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UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

A review of the intervention strategies and approaches used with young offenders: Southill Outreach a case study.

Maeve Tuohy

CARL Research Project



Name of student(s):	Maeve Tuohy
Name of civil society organization/community group:	Southill Outreach
Supervisor(s):	Eilish Forrest
Name and year of course:	Master of Social Work Year 2
Date completed:	28th April 2014

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Executive Summary

Background to the study

This study began as an MSW dissertation as part of the Science Shop Initiative by University College Cork. Research was carried out in Southill Outreach, which is an agency funded solely by the Irish Youth Justice Service through Young Person's Probation and offers a range of activities, incorporating preventative and supportive services to young people and their families.

Objectives

The objectives agreed upon for this study are as follows:

1. To review the literature relevant to intervention strategies with young offenders
2. To investigate specific interventions used within Southill Outreach through primary research
3. To identify key challenges or successes in the interventions used by Southill Outreach
4. To compare the findings with the initial review to determine how intervention strategies contribute to social work practice

Methodology

This research took on a participatory role with Southill Outreach. Qualitative research was employed in the undertaking of this study through primary research using semi-structured interviews with young people and a focus group with staff and Board of Management members of Southill Outreach. In addition, a comprehensive literature review was carried out. An interpretative approach was taken to analyse the data and a thematic approach was used for coding the data gathered into relevant themes. Subsequently, limitations to this piece of research were identified and ethical considerations were considered.

Results

Findings showed that young people who participated in the research expressed a positive attitude towards the work carried out within in Southill Outreach. The young people also acknowledged the positive relationships they had with all members of staff within the agency. The focus group highlighted various reoccurring themes such as Relationship Building, Motivational Interviewing, Family Interventions and Individual Needs and Tailored Interventions as positive ways of engaging with young offenders.

Recommendations and Implications of the Study's Findings

Following this research it was recommended that Southill Outreach required an effective way of measuring outcomes within the agency. It was also acknowledged that further training in the area of self care strategies would be of benefit to staff in Southill Outreach. Supervision was highlighted as an area that should be utilised as a form of effective self care. Lastly, further large scale research in the area was recommended.

Authors Conclusion

The researcher believes that this was a valuable and interesting study to conduct for Southill Outreach. It provided insight into the perspectives staff had of effective interventions used with young offenders within the agency. It also provided recommendations for the agency and highlighted the positive opinions expressed by young people involved in the agency. The researcher thoroughly enjoyed conducting the research.

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First and foremost I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my tutor Eilish Forrest for all her support and guidance over the past two years. The time and effort you gave to me throughout both years and especially in the last year while completing this dissertation was very much appreciated.

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Thank you to all the staff and members of the Board of Management in Southill Outreach for their support while carrying out this study and for the time taken to answer questions in a focus group. I would also like to thank the young people who willingly took part in the interviews for this study.

A big thank you to my parents and my sister for the constant encouragement and support throughout the two years, without your help and support this would have been more challenging for me.

Finally, I'd like to thank the staff and lecturers in UCC for making the past two years a very enjoyable and interesting experience.

Abstract

This study reviewed the intervention strategies and approaches used with young offenders by gaining the perspectives of such interventions with Southill Outreach staff members, members of the Board of Management and young people. An intervention in the context of this study is a structured service or series of actions that aims to achieve change overtime when working with young offenders. The study presents findings from relevant national and international literature including findings from three interviews carried out with clients and from a focus group comprising of staff and members of the Board of Management in Southill Outreach. A thematic analysis identified relevant themes that arose during the focus group and interview group regarding effective intervention strategies used when working with young offenders. Findings suggest that there are multiple interventions and approaches that are effective when working with young offenders. Examples include; Motivational Interviewing, Family Interventions, Relationship Building, Tailored interventions and the importance of the recognition of, and work to address, individual needs in order to engage young people who offend. The findings illustrate that an effective system for measuring outcomes would be of great benefit to the agency. Furthermore, it was identified by participants that there was a real need to encourage the use of effective self-care strategies and further utilise supervision as part of this process.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Title

A review of the intervention strategies and approaches used with young offenders: Southill Outreach a case study.

1.2 Agency Profile

The Irish Youth Justice System mission statement is 'To create a safer society by working in partnership to reduce youth offending through appropriate interventions and linkages to services (Department of Justice and Equality,2013). This is carried out through the provision of community based organisations (CBOs) highlighting a more welfare approach to youth offending. By adopting a welfare approach it allows for the freedom and autonomy of a child for the purpose of rehabilitation as distinct from punishment, and indirectly through measures which protect the child from the rigours of the regular criminal process (Walsh, 2008).

Southill Outreach was established in 1990 in response to needs identified by a group of interested persons, who were involved within Southill community and also involved with the Probation Service. It developed as a pilot project funded by the Department of Justice through the then Probation and Welfare Service. It is now funded solely by Irish Youth Justice Service through Young Person's Probation and offers a variety of activities, incorporating preventative and supportive work to individuals as well as providing a supportive service to the individual's families. The agency is heavily involved in 'streetwork', which the service was initially set up to provide, targeting those who are on the margins of educational disadvantage and are at risk of being involved in criminality. Streetwork involves workers going into the environs of groups of young people and engaging with them at their level. The young people are also targeted in terms of the range of activities available, and the workers act as advocates for the young people who may present with issues such as substance misuse, homelessness, criminality, school refusal or course non-attendance.

Southill Outreach work with young people who are mostly referred by the Probation

Service 80% and the other 20% of young people are those identified as ‘at-risk’ youth by staff members and statutory agencies such as HSE and voluntary agencies. These young people are aged between 12-18 years with possible support for young adults, in an aftercare service for young people up to the age of 23. The agency mainly works with young people from Limerick city and county, but it also works with young people from Tipperary and Clare if referred by the Probation Service.

1.3 Background to the research

Strong consideration is always given to the fact that there is no single way of successfully dealing with the problems and issues associated with young offenders. The approach most likely to be successful is to provide a wide range of options. Guidelines to “Tackling Youth Crime” documented by the Irish Youth Justice Service (IYJS, 2013) highlighted numerous ways of working with young offenders. Nevertheless, there is a general trend in policy and intervention of ‘one size fits all’ notion, with little consideration at times being given to individual characteristics of young people. However, with more available research this trend is changing and prevention and intervention programmes aimed at tackling youth offending have started to incorporate both risk and protective factors paradigm more appropriately and on an individual basis. Improving education and encouraging social interactions may also be a contributing factor in reducing re-offending (Feilzer et al, 2002).

Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) has also proven to be an effective method of intervention for young offenders (Youth Justice Board, 2008). MST therapy concentrates on viewing offending behaviour as a consequence of the relationship between individuals and their external environment. Due to the multi-faceted approach adopted by MST, it can be concluded that this approach to intervention is most closely linked to the risk and protective factors paradigm. This approach to intervention will be considered later in this study.

There has been an extensive amount of research carried out with regard to using Motivational Interviewing as an intervention with young offenders. Practice knowledge indicates that telling people what to do or how to do it is rarely effective in supporting people to change their chosen behaviours. Furthermore, recent

recommendations' suggest that practitioners should be encouraged to explore a broad range of issues, including but not limited to skills and barriers (Wahab, 2005). The ways in which clinicians interact with clients has a significant effect on the clients' motivation and resistance to change' (Miller & Rollnick, 2002, p. 49).

Strategies and services targeted at improving parenting effectiveness; early attachment and cognitive development for young people; reductions in alcohol and drug misuse; improvements in school performance; and participation by young people in mainstream youth activities. All of these have a significant role to play at all stages across the youth justice system in helping young people realise their potential and avoid becoming further involved in offending behaviour (IYJS, 2009). It is imperative that to address all of these issues associated with youth offending that strong consideration needs to be given regarding the interventions used to enhance positive change in a young person's behaviour.

1.4 Rationale for the research

Southill Outreach requested research to be carried out regarding the various interventions used with young offenders and also to highlight staff's views regarding the interventions they were using when working with young offenders. They also wanted to gain an insight into the opinions of the young people who were still engaged with their service (over the age of eighteen).

The rationale behind undertaking this particular research topic can be understood by one motivating factor. The researcher has a keen interest in working with offenders. This interest is largely due to gaining experience while on work placement in the Probation Service in Limerick. The researcher was introduced to Southill Outreach agency during this placement. Within Young People's Probation (YPP) the researcher was given the opportunity to work with a number of young offenders aged between 15-18 years old engaged in various community based programmes throughout the city for example, Southill Outreach. The researcher began to reflect on these community based programmes as interventions used with young offenders and this is where her greater interest in researching the topic began. This work has been invaluable to the researcher and has contributed significantly to her learning needs as a novice social worker to working with young offenders. The work within the Probation Service

provided her with the experience and theoretical knowledge that can be applied when working with young offenders and adult offenders. During this time, the researcher became more interested in the intervention strategies and approaches used with young offenders in order to reduce recidivism. Within the Probation environment, the researcher became aware of the more welfare approach used by the Courts when sentencing young offenders. The researcher is cognisant of the risk and protective factors which are believed to contribute to offending behaviour amongst young people. The most valuable learning gained during placement was that young offenders can change their behaviour for the good of themselves and society through engaging with a variety of interventions. It can be challenging for a practitioner to continually strive for positive change in a person when surrounded by negative behaviour but unless the practitioner can help motivate the young person to change, there is a little chance that the young person will adopt positive behaviour. The ways in which practitioners interact with clients has a considerable effect on clients' motivation and resistance to change (Miller & Rollnick, 2002).

1.5 Aims of the research

In agreement with the Community Service Organisation (CSO), the overall aim of this research is to review the intervention strategies and approaches used with young offenders through gaining client, staff and Board of Management perspectives on various interventions used in Southill Outreach. More specifically, it also aims to identify what specific interventions and approaches worked effectively within the agency.

1.6 Objectives of the Research

In order to meet the above aims, the objectives are as follows:

1. To review the literature relevant to intervention strategies with young offenders
2. To investigate specific interventions used within Southill Outreach through primary research
3. To identify key challenges or successes in the interventions used by Southill Outreach
4. To compare the findings with the initial review to determine how intervention strategies contribute to social work practice

1.7 Research Questions

1. What intervention strategies are used to promote change with young offenders in Southill Outreach?
2. Which intervention strategies and approaches identified within research are regarded as the most effective when working with young offenders, and why?

1.8 Relevance to Social work

This study has an important link to social work practice. The CSO is a community based probation project and the majority of its clients are through probation referrals. The study uses an ecological approach. This approach is focused on the individual, the family, the community and society as a whole. Brofenbrenner (1979) ecological approach is a variation of Talcott Parsons systems theory. As the environment interplays with individual/families this can play a part on development therefore, the strategies employed at times productive or unproductive are dependent on the strategy undertaken (Cheal, 2002). In terms of ecological theory, changing one system can influence another and practitioners can use this to effect positive change for clients [in this case young offenders]. This study also takes into account relevant social work policies, children's rights and the Children Act 2001.

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter provided information regarding the agency profile of Southill outreach and provided a background to the study. The research rationale, aims, objectives and questions underpinning the study were highlighted. The relevance to social work was outlined. The next section will conclude with an overview of the remaining chapters.

1.10 Overview of Chapters

Chapter Two will examine the research methodology, theoretical frameworks and research methods engaged in this research. The participatory approach will be outlined throughout this chapter. Research methods will be highlighted and the interpretative thematic analyses employed will be discussed. Lastly, ethical considerations and limitations to the study will be considered.

Chapter Three will provide a review of the literature relevant to this research: The intervention strategies and approaches used with young offenders. The strengths and challenges of various interventions will be discussed.

Chapter Four will present the findings and analyse the data of the interviews and focus group carried out. This chapter will incorporate a thematic approach to the data collected.

Chapter Five will draw on conclusions and recommendations from chapter four. It will focus on the key findings and outline future recommendations. Lastly, it will comprise of reflections from the researcher in relation to carrying out this study.

Chapter Two : Methodology

2.1 Introduction to the chapter

This chapter discusses the rationale of adopting a qualitative approach within research. It will also highlight the conceptual framework of Interpretivisism. Research methods, data collection and data analysis are explored. Lastly, the limitations and ethical considerations are addressed.

2.2 Theoretical Perspective

Epistemology is the study of the theory of knowledge. Carey (2009, p.50) denotes that it "queries what knowledge is, how knowledge is acquired, the different types of knowledge and how knowledge is known". The researcher's epistemological position originates from an interpretevist perspective aided by Brofenbrenners ecological approach. The ecological approach takes into account various factors such as the individual, the family, the community and society as a whole (see Fig 1.).

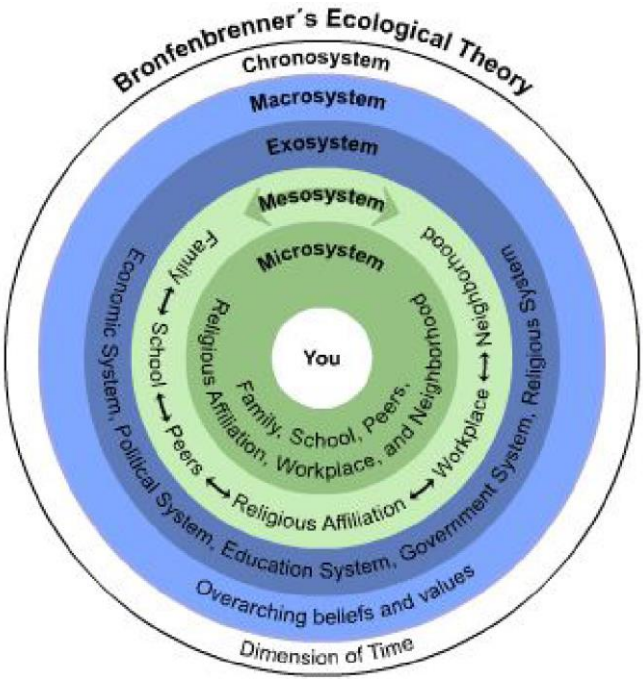


Figure 1

Ecological systems theory as espoused by Brofenbrenner (1979) is a framework that underpins how the environment plays a role in human development. It emphasises that children develop through various interactions with people, objects and symbols within their environment. The most pertinent of these environments

is the micro-system, which has a large part to play in children's lives, as they encounter this system most often. A child's development will essentially be determined by what they experience in these environments such as appropriate ways to behave. This theory may be utilised to understand the rationale for children's perspectives of phenomena such as anti-social behaviour, offending behaviour, substance misuse etc., and to gain an appreciation of the effect children's environments have on their understanding of the social world.

Carey (2009, p.53) would suggest that interpretivisism is defined as the attempt to "uncover the meaning and reality of people's experiences in the social world". Interpretivists attempt to understand the opinions, attitudes and emotional responses expressed by their participants and then connect them with the behaviour and actions displayed by participants in order to contextualise the views of participants (Carey, 2009).

2.3 Participatory Research

This research project was born out of the Science Shop Project within UCC; by its very nature the research is participatory. Participatory research "sets itself apart...from other forms of...research because of the central role that non-experts play" (Park, 2001, p.81). At the centre of this research were staff members of Southill Outreach, members from the Board of Management and service users of Southill Outreach each giving their own views of interventions used within the agency. Cornwall and Jewkes (1995, p. 68) argue, "one of the key strengths [of participatory research] is seen to reside in exploring local knowledge and perceptions". Staff acknowledged that various interventions used with young offenders can have an impact on recidivism highlighting that building a relationship with the young person is of utmost importance in order for them to actively engage in any intervention. Following the submission of this research, the findings will be presented to Southill Outreach through a presentation given by the researcher and also in written form through submission of a copy of this research.

2.4 Qualitative Research

The decision to undertake qualitative research was agreed by Southill Outreach in Limerick as they requested an in-depth review of the intervention strategies and

approaches used with young offenders within their agency. The reason qualitative research design was chosen is due to the concept that the main principles of qualitative research are based on and centre on a number of fundamental concepts, such as communication, subject and everyday life (Sarantakos, 1997). Research is embedded in the process of communication of the researcher and the respondent. He further emphasises that the researcher and the respondent are working together for a common goal and that the respondents are the 'subjects' who ultimately define, interpret, explain and construct reality. This type of research method allows for flexibility, for example with regard to the choice of instruments used such as a Dictaphone and also the research process. Southill Outreach were also interested in exploring the views of young people involved in the agency to gain their perspective on whether the work they were carrying out was effective. It [qualitative research] is not a rigid design therefore the flexibility allows this study to take many angles and can change during its execution. This type of data cannot be preconceived by the researcher (Willig, 2008).

2.5 Research Methods:

*2.5.1*Literature Review

A literature review was completed during the data collection phase. Carrying out a literature review allows the researcher to "locate and review the existing literature that pertains to the research topic" (Jupp, 2006, p.162). EBSCO and Academic Search Complete were the main search engines used to gather this research for interventions used with young offenders. The search terms used by the researcher included: 'young offenders', 'interventions with young offenders', 'what works with young offenders', 'engaging young offenders', and 'approaches used with young offenders'. Relevant articles were carefully selected for inclusion in this study.

2.5.2 Data collection

A focus group was carried out with seven staff members (including Board of Management members) of Southill Outreach together with three semi-structured interviews with young people over the age of eighteen who were still involved with the agency. Open-ended questions were used for both the focus group and the semi-structured interviews. Ritchie *et al* (2003) emphasise that focus groups

"provide a social context for the research, and thus an opportunity to explore how people think and talk about a topic, how their ideas are shaped, generated or moderated through conversation with others" (2003, p. 37). The interviews are considered to be semi-structured due to the fact that they were guided by a set of pre-determined questions and topics.

The data was collected using a Dictaphone. Permission was sought by all participants and each signed an informed consent form (see Appendix A). These recordings were then transcribed and utilised to identify relevant themes. Themes "capture something important about the date in relation to the research question..." (Seale, 1999, p. 46). Relevant literature from the initial literature review and new literature were then linked to highlight the reoccurring themes. Themes that emerged from the interviews and focus group will be discussed further in the findings and analysis chapter.

2.5.3 Data Analysis

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

The researcher analysed participants' responses by using Thematic Analysis. The transcripts were suitable for this type of analysis due to the researcher exploring the answers through semi-structured, open-ended questions for both the focus group and interview group. Therefore allowing for themes' to emerge and be identified from participants' responses. The purpose of interpretative phenomenological analysis is to carry out an in-depth investigation of how participants understand their own private and societal world (Smith et al., 2009). The research aimed to review the intervention strategies and approaches used with young offenders by using a focus group and interview group to gain an understanding of the interventions and approaches used within the agency. An interpretative lens was used to code the data and identify reoccurring themes throughout.

2.5.4 Limitations to the research

It is acknowledged that there were limitations to this research study. This research is a small-scale qualitative research project. Part of this study concentrates on the perspectives of young people who have been involved in the programs offered by Southill Outreach, and does not include young offenders who have not participated in the program. The data analysis was conducted by one analyst [the researcher] and is

therefore open to a certain degree of subjectivity. This subjectivity can be eliminated in larger studies where a number of researchers and analysts are involved to carry out research in the area. A final limitation that could be evident within this research is bias. Southill Outreach sourced all participants for the research and are aware of the young people who took part in the study. Therefore, due to all participants being informed about the research being presented to Southill Outreach this may have caused some participants to be less honest about Southill Outreach for fear of their observations being identifiable. The researcher acknowledges the importance of other intervention strategies and approaches such as Restorative Justice Practice, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Family Group Conferences as ways of working with young offenders but given this is a small scale study it was not possible to include these other intervention strategies and approaches.

2.6 Ethical Issues and Considerations

This section will consider some of the main ethical considerations and procedures taken. These include gaining informed consent, ensuring anonymity, ensuring confidentiality and informing participants of the risk of harm. It can be said that "all social research involves ethical issues" (Punch, 1998, p. 281).

2.6.1 Gaining Informed Consent

The focus group and the young people were given information sheets regarding the purpose of the study. Each participant read through this sheet before signing a consent form. With regard to the young people, this information was explained to them before signing the consent form in the case of any literacy difficulties. No issues arose during this time.

2.6.2 Ensuring Anonymity

All participants were informed that their identities would be anonymous during the transcription stage and that the recordings would be stored in a lockable cabinet for a period of up to six months. Any descriptions or personal details which the researcher may have felt identified any participant were not included in the final report of the study.

2.6.3 Ensuring Confidentiality

Participants were informed that all information, opinions and perspectives gained from the data collected would remain strictly confidential and duly confined to the research being carried out. The transcripts of the interviewees and focus group would be read by the researcher and the external examiner in UCC should they be requested. Participants were also informed that the transcripts would be only transcribed by the researcher to further highlight the importance of confidentiality. It was stressed to all participants that information would only be disseminated by the researcher if any information provided, indicated that any person or they themselves could be at risk of harm.

2.6.4 Risk of Harm

Information referring to protection from harm was included in the information sheet (see appendix B). Participants were informed by the researcher that they were free to withdraw from any part of the interview or focus group at any time, should they wish to, without any reason being given.

The interviewees [young people] in particular were a vulnerable group because although they were all over the age of eighteen, they were still young offenders who had experienced difficulties in the past regarding various areas of their lives (e.g. socially or domestically). They were all individuals considered to still be 'at risk' due to being on probation, and for these reasons, the researcher was particularly sensitive to this when asking certain questions related to this (see Appendix C for transcript of questions). Overall, the researcher was mindful of the participants being interviewed and the participants of the focus group, approaching both methods of gathering data in a respectful manner. it is necessary to be aware of "the researchers' values, beliefs and possible prejudices" when gathering data (Carey, 2009, p. 155).

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has examined and outlined the concept of participatory research. Qualitative research and the conceptual framework were also explored by the researcher. The research methods of literature review were highlighted and the search strategy method was identified. The method for data analysis and collection were discussed together with the limitations of the study. The final section of the chapter considered several ethical issues.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

This literature review aims to explore the intervention strategies/approaches used with young offenders. It will outline the various strategies and agencies involved in rehabilitating young offenders and reducing recidivism in Ireland. A brief overview of the Irish Juvenile Justice System will be discussed. The risk factors that may cause a young person to commit a crime will be outlined together with highlighting the protective factors. This is to enable us to ensure positive outcomes in life for vulnerable young people. Examples of community based approaches to youth offending will be explored. International interventions and approaches to youth offending will be discussed such as Multi-Systemic Therapy, Motivational Interviewing and Mentoring Programmes will be reviewed. The purpose of this literature review is to review the intervention strategies and approaches used with young offenders. It must be noted that it will not measure the effectiveness or success of such interventions.

3.2 Youth Justice Service in Ireland:

The Irish Youth Justice Service (IYJS) is responsible for ensuring the effective development and execution of strategy in relation to reducing youth crime and facilitating the effective co-ordination of effort by all stakeholders involved in this area (Department of Justice and Equality, 2013). The Probation Service more specifically occupies a central role in delivering court ordered common sanctions and bringing about change in the behaviour of young people involved in youth offending behaviour (Youth Justice Service Report, 2001). This report outline a number of key factors relating to young people's anti-social attitudes such as impulsiveness, low empathy and, in particular, parental effectiveness, or more specifically the parents' role in cultivating pro-social behaviours in their children.

The Probation Service is in partnership with 66 Community Based Organisations (CBO) to provide services on its behalf to clients of the Probation Service and others considered to be at risk of offending in local communities cross country (Redmond and Dack, 2009). A smaller group of the CBOs are funded by the Irish Youth Justice Service falling within the remit of the Young Persons Probation (YPP). Various YPP projects include Ceim ar Cheim, Le Cheile and Southill Outreach that was set up to

primarily engage young people who are at risk of becoming involved in crime and antisocial behaviour. Southill Outreach also focuses on young people who are currently at the judicial stage or those who are in detention centres where both pre and post release support services are provided.

The Children Act 2001 introduced a wide range of innovative measures around working with the young, thereby providing a statutory framework for the future development of the juvenile justice system, in accordance with modern thinking and best international practice (Probation Service, 2008). Strong consideration is always given to the fact that there is no single way of successfully dealing with the problems and issues associated with young offenders. The approach most likely to be successful is to provide a wide range of options (Stokes, 2004). The Children's Act 2001 shifted the emphasis away from residential or custodial care to care in the community highlighting that detention is viewed as a last resort (Probation Service, 2008).

The focus of the Youth Justice Action Plan 2014-2018 is to 'continue the downward trends in high volume crime and detention; becoming more adept in understanding and intervening in more serious crime offending patterns; and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of these interventions in addressing the behaviour and needs of these young people'. (Irish Youth Justice Service Report, 2013). With this in mind it is therefore necessary to highlight the needs of young people by aiming to address the risk and protective factors in relation to offending behaviour.

3.3 Risk and Protective Factors associated with youth offending

Research on risk factors ultimately encouraged discussions and investigation into influences that may provide a buffer between the presence of risk factors and the onset of delinquent behaviour. Examples of risk factors include antisocial peers, poor parent-child relationship and substance misuse. In essence, risk factors to offending can be broadly defined as anything that increases the probability that a person will engage in offending behaviour (Shader, 2002). In contrast to this, protective factors are those which allow some young people to become more resistant to developing offending behaviour despite exposure to a number of risk factors. Examples of protective factors include positive social orientation, supportive relationships with parents, commitment to school and constructive use of leisure time (Shader, 2002).These correlates of antisocial behaviour patterns include factors that are

inherent to the young person, present in the immediate social environment in which they live, and are connected within the broader background of the young person's life. Losel clearly acknowledges that any theory focusing specifically on a single factor will be inadequate in explaining the causes of anti-social behaviour (Losel, 2003). Moreover, almost all studies are of the same opinion that the most effective approach in changing these risk factors for the better is to target multiple factors (or at least more than one) and use them in a diversity of techniques to change them (McLaren, 2000). Therefore, the question arises; what intervention strategies and approaches used with young people address these known causes of offending?

3.4 What works in reducing offending behaviour?

There has been an abundance of research carried out since the 1970's from a view to 'nothing works' to highlighting 'what works' in relation to both adult and juvenile offending on both sides of the Atlantic.

Techniques for engaging young people who offend are concerned with "the question of how to gain young people's interest and willing participation in interventions or programmes of interventions intended to prevent or reduce reoffending" (Mason and Prior, 2008, p. 212). They further contend that through "engagement' a young person can become motivated and committed to involving themselves in the activities on offer. In fact, full engagement by the young person is considered a most important factor in making an intervention successful.

"Offending by young people is associated with, rather than caused by, numerous social and psychological influences…" (Eadie and Canton, 2002, p.22). These influences to be considered include peer group pressure, neglectful or inconsistent parenting, boredom, poor job prospects and experimentation with illicit drug use (ibid). Any purposeful attempt to address offending behaviour must take into account these influences. The challenge for practitioners is "understanding and addressing the fluid dynamics, the mercurial nature of a young person's journey from adolescence to adulthood" (Farrow and Wilkinson, 2007, p. 87). For the practitioner, the need for understanding and a respectful approach are of utmost importance.

The researcher will now highlight various interventions and approaches when working with young offenders.

3.5 Intervention Strategies and Approaches used with young offenders:

Relationship Building and Motivational Interviewing*:*

In applying the messages from literature on relationship building to the specific context of work with young offenders, definite questions are raised about the acceptance or willingness of the young person to be engaged in relationships aimed at changing their behaviour (Mason and Prior, 2010). Most practitioners speak of a desire to facilitate positive change in the lives of service users (Watson, 2011). However, "no matter how modest the goals may be, change is a difficult process and social work intervention may be an unwelcome intrusion" (Watson, 2011, p. 465). Resistance to change can be viewed in many varied forms and has long been a reoccurring theme in the social work field. It often appears to be counterproductive and motivated towards self-destructive behaviour (Watson, 2011). Social work has always attempted to balance the dual role of care and control.

Motivational Interviewing (MI) relies on a positive and sustained relationship with clients for it to work effectively. There is an absence of "robust research evidence on how such relationships can be achieved and on their effects" (Mason and Prior, 2010, p.219). The quality of the relationship between the practitioner and the young person has rarely been a topic of thorough research investigation. Furthermore, questions about how to engage young offenders are problematic because they are effectively questions about the interaction between individuals, how these interactions change over time, and how the interaction is influenced by the personal, social and cultural factors. Mason and Prior contend that "it raises issues of human agency and social context, which cannot be contained with experimental design" (ibid). Young people may often be coerced into treatment and are sometimes angry therefore these feelings conflict with engagement in any interview thus making the method of MI more challenging for the practitioner. To partly overcome these issues practitioners can openly acknowledge common thoughts and feelings and, if appropriate, encourage the young person to see if he or she can benefit from the motivational interview (Baer & Petterson, 2002).

MI is defined as a "client-centred, directive method for enhancing intrinsic motivation to change by exploring and resolving ambivalence" (Burke, Arkowitz and Dunn 2002

as cited in Miller and Rollnick, 2002, p. 218). It involves four basic principles: Expressing empathy, developing discrepancy, rolling with resistance and supporting self efficacy (ibid). The spirit of motivational interviewing is defined by specific concepts of collaboration, autonomy and evocation (Austin, Williams and Kilgour, 2011).

In Ireland, there has been an increased interest in motivational interviewing (MI) in various social work agencies since the late 1980's (Loughran, 2006). He further states "given the current interest in MI it is useful to consider whether there is indeed a fit between the MI spirit and the mission of the Probation Service" (Loughran, 2006, p. 20). The word 'spirit' in MI is related to elements such as collaboration, evocation and autonomy yet these may be seen to undermine the argument in favour of MI within the probation service. Developing a collaborative relationship with an offender can prove challenging at times. MI promotes the view that it is crucial for the worker to provide "an atmosphere conducive rather than coercive to change" (Loughran, 2002, p. 20). The focus on working collaboratively towards agreed goals can be viewed as an attempt to show service users that they are in fact experts in their own lives. Diclemente and Valasquez attest that "motivation can be seen as the fuel that powers the engine of change, providing the impetus for the effort, re-evaluation, planning and change strategies" (Diclemente and Valasquez, 2002, as cited in Watson 2011, p.466). People can be ambivalent about change even though they are aware of the negatives a situation may present. Bearing this in mind Miller and Rollnick highlight that resistance should be seen as a less inherent personality trait and "more as an understandable response to this conflict" (2002, p.324). MI argues that for one to be motivated towards change one needs to first resolve ambivalence (Watson, 2011). It can be disputed that a fault of practitioners is to press ahead without considering the impact of ambivalence, thus making it likely to encounter resistance. MI takes a different approach; using active listening skills to encourage clients voice both sides of their ambivalence, with the purpose of drawing out service users' own arguments in favour of change (Trevithick, 2005).

Mentoring Programmes*:*

Stokes (2004) stresses that mentoring should be a core method of engaging offenders

in the Youth Justice System. A wide range of protection and risk factors and processes are in play with young people engaged in offending behaviour or are deemed 'at risk' of doing so. Key factors include alcohol, poverty, drugs, violence and low expectations such as life, education and self. He further highlights that "mentoring, where available, is a highly significant protective mechanism, especially as regards those who are vulnerable and passive" (Stokes, 2004, p. 17). He alludes to the fact that this is supported by international research evidence. Berncroft (2007) concurs with the positive nature of mentoring stating that programmes should incorporate a component where socially appropriate ways of behaving and problem solving should be at the forefront of the aims of mentoring programmes with young people. The hope is that young people will be less inclined to react violently when faced with difficult, dangerous or stressful situations (ibid). Mentoring programmes such as 'Big Brother' 'Big Sister' can be of benefit to the young offender and could further trigger behavioural change through positive role modelling (Kelly *et al*, 2012).

Various community sanctions available to the courts exist within the Irish context of youth offending. Such sanctions a Mentor (Family support) Order. This Mentor (Family support) Order is available to help, advise and encourage the young person and his/her family in trying to combat the young person from committing further offences. An Irish example of this programme exists within Le Cheile agency which provides a mentor service to young people involved with the Probation Service. In addition to this it provides parent mentoring and delivers the Strengthening Families Programme across Ireland in various locations.

Newburn and Shiner have reviewed a number of mentoring programmes and have carried out their own research with regard to mentoring schemes. Their study was the largest British study of mentoring schemes to date. They conclude that "well designed, focused programmes can have positive impacts for participants" (2006, p. 23). A mentoring source paper documented by the Youth Justice Board(YJB) in England highlights that features of effective mentoring interventions are identified as "a flexible structure matching young people's assessed needs to available resources within local settings, goal setting, regular reviews and planning that fosters an achievement culture"(YJB, as cited in Newburn and Shinner, 2003, p. 3). Bilchik affirms that the availability of this type of support to young people who are growing up in high-risk, multi-problem families is of great benefit to the young person and is

seen as a protective factor which in turn makes the development of life problems(including offending) less likely (Bilchik, 1998). "Mentoring provides the highest dosage of adult-child interaction of any formal community based programme" (Sherman *et al*, 2008, p. 45). Mentoring schemes cannot be solely based on supportive relationships, which engages the young person in the programme it needs to target the behaviour and other changes to make a significant difference in the offending behaviour of the young person (Catelano *et al*, 1998).

Multi-Systemic Therapy and Family Interventions*:*

A significant number of studies have targeted the family as the unit for intervention. Among the most established methods for family intervention is Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST). The Family Services Research Centre in South Carolina developed MST. This centre reviewed research literature and looked for interventions with documented success in shaping positive outcomes for anti-social behaviour in youth. The underlying premise of MST is that criminal conduct is multi casual; therefore, effective interventions would recognise this fact and address the varied and multiple sources of criminogenic influence. Karnick and Steiner (2007) highlight that these sources are found in the youth's social ecology namely the family, peer groups, school and neighbourhood. The MST process begins by identifying problem behaviours associated with young people which in turn are a task for the whole family. Examples of problem behaviours include non-compliance of family rules, truancy, failure to complete schoolwork, and substance use (Karnick and Steiner, 2007). The focus of the therapy aims to eliminate the presenting problems and one way of doing this is by building on strengths. MST is designed to be a short- term intervention, which can result in positive gains in the long-term. No social service intervention is everlasting; the ultimate goal of this treatment is to empower the family to continue with taught strategies that were successful at the time of intervention.

Greenwood emphasises that the most successful programmes are those that "emphasise family interactions, probably because they focus on providing skills to the adults who are in the best position to supervise and train the child" (2008, p. 198). He contends that more traditional interventions using punishment or attempting to scare youth are the least successful. He recommends two interventions for youths on

probation; Multi-Systemic Therapy and Functional Family Therapy. Both programmes use different types of therapists ranging from paraprofessionals to trainees in a variety of social work and counselling professions. Furthermore, MST evaluations demonstrate that it is effective in reducing re-arrest rates and out of home placements for a diversity of problems encountered by youth involved in both the juvenile justice and social service system (Greenwood, 2008). He would argue that community based programmes that focus on the individual offender rather than on the family are much less successful. In contrast to Greenwood's view, Hourigan challenges the evidence, of including the family in early interventions. Hourigan states that even though the family is the central unit at the core of criminal activities [in Limerick city] and although we acknowledge that there are various rational reasons why families engage in criminal activity, it is of utmost importance to remember that family members may refuse to engage with early intervention strategies given that some families are caught up in high crime activity, and "they have every incentive to keep social/youth and family support workers at a distance" (2012, p. 72). While she supports the call for more early intervention initiatives, she concludes stating that advocates of early intervention strategies as a means of tackling juvenile justice issues need to make clear greater realism about the question of familial engagement (Hourigan, 2012).

Educational Model for Crime Reduction**:**

Education is one of the most widely examined risk factors for delinquency (Ford and Schroeder, 2011). "Many young offenders understand that qualifications, skills and jobs can help them break the cycle of crime, but many face barriers to living crime-free" (Hayden, 2008, p. 24). The Youth Justice Board (YJB) in the UK states that there is a remarkable overlap between the risk factors associated with failing in education and the risk factors that may lead to offending behaviour. The consequence of failing in education is associated with a stronger likelihood of offending, and equally the factors that steer away from ongoing offending is educational achievement (Bishop and Coxhead, 2010). Educational failure can lead to negative attitudes towards schooling and further lack the respect for societal norms. Furthermore, low attainment can lead to low self-esteem issues in young people and the 'labelling' of 'problem' children (ibid). Stephenson attests that the influence that education can have on the attitudes and behaviours of young people is indisputable also reminding

us that we must strive towards 'cross-pollination' of education and youth justice if we are to see radical changes in the numbers of detached students and young people involved in the criminal justice system (Stephenson, 2007).

Stokes (2004) emphasises that education programmes alone will not diminish youth offending, such an outcome can be achieved by significant additional interaction between agencies and services targeting young people, their families and communities. Early intervention is imperative. Research from a Canadian source document on education demonstrates that Primary Schools are now using a "Behaviour Checklist" to analyse individual pupil's behaviour, identify circumstances associated with disruptive behaviour and formulate an individual educational programme (McCarthy *et al*, 2004). This checklist looks at various classes of behaviour such as; academic behaviour, behaviours concerned with rules and routines, verbal or noisy behaviour, aggression towards pupils and teachers and social and emotional behaviours (McCarthy *et al*, 2004). It is now widely accepted that children's readiness to learn when they start formal education is a crucial determinant of their future achievement and behaviour.

School based risk factors are inherently linked to individual, family and community based risk factors (Ford & Schroeder, 2011). In other words, a young person's progress in school may be either hindered or encouraged depending on various family based risk factors they experience at any given time. It is imperative to put in place school based protective factors for young people. For example, an identified school based risk factor is truancy and recognition for involvement in conventional activities is identified as a protective factor. In conclusion, prior to putting in place the school based protective factor, it is necessary to consider the reasons for truancy in order to design methods that will in turn increase effectiveness of the protective factors.

Conclusion:

This review has looked at the Irish Youth Justice System highlighting a more welfare approach to youth offending. The risk and protective factors associated with youth offending have been explored. It has also reviewed various interventions/approaches

used with young offenders such as Multi Systemic Therapy and Family interventions, Mentoring programmes and Relationship Building and Motivational Interviewing. The link between education and youth offending was discussed identifying the importance of reducing the risk factors and enhancing the protective factors relating to education. In essence, the key ingredients of effective interventions with young offenders incorporate a multi-faceted approach using various techniques that target a number of needs of young people.

Chapter Four: Findings and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to outline and examine the findings from the focus group and the three interviews with young people of Southill Outreach. The methods employed in collecting the data are in keeping with the ethos of community based participatory research whereby local community agencies and community members engage in research to highlight their views on the topic being researched. Primary research was carried out to collect this data and various themes emerged: Relationship Building, Individual needs and tailored interventions, Motivational Interviewing and Family Intervention. These themes will be presented and analysed with regard to research highlighted in the literature review and it will also include new literature in order to better analyse the research findings. A brief discussion will occur after the findings under each theme. Finally, the researcher will conclude with an overall discussion of the findings presented.

4.2 Findings

The aim of this study was to review the intervention strategies and approaches used with young offenders. Participants will be identified as follows: Focus group participants will be identified as "P1-P6" as there were six participants in the focus group and young people will be identified as Client 1, Client 2 and Client 3.

4.3 Emerging Themes

4.3.1Relationship Building

The most pertinent theme that arose during the focus group was the importance of building a relationship with the client.

> P1 states "... *first thing is to build some sort of relationship with the young person, hopefully that relationship has already been established informally before they are referred but not necessarily".*

The findings of the study would suggest that building a trusting relationship with the young person was of utmost important in order that the young person would in some way engage in the programme offered.

P2 states " *the thing is, you can, in a sense measure the relationship by them just turning up because if they don't have a relationship with you they are just not going to turn up...".*

Clearly, it is evident that building that initial relationship with the young person is the foundation for effective intervention. Client 1 stated "*I've a good relationship with them here... If they pass me [on the street] it's like friends ya know like, so it's good."*

Interestingly, it was the way in which the staff worked to create relationships that was very insightful.

P3 stated " *The point is to build a relationship so conversations nine time out of ten will evolve from just being with the young person having a chat over a game of pool or whatever...you get an insight into their world, you know what's going on for them and we go at their pace rather than pushing issues, we first see where they are at".*

'Measuring relationships' was highlighted as a challenge for the focus group however, with regard to measuring relationship outcomes P5 states "*we know from our own experience , clients we had years ago still coming back, still trusting the agency...some place where they belong, where they are valued".* Client 2 acknowledges the good relationship he has with the staff in Southill "*All very friendly, always there for me when I wanted them..."*

Various members of the focus group spoke about the need to create a stronger, more in-depth relationship with the female clients as opposed to the males. P4 states "it's *more about the relationship building with them, they need that deep relationship before they start to open up...build a good rapport with them".* P1 concurs with this "*... you do have to be persistent with them and build that relationship from the start.*

The focus group discussed the problem regarding substance misuse among young people, yet it was highlighted that it was the relationship the young person had with their key worker that would motivate the change in the young person to address this issue. P1 states

" *it goes back to the relationship they have with their key workers and the trust they have with them... if the key worker says would you like to talk to*

somebody about it... they feel listened to and because of the trusting relationship, they will go, more often than not because they trust the key worker".

4.3.2 Discussion:

It is apparent from the findings under this theme that all participants value the importance of the relationship between workers and client group. Focus group participants strongly emphasised that building a relationship with clients was of utmost importance. This is in line with literature carried out by Mcneill who stresses that it is through the quality of the relationship formed between the young person and the professional , rather than any content of any intervention or programme , that "real progress can be made in the prevention of future offending"(2006, p.133). "Of even greater significance to young people is the nature of their relationship with the practitioner" (Farrow *et al*, 2007, p.117) .Trevithick denotes that establishing a relationship with a service user is central to achieving change. She states

> "There are situations where relationship building is central to the task of establishing a 'corrective relationship': a reparative experience that is created to compensate for previous unsatisfactory or painful relationships''. (Trevithick, 2005, p. 148)

In summary, it is evident from the findings that there is a considerable emphasis put on relationship building to support change, to build a working alliance that is person centred, and to have effective relationships whatever the programme of interventions.

4.3.3. Individual needs and tailored interventions

Every person has needs and if a young person's needs are not fulfilled, they will often seek out alternative channels that are easily accessible to them. This can in turn lead to the young person getting involved in anti-social behaviour or criminal behaviour to satisfy these needs.

The focus group agreed that it was important not to use a generic approach with regard to interventions used with young people. P5 states " *it's a tailored individual plan for each person, looking at their needs and it's not a case of if they don't fit into*

the plan that's their problem... we make it as individualised as possible... we are really open to most suggestions". It was acknowledged that the young people felt that they had choices and options when planning the programme. Client 1 "*Staff do everything grand down here like, if ya wanna do something else all ya gotta do is ask em like and they can arrange it then ".*

The focus group mentioned that it was not a 'one size fits all' approach with young people, which indicated that there was a lot of thought and effort put into tailoring individual programmes for clients within the agency. P6 explains "*we tailor individual programmes...so we are not trying to compartmentalise young people into certain boxes".*

Trying to accommodate and address the needs of young people is central to the work carried out within Southill Outreach. P3 denotes "*There are a variety of activities offered and if there is something else they want to do, we try to accommodate that*". The consensus's amongst the focus group was that they used active listening skills understand what the young person needed and what needs should be addressed. P4 explains *"I think what we are good at is listening to how people identify their needs...it's often quite obvious what these needs are but we listen to what they want".* Client 1 emphasises that they felt listened to by tailoring a programme specific to their needs

> " *They're good like, they know what I like... programmes were useful, definitely, just kept me outa trouble , I haven't been arrested in months, haven't had a charge in months, haven't come to the guards attention in months, its good here".*

With regard to specific needs, the focus group identified educational needs, forming positive relationships, the need to belong, to experience inclusion in society as key aspects to addressing a young person's basic needs. P5 stated "*Education would be one... a lot of the time it's just to be listened to or have a positive relationship in their lives or a role model of sorts".* In relation to feeling listened to as a need for young people Client 2 stated " *they are always there for me when I want it, ya know, around for chat and easy to talk to".*

The focus group discussed the importance of the need to 'belong' amongst young

people due to so many of them feeling excluded in various aspects within society. P1 stated " *The need to belong is a huge thing...so many experience exclusion...discrimination...the guards treat them differently because of the way the look, where they are from...it's a huge weight for them to carry*". P1 further stated that feeling excluded within society is a contributing factor leading to antisocial behaviour because within this group, this is where they develop a sense of belonging "*something that maybe isn't good for them, and a bit self destructive but nevertheless it meets that need".* Other members of the focus group concurred with this point stating

> "*we advocate on their behalf and challenge those who are excluding them in society for example school, they need to feel that sense of belonging, it's such a huge need for them".*

4.3.4 Discussion

Literature shows that individual needs need to be addressed and identified when tailoring specific programmes for young people. There is particular emphasis placed on meeting the needs of vulnerable and marginalised individuals and groups within society (National Association of Social Workers, 2011). McNeill highlights that

> "there are dangers that an over-reliance on structured programmes and prescribed interventions, which ignore issues of individuality and the impacts of social and material contexts in shaping individuals' lives, can result in practice which is ineffective in engaging young people who offend in positive change"(McNeill, 2006, p.48)

This concurs with a comment P1 made in the focus group regarding tailored interventions, she stated "*I don't think there is a generic approach to any intervention...it's a tailored individual plan for each person...which isn't prescriptive really"*. McGuire and Priestly would contend that programmes and interventions should be developed through communication that is built on empathy and trust and thus delivered "through individualised active and participatory support" (1995, p.145). The focus on intervention in social work is on the relationship between the individual and their immediate and wider social environment.

Kelly *et al* (2012) summarises how youth workers can help young people involved in the Juvenile Justice System to meet their needs by:

1. Ensure the young person understands why they are involved in the project and the benefits of being at the youth project
2. Understand and identify each young person's needs and personal situation
3. Work with the young person on how to meet those needs in a positive and pro-active way
4. Encourage and facilitate education/training achievements and help the young person visualise and aim for future events e.g. seeking employment, attending a course.

All of these points addressed by Kelly *et al* (2012) emphasise the core work carried out by youth workers in various agencies. After asking a series of open ended questions in relation to various aspects of the work carried out within Southill Outreach, findings show that all of these points were addressed when working with young people.

4.3.5 Motivational Interviewing

It was highlighted to the researcher that all staff in Southill Outreach received training in Motivational Interviewing (MI). The consensus of the group was that they would try to use it on a daily basis with the young people but that it may not always be possible to do so. P3 stated that the young people are very intuitive " *I've one client who says don't be using that physco-babble on me, she susses it as she is in services for years so she knows when it is being turned back on her...but she is open enough to it."*. The focus group all stated that they would aim to use it in each session with the young person but that you may not be afforded the opportunity to do so.

The focus group thought that effective use of MI was about timing and common sense. P4 stated " *timing and common sense is a lot of it... you try to read the situation...sometimes there is a window of opportunity to use it and other days you think, ok today is not the day to use it".* This again reaffirms that the staff are meeting where the young people are at on a daily basis and going at their pace. P1 stated that using MI *"opens up that space and brings it somewhere you wouldn't have gotten to before we were trained in MI".* P4 stated "*before [being trained in MI] we were more inclined to use the closed questions rather than making the open ended questions or summarising...*".

Participants agreed that although it is an effective way of working with young offenders it must be acknowledged that the approach should not be forced upon the young person P1"we *are all human ... we can get caught up in the lets fix it mode rather than letting them try to fix it themselves*". Findings from the group showed that they believed MI worked well as an approach used with young offenders. P3 stated "*I definitely think MI works...we may not have gone to the same depth with clients that we are now are with the use of MI".*

4.3.6 Discussion

The consensus of the focus group was that MI is an effective approach when working with young offenders. This correlates with literature already reviewed with regard to the use of MI when working with young offenders. MI promotes the view that it is crucial for the worker to provide "an atmosphere conducive rather than coercive to change" (Loughran, 2002, p. 20). Motivational experts claim that the therapeutic relationship between client and worker is a key component to its efficacy. MI honours and respects the individual's autonomy to choose. The worker's goal is to evoke the persons own intrinsic motivation to change. MI focuses on being non judgemental, non confrontational and non adversarial. The four basic principles of MI are, in fact, themselves part components of the social work code of ethics. These are expressing empathy, developing discrepancy, supporting self-efficacy and rolling with resistance.

4.3.7 Family Intervention

All participants in the focus group discussed how the family have an important role to play in changing the behaviour of young people. Findings showed from the focus group that clients attending Southill Outreach were coming from chaotic families. Participant 4 explains, "*Chaotic families, like the kids themselves are not just chaotic for a reason, the families are as well".* The participants spoke about the lack of boundaries within families highlighting that there appeared to be a breakdown in communication between parent and child. P2 adds " *there doesn't seem to be any boundaries...parents, mostly single parents...are just struggling to keep life and soul together...and once these guys get to 14 or 15 they are bigger and parents are afraid of them and then nothing has been put in place from a young age".* P5 echoes this by

stating "one *client said to me, if her parents had been stricter with her at an earlier age she wouldn't have gotten into as much trouble...she always knew she could get away with it".* In contrast to the view of lack of boundaries P4 states "I *do feel there is a want in parents to be a positive role model for their kids but you can only parent to the level you've been parented to yourself".*

It was acknowledged by the focus group that the agency worked indirectly with families. They try to include them in every part of the process alongside working with the young person. P1 stated

> " *a lot of the time they are a tool in the toolbox for us... they give us information on the kids... cause half the time the lads wouldn't tell you the full details of what's going on... so yeah it's important to stay linked in with the family and gain their trust...that's kind of our form of intervention".*

Findings from the interviews with young people showed that their families supported their engagement within the agency. As Client 1 explains

> "*Yeah, my mother like, she gave permission to come, she came up here again when I first came here, she'd a look around. She didn't encourage me to come up here cause she's a bit paranoid about been around Southill ya know, it's rough ya know, it was more my decision but she still came up".*

Client 2 also felt supported by his family stating

> " *Yeah, they said it was a good programme to to keep me outa trouble ya know, that was more their concern, keeping me outa trouble so it's better they know I'm up here and outa trouble.*

In general the views of the young people were positive regarding the support their families offered to them whilst engaging in the programme.

4.3.8 Discussion

It is evident from the findings that including the family in the process when working with young people is of great benefit and in general they are supportive of the interventions used within the agency. As previously highlighted in the literature Greenwood (2008) emphasises that successful programmes with young people are

those, which include the family in all parts of the intervention. Moreover, he further stresses that it is through providing adequate parenting skills and good supervision of young people are envisaged to be the key ingredients in the recipe of success in changing the behaviour of young people. Karnick and Steiner (2007) contend that the ultimate goal of effective family intervention is through empowering the family to continue with taught strategies that were successful at the time of intervention. However, participants of the focus group acknowledged that there was an issue with parenting skills and a lack of implementation of boundaries from a young age with the client group they worked therefore making it more challenging at times to work with the young person. Yet, it was acknowledged by participants that they tried to support the family in a variety of ways thus empowering them to be more effective when interacting with their children. Participants also stated that they often identify [to families seeking extra support] family support agencies that may be of benefit to the families should they wish to avail of them.

4.4 Concluding Discussion

Overall, the findings of this study showed various interventions and approaches that proved to be effective when working with young offenders. These included positive relationship building, motivational interviewing, family interventions and addressing the individual needs of a person through tailored interventions. The findings discovered that relationship building was a key factor to encourage young people to engage in specific programmes. Moreover, it was highlighted that the young people viewed Southill Outreach as having a very positive influence on their lives.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

The intention of this chapter is to outline the key findings that arose from this research study. A number of interesting themes and issues were raised during the course of the analysis. This chapter will discuss these themes and subsequently highlight the key recommendations generated by this study.

5.2 Brief Outline of Findings

Relevant themes emerged from the finds include; Relationship Building, Individual Needs and Tailored Interventions, Motivational Interviewing and Family Intervention.

5.2.1 Relationship Building

Participants concurred that building a relationship was the foundation for effective interventions that followed. It was acknowledged that the most effective ways of building a relationship with a young person was by spending time with them, making them feel valued, going for food, which in turn opened up that space for discussion with the young person regarding their issues. Interestingly, focus group participants highlighted the need to build a more in depth relationship with female offenders as opposed to males due females lacking interest in some of the activities offered by the agency and requiring a more therapeutic relationship. When addressing specific issues such as substance misuse it was recognised that it was through the initial formation of the relationship between the young person and the key worker that more formal interventions of addressing this issue could be worked upon such as referring them to a drugs counsellor.

5.2.2 Individual Needs and Tailored Interventions

The group recognised the need for establishing programmes of intervention specific to the individual needs of young people. Identifying such specific needs centre on the importance of relationships and individualised interventions. Participants highlighted that there was no generic approach with interventions used. The young people also highlighted that staff were open to suggestions regarding the tailored programmes and that they were able to accommodate most of their requests for specific activities. Lastly, it was acknowledged that the specific needs of the young people were

identified on an individual basis such as educational needs, the need to belong and the need to experience inclusion within society all of which are considered when working with the young person in Southill Outreach.

5.2.3 Motivational Interviewing

Interestingly, as already stated by staff in Southill Outreach, all are trained in MI. The focus group highlighted that MI opened up the space for greater discussion regarding the issues affecting the young people they worked with. This was done by using open-ended questions and summarising what the young person said, all of which are key skills associated with the successful use of MI. The consensus amongst the group was that it was an effective approach to working with young people however, it was emphasised that the approach should not be forced upon young people.

5.2.4 Family Intervention

Many participants discussed the importance of family intervention with regard to the duration of programmes offered. A lack of parental boundaries appeared to be a reoccurring theme throughout this discussion however, it was acknowledged that a significant number of families had experienced huge trauma in their lives such as murder and overdoses thus having a negative impact on the behaviour of children because of these circumstances. It was acknowledged that the majority of families have good intentions to act as positive role models in their children's lives however it was identified that parents were seen to be only able to parent to the level they were parented themselves. The group recognised that by building a good relationship with family members staff obtained additional knowledge with regards the issues encountered by the young person. Therefore this allowed for greater insight into the individual needs to be worked upon with the young person. Overall the focus group viewed family interaction as a positive influence on the young person's successful engagement within programmes offered by the service.

5.3 Conclusion

Overall, findings from the research acknowledged that there were many and varied interventions that were effective when working with young offenders. The mission statement of Southill Outreach states:

> "Southill Outreach believes in the inherent value and dignity of every

individual. We believe that trusting relationships have the potential to bring about positive change. Our aim is to invest time and resources to involve selected young people at street level in planned activities in a spirit of inclusiveness in order to help them grow into responsible adults'', (Southill Outreach Handbook).

In answering the research questions, the perceptions of staff and Board of Management have been clearly depicted in this study regarding the interventions and approaches used with young offenders. It must also be accepted that the young people acknowledged that the agency had an overall positive influence on their lives.

5.4 Recommendations

The recommendations made by the researcher are based on the views of the participants in the focus group. These include:

- Participants highlighted that effectively measuring outcomes was a challenge for the agency. Over the past few years, there has been an increased emphasis on having effective assessment, monitoring and outcome measurement systems in place for organisations in receipt of state funding (Probation Service, 2011). On carrying out further research in the area of measuring outcomes the researcher reviewed a system currently in operation in Wexford which may be of benefit to Southill Outreach when measuring outcomes. This system is called the COAIM system (Change, Outcome, and Indicator Mapping). This system comprises of a set of tools for assessment, monitoring and outcome measurement incorporating theory of change and logic model methodologies with motivational interviewing and the stages of change model to provide a user with a friendly and reliable system (Delaney and Weir, 2011). Through the use of MI strategies, the COAIM system facilitates and enhances the development of positive change with clients. The system helps a programme to be specific about the clients' targets, the changes it expects to see, and the strategies it employs hence, to be more effective in the results it achieves (ibid). The COAIM system can extract and compile data on an individual client or whole programme and can also be used to indicate trends and highlight emerging issues for agencies (ibid). In essence, the COAIM system maps clients progress from assessment, through engagement, to

conclusion on the programme and measures change and outcomes.

- Participants highlighted the importance of the need for better self care strategies. If we as professionals are not careful in our own self-care, it can cause burn out- basically giving too much attention to our service users and too little attention to ourselves. The effectiveness of helpers depends on our own health and well-being. Knott & Scragg (2007) emphasise that in caring for the emotional self we need to develop self-compassion. They contest that self compassion is

  ‘’being kind and understanding toward oneself in instances of pain or failure rather than being harshly self critical...the practice of self compassion promotes the ability to forgive oneself and understand that imperfection is a part of the human experience’’ (Knott and Scragg, 2007, p. 96)

Attending a course on self-care strategies may be beneficial for the staff in Southill Outreach in order for them to gain more skills in effective strategies of self care.

- It was acknowledged by participants the importance of receiving good supervision in the working environment. The purpose of supervision is “to facilitate the professional development of practitioners to ensure that our work is effective, efficient, accountable and undertaken in ways that sensitively address the needs of service users” (Trevithick, 2005, p. 252). It is important for professionals working within Southill Outreach to continue to use supervision in the most effective way possible. As P1 in the focus group stated “*use it as a way of formally putting self-care into our work*” (P1).
- The researcher has identified the need for further research to be conducted in the area with the community as a whole. This study was a small-scale study and the researcher suggests that a further larger scale study be carried out in the future with regard to intervention strategies and approaches used with young offenders. The larger study could include interventions used in a variety of agencies within Limerick City working with young offenders and findings could then be compared and contrasted thus identifying intervention strategies capable of working more effectively with young offenders.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the conclusions and recommendations made by the researcher in light of the findings of the research project. In conclusion, the researcher has achieved research aims, objectives and answered the research questions. Lastly, the researcher makes specific recommendations to the CSO.

5.6 Reflective Research

Having completed the research and writing of this dissertation, I feel I can now look back on my journey for the first time. This research project proved to be both a challenging and immensely enjoyable experience. Carrying out primary research helped make my work more meaningful and dynamic. I feel that after carrying out research with a focus group and interviews with young people it allowed me to have a better understanding of the key features and themes that emerged throughout the analysis of the data. I also learned how important it is to discuss ideas with others who are knowledgeable in the field and creating discussion with experts compliment reading works published by other authors.

I have personally gained a lot by being involved in the research. I learned that keeping a journal helped me to reflect better and I have learned the value of honouring these insights by recording them. A huge learning curve for me was that success is not so much in the outcomes as in the process. By this, I mean a process that involves, respects, challenges and supports others is what is important. Personally, when gathering the data I had thought about a few outcomes that I was hoping would materialise from the focus group and interviews but when I carried out the process and analysed the data I realised that I needed to take a step back and listen to the views expressed by experts; in the field of working with young offenders regarding effective interventions. I realised that although I had carried out an extensive research literature on intervention strategies and approaches used with young offenders, I needed to really listen to what the staff who worked so closely with these young people identified as effective ways of working with young offenders.

As a researcher, I acknowledged the difficulties I encountered when interviewing young people. I found that they appeared a bit reluctant and nervous to speak to me

about their involvement in the agency, for fear that any negative opinions would be documented. It had been highlighted to them that everything they said would be confidential and anonymous yet given that most of the young people were a vulnerable group I felt this impacted on the information I gathered from them. It must be acknowledged that each of the young people interviewed were polite and respectful towards me. Overall, I feel very proud of this research. I believe it answers the questions it set out to do and I hope that it is of benefit to Southill Outreach.

Appendix A

Consent Form to participate in a research study for Focus Group and Interviews

Title of project: A review of the intervention strategies used with young offenders: Southill Outreach a case study

• I……agree to participate in Maeve Tuohy's

research study.

• The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me, and a copy given to me

in writing.

• I am participating voluntarily.

• I give permission for my interview with Maeve Tuohy to be tape-recorded. This will be transcribed and will be kept for a period of six months after the interview takes place, at which time the data will be deleted.

• I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without repercussions, at any time,

whether before it starts or while I am participating.

• I understand that I can withdraw permission to use the data within two weeks of the

interview, in which case the material will be deleted.

• I understand that anonymity will be ensured in the write-up by disguising my identity. No staff member or client will have access to have of the information provided.

• I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the thesis

and any subsequent publications if I give permission below

• I understand that this is a Science Shop study and this study will be available on the

internet.

(Please tick one box:)

I agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview

I do not agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview

Signed……. Date……

Appendix B

Information Sheet for Master of Social Work Research for young people of Southill Outreach

Purpose of Study: A review of the intervention strategies used with young offenders: Southill Outreach a case study

• As part of the requirements for the Master of Social Work course at UCC, I have to carry out a research study. The study is concerned with looking at the various interventions used by Southill Outreach with young people.

• The study will involve interviewing three clients of Southill Outreach and carrying out a focus group with staff members and the Board of Management of Southill Outreach. The interview should last no more than twenty minutes with each person.

• You have been asked to take part in this research because you were a client of Southill Outreach and you are over eighteen. You will also have experience of engaging with intervention used by members of staff in Southill Outreach and have also previously/currently an involvement with the Probation Service. This research aims to get your opinion on the intervention programmes used within the agency.

• You do not have to take part in this study but if you do, you will be required to sign a consent form. You will be given a copy of the consent form and this sheet for your information. If at any stage you want to withdraw consent, before the interview or after the interview has taken place, this will not be a problem. It will not affect how Southill Outreach works with you in the future. Any information that you provide in the interview will not be identifiable in the research. If you change your mind and withdraw consent during the interview, the information received will be destroyed.

• Your participation in this study will be kept anonymous, therefore if there is something written in the study that you have stated, this will be disguised. Also, while the interview will be confidential, any information which indicates that another person may be injured or harmed in any way will need to be passed on to the Manager of Southill Outreach and thereafter the Gardai.

• The information that you give during the interview will be recorded on a Dictaphone. This is to ensure that I have accurate information. Once this research is handed in to the college, the

information that you give through the interview will be destroyed within six months. At any stage during this research UCC could request the interview recording and the transcript for external examination.

• No other client of Southill Outreach or staff member will have access to what you have said in the interview.

• When all the information is gathered the results will be presented in my thesis. This will be seen by my supervisor, a second marker and the external examiner. The thesis may also be read by future students on the course. The study may be published in an academic journal and on the UCC Science Shop Website. As stated previously, all information will be anonymous.

• There should not be any negative consequences for you in taking part in this study. Should you feel upset at any time during the interview I can cease at any stage.

• At the end of the interview, I will discuss with you how you found the experience and how you are feeling. If you subsequently feel distressed, a staff member from Southill Outreach will be there to provide extra support for you.

• Southill Outreach Board of Management and the UCC Ethics Committee have reviewed this piece of research and have given permission for the study to take place.

If you need any further information, you can contact: Maeve Tuohy at Mauvistuohy@gmail.com. If you agree to take part in the study, please sign the consent form.

Appendix C

Information Sheet for Staff and Board of Management- Focus Group

Purpose of Study: A review of the intervention strategies and approaches used with young offenders: Southill Outreach a case study

• As part of the requirements for the Master of Social Work at UCC, I am required to carry out a research study. The study is concerned with looking at the intervention strategies used with young offenders in Southill Outreach. This will be carried out through gaining the perspectives of clients, staff members and the Board of Management.

• The study will involve interviewing three clients of Southill Outreach and carrying out a focus group with staff members and the Board of Management of Southill Outreach. The focus group should take approximately 1.5 – 2 hours.

• You have been asked to take part in this focus group because you are either a staff member of Southill Outreach and engage in the interventions used with young offenders or are a member of the Board of Management. I feel that rich data could therefore be gained for this study with your knowledge.

• You do not have to take part in this study but if you do, you will be required to sign a consent form. You will be given a copy of the consent form and this sheet for your information. If at any stage you want to withdraw consent, before the focus group commences or after it has taken place, this will not be a problem. Any information that you provide in the interview will not be identifiable in the research. If you change your mind and withdraw consent, during the focus group, the information received will be destroyed.

• Your participation in this study will be kept anonymous, therefore if there is an abstract from something written in the study, that you have stated, it will be disguised.

• The information that you give during the focus group will be recorded on a dictaphone. This is to ensure that I have accurate information. It will then be transcribed and stored confidentially on Google docs. Once this research is handed in to the college, the information that you give through the focus group will be destroyed within six months. At any stage throughout this research, UCC can seek the recordings and transcripts for external examination.

• Any staff member or Board of Management members who choose not to take part in this research will not have access to the data collected within the focus group for the purpose of confidentiality.

• When all the data is gathered the results will be analysed and presented in my thesis. This will be seen by my supervisor, a second marker and the external examiner. The thesis may also be read by future students on the course. The study may be published in an academic journal and on the UCC Science Shop Website. As stated previously, all information will be anonymous. No staff member of Southill Outreach will have access to this information

• I do not envisage any negative consequences for you in taking part in this study. If you find any part the focus group distressing you may leave focus group if you wish to do so.

• At the end of the focus group, I will discuss with you how you found the experience and how you are feeling. If you subsequently feel distressed, I will be available to discuss this with you.

• Southill Outreach Board of Management and the UCC Ethics Committee have reviewed this piece of research and have given permission for the study to take place.

• If you need any further information, you can contact: Maeve Tuohy @ Mauvistuohy@Gmail.com

If you agree to take part in the study, please sign the consent form overleaf.

Appendix D

Interview Questions with young people in Southill Outreach:

1. What brought you to the attention of Southill Outreach?
2. Can you tell me what you were doing at the time? Prompt: Employed? In School?
3. What programmes were you involved in? Prompt: Did you find them useful? How often did you attend?
4. Can you describe your relationship with the staff in Southill Outreach ? Prompt: positives? Difficulties encountered?
5. Did your family support your involvement in Southill Outreach? In what way? Prompt: Practical ways...
6. In what way did your involvement in the agency help you?
7. What did you learn about yourself during having participated in the programme?
8. Is there anything Southill Outreach could do differently to help young people and to improve their service? Prompt: Any other interventions?

Appendix E

Questions for Focus Group:

1. How long have each of you worked in the agency and what experience/qualifications are required to work in the agency?
2. What are the main social issues/problems prevalent in the community?
3. What interventions are used within the agency when working with young offenders?
4. How do you measure the effectiveness of the interventions used?
5. Are there some interventions are better suited for boys/girls and are some interventions more effective when used with specific age ranges?
6. Do you feel that family have an important role to play in changing the behaviour of young people? How?
7. Do you think there is a connection between youth offending and lack of educational attainment?
8. What are the needs of the young people you work with?
9. At a socio-economic what would you consider are the risk factor with youth offending?
10. What aspect of your work do you feel addresses these risk factors?
11. What recommendations would you make to effectively tackling the main risk factors in young people's lives?
12. What recommendations can you make as a focus group in relation to the effectiveness of your work and how can this be developed?
13. What do you know about motivational interviewing and is it an approach used within the agency?
14. What are the strengths and challenges that professionals encounter when using intervention strategies with young people?
15. Is there any other training that may be beneficial to you when working with young offenders?

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