



An Australian Government Initiative



NATIONAL COMMUNITY CRIME PREVENTION PROGRAMME

Designing and implementing a targeted youth crime prevention project

This Tip Sheet is focussed on issues that arise in the planning, design and implementation of youth-specific crime prevention projects.

The term 'young people' in the Australian context applies to a broad group aged of 12–25. What may be appropriate for young people aged 18 to 25 years is very different from effective approaches with very young adolescents. Family context and permission should be taken into account when working with adolescents and family input should be sought when appropriate. Information in this Tip Sheet is a guide only. It is recommended that in planning youth crime prevention projects, organisations enlist the assistance of a broad range of community advisors who are familiar with conducting services and projects for young people similar to the intended target group.

For general planning for crime prevention projects see Tip Sheets 1–4 on crime prevention project planning and evaluation.

Why undertake a youth crime prevention project?

A crime prevention project aimed at young people can change behaviour, attitudes and ultimately the path of the young person.

Youth crime prevention projects can have a prevention focus. They can also be targeted at young people within known risk groups or target people who have a recognised need for an intervention (an 'indicated intervention').

Types of interventions

- Crime prevention projects aim to reduce risk factors in the whole community that have been associated with youth crime. An example of such a project would be a campaign to encourage parents to better supervise their children in the school holidays.
- Targeted crime prevention projects select a group within the community that is perceived to be at higher risk and provide services or interventions aimed at this group. This may include providing free additional supervised and structured activities for adolescents in school holidays or on weekends in disadvantaged areas where families may not be able to afford such opportunities for their children.
- Indicated crime prevention projects may target young people already offending in their communities. An example of such a project may seek to provide these young people with skills that may reduce their offending behaviour such as more appropriate conflict management skills or more opportunities to receive extra support to stay at or return to school.

The design phase

To plan a youth project as a crime prevention strategy, the following steps are recommended:

- **Conduct a local needs assessment** based on qualitative and quantitative data. This should include:
 - Facts and statistics about the volume, impact, extent and location of youth crime and delinquency in the local community.
 - Community consultation concerning gaps that exist and/or problems that could be addressed by a specific project.
 - If the project will be working with Indigenous young people, obtain explicit agreement from the relevant Indigenous community.
 - More tips are available in Tip Sheets 1 and 2.
- **Establish clear:**
 - **crime prevention aims and objectives**—these should be related to identified needs.
 - **need**—number of offences committed, or the number of young people with identified risk factors related to offending such as poor school attendance, unemployment and substance abuse (National Crime Prevention 2003).
 - **project activities**—these should address identified need. For example activities that address behaviours that may lead to offending, activities may be based around skills development. Project plans should make clear what it is that the planned activities will achieve.
 - **performance and outcome measures** that will be used to determine the success of the project (see Evaluation Tip Sheets no. 3 and 4 for more information).
- **Identify the specific target group** and selection criteria. If a project aims to reduce youth crime it may target young people who are already in contact with the criminal justice system or who have numerous risk factors within their lives that place them at risk of criminal activity. Care should be taken that when bringing young people together in a group that this does not function to normalise or perpetuate inappropriate behaviour.
- **Make sure the project is appropriate for the age group targeted:** because of age related developmental differences amongst young people your project needs to select which age group it is targeting. Narrow age group definitions are the most appropriate.

- **For some age groups and issues you may need to target either boys or girls.**
- The **literacy** level of the target group will also create limitations on what activities you plan.
- **Cultural background** of young people also needs to be taken into account.
- **Build in flexibility** in the structure and content of the project to accommodate diversity amongst the participants in regards to their needs eg, cultural background, age, literacy level, and gender.

If you have an idea for a crime prevention project that you want to implement and you are not based in an incorporated organisation or a local council (a requirement for NCCPP funding) you could approach an incorporated community-based organisation to auspice the project.

Staff selection

Check what mechanisms are in place in your state or territory for conducting police checks for staff to run the programme.

Expert staff will be needed if your project is targeting young people with serious substance abuse problems, severe mental health problems and/or have a history of violent behaviour. If your target group requires experienced staff you will need to make sure the salary you are offering is competitive.

Networking with other agencies and stakeholders

Establish relationships with a range of youth agencies and stakeholders. It is important to know what services there are in your region and make sure that what you are proposing does not duplicate existing services. Communicate with others about your project to raise their awareness and to seek their support and co-operation. This may be achieved through the use of a local advisory committee and/or employing an experienced co-ordinator with wide community networks.

It is useful to know what other youth services are available in your area. Youth projects that work with disadvantaged youth or youth with a history of offending behaviour may have other related issues for example drug or alcohol problems or mental health problems. If you have established connections with other service providers it will assist you to appropriately refer young people to other services if necessary.

Key implementation issues

While you may just be at the planning stages the following issues are important to consider.

Developing a project plan

- The development of a youth project plan should include:
 - Defining the mission statement, aims and objectives of the project.
 - Ensuring commitment from local stakeholders, for example, the police, youth justice agencies, schools and the wider community.
 - A detailed timeline that includes milestones and outcomes.
 - Contingency plans for unexpected occurrences throughout the project.

Policies and procedures

- The lead agency should have documented policies and procedures. This may include but is not limited to: mandatory reporting, rights and responsibilities, confidentiality and privacy, legal issues, insurance, duty of care, occupational health and safety, protection against harassment and grievances.

Budget/costing

- An outline of the proposed budget outlining all sources of revenue and budgeted expenses should be prepared prior to the establishment of a youth project. This should include costs such as salaries, financial audit costs, evaluation costs, and insurance. It should also detail other sources of funding other than primary grant funding. Budgets should also anticipate rises in salary and other potential costs.

Legislation/insurance

- The project should ensure it adheres to relevant legislation, for example, equal employment opportunity legislation, mandatory reporting, privacy and confidentiality legislation, and occupational health and safety legislation
- The project should ensure it is covered by necessary insurance requirements. This may include but is not limited to public liability insurance, workers compensation insurance and professional indemnity insurance.

Recruitment, training, retention and ongoing support of staff

- A recruitment strategy should be developed. The use of a steering committee with community representatives may assist in ensuring the selection of appropriate staff.
- Staff should have training/professional development opportunities.
- Supervision and support of staff needs to be formally organised and costed in the budget.
- As the project will be working with children or young people managers need to be aware of the requirement for police checks on staff

Project evaluation and measurement

- Evaluation and measurement is a vital part of ensuring that a project is accountable and assessing whether it has achieved its aims and objectives. Tip Sheets 1 and 2 in this series are available on evaluation and cover this topic in more detail.
- Evaluation of a project may be either external or internal. This is covered in Tip Sheet 3. It is generally preferable that evaluations are conducted by individual/s external to the project. However, where funding does not provide for this an internal evaluation will suffice.

Other relevant information is provided by the Australian Government's Crime Prevention website

<http://www.crimeprevention.gov.au>

References and further reading

Australian Institute of Criminology 2005. *Measuring the performance of crime prevention programs*. AICrime reduction matters no.38. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology

<http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/crm/crm038.html>

Australian Institute of Criminology 2006. *Measuring crime prevention outcomes*. AICrime reduction matters no. 41. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology

<http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/crm/crm041.html>

National Crime Prevention 2003. *Early intervention: youth mentoring programs*. Canberra: Australian Government Attorney-General's Department

<http://www.crimeprevention.gov.au/agd/www/Ncphome.nsf/Page/AB5020EC5414D137CA256DC100037FC2?OpenDocument>

Tarling R, Davison T & Clarke A 2004. *Mentoring projects: the national evaluation of the youth justice board's mentoring projects*. Institute for Social Research, University of Surrey

<http://www.youth-justice-board.gov.uk/Publications/Scripts/prodView.asp?idproduct=165&eP=YJB>