

NACRO

The Hammersmith Teenage Project



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The Hammersmith Teenage Project

An experiment in the community care of young offenders

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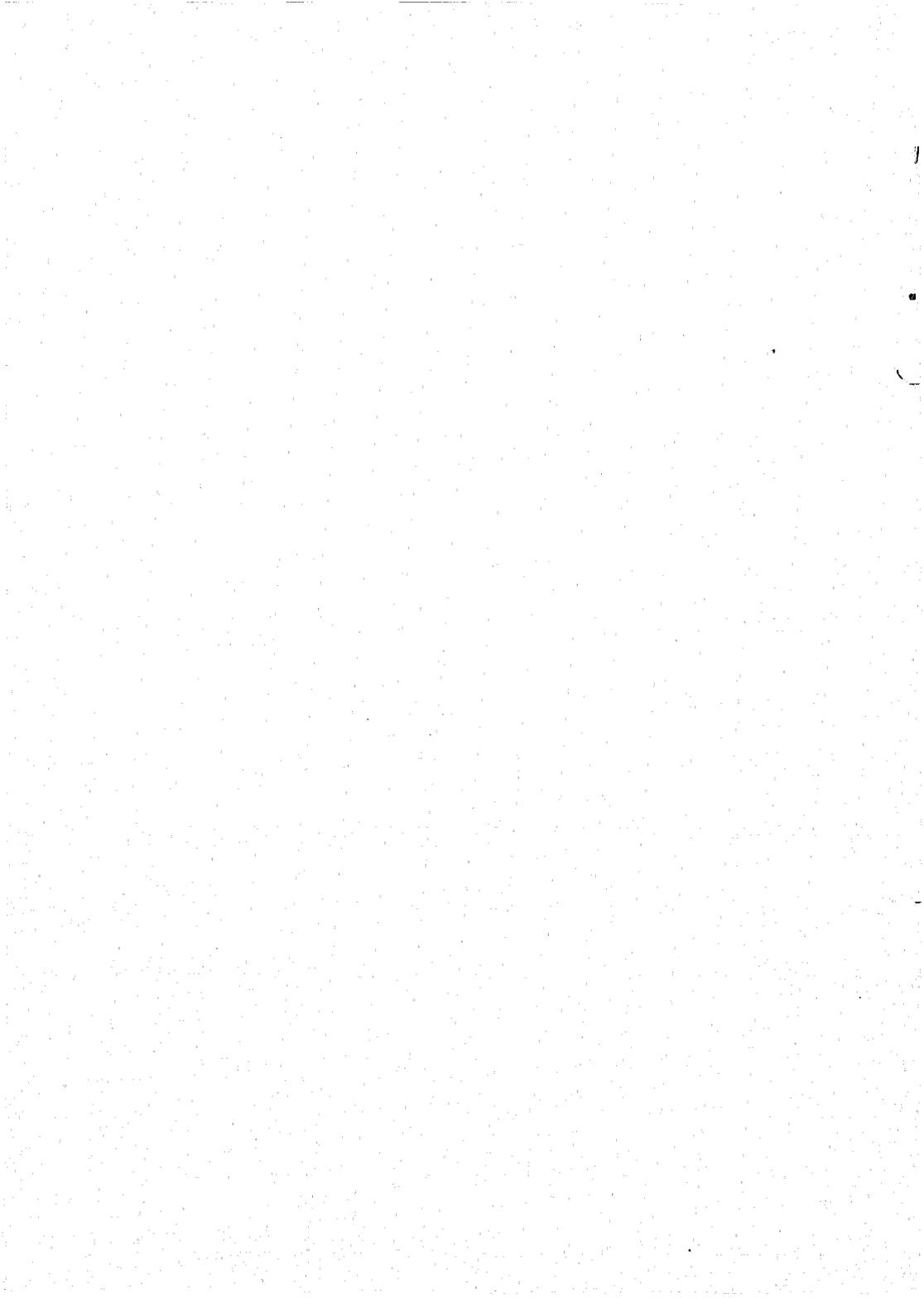
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Two of the photographs on the front cover
were taken by Karen,
a teenager with the project.

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Introduction

by Lady Plowden

Juvenile delinquency is nothing new. However, crime figures for recent years suggest that more crimes are being committed by young people under 17. This is bound to cause concern, as juvenile delinquency always has done, but in searching for solutions we have to be careful. Commonsense tells us that young people get on the wrong side of the law for many reasons and no one blanket solution - lock them all up, give them all family therapy, short residential courses or the opportunity to build canoes - is likely to be the final answer. We need a wide variety of provisions; we need better techniques of diagnosing the causes of a young person's anti-social behaviour; we need much more experimentation.

The Hammersmith Teenage Project is one small experiment in one London borough. It is a project which was set up in 1974 by NACRO in conjunction with the Hammersmith Social Services Department. It has tried to provide an alternative for young people in trouble whom the courts consider should be sent away to a community home school, detention centre or borstal, and for those at risk of going in the same direction. After three years of being run by NACRO with funds from private and public sources, the project is being taken over by the London Borough of Hammersmith as part of its regular social services provision from April 1978. This booklet chronicles the progress of the project, its successes and failures, so that others can learn from its mistakes and build on its successes. I hope it will be useful to those wanting to set up similar schemes, whether in social services department or voluntary organisation, to juvenile magistrates, to teachers, in fact to all concerned with young people in trouble.

In 1975 the project set up a Committee under my Chairmanship to give advice on how the lessons of the project might be disseminated and such work extended into other areas. This booklet is one of the outcomes of the Advisory Committee's work and I am grateful to all my colleagues for all the time and effort they have put into this venture.

March 1978

Two Hammersmith Teenagers

"I live in the White City Estate. What I think of it is not too bad because there is lots of things you could do such as go to the adventure playground. There is most things you could do such as play on the slide or run up and down the beam or play on the Tarzan swing and other better sports. On Friday you could go to Fulham Town Hall to listen to sounds. Sounds is just the same as discos. So you could go and enjoy yourself and besides Fulham Town Hall you could go to another club it's called Blythe Hall that is not so bad. Anyway there are a lot of clubs going on all week so you could go and find out what it is like."

* * * * *

"I have been living in Fulham for five years. The area is quite good, very lively. There are a few clubs around for instance like the Brunswick Boys Club. This is a good club. You can do anything you please. They have a colour T.V. in the lounge where seniors can sit down and watch telly away from the juniors in peace. They do a lot of boxing down there and do a lot of football and have a very lucky football side. Outside there is a five-a-side football pitch. Every summer football competitions start there ! five-a-side.

As well as doing that they do a lot of plays. So far they have done 'Oliver' and 'Bye Bye Birdie' and 'Kick off at Three' and 'Sweeney Todd the Barber' and 'Dracula'. Fulham is a good area to live in because we have three football grounds next to us, so we can have a choice. They are mainly Chelsea and Fulham supporters.

There are a few parks. The best one is Bishops Park because the grass is looked after, so are the football pitches.

We go to the pubs for entertainment. They are really good, the blokes who own them. I go in one special one every afternoon and every evening after ice-skating. I only go in there for one thing and that's to play pool. Last night the man who owns the pub let us stay in there until half past eleven to watch football. We always offer to buy him a drink. If he refuses we put 'Up Town Top Ranking' on. That record drives him mad.

They have lots of discos around. It's a very friendly area. I hardly stay in the area of Fulham. I go to ice-skating at Queensway.

I have been at the Teenage Project for about four months now. It is very good because it's disciplined. We learn a lot of things. The staff are fair. We do a lot of activities, like horse-riding and ice-skating.

We have to be in by ten o'clock and do two hours of work and then we play games for half an hour and then go for dinner.

The aim of the Teenage Project is to help people like myself to get back into work what we've missed either playing truant or making trouble in school. I regret the trouble I've made. I wish I was in a normal school. My reading and writing is not good enough, as yet, but hopefully soon I'll be good at work.

I think that most of the kids on the Project enjoy themselves. I do''.

Early Days

The London Borough of Hammersmith, an amalgamation of the former Metropolitan Boroughs of Fulham and Hammersmith, has a population of just under 200,000. It is an area of Inner London with a typical mixture of residential, industrial and commercial life. Although it contains most of the inner city problems of poor housing, overcrowding, a concentration of families with difficulties on certain local authority housing estates and diminishing employment opportunities especially for unskilled school leavers, it also has pockets of exclusive private housing and some neighbourhoods which are considered fashionable. The population contains a range of different ethnic groups. Traditionally an area of Irish settlement, there is now a substantial West Indian community as well as smaller groupings of Indians and Africans, and in 1975 48% of the total live births were to mothers born outside the U.K. (1), so the child population is very mixed. The Borough is within the area of the Inner London Education Authority (I.L.E.A.) and contains 14 secondary schools, 46 primary schools and four nursery schools. It also has the famous Hammersmith Palais and three well-known football league teams - Chelsea, Queen's Park Rangers and Fulham.

Compared with other Metropolitan Boroughs, Hammersmith has a low incidence of juvenile crime (perhaps surprisingly in view of some of the

(1) OPCS Monitor FMI 77/1, 25th January 1977.

problems that there are in the Hammersmith area). The major crimes of young people are thefts and burglary. The figure for the number of juvenile offenders for 1976 in the Metropolitan Police's F Division, which covers the Hammersmith area, was 1,032, compared with the highest figure for any division in the Metropolitan Police's district for the same period of 3,462 (2).

The idea of introducing into Hammersmith a resource such as the Hammersmith Teenage Project (HTP) was conceived during a meeting in a pub between Peter Westland, Hammersmith's Director of Social Services, and Nicholas Hinton, then Director of NACRO. Peter Westland expressed his acute concern about the lack of provision for black teenagers in the Borough who were likely to be unemployed and actively or potentially delinquent. This concern about young black people coincided with NACRO's interest in testing out two experimental ideas, hitherto much more familiar in the U.S.A. than here - "diversion" from the criminal justice system, and New Careers.

"Diversion" means halting or suspending criminal proceedings against an offender in favour of processing him through a non-criminal disposition, usually one which provides him with short term intensive assistance. A seminal diversion scheme, from which NACRO had learnt a great deal, is New York's Manhattan Court Employment Project. This diversion scheme for adult offenders employs non-professional (mainly ex-offender) workers or "reps", who over a period of three months try to sort out selected defendants' immediate problems, help them to get a job, and if necessary involve them with a person or agency who can give them appropriate long term support. If the defendant co-operates with the project the charges against him are dropped at the end of the three month period. The defendants selected for the project are those in whose case it is considered that such short term intensive help may suffice to set them back on their feet and reduce the chance of their committing further crimes (3).

The ex-offender "reps" provide a good example of "New Careers", an idea which also comes from America. The New Careers idea is that people who have similar backgrounds and have gone through similar experiences to the clients of social welfare agencies have experience and

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- (2) Information supplied by A7(2) Branch, New Scotland Yard.
 - (3) More information on diversion programmes in the U.S.A. is contained in "Diversion from Criminal Justice in an English Context", Report of a NACRO Working Party, available price £1.00 from Barry Rose (Publishers) Ltd., Little London, Chichester, Sussex, PO19 1PG.

instinctive skills which can make them valuable employees of those agencies. There are now more than a quarter of a million New Careerists in America, and it is maintained that some of the most effective are those who were themselves once in trouble with the law and have now taken up a new career helping teenagers to keep out of similar trouble (4).

These ideas seemed to Peter Westland to be worth trying out and it was agreed in the summer of 1973 that the idea of an experimental project run by NACRO in Hammersmith should be pursued. The intention that the project should cater specifically for black teenagers was dropped following consultations with the police, whose records indicated that proportionately fewer black youngsters than whites were involved in criminal activity in Hammersmith (5). The proposal was therefore re-defined and the aim became to establish a programme for young offenders and teenagers at risk generally. Looking forward, it is interesting to note that of the 98 teenagers who had been accepted on to the project by the end of 1976, 74 were white and 24 were black (mainly of Caribbean origin). The figures for the 1977 intake show that 19 out of 65 were black.

An early assumption behind the project was that work with teenagers in trouble was often unsatisfactory because of lack of co-ordination of all the agencies who become involved. It was felt that the service would be improved if all the relevant statutory agencies could co-ordinate their work, rather than operate in isolation. By drawing its referrals from different statutory agencies and by involving all the agencies closely in the work of the project it was hoped that it could facilitate co-operation between agencies.

In any case, since the project was aiming to divert teenagers from the criminal justice system, it would not have been able to operate on its own but needed the agreement and close co-operation of all the relevant statutory agencies. A first step was therefore to ensure that each agency would work with the project. Key representatives of each

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- (4) More information of the New Careers movement in America can be found in "New Careers for the Disadvantaged" by Nancy Hodgkin, available price 65p from Barry Rose (Publishers) Ltd.
 - (5) This is interesting and encouraging in view of Metropolitan Police evidence to the House of Commons Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration in 1976 where it was claimed that in the Metropolitan area the number of black people arrested for indictable crime was disproportionately high in relation to the size of the black population.

agency were approached with the outline of the idea and it was developed with them. This ensured that the details of the project were understood and accepted by all the agencies concerned from the beginning.

Out of these consultations came the final community-based proposal. It was to be a community-based project aiming to prevent teenagers from committing offences by working closely with them in liaison with their families and schools. The project would cater for boys and girls aged 12 to 16 living in the London Borough of Hammersmith, who appeared before the Juvenile Court or came to the notice of the police, or who were considered to be at risk of getting into trouble with the law. Each teenager would spend a minimum of three months with the project, during which time one of the project's aims would be to involve the teenager with a person or group of people locally who could offer more permanent support. However, if at the end of the three months the teenager wanted to continue with the project he would be able to do so. A New Careers element would be incorporated into the project by employing six staff members in their early twenties who might themselves have committed offences in the past and who came from a similar background to most of the teenagers.

The discussions with all the agencies in the Borough dealing with young people had been fruitful. It had been agreed that referrals would come from any agency which dealt with young offenders. Following further discussions with the Director of Social Services, it was proposed that the **Social Services Department** should recommend to the project teenagers whom it judged to be either seriously at risk of getting into trouble with the law, or of being in need of care and control, and for whom it was felt the project might offer suitable support.

The **Police** did not see the project as an alternative to sending youngsters to court but the Divisional Commander and Community Liaison Officer agreed that, when cautioning a juvenile, they would consider strongly recommending to him and his parents that he should participate in the project as a way of helping him to keep out of further trouble.

The **Chief Clerk of the Juvenile Court** suggested that in suitable cases the court should be asked to defer sentence for three months on the understanding that the project would work with the juvenile during that time. On his return to the court, if the project's report indicated that the teenager showed promise of permanent change, the court would consider imposing an absolute or conditional discharge.

It was expected that the majority of Education Authority referrals to the project would come through the Educational Welfare Service. Following discussions with the Divisional Education Officer and the Divisional Education Welfare Officer, it was proposed that they should refer to the project children who might benefit from the attention and support such a programme would be able to give them. Although most teenagers referred by the Education Authority would probably be having difficulties at school, or not attending at all, this could not be the only reason for referral - they also had to be in trouble with the law, or seriously at risk of committing crime. It was accepted that the project was not designed to deal with truancy per se.

However, there was a general acceptance that many of the teenagers referred to the project would not be attending school regularly. It was therefore agreed with the I.L.E.A. that the project would incorporate a temporary education programme for those who would not or could not go to school. This would be run by a teacher who would be part of the project, but whose teaching programme would be under the oversight of the Divisional Inspector. The aim of the programme would be to get each teenager back to school as soon as possible and it was recognised that this was dependent upon the project making links with local schools.

The funding for the project came from a wide variety of sources. The Home Office Voluntary Services Unit, the Hammersmith Social Services Department, the I.L.E.A., the City Parochial Foundation, the Goldsmiths' Company and an anonymous donor all contributed to the running costs of the project for a three year experimental period. It was envisaged that at the end of the three year period the project would be taken over by the local authority if it had proved successful.

A Steering Committee was set up to help with the detailed planning of the project which involved representatives from all the agencies concerned. These were the Director of Social Services in Hammersmith, the Hammersmith Police (represented by the Divisional Commander and the Community Liaison Officer), the Chief Clerk of Hammersmith Juvenile Court, the Divisional Officer from the Inner London Education Authority, the Community Relations Officer for Hammersmith, a representative from the Inner London Probation and After-Care Service, and representatives of NACRO.

Premises were then sought. In November 1973 the Local Authority's Management and Policy Committee authorised the estates valuer to begin negotiations for the acquisition of a former Territorial Army drill

hall at 58 Bulwer Street, Shepherds Bush, which was to be used partly as a community hall as well as by the Hammersmith Teenage Project. At the same time NACRO submitted to the local authority estimates for a contribution to the running costs of the project over a three year period, which involved asking the Council for approximately £16,050 for the first year. These proposals were approved by the Council in August 1974 and the way was clear for the project to start. A Director for the project was appointed in December - Michael Whitlam, who had previously been an Assistant Governor in the prison service, working both at Hollesley Bay Borstal and at Brixton Prison, and before that had taught in a secondary school. His staff was to consist of three counsellors (one a teacher, one a social worker and one a youth worker), six New Careerists, a secretary and a researcher.

"At the time of my appointment I had decided that custody was inappropriate for the vast majority of offenders that I had met", says Michael Whitlam. "The opportunity to set up and run an alternative project was very exciting for me, as I was given the challenge of moving into a new area." Following his appointment he spent some time in the United States looking at two diversion projects, the Argos Community and the Neighbourhood Youth Diversion Programme, both in New York.

Before the project began operating, a great deal of intensive work had to be done talking to local people, meeting local groups and visiting local organisations. With the aid of members of the Steering Committee meetings were held with social workers, education welfare officers, magistrates, police and other groups in the area, to inform them about the project and its aims. In addition to this series of meetings, potential referral agencies were sent a document setting out both the criteria for referrals and the method of referring teenagers. In addition two letters were prepared. One was sent out by the court staff and police with every summons issued by the Juvenile Court: it was addressed to the parents of the child in question, explaining briefly what the project was about, and offering a visit by a project worker for further discussion. The second letter was to be sent out by the Social Services Department's court liaison officer, and simply informed parents of the existence of the project.

The first counsellor, a social worker seconded by Hammersmith Social Services Department, four New Careerists (originally called "linkers") and a secretary were appointed in March and April 1975. The roles to be filled by the project staff were defined in the original project brief and it may be helpful to quote this here:

"The Director: He will be responsible for the administration of the project, for liaison with all relevant outside agencies, and for involving industries and businesses and other resources. He is ultimately responsible for all the staff and all the teenagers, but all important decisions should be taken by the staff as a whole.

The Counsellors: They will work full-time with the project, and each will be responsible for the training and work of a team of two linkers. They will provide the linkers with training on a daily basis and be constantly available to them to give them support and advice. They will be responsible, on the basis of enquiry, for the teenagers' overall programme, and for developing the resources necessary to meet its needs, including accommodation where necessary. The Counsellors will also act as liaison between the teenagers and the courts.

The six linkers: Each linker will be responsible for five teenagers (the number may be increased). They will work directly with them on a daily basis, in groups and individually, and take primary responsibility for the individual programmes. In addition to working individually with his five teenagers, each linker will work as part of a team of two, and those two will plan their programme together, so that they know each other's group well and take over if the other is away. They will have daily training sessions with their counsellors and seek their help whenever they have a problem. Most major problems should be taken to the entire staff. The linkers will spend time with the families of the children, and try to involve them as much as possible in the project; also the schools, where that is relevant. If a teenager is on a deferred sentence, the linker will go to court with him at the end of the three months."

The intention was that the small staff would work closely together and that, although the Director would of course be ultimately responsible, all major decisions would be taken by the staff as a whole. From 1st April 1975, the staff spent a period of five weeks as a group planning for the start of the project. During this period of orientation, the staff aimed to get to know each other and begin to work together so that, once the teenagers arrived, the staff could speak with one voice and make decisions in the knowledge that they were based on a generally agreed project policy.

This introductory phase was not a great success. There was a lot of criticism, particularly from the New Careerists, that five weeks was far too long to sit down and talk and plan. The Director, in his first report on the project, commented: *"If this kind of exercise were to be*

repeated, it would probably not last quite so long. New Careerists such as those working on the Hammersmith Teenage Project need to feel almost from the outset that they are involved practically with clients and not involved in talking about helping clients."

The project opened its doors to teenagers on the 5th May 1975, in temporary premises at College Park which had been provided by the Council while the Bulwer Street building was being made ready. These temporary premises were not really suitable for the project. They were a long way from the centre of the Borough and too small to achieve much of what was envisaged. Only 10 to 12 children could be catered for, instead of the intended 30; because of the lack of room in the premises, the appointment of two counsellors and two New Careerists was delayed until September 1975; there was no room to run a proper evening programme of youth activity and so this did not become fully organised until after the move to Bulwer Street in November 1975.

Michael Whitlam, reflecting on this period, admits that *"in retrospect it was a bad move starting the project, not having the funding co-ordinated with the building work and the appointing of staff"*. Partly because so few teenagers could be accepted, and partly through a natural wish on the part of the staff, to get their teeth into something really worthwhile, all the first group of teenagers accepted were "hard core" delinquents, instead of a mixture of cases as had originally been envisaged. This was later recognised to be a mistaken policy. This phase of the project is well described in the 1976 Interim Research Report (6):

"An attitude to referrals was crystallised at a meeting in February 1975 between the Director of the Project, the senior linker and representatives of all the referral agencies. It was then decided that the Project would initially concentrate on two groups of adolescents: '(a) those caught by the police or under care orders; (b) those to be diverted from institutional experience, i.e. Borstal'. The three linkers appointed in April thus conceived the Project as one for 'hard core delinquents' and with the rest of the staff decided they would give preference to referrals who were in danger of going to Borstal or detention centre; referrals with one or no offences were rejected. This was allowed in spite of the fact that the counselling staff was incomplete and therefore the basic structure of the Project was inadequate for supporting four young, untrained linkers who were expected to work with youngsters every-one else had 'given up on'.

(6) Unpublished. Copies available from NACRO at a photocopying charge of £1.62, inclusive of postage and packing.

Thus the Project 'jumped in with both feet' to 'test out what we're setting out to do'. The reasoning behind this was that if the most intractable cases could be effectively worked with the others would be easier to treat. But this put enormous strain on the staff who became frustrated and disillusioned because many of the referrals were, in the end, going to institutions. The realisation began to develop that, as one linker put it at a staff meeting in September: 'We'd need to have bars on the windows and the police at the doors to have adequate support to deal with these kids!' "

The difficulties this caused came to a head after a trip to Wales in July/August 1975, after which four of the project youngsters appeared in court charged with taking vehicles, driving and damaging them.

An evaluation meeting was held on 20th August 1975 at which the staff considered a number of questions including the following:

- (a) Why has the system of support within the project remained inadequate and what can be done about it?
- (b) How much can these youngsters be trusted and how does one supervise them?
- (c) How committed are the linkers and how much have they developed as a team?
- (d) Is the project encouraging delinquency in some instances by the type of support offered, e.g. intervening so often with the police?
- (e) What of contamination of the less delinquent by more "hard core" teenagers?
- (f) What does our experience tell us about the whole theoretical basis of keeping offenders out of institutions at all costs?
- (g) Can the project survive if it continues to take hard core delinquents?
- (h) Exactly how should the aims of the project be defined or re-defined to be effectively implemented?
- (i) How long will the staff be able to bear up under the present strain and what can be done about it?
- (j) Can the youngsters being taken be helped by the type of support being given to them?

Before this evaluation, the whole concept of diversion was discussed with various staff members and it was found out that they had increas-

ingly become preoccupied with keeping young offenders out of institutions as the main criterion of the project's success, even though it had been explained during the orientation that, in fact, the project aimed to operate on several levels (preventing teenagers from committing an offence, diverting them from a summons, etc.). It was suggested that it might be worthwhile to:

- (a) think about dealing with a smaller proportion of "hard core" cases;
- (b) extend in certain instances the three month period for treatment of youngsters.

After a considerable debate at the evaluation, it was decided to reconsider the type of referrals being taken.

Other lessons were also learnt the hard way during these early stages of the project. The first research report provides a personal account of these:

"A critical decision was made during this period by the staff as a whole: there would be no written rules governing the Project. This decision was made at linker insistence because they felt they would be able to form closer relationships with the teenagers (a) by letting them run the Project themselves, (b) treating them like adults and trusting them. It was felt that formal rules would inhibit productive relationships and offend the adolescents accepted on the Project . . .

No absolute rules for the teenagers implied that linkers could avoid rules as well: they disliked staff meetings, time keeping, writing reports, keeping records, having training sessions, and so they decided to 'run their own show' in an unstructured and essentially disorganised manner.

Adolescents like the ones being accepted, turned loose in a situation like this, not surprisingly took advantage of the situation. But were they fully to blame considering what was known by the staff about them? The first of a number of burglaries occurred on June 4th, and while the linkers found out who had done it and recovered the property that was stolen, the youngsters involved stopped coming to the Project and were never made to pay any compensation: only one linker felt the police should have been involved immediately. It was suggested that the event should be discussed in detail to prevent future recurrences, but it was decided that no contingency plans should be made because 'we want to keep our options open'. Subsequently a number of burglaries and thefts took place and it was felt by the linkers that the youngsters were 'playing us for mugs'.

Equally, because of the lack of structure, the children drifted in and out of the Project at will and attended class if they wished. By 10 June 1975 I noted in my diary: 'None of the kids except one have arrived at the centre this morning and none of the linkers seems to be doing much about it . . . Something is radically wrong'. On the same day at a linkers' meeting they decided that they had to get tougher on the teenagers and try to work more closely as a team and with the professional staff. By 13th June 1975 I noted 'The linkers are coming down harder on the kids generally; they are definitely tightening up and I think their ideas of no rules and little control have been pretty much dumped in the face of reality'. By the end of June the entire staff was making a concerted effort to organise the project and the youngsters attending: they decided that if a youngster did not come regularly he would be dropped.'

By the time the project moved to Bulwer Street, in September 1975, many of these teething troubles were being actively tackled and some had been overcome. Looking back on those early days with hindsight, those involved in the project feel they should probably have known better and might well have avoided such mistakes. But the purpose of experimental projects is to experiment and lessons that emerged so painfully from those early experiences have been taken to heart.

2

The Next Two Years

The move to the large Bulwer Street premises in September 1975 solved some of the difficulties the project had been facing. There was much more room; the location was central and accessible; the full staff complement could be taken on and links with the immediate community could begin to be made. The changes made in the type of referral taken and ways of working also began to show results.

In this section we shall be looking at the work of the project as a whole, up to mid-1977, or later where more recent information is available.

The referral process

The project now takes three different categories of teenager. Firstly, there are those who are not presently offending but seem in danger of offending for a variety of reasons, mostly connected with problems in the family and at school. Secondly the project takes those who have offended and been cautioned by the police. The third group are those who have offended and appeared in court or are due to appear in court, some of whom would otherwise have been taken into care or given a custodial sentence. The proportions of each category obviously vary from time to time but an attempt is made to keep a balance. Teenagers in the first category are referred to the project by their school, parents, doctor, social worker or the police. Those in the second category may be referred by the Juvenile Bureau, which recommends the project to both parents and teenager as a means of avoiding further trouble.

Teenagers in the third category may be referred in a number of ways. Some are referred by the Juvenile Court, which defers sentence for three months on the understanding that the teenager will stay with the project during that time, and that when the time is up sentence will be passed in the light of a progress report from the project. Some are referred by social workers after the court has passed a non-custodial sentence, while others are referred by social workers in advance of the court hearing.

From 5th May 1975 to 31st December 1977, a total of 308 teenagers were referred to the project. 160 of these were accepted. The sources of referral were as follows:-

Social Services	152
Social Services on recommendation of project staff	5
Education Welfare Officers	51
Schools	16
Probation Service	12
Youth Service	3
Police	28
Adventure Playgrounds	1
Self-referrals	17
Project staff direct referrals	6
Parents	8
Other	9
	<hr/>
	308

Of the 152 shown as being referred by the Social Services, about 40 in fact originated in the courts. In many instances several agencies and individuals were involved in the decision to refer a teenager (e.g. police, schools, parents) although only one agency is recorded as actually making the referral.

The decision as to whether a referral should be accepted or not is made by the staff as a whole. The Administrator/Secretary is responsible for ensuring that all the information on the case is collected and recorded in time for the staff meeting. The case is then discussed and a decision is made as to whether to accept the referral and, if so, which staff team will take it on.

The teenagers

A considerable amount of information has been collected on the teenagers referred and this has been analysed for those referred up to December 1976. During the period 5 May 1975 to 1 January 1976 the

project took on 42 youngsters, 35 boys and 7 girls. 32 of these were 14-15 years old. 22 were indigenous and 10 from ethnic minority groups. The majority came from large families, the average family size being 5.7 excluding parents. 13 had only one parent present at the time. 26 had been separated from home, 13 between 1 and 3 times, 9 more than 3 times and 4 were in residential care. 22 came from families with brothers or sisters already in trouble. 37 out of the 42 were known to the Social Services Department and 33 were known to be involved with delinquent groups. 20 had been on care orders and 15 were still on care orders when accepted by the project. 3 came to the project soon after release from Borstal or detention centre. 36 had committed one or more offences and 10 of these had committed more than 5 offences.

In the second phase, 1 January 1976 to 31 December 1976, the project accepted 56 referrals but nine of these never actually attended. Of the 47 who attended seven were still at the project at the end of 1976 and so information on them is not included here. Of the 40 on whom data is available, 31 were boys and 9 girls. 26 were indigenous and 14 from ethnic minority groups. The family size was also between 5 and 6, excluding parents, which is roughly the same as the previous year's intake. 24 were living with both parents at home but only 8 of the children's families were recorded as having no serious problems. Nearly all the families had contact with the Social Services department and 21 came from families with delinquent members. 37 of the 40 were involved in delinquent peer groups. 26 of the children had committed one or more offences and 14 had committed no offence.

Clearly then the children are all coming from broadly similar backgrounds (in spite of ethnic differences), mainly from large families, often families with difficulties, who are in contact with the social services and mixing with a delinquent group. It is interesting to see that the second year's intake are more mixed as far as offence record is concerned. Two case studies of teenagers taken on to the project illustrate well the variety of cases dealt with. The project was reasonably successful with the first; with the second it failed completely.

Example 1

The referral came from a local school, who were at the point of suspending him as a result of continuous rude behaviour. The 'last straw' was a fight with a teacher. A linker (8) immediately visited the school in order to interview both the staff and the referral. The decision was

(8) At that time project workers were called linkers but the name was subsequently changed. See Chapter III for more discussion of this.

made to accept him on to the project, (a) because he had certainly been involved in offences although he had never been to court and (b) by accepting him before he was suspended, a place would be kept open in the school for him, making it easier to ease him back at the end of three months.

When he came to the project he was often very rude to both staff and other participants, using his size to try and dominate, often physically pushing people around. He also had many problems with reading and writing, having come to England from another country at the age of nine. Throughout his three month stay at the project all staff and his linker concentrated on trying to help him to control his aggressive behaviour, his language and on building up his confidence in his academic work.

By the end of his stay, his behaviour had improved considerably, he was polite and considerate to staff, although he could still lose his temper. He had lost his need to dominate his peer group and therefore was far more acceptable to his friends. He seemed more confident in his ability to work generally.

He returned to his school, from where we have had good reports about him. One term later he is still attending, and to our knowledge he has not been in any trouble with the police. He still visits us from time to time to tell us that all is well.

Example 2

Referral 2 was referred to the project by her social worker, mainly because of her having been suspended by her school for disruptive behaviour, such as lighting fires in the toilets. She also often fell asleep in class. She was in care (Section 1) to the local authority and was living in a children's home. She had one previous offence some time earlier for which a supervision order had been made.

The girl and her social worker were interviewed by a linker at the project, at which time she presented herself as a very cheerful girl, full of enthusiasm for the project. As she was suspended from school we decided to accept her on to the project during the day time. Her social worker later explained that there had been many problems as her mother had suffered from mental illness and had since died, as had an uncle who had taken over care of the girl. It was unfortunate that all the background information was not given to the project at the time of referral, as we might then have recognised we were dealing with a highly mentally disturbed girl.

This case was fraught with problems, particularly as we were not informed of the whole background to the case, and it was a lesson for us all. The case was extremely time consuming and the more we worked with her the more evident it became that neither the project nor the children's, home could contain her. She left the project early and is now in more secure accommodation.

The staff

The project now has a staff of twelve; a director, three counsellors (one teacher, one youth worker, one social worker), six New Careerist project workers (there is an additional project worker post to allow for secondment to a training course), two part-time teachers, an administrator/secretary, and a full-time researcher. The nature of these posts was laid down in the original project proposal (see p) and has not changed a great deal.

Since the project started there have been at different times 12 New Careerist project workers on the staff. Seven of these are currently employed on the project of whom one is seconded to a full-time, two year training course. Their average age is currently 24. All but two have had an offender background. However, experience on the project has shown that previous offences should not be regarded as an essential qualification for a project worker; what counts more is a similar background to the majority of teenagers, the ability to work well with them and, preferably, local knowledge.

The five project workers who have left the project have all stayed in social work, one as a volunteer. Each stayed at least a year, and the longest serving project worker is now in his third year.

The programme

Two project workers, one more experienced than the other, work in a team with a counsellor. Each team has responsibility for up to 20 teenagers.

As soon as a teenager has been referred to the project a team goes to see him, his family and his school, to explain exactly what joining the project involves. Written agreement to his attendance from the parents and the teenager himself is necessary before he can start attending the project. If the teenager is accepted he becomes part of a team - probably the same team which first interviewed him. It is the team which assesses his needs, draws up a programme for him (which is reviewed each week) and looks after him as long as he is with the project. The minimum period for which a teenager is referred is three

months, though it can often be longer if it seems that he can benefit from a longer association with the project, or if he himself opts to stay on. The average length of stay with the project is 20 weeks.

The project operates morning, afternoon and evening. Up to September 1976 the children were divided into two groups, those who came full time during the day to attend the education programme and those who came part-time during the evening for activities. These evening activities occasionally involved non-project young people as well, but at least one evening of activities was restricted to children on the project. The structure of the project was altered in September 1976 so that the education programme was reduced to a half day (mornings) to allow more time to be spent with the part-time referrals attending school while at the project. As a result of this change the day education programme and evening activities programme have become more integrated, there is more support and time available for the children on the evening programme and the teacher has been freed during the afternoons to liaise with schools outside the project and to counsel teenagers.

The education programme now concentrates on basic skills teaching. If it is decided that a teenager ought to join the basic skills programme, his reading age and general capabilities will be assessed by the teachers and appropriate work set for him, using Ward Lock reading, Blackwell's spelling and work cards made specifically for the individual's needs. The mathematics scheme is one called **Smile**, which is used in some of the local schools, and here again work cards are made individually if needed. Volunteer help for the teachers is essential for the success of the basic skills programme because the teenagers vary a good deal in age and ability. The one factor they have in common is that they have all been failures at the schools they were supposed to be attending. They therefore require as much individual attention as possible. Three regular volunteers, and two more people on a part-time basis, have given their services as teachers. Some of these are qualified but currently unemployed teachers. Close links have been formed with the Avery Hill College of Education, and students from the College have been able to do a teaching practice with the project.

At present the procedure for the basic skills programme is that the teenager is expected to arrive between 9 a.m. and 10 a.m. at the project. If he is persistently late or does not appear at all, the team responsible for him will follow this up and decide how to handle it. At 10 a.m. the basic skills programme starts in the large hall. Up to 25 teenagers attend and there can be up to five adults if volunteers and students are available. Each teenager on the basic skills programme

works at his own pace and is expected to do his own best. The programme is designed to teach concentration as well as basic skills and to give teenagers a feeling of confidence in themselves. An attempt is made to provide work similar to the work given by local schools, so that it will be easier for the teenagers to return to school. The programme seems to have worked quite well, and there has been a high attendance rate. Of the first intake of teenagers only a third were regular in their attendance, but by the end of 1975 an almost 100 per cent rate of attendance was reported, and this rate was maintained throughout 1976.

Extracts from the teenagers' writing give some insight into their relationships with teachers:

"Why don't you ever give me some proper work. If you give me all my book's back and you look back in it it follows the same pattern all the time all you do is give math's English and other stupid work and all you do is give me work from a card to do you only set the work you don't do it and you don't know how boring and stupid it is. I told you some many times before unless you give me new work then you don't stop giving it to me for week's don't you understand that I can't stand the stupid spasticated work O.K."

(Teenager)

and into their teachers' reactions:

"Yes, I do understand, and I know what you mean. But for just as long as you have been bored, I have been asking you what kind of work you want to do, and you won't say. If you would give us some idea of the kind of work you think is suitable, we will set it for you. But it isn't any use just getting infuriated unless you can suggest a better alternative. I suspect that it may be because you can't think of anything better that you get so angry."

(Teacher)

into their relationships with social workers:

"My social worker - I think he's nice to talk to and he's funny. I feel shy when I talk to him. He's got asthma. He's kind and saved me from getting put away. He doesn't shout at me and he's gentle. I can talk to him and trust him. He can be nasty sometimes . . ."

into their perceptions of school:

"Well the advantages of school are they have most of the things for what you want to do plus they have the lessons to do for exams. They sometimes have trips but they dont last for long say about 4 hours at

the most. Other trips are different. I went on a day trip to Boullione but the waves were too rough and it was foggy so we were stuck at Dover so we got on a special bus to Canterbury. We spent about 45 minutes there and by the time we got back it was about six o'clock and foggy. One sort of advantage is that from the third year upwards you choose what lessons you want. But for some lessons you need another lesson to help you with the lesson you picked and this creates boredom. The uniform is a load of trouble because some say not every family can afford a uniform some people can't come to school wearing a suit of clothes every day so most families get a giro for enough money for a uniform and they can always wear the same uniform every day. Say that I had a fight with a kid that started it and I won it always happens that if you won you get into trouble."

"I don't like the crowds at school. I'm scared . . ."

into their criminal activity:

"Trespassing

When I used to go to my primary school I went about with my mate Mickey. On Sunday we were going down Studridge Street when we saw a house that was empty. We went to the door and broke the door window so that we could get in. We got in and we saw some pictures left on the wall. We took them down and put them by the door. Then we checked the rest of the house. We saw a cellar door and we went down it. We switched on the light but it was empty. We picked up the pictures by the doorway and went back to the flats. The next day after school we bought a box of matches to make a fire there because it was cold. We went down the cellar and made a fire for about 20 minutes and then we stamped on it to put it out. When we came out of the cellar I said to my mate I had a feeling that we were going to get caught. I played a trick on him. I ran to the door and said the police but then I said 'not really'. Then we went upstairs and made another fire. There was a lot of smoke. Then suddenly we heard doors open and close. It was the police. My mate and I hid behind a little cupboard but they found us and took us down to the police station."

and into their environment:

"Wormwood Scrubs

I live next to Wormwood Scrubs prison. When I look out my top window I watch the prisoners pass fags by tying too a sheet and when it is sunny they play with mirrors and shine them at people the walls across the scrubs at night the prisoners are always shouting and when the screws shine the light at the cells they go quiet. On

Sunday they play football in the yard. When they score it sounds just like a football match, all the other prisoners roar. The cameras are always watching. Sometimes I throw sticks at the wire. The cameras turn round and watch you then the police come round. Last Christmas three prisoners jumped the wall. One hurt his leg, the other two was fighting the police. The prisoners did not have a chance. There were police cars everywhere. When you sit at my top window and watch the prison it seems like a dream."

The project staff believe that their educational programme has been effective, and they suggest that this may be due to certain differences between the project and the schools the children come from. On the project the children get individual attention and the teachers expect them to work hard and do well within their own capabilities. If they do not turn up, the staff have time to chase them up and encourage them to carry on with their work. Also, the atmosphere is much more relaxed than in a normal school. For example, the children are allowed to smoke, if they wish to.

Liz Robson, the project's teacher, comments:

"In developing the basic skills programme, we have borne in mind that these teenagers have failed to respond to the ordinary system. We have deliberately tried to get away from the ordinary school atmosphere. If the programme goes some way to help these teenagers to become motivated to learn, to explore and to understand, and to gain respect for themselves in their own community, then it has achieved what the local schools have failed to do.

Perhaps it is difficult to imagine what a teenager who hasn't been to school for a couple of year, feels about school and the education system. Often comments are passed such as 'they don't care a damn about me so why should I go' or 'school's boring' or 'I hate teachers' and so on. Many are confused about the whole system; the size of schools and the insecurity this brings means that often their desire to learn has been stifled. An agnored question early on has led to a feeling of rejection and they have slipped further and further behind until they finally give up and truant, not giving a toss about the consequences. Often, being taken to court for non-school attendance only reinforces their feeling of failure.

It is with the above attitudes that many teenagers come to the project. Why is the project successful with many of these teenagers when the system which ought to be coping with them is failing? One 15 year old girl recently wrote: 'Kids love the project, it has a lively atmosphere

and when work should start we settle down and do it. It is so different from school. The project is based on trying to get us kids back into school and it also helps kids of leaving ages to get a job. The basic skills is a good idea 'cos it helps kids from being behind in their work such as English, Maths and Spelling . . . The reason I like the project is 'cos when I came to the project November 1976 they helped me get back to school and I left the project February 1977 but after a few months I dropped out of school.'

Many of the teenagers who attend the basic skills programme desperately want to be in school. They want to be part of the system although they cannot understand it because being alienated from school means alienation from their peer groups. Adolescents don't want to be different from each other and, therefore, not to be accepted by or able to accept the school system is difficult for them to come to terms with."

The Second Year Research Report (7) has an interesting comment on the education programme and the teenagers attending it:

"School records concerning children at the project were largely average to below average (only 3 children had a high intelligence level, 3 above average level of school work and 5 above average in literacy). However, the education programme at the project reported that most of the children had an intelligence level of average to above average along with a low level of literacy . . . There is growing evidence in juvenile delinquency research finding low levels of literacy and school work along with high intelligence levels. The picture of the juvenile delinquent may therefore be that of a child whose abilities have been frustrated due to a variety of reasons rather than that of a child lacking in intelligence who then became 'delinquent' out of boredom or to counteract failure and gain attention."

The educational needs of 15 year olds have been found to be very different from those of younger teenagers. The most appropriate solution for them has been a programme as relevant to work as possible and a work experience programme has been devised for these teenagers in their last school year, in co-operation with the I.L.E.A., which involves them in preparation for employment. They work part-time (unpaid) in a firm, and attend part-time at the project where they learn about such things as employment laws, trade unions, banking commerce and job interviewing. In addition some attend part-time

(7) Unpublished. Available from NACRO at a photocopying charge of £1.42, inclusive of postage and packing



Courtesy of Woman's Realm

A student teacher and teenagers taking part in the basic skills programme.



Courtesy of Woman's Realm

Developing interests — two teenagers undertaking a project on photography.



John Craven of BBC Television's 'Newsround' starts the Projects sponsored walk.



Acquiring practical skills — a teenager learns to type.



Courtesy of Woman's Realm

One to one counselling — a staff member and teenager talk things through.

courses. The background and effect of the work experience programme on one teenager has been recorded by a project worker:

"J. was referred by the Educational Welfare Department in November 1975. The referral consisted of a letter giving details of J. and his family. The family had been involved with the courts on numerous occasions for non-attendance at school, not only in J.'s case but his brother's as well. J. was 15 years old and had three more terms of school left . . .

On November 19th 1975 J.'s mother telephoned the Project to find out if he could start to attend. I spoke to her and learned that she was anxious that J. should be involved in the Project because he was not going to school and had recently been involved with the police on two occasions. I told her that the Project was not an alternative school and that it would only be for a short time. I arranged to go and see J. and his family at their home later that day.

The visit consisted of me giving information on the Project. J. did not comment much on what I had to say, while his mother answered most of the questions that I directed at J. . . I made it quite clear at this first meeting that one of the priorities in J.'s case would be to integrate his return into a school situation as soon as seemed an appropriate time.

J. started on the Project on December 3rd, 1975. During his first week I spent a good deal of time talking to him about what he didn't like at school, what he hoped to do after school, his involvement with the law, what he thought would happen to him at court, and arranging a programme during his time on the Project.

J. seemed very inarticulate during our talks and this was so during a group discussion with the other kids. He was shy and withdrawn. Though his academic ability was below average for his age, he showed the potential ability to do better. His academic work needed supervision because if he came across something that was difficult for him to understand he wouldn't ask for help. Although he participated in activities at the Project, J. seemed to prefer to follow rather than lead and never showed initiative or individuality even if it meant going against what he really felt.

I arranged with the E.W.O. involved in J.'s case to visit the Project and speak to J. in an interview with myself. I wanted to talk with the E.W.O. about the possibility of a work-based educational programme or part-time attendance at a technical college. I had talked with J. about this previously and he seemed keen enough to follow them up although I feel it was because he would have to spend less time at school. The

E.W.O. agreed to enquire at the careers office and at J.'s school about the possibility of work-experience in conjunction with school. Unfortunately, since this meeting J.'s E.W.O. was changed three times, making continuity difficult and delaying making any arrangements for J.

Six weeks passed and I had not heard about work-experience programmes from the E.W.O. I wrote to two local carpentry firms to see if J. could work with a carpenter one or two days a week to gain some work-experience. These enquiries were unsuccessful and I decided to visit J.'s school to find out about work-experience programmes myself. I took J. with me and we met his Year Master.

Work programmes did not operate in J.'s school. We spoke at length about J. returning to school on some sort of basis and agreed that he return on a two day a week basis starting March 8th; the rest of the time would be spent attending the Project.

While attending the Project J. had progressed steadily in his school work. He had assumed a certain amount of responsibility and could be left unsupervised to carry out a task or organize events. It was decided that J. could best become responsible if responsibility was pushed on to him - this worked. His behaviour improved steadily and his attendance was excellent.

Although we had talked at length about J. returning to school, when the time came for J.'s return difficulties arose. I arranged a meeting with the family and my counsellor at the Project to summarise J.'s involvement with the Project and make it clear that one of J.'s reasons for his reluctance to return to school was that his mother let him do more or less as he pleased. I told her and her husband that even if J. were attending school he would need a good deal of support from the family as well as the Project. I asked J.'s parents if they would object to J.'s becoming involved with the Project as a helper more than a 'client', in an attempt to extend the responsibility that J. was responding well to. There was no objection. This meeting was quite successful; everyone knew now (including J.) about the school situation as well as J.'s progress at the Project.

There followed a fairly extensive period of contact with J.'s school to arrange a suitable programme for J. This involved the teacher from the Project, two teachers from J.'s school and myself and J. The result was that J. attended the school for four half-days a week and the Project during the afternoon.

In conclusion, I feel in J.'s case that contact should have been made far earlier with the school. Although he responded well in a small group situation, J. became very dependent on it and it took a good deal of time to impress upon him that he should apply his experience to school

and work. J.'s time at school was gradually increased while his time at the Project lessened. J. left the Project on 10th June, 1976 after being involved over a period of six months. J. finished school and is now working with his brother as a carpenter.

As far as J.'s involvement with the law is concerned, I went to court on three occasions with him for offences which were committed before his referral to the Project. The sentences in two cases were deferred and on the third he was fined. When J. returned to court for a review of his deferred sentences, the magistrate was very impressed by his progress at the Project but told J. that if he appeared before the court again he would very probably be sent away. He was fined £10 for the burglary charge and given a one year conditional discharge with a £25 compensation order for the criminal damage charge. J. committed no offences while he was attending the Project."

As with many projects of this type there have been difficulties in returning the teenagers to school after a time on the project. Many of the schools in the Borough with which the project has close links have been co-operating with the project in trying out a variety of ways of returning teenagers to school. In some cases teenagers have been going back to school for two or three days a week, or simply for subjects in which they are particularly interested, spending the rest of their time on the project. In other cases teenagers have been on a part-time school/part-time project basis from the date of their arrival on the project. In other cases it has seemed advisable that the teenager should return to school immediately and not be taken on to the basic skills programme. In seven cases it has been agreed that the teenagers required special education. In the case of some of the 15 year olds, it has been agreed in conjunction with the head teacher that the educational programme will be geared to getting the teenager into work as described above.

The programme is flexible and designed for the individual teenager. The sort of teenager who is on the project often finds it hard to grasp the point of unconventional activities, which means that staff have to put a great deal of time into making such activities seem both useful and enjoyable. The majority of teenagers on the Project have low levels of concentration. The need, therefore, is for short term projects and goals, flexibility, and a willingness on the part of the staff to change. Group discussions are held weekly to discuss behaviour, to help teenagers gain some insight into their own behaviour and that of their peers. Other types of discussion occur more often as a result of films, speakers and news items. The variety of the programmes arranged and the differing

needs of the teenagers may best be illustrated by the cases of John and Jane.

John was 14. He was referred by an educational welfare officer. He had been deemed maladjusted and had been a pupil of a boarding school for maladjusted children from which he had continually absconded. He had returned home but could not go to a normal school, so he had been placed with a home tutor who provided eight hours tuition per week. He had been in trouble with the police and had offended twice. The programme the project devised for him included: a reassessment by an educational psychologist; a continuation of the home tuition supplemented by some attendance on a basic skills programme; the occupation of his abundance of free time during the day and evening through attendance at the youth club and horse riding, community service and sports options; and employment by the project as a junior playleader on a summer play-scheme, being paid £10.00 per week for six weeks. John is now in the process of leaving the project and returning to day school for the first time in two years.

Jane referred herself. She was 15, a habitual truant, but had never been in trouble with the police, although project staff were familiar with her and the delinquent peer group she was involved in. The aims of Jane's programme were to help her to see the value of school in relation to her starting work in a year; she had a talent for working with young children and wanted to become a nursery nurse. The project put her on to the basic skills programme (part-time), arranged that she would attend school for two and a half days per week and that she would have a work placement in a nursery. With her school she devised a programme of C.S.E. study of English and Social Studies, geared towards securing a job for her, and the project will also help her to find a permanent job or a place on a nursery nurse course. Jane was also a junior playleader on the project's summer play-scheme.

Community involvement

The project has attempted to involve the community in a number of ways, some continuing, some one-off attempts to arouse interest. One of the counsellors has been made responsible for making and maintaining community links and it is part of the basic philosophy of the project to work closely with the teenagers' families. The project staff are encouraged to live locally and become part of the community. The project also works closely with local community workers and other agencies and as mentioned earlier there is an open youth club where teenagers can bring friends. Also, the project workers personally visit anyone known to have been a victim of a crime committed by one of

the project's teenagers, and where appropriate offer restitution.

The teenagers work in the community whenever possible, for old age pensioners, for instance. The summer play-schemes, a joint venture with the local residents' association, took place in the project building and employed some of the teenagers. A stall was taken and a film of the project's activities was shown at the Borough's Shepherds Bush exhibition. The project staff have spent a great deal of time building up a resource of local employers willing to take on 15 year olds for 'work experience' and seeking out local people willing to take on teenagers for a variety of activities and support.

The degree to which the project has succeeded in its aim of involving the local community is analysed further in Chapter III.

Staff perceptions

Staff perceptions of the project are perhaps best conveyed by the staff themselves. Below we give a view of the project by Martin Farrell, the social worker counsellor, who came to Hammersmith in 1976:

"Weaving through the morning rush hour I would like to be able to look forward to comforts when I arrive at work. Each morning when I arrive at the project I am sadly disappointed. I am greeted by chipped, colourless lino, by irreverent graffiti, the occasional fist shaped holes in the wall, all peppered with last week's cigarette ends and dust and sweet wrappers from the week before that. A coffee; yes, a good cup of hot coffee might cast a rosier glow on things. The cups are scattered here and there and are lined with yesterday's left overs, all the milk's gone and the kitchen floor still not cleaned; it puts me off the whole idea.

I joined the Hammersmith Teenage Project a year ago and not only am I still the project's Social Worker/Counsellor but I intend to stay that way for some time. What benefits are there to balance the manifest absence of creature comforts?

One major attraction is the constant stimulation it gives me; walking into the building is like walking on to a stage in the middle of the second act. You can't just stand there, you're in it, an actor having some idea of what went on in the first act, but having to ad lib as best you can. There's a constant barrage of inter-actions with colleagues, with the kids, with visitors, the telephone; it is not the sort of place to go for a quiet doze.

The real stimulation comes from the background to all that goes on, each personal inter-change affects the way that relationships are developing. 'Was that a helpful way to react?' 'Was he boasting or did

he really do a break-in at the weekend?' 'She seems upset, should I drop everything else and take her for a chat over a coffee?' It's like being a main actor, director and audience all rolled into one, constantly checking how the plot's developing and trying to foresee where it might go next.

I have never been on the rack but I know it involves being pulled in all directions at once. One minute I'm talking to one of the kids, being authority or maybe the consoling 'good parents', the next allowing myself to be sounding board for another staff member's anger and frustrations, the next representing the project to a prospective volunteer or an old lady who is about to have her living room decorated, not to mention attempting to keep my neck of the woods in some sort of administratively good order. At the same time I'm trying to do my bit towards setting the stage for the third act: what direction should the community service programme move in? What sort of supportive structure should we create for voluntary workers in the project? This is rather like trying to compete in the pentathlon: it challenges every muscle in the body to prove itself. I find all my faculties are constantly in use leaving no cobwebbed corners.

Another appeal of this seemingly pretty crazy job is its flexibility; if I decide that delinquency will be favourably affected by a daily dosage of carrot juice, there is nothing to stop me initiating a scheme to provide just that. We are tremendously fortunate to have been at arm's length from bureaucratic stultification; we have very little paper-work and the management committee has given us a comparatively free hand to spend small sums of money where we think it will be most effective.

I can't complain 'they' are putting obstacles in my way; my only boundaries are my own, my only restriction my flagging energy. Energies which I do have are not diluted by fighting cramping structures, but can be used creatively for implementing new ideas. We are now coming to the end of our experimental three year period and are soon to be 'taken over' by the local authority; let us hope that we manage to remain free to innovate and experiment.

There is much at the Project which does not run smoothly, much which is left undone and much which is only half-completed. We're not trying to pretend it's all tied up with pink ribbons! But we have some of the right ingredients and if we can get the quantities and the oven temperature right we'll have a cake well worth sharing around."

Research

As the project was intended to be experimental, a research component

was essential and, when the project was first set up, was established by NACRO to cover the three year experimental period. The research team consists of a full-time researcher attached to the project, the NACRO Research Officer and a research consultant from Brunel University. At the inception of the Project, the full-time researcher was the late Peter French, who produced an interim research report in April 1976. Following Dr. French's tragic death later that year, Coline Covington was appointed as researcher to the Project.

The tasks of the research have been three-fold:

- (1) to act as a consultant to the project throughout its developmental period by providing information to the staff concerning the direction and functioning of the project;
- (2) to evaluate the aims specified by the project in its initial brief in terms of whether or not these aims have been achieved and how some aims may have changed in the course of the project's development.
- (3) to provide a comprehensive history of the project during its experimental period.

The consultancy role of the research is best described in a paper written at the end of 1975 by the Director of the project:

"The researcher will act as a liaison between NACRO and the project by providing constant feedback to those concerned. This information should not in fact influence the development of the project but be used more as advice concerning the development of the project in relation to its initial aims and objectives . . .

Continually advising the Director of problems and progress that seems to be developing and of instances when the project seems to be diverging from its original aims, the researcher will act as a sounding board to him. Feedback that may affect the staff as a whole to help them to evaluate their performance and that of the project will be provided regularly at staff meetings. From a broader and more objective stance the researcher will normally suggest that, a, b and c seem to be occurring, but refrain from offering d, e and f as solutions. Finally, the researcher will inevitably be part of the intricate support structure developing within the project as he will have access to each individual and will be trying to keep communication flowing between the parties involved."

Coline Covington, the project's full-time researcher since late 1976, describes the process of evaluating the project as follows:

"The evaluation of the project covers an assessment of the teenagers attending the project, the changing structure and development within the staff, and the relationship of the project with social agencies and the local community. Evaluation encompasses both qualitative and quantitative data. A number of quantitative measures of progress and outcome concerning the teenagers at the project have been assembled. A control group, set up by means of random allocation to the project, was not considered feasible. However, some comparisons can be made with respect to reconviction data. In addition much qualitative data has been collected to examine other aspects of the project's work. This data is in the form of depth interviews, group and individual discussions attendance at meetings involving the project, and fieldwork notes. The qualitative information complements and gives depth to the numerical material, since the small number involved imposes limitations on the statistical inferences that can be made."

The material collected on the evaluation and the account of the history of the project will be presented in a final research report to be published in the autumn of 1978. This report will also look at various elements in the methods and approach used by the project to see what lessons can be drawn in the treatment of juvenile delinquency in the future.

Costing

The 1977/8 budget for the Hammersmith Teenage Project, prepared in March 1977, was £79,705. This is broken down as follows:

	£
Salaries, N.I.C. (excluding teachers' salaries)	49,016
Rent, Rates, Light, Heat	9,100
Postage, Telephone	2,000
Travel/Vehicle Running Costs	3,000
Repairs, Renewals	2,000
Cleaning, Wages and Materials	550
Management Fees	2,000
Education Costs (including salaries of one part-time and one full-time teacher)	9,400
Stationery, Publications	850
Depreciation	1,629
Miscellaneous	100
	79,705

Since the project has been working at full capacity an average of 60 children per year have gone through the project at an average cost, on the basis of the 1977/8 budget, of £1,328 a year or £25 per week.

3

Lessons Learned

The project was an experimental one designed to test out different ways of working with difficult young people. Some of the ideas we started with have been more successful than others. In some areas we think lessons have been learned which may be of value to others. In this chapter we attempt to evaluate the project and look at what we have learned so far.

New Careers

As explained in Chapter 1, the idea behind 'New Careers' is that people with similar backgrounds and who have gone through similar experiences to their clients have experience and instinctive skills which professional social workers do not have.

Work with New Careerists on the Hammersmith Teenage Project has shown that there are potentially a number of difficulties inherent in the New Careers concept. The central paradox for New Careerists who were offenders is that they suddenly find themselves being valued for the very things for which they were formerly punished. This can cause confusion for them. Furthermore, from being the client, they find themselves the social worker - from being the person who is expected and allowed to let his personal problems dominate, they become the authority figure who is expected to suppress those problems. This is not an easy switch for people to make, and can create serious difficulties within the project, particularly in terms of staff reliability.

In order to convince the statutory agencies and the public that there is justification for employing ex-offenders in a responsible role, and to give New Careerists the confidence to take on a social work job, there is a tendency to exaggerate the value of their 'life experience' and instinctive skills. One danger of this is that New Careerists may get over-inflated ideas about their abilities. Another danger is that an over-emphasis on the value of the instinctive approach can lead to an apparent rejection of traditional professional social work.

It is sometimes difficult to achieve a balance between the informality, creativity and excitement that New Careerists can bring, and the reliability, responsibility and application necessary in working with young people.

The dilemma was well expressed in the first research report:

"It has often been stressed that the New Careers role is the crucial one within the Project - and also that it is the one that carries the greatest tensions and is the most difficult to sustain. There are many reasons for this, not the least important being the high hopes that have been aroused by the idea of linkers having special abilities to deal with delinquents because they 'have been through the same experience themselves and survived.'

This underlines the very real paradox of the New Careers philosophy and explains a number of conflicts and confusions which the linkers have had to face. The very terms 'linker' and 'New Careerist' have produced resentment. New Careerists are particularly sensitive to being depicted as 'non-delinquent delinquents', dislabelled for a time and asked to contribute as their greatest resource an experience for which they have hitherto been punished - their own delinquent experience, an experience which, for the most part, they would rather forget. Most of the linkers see no reason why they should be labelled New Careerists any more than other people who change careers. The term linker is disliked, for it is felt to underline the ambiguous role that New Careerists have been assigned: they are links in a very real sense, neither part of the established system, nor any longer seen as inimical to that system. They remain unidentified except as 'ex-offenders' which does, in reality, offend them. They resent NACRO because 'they have no idea how New Careerists feel.' Their sense of being manipulated is sometimes very strong, and this leads to an 'us' and 'them' attitude. As they become more qualified professionally, linkers may risk losing their prime qualification for being a linker.

It has been said by a New Careerist on the project that the very fact that linkers have been chosen and given jobs only if they have delinquent histories is, of itself, disturbing - again, paradoxical. Linkers are chosen for other things than having a delinquent background and for having 'survived it'; the positive aspects they have to offer should be stressed. One can be labelled either positively or negatively, and linkers have been labelled by their faults rather than their virtues."

Most of those involved with the project would agree that the value of employing New Careerists lies mainly in their approach. It is not what is offered on the project that is different or special - it is how it is done. New Careerists' approach to both problems and people tends to be direct, practical, and immediate. Their life style and language are much closer to most of the teenagers and their families than those of most social workers - they have little difficulty in communicating with them, and at the same time they are seldom taken in by them. The research officer, in the same report, evaluated the project workers' contribution as follows:

"There is ample evidence that the project workers are able to communicate with many youngsters in a way that social workers cannot. They deal in a far more natural way with the kids and treat them like younger siblings. Obviously the project workers have not been able to perform miracles in every case and get through to the adolescents, but at least they are heard, and in many instances listened to after repeated efforts.

As for their dealings with the parents of the adolescents who come to the Project, the project workers have on the whole done well. They have been generally well received. They communicate on a level which the parents as well as the kids seem to feel is sensible as well as relaxed and informal.

Another way in which the project workers showed considerable maturity at a very early stage was their willingness to admit, in spite of the considerable pressure that would normally have made them unwilling to do so, that there were certain children who would gain no benefits from coming to the Project. Project workers went so far as to recommend to the magistrates that certain youngsters be institutionalised. This impressed the magistrates considerably. They felt that they could trust the judgement of the project workers since they were clearly not just trying to get youngsters off, but were seriously considering the best course for each individual case. Thus the project workers have managed to develop a good reciprocal relationship with the courts."

This view is strongly supported by Mr. J. Garfield, a juvenile court magistrate. *"I have been very impressed by the project workers' performance in court"*, he comments. *"They are clearly in touch with and know the teenagers better than professional social workers. They go less into the underlying reasons for delinquency than professional social workers, but they speak on a very practical level and obviously spend more time with and are closer to the youngsters."*

It seems to those involved that the ideal staff mix is a balance of experienced professional staff and New Careerists. If possible the New Careerists should be drawn largely from the local community and have experienced the same sort of deprivations as the majority of their clients; but they should also have gained a level of maturity and stability which will enable them to respond positively and reliably to teenagers.

Experience also shows how important it is to have a clear definition of each person's work and responsibilities. There is a need for thorough induction training and a familiarising with relevant types of social work, the Project and the area, before a New Careerist starts work with teenagers. Ideally, this induction training should last six months, during which the New Careerist should be attached to the project and supervised by a staff member, but should work outside the project in a variety of agencies, projects and institutions, in order to familiarise himself both with different kinds of social work and with the area. There will subsequently be a need for continuing on-the-job training and support for New Careerists from the professional staff and from professionals outside the project. The project found that it took over a year for its team/support structure to become established, and for regular on-the-job training to be accepted by project workers.

It is also extremely important, as the project found, to clarify expectations. In the beginning New Careerists were encouraged to think that, by joining the project, careers in social work could ultimately be open to them. This possibility was probably over-sold, even though the project staff realised that expectations of future careers in social work should not be raised too high. It was made clear that employment in such a project can give skills and experience which might help towards further work and training in the social work field if a New Careerist decided he wanted to pursue it. It was agreed that every encouragement should be given to New Careerists to attend courses and, to enable this to occur, it was recognised that the project should budget for funds to allow staff away on courses to be replaced.

Community Links

A teenager's stay with the project is short term, the aim being to

integrate him into the local community through involving him with a person or group of people locally who can offer more permanent support to him and his family. This means that the support and involvement of the local community is essential to the project's success. Unusually in the experience of projects for teenagers, there has been almost no opposition locally, and gradually the project has built up help and co-operation.

Michael Whitlam wrote in his first report: *"We have been fortunate, I believe, in being able to set the Project up in an Inner London borough where many enlightened people live and work. So many people in the borough have said there is a desperate need for work to be carried out with delinquent teenagers that opposition has been minimal."*

Some of the project's attempts to involve the community were outlined in Chapter II. Despite these attempts, the development of community support and ties has proved very elusive, particularly in terms of providing long term support for teenagers leaving the project and their families, and progress made in this direction has been less than was originally envisaged. The lesson of this may be that a project as dependent on community support as the Hammersmith Teenage Project must be careful not to develop faster than it can build up community resources.

The project has nevertheless demonstrated that a variety of "community links" can be mobilised to support and exert a positive influence on a teenager at risk. In forming any such links, the aim is to locate people with whom the teenager relates well and whom he respects, who can exercise a stabilising and positive influence on him. An additional aim in many cases will be to put the teenager in situations where he can develop his talents positively and constructively and gain a sense of personal achievement.

The project found that the first type of "community link" which can be developed is support from relatives, close friends of the family and "proxy parents, aunts or uncles." Even in the large impersonal blocks of flats on the White City Estate, there is some evidence to suggest that people on the same floor can be found who are prepared to give a teenager support.

✓ The second type of "community link" is that which goes further than merely forming a one-to-one link and involves the teenager in the local community's activities in some way - for example, as play leaders in a summer play scheme for younger children organised by or with a local tenants' association, or by other forms of community service.

Some teenagers at risk can also receive support from youth clubs of the kind which are particularly geared to the so-called "unclubbable" teenagers.

The third type of community link can be provided by work experience programmes, where local employers agree to take a teenager for a couple of days a week in a work situation: for example, a garage manager may agree to take a boy who is particularly interested in cars and car maintenance. Valuable individual relationships can often spring from work situations, as well as placing the teenager in a position where he gains work experience and ideally a sense of achievement from this.

In order to make tangible the community involvement on which a project like the Hammersmith Teenage Project depends, a number of conditions need to be fulfilled. It should be a neighbourhood project, sited in an area where there is a potential community which either already sees itself as such, or can be helped to, and its premises should be used by the local community as a community centre. Some staff should be drawn from the local community. Thorough ground work needs to be done so that it is seen locally as a resource to the project. It must not try to serve too large an area or it will not be seen as a community project, rather as an institution. The project has found that it works most effectively with teenagers from North Hammersmith, which is the area in which it is sited.

Inter-Agency Co-operation

No project which aims to divert teenagers from the criminal justice system can operate without the co-operation of that system and of the relevant statutory agencies, and one of the assumptions behind the project was that it would be of more benefit to teenagers if the agencies concerned could co-ordinate their work, rather than operate in isolation. Regular contact with agencies at all levels of staff is essential for any community-based project for young offenders, to ensure that the aims and activities of the project are understood.

(i) **Courts:** Initially it was agreed with the Juvenile Court that in suitable cases the court should be asked to defer sentence for three months, on the understanding that the juvenile would work with the project during that time. On his return to court, if the project's report indicated that he showed promise of permanent change, the court could consider imposing an absolute or conditional discharge. The aim is that this should be handled in such a way that the teenager will understand he is being offered the opportunity of a real alternative to being sent to an institution if he is prepared to try to work with the project, but that

he is not compelled to attend. In the first year, magistrates sent 12 teenagers to the project, having deferred sentence, and of the 40 teenagers who attended the project in 1976, 18 had had sentences deferred.

A number of factors may account for the high degree of confidence in the project on the part of magistrates. As mentioned earlier, from the outset, project workers showed a willingness to admit there were certain youngsters who would not benefit from the project, and recommended that some of these might benefit from institutional care. This demonstrated that the project was not trying to get teenagers 'off', but was seriously considering the best course for each case individually. Moreover, the project seems to offer something positive - education and a variety of other activities, and a means of keeping children occupied and off the streets, while not removing them from their own environment.

(ii) **Police:** Initially it was hoped that the project could provide for the police an alternative to sending certain juveniles before the court. The police did not see the project as offering alternatives to their present procedure, i.e. cautioning or court, but as an additional means of helping a juvenile to keep out of trouble. They agreed, where appropriate, at the time of cautioning to recommend to a juvenile and his parents that he should participate in the project. They also agreed to refer juveniles to the project between arrest and court appearance, on the understanding that, if they attended the project, the project would speak for them in court.

However, in the first year there were only two referrals from the police, despite satisfactory contact with them on a day-to-day basis. Though the police had the option to refer teenagers they cautioned to the project, they refrained from doing so at the beginning because of the 'hard core' nature of the teenagers already on the project, which they felt would increase the risk to others rather than reduce it. The police needed to see this kind of project as successful before deciding to extend their cautioning powers.

By the end of 1976, the police had referred only six teenagers to the project at the time of cautioning; but in the first five months of 1977 they referred 20 and extended their discretion to include juveniles being prosecuted and those against whom they were taking no further action. Of those cautioned and referred to the project, in most cases the decision to refer is taken after the decision to caution or prosecute, rather than as an alternative to prosecution as was originally hoped.

Only in the minority of cases where the existence of the project has influenced the decision to caution the teenager is the project acting strictly speaking as a form of diversion from the criminal justice system.

The police may find it difficult to extend their discretionary powers, which would enable them to refer more teenagers to the project, for a number of reasons. Obviously there is the fear of 'contamination' and the very reasonable fear of labelling a teenager as delinquent by referring him to the project. Since the system of cautioning is itself intended as a diversion from the criminal justice system any further intervention might be seen as a sanction. In more serious cases they are clearly reluctant to make a referral in lieu of prosecution because attendance at the project is voluntary and they see responsibility for discretionary decisions in more serious cases as lying within the jurisdiction of the courts.

(iii) **Education Authority:** The project's relationship to the local education authority is different from its relationship to the courts and police in that the ILEA provides the salary of one full-time teacher, two part-time teachers, a full-time youth worker and a number of youth work sessions.

It was recognised from the beginning that many of the teenagers referred to the project would not be attending school regularly. What had not been foreseen was that almost every teenager referred to the project would be having trouble with school. Of the first intake, almost all had been suspended or expelled. The ILEA soon realised that the project was a useful resource in that it was prepared to take teenagers that no school was either prepared to take, or able to keep. The project realised that close co-operation with local schools was imperative, if the project were to realise its aim of returning teenagers to school.

Unfortunately it has proved almost impossible to return 15-year-olds to school, and many younger teenagers were returned but did not stay. This is partly accounted for by the fact that, although keen to learn, these young people cannot cope with a normal school classroom. Return to school is particularly hard after an absence, as in addition to their initial difficulties, they are now often strangers in their classroom without the support of friends.

The project staff came to feel that it was unrealistic to expect many such teenagers to return to school unless schools were prepared to recognise their difficulties and make provision for them initially. They

need to be part of the school, share in the games, and build up acquaintances and friends who can gradually help them back into a normal classroom. (There is also a small group of maladjusted children who will never fit into a normal classroom and for whom the ILEA makes special provision).

The project now has an agreement with schools and the ILEA whereby no teenager under 15 is accepted until the education authority has agreed some future provision for education. Prior to this agreement, a number of teenagers had remained on the project for many months because no school could be found for them. In the case of 15-year-olds, the ILEA is co-operating with the project's special programme to prepare them for employment.

The ILEA also pays for a youth worker and gives some additional resources. This commitment to the project provides valuable support, resources and local contacts for the youth worker in particular, and the project as a whole: youth workers in the community can provide valuable support for teenagers leaving the project.

(iv) **Social Services:** The project was set up in close co-operation with the Social Services Department, which provides the premises and running costs and the salary of one full-time social worker. Without the close co-operation of the Social Services, it would not be possible to run the project as a resource for the criminal justice system.

In the first year, of 67 teenagers referred to the project (42 were accepted), 49 were referred by Social Services, including the 12 whose sentences had been deferred. In 1976, nearly half of the teenagers who attended the project were referred by Social Services, including the 18 whose sentences had been deferred.

The relationship between Social Services and the project has always been close at Director level, and the number of teenagers referred to the project indicates a good relationship at field level. Most social workers recognise a need for more supervision and attention than they are able to give to most teenagers, and view the project as somewhere they can get extra help. The project has a formal liaison arrangement with one area team, and an informal one with another.

Initially social workers were anxious about confidentiality, and reluctant to give any information to New Careerists about clients they referred to the Project, preferring to liaise only with qualified members of staff. This antagonised the project workers, but is no longer a problem as

social workers have gained confidence in project workers and come to see them as colleagues.

On the other hand, the New Careers philosophy, in the early days, tended to emphasise over-zealously the innate skills and experience of New Careerists in a way which apparently down-graded the value of professional social work training and methods. One effect was that social workers felt criticised, and excluded from the work the project was doing. This seems to have improved, but a recent survey, carried out by the local authority, indicates that a number of social workers still feel that the project does not want to involve them in programmes for individual clients. Project workers on the other hand sometimes get the impression that social workers dump difficult clients on them and leave them to it.

In April 1977, as originally envisaged, the local authority's Social Services Committee agreed to take over the project at the end of its three-year experimental period, and this handover is clearly another area of experience in which important lessons will be learned. Such a management handover from a voluntary agency to a statutory agency is fraught with potential problems and is being planned carefully, with the involvement of all staff.

Peter Westland, Hammersmith's Director of Social Services, is very conscious of the problems which the project's experimental nature poses for the local authority. *"The project will be absorbed into a clear hierarchy of accountability,"* he points out, *"yet its success has depended largely on the innovatory initiatives of the staff. The local authority has to be very conscious of the status and authority which it gives to the project and its Director.*

"It is very easy for the local authority to attempt to 'take care of' issues which in the past the Director has dealt with personally. If it doesn't reach agreement with the project on what things should be 'taken care of', there is a danger of demoralising the Director or perhaps diminishing his identification with essential negotiations. For example, it would have been easy for us to have negotiated with ILEA arrangements for their financial and staffing contribution after the handover. We could have excluded the Director from these discussions for the best of motives - to spare him the tedium of two bureaucracies talking to each other - but to have done so would have excluded the project staff from an essential bit of the developmental process."

Michael Whitlam considers that the handover should not adversely affect the way the project operates. *"The staff feel that the project has*

established itself as a project in its own right and that the local community should not notice the change in management", he says "The major change will be probably in the project Director's role and relationship to the local authority, and he should protect the staff from unnecessary pressure resulting from the handover.

"As the project evolves, so our links with the community strengthen. We will be in a slightly more difficult position once we are part of Social Services, as our interests may be in conflict but this point has been thoroughly discussed by the management and project staff and neither side feels unduly concerned. It is vital during such a handover to ensure that everyone is agreed on what exactly is being handed over, and this certainly has happened in this case."

4

The Life of an Experimental Project as seen by the Director

by Michael Whittle

This book aims to show the principles involved in the Hammersmith Teenage Project and the results and lessons for future development work to be carried out in this area. However, in this chapter I hope to show the stages that the project went through as I feel that this would enormously help any person in the future who is given the task of setting up and running a similar project and in fact it may have implications for other experimental projects also.

At the time of my appointment I had decided that custody was inappropriate for the vast majority of offenders that I had met in the prisons and borstals where I worked. The opportunity to set up and run an alternative project was for me very exciting as I was given the challenge of moving into a new area with ideas that had not been tested elsewhere. Therefore, for me, this was a time of enormous activity. With any new project the first period is one where there is much enthusiasm and everyone concerned wants to discuss and iron out any problems that may arise. This will prove not to be the case later.

The first job I felt I must do was to explore any experience of diversion that existed and as it did not exist in this country I had to visit New York. I met many people and talked about the project brief - given to me by the Steering Committee - and my ideas for implementing this brief. I was very confused as I had many ideas and a unique opportunity which I did not want to waste. It was a period of gathering opinions, infor-

mation and assessment. I felt particularly that it was a period of assessment as I was assessing the people that I would have to work with, and they were assessing me. Luckily the majority were sympathetic to the ideas and had had to cope for so long with the increasing problems of juvenile crime that they were prepared to listen and discuss reasonably. There are always the cynics who start out doubting and spend time trying to prove that they are correct. *"You will learn . . ."*, *"It will never work . . ."* and *"Don't say we did not warn you . . ."* were phrases that I was to hear many times.

In the first three or four months I spent much time talking to people, meeting groups and visiting organisations locally and it was not until I had to begin taking on staff and sorting out the premises that the problems began to arrive.

The funds and building had been secured prior to my appointment, both were on fixed period contracts. I did not want to waste time as three years did not seem to be long at all. In retrospect it was a bad move starting the project not having the funding co-ordinated with the building work and the appointing of staff. I was unable, through lack of space, to take on the whole staff and we were restricted in the numbers of young people that we could take on. It was one year from my appointment before we were able to move into the permanent premises and operate in the way we intended. This is something that should be avoided if at all possible.

In April 1975 I took on six staff prior to taking any teenagers and this was the first problem. I had talked long and hard about New Careerists and delinquents and programmes and we felt that we needed a period of orientation so that we could get to know each other. This programme lasted five weeks and was not a pleasant experience for any of us, although personally I felt that I knew the staff better because of it. For me and for the staff this was the first real experience of doubt about the job and the euphoria of the past few months began to fade.

However, we all felt prepared to begin taking referrals and did so from May 5th. In order to restrict numbers we deliberately chose to take the hard core referrals. This created problems for staff and referral agencies alike, and proved not to be the best decision I had ever taken. The temporary building was not in the main area of Hammersmith and I was unable to establish useful links. I resorted to erecting a large notice outside the building giving my name and the name of the project. A residents' deputation was quickly formed and came to see me. They had hoped to have the building as a residents' association base and our arrival

had upset them considerably. I explained that we were only there on a temporary basis and that I could also help them using my newly established contacts. This I was able to do and I also offered the job of cleaner to one of the ladies concerned. This helped our local relationship and we are still in contact with them even though we have moved out of their area. Our contact with the local residents' association did help a little, however, not as much as was necessary.

Once a few youngsters began to arrive the work emphasis and pace changed but we were faced with a long summer break very soon after starting. We planned a trip to North Wales and the trip was to be highly staffed and take place whilst I was on holiday. I learned another lesson about working with New Careerists and also about managing multi-disciplinary staff. I felt that every contingency had been planned for except what to do if the teenagers committed an offence or if the staff disagreed as to how to deal with a crisis. On the last evening of the visit unbeknown to the staff some of the boys did commit offences and the project was reeling from that problem for months after. The staff were demoralised and some cynics were quietly chuckling to themselves. Nevertheless, we survived and spirits began to improve as we took on more staff in anticipation of the new building being complete. We moved in on November 23rd, 1975 and spent only one week working out team structures and programmes. Christmas was a pleasant end to a most frustrating year.

1976 began with renewed enthusiasm and people began to establish a pattern of work. However, there was a good deal of pressure from groups that we worked with to fit into categories that they understood. By the middle of the year staff were beginning to question the direction that they were going. This was not helped by the difficulties in setting up an evening programme. One result of the restrictions in the temporary building was that some staff had to break the habit of only working daytime hours. I think that it is vital to establish the pattern of work desired from the outset and not compromise the programme, as it only produces difficulties later. We may in fact have taken on, as an experimental project, more than was sensible. In addition to the problem of establishing work patterns and programmes we had decided to employ New Careerists in key posts. I was keen not to force too much training on to these people in the hope that their natural skills would show through. However, we had not bargained for the considerable support that these young staff needed in coping with the switch from 'client' to worker. This has proved to be a problem throughout the life of the project and we worked out induction programmes to

cope with it. I think that now we have sufficient experience to know when to offer support and when to make demands. There are no short cuts to this problem; using my New York experience I thought that I would be able to short circuit some difficulties but many problems have to be worked through as a means of reaching the desired state and structure in which to work.

By the middle of 1976 we had experimented with a number of approaches and were still able to try out unorthodox methods without too much difficulty. The staff were still not settled and sure about direction. This was not I feel, due to any lack of clarity in the original brief but largely lack of experience and real understanding on the part of those people with whom we worked outside the project. By this time also we had lost two staff, one who left to go to a "better job" and the other for a variety of reasons. Both people in some ways were victims of the confusion of the start of an experimental project and their leaving left the rest of us with a certain feeling of failure and concern. I think that it was around this time that morale really slumped to an all time low. Many staff talked of internal problems and of leaving; so much so that it was decided to hold a review of the project.

The review took the shape of individual discussions with staff resulting in a number of issues being raised. The youth worker then produced a discussion document which formed the basis of the staff discussions. Around this time also more staff talked of leaving and in many respects if some of the changes were to be implemented it was necessary to lose some of the very good staff. I am convinced that working on an experimental project requires a different type of worker than for working on an established project. Qualities of determination, flexibility, staying power and stability are perhaps obvious qualities for most jobs but more important on an experimental project.

From the review we were able to re-affirm the original aims and objectives and that I think says a great deal for the sound way in which this project was set up. The review both at a staff level and at management level seemed to focus on methods and approaches. Some job descriptions were changed to cater for a new understanding of the needs of the project - based this time on experience. Selection processes were altered as were support structures.

By Christmas 1976 the most uncomfortable three months of my professional career were over and the Hammersmith Teenage Project Mark III was born. This time it was based on tested ideas with committed staff selected with a greater understanding of the likely

workload. It seemed that we were now set for a period of consolidation where the young people on the project would reap the benefits. I am sure that that is so because now in September/October 1977 we have a very competent and professional staff who are able to give the teenagers what I consider as good a service as there is at present in the country.

For me 1977 has meant that in addition to the normal running of the Project I have had to concern myself with two other factors. Early on in the year we had the preparation for the hand-over to the local authority. This required the pulling together of available research data in order that it could be presented to Hammersmith Council. Negotiations with Hammersmith Council had been going on throughout the project but from January to June we worked hard on them. By July we knew that we had been successful in negotiating the hand-over of the project from NACRO to the London Borough of Hammersmith to take effect from 1st April, 1978. It remained then to work through with staff any problems that might arise with the change in managing body.

The second major piece of work was, as should be the case with any experimental project, a review of the lessons learned and the dissemination of those lessons. This book forms part of that work. However, it is still necessary to take time to talk and share experiences with others in the field. I have chosen to do this through conferences, articles and allowing a steady flow of visitors to the Project. I am sure that this is a major part of the work. However, one must not forget that the other project workers may not see it as a major part of their work and they should not be prevented from carrying out their normal tasks with the client group. Neither should the client group be compromised. The story does not finish there however as I feel that, as we are part of a continuing search for alternative methods of care and treatment, we have a responsibility to continue the developmental work by encouraging others to have the courage to take risks and try something different. We must also be able to allow others to make use of our experience, both good and bad.

I hope that this chapter - which was not intended to give details of our work and operational procedure - will show that it is possible to survive the trials and tribulations of an experimental project, survive the label "charismatic nut" and develop new ideas. I was lucky I had sound back-up in NACRO and intelligent, caring, although often highly emotional staff to put up with a Director whose ideals were high but achievable.

5

Some Conclusions

This booklet does not set out to suggest that the Hammersmith Teenage Project has found a model that all other non-custodial projects for young people could emulate. However, those who have set up and been responsible for the running of the project are sure that what they have provided is at least as successful as the much more expensive custodial alternatives and contains some pointers towards a more rational policy for juvenile offenders for the future.

Lessons learned so far from the project are not new and may have been obvious to many before the project began. Others may find that they can learn from the project's experience, the mistakes it made and the ideas that worked. Since the project is continuing - and we hope it will continue for as long as there is a demand for it in Hammersmith - the picture we have given in this booklet of a fixed time scale within which ideas were tested out, changed, developed and then pronounced successful or unsuccessful, is a false one. As the booklet goes to press other changes are being made and the process of development continues. The research programme also carries on until September 1978 and a full research report should be available soon after that.

In the meantime, however, certain conclusions may be drawn even though they may need to be modified as time goes by.

One clear conclusion from the work of the project is that more co-operation between all the agencies working with young people is

essential. The fragmentation and differentiation of young people's services makes it all too easy for bad decisions to be taken and for responsibilities to be passed from one agency to another. It is a widely held view that closer co-operation is essential. The Personal Social Services Council in the report *"A Future for Intermediate Treatment"* (10) recommended the setting up of liaison groups centrally and locally to bring together officers of different agencies, elected members, magistrates, professional workers, indigenous workers and volunteers from the community. The House of Commons Expenditure Committee in its report on the Children and Young Persons Act 1969 (11) also called for the setting up of liaison committees. In its Observations on the Expenditure Committee Report (12) the Government called for *"greater mutual understanding, consultation and co-operation among all those who share responsibility for helping children in trouble and protecting and re-assuring the community"*. The experience of the Hammersmith Teenage Project would certainly lead to support for this recommendation.

Of all the agencies involved, the role of the education system in relation to the young person in trouble is perhaps the most difficult one. It is worth re-stating that virtually all the Hammersmith Teenage Project youngsters were having difficulties at school and many could not cope with the school environment. Clearly school must serve the interests of the majority of children and cannot be run for the benefit of the difficult or disturbed few. On the other hand, school is the one agency which has long term contact with all young people up to the age of 16 and which could play a large part in helping some of these young people through their difficult times. In fact, many schools do divert considerable resources to the caring side of the educational process. Some schools now employ social workers on their staff and research on the impact of such appointments suggests that they may reduce the incidence of juvenile offending. This seems to be a worthwhile area for development and it is to be hoped that such schemes in schools will be extended.

The courts are in a sense at the centre of the whole process of dealing

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- (10) *A Future for Intermediate Treatment*. Personal Social Services Council. June 1977.
- (11) *Eleventh Report from the Expenditure Committee. The Children and Young Persons Act 1969*. HMSO July 1975.
- (12) *Observations on the Eleventh Report from the Expenditure Committee. The Children and Young Persons Act 1969*. HMSO 1976.

with juvenile offenders. The Hammersmith Teenage Project found the courts helpful to them and most of the magistrates were actively seeking appropriate alternatives to custody for those who appeared before them, some with saddening regularity. Unfortunately alternatives are few. The experience of the project suggests that magistrates are willing and eager to use alternatives and the problem lies in the shortage of such alternatives, not in any enthusiasm on the part of the magistrates for more custodial sentences.

The police, too, are central. The police in Hammersmith have supported the project and to a limited extent they have used it as an addition to the cautioning procedure to divert selected juvenile offenders from the court process. This seems to have been worthwhile and there would be great benefit in setting up further experiments in other areas. The role of the police is very important in any development regarding young people in trouble and any organisation setting up projects for young people would do well to involve the police from an early stage.

Finally, close liaison and continuing co-operation with all levels of the local authority social services department, and with councillors serving on the social services committee, has of course been essential in relation to such matters as finance, referrals to the project, effective links with the juvenile court and many other aspects of the project's functioning. Moreover, without such co-operation, the eventual hand-over of the project to the local authority could not have taken place with the same confidence that it will be allowed to retain the flexibility which has proved fundamental to its effective operation.

The involvement of all these professional agencies is essential; so too is the involvement of the lay community. Community involvement was basic to the ideas behind the Hammersmith Teenage Project. Just as the problems which lead many young people into trouble were rooted within their community, so it was felt were the solutions. To take a child from the community to which he was to return seemed illogical. The problems needed to be tackled on the spot with the involvement of the people who formed the young person's environment. This idea has proved more difficult to put into practice than had been expected and, though there have been some advances, this part of the project has not been as successful as was originally hoped. This has not diminished the belief that the community should be much more involved with its difficult young people but has pointed to the need for much more experimentation with ways of bringing this about.

The contribution of the New Careerists has undoubtedly been of great

value and, although some of the more naive presumptions were challenged, the basic concept has more than proved its worth. More experimentation with the New Careers concept is necessary and more attention could well be given by the training agencies and social work employers to the possibilities of developing the potential of this group.

Now, at the end of its first three experimental years, the Hammersmith Teenage Project believes that others may benefit from learning both of its successes and of its mistakes. We are happy to share our experience with others in the hope that the imagination, the drive and the necessary resources will be forthcoming to ensure the establishment of such a project in every area with juvenile crime problems comparable to those of the London Borough of Hammersmith.

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