

EVALUATION OF ST GILES CHOICES PROGRAMME: Depth Qualitative study

Research aimed to explore the individual, community, and systemic reasons/risk factors for youth offending, gain insights into the experiences of young people encountering the Criminal Justice System (CJS) and understand the challenges these young people experience in attaining education, training, and employment outcomes. The research explored effective support for reducing barriers and improving outcomes for young people.

COMMUNITY AND SYSTEMIC RISK FACTORS OF INVOLVEMENT IN CRIME

The findings presented here are based on in-depth interviews with nine stakeholders working with young people, and five young people supported by St.Giles

Young people thought that living in a community where criminal activity was prevalent increased the risk for young people becoming involved in crime.

Lack of positive activities and opportunities for young people were seen as a barrier.

Stakeholders had concerns about the rising cost of living, unemployment, low income, and debt. They thought poverty was a significant risk factor for young people being vulnerable to exploitation and involvement in crime.



“Because they are like a product of their environment. I have friends that have been to prison a couple of times... I asked my friend how he got into that certain lifestyle.... He was involved in drugs and violence and weapons and that kind of stuff. He said that if he had grown up in an area that did not have that kind of surroundings, he thinks he would not have got into that kind of lifestyle”

Young person

“One of the main drivers is money and opportunity. We need to be able to say you can make more money legitimately and you don't have to look over your back. But how can we bring those opportunity to inner city kids?”

Stakeholder

FAMILY AND INDIVIDUAL RISK FACTORS

Stakeholders and young people felt risk factors were;

- Neglect at home
- Poor mental health
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
- Special educational needs and disability
- Substance use
- Disengagement from education
- Lack of parental capacity



“The majority you find have been in trouble at school or kicked out of school... labelled as that ‘naughty child’... then ended up in the CJS... they now feel ‘I can’t get a job because I’ve not got the qualifications, or no one will take me now because of my criminal record’”

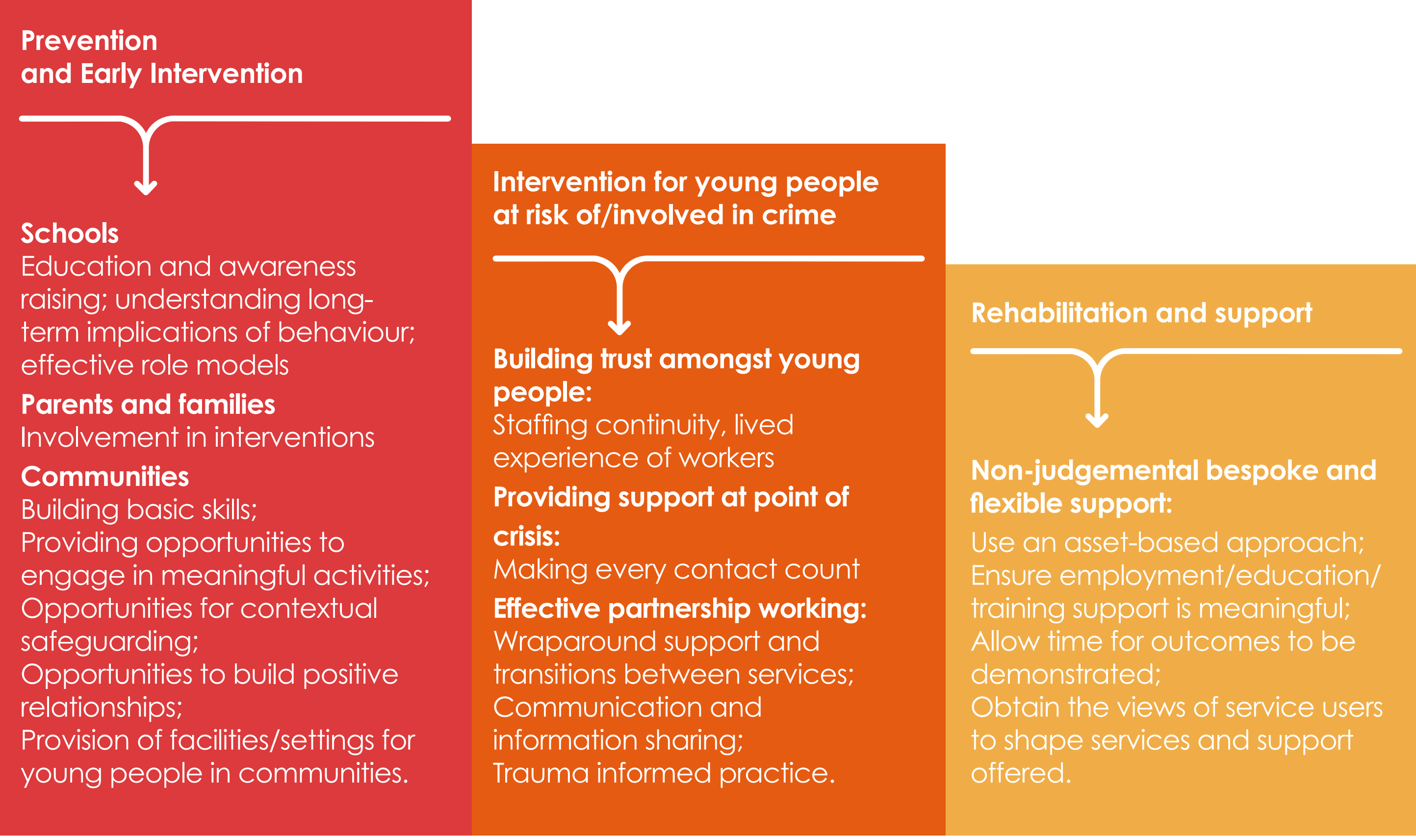
Stakeholder

“Some young people say that there’s no good qualities about them. A lot of them don’t know what they want to do when they grow up as well”

Young Person

EFFECTIVE SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Key factors that were considered to effectively support young people



“I think if I had had a different kind of view on life, and maybe some different things to get myself involved in when I was younger, then yes that could have made a change in my life”

Young person

“They think that they’re not worthy anymore. Letting them know that everything is possible, and they can get work and they have got a future”

Stakeholder

Prevention and early intervention	What worked for young people at risk or involved in crime
<p>Stakeholders / young people thought more and longer-term mental health support is needed for young people. This would help to prevent the risk of involvement in crime, and support for those experiencing the long-term mental health impacts of traumas linked to offending.</p> <p>Stakeholders advocated for investment in voluntary community-based projects to provide young people with a safe space to engage in meaningful activities. Support from role models and those with lived experience was recommended to effectively engage young people.</p>	<p>Stakeholders / young people thought young people need a non-judgemental safe space with skilled practitioners who can build trust, break down barriers and advocate for them. Multiagency working is essential for this and supports referrals between services to both escalate or deescalate support.</p> <p>Two approaches were increasingly thought to be effective:</p> <p>A) A trauma informed approach, ensuring that professionals look beyond the crime.</p> <p>B) An asset-based approach to supporting young people to recognise their skills and provide opportunities to develop new skills in areas of interest.</p>

The findings are based on a small number of interviews and seek to illustrate a range of experiences and viewpoints. The findings presented reflect only the perspectives of those interviewed and cannot be generalised to the whole population.