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**Youth offending unit report**

# **An evaluation of the ACFA Outreach project in Wales in 2007**



# An evaluation of the ACFA OUTREACH project in Wales in 2007

## Contents

Executive summary	page 2
Recommendations	page 5
Introduction	page 7
Partnership arrangements	page 10
Expectations of OUTREACH	page 23
Targeting and referral	page 25
Preparing young people	page 31
Young people referred in 2007	page 34
Programmes	page 40
Supporting young people	page 48
Achievements and awards	page 55
Feedback	page 58
Evaluating outcomes	page 60
Reoffending	page 67
Young people's views	page 72
Appendix 1: Methodology	page 78
Appendix 2: Interviewees	page 81



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Front cover photos: taken at an ACFA OUTREACH course held in Wales in 2006 and supplied by Lt Col Paul Hayden, national co-ordinator

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## Executive summary

Nacro Cymru was commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government to undertake an evaluation of the activities of the all Wales Army Cadet Force Association (ACFA) Youth and Community Outreach Project in 2007 (OUTREACH). In 2007 and 2008 the Welsh Assembly Government provided funding to ACFA to work with youth offending teams (YOTs) and secondary schools in Wales to engage young people at risk of social exclusion and involvement in the youth justice system. Community safety partnerships and YOTs in Wales can also use their Safer Communities Fund allocations to engage with OUTREACH projects.

The aim of the evaluation is to examine the impact of OUTREACH on young people who participated in 2007 and to ascertain whether involvement resulted in an improvement in their behaviour and the prevention of (or a reduction in) offending. The programme is made up of a range of team and individual activities that aim to foster personal development, for example gaining self-awareness and self-confidence. The rationale is this gives young people the skills and self-belief to address problem areas of their lives and therefore promotes social inclusion.

The Rhondda Cynon Taff (RCT) Partnership for Youth project – a partnership between the youth offending service (YOS) and Glamorgan Army Cadet Force (ACF) – was evaluated by Nacro in 2002. It was found that the project had a positive effect on those that participated in terms of helping them to improve their self-confidence and self-awareness, as well as preventing further offending. The scope of this current study has been much broader in that it has encompassed schools and other YOTs that have referred young people to OUTREACH courses in Wales in 2007 as well as the RCT YOS Partnership for Youth project. The ACFA national co-ordinator was interviewed, as were all ACF project leaders who administer and deliver the courses and the partners they work with. There are variations in the way all areas operate their programmes and whom they choose to engage with, but all are working towards the same broad aims of reducing the risk of social exclusion, offending or involvement in the criminal justice system. This is compatible with the Welsh Assembly's aims in *Extending Entitlement* and of providing appropriate preventative interventions, although it should be noted that one of the schools included in this study is located in England.

Some of the OUTREACH projects operate more effectively than others; the level of engagement and involvement achieved between partners and ACF is critical to success. The initiative is not without its challenges as types of organisations which are culturally very different are working together. But where it works well the positives outweigh the negatives and partners try and address problems constructively, implement the lessons learned and seek to develop the courses.

Good communication and relationships between ACF and its partners, and clear expectations about what the OUTREACH programme can deliver and achieve are commonly seen as the ingredients of successful partnerships. The fact that the project provides an 'alternative' way of engaging with young people away from the classroom or appointment-based work is important. Young people successfully completing the programme and having their achievements recognised is also extremely important. Partners indicate they want a close degree of contact and to be consulted and involved in the processes, whether in the planning arrangements, reviewing how programmes operate, receiving feedback about young people's engagement or being clear about the differing roles and responsibilities and what engagement with OUTREACH means for them. Delivering what is intended to a high standard is also seen as essential.

Similarly where partnerships have experienced challenges it has been in ensuring that the programme is funded and resourced not only with maintenance in mind but also expansion. Promoting OUTREACH as a positive activity to teaching and YOT staff remains a difficulty because of assumptions about the military connection, and this appears to be the most common reason for deciding not to engage with it. Fully securing the active participation of partners in the programme, clarifying the responsibilities of all concerned and ensuring that young people are appropriately targeted and referred all require continuous attention. Finally, having the right staff and volunteers in place who can work with and communicate with young people who are sometimes difficult and challenging is essential if they are to have a positive experience. Less effective partnerships lack structure. In addition, they tend to be those where partners do not have a clear concept of what OUTREACH is aiming to achieve, are unsure about whom to refer, feel that problems are not addressed or that requirements are not sufficiently taken into account. In some instances this had led to confidence in OUTREACH being undermined and a lack of willingness to continue or reservations about engagement.

ACF and its partners need to consider how they can develop the evidence base for their work in terms of obtaining feedback directly from young people and in ensuring that partners complete and provide comprehensive follow-up evaluations. The promotion of effective practice should be an integral element of youth justice activity and a firm evidence base that indicates good outcomes can be a powerful tool in promoting the project.

Young people need to be properly and thoroughly prepared for the experience, given the choice of whether to engage or not and be encouraged to succeed if they do complete the course they attend. All areas try and ensure that these elements are covered. In terms of referrals and engagement, more boys than girls take part and the average age of participants is 13 years.

Young people's experiences of the programme are very positive. All partners observed improvements in self-confidence, self-esteem and behaviour. The research found that where information was made available for a number of young people three and nine months after they had completed an OUTREACH course, 92% had shown positive improvements in the initial period and 77% had

continued to sustain these at nine months (figures were available for 63% of those participating in 2007). Importantly, young people also indicated that participation helped them to learn new skills, gain confidence, feel better about themselves, get on better with adults and become involved in new activities. This suggests the aims of OUTREACH are being met and the factors it is trying to deal with through their referral criteria are being addressed. However, the findings are biased, reflecting the impressions and views of schoolchildren as it proved difficult to gather the views of some of those who had been referred by YOTs. However, this does not negate the findings.

Information from the RCT YOS Partnership for Youth programme and for those that participated in Glamorgan OUTREACH as a result of South Wales Police support indicate good outcomes for all young people in respect of reoffending, particularly in the short term but, significantly, that those who complete the course appear more likely to desist from offending than those that do not. The findings indicate that 90% of young people did not reoffend within three months, 88% did not within six months and 76% did not within twelve months of participating in the project. For those that completed the course they attended this was 98%, 95% and 86% respectively. This suggests the programme can successfully be part of a range of interventions that promote desistance. However, the information should also be treated with caution. Its effect cannot be entirely viewed in isolation since the majority of the young people were engaged in wider programmes of support aimed at assisting them to overcome problems or difficulties, and the majority were either referred through a preventative route or were first time or low-level entrants to the criminal justice system. The complimentary nature of OUTREACH as part of a wider programme of support for young people is stressed in the promotional material produced by ACFA.

## Recommendations

If OUTREACH is to expand its work in Wales, there needs to be further promotion, although it is recognised that resources are needed to do this as additional courses require funding. There is little contact with YOTs other than those in South Wales through the programme that RCT Partnership for Youth has developed and those that South Wales Police sponsor. Elsewhere the contact is mainly with schools.

Promotion of OUTREACH to partners should focus on the referral criteria, who to target and the potential benefits of involvement for young people. There needs to be more clarity amongst YOTs that OUTREACH aims to help young people with a range of problems and that the project can address certain needs. The project is not intended to be one of 'one size fits all' and the ability to be flexible and to accommodate the needs and abilities of different participants must be recognised and encouraged in partnership working.

OUTREACH may be better suited to young people who come into contact with YOTs through prevention initiatives (and first time or low-level offenders) as they are likely to be nearer the target age group, present less challenging behaviour and the evidence suggests that those with low self-esteem or confidence and behavioural problems appear to benefit most. This needs to be reflected in the promotional literature and activity.

The under-representation of girls on some courses in Wales suggests this is an area that should be further explored to identify if there is anything more that can be done to attract them to the programme and to provide activities they would enjoy.

School staff did not comment to any significant degree about the expectations of their participation in courses (not all are required to do so) whereas YOT staff did. The role of support staff and what is required of them needs to be made more explicit. Their participation can be encouraging and supportive to young people and provides an alternative way of working with them. It is also a means of disseminating information about the programme to colleagues. However, partners and ACF need to work together to identify the best way of managing supervisory demands whilst on residential courses. It is recognised that there are very real practical difficulties in releasing staff to attend alongside the young people they refer, but the evidence suggests there are benefits to be gained if this can be achieved.

ACF needs to consider whether there is anything they can do to enhance the feedback provided to partners who have referred young people. This could be linked to promotion and would help to ensure they have an opportunity to give their views of how courses have been delivered as well as the impact on young

people. This should help YOTs and schools to build on positive progress and feed this into their curriculum and intervention plans.

There is also a need to consider how to build up a robust evidence base that illustrates successes and positive outcomes. This should develop as a result of better monitoring and evaluation of inputs and outcomes. Improved arrangements for obtaining feedback directly from young people also need to be put in place. Consideration should be given to ensuring that post-course evaluations and feedback are received as some indicate the nine-month timescale is too long and the level of returns is generally poor. A strong evidence base has the potential to assist promotion and to focus attention more positively on outcomes rather than military connections.

# Introduction

Nacro Cymru was commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government to undertake an evaluation of the activities of the all Wales Army Cadet Force Association (ACFA) Outreach Project in 2007 (OUTREACH). In 2007 and 2008 the Welsh Assembly Government provided funding support to ACFA to work with youth offending teams (YOTs) and secondary schools in Wales to engage young people at risk of social exclusion or involvement in the youth justice system. The Welsh Assembly Government has also informed community safety partnerships and YOTs that they can use their Safer Communities Fund allocations to support OUTREACH as part of crime prevention measures.

The aim of the evaluation is to examine the impact of the OUTREACH project on young people who participated in 2007 and to ascertain whether involvement resulted in an improvement in their behaviour or the prevention of (or a reduction in) offending. The evaluation covers:

- the working arrangements with partner agencies
- the processes used to target and refer young people
- an examination of the key components of OUTREACH
- an analysis of the young people referred who participated
- an analysis of the outcomes of the programme, including the views of the young people, parents/carers and partner agencies
- conclusions and recommendations.

In terms of methodology, the study examined all the areas where OUTREACH activity took place in Wales in 2007, talking to those Army Cadet Force (ACF) staff involved in administering and delivering courses and the agencies that referred young people to them. Additionally, young people and a small number of parents were consulted about their experiences and views of the project. Appendix 1 contains a fuller explanation of the methodology. Appendix 2 provides details of all those interviewed. All interviews took place in 2008.

## Background

The Ministry of Defence has an Armed Forces Youth Group Policy which supports government youth policies and develops strategies to work with young people, in particular those who are at risk of social exclusion or offending behaviour and likely to face a number of challenging issues. ACF is the main means through which this is delivered; however it is not a branch of the army nor a recruitment mechanism for it, although there are misconceptions about this.

ACFA set up OUTREACH in 1994. OUTREACH comprises courses lasting between three and five days for young people aged between 12 and 14 years of age. The courses are made up of a number of components: challenging activities such as

rock climbing; team and individual sports; and group work, for instance raft building. The programme of activity aims to help young people to learn skills and experience new activities either as individuals or through teamwork. By contributing to the planning and completion of complicated tasks and working with others it is intended they will learn more about their capabilities and gain the confidence through these experiences to acquire the skills they require in other aspects of their lives. Programmes are structured and are intended to be a challenging experience in a disciplined and supportive environment, through which young people can develop self-awareness and self-confidence. Courses can be tailored to a certain extent to meet the needs of those who attend. However, the range of activities provided varies from area to area depending on what is available and delivered locally. Young people take part on a voluntary basis.

OUTREACH is a volunteer-led and run programme. Each area in which it operates has a project leader who is an experienced volunteer ACF officer who has been trained in working with young people between 12 and 18 years of age. They include teachers, police officers and civil servants. Their role is to plan, organise and deliver the programmes, including liaising with partner agencies which are generally schools or YOTs within their locality. Courses are also run with the assistance of teenage army cadets, some of whom may previously have been course participants. Their role is to offer peer support to the young people who take part. Additionally, agencies that refer young people are expected to attend to provide extra support and discipline. All ACF units are supported by a small team of permanent staff headed by a cadet executive officer whose role is to provide administrative support, for example booking training areas, obtaining clearances, conducting risk assessment and providing stores and equipment.

## OUTREACH in Wales

Each ACF area is able to choose which partners it will engage with and offer the courses to. In Wales in 2007 there were six ACF areas:<sup>1</sup> Clwyd, Dyfed, Glamorgan, Gwent, Gwynedd and Powys. The OUTREACH programme was run in five of these areas, but not in Gwynedd due to a shortage of adult instructors. In Wales, ACF works with:

- Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) Youth Offending Service (YOS)
- South Wales Police
- secondary schools
- South Wales Fire and Rescue Service
- YOTs

In 2006, South Wales Fire and Rescue Service approached Powys ACF to provide an outward-bound course as part of the Dragon Programme – a 12 week fire and

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<sup>1</sup> The following is a breakdown of the local authorities covered by each ACF county: Clwyd – Conwy Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham; Dyfed – Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire; Glamorgan – Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Neath Port Talbot, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Swansea and the Vale of Glamorgan; Gwent – Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent, Newport, Monmouthshire and Torfean; Gwynedd; and Powys.

rescue-themed course, for young people aged 14 to 15 years old who are regularly absent from school. An OUTREACH course is the final element of the programme. This partnership is subject to its own arrangements with the ACF, and as such has not been included in this evaluation.

## Funding

OUTREACH receives funding and in-kind contributions from a variety of sources including the Ministry of Defence, the Welsh Assembly Government and local partners. Counties are encouraged to raise funds locally and where possible to request contributions from referring agencies. South Wales Police sponsor two courses a year (£9,000 in 2007) for young people engaged with the seven South Wales YOTs: Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Neath Port Talbot, RCT, Swansea and the Vale of Glamorgan.

To date the Welsh Assembly Government has provided funding support through the Safer Communities grant to ACF for OUTREACH activity: £60,000 in 2007, followed by £20,000 in 2008. Partners also make significant in-kind contributions in terms of staff time. RCT YOS, for example, indicated the investment of time and resources is significant, including staff time spent attending the courses, financially contributing towards the cost of equipment and transport for young people and support staff.

At the beginning of each year, the OUTREACH project leaders must submit an estimate of the number of participants they will engage with, the course dates/locations and a budget projecting the likely costs of running the courses. Funding is authorised by the ACFA national co-ordinator and finances are allocated from the ACFA central fund. This is done on a 'first come first served' basis. The cost of running the courses includes expenditure on instructors to deliver the courses and consumables such as minibus hire, fuel, food, clothing, visits to specialist activity providers and equipment. In 2006 the total spend was £60,999 with an average cost per head of £282.<sup>2</sup> In 2007, the actual expenditure on courses was £52,743, which equates to an average cost per head of £254, based on 207 participating (see page 34 for more details on this).

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<sup>2</sup> Hayden P (2006) 'ACFA Youth and Community Project OUTREACH: Summary report for the National Assembly for Wales on OUTREACH projects in 160 (Wales) Brigade area in 2006'

## Partnership arrangements

### Overview

In 1995, Powys was the first ACF county in Wales to develop an OUTREACH programme, followed by RCT YOS Partnership for Youth project in 1996. For the others it remains a newer venture. The courses in Dyfed were established in 2000, as were those that South Wales Police sponsor (see 'Glamorgan' on page 13). Gwent started in 2004 and Clwyd in 2006. However, between 2001 and 2004, Dyfed did not deliver the programme due to a lack of available staff, but with the appointment of a new project leader in 2004, it was re-established.

Clwyd, RCT YOS and Gwent initially set up their projects to target and work with young people at risk of social exclusion and those at risk of involvement in the youth justice system. However, in 2007, Clwyd altered their focus solely to the former group and while courses sponsored by South Wales Police initially worked exclusively with young people involved in the youth justice system, this has since been extended to those at risk of offending and social exclusion. Dyfed and Powys have only ever worked with young people at risk of social exclusion. This targeting has largely determined whether ACF works with schools, YOTs or both. There tend not to be service level agreements that set out the arrangements between ACF and partner agencies. However, responsibilities are broadly divided between ACF which provides a 'professionally organised youth-orientated programme, staffed by trained instructors who have appropriate health and safety qualifications' and partners who refer young people, provide ACF with the documentation they require and will attend, support and encourage young people on the courses provided.

The extent to which the programme is marketed to prospective and existing partners varies on a local basis. Nationally, the *ACFA OUTREACH Annual Report* is used for this purpose and ACFA also attends the Youth Justice Board Annual Convention to promote its work. The national co-ordinator estimates that 70% of partners across England and Wales are currently schools.

The following section provides a more detailed description of how each area operates its programmes, the partnership arrangements and issues that have arisen in the working arrangements.

### OUTREACH programme areas

#### Clwyd

In 2006 Conwy Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham YOTs were approached with a view to engaging with OUTREACH. However, Flintshire declined to participate at that stage as they felt unable to release staff to attend the course. This problem is not specific to this area alone as several other YOTs have also

commented on the difficulty of releasing staff for the duration of the course, the financial implications of doing so (providing staff cover and accommodating time off in lieu) and also not all YOT practitioners are willing or able to attend and participate.

Although arrangements did commence with the two other YOTs, a number of problems emerged that undermined the potential effectiveness of their involvement: the aims and objectives of the course were not made clear, nor which young people should be targeted. As a result the YOTs did not have a good understanding of who might benefit from the experience and cope with the demands made on them. The ACF project leader indicated that many of the young people referred by YOTs had multiple needs and did not behave well (on both the discovery day and residential course). They proved too challenging for the ACF volunteers to manage and found the structure and discipline required of them on the courses difficult to adjust to. Due to high levels of disruptive behaviour many were sent home which undermined the efficacy of the course and left ACF staff disillusioned by the experience. Nonetheless, eight did complete a five-day residential course and the ACFA project leader indicated 'they got a lot out of it'. However, as a result of this experience, it was decided to re-orientate the programme and to work with schools rather than YOTs.

Throughout 2007, ACF worked with the Bishops Blue Coat Church of England School in Chester where the ACF project leader is also the social inclusion teacher. The young people targeted are likely to be in the social inclusion unit and on a programme of support that is addressing their needs, for example through a pastoral support plan.<sup>3</sup> The ACF project leader indicates the aim is to give each young person 'an interesting and challenging time and to give them activities that they would probably never have the opportunity to do and to give them praise'. He indicates that activities undertaken on the course should be transferable back to the school setting and that the skills acquired should be used to address the problems young people have been experiencing (for example, poor attendance and poor classroom behaviour).

The project has learned from its early experiences: regular meetings are now held with those making referrals to discuss the courses and to resolve any problems or difficulties that may have arisen. An induction evening is held for young people to inform them of what is required and to help prepare them. ACF staff are made much more aware of their needs and requirements prior to the courses commencing. School staff are not required to attend the induction evening nor participate on the course itself, although they have done so. A review meeting is also held at the end of the course with OUTREACH staff and cadets to discuss what worked well and where improvements need to be made in future. This approach has been much more successful, with the ACF project

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<sup>3</sup> A pastoral support plan (PSP) is an intervention determined by a school to help individual pupils manage their behaviour. It is automatically set up for any pupils at risk of permanent exclusion, or for any pupil identified as being at risk of failure because of disengagement. PSPs are short, practical and specific, identifying precise and realistic targets for pupils to work towards.

leader reporting that nine months after the last course '90% of young people have improved their behaviour in school'.

With these changes in place the project has run more successfully and the fact that the project leader has a dual role and is located within the school is significant. As a result of these improved arrangements there were plans in 2008 to expand the project outside the school. Support has been secured from Wrexham Communities First and Conwy Denbighshire Youth Inclusion Project.<sup>4</sup> The project leader indicated that the intention was also to try and re-engage with the YOTs by 2009 and to work with children and young people up to and including 14 years of age who are 'not too far down the youth offending route'. Partners are now required to sign an agreement specifying the referral criteria. The agreement is explained to them and they are also given the opportunity to discuss who may benefit from participation. Additionally, a number of secondary schools have been approached but have so far declined involvement due to the project's military connections.

### **Dyfed**

Carmarthenshire Social Services had some involvement with Dyfed OUTREACH between 2000 and 2001 but this ended following the departure of the ACF project leader. In 2004 Bryngwyn Comprehensive School, Llanelli engaged with OUTREACH and continued their involvement until 2006. Until this point, the school had been contributing half the cost of the courses, but was unable to continue doing so and withdrew. In 2007, Coedcae Comprehensive School, Llanelli were approached and, on the basis of Bryngwyn School advising that it had been a positive experience for them, they decided to get involved.

The ACF project leader in Dyfed has placed significant emphasis on ensuring the partnership arrangements work well. This involves regular dialogue and encouraging partners' involvement in directing and supporting the programme. For example, partners are consulted about the suitability of the programme, participate in all activities and are encouraged to provide feedback following courses. Whilst no formal arrangements are in place, what exists works well. The roles and responsibilities of each partner are made clear and continue to be reiterated throughout the process. Two members of school staff participate in the courses and activities. The school is clear about the aims and objectives of the programme and who it is targeted at. The ACF project leader actively encourages partners to suggest different ways in which they can engage young people, is willing to make changes and try new ideas and, if suitable, to incorporate them into the programme.

The programme is developed in discussion with the teachers who have often led the way on some of the activities such as the assault course... we

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<sup>4</sup> Youth inclusion projects target 50 young people aged 13 to 16 in a specific area who are engaged in crime or are identified as being most at risk of offending, truancy or social exclusion. The aim is to encourage them to engage in more positive activities and to divert them from criminality.

will trial new ideas and if they work we add them to our portfolio. If not, we don't use them again.' ACF project leader

The course is intended to be challenging and to assist personal development:

'It is about recognising people's strengths and weaknesses and working with the group to overcome these.' ACF project leader

The partnership between Dyfed OUTREACH and Coedcae has been successful and, as such, the school views the project as an 'excellent programme' that is considered integral to its behavioural support plans.

'The programme gives young people the opportunity to take part in new activities which provide them with boundaries and guidelines and an insight into what it would like to be employed by the army.' Teacher

At present Dyfed ACF does not directly engage with Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire YOTs but the ACF project leader is keen to forge links.

### **Glamorgan**

ACF works with two different partnerships in the Glamorgan area:

- RCT YOS Partnership for Youth project: this is a joint initiative with ACF that was set up with RCT Youth Justice Team (now Youth Offending Service) and the county borough council to provide a challenging community-based programme for young people from the local area.
- South Wales Police: in 2000, South Wales Police took the decision to sponsor courses for young people in contact with YOTs in the south Wales area. The decision arose out of Nacro Cymru's positive evaluation of RCT YOS Partnership for Youth project in 2000.<sup>5</sup> South Wales Police work in partnership with ACF in Glamorgan who deliver the programmes on its behalf.

The two projects are, however, inter-related in that the RCT YOS Partnership for Youth project co-ordinator contributes to the organisation and delivery of the courses sponsored by South Wales Police. RCT YOS has input in terms of providing expertise and continues to make a significant contribution. The RCT YOS Partnership for Youth project co-ordinator attends each of the courses and provides equipment and a minibus. South Wales Police have provided funding to Partnership for Youth to assist them to develop their resources, notably the purchase of equipment that is available for both courses.

Glamorgan OUTREACH also has a project leader based in Swansea YOT who is responsible for the organisation and delivery of all the courses in South Wales (including contributing to those run by RCT YOS Partnership for Youth) and who also co-ordinates the referrals from YOTs to the South Wales Police course.

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<sup>5</sup> Nacro Cymru (2000) 'Partnership for Youth: A joint community programme annual report 1999-2000'

### **RCT YOS Partnership for Youth**

The Partnership for Youth Project was established in 1996 between RCT YOS, RCT Children's Services and ACF in Glamorgan. It is a four-day personal development course for young people in the local authority area. The programme seeks to develop self-awareness and to help young people gain the skills and confidence to address any barriers that prevent them from being socially included. It is available to young people with an offending history or social problems, with whom the YOS is working in a preventative capacity. It has become an important component of the work they undertake. Significantly the YOS does not see it as a stand-alone activity and takes the view that it should be located in a wider programme of support and with other interventions the service may be able to offer or that young people are already engaged with. The YOS also endeavours to make further referrals on completion of the programme, so that it is not a one-off experience, but instead builds on the progress young people have made or encourages them to engage in activities they have shown an interest in.

The programme is not exclusively for young people involved in or at risk of involvement in the criminal justice system. It is a resource for the authority as a whole: children's services, the local youth inclusion and support programme, schools, the Miskin project,<sup>6</sup> On Track<sup>7</sup> and other YOTs in south Wales via South Wales Police can all make referrals to it. For example, each course offers two places for children in contact with Swansea YOT. Partnership for Youth has a full time co-ordinator located in the YOS responsible for its administration and management. The Cymorth Support Fund<sup>8</sup> has provided resources for the programme since 1999 and this supports the full time co-ordinator's post and there is also substantive input from the YOS.

The programme has expanded considerably since its establishment, engaging with a wide variety of partners. Considerable emphasis is placed on developing and maintaining relationships with firstly, the partners to ensure they target young people appropriately and secondly, with ACF so that suitable activities are developed to meet their needs. This includes holding planning meetings (at the start of the year) with all partners, reviewing past programmes, making plans for forthcoming ones and holding de-briefing sessions immediately after courses are run. Emphasis is placed on explaining the aims and objectives of the courses, the purpose of involvement and how young people may benefit from it. As the operations manager with responsibility for prevention explained:

'We talk to partners and explain the system to them and what the young people can get out of the course, as well as inviting them to attend the briefing sessions and award ceremony. It makes them feel part of the

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<sup>6</sup> An outdoor pursuits project set up to provide adventure activities for disadvantaged young people and their families living within RCT.

<sup>7</sup> On Track is an initiative aimed at children at risk of involvement in crime. See [www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/crprint/crprint.htm](http://www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/crprint/crprint.htm).

<sup>8</sup> The Cymorth Support Fund is provided by the Welsh Assembly Government to commission targeted services for children, young people and their families who suffer economic, social or educational disadvantage because of the area in which they live or because they have a particular special need or disability.

system and allows them to see first-hand the developments the young people make over the few days... It is also about having good relationships with schools. The four-day course covers a Friday and Monday and the advance course will normally be run on a Wednesday and Thursday, so obviously they need to have time off school. We have spent a considerable amount of time explaining the reasons why we want to take the young person out of school and the purpose of the activities. If we had not established such strong links with the schools this would not be possible.'

The fact that there is a full-time project co-ordinator located in the YOS is significant and the degree of partnership working could not be sustained without it. The role specifically includes liaising with partners, parents and young people.

'OUTREACH could not be added to a person's daily job... it is very time-consuming and needs a specified person to run the programme.' Operations manager with responsibility for prevention, RCT YOS

In developing Partnership for Youth, the YOS is well aware that working with ACF (which is culturally very different) has not been without its challenges. The partnership has taken time to develop to the degree that it has and an important component of this has been to appreciate the way in which each organisation works:

'I think that at the beginning ACF had a view of us as airy fairy social workers who treat young people with kid gloves, whereas now they are much more aware that we are there to help these young people and want to change their behaviour for the better.' Operations manager with responsibility for prevention, RCT YOS

However, both partners respect each other's views, are able to work flexibly, will try and accommodate each other's viewpoints and take on board criticisms, as well as recognising when things have worked well. The YOS works closely with ACF and will review the programmes and discuss any issues that have arisen or given cause for concern. Ultimately the YOS indicates that what they are most concerned about is that the courses are a positive experience for the young people who participate:

'It is important for the ACF staff to take on board the issues we raise with them.... because at the end of the day if they do not, the young people will not benefit from the course.' Project co-ordinator, Partnership for Youth, RCT YOS

One of the other strengths about RCT YOS's arrangements is that they have a pool of staff who know what the courses entail, participate, and understand it is their role to take part in all of the activities and support young people throughout.

The YOS has also commissioned evaluations to examine the effectiveness of what is provided and the outcomes to help identify what action can be taken to improve the arrangements for partners and young people in the future. The

findings from these reports have indicated a positive effect on the children and young people who have participated.

### **South Wales Police**

In 2000 South Wales Police became interested in working with ACF to develop OUTREACH as it encompasses both the prevention and inclusion elements of the work undertaken by YOTs and accords with the Welsh Assembly Government's vision in *Extending Entitlement*<sup>9</sup> of creating new opportunities for young people. South Wales Police asked ACF to develop a professional course of activities, delivered in a safe manner, where young people can 'feel good about themselves and build self-confidence and self-esteem'. The fact that OUTREACH had been positively externally evaluated (in 1999 and 2002 by Nacro Cymru) also influenced their decision to engage with it.

A maximum of six places are made available to each of the YOTs in the South Wales Police area<sup>10</sup> and RCT YOS can also refer young people if there are vacancies. Staff members (from each of the YOTs) must accompany young people on the courses. Bridgend, Cardiff, Neath Port Talbot, Swansea and the Vale of Glamorgan have all referred young people. However, in 2007 the Vale of Glamorgan did not due to problems in releasing staff to carry out this task. At the time the evaluation was being carried out, Merthyr Tydfil had not made any referrals but were intending to do so in 2008 and have indeed now done so.

From discussions with the YOTs that have made referrals, it seems there is a need to improve their understanding of the project's aims and objectives in order to help identify appropriate young people who could benefit from participation in OUTREACH. For example two YOTs indicated they were unclear about what was intended – whether it was to reduce the likelihood of future offending or simply to provide an additional activity to engage young people in. That said, the consensus appears to be broadly as follows:

'I have always thought the aims of the course are to give young people a positive experience that gives them more pluses in life.' YOT police officer

'Their aim is to take a young person and show them there is more to life than what they might be getting up to and to provide them with skills like communication and team building so that they can go out and take the skills and have a positive attitude to things.' YOT practitioner

There was an initial presentation to YOT managers in 2000. The principal officer, Youth Justice, South Wales Police promotes the programme as part of his regular contact with each of the YOT managers and information is sent to them at the start of the year with course dates which they are asked to make staff aware of. YOT police officers are familiar with OUTREACH, but not all caseworkers in the

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<sup>9</sup> National Assembly for Wales (2000) *Extending Entitlement: Supporting Young People in Wales* Cardiff: National Assembly for Wales

<sup>10</sup> Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr, Neath Port Talbot, Swansea and the Vale of Glamorgan.

individual teams necessarily are. There is a reliance on the police officer in the team or the operations manager to promote the courses and to generate referrals. However, it is recognised there is a need to do more because some YOTs are not clear about who they should target and what can be achieved through the programme. Also, some police officers indicate the marketing expectations can be very time-consuming and they often face resistance because of the military connections.

As a result, ACF in 2009 have undertaken a series of presentations at YOT team meetings to provide information about the aims and objectives of OUTREACH, who it may be suitable for and the potential benefits to young people. The aim has been to talk particularly to case managers who are potential sources of referrals and who may not have knowledge or experience of OUTREACH. This has also presented an opportunity to discuss the military connection. Further considerations should involve how to build up an evidence base that illustrates successes and positive outcomes, as this may be a useful tool for promotional activities.

Additionally, four of the five YOTs have had staff participate in OUTREACH and this has provided a potential mechanism for raising awareness, although it has also been noted that personally negative experiences can have a significant impact on referrals to the courses. As previously mentioned, it can be difficult for YOTs to release staff for the duration of the course and it has not always been appreciated that attendance means providing 24-hour supervision and support, and full participation in all the activities. Briefings with the YOTs also provide an opportunity to discuss this more fully with the staff concerned.

All of the YOTs interviewed recognised that changes were being made for the better and thought the appointment of the ACF project leader in Swansea YOT had been a constructive move:

'There have been times when I have thought that things need to be altered slightly and have been able to talk to either [the ACF project leader or the principal officer] and they have taken on board my suggestions.' YOT police officer

South Wales Police also indicate that, from their perspective, working with the YOTs as partners has been a success and something they want to continue developing. They have plans to fund the courses for the foreseeable future:

'Very few of us could put on such an activity on our own, we have to tap into what is out there, and I think this is as good an example of partnership working as you are likely to get.' Principal officer, Youth Justice, South Wales Police

From the YOT viewpoint, staff who had been involved in the courses were positive about what was provided, for example:

'I thought [the course] was well organised and you could tell they were really well planned.' YOT practitioner

South Wales Police are also considering developing a service level agreement with ACF to formalise the existing arrangements.

### **Gwent**

In 2004, the ACF project leader approached the three Gwent YOTs: Blaenau Gwent Caerphilly, Monmouth Torfean and Newport and a secondary school (Hartridge High School) offering them the opportunity to refer young people to OUTREACH. Initially, Hartridge decided to participate but Blaenau Gwent Caerphilly and Monmouth Torfean YOTs did not, perceiving it to be a recruitment mechanism for the army. However, they later changed this view and decided to engage. Newport YOS, on the other hand, has never referred young people to OUTREACH. The prevention manager indicated they were not aware of the programme, but could be interested in the future.

Having gained the agreement of the two YOTs and the school, the programme did not run smoothly for a number of reasons. Firstly, there appears to have been a lack of regular communication between ACF and the partners. They feel in retrospect that they could have benefited from more initial discussion and face-to-face meetings to discuss requirements. The partners also indicated the aims and objectives of the courses could have been made clearer which would have helped them to make appropriate referrals, and specifically that the expectations of partner involvement (particularly in attending and participating in the courses) should have been made more explicit. Monmouth Torfean YOT initially understood that their input would be confined to supporting the ACF volunteers should young people misbehave. They were not aware they were expected to join in all the activities and to support and supervise the young people at all times.

'I was led to believe that I was there to support ACF staff in their work, I didn't realise that I would have to support our young people all of the time.' YOT practitioner

Hartridge High School found the experience of mixing schoolchildren with those referred from the YOTs had not been a good one and this was ultimately a contributory factor in them deciding not to refer to the programme in future. The school felt that when concerns were raised and suggestions made, for example to separate the different groups of children, these were not addressed. It was also felt that little was done to take the needs of the young people into account and to convey important information about them to ACF staff running the courses. As a result, little consideration was given to any particular problems or issues in their background that might have affected the way staff worked with them. Recommendations were made to amend the programme of activities, as young people were not always fully occupied and too much free time resulted in boredom, distraction and misbehaviour.

As a result of these experiences, partners started to question their involvement and to disengage from OUTREACH. They were also concerned about the approach of some of the ACF volunteers and staff. It was felt that their roles and responsibilities were not being taken seriously enough and they were not focusing on young people in an appropriate way. For example:

'The level of engagement from OUTREACH staff was not acceptable, with members of staff standing talking to each other rather than taking part in the activities.' YOT practitioner

Additionally, the rules and regulations that applied to the cadets, for example, being allowed to swear, could potentially be a disciplinary matter for young people on the course. Also, the sleeping arrangements were felt to be unacceptable as cadets slept on camp beds and course participants on mattresses on the floor. As one YOT practitioner commented: 'this type of segregation does not promote social inclusion'.

As a result of these problems, which appear to stem mainly from (1) a lack of communication between ACF and the partners (2) the apparent inability to solve problems that were raised and (3) to take on board recommendations, the YOTs and Hartridge High School declined to participate further. From the school's point of view the programme failed to realise its potential:

'When you look at [OUTREACH] on paper, it is a really, really good idea, but the staff just can't deliver the package as it is on paper... fundamentally, however, it could be a fantastic project.' Teacher

This view was also reflected by the YOTs, who indicated that OUTREACH failed to meet their expectations and the needs of the young people referred:

'OUTREACH doesn't meet my expectations and although the course provides the young people with the opportunity to take part in new activities... I don't think it lives up to their expectations either.' YOT practitioner

'OUTREACH is an excellent programme when it is run properly. However, the YOT needs to be more involved in the planning process to ensure the expectations of the partners are clearly communicated.' YOT practitioner

But despite the reservations of the partners, all reported that the young people had enjoyed the experience and felt that it provided the opportunity to take part in something they would otherwise not have had the chance to do. Gwent ACF has undergone a number of changes since this occurred and a new project leader has been appointed, although the future direction of the programme was not clear at the time of our interviews. Some of the partners suggested that a service level agreement would help to clarify roles and responsibilities and should be considered if there is to be future involvement.

## **Powys**

OUTREACH in Powys has been established for over ten years. The ACF project leader is retired and devotes considerable time to the organisation and delivery, and over the years has developed good local partnerships, cohesive working arrangements and ways of operating that work well in the locality. As a result, he has the confidence of the partners he engages with. He has a pool of experienced volunteers and cadets and because of this, local partners are not required to attend the courses and support and supervise the young people they refer.

The ACF project leader initially approached Powys Local Education Authority offering OUTREACH as an alternative programme for disengaged pupils. This resulted in three secondary schools (Brecon High School, Crickhowell High School and Maes-y-Dderwen Comprehensive School) agreeing to refer young people to it, although one initially had reservations because of the military links and concerns that it could be a recruitment channel for the army.

All young people referred to the Powys project are subject to a pastoral support plan or other form of school plan. It is used to help young people experiencing difficulties in the school environment. Courses are held in the school week and term-time:

'This gives the course more legitimacy with the schools as it forms more of an integrated part of their pastoral programme of support.' ACF project leader

The schools all indicated they regard OUTREACH as an important component of their social inclusion activities as it provides a resource for disaffected children who continue to be supported and encouraged to overcome their difficulties after engagement in the programme. The schools indicate it has been a successful venture for them.

'It is a tremendous programme that offers the school an additional intervention to work with the needs of the young people.' Teacher

'I think OUTREACH offers a course that is challenging and stimulating for the students... it's a key branch of our social inclusion activities that is held in high regard by all staff.' Teacher

'OUTREACH meets every expectation of the school... this is largely down to the very clear aims and objectives as explained [by the ACF project leader] and excellent communication between the project leader and the school.' Teacher

The ACF project leader is in regular contact with each school, primarily to keep them informed of developments and also to review the progress of the programmes to ensure they are meeting the needs of the schools and of the pupils they refer. This is appreciated and all partners view it as important. All of the schools specifically commented on the quality of their relationship with the

ACF project leader who they regarded as highly committed and prepared to accommodate any suggestions and recommendations they put forward:

'The greatest success is the communication between ourselves and OUTREACH. [The project leader] is always available to speak to, and is easy to reach.' Teacher

In 2007, Powys Community Safety Partnership approached the ACF project leader to request that they work with Powys YOS with additional funding. The OUTREACH project in the area has had long-standing reservations about working with young people engaged in the youth justice system, one of the main reasons being that the volunteers are not sufficiently experienced in dealing with more challenging young people and those with serious problems. On this basis Powys ACF has not expanded its remit at present. Powys YOS are however still keen to engage with them and further discussions are anticipated.

## Conclusion

The quality and success of the arrangements ACF has with its partners are variable, with some being more effective than others. Longer established projects (Powys ACF and RCT YOS Partnership for Youth with Glamorgan ACF) which have had continuity in terms of staffing and staff that can dedicate significant time to it operate more effectively than those where this is not the case. It is also apparent that they have been through various stages of development and have refined their organisation and management of the project over time. Projects that have close working arrangements between ACF and their partners operate successfully. One very important feature is investing the time to have personal contact with all those who make referrals to ensure they target young people appropriately. It is also important that partners:

- are clear about the aims and objectives of OUTREACH
- are aware of the referral criteria and the purpose of involvement
- understand how young people may benefit from engagement.

The projects operate in very distinct ways (for example Clywd and Dyfed at the time they were interviewed were working with just one school each) and had successfully developed programmes and ways of working that suited them, despite some initial difficulties in Clywd. South Wales Police by contrast deal with up to seven different organisations and therefore operate in a much more complex environment. RCT YOS also has multiple partners.

A particular issue was the expectation from ACF that staff from the partner agencies accompany the young people they refer. While there were no fundamental objections to this, a common theme was that it was often not made fully clear what this meant (ie, full active participation and the practicalities for some YOTs and schools in releasing staff to do this – this is discussed further on pages 50 to 52).

In some instances OUTREACH courses need to be more proactively marketed to YOTs and schools if ACF is to maintain and expand its work in Wales. However, time and resources are required to do this. In addition, when promoting the programme, the relationship of ACF with the army needs to be made explicit as negative connotations exist about it being a recruitment mechanism for the army and, in some quarters, the military connection simply causes suspicion.

## Expectations of OUTREACH

Partners were asked what their expectations of sending young people on OUTREACH were. They indicated they expected a range of challenging, purposeful and enjoyable activities to be provided, in a safe environment, with good support. Courses should meet the needs of those referred, provide them with the opportunity to engage in activities they might not otherwise experience, help them to think about how to use their time more effectively and about how their behaviour impacts on others. The entire experience should be positive.

'[It] is about giving young people who are under the umbrella of the YOT, whether they are at risk of offending or have vulnerability issues, the chance to experience something in life. Most of them are from deprived areas, backgrounds with problems in their families, peer groups etc. [OUTREACH] gives them the chance to experience something positive in their lives.' YOT police officer

Partners indicated they hoped by participating in demanding activities and receiving encouragement and praise, the course would help young people to become more confident, improve their self-esteem and feel appropriately challenged to think about their behaviour and attitudes. One described it as a prevention programme that promotes social skills:

'OUTREACH means the ability to put young people into situations that are unfamiliar to them, to challenge their abilities and attitude and to show them there are benefits when you co-operate and work together with people as opposed to working against them and the system.' YOT police officer

The programme should provide young people with the opportunity to extend their lives beyond what can sometimes be a narrow focus, both to prevent further offending and to expand their social horizons:

'Some of the young people that OUTREACH engages have never eaten food sat around a dinner table or had to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner. The OUTREACH experience exposes these young people to a different set of values, challenges them both physically and mentally, and lets them have fun.' Principal officer, Youth Justice, South Wales Police

The expectation is that the courses are run by well-trained staff who are aware of the needs of the individuals they will be supervising, and that they support and encourage them to be successful and achieve:

'South Wales Police expect OUTREACH to develop a professional course of activities within a safe environment where young people can feel good about themselves and build their self-confidence and self-esteem. It is essential that OUTREACH have in place professional and trained staff from a variety of backgrounds and ages to act as role models.' Principal officer, Youth Justice, South Wales Police

## Targeting and referral

### Referral criteria

OUTREACH is intended to be targeted at males and females aged between 12 and 14 years old who are at risk of social exclusion and/or involvement in crime and who meet at least one of the following criteria:

- low self-esteem
- subject to a police reprimand or final warning
- excluded from school
- truanting
- behavioural problems
- low achiever
- socially excluded

These are national criteria that apply to all ACF project areas. The project leaders advise partners of what courses are to be run at the start of the year, provide them with dates and, if necessary, copies of the *ACFA OUTREACH Support and Guidance Pack* (or in the case of RCT YOS, the *Partnership for Youth Information Pack*). Both documents contain details about the courses, the referral criteria and necessary paperwork for making a referral. Partners are responsible for targeting young people using this information as a basis. Feedback suggests there are a number of different ways they do this which broadly include a process for identification and consultation with members of staff in schools (or case workers in YOTs) to ensure the appropriateness of the referral, followed by discussion and consultation with the young people concerned.

It is the partner's responsibility to complete the necessary paperwork: referral forms, medical forms and obtaining parental consent. This provides ACF with basic information about the young people who will be attending and the reasons why they have been put forward.

### Youth offending teams

#### RCT YOS Partnership for Youth

Partnership for Youth is based on OUTREACH, but the referral criteria are not rigidly applied and can be broader. Young people can be targeted for wide-ranging reasons and are identified on the basis of their particular needs and how it is felt the programme can address them. The most common reasons for referral are because of low self-confidence and poor self-awareness, behavioural problems at school or at home, being subject to an acceptable behaviour contract, to promote interest and confidence in taking part in constructive activities or because of an interest in the army or ACF. Young people can be referred from the prevention team or because they are subject to a police reprimand, final warning, referral order or other court order. The YOS also

indicates there has never been a problem mixing children and young people from different backgrounds and with different experiences (eg, offenders with non-offenders).

Within the YOS the parenting worker may identify a young person who has siblings who might benefit from participation, and the restorative justice workers are the link to school referrals. Partners must indicate on a referral form they submit to the YOS why the young person is being put forward and the YOS is proactive in following up the information provided to ensure it is comprehensive and that nothing important is missed.

The YOS is also clear that agencies and parents have an important part to play in facilitating and supporting referrals. Partners are responsible in the first instance for informing the young person about the course and what it will entail. They are provided with all the necessary information and expected to perform this task. In addition, all young people have to attend a briefing evening held two days before the residential course.

### **Other YOTs**

The majority of YOTs include in their target group those subject to a police reprimand, final warning or referral order. This has largely derived from their experiences of selecting young people with greater criminal involvement for whom outcomes have been less successful. For example, one YOT targeted those considered to be at the 'high-risk end of offending', but this resulted in a number of young people being asked to leave a particular course for being troublesome and, as a result, they have revised their views on who should attend:

'I don't see why a young person classified as being at high risk of reoffending should be less successful than those classified as medium risk in an activity like this, but quite clearly they are.' YOT practitioner

This YOT also tries to ensure that young people who are identified do not know each other, as past experience suggests groups of friends can be disruptive to the course. Similarly, other YOTs had also previously targeted those on more intensive statutory orders, such as intensive supervision and surveillance programmes (ISSP), but similarly found that the programme was not always suited to those with more complex needs and problematic behaviour, with young people being unable to adjust to the levels of discipline required and as a result being sent home:

'There comes a time when a kid's behaviour becomes so ingrained in offending... those who have lengthier offending records find it harder to adjust to the discipline expected of them and by sending them on the course we are almost setting them up to fail.' YOT police officer

Some YOTs now target those involved with prevention programmes, notably youth inclusion programmes (YIPs) and have found this to be more successful. One YIP identified two young people for OUTREACH who were not engaged with any youth centres or sports activity outside school. It was felt that team-building

activities could help boost their self-confidence and encourage them to think about engagement. They were given the target of improving their school attendance to 80% for two weeks which they achieved and were then put forward for OUTREACH.

These experiences suggest that OUTREACH is more suited to those subject to preventative or low level interventions (because they are 'low-end offenders') than those subject to more intensive statutory orders. The identification and targeting of young people should take into account who is likely to benefit from participation and how it will address their needs. That said, no young person would be excluded purely on the basis of the order they are on.

'We have not said that you cannot send young people who are on ISSP, but what has developed is a consensus that for those who are top-end offenders there must be other ways to manage their behaviour.' Principal officer, Youth Justice, South Wales Police

When considering who to put forward, YOTs indicated the young person should be able to work within a group, be willing to participate in the programme, be likely to derive some benefit from the experience and to enjoy it. Additionally, they may have a potential interest in an army career. YOTs indicated young people's standard of behaviour must be 'reasonable' and those with chaotic lifestyles or entrenched substance misuse problems are likely to find it difficult to cope.

In terms of the identification process, the principal officer, Youth Justice, South Wales Police co-ordinates the referrals made in the South Wales Police area and makes places available on the two courses that it sponsors each year (one for boys and one for girls). When the dates have been agreed with ACF an information pack is sent to each YOT manager and the police representative in the team who is then responsible for circulating this to case managers and others. At this stage practitioners are asked to identify any suitable candidates and to ensure they meet the referral criteria.

In Swansea the YOT police officer/ACF project leader will meet with the YIP and teams that administer final warnings and referral orders to discuss the programme, including the referral criteria and the aims and objectives of OUTREACH. These meetings are used to identify potential participants, following which young people are approached. Initially this is undertaken by the case worker, followed by a discussion with the YOT police officer/ACF project leader.

The ACF project leader/YOT police officer in Swansea indicated that the aims of discussion with case managers are also to consider the safety issues for young people themselves, the risks the course may present to them, the extent to which their needs will be met and whether they would be able to cope with it. Some may exhibit behaviour that may exclude them from a particular course, but if improvements are made they can be considered for another in the future. If there is uncertainty about whether to put a young person forward there is

likely to be a discussion with the YOT police officer and case manager and a joint decision will be made about whether to include that person or not.

Other YOTS indicated the YOT police officers meet with case managers before young people are approached to discuss their suitability. This relies on all individuals being well informed about the courses and what they require of young people. Where staff have attended and participated themselves they can talk from personal experience and convey what is involved:

'I have an excellent relationship with the case managers within the YOT. We have been involved with OUTREACH since it began and, as such, they are aware of what the course is about. If they have concerns about a young person they will approach me first to discuss their suitability.' YOT police officer

Prior to making any referrals one YOT will check that staff are willing to attend the course and will only start to identify young people once this commitment has been made. The need for this arose because places had to be withdrawn on a prior occasion as staff were not available. A senior practitioner also personally vets all young people who are put forward, mainly to spell out the realities of what is involved and to assess their commitment or any hesitation. The latter would make it less likely the referral would continue and the YOT is keen to ensure they do not refer young people who cannot cope and who have to return home as 'this undermines the course for everyone':

'I make sure the young people are fully aware of the course and what the worst case scenario could be... I think that it is better to refer fewer numbers of young people who want to be there than to refer those that aren't bothered and want to come home almost as soon as they arrive on the course.' YOT practitioner

## Schools

Schools tend to identify young people who are already engaged in a programme of support because they are experiencing difficulties at school or with other aspects of their life. They are likely to be subject to a PSP or in a behaviour support or social inclusion unit. OUTREACH is used as part of a strategy to help those who have problems with behaviour, achievement, attendance, life skills, socialising and engaging with the school curriculum. The process is broadly the same as for the YOTs, in that schools are advised of the dates of forthcoming courses and the number of allocated places and asked to identify young people to attend.

Generally schools tend to target those with confidence problems, indicating OUTREACH can be helpful in building self-esteem through participation in team-building activities. One has found it less effective for those with attendance and behavioural problems, whereas another will consider those with low-level disruptive behaviour and who are isolated for various reasons. One more also considers those who have had limited life experiences who could benefit from

doing something new. Another school may refer those at risk of criminality for these reasons.

In terms of the selection process, schools generally monitor the behaviour of pupils and use this as a basis for identifying potential candidates. Teachers and other staff (social inclusion or behaviour support) will discuss which pupils should be selected and will consider any suggestions put forward by colleagues and liaise with the parents and young person to establish if they are interested. One school indicated it focused its attention on those known to be involved in the criminal justice system or to have truanted or been excluded from school. School records are examined to identify who has a police warning as well as their attendance records. Pupils may be put forward or withdrawn from the initial list and reserves are generally identified should any of those initially selected withdraw.

One school uses a positive reward scheme known as ComPACT to help identify young people from the social inclusion unit. The 'PACT' of ComPACT stands for punctuality, achievement, commitment and tolerance and is aimed at helping pupils in Years 7 and 8 (12 to 14 year olds) with these difficulties to overcome them. A competition is held two weeks before OUTREACH begins. All pupils subject to this scheme are given a scorecard which they must present at each lesson, at the end of which they are given a mark in relation to PACT. For example, they would score a zero if they were late, but a one or two if they appeared committed to the lesson. At the end of the competition the scores are tallied and the pupils with the top ten scores are eligible for referral. The school feels this is the fairest way to select participants, as those in the top ten will have worked the hardest, been given something to aspire to and want to attend. They would not be excluded from the selection process if they have previously undertaken OUTREACH.

## Administration

If the young person wishes to proceed, a referral form will be completed. This is usually done via a letter providing details about the course, when it will run, why the young person has been selected, items and clothing to take and what they will be provided with (for example, waterproof clothing and walking boots). Parents are required to complete a consent form and to provide basic medical information about their son or daughter, primarily to identify whether there are any disabilities or medical conditions or they are taking medication that might affect what activities they can undertake.

Some YOTs complete this information with parents as it provides them with the opportunity to tell them more about the course, for example a YOT police officer will meet with the parents to clarify any issues. In all cases it is the responsibility of the referring agencies and not ACF to ensure this information is completed and returned.

'Partners must take responsibility for their part in the process or the young people will miss out.' Operations manager with responsibility for prevention, RCT YOS

'I write a letter to their parents... and ask them to fill in the consent form and basic medical form. If I do not get the forms then they do not get on the bus.' Teacher

Referral forms, medical information and parental consent must be provided at least two weeks before any course is due to commence. This allows the ACF project leaders to check through the information, to assess the needs of the young people and if necessary tailor the programme of activities. Joining instructions will also be sent to the young person and parents. YOTs also remind young people of the start dates.

# Preparing young people

## Voluntary participation

All of the agencies making referrals stressed the importance of providing young people with sufficient information to help them decide whether or not they want to participate and to help prepare them for what to expect, notably the high levels of structure and discipline. Participation in all cases is voluntary and no one is coerced into attendance. What appears to be important is that there is a means of informing them and that it is as realistic and honest as possible.

In the initial stages of identifying young people who may be suitable for the course, a YOT officer or teacher in their school will discuss with them what to expect. However, it is also important that ACF has input, both in terms of meeting the young people who are likely to be progressing onto courses and to emphasise the expectations and explain what will be involved. This is generally undertaken through a presentation, showing a DVD of the OUTREACH experience or through holding a briefing/induction evening. One school invites pupils who have previously attended the course to talk to those who might attend to tell them about their experiences and what to expect. They indicate this works well:

'The young people benefit from hearing about the course from other students, as they are able to provide them with a realistic view of what to expect.' Teacher

## Briefing evening

Clwyd ACF and Glamorgan ACF in conjunction with RCT YOS and South Wales Police invite young people to attend a briefing evening. Attendance is not compulsory but failure to attend would mean they could not progress on to a course. The evening is intended to provide young people with more information about the course and to provide them with the opportunity to confirm their interest or to withdraw. This is a two-way process:

'We had an occasion in the past whereby four lads attended the briefing evening and messed about so much that they were removed from the course there and then. They were 17 and did not appreciate being told they could not smoke.' YOT practitioner

'There were a number of 13 and 14 year olds who were quite intimidated by their behaviour. I just did not think it was worth the risk to jeopardise the programme for these young people. Once they were removed the dynamics of the group changed and the young people remaining all got on. No-one wants to do this and I do not like doing it, but you have to look at what is best for everybody.' Principal officer, Youth Justice, South Wales Police

'Twenty-five young people turned up for the briefing night and only twenty-one will actually take part in the course. The ones that drop out at an early stage would almost certainly not have lasted the course.' YOT police officer

Glamorgan ACF and RCT YOS hold a briefing evening on the Wednesday before the course which parents are encouraged to attend. Failing this, the referring agency whose responsibility it is to provide young people and their parents with all the relevant information will act as a single point of contact for them. It also encourages the referring agency to take responsibility and to play their part in the arrangements. The YOS are keen to encourage the involvement of parents, inform them what will be undertaken and to help them recognise their children's achievements and successes. Their persistence in involving parents and carers now means that briefing evenings are well attended. Parents admit they can feel negative and sceptical about what is being proposed, particularly when they understand what the course will entail, for example getting up at 6.00 am.

'When they told me about the course, I didn't think mine would do it. I didn't think that he could handle the discipline.' Parent, RCT

'My initial reaction was that I didn't want him to go, but knowing that he had support from [the YOS], I felt that I had to let him go.' Parent, RCT

Others are more optimistic and recognise the opportunity it presents:

'I thought it was a great opportunity for them and I was really excited, because it was something positive they could be doing.' Parent, RCT

'We went to the briefing evening and I was really excited because I thought it was something positive he could enjoy.' Parent, RCT

The briefing lasts approximately one hour and includes input from ACF and RCT YOS. It comprises a presentation about what is involved, reiterates the ground rules and shows a video depicting the programme. Support staff also attend. The YOS tends to oversubscribe the courses as they have found that not all who express an initial interest will follow up on it and the briefing evening acts as a further gate-keeping mechanism, with young people largely putting themselves in or out of the running. The YOS will not necessarily exclude anyone who misbehaves at the meeting, but will monitor him or her more closely and explain that if they continue to misbehave they may not be able to attend. It is stressed that the course is about hard work and not just a few days of fun away from home. The YOS has found that running the briefing very close to the course start date helps to retain young people's interest and motivation.

The Glamorgan ACF briefing for the South Wales Police-sponsored courses is also held the Wednesday before the course and YOT volunteers and staff who will be accompanying the young people are responsible for ensuring they attend. The evening is also an opportunity for ACF staff to meet the young people and the

YOT staff/volunteers and to explain what the course will entail and what is expected of them. Parents are not necessarily required to attend. The briefing is also used to explain to support staff what is required of them and a separate session takes place after the main briefing for young people. Information provided then is also reinforced on the first morning of the course.

The ACF project leader in Clywd also holds an induction evening, but speaks to young people on an individual rather than a collective basis. When the project was initially set up no process existed to inform the young people about the course, many were unprepared and as such were asked to leave the programme due to disruptive behaviour. The briefing evening has helped to prevent this and the project leader feels that young people are now better prepared. If they want to continue they must sign a contract confirming they understand what is expected of them and that they are willing to engage with the activities. Following this, if the referral is to go ahead they are invited to a discovery day. Gwent does not hold a briefing evening as it has proved difficult to get ACF volunteers to attend.

## Exclusion

ACF project leaders and partner agencies were asked about their approach to excluding young people from participation in OUTREACH. Views were on the whole the same, in that they endeavour to be inclusive and try and ensure that young people are properly selected to participate in the first place, that they are provided with sufficient information to allow them to decide whether or not to engage and that opportunities are afforded to allow them to withdraw prior to attending the course. A number of reasons were cited for not selecting or excluding a young person which include:

- reoffending or truanting before the course begins
- an impending court hearing
- a deterioration of behaviour since referral
- entrenched substance misuse problems
- disruptive behaviour (in school or at the briefing evenings)
- difficulties working in a group
- severe behavioural problems, for example violent behaviour
- not being physically fit enough to undertake the activities.

However, in general, there are no hard and fast rules and each young person and their situation is considered on merit. Partners indicated they want young people to attend and succeed and despite some of the reasons mentioned here being a cause for exclusion, they are not definitive:

'There have been particular students who have drink and/or drug habits; they are closely monitored.' ACF project leader

## Young people referred in 2007

The following section provides information about young people referred to OUTREACH during 2007 and is taken from referral forms that were made available from ACF, RCT YOS and South Wales Police. The quality of data received from each of the ACF areas for this evaluation was variable and not always fully comprehensive. For example data was only available from Clwyd about those who actually completed the course (n=10), and there was no detailed information about the young people who were referred and participated in Gwent.

### Number of available places

In 2007, 252 places were made available to partner agencies by ACF. In total 217 young people were referred to OUTREACH, of whom 207 participated. Seventy-five per cent of those who participated completed the course, with Dyfed and Powys having 100% completion rates, Gwent (70%), Partnership for Youth (67%), South Wales Police-sponsored courses (60%) and Clwyd (53%). For the purpose of analysis, the activity in Glamorgan has been divided to identify that undertaken by the two different projects: Partnership for Youth and the South Wales Police-sponsored courses.

**Table 1** Numbers referred, participating and completing a course in 2007

Project area	Number of available places	Number of young people referred to the course	Number of young people who participated	Number of young people who completed the course
Clwyd ACF	30	21	19	10
Dyfed ACF	24	22	22	22
Glamorgan ACF Partnership for Youth RCT YOS	80	78	78	52
Glamorgan ACF South Wales Police	40	33	25	15
Gwent ACF	38	23	23	16
Powys ACF	40	40	40	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>155</b>

The shortfall in referrals and participants for one of the South Wales Police courses was due to it being run over a Bank Holiday weekend and the difficulty in getting staff to support it.

## Reasons for referral

The reasons for referral were made available for 174 young people put forward for OUTREACH (80%). Of these, just over half (55%) were referred for one main reason and for the others there were generally two or three. Fifty per cent of young people were referred because of behavioural problems, of which 69% came from schools. Being in receipt of a police warning or reprimand comprised 47% of total referrals, of which 71% were made via the YOTs. Both Dyfed and Powys do not actively engage with their local YOTs. However, their referral information indicated a number of young people who have had contact with the criminal justice system. When this was examined further only one of the forty young people referred in the Powys area was known to the YOT (for a final warning) and three of the nine for whom details were provided from Carmarthenshire (for a reprimand, referral order and supervision order) were known to the YOT.

**Table 2** Reasons for referral by ACF project area

Project area	Referral reason							
	Police reprimand	Police warning	Excluded from school	Truancing	Behavioural problems	Low achiever	Low self-esteem	Socially excluded
Clwyd ACF	0	0	7	5	10	9	8	9
Dyfed ACF	8	8	9	15	17	2	9	0
Glamorgan ACF Partnership for Youth RCT YOS	12	19	2	0	19	0	12	7
Glamorgan ACF South Wales Police	0	27	0	0	8	0	6	2
Gwent ACF	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Powys ACF	0	8	4	1	33	20	16	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>24</b>

The ACF referral form is not precise enough in indicating the criminal justice status of young people and what the status of a police warning or reprimand is (eg, formally as per the provisions of the *Crime and Disorder Act 1998* or more informally) nor does it allow for the referral agencies to indicate whether the

young person is on a statutory order, has come into contact with OUTREACH because they are working with a YIP or as a result of antisocial behaviour. It was noted from referral forms that those on statutory orders could appear under police reprimand or police warning.

Low self-esteem was the third main reason for referral (29% of young people) and in a third of these cases it was also linked to behavioural problems for children and young people put forward from schools in particular. Comparison by gender revealed no discernible difference between the referral reasons for boys or girls, possibly because the numbers were small and the information analysed was not fully comprehensive.

The status of the young people referred by YOTs was examined further to identify what types of interventions or orders might have been included under police reprimand or police warning (which is what the referral forms used as a basis for table 2 indicated). Information was available for 113 young people. Table 3 shows that while some of these young people were actually on a police reprimand or final warning, others were in fact subject to prevention programmes or statutory orders. What this does indicate is that 56% of young people referred to OUTREACH by YOTs are referred through the prevention route, whether a YIP or, as with RCT YOS Partnership for Youth, because of their contact with local schools and children's services.

**Table 3 Status of young people referred from YOTs**

Youth offending team/service	Prevention	Reprimand	Final warning	Referral order	Action plan order	Reparation order	Supervision order	Other
RCT	48	1	4	14	4	4	3	
Bridgend				2			2	
Cardiff			5					
Neath Port Talbot			5					
Swansea	10			2			2	1*
RCT – SWP**	5			1				
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>

\*The records indicated this young person was on a detention and training order licence.

\*\* Young people from RCT YOS referred to the South Wales Police courses.

In discussions with YOTs and schools, it was evident that YOTs tended to describe the young people they referred in terms of their criminal justice status and the type of order they were on, whereas schools were more descriptive of the nature of the problem eg, behavioural or a lack of confidence. The lack of

description by YOTs may also be a reflection of the fact that some were unclear about whom the course should be targeted at and what it could contribute. Greater clarity in this respect might help them to better consider how they can use OUTREACH as an intervention.

## Age

Information was made available about the age of 153 programme participants (74%). As table 4 indicates, 61% fell within the OUTREACH recommended age range of 12 to 14 years. The average age of those referred was 13.6 overall. For children referred from schools it was 12 years old and from YOTs 14 years old.

ACF project leaders in conjunction with partners have the scope to work outside the target age group and some variation was evident from discussions. For example, Clwyd and Powys target young people from 11 years, but do not work with those over 14 years, although Powys had run a successful trial course with older children which it may continue in the future. In the past there have been reservations about working with an older age group due to concerns about being able to effectively manage them. However, RCT YOS and South Wales Police target those up to the age of 17 and their completion rates indicate that 63% of 15 to 17 year olds finish the course, with reasons for non-completion not solely relating to disciplinary problems (for example illness, injury and opting out all occurred as well).

Hartridge High School had altered its target age range to 14 and 15 year olds, feeling that they were better able to cope with the course than younger children. Monmouth Torfaen YOT commented that the main YOT population is 15 to 17 years and extending the target group beyond the 12 to 14 age group would take in a broader range of children and young people. The ACF project leaders have the flexibility to consider this.

**Table 4 Age of young people who participated by project area**

Project area	Age of young people (in years)						
	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Clwyd ACF*	2	4	3	1	0	0	0
Dyfed ACF**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Glamorgan ACF Partnership for Youth RCT YOS	0	5	23	21	13	11	5
Glamorgan ACF South Wales Police	0	0	6	2	9	6	2
Gwent ACF**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Powys ACF	12	17	8	3	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>7</b>

\* Information provided for 11 of the 21 referrals.

\*\*No information provided.

## Gender

Information was made available for 175 young people (85% of participants) as illustrated in the following table. This indicates that 69% of young people participating in OUTREACH in 2007 were male. The majority of areas run courses for boys and girls, with the data indicating that girls are present in greatest numbers on the Glamorgan ACF/RCT YOS Partnership for Youth courses, and South Wales Police also sponsor a course specifically for girls.

**Table 5 Gender of young people participating by project area**

Project area	Males	Females
Clwyd ACF	8	2
Dyfed ACF	18	4
Glamorgan ACF Partnership for Youth RCT YOS	40	38
Glamorgan ACF South Wales Police	14	11
Gwent ACF*	-	-
Powys ACF	40	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>55</b>

\*No information provided.

From discussions it appears that the majority of YOTs (with the exception of RCT YOS) find it difficult to engage girls, partly because there are fewer of them in caseloads than boys and because they show less interest in OUTREACH.

'It is very difficult to get girls to go on the course because they cannot take their hair straighteners and nail varnish and there is no point in taking them unless they are going to do it.' YOT police officer

The information on those that participated from RCT YOS and South Wales Police-sponsored courses suggests that girls are more likely to drop out because they find it too hard, whereas boys are more likely to be asked to leave for disciplinary reasons. Powys does not run courses for girls, having found them to be less effective in the past. Some of the case study material provided for this evaluation suggests that girls do benefit, indicating that perhaps more should be done to explore what could attract them. The following case study relates one particular experience as reported by RCT YOS which invited a young girl who had been a victim of a serious assault to attend one of their courses. A victim liaison officer approached her because she was not going to school or leaving the house because she had lost her self-confidence. She attended an OUTREACH course and wrote the following about her experience:

'I have been involved with the youth offending service and victim support for almost two years. This is because when I was 15 I was attacked in the

street on my way home from the corner shop. I knew her and a few of her friends who did not help and I became very nervous, sad and scared. I was afraid to go to school and I still do not answer the phone or the door. I even cut off my hair because she had pulled it and I did not want anything to remind me of the attack. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to get my life back through the course with Partnership for Youth. The first one I did was an army course – I describe it as the four worst and best days of my life! It was so hard and there were many tears and tantrums, but we all had smiles on our faces throughout. I met some inspirational people over these courses and I am so lucky! While on the course I realised something very important. I went to get my confidence back, but learnt on the way that not all people who have offended are nasty, bad people and they are not monsters. You can have conversations with them without being afraid to disagree and they do have respect for other people. I should not stereotype them because of past bad experiences and I also saw they were gaining from me. They saw a victim's point of view, how it affected me and saw how badly a few punches can affect someone, not just physically, but emotionally and mentally as well. I hope they learnt from me as I learnt from them.'

## Programmes

### Programmes run in 2007

The *ACFA OUTREACH Support and Guidance Pack* recommends that all areas should run a discovery day to provide young people with the opportunity to sample the activities that will be undertaken on the longer courses. It suggests this should be followed by a three-day residential course, but this is not prescriptive and ACF project leaders can alter the structure, activities and duration of the programme as they see fit and tailor them to suit local circumstances. Table 6 provides details of OUTREACH courses run by ACF areas in 2007.

**Table 6** Course description by project area

Project area	Number of courses	Discovery day	Residential courses (number of days)			
			2	3	4	5
Clwyd ACF	1	Yes	√			
Dyfed ACF	1	Yes	√			
Glamorgan ACF Partnership for Youth RCT YOS	4*	Yes	√		√	
Glamorgan ACF South Wales Police	2	No			√	
Gwent ACF	2	Yes	√			
Powys ACF	4	Yes		√		√

\* This is just the four-day residential course. Others are run – see below.

Not all areas run discovery days and the duration of courses also varies. Three areas run short (two-day) courses over weekends. The greatest number of courses have been run in Powys and Glamorgan, reflecting the fact they have the resources to do so. RCT YOS and Powys operate the programme on an ongoing and graduated basis. RCT YOS provides a two-day advanced course for every four-day course run (six participants go forward from each of the initial courses). In Powys (after the discovery day) the courses are delivered in two parts, which are spread six months apart. The intention is that the same young people attend throughout. The ACF project leader is of the view that working with young people over a longer period of time is more likely to produce a positive outcome.

'Working with young people for four days to address their multiple needs is not sufficient. By increasing the number of days, we can work with them for longer and increase the likelihood of their needs being met.' ACF project leader

This model is not necessarily replicable elsewhere, for obvious reasons:

'If I had more manpower... and the finances were there, then [OUTREACH]... could be run all the time.' ACF project leader

## Discovery day

Four areas offer a discovery day. This provides young people with the chance to experience the course first-hand and acts as a gate-keeping mechanism, allowing the ACF project leaders to get to know them and to assess whether they are likely to be able to manage a longer course. It is not unusual at this stage for either the young person to decline further involvement or for the project leader to suggest they should not be involved.

The discovery day held in Powys typically involves young people being picked up from the school at 9.30am in a minibus and taken to a meeting point where the first activity is undertaken. At this point they will be reminded about the rules and conditions of their involvement. Team-building exercises begin with a forest walk, which is seen as an opportunity for the young people and the volunteers to get to know each other (an ice breaker). At the end of the walk there is a team-building activity such as rope climbing or a trust exercise, for example being blindfolded and having to listen to commands or bridge building without touching the ground and so forth. Once the activities are completed the young people are returned to school for 3.30pm. Usually young people who behave well and complete the day will be encouraged to attend the three-day course.

Clwyd runs a half-day discovery day, Gwent runs four discovery days spread over two weekends and Dyfed a one-day taster. All are organised along similar lines in that young people meet with ACF volunteers and cadets and work with them on a variety of tasks. Young people are divided into groups and are allocated an instructor, ACF staff, cadets and partner agency support staff, depending on local arrangements. They undertake a selection of activities in their teams focusing variously on group work, team building, camp skills, command tasks and other pursuits, such as archery (the content varies by area). All have to be completed within specific time limits. Young people remain in the same group which helps them to get to know each other, the ACF staff and others who are mentoring them throughout. The day is used to assess suitability for the longer residential courses and those who behave and engage well with the activities are likely to be selected. Young people may be advised at the end of the session who will be going forward or not and why.

When the Glamorgan ACF/South Wales Police programme was first set up, it included a discovery day. This proved to be very successful with partners and young people alike who found the experience informative as to what the courses involve:

'We used to provide a taster day to give both staff and the young people an idea about what to expect on the course... it was well received.' Principal officer, Youth Justice, South Wales Police

This has since been replaced by a briefing evening as it was not possible to sustain the discovery day due to partner agency staff not being available to attend. However, some YOTs now suggest that it should be reinstated because it provides a more realistic account of what to expect on the residential courses, notably in terms of the sleeping arrangements (basic), the activities (demanding) and the style of delivery of the course (highly structured and disciplined). The discovery day also helps to prepare the support staff from schools or YOTs who will be accompanying the young people:

'I think there needs to be a one-day experience before the residential course. This would ensure that the staff are aware of what the course entails; I mean it was a lot harder than I thought it was going to be.' YOT practitioner

## Residential programmes

The *ACFA OUTREACH Support and Guidance Pack* provides the project leaders with a menu of activities from which they can develop their programmes. However, it is just a guide and they have scope to include their own activities. The guidance recommends that young people are fully engaged throughout the course to minimise the time they could become bored or distracted. As a result, there is a demanding timetable that requires a high level of motivation and commitment from all concerned.

The OUTREACH regional co-ordinators review each programme of activities before the courses commence to ensure they are appropriate and meet the needs of the young people. Programmes are also checked to ensure that risk assessments have been completed and that all safety measures are in place before they begin.

'We will not provide activities that are unsafe, but provide activities that are fun, that the young people will enjoy and that have a learning element to them. We try to provide a package that teaches the young people team building, communication skills and self-confidence through activities that they will enjoy.' ACF cadet executive officer

A typical four-day course delivered by Glamorgan ACF with RCT YOS comprises the following:

An evaluation of the ACFA OUTREACH project in Wales in 2007

Day 1		Day 2	
11.00	Arrival and briefing	06.30	Wake-up call
12.30	Assault course	06.40	Morning activity
15.00	Gym	07.00	Breakfast
17.00	Potted sports	07.30	Pack kit
19.30	Indoor climbing	08.30	Archery/bush craft/mountain walk
22.15	Command tasks	13.00	Mountain walk
22.30	Supper and ONC paperwork	18.00	Evening meal
23.00	Lights out	19.00	Command task
		20.00	ONC paperwork
		22.00	Lights out
Day 3		Day 4	
07.00	Wake-up call	06.30	Wake-up call
07.30	Breakfast and morning drill	07.00	Breakfast and morning drill
09.00	Orienteering	10.00	Rehearsal of assault course and climbing wall
13.00	Lunch	11.00	Parents/carers arrive
14.30	Rock climbing/abseiling	12.30	Presentation and buffet
17.00	Gorge walk	13.30	Pack up and depart
19.30	Shower		
21.00	Evening meal		
21.30	ONC paperwork		
22.00	Staff meeting		
23.00	Lights out		

In terms of the way in which the courses operate, there are local variations but broadly speaking they are run along the same lines. Young people are taken to the location of the course where they are briefed about the rules regarding their participation, including health and safety aspects. They are provided with an army kit, for example those attending the Glamorgan ACF/Partnership for Youth courses receive a rucksack containing a roll mat, water bottle, T-shirt, fleece, waterproof clothing and a sleeping bag. ACF staff check they have all the items

they have been asked to bring with them and confiscate anything they should not have brought.

'It is surprising what they try to bring. Some girls bring hair dryers with them, which you do not need on a farm with no power.' ACF cadet executive officer

The first morning is generally taken up with briefings and ice breakers, followed by a range of activities that may be about basic survival, for example putting up a tent, outdoor survival skills and camp craft.

'We expect young people to cook their own food, so we provide them with ration packs and show them how to cook in the field.' ACF cadet executive officer

Young people are divided into groups, which they remain in for the course, which allows for an element of competition. The ACFA national co-ordinator explains that programmes should include activities such as team building, problem solving, for example raft building, life skills including washing and cooking in the field, new skills like archery, and major skills such as rock climbing or canoeing. Each programme should also incorporate an outdoor activity, such as an expedition with an overnight camp, whereby the young people have to build a shelter and cook army rations. All activities arranged by OUTREACH must be those that an ACF cadet of a similar age would take part in. The *ACFA OUTREACH Support and Guidance Pack* provides details of a number of suggested pursuits that include archery, mountain bike orienteering, camping, a night walk, command tasks, a climbing wall and an obstacle course.

From discussion with the ACF project leaders there are a wide range of others that are provided, for example, rock climbing/abseiling, gorge walking, cookery, swimming, timed runs, raft building, horse riding, completing an assault course, team sports such as football, blindfolded walks, observation tasks and an evening quiz. However there is some variation in what is delivered in each locality and this depends on the resources ACF has access to and the activities it has instructors for. Some activities are provided as rewards for good participation and behaviour, for example a trip to Oakwood Park (Powys) or excursions such as bowling (Dyfed). Others have made decisions to exclude certain activities such as horse riding (Dyfed) and paintballing is not included as it is not an approved ACF activity.

'We do not take them horse riding because we treat them like our cadets and they do not get to go horse riding.' ACF cadet executive officer

On the whole the courses offered are regarded as comprehensive and aim to retain the interest and engagement of the young people throughout. Criticism was however made of the Gwent ACF programmes as they did not provide enough activity and young people became bored and restless. Another reservation was that the venue that appeared to offer little opportunity to do more than map reading and walking which was considered not sufficiently

stimulating by the referring partners. They indicated more motivating and purposeful activity was required and that pursuits should not focus too much on new experiences that cannot always be continued after returning home.

'More team-building activities are needed so that those who are not participating in activities such as archery don't become restless and disruptive.' YOT practitioner

In contrast the ACF project leader in another area indicated they specifically provide evening activities to ensure that young people are tired when they go to bed and will therefore be more settled and sleep better, minimising the chances of disruption.

### Tailoring activities

There is some variation in approach in terms of whether courses are tailored to the needs of the individuals attending or not. The ACFA national co-ordinator indicated that once the referral forms are received from the partner agencies, there is an expectation that ACF project leaders will use this information to plan the course activities. It is however recognised that whilst it is impossible to meet the needs of every young person, there is an assumption that the pursuits offered will be tailored to the needs of the majority of young people. For example, if a significant number of young people have low self-esteem and confidence, the ACF project leader would be expected to arrange activities that encourage small success on a progressive scale, whereas for behavioural problems the course programme would include a selection of team-building exercises.

Clwyd, Gwent and Powys tend to use standard activities that are replicated for each course. Clwyd indicate that meetings are held with ACF volunteers and cadets to discuss the young people who have been put forward. They are also divided into groups at this point so that ACF staff know who they will be working with and what their requirements might be.

The schools that refer to the Powys courses indicated they are confident the activities provided are appropriate and they rely on ACF to select those that will meet young people's needs and challenge them. All three schools report good outcomes for those who have attended, suggesting the content is appropriate for the groups of people referred. This may be a reflection of the fact that the schools and ACF have worked together for a number of years and have collectively identified what works best over time. In Gwent one of the criticisms was there had not been sufficient contact between the referring partners and ACF, with the partners indicating they would have liked more opportunity to influence course content and to work with ACF to ensure the activities offered were appropriate for those referred.

One of the main reasons for providing referral information about the young people to ACF is to give basic information about the reason for the referral eg,

whether self-confidence is a problem and to identify whether there are specific needs. The medical forms indicate whether there are any health problems that might prevent a young person undertaking a particular activity. Dyfed, Glamorgan with RCT YOS and South Wales Police all indicated they review referral information with the aim of tailoring their courses to suit the needs of those attending, although were not specific about the ways in which this would be done. However, all felt it was important to have this information to be able to properly brief ACF staff and volunteers about particular requirements and relevant issues. They also indicated that debriefing sessions and asking young people for their views were useful in reviewing what had been undertaken and developing future courses, for example activities could be changed or removed from the programme depending on the feedback received.

### Discussion time and feedback

A number of projects, notably Gwent, Powys and Glamorgan with RCT YOS and South Wales Police incorporate discussion time in order to assess how young people are dealing with the activities and to determine whether there is anything they need to change. It is also a mechanism for resolving problems as they occur. This helps partners to have a frank exchange of views and for all concerned to participate in the development of the courses.

RCT YOS in particular stressed the importance of this since ACF and the YOS have very different working cultures and therefore ways in which they may respond to the challenges young people present. The YOS works closely with ACF to ensure there is a good understanding of the difficulties the young people referred often face and takes an active stance in this respect. For example, an ACF volunteer lost his temper with a young person and this was highlighted in the discussion time:

'There was a little incident at the weekend when [an ACF] member of staff screamed and lost his temper with one of the young lads. One of my support staff was not happy with his behaviour, so this was brought up at the meeting, and as it happened the ACF chap put up his hand and apologised saying he had lost it and apologised to the member of staff and to the young person. The rest of the course went along with no more problems.' Project co-ordinator, Partnership for Youth, RCT YOS

Dyfed holds a briefing session at the end of each day which includes the young people as well as staff. Groups break away with a mentor to have a discussion about the programme. The ACF project leader feels this is important, as it actively encourages young people to express their views, to talk about what they have done and their likes and dislikes. The briefing session is also helpful if new ideas have been tried out to establish if they are worth incorporating into future courses.

## At the end of the course

Some areas hold a debrief at the end of the courses involving ACF staff, volunteers and cadets and support staff (Clwyd, Gwent and Glamorgan with RCT YOS and South Wales Police):

'At the end of the weekend we were given the opportunity to reflect on the course and to share our experiences. It was the first time the bush craft activities were incorporated and we all had the opportunity to feed back on how that particular event had gone. As it happened it went very well.' YOT practitioner

The combination of these discussions and further reviews of the programmes (with Glamorgan ACF and the help of RCT YOS) have led to the courses sponsored by South Wales Police being modified. As a result they have become more structured, with less travelling time between activities, more continuous activity from 6.00am to 11.00pm and the range of pursuits young people can participate in has been developed. This has brought benefits. Support staff who have attended the courses talked about the changes being for the better and consider them 'professional, well planned and organised'. The indications are that young people are now too tired or busy chatting about what they have done to become disengaged and disinterested.

## Supporting young people

All partners took the view that it is important to try and ensure that young people who participate in OUTREACH have a positive experience from which they can benefit. As such, the intention is to encourage them to participate and to try and overcome any difficulties they might experience. For example the first night away on a residential course can be difficult for those who have never spent time away from home, and feeling homesick and asking to go home are not uncommon. Efforts will be made to help them to overcome this, but it is also recognised that if feelings are intense there may be no other alternative. Also, young people may not react well to the way they are treated (for example being shouted at) and may feel concerned about what they have let themselves in for when the reality of the experience starts to set in. The role of the ACF staff, volunteers, cadets and support staff from referring agencies are instrumental in helping young people to overcome these feelings and in encouraging them to engage with the programme in order to experience it in the best possible way.

### ACF volunteers and cadets

All of the projects rely on ACF adult volunteer instructors and cadets to deliver the programme of activities. The *ACFA OUTREACH Support and Guidance Pack* indicates that for courses of 20 to 30 young people there should be nine ACF staff and five cadets (and two members of support staff from partner agencies). However, this is not prescriptive and staffing ratios and composition vary from area to area and for each course.

'We also bring in a number of senior cadets who help control the group at mealtimes and help the young people to get kitted out. We also bring in other members of staff such as chefs, minibuss drivers, kayak instructors, abseiling/rock climbing instructors and so forth.' ACF cadet executive officer

Powys ACF has established a pool of experienced volunteers who are skilled in helping the schoolchildren to work through OUTREACH courses. However, they also recognise their limitations and will not work with more demanding or 'high-risk' young people as the ACF project leader does not feel the current pool of volunteers have the skills to effectively manage them.

Clwyd, Dyfed, Powys, RCT YOS and South Wales Police all stressed the importance of ACF staff possessing an appropriate range of skills to work with and support challenging young people. They also need to be properly briefed about the young people they will be working with. RCT YOS was the only partner to indicate it will always ensure that fully completed referral details are received, and if necessary will contact partners if anything is missing. They particularly

stressed the importance of receiving detailed information, of going through referral forms carefully and of conveying the information they hold to ACF staff if there are any problems staff should be aware of. On the first morning of the South Wales Police-sponsored courses, the principal officer, Youth Justice (who attends each of the courses) provides all staff with a comprehensive pack containing details of young people participating as part of their initial briefing.

However, partners in other areas felt that some of the ACF volunteers lacked an understanding of the needs of young people which had an impact on how they were treated. Sometimes assumptions were made, for example, treating everyone as an offender which in itself raises questions about the appropriateness of this approach.

'I do not think it was made clear that not all the young people are attending because they have a criminal record. Many of my young people were there because they were lacking self-esteem and confidence.' Teacher

All of the partners who had referred young people to the Gwent courses questioned the ability of ACF volunteers to work with and supervise difficult and challenging young people. Particular comment was made about not being sensitive to their needs. For example, young people from the YOTs were expected to sleep on mattresses on the floor whilst the ACF cadets slept on camp beds in another room. This, it was felt, created segregation between the two groups and a 'them and us' atmosphere developed which did not form a good basis for running the course. The referring partners suggested there needed to be more robust selection of adult volunteers who could appropriately respond to the needs of difficult young people, and better briefing and awareness of the problems the young people they would be supervising had so that they could tailor their approach accordingly.

Also of relevance in this respect for the Gwent courses was the need for ACF staff and volunteers to have better awareness of their function as role models. For example, spending time talking to each other rather than engaging young people was unsatisfactory, as was enforcing different boundaries and rules for different groups of young people (for example, schoolchildren compared to those referred from the YOTs). The proximity in age of some of the course participants and young adult volunteers can produce tensions that need to be carefully managed.

By contrast, another project specifically commented on the importance of non-segregation and of the young people, ACF cadets and volunteers and support staff all sharing the same experience, with any separation occurring only to part males and females in terms of sleeping arrangements. One YOT also said that becoming part of the wider team was one of the factors that contributes to the effectiveness of the courses.

One of the issues raised by a number of the partners is ACF's style of delivery which often involves shouting instructions at young people. Some noted that young people did not respond well to it:

'I do not think it is acceptable for them to be shouting at someone who has self-esteem issues. I expected all of the soldiers to have read up about each individual and not just to treat them any way they wanted.' Teacher

A worker who attended the course from a YOT indicated that he felt it was his role to explain to young people what ACF staff wanted and why they shouted instructions and that by explaining this, young people tended to respond better. He did not feel though that shouting worked very well and that young people struggled to accept it and sometimes wanted to go home because it upset them. Another YOT also commented that young people who attend the course are 'vulnerable [and] whilst they may be offenders they are children first' and are often sensitive to the way in which adults react to them. One more YOT highlighted the importance of appropriately selecting and preparing young people for this reason, noting that some ACF staff prefer to take a 'militaristic' approach and shout instructions irrespective of whether young people would respond or not, whereas others are more prepared to modify their approach and to try and understand where the young people are coming from and why. As a result, when discussing the suitability of the course with a young person one practitioner would stress some of the more 'negative' aspects to present as realistic a picture as possible to avoid young people who are shouted at immediately wanting to go home. Others commented that, with experience, the strict military style had been relaxed somewhat, with ACF becoming more aware that there are other ways to get the most out of course participants.

'When I first came on the course as a support member of staff, the army had their very distinct way of working with the young people. Normally they are working with young people who want to be there, cadets who want a future in the army. The biggest thing for their staff was how they manage the type of young people we have on the courses. I think they did struggle a lot coping with the discipline and behaviour of the young people, and I suppose [they] would probably be kicked out of cadets, so it has been a struggle to get them to realise the issues [that may] affect them and the lack of structure these young people have in their lives.'

Project co-ordinator, Partnership for Youth, RCT YOS

## Support staff

One of the expectations of ACF is that partners professionally support the courses and members of staff accompany young people to provide additional support and encouragement. ACF also views it as an opportunity for workers to build bonds with participants by engaging in activities together, which means that support workers are required to fully participate in all of the pursuits.

Powys does not require partner agencies to provide support staff. Although there is no expectation for the schools to provide staff to attend, one provided a member of staff to provide additional assistance to a young person with particular behavioural problems (which was found to be effective) and another sent a trainee teacher who was a member of the territorial army. However, the

schools in this area commented that it is difficult to provide this type of support as there are cost implications in covering the member of staff who is absent. All courses are run in school term-times and in the week. Powys ACF has also had difficulty in recruiting adult volunteers who are willing to supervise young people for their five-day residential course.

The ACF project leaders in Dyfed and Glamorgan and interviewees from RCT YOS and South Wales Police remarked on the valuable contribution support staff can make in terms of their personal knowledge of the young people they have referred and in the efforts they can make to encourage them:

'They [the teachers] had a go at anything; this was good for the children to see. It was certainly the case when we visited Castel Martin as the teachers led the way on a number of activities – rock climbing and abseiling and the assault course – which encouraged the children to take part.' ACF cadet executive officer

However, for others the extent to which they were expected to participate in the range of activities was unexpected:

'It was not made clear that support staff take part in activities. I tried to take part in all of them because I enjoy sports, so I saw the weekend as a challenge myself. A number of members of staff, however, did not take part in all the activities and a few young people did not as I recall. I think it's important for the support staff to take part, because they [the young people] see me doing it and they think it's ok for them to do it. It encourages them to engage.' YOT practitioner

Others definitely see their role as getting involved and being proactive in everything that is expected of them:

'If you have a 15 or 16 year old that you are trying to motivate to participate in activities... you not taking part can be very ineffective.' YOT police officer

Glamorgan ACF and South Wales Police now require support staff to attend the briefing evening, recognising that it is as much about their preparation as that of the young people. As mentioned previously, there is a separate briefing for staff that focuses specifically on their roles and responsibilities as part of their preparation. The South Wales Police-sponsored courses more than any of the others bring together a range of support staff (thirteen on one course) who have mixed familiarity with it and different skills and approaches in working with young people. This adds complexity to the management arrangements. RCT YOS by comparison provides three members of staff to attend each course who support and care for the young people. They work closely together, are familiar with what is involved and what is required of them, so tend not to experience some of the difficulties that other areas have.

The fact that some support staff are expected to be on duty for the 24-hour period to deal with any misbehaviour, including at night, was felt to be unacceptable in certain instances. One YOT believes that this is an unrealistic expectation as it raises a number of health and safety issues for staff, as they are required to be on duty day and night for the duration of a residential course, which is very tiring. Some of the staff who attended from YOTs in particular indicated that, although a potentially rewarding experience, the demands of the course made it exhausting. One area overcomes this by nominating staff members to be on duty at night.

Overall it appears that programmes are likely to run more effectively when experienced ACF volunteers and support staff are used who are fully briefed about the needs of the young people attending. Ultimately, what is important is the quality of the experience the young people have – being well supported and encouraged to successfully complete the programme:

'I am looking forward to the next one. They are improving every year for the better. However, perhaps staff should be more aware of what they are taking on.' YOT practitioner

## Discipline

Alongside the physical activities, high levels of discipline and a support structure play an important part in OUTREACH. Young people are told from the outset what behaviour is expected of them and to be aware of the consequences of misbehaving for themselves and others. They are expected to fully engage with the programme and to work co-operatively with ACF staff, volunteers and other support staff. This requires listening to instructions, behaving responsibly and not misbehaving for the duration of the course. ACF and partners indicate they do not like sending young people home and view it as a matter of last resort as it can be disruptive to the rest of the course participants, as well as representing failure for the person concerned. Part of the preparation for young people is advising them of the consequences of breaking the rules or misbehaviour.

ACF and partners stressed that their initial objective is to try and encourage young people to participate in the course and to overcome or work through any difficulties they are experiencing. The programme involves learning about different and sometimes difficult situations. Overcoming personal doubts and problems can be part of the experience, as can accepting personal responsibility and recognising that when they sign up for something there is an obligation to complete it.

'We just want them to have a go, instead of saying "I can't".' Principal officer, Youth Justice, South Wales Police

The *ACFA OUTREACH Support and Guidance Pack* recommends using a red and yellow card scheme for those who misbehave or are not complying with the requirements of the course. Should this occur, a young person would initially

receive a warning in the form of a yellow card and an explanation of why this has been issued. If they continue to misbehave, the ACF project leader may give out a red card, at which point they are removed from the course.

Three areas (Clwyd, Dyfed and Powys) operate this system, and it appears to work well, with the handing out of a yellow card being sufficient to warrant a change in the behaviour of most young people. One ACF project leader believes this process sets clear boundaries for all those involved and when enforced fairly young people respond well:

'I explain to them the process of the red and yellow card system: two yellow warning cards and then a red card which results in exclusion. I have never sent a young person home... they all seem to understand this process and respect it. I have given a number of yellow cards and spoken with young people who have pushed the boundaries.'

The ACF projects that operate in Glamorgan with RCT YOS and South Wales Police use a less formal system, but nevertheless talk to young people about the reasons why what they have done is unacceptable. Both have an 'open door' policy that encourages young people to discuss their problems and to try and resolve them before they escalate. They will employ diversionary measures to encourage them to behave. For example if young people are misbehaving at night (after lights out at 11.00pm) ACF may get them up and make them go for a run.

'By the end of the weekend [the young people] are used to it and know when they have done something wrong.' Project co-ordinator, Partnership for Youth, RCT YOS

It is also recognised that having to take someone home can present logistical problems as it means the loss of a support member of staff, so efforts will be made to avoid this. Generally ACF staff manage the discipline with the assistance of the partner agency, as their personal knowledge of the young person can be helpful when problems arise. The partner agency is responsible for taking the young person home and informing their parents if the need arises. All partners plan for the likelihood that someone may have to be returned home by having designated drivers or by support staff taking their own vehicles which are then left at the army base.

When dealing with matters of discipline it is important that ACF and support staff from the referring agencies take a common approach, as without this partnership arrangements are less likely to be cohesive and can lead to either party becoming disillusioned. Inevitably there can be differences of opinion and sometimes a lack of communication between the partners occurs. RCT YOS and South Wales Police have tended to use the briefing evening to make staff aware of their responsibilities so there is less likelihood of this occurring on the courses. Also, being aware of the lines of authority is important, as is having a consistent team of ACF staff and support staff who know each other and know what to expect and do.

One of the criticisms from a particular course was the differential treatment of young people in terms of what it was acceptable for the ACF cadets to do and the rules that might apply to schoolchildren and those referred by the YOTs. However, it was also pointed out that young people can be attending the courses for very different reasons and ACF need to be briefed about and be tolerant of this in order to know how best to respond to them. This sometimes means there are good reasons for disciplining young people differently when they have done the same thing wrong. This can create tensions and in these situations it is the skills, knowledge and experience of the staff in working with young people that will help to get the balance right.

Others have noted that although some young people present very challenging behaviour, it is important that consistent boundaries are adhered to as they are likely to respond better when a structure has been imposed. No one method of discipline appears more effective than any other and what is evident is the need for the system to be clear, structured and understood by everyone involved to ensure the young people appreciate the parameters within which they can experience the course. As one young person referred by RCT YOS said: 'It's strict but the experience is good.'

## Achievements and awards

All OUTREACH projects place a considerable emphasis on recognising the achievements of the young people and present them with awards and certificates on completion of the courses. All participants are given a minimum of a certificate, some give medals and young people can take home the T-shirt and fleece they have been given. There are team as well as individual prizes.

'We try and ensure that no one goes home empty-handed and that everyone wins a prize.' ACF cadet executive officer

Partners and ACF commented on the importance of having an award ceremony, whether at the end of the course, later in school or at a designated time after the course has finished.

'The young people finish the course with a sense of achievement, and are presented with certificates and T-shirts. This is often the first time they have ever achieved anything worthwhile.' YOT practitioner

Glamorgan ACF, RCT YOS Partnership for Youth and South Wales Police hold a special event at the end of the course, to which parents/carers are also invited, which allows them to see what their son or daughter has achieved.

'It is a brilliant feeling to see the parents come up on a Monday and see their child climbing over six foot walls and being presented with awards and certificates. So I always really push to the referral agency that they must include the parents. For instance, when we ran the March all-boys course, 56 parents and carers came up to the presentation day and the last few briefing evenings we have had at least 50-60 people attend; it has been packed. It is great for the young people to prove themselves to their parents.' Project co-ordinator, Partnership for Youth, RCT YOS

Parents and carers are often impressed with what their children have achieved:

'It was nice at the presentation and to see his project worker there shouting for him as he completed the assault course. Well, I got all emotional, to think that someone was supporting and encouraging him rather than putting him down, and seeing him there looking so proud of what he had achieved, I was crying tears of joy.' Parent, RCT

'I watched my boy come down the assault course and wait so that one of the little ones could jump over his hands to get over the wall... It's simple things like that they would never do if I asked them, but no-one had told him to help, he did that himself... it was brilliant.' Parent, RCT

Young people attending the Glamorgan ACF, RCT YOS Partnership for Youth and South Wales Police-sponsored courses also work towards an Open College Network (OCN) qualification in camp craft, team building and problem solving, a first aid certificate (Heartstart) and a combined certificate that is signed by all partner agencies and a senior police representative (the latter certificate is South Wales Police-sponsored courses only). Glamorgan ACF courses incorporate time to undertake the OCN work. One school (Brecon High School) also links the programme to OCN qualifications which the young people attain on completion of the course. If they are working towards their ASDAN Award (a qualification to develop key skills) the OCN qualification contributes towards one of the challenges. Powys ACF works in partnership with the youth service so that young people who complete the course are also provided with a WJEC<sup>11</sup> certificate. The youth service is provided with a list of names of those that have completed the course and provides them with a certificate.

The ACFA national co-ordinator advises the Heartstart initiative is now an integral part of OUTREACH. Heartstart UK is co-ordinated by the British Heart Foundation to teach members of the public what to do in a life-threatening emergency. Nationally, OUTREACH is in discussion with the OCN to integrate its qualifications into its courses.

One YOT also publicises achievements from OUTREACH:

'The successes are young people who complete the course and then desist from offending. We try and publicise young people's achievements when they return from the camp. We usually contact the local press and publish a group photograph of the boys that took part. This promotes a positive public image of young people who normally get a rough deal and this encourages them to continue as well.' YOT practitioner

Once young people have completed the course, ACF has no further contact with them, although all projects mentioned young people who had gone on to become cadets as a result of their experiences, and a small number have also joined the army. An example of this came from one of the teachers in Powys:

'There is a boy who was always in trouble for the first three years he was in school. He attended OUTREACH and enjoyed it so much that he joined ACF. Whilst he was in Key Stage 4 he used to leave school and help support the other younger students on OUTREACH. He has since left but continues to engage with the school through ACF, ensuring that he is able to volunteer when our pupils attend the courses. Because he has achieved in this area, he comes back to the school to work as a mentor and is now regarded as a valued member of staff.'

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<sup>11</sup> WJEC is an education charity that provides examinations, assessments, professional development and educational resources for those wishing to access youth activities ([www.wjec.co.uk](http://www.wjec.co.uk)).

RCT YOS also stressed how helpful and supportive ACF staff are of young people they get to know and are always willing to write reports to say how well a young person has done. The project co-ordinator of Partnership for Youth gave an example:

'I had a young person who completed the course with flying colours. Prior to it he had problems with substance misuse and alcohol and was having major behavioural problems. He applied to join the army after he completed the course. They contacted his GP and became aware of his issues and deferred him for three years as a result. The reason he was drinking and taking drugs was because he had recently split up from his girlfriend, so he was going through a bad couple of months. After attending the course he turned his behaviour around, training and working hard, so it was difficult for him to be told he had been deferred for three years. I contacted ACF and spoke to the recruitment officer who asked the social worker to contact them in order to have a full picture of the lad in order to be able to possibly reconsider their decision. It is more likely now that he will be put forward to attend army preparatory college.'

## Feedback

This section of the evaluation examined the feedback provided to partners about the young people who had experienced the course and the feedback obtained directly from young people. Providing feedback to referring agencies gives them an opportunity to offer their perspectives and suggestions and when there are problems, the chance to discuss them. Partners indicated they want to be able to offer their views and to work with the ACF constructively to improve outcomes for young people. In addition, directly seeking the views of service users is an important component of any evaluation.

### Feedback to partners

The ACF project leader in Powys contacts each of the schools a few days after the course to discuss informally how young people have got on. Gwent has also held similar sessions in which partners have been asked for their feedback about the courses run and young people's reaction to them. Glamorgan ACF and South Wales Police hold a partners' meeting the Tuesday after each course. Prior to this, the ACF project leader speaks to all of the ACF staff who have been involved to gain their views which are then fed into the partners' meeting. This involves the principal officer of Youth Justice for South Wales Police as well as the project co-ordinator for Partnership for Youth and the operations manager from RCT YOS.

RCT YOS will contact all the social workers who have made referrals to advise them how their young person dealt with the course and to pass on any information they need to know. This has helped to cement relationships and is a natural conclusion to a process which effectively starts on the briefing night. The YOS say this works for the young people as it encourages the partner agency to attend the awards ceremony and to support and recognise the successes and achievements. This is particularly important if parents do not attend.

One YOT commented that although they receive informal ad hoc feedback from the staff and young people that have attended, they would like this to be more formalised, for example being made more aware of any progress young people have made so that case workers can help to ensure constructive experiences continue:

'We need at least a minimum of a written report on each individual, which OUTREACH should complete and then feed back to the case managers. This information can then be incorporated into the casework with that young person and whatever the positives were, they can continue to be built upon, to further develop their self-esteem and develop the way they respond to adults. As it stands at the moment it is... simply... [a] stand-alone programme.' YOT practitioner

Whether this is a common view needs to be explored further and the capacity to write reports on young people who have attended is something the ACFA national co-ordinator would need to consider. Glamorgan ACF potentially liaises with a wide range of YOT staff providing feedback to them on how the courses are run and how the young people got on. When the feedback is positive it should be used to promote the project. Partners generally also indicated they want their views to be taken into account and if suggestions or recommendations are not to be acted on, to know the reason why.

### Feedback from young people

At the time of the evaluation there were no standard mechanisms in place for asking young people to evaluate their experiences of the courses. The ACF project leaders in Clwyd and Powys tend to discuss with partners (but not young people directly) their impressions of how the course went. Glamorgan ACF with RCT YOS Partnership for Youth and South Wales Police and Dyfed ACF incorporate group discussion time into the programme of activities, but tend not to record views. An evaluation form has been introduced (Glamorgan ACF), which is to be completed by young people in relation to their OCN work, but not in relation to the course as a whole. Clwyd ACF indicated they were in the process of developing a feedback form to evaluate outcomes for courses undertaken in 2008. Initially, Gwent ACF asked young people to talk to their volunteers at the end of the course about their experiences, but this was discontinued as it was felt the timing was not right since the participants were too tired and did not engage well.

Many of the partners comment that they speak to young people informally (for example, in school reviewing what they have done) asking them to write down what they enjoyed and feel they have achieved, looking at photographs and encouraging pupils to relate their experiences. Some schools also indicated that their records on attendance and behaviour provide information which can be discussed informally with the ACF project leader as part of their post-course follow-up. RCT YOS advised they may be working with the young person on other programmes and if they contain formal reviews, feedback would be sought at that point.

This suggests that if ACF wishes to effectively monitor the progress and experience of young people on OUTREACH a process needs to be built in for obtaining feedback from them in order to help build up an evidence base in relation to outcomes, as this can help with the promotion of the programme. Having said that, what was evident from partners was the wealth of anecdotal information about positive changes that have occurred as a result of young people's participation on the course, and this is also useful.

## Evaluating outcomes

### Three and nine-month evaluations

ACF has endeavoured to obtain follow-up information from partners to ascertain whether the involvement of young people in an OUTREACH course has had more than an immediate impact on the reasons for being referred. They request that three and nine-month follow-up evaluations are obtained from the partner agency which is required to assess whether participation has impacted on the young person's behaviour and the reason for referral. However, the extent to which this information is provided and followed up by ACF is variable: some areas indicated that they always do so (Clwyd ACF, Dyfed ACF and RCT YOS Partnership for Youth) whereas others are less diligent:

'I have always sent the three-month forms back [to OUTREACH] as the information is fresh in my mind, although I very rarely send the nine-month one back and I have never been chased up about it.'

None of the YOTs in the South Wales Police area explicitly stated they complete the three and nine-month evaluations and South Wales Police recognise this matter needs further attention to achieve a good level of return (although some information was provided by them for analysis in this report). Dyfed ACF reported they were intending to be more proactive in 2008. The ACF project leader in Powys indicated there is a 50% return rate overall, with more three-month than nine-month evaluations being returned. He is responsible for collating this information for Wales as a whole.

Some of the YOTs felt that asking for information at three and nine-month intervals was unrealistic as they may not be working with, or in contact with, young people, particularly those on short court orders or those referred through prevention services. They suggested that obtaining feedback nearer the end of the course would be better. This suggests that introducing a post-course evaluation for young people that could be completed in their schools or with their caseworker in the YOT and returned to ACF within a specified timescale remains an important consideration in improving the level of feedback provided. Another option might be to ask for this to be done prior to the award ceremony, although account would need to be taken of any bias and the views of young people who have completed the course should also be sought. It would seem important that OUTREACH obtains some follow-up data, as it is included in their annual report which is used to promote the courses and to demonstrate to prospective and existing partners that they can be effective. Also, if measuring reoffending is an anticipated outcome, there need to be mechanisms in place with YOTs to establish how this can be achieved (see the next section entitled 'Reoffending' for more on this).

For this report some three and nine-month evaluations were provided which have been analysed. They were for 98 young people – 63% of those who completed courses in 2007. However, the information received was not directly comparable because it was incomplete, covered different periods (some evaluations were for three months and some were for nine months) and did not necessarily relate to the same children (only 33 three and nine-month evaluation forms did).<sup>12</sup>

The following tables analyse the information that was returned and are the views expressed by the referring agencies (schools or YOTs) of whether there has been an improvement in the young people's behaviour following completion of the course as assessed against the original referral criteria. The three and nine-month periods have been tabulated separately as they have different populations. In addition, some of the information provided indicated changes in a number of different areas, for example self-esteem, behaviour and social exclusion. For the purpose of this analysis, overall change has been measured by examining the level of improvement or lack of it overall. Table 7 provides information after three months for 59 young people and table 8 after nine months for 73 young people.

**Table 7 Progress after three months**

Area	Significant improvement	Minor improvement	No change	Deterioration
Clwyd ACF	3	6	0	0
Glamorgan ACF Partnership for Youth RCT YOS	22	10	4	0
Glamorgan ACF South Wales Police	6	7	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>

**Table 8 Progress after nine months**

Area	Significant improvement	Minor improvement	No change	Deterioration
Clwyd ACF	3	6	0	0
Glamorgan ACF Partnership for Youth RCT YOS	14	6	2	3
Powys ACF	11	16	6	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>

<sup>12</sup> Clwyd provided information for nine young people at three and nine months, Powys for 39 young people at nine months, RCT YOS for 36 young people at three months and 25 at nine months and South Wales Police for 14 young people at three months.

The tables indicate that at three months 53% of young people had shown a significant improvement, 39% a minor improvement and 8% no change in their behaviour. At nine months 38% showed a significant improvement, 38% a minor improvement, 11% no change and 12% had deteriorated. Overall 92% of young people had shown some improvement at three months in relation to the reason they were referred to OUTREACH and 77% had shown some improvement at nine months (although the populations are not directly comparable).<sup>13</sup>

When comparing those populations (where it is possible to do so) there is very little difference in the changes that occurred at three months and later at nine months. For the Clywd population there was no change and for 24 young people from RCT YOS there was also very little movement. Where there was movement, it tended to be from 'no change' to 'deterioration' and vice versa, rather than from improvement to either 'no change' or 'deterioration'.

The information has been examined further to identify where areas of change have occurred and, because of the different groups, has been separated into the three and nine-month populations in tables 9 and 10. In these tables there may be more than one indicator for each young person.

**Table 9** Areas of improvement at three months

	Police reprimand	Police warning	Excluded from school	Truancing	Behavioural problems	Low achiever	Low self-esteem	Socially excluded
Significant change	12	5	5	3	8	5	5	3
Minor change	1	5	5	1	11	0	8	10
No change	0	1	0	0	4	3	0	1
Deterioration	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>

<sup>13</sup> The ACFA national co-ordinator indicated that OUTREACH would expect to see an 80% improvement in all referrals.

**Table 10** Areas of improvement at nine months

	Police reprimand	Police warning	Excluded from school	Truancing	Behavioural problems	Low achiever	Low self-esteem	Socially excluded
Significant change	7	5	6	3	10	5	8	3
Minor change	1	1	3	1	21	15	10	13
No change	0	0	1	2	6	4	2	6
Deterioration	1	0	2	0	11	5	2	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>

The information suggests that improvements (minor or significant) were most likely to be made in behaviour. However, as the evaluation returns are in tick box form little information is provided that expands on this. The need to improve behaviour was also the main reason young people were referred to OUTREACH. Other areas that showed positive indicators related to police warnings or reprimands and improved self-esteem and greater social inclusion. These are also likely to impact on behaviour.

If this process is to assist ACF in monitoring the effectiveness of OUTREACH, there needs to be more robust collection of data and ensuring that what is provided is complete so that comparisons can be drawn. Also, what is collected is confined to the views of the partners and not young people as previously mentioned. However, the information does indicate some promising results and the majority of young people clearly seem to have benefited from the experience.

Schools provided a number of examples of where they thought improvements had occurred. For example children who were noted to be solitary and loners mixing and engaging better because they had been encouraged to speak to others and do things with others (in teams) which had increased their self-confidence. Others brought their behaviour more into check (although it was noted that this was sometimes short-lived) and generally behaved better in class. This has the potential to impact on the number of school exclusions. Partners were all committed to trying to ensure the lessons learned continued to be applied and that young people were supported and encouraged to maintain any positive changes.

YOTs also commented on the encouraging changes they had observed in young people whilst on the courses:

'One of the benefits we have seen from the South Wales Police course is young people learn to get on with others they thought they might not have anything in common with. You have young people there from Cardiff, Swansea and RCT. The young people are apprehensive of meeting each other. What you find is they start off saying 'Do you know so and so? Oh, I know him' and the bond starts from there. I think they learn a lot from this, that they can get on and have a really good time with different people.' YOT practitioner

'Seeing the young people come to the programme with their attitudes on the Friday and seeing them leave on the Monday, parading and getting the awards and certificates that they deserve is amazing. The fact that they have seen the programme through is the greatest success.' ACF project leader

'What I like about the course is that you see the dynamics of the kids change for the better as the weekend continues.' YOT police officer

Other benefits that were noted were increased self-confidence, motivation and self-control:

'One girl was an under-achiever in school, but by the time she finished the course it became apparent that she had excellent leadership skills. OUTREACH had the ability to make her feel good about herself and enhanced her level of self-confidence and self-esteem.' Principal officer, Youth Justice, South Wales Police

'One young person we have on the course had really low esteem and would not say boo to a goose, but by the end of the course the turnaround was huge. He was the only one who said he did not want to go home.' YOT police officer

A number of comments were also made about young people who were trying to alter their lifestyle:

'One lad has changed considerably since his return from the army weekend. He is staying in more and doing more fitness... hopefully it will last long term.' YOT practitioner

'I have noticed with one of our lads since he came back, and whilst on the course to some extent, that he is more inclined to help other people now. On the course he would wait for people to catch up and then encourage them on. My relationship with both lads has improved. They open up more to me now and are more inclined to take part in activities I suggest to them. One of the lads now attends the local leisure centre and takes on more of a leadership role with the younger kids.' YOT practitioner

It was also clearly an enjoyable and memorable experience for others:

'Of the four young people we took on the last course (2008), four that we are still in contact with cannot stop talking about it. I know they have taken a lot away from it that they will remember in years to come.' YOT practitioner

Partners were asked as a result of their involvement whether OUTREACH met their expectations. On the whole they were very positive and felt that it did in terms of what it provided and could achieve:

'[It] is a tremendous input to this school and these children look forward to it. I taught pupils this morning who asked when the next five-day course was because they can't wait.' Teacher

'I have always seen the benefit of OUTREACH in providing new opportunities for young people. The advantage of doing it with the army is they bring structure, discipline and routine that young people may not otherwise have had. It does not always work, as some young people do not want to engage, but if you are selective and carefully explain before they go what the course entails you have a greater chance of success. The new experiences offered are very intense.' YOT practitioner

Schools indicated that it was an integral part of their school curriculum (in Powys particularly) and that it provides something they cannot by engaging young people in a different way which brings added value. RCT YOS also views it in this way:

'One of our young lads attended the course in March and then took part in the advanced course and then he was part of Splash. To see the development in him and to see the change of attitude is quite inspiring, to be honest. So the main thing for me is that we have found a way of working with a young person that engages them. When I went to a meeting at the school I got positive feedback, which was excellent. You see an impact, and that is the most important thing.' Operations manager for prevention, RCT YOS

'The young people who attend get far more than can be provided in a school environment, from travelling to places they haven't been to before to learning to follow instructions in a different way to how they follow them in school. The army can be more assertive than they can be in the school, and this works quite well for some of the students who perhaps are not used to that. Also working together is a big part of the project, with the pupils thinking and solving problems and achieving things they have never done before and perhaps would not have got the opportunity to do otherwise.' Teacher

Where criticisms existed it was when it was felt the courses were poorly run and that partners were not sufficiently engaged or their viewpoints not considered. In

these instances the programme was not felt to meet expectations and disengagement occurred. However, interestingly, this did not always detract from young people's enjoyment of the experience. Others commented that the short-term nature of the programme made it difficult to measure whether there would be sustained benefits and that it is up to the partners to capitalise on any successes and achievements.

'It is not broad enough or long enough to be a stand-alone project.' ACFA national co-ordinator

YOTs were also generally more cautious about what they felt the courses could achieve because of their short duration:

'We only have them for four days and we only provide so many activities for a few hours in the day, so we can't address every single need, it is nigh on impossible. If they have housing needs we can't address that.' Principal officer, Youth Justice, South Wales Police

Research findings<sup>14</sup> indicate that if such programmes are to have a beneficial/diversionary effect there needs to be some possibility of the skills and experiences that young people have acquired and experienced having some permanence in their lives. This suggests it is important to feed back to referring partners what has been achieved in order that this can be taken into account and, if appropriate, incorporated into any support or intervention plans so that development continues.

The schools and RCT YOS indicated they do not see involvement in the programme as a stand-alone activity. Referring young people to OUTREACH is one of a number of strategies they employ to try and engage and motivate those who are becoming disaffected. They make efforts to ensure the work undertaken and any achievements are sustained following completion. For example RCT YOS engages with a variety of other projects and will consider, on the basis of the young person's experience with OUTREACH, what else they may benefit from attending. For example, six young people who attend the four-day residential course will be selected for a further two-day advanced course and a further number can proceed from this to an additional two-day personal development course.

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<sup>14</sup> Nacro (2008) *Youth crime briefing: Sport, recreational and physical activity programmes and youth justice* London: Nacro

## Reoffending

Standard measures of reconviction by the Home Office are over a two-year period. The nature and type of referrals to OUTREACH suggests that it would be difficult to monitor the outcomes from participation in this respect, as not all young people are referred because they have offended and cannot therefore be easily followed up. For example, a number of schools indicated that young people had been referred for a police warning or reprimand but it was not always possible to identify whether this was an informal warning as a result of antisocial behaviour or whether it was a final warning under the *Crime and Disorder Act 1998*. Also, OUTREACH is aimed at those on the margins of the criminal justice system which means young people may be referred through prevention programmes because of concerns about behaviour leading to criminality, rather than because they have offended. Measuring offending is also problematic as there are different definitions, for example at charge or on conviction. Neither takes into account offences that are undetected. For the purposes of this study reoffending has been identified on the basis of whether the electronic monitoring systems used by YOTs record any court orders or court outcomes following participation in the programme. Any outstanding matters prior to attending the course have been discounted, as the intention has been to try and look at the impact following engagement. The dates of outcomes of court cases following the course have been used to measure progress in respect of reoffending.

### RCT YOS

The RCT YOS monitors whether young people reoffend<sup>15</sup> and does this over a 12-month period. It is noteworthy that at the time the research was being undertaken two years would not have elapsed so could not have been used as a measure. Table 11 summarises outcomes for participants in 2007. Of those taking part in OUTREACH 38% had been referred because the YOS was in contact with them (because of a police reprimand, final warning or statutory order) and 62% were referred by other agencies as part of prevention and early intervention initiatives.

When the outcomes for all young people are analysed in relation to offending after engagement with OUTREACH (see table 11), it can be seen that 95% of young people overall did not offend within the first three months, 92% had not six months later and 86% had not 12 months later. However, a significant proportion are unlikely to have offended as referrals are made for wide-ranging reasons and not all relate to potential criminality.

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<sup>15</sup> This mainly covers those convicted of offences but electronic monitoring systems also contain data about those charged who may be subject to a police reprimand or final warning.

**Table 11 All participants attending RCT YOS courses**

Course	Number	3 months	6 months	12 months
March 2007*	20	3	1	5
April 2007	18	0	2	4
July 2007	20	1	2	3
September 2007*	20	0	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>
		5%	8%	14%

\* Includes young people from Swansea YOT.

As a result, the information about those young people subject to a police reprimand, final warning or on a statutory order has been examined separately in the following table. This indicates good outcomes and a significantly high proportion of young people who do not reoffend. In the first three months 91% of young people did not reoffend, 88% had not after six months and 73% had not at twelve months. None of the same young people reoffended throughout. This indicates the programme appears to have an impact on behaviour for this group specifically.

**Table 12 Young people subject to a reprimand, final warning or statutory order**

Course	Number	3 months	6 months	12 months
March 2007*	9	2	1	3
April 2007	3	0	1	2
July 2007	12	1	2	4
September 2007*	9	0	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>
		9%	12%	27%

\* Includes young people from Swansea YOT.

Finally, this information has been assessed further to examine outcomes for those who completed OUTREACH (as opposed to those referred irrespective of outcome). This represents 61% of this group of referrals.

**Table 13** Young people subject to a reprimand, final warning or statutory order who completed OUTREACH

Course	Number	3 months	6 months	12 months
March 2007	6	0	0	0
April 2007	2	0	0	1
July 2007	8	0	1	2
September 2007	4	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	20	0	1	3
		0%	5%	15%

None of these young people reoffended within three months of the course, 95% had not in the six months afterwards and 85% had not up to a year afterwards. When cross-referred to the type of orders these young people were on, the majority were first-time offenders, so it seems that appropriate programmes of support (of which OUTREACH can be a part) can have a diversionary effect and an important impact on future behaviour.

### Other YOTs

As RCT YOS collects data for a 12-month period, this measure was applied to the YOTs who had referred young people for participation in the courses sponsored by South Wales Police.

**Table 14** Participants from courses sponsored by South Wales Police

Youth offending team/service	Number	At 3 months	At 6 months	At 12 months
Bridgend	4	0	1	1
Cardiff	5	1	2	2
Neath Port Talbot	1	1	0	0
Swansea	10	0	0	1
RCT	5	1	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	25	3	3	4
		12%	12%	20%

Overall 88% of young people had not reoffended after three and six months and 80% had not after 12 months.

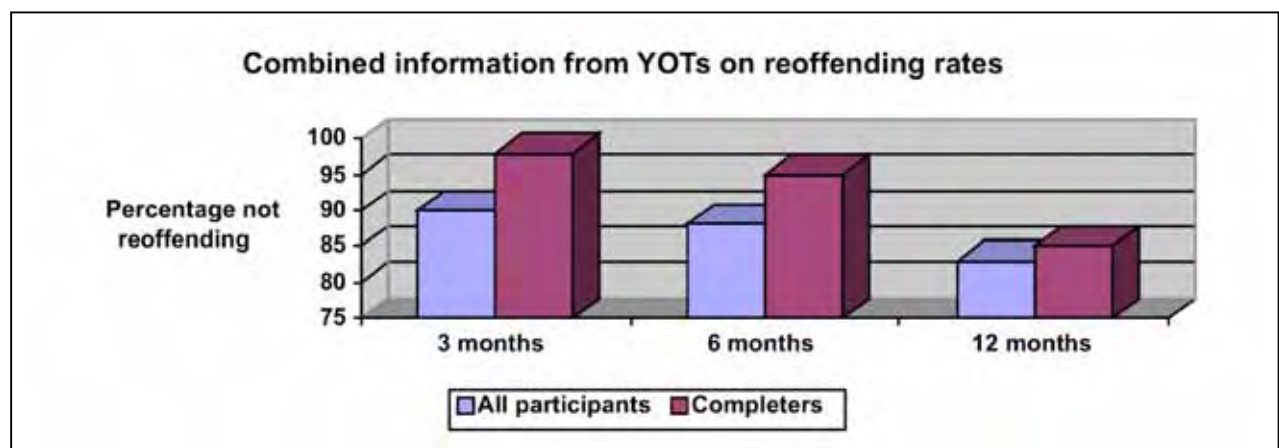
Upon closer investigation of these figures, when dividing the prevention population from other young people known to the YOTs, 14 young people (56%) had been in receipt of a police reprimand, final warning or on a statutory order, of which three (79%) reoffended at each of the measurement points. Eleven young people (44%) were referred through a prevention route, only one of whom offended within 12 months of participating in the programme.

When the information on those who completed the course is analysed, it can be seen that 93% did not reoffend in the first three and six months and 87% did not within twelve months – again indicating a slight improvement in reoffending rates. However, in all instances the numbers involved are small and findings must be treated with caution.

### Combined information from YOTs

When the combined information is taken for young people in receipt of a police reprimand, final warning or on a statutory order (from the RCT Partnership for Youth and South Wales Police-sponsored courses) it can be seen that 90% of young people did not offend within three months of attending, 88% had not within six months and 83% had not within 12 months. For those completing the course, it was 98%, 95% and 86% respectively (this is shown in the graph at table 15). Once again this indicates an improvement, which may also be explained by the fact that those who complete the course may be more motivated and more proactive at addressing other issues in their lives.

**Table 15 Comparison of reoffending rates for all participants and those who completed the course**



It is difficult to be absolutely conclusive about the outcomes due to the limitations of the study and the fact there has been no comparison group with which to contrast results. Also, young people are attending different courses of different durations with different components, so the conclusions have been generalised. The impact of the course is difficult to isolate in terms of a stand-alone effect as the majority of the young people were engaged in wider

programmes of support aimed at assisting them to overcome problems or difficulties. However, the evidence suggests that it could potentially have an impact on offending behaviour, particularly in the short term (the first three months in all instances showed the highest level of desistance) and seems to be best targeted at those whose problems are not too entrenched, which accords with OUTREACH's aims and objectives.

## Young people's views

As a final component of the evaluation young people's views on their experience of OUTREACH were sought. This was done through focus groups, postal questionnaires and one face-to-face interview (see appendix 1 for full details). In total 58 young people provided feedback, the majority coming from school referral routes rather than YOTs, providing a bias in this direction. Sixty per cent of young people were in the target age range of 12 to 14 years and 72% were male.

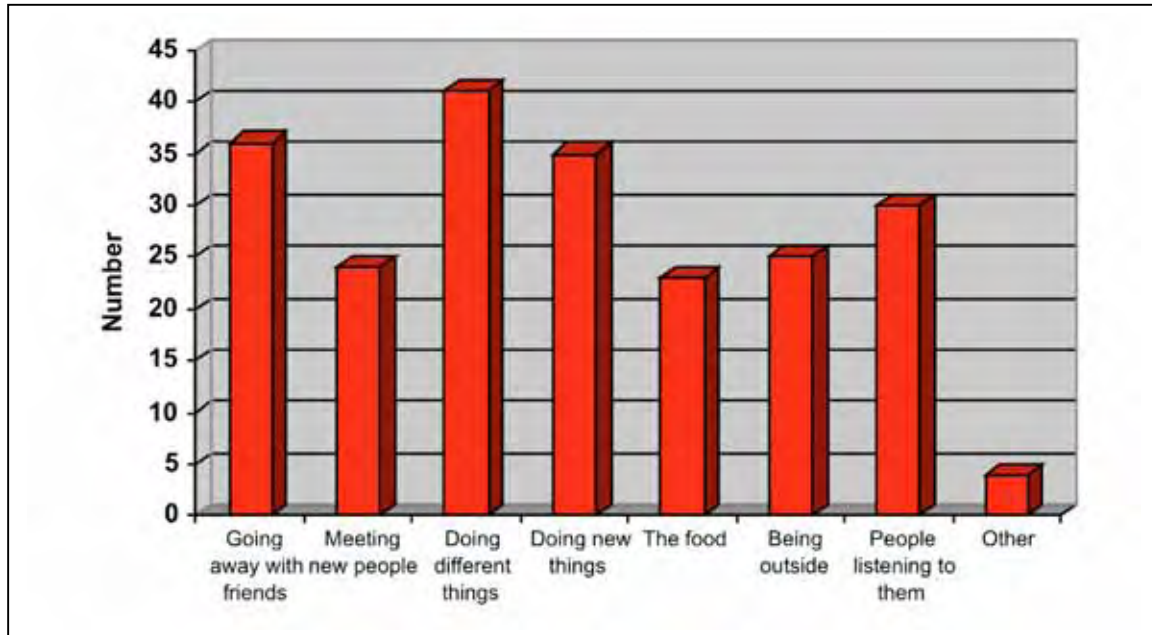
Ninety-eight per cent of young people said they remembered the course well and therefore felt in a position to comment. When asked about their expectations of participation, working as part of a team, following instructions and helping others were all indicated. In the main the course was what they expected, having been told by others what was involved, with some viewing it as being harder than anticipated and others enjoying it more than they expected to. Young people were asked what they liked and disliked about the courses, what they had done, what factors course planners should take into account and how they felt as a result of their participation.

### Young people's likes and dislikes

As illustrated in figure 1 on the next page, the things that young people liked most about OUTREACH were: that it provided them with an opportunity to do something different (71%); it was an opportunity to go away with friends (62%); and an opportunity to do something new (60%). Fun and enjoyment were recurrent themes in the feedback as was the opportunity not only to meet new people but to do enjoyable things with their friends. Those referred from the same school are likely to already know each other (in the ACF areas of Clwyd, Dyfed and Powys), so this is not surprising. However, 62% of respondents indicated they had made new friends as a result of their involvement and this was clearly important to them.

In terms of what they did not like, just under a third (29%) could not think of anything. Of the remainder (n=32), the three main reasons cited were: there was not enough to do (28%); being away from home (28%); and not liking the food (25%). The reasons behind some of these responses were because they did not like camping, the bad weather and walking.

**Figure 1** What young people enjoyed most



### Activities undertaken

Young people were asked what activities they had taken part in. The most common were walking (93%), rock climbing (83%), cooking (78%) and map reading (74%). One young person indicated that going for a walk gave her the opportunity to concentrate and to clear her head. Another found that he was good at rock climbing and the general consensus was that it was enjoyable because it was challenging (among boys and girls alike). Cooking and food appeared to divide young people: they either enjoyed or hated it, and map reading, although highly rated, was not specifically commented on. Young people often said they enjoyed doing a certain activity because it was 'fun' and this applied across the range of pursuits. They also indicated they enjoyed activities where they had to work as a team, whether tackling the assault course or building a raft. Seventy-eight per cent said they enjoyed the activities very much and a further 21% said that they had enjoyed most of them. There was no discernible difference between boys and girls in this respect.

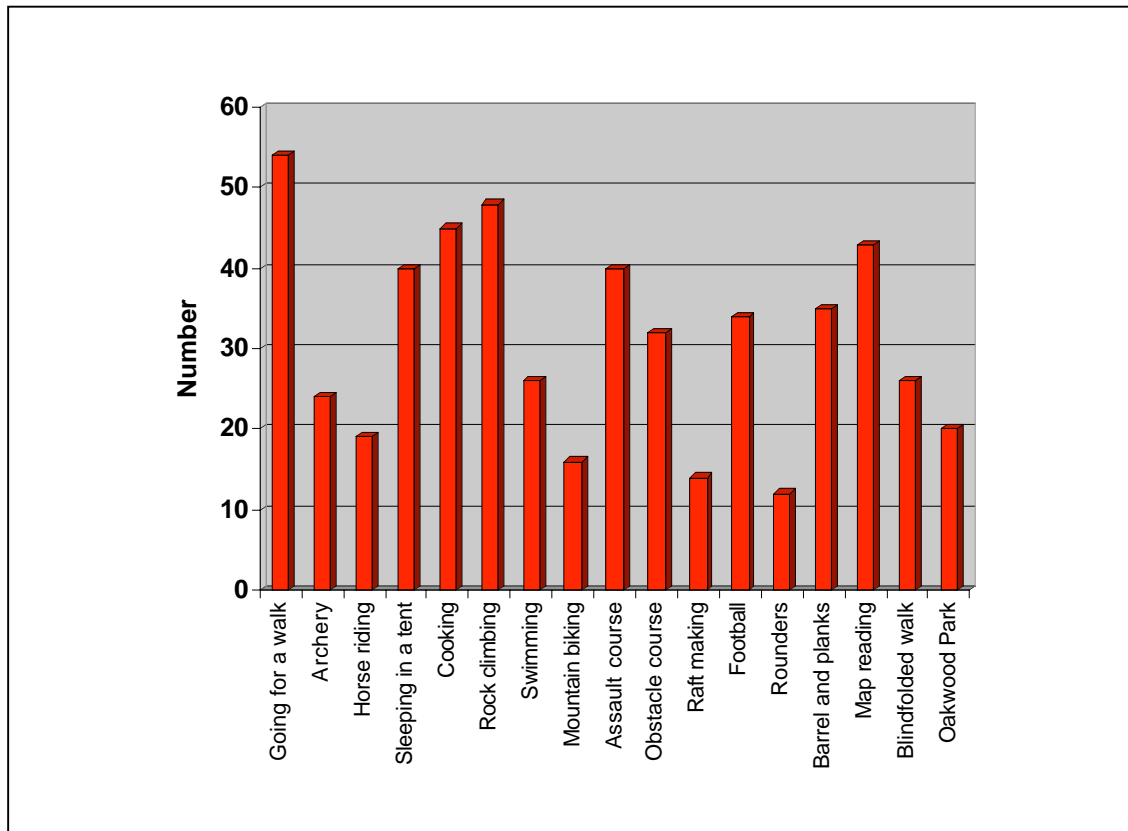
Young people were asked to indicate what they liked best about what they did. Fifty-six replied. The majority said they enjoyed the whole thing:

'I liked everything... I enjoyed it all.'

'All of it, it was hard, but fun.'

'It was just brilliant.'

Figure 2 Activities undertaken



Others who were more specific cited rock climbing (14%) followed by a visit to Oakwood Park (11%),<sup>16</sup> meeting new people (11%) and sleeping in a tent (11%).

'Rock climbing: it was a challenge, it made me get over my fear of heights.'

'Oakwood Park, I had not been before.'

'Meeting new people and football.'

'Sleeping in a tent, we got to cook just like the army.'

Young people were also asked if there was anything they had not enjoyed doing. Fifty-five young people replied. Thirty-one per cent said there was nothing about the course they disliked. Of the remainder, 26% had not enjoyed the walk because it was boring, tiring or because they disliked it generally; one young person simply said she had not enjoyed it because she was lazy. Twenty-four per cent disliked the food, which was described as 'stale' and 'disgusting'; there were a lack of snacks and they had to cook in 'tiny tins'. Thirteen per cent said that they did not like a member of staff (not the same one) – the reasons being

<sup>16</sup> This relates to the Powys and RCT YOS Partnership for Youth project only.

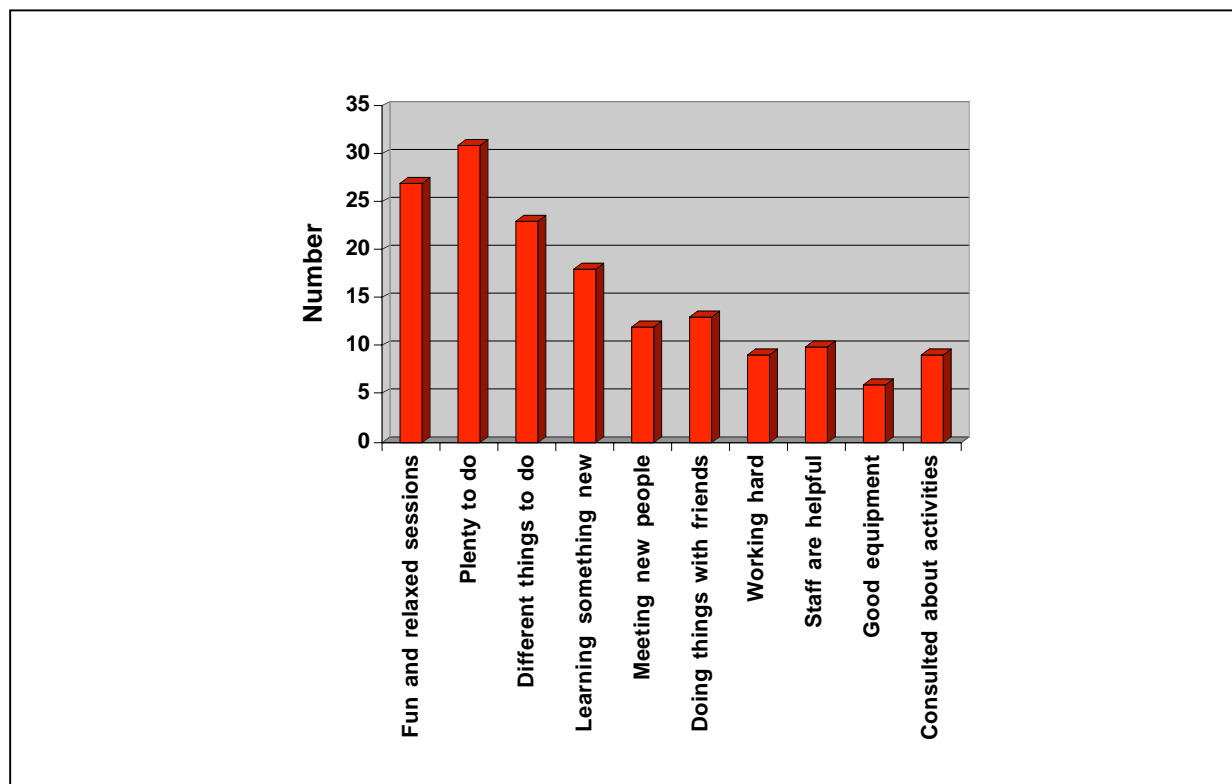
because they were 'scary', 'hairy', 'moody' and shouted a lot. Comments were also made about the weather being cold or wet but it did not appear as a reason that significantly put young people off and only two (5%) made any comment about not liking getting up early (in one case because she was not 'a morning person').

Seventy-four per cent indicated they enjoyed the course very much and a further 22% said that they had enjoyed most of it and all of them said they would take part again. Once again there were no evident differences in views on this between girls and boys.

### Planning activities for young people

Young people were asked to select the three key factors they felt were important when planning future activities. The main ones that emerged were there should be plenty to do, sessions should be fun and relaxed and that activities should be varied.

**Figure 3** Important factors when planning activities for young people

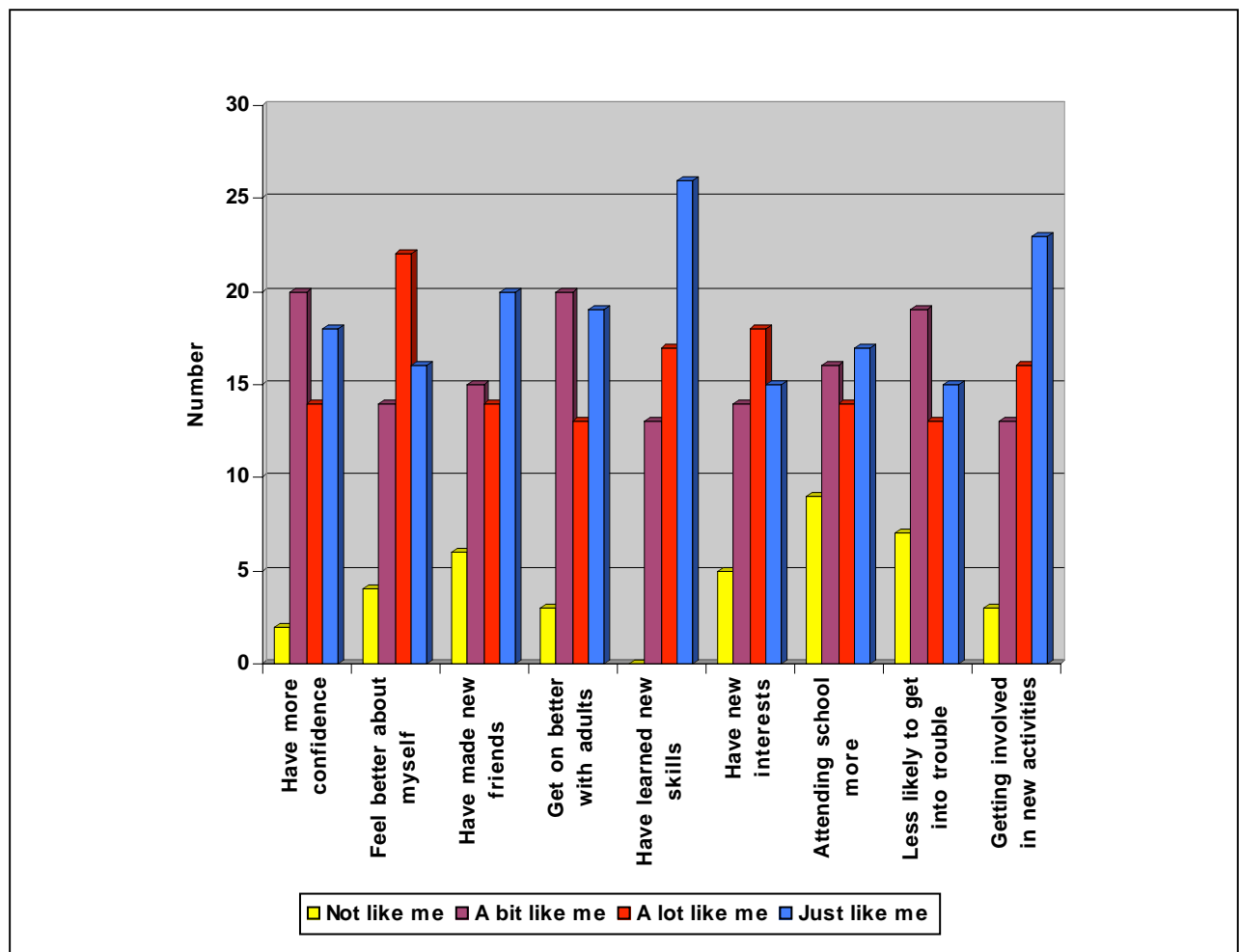


These findings are echoed by ACF staff in Dyfed who indicated they try to run courses that are fun, albeit with more serious underlying learning, and had found that 'well-constructed short games work well and keep them engaged' whereas complicating the course would make it unworkable for many of those that attend.

## Effect of participation

Young people were asked to rate themselves against nine statements to give some indication of what they felt they had got out of the experience and how it contributed to the way they were currently feeling about themselves. The most positive indicators are taken from those saying the statements were a lot or just like them. On this basis, learning new skills, having more confidence, feeling better about themselves, getting on better with adults and getting involved in new activities were more significant than some of the others, although the margins between all of these statements was slight, indicating that overall there was a general beneficial effect. 'Less likely to get into trouble' was not one of the major indicators but as the feedback was primarily from schoolchildren this is perhaps not surprising. Getting into trouble also does not necessarily indicate offending.

**Figure 4** The impact of the course on young people



## The views of parents and carers

We also held a focus group with six parents/carers whose children had attended the RCT YOS Partnership for Youth course. Some of the parents indicated they had initially been sceptical about involvement, as they were unsure whether their children could cope with the demands and were uncertain how they would react. However, all of these parents were extremely positive about the course, with their children often achieving more than their expectations. They also noticed changes in behaviour on their return home:

'It's the small things that have changed, like tidying his bedroom without a massive argument, but it's these things that make the biggest difference.'

'My boy still does things wrong, but not like he used to; he listens to me more now.'

The parents also highlighted the importance of the RCT YOS staff in supporting and encouraging the young people through the experience and continuing to engage them in activities after the course had ended.

'I don't think that it is just the army course, the support that my boy has had from the team and the experience of the course has really helped him. The people on the course drilled into him that he was better than he thought and built up his self-esteem, and [the RCT YOS prevention team] have encouraged him to build on this.'

All of the parents commended the course and its value in helping young people face up to their difficulties. One said:

'It's an excellent project, but it's also about the support they get [from the YOS]. The project co-ordinator has been behind my boy all the way, encouraging him to take part in lots of things, not just this.'

## Appendix 1 **Methodology**

This study examined the operation, delivery and outcomes of OUTREACH run in Wales in 2007 in the ACF-designated counties of Clwyd, Dyfed, Glamorgan, Gwent and Powys. The evaluation used a qualitative methodology to examine the perspectives of those involved in the administration and delivery of OUTREACH and detailed processes and practices. This included interviews with ACF staff who administer and run the courses and partner agencies such as schools and YOTs that refer young people to them and provide support staff on the programmes. The views of young people and a small number of parents were also obtained through focus groups, questionnaires and interviews. Additionally, quantitative data has been collected and analysed regarding referrals and their outcomes.

The aim of the evaluation is to examine the impact of OUTREACH on young people who participated in 2007 in Wales and to ascertain whether involvement resulted in an improvement in their behaviour (offending and otherwise) and the reasons for their referral to the programme.

### **ACF and partner agency interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with ACF project leaders and other key staff as well as partner agencies (schools and YOTs). All interviews were conducted face to face, tape recorded and transcribed. They lasted between one and two hours. They took place mainly in 2008. A semi-structured questionnaire was used for this purpose and covered the following areas:

- The working arrangements with partner agencies.
- Their understanding of OUTREACH's aims and objectives.
- The processes used to target and refer young people.
- An examination of the key components of OUTREACH, how it operates and what it delivers.
- Partners' expectations of each other and the programme.

The aim was to develop a 'pen picture' of each area, examine strengths and weaknesses in working arrangements and identify what processes and procedures are in place and how well they work. A total of 27 staff were interviewed (see appendix 2 for more detail). Telephone interviews were also carried out with the following YOTs (which are in ACF counties) to ascertain what level of contact they had had with OUTREACH during 2007: Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Gwynedd Mon, Merthyr Tydfil, Newport, Pembrokeshire and Powys.

## Young people's views

Young people were invited to give their views through a number of different mediums to find out more about their experiences:

- Focus groups – seven were held: in six schools and the RCT YOS Partnership for Youth project. Young people were also asked to complete a short questionnaire. In total, 44 young people took part. The breakdown of young people is as follows:
  - Bishops Blue Coat Church of England School, Clwyd (six)
  - Coedcae Comprehensive School, Dyfed (five)
  - Hartridge High School, Gwent (three)
  - Crickhowell High School, Powys (nine)
  - Maes y Dderwen Comprehensive School, Powys (eight)
  - Brecon High School, Powys (eight)
  - RCT YOS (five)
- Postal questionnaires were distributed to those who had not attended the focus groups (schoolchildren and young people referred by YOTs). Forty-three were distributed where home addresses could be identified. Thirteen (30%) were returned.
- Face-to-face interview – one interview took place with a young person from Monmouth Torfaen YOT, using the same questionnaire as for the focus group.

In total, the views of 58 young people who completed courses in 2007 were obtained (37%). Contacting young people who had been referred by YOTs was sometimes difficult, as records of referrals had not always been kept and no information was provided from ACF in Gwent about any participants. Additionally, YOTs advised that they were not necessarily in contact with young people who were on prevention programmes or who had completed interventions (statutory and otherwise). As a result the feedback from young people is mainly from schoolchildren and not those referred from YOTs.

## The views of parents and carers

A focus group was held with six parents/carers of young people who had taken part in Glamorgan ACF and RCT YOS Partnership for Youth project. They were asked to give their impressions of the programme and the impact on their children.

## Records

ACF staff were asked to provide the following:

- Completed referral forms for each young person who attended OUTREACH. These contain information about their age, date of birth, the date of the course attended, the referral agency and the reason for their referral.
- Completed three and nine-month evaluation forms for each participant which detail whether there has been in any improvement in relation to the behaviour which was the reason for referral.

Not all of the information requested was received, and some was not comprehensive or complete. The referral information was generally better than the later follow-up documentation where there were significant gaps both in terms of the number of young people for whom information was supplied and in terms of what was provided eg, three-month follow-ups for some and only nine-month follow-ups for others which did not allow for direct comparison.

## Appendix 2 Interviewees

**Lieutenant Colonel Paul Hayden** ACFA OUTREACH national co-ordinator

**Captain Peter Watson** ACFA regional co-ordinator for Wales and the south west and ACF project leader Powys

**PC David Williams** ACF project leader, Glamorgan and YOT police officer, Swansea YOT

**Major Mike Henderson** Cadet executive officer, Gwent ACF

**Captain Jayne Hemmings** Volunteer, Gwent ACF

**Major Malcolm Evans** Cadet executive officer, Dyfed ACF

**Terry Burgh** Deputy commandant, Dyfed ACF

**Alan Hopkins** Duke of Edinburgh Award officer and OUTREACH project leader

**Gavin Jones** ACF project leader, Clywd

**Elsbeth Wynn** RCT YOS operations manager with responsibility for prevention

**Garreg Jenkins** Project co-ordinator, Partnership for Youth

**Jeff Matthews** Principal officer, Youth Justice, South Wales Police

**PC Melanie Weaver** YOT police officer, Vale of Glamorgan

**John Pearson** Substance misuse worker, Vale of Glamorgan YOT

**PC Ian Williams** YOT police officer, Cardiff YOT

**Dave Whitely** Community safety and YOT operations manager, Neath Port Talbot YOT

**Karen Davies** Reparation worker, Neath Port Talbot YOT

**Andrea Williams** Youth worker, Monmouthshire Torfaen YOT

**PC Dene Jones** YOT police officer, Neath Port Talbot YOT

**Goodwin Maddocks** Senior practitioner, Bridgend YOT

**Russell Martin** Project worker, Cardiff YIP

**Richard Rees** Volunteer co-ordinator, Blaenau Gwent Caerphilly YOT

**Lucy Pearce** Special needs teacher, Hartridge High School

**Sarah John** Coedcae School

**Carol Phillips** Student support officer, Crickhowell High School

**Annette Thomas** Social inclusion co-ordinator, Brecon High School

**Bev Phillips** Assistant head teacher, Maesydderwen Comprehensive School