

# **Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Safer Communities Fund 2006-2009 (CONTRACT NUMBER: 151/2007/08)**

**Submitted to the Welsh Assembly Government  
by Cardiff University, Swansea University,  
and ARCS Ltd**

## **Executive Summary**

**July 2009**



## KEY FINDINGS

The Safer Communities Fund (SCF) commenced in March 2003. Its current aim is to support implementation of the All Wales Youth Offending Strategy (2004), which seeks to reduce both first time entrants into the criminal justice system and re-offending rates. These findings arise from a mid-term evaluation of the second three-year funding programme (2006-09).

In addition to a requirement to examine the use of SARA-style approaches to SCF-funded activities<sup>1</sup>, there were three main research aims outlined in the research commissioning documents:

“To evaluate the overall effectiveness of the scheme and of the types of project within the scheme;

To give advice to projects to enable them to be more effective in the third year of the scheme;

To make recommendations regarding possible future initiatives of a similar nature.”

In terms of the above three aims, key findings from the evaluation are as follows:

### 1. Effectiveness of the Scheme and Types of Project

- SCF is the major source of funding dedicated to youth crime prevention work in Wales. Whilst there are some other sources of youth crime prevention funding in Wales, these are targeted exclusively on interventions with known offenders or those thought to be at risk of offending – rather than working with the whole population of young people (‘primary prevention’).<sup>2</sup>
- The effectiveness of local youth crime prevention projects across Wales in reducing both offending and re-offending thus depends to a large extent on the continuing financial support provided by the SCF - and primary youth crime prevention is entirely dependent on SCF support.
- Funds from the SCF have been used primarily to support two basic types of youth crime prevention work: (1) youth justice interventions that focus on reducing the risk that offenders pose to themselves and their communities; and (2) directed-leisure activities aimed at all young people as a means of preventing any ‘drift’ into offending.
- On this basis, the SCF reflects the focus in the All Wales Youth Offending Strategy (AWYOS) through two basic crime prevention approaches: (1)

<sup>1</sup> The SARA criteria are: *Scanning*: clear identification of the problem; *Analysis*: systematic analysis of the problem; *Response*: performance management - including the specification of performance indicators and targets; *Assessment*: evaluation of the effectiveness of the intervention.

<sup>2</sup> As the terms are currently understood in the crime prevention field, “primary prevention” operates at a broad level to address economic, social or other conditions which could over the longer term lead to the development of crime, “secondary crime prevention” focuses more specifically on groups that are directly “at risk” of becoming offenders, and “tertiary crime prevention” seeks to prevent further offending by individuals already identified as offenders.

targeting and managing the risks presented by young offenders; and (2) by extending entitlements to all young people. These two objectives stand in some tension with each other and this tension is reflected in the projects themselves.

- Recorded youth crime fell by 12% across Wales between 2002 and 2007. At the start of that period, youth offending<sup>3</sup> in Wales was higher than that in England. However, the Welsh rate dropped below the English rate in 2004-05 and has remained lower in subsequent years. Whilst the difference between the countries is relatively small and unlikely to be statistically significant, youth crime in Wales has fallen slightly at a time when the rate for England was on the increase.
- Compared with England, Wales has been particularly successful in:
  - Reducing the numbers of first time entrants (FTEs) into the criminal justice system; and
  - Having fewer re-offenders who commit a *more serious offence*.
- Although it is not possible to attribute these statistical trends directly to the impact of the Safer Communities Fund, the interventions funded by SCF represent different approaches to those adopted in England and are likely to be part of the 'complex mix' of factors that explain the divergent results.
- It proved difficult to conduct an analysis of the overall effectiveness of SCF projects in reducing youth crime due to limitations in the SCF project database – primarily the fact that it recorded outputs (numbers of participants, descriptions of activities) rather than outcomes (e.g. desistance from offending).
- The case study element of this evaluation found that monitoring and assessment of project outcomes was limited as was any rigorous application of intelligence-led or 'problem-solving' approaches to youth crime reduction. However, the case study research also indicated that some very high quality work is taking place as part of the SCF programme, which is consistent both with what is known about good practice in specific areas (e.g. multi-tiered anti-social behaviour work, intergenerational work, detached youth work), and with the risk management and extending entitlements aims of the AWYOS.

## 2. Advice to Projects

The recognition, communication and dissemination of this higher quality work could be significantly enhanced through the adoption of standardised recording and reporting procedures by SCF project teams that would include details of project outcomes as well as outputs.

Project managers would therefore be advised to adopt a recognised problem-solving process for the systematic recording and reporting of SCF project activities. This would require the provision of training and support for project

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<sup>3</sup> Defined as the number of offences committed by youths as a percentage of the youth population.

managers to complete standardised returns on SCF project activities.

In the absence of such training and support, project managers have become disenchanted with data collection and reporting to the existing SCF database. This has fostered an antipathy to problem-solving and intelligence-led approaches to crime prevention, compromising their potential effectiveness in accomplishing and sustaining reductions in youth crime and disorder.

### 3. Recommendations for Future Practice

- Substantial discretion has been devolved to particular partnerships to commission youth crime prevention projects. This has the benefit of enabling community safety managers to tailor youth crime prevention work to the particular local conditions for youth crime and disorder. However, in the absence of more direct guidance from the Welsh Assembly Government on the purpose of the SCF, there is a danger that the programme becomes no more than the sum of its variegated projects in these localities.

In order to clarify the overall purpose for the SCF, one suggestion is to distinguish between the different types and purposes of youth crime prevention - considering the following five basic dimensions:

1. Type of prevention (e.g. primary, secondary and tertiary 'tiers');
  2. Purpose of prevention (e.g. risk-containment and/or enhancing entitlement);
  3. Audiences for prevention (e.g. young people and 'everybody else');
  4. Timescales for prevention (e.g. immediate, medium and long-term); and
  5. Targets for prevention (e.g. individuals, groups and populations)<sup>4</sup>.
- More explicit guidance from the Assembly Government on the balance of effort desired across the five dimensions of youth crime prevention may help to avoid confusion among and tension between community safety and youth justice partners. Our own recommendation is that in order to meet both the All Wales Youth Offending Strategy and the Extending entitlements policy, greater attention should be given to medium/long-term prevention work that is targeted at whole populations of young people.
  - Strategic planning for safer communities is crucial for realising the above aims. If Youth Crime Prevention and its five dimensions are conceptualised more clearly, then effective performance monitoring can follow on.
  - The following recommendations could enable the Welsh Assembly Government to improve decision making in the selection and monitoring of such interventions, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of SCF and other future initiatives:
    - Strengthen monitoring and oversight of the SCF programme between the centre and the twenty two localities (see para 3.1 below);
    - Enhance the accountability of Community Safety Partnership

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<sup>4</sup> Readers are referred to the full technical report for definition of these scientific distinctions.

commissioning roles (see para 3.2 below);

- Set specific objectives for the range of different youth crime prevention approaches that are desired (see para 3.3 below);
- Plan a systematic evaluation of community-based youth crime prevention (see para 3.4 below), and;
- Clarify recommended approaches to strategic-level problem-solving - to assist both local targeting of resources and the collection and national dissemination of good practice knowledge (see para 3.5 below).

## 1 Introduction

The Safer Communities Fund (SCF) commenced in March 2003. Its current aim is to support implementation of the All Wales Youth Offending Strategy (2004), which seeks to reduce both first time entrants into the criminal justice system and re-offending rates. During 2006-09, a total of £13,473,498 is being distributed across the 22 Community Safety Partnerships in Wales - for projects seeking to reduce youth crime and disorder.

In January 2008, the Welsh Assembly Government commissioned Cardiff University, Swansea University and ARCS LTD to "assess the design, implementation and effectiveness of the Safer Communities Fund (2006-9)" across the 22 local authority areas in Wales. The specific aims listed in the commissioning documentation were:

- "To be able to give advice to schemes and projects to enable the projects to be more effective in the third year of the scheme;
- To evaluate the overall effectiveness of the scheme and of the types of project within the scheme"; and
- "To make recommendations regarding possible future initiatives of a similar nature."

It was also intended that the evaluation examine SCF activities in terms of the SARA criteria<sup>5</sup> both at an overall level (where an examination of project and area feedback in relation to key SARA headings was to be undertaken) and at area/project level, where adherence to the SARA approach was meant to inform the selection of case studies for more detailed analysis (and where the research team was meant "to examine the rationale and decisions made with regard to the SARA topic headings" in local areas).

In short, the evaluation aimed to deliver a robust mid-term assessment of progress to date at both national and local level - providing an anchor for recommendations about the shape and direction of future youth crime prevention work across Wales.

The evaluation involved four key strands of work:

- **Review of reviews** - analysis of existing reviews of research and policy literature on community-based interventions aimed at young people, and of problem-solving ('SARA') approaches adopted in such work;
- **Trend analysis** - longitudinal comparison of youth crime and numbers of first time entrants in the criminal justice system in Wales since 2002/3;

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<sup>5</sup> See footnote 1, above.

- **Analysis of SCF data-base material** – to summarise and assess material held in the SCF programme data-base in order to:
  - describe the breadth and progress of SCF-funded activity nationally,
  - examine the degree to which areas and individual projects “have followed the SARA criteria”, and also
  - describe the extent to which local projects fit with the All Wales Youth Offending Strategy;
  
- **Evaluation of sample of programmes and projects in three localities** – in-depth case-study research in Swansea, Rhondda Cynon Taf, and Flintshire, with samples of 3-4 individual SCF-funded projects in each area. This work involved analysis of local documentation and data, individual and focus group interviews with agency representatives, group discussions with young people on projects, and interviews with community representatives.

## **2 Summary of Findings**

### **2.1 Review of Reviews**

The scientific evaluation of community-based youth crime prevention across the world is very much still in its infancy, and this does make it more difficult for reviewers to draw general conclusions about the impact and effectiveness of particular approaches. Many common interventions have never been properly evaluated, and many successful evaluations have not been replicated often enough to provide findings which can be generalized. There is also a very limited evidence base on the effectiveness of systematic, strategic problem-solving (often termed ‘SARA’- type) approaches in reducing youth crime although such approaches appear potentially promising for both the SCF programme generally and also local projects across Wales (because of the way in which these approaches can encourage commissioners and service deliverers both to identify local problems in a more focused and systematic manner, and to design and monitor interventions that are closely tailored to the nature of identified problems).

More rigorous and high quality evaluations are needed to build the evidence base of what works in community based youth prevention initiatives. Indeed, new methods of evaluation may be required in order to test the more complex, indirect processes through which behavioural change may be instituted. There is a need to develop techniques that enable the measurement and interpretation of community-level processes and outcomes in both the short and longer term - rather than relying upon what may be crude (before and after) indicators of effectiveness focusing on individualised interventions.

Undertaking this evaluation has enabled the research team to make some initial suggestions about how the focus of future evaluation could be managed to maximum effect in Wales - which could place Wales at the cutting edge of effective and innovative problem-solving in this policy field. This is covered in section 3.4.

## 2.2 Trend analysis

The broad national picture for Wales is one of an overall reduction in recorded youth crime since 2002 – at a time when the trend in England is of increasing youth crime. In 2003-03, the number of offences committed by youths (as a percentage of the youth population) was higher in Wales than in England. However, the Welsh rate dropped below the English rate in 2004-05 and has remained lower in subsequent years. Whilst the difference between the countries is relatively small and unlikely to be statistically significant, youth crime in Wales is falling slightly at a time when the rate for England is on the increase.

Although there are important caveats relating to the available statistical data, some specific complex trends are particularly noteworthy:

### *First Time Entrants (FTEs) into the Youth Justice System in Wales*

- There was an overall fall in the number of FTEs into the Youth Justice System between 2005-06 and 2007-08 in Wales, with FTE numbers falling in all areas of Wales between 2006-07 and 2007-08.
- The number of FTEs (as a percentage of the overall youth population) ranged between 1 - 2% each year for most areas - except for Gwynedd Mon (4%, 2006-07) and Wrexham (3%, 2006-07).
- The total number of FTEs in Wales in 2005-06 and 2006-07 was appreciably lower than in any other region across England and Wales. The 14% decrease in FTEs in Wales between 2005-06 and 2006-07 compares very favourably with the 7% increase across England and Wales; and is a larger decrease than the majority of other regions.

### Reconviction

- The overall 12-month reconviction rate for young people across Wales was 42% in 2002 (compared to 28% in England) and 37% in 2005 (equivalent to the English rate).
- In 2002, the percentage of recorded re-offenders who committed a more serious offence was broadly the same in Wales and England (24% compared to 23%, respectively), but by 2005 it was lower (16% compared to 22%).

The accumulated research evidence on crime trends indicates that the main drivers in youth offending are demographic in nature (e.g. the changing distribution of age groups in a given population over time). However, it is also clear that different forms of intervention and policy also may affect both declines and increases in recorded crime trends. So, although it is not possible to attribute the downward trend in youth crime directly to the impact of the Safer Communities Fund, the interventions funded by SCF represent different approaches to those adopted in England and are likely to be part of the 'complex mix' of factors that explain the divergent results. The research team would suggest that a scheme like the SCF with its preventive and reductive emphasis is likely to have acted as a supporting factor in this overall fall although this cannot be scientifically proven.

## 2.3 Analysis of SCF Funding Project Database

Across all Community Safety Partnerships, SCF funding is *the* major source of youth crime prevention work in Wales, compared to both Home Office crime and

disorder reduction funding and Youth Justice Board dedicated prevention funding. The Substance Misuse Action Fund (SMAF) has a significantly larger budget than SCF (just over £22 million in 2008-09) and is targeted mainly at interventions for existing substance misusers (rather than prevention work for the whole population). There is inevitably some overlap between work funded by SMAF and SCF funded projects, but detailed examination of this issue was beyond the remit of the evaluation.

SCF projects are targeted at preventive approaches for youth safety, anti-social behaviour, youth annoyance, youth crime and disorder and substance misuse. This is particularly striking when compared to Home Office crime and disorder reduction funds and also the earlier Safer Communities initiative. Youth crime prevention and youth safety promotion work across Wales thus depends to a great extent on the continuing financial support provided by the SCF.

#### *The scale of SCF funding*

Almost £4.3 million of funding was approved from the Safer Communities Fund in the financial year April 2006 - March 2007. This equates to an average of £1.50 for every person living in Wales or an average of £18 per notifiable offence that year. Funding for 2007-08 rose by an average of 7% to over £4.6 million.

#### *The role of SCF*

SCF funding is one of four major funding sources recorded in the SCF database, the others being the Basic Command Unit (BCU) fund, the Crime Reduction and Anti Social Behaviour (CRASB) Capital Fund and the CRASB Revenue fund. In both 2006-07 and 2007-08, the Safer Communities Fund was the largest of these four sources - representing around 38% of the total spend for 2006-07, rising to 42% for 2007-08. The Safer Communities Fund was the main funder of youth projects and other interventions to reduce youth crime as few interventions of this nature were funded by the other three funds.

#### *Scale of interventions funded by SCF*

231 interventions received SCF funding in 2006-07 and 209 interventions received it in 2007-08. The number of funded interventions in each area varied - ranging from 4 in Newport to 20 in Swansea and the Vale of Glamorgan in 2006-07; and from 4 in Newport to 19 in the Vale of Glamorgan in 2007-08.

#### *Intervention funding levels*

SCF funding for a single intervention averaged £18,576 in 2006-07, rising to an average of £22,200 in 2007-08. There was considerable variation in the amount funded (ranging from £500 to £113,000 per intervention in 2006-07; and from £286 to £140,884 in 2007-08). Compared to the other three major funds, average SCF funding per intervention was the highest.

#### *Types of intervention funded by SCF (2006-07)*

In 2006-07, the most common forms of SCF funded intervention were youth projects or interventions aimed at increasing youth safety (29%), followed by initiatives aimed at reducing anti-social behaviour (24%) and those aimed at reducing youth crime (19%).

In terms of the proportion of funding received, over 70% of SCF funding was spent on: youth projects (26%), anti-social behaviour initiatives (24%) and generally reducing youth crime (21%). Restorative justice initiatives, although a small percentage of total SCF funded interventions (6%), were mainly funded by SCF (89% of total funding on restorative justice initiatives). Anti-social behaviour initiatives were more typically funded by other major funds, as well as the Safer Communities Fund. Overall, more than £2.1 million (19% of total funding across the four major funds) was spent on reducing anti-social behaviour in 2007-08.

#### *Types of intervention funded by SCF (2007-08)*

Broadly similar trends were observed for 2007-08. However, the number of specific youth projects had risen to form 47% of SCF funded interventions (from 26% in 2006-07), with a corresponding drop in the number of anti-social behaviour and youth crime initiatives. The proportion of SCF funding spent on youth projects was 38% with another 23% spent on youth crime. Anti-social behaviour initiatives accounted for 18% of SCF funding.

In terms of how the SCF-funded interventions worked with young people, there were two main types of approach: (1) Youth-Justice based interventions and (2) directed-leisure activities. Each of these accounted for around a quarter of total spend.

Currently the SCF database does not contain sufficient information of the right type to be able to draw conclusions about good practice or the effectiveness of interventions. As a result, few inferences can be drawn about project 'fit' with either the criteria of the All Wales Youth Offending Strategy or the technique of SARA. For some partnerships only perfunctory and superficial monitoring and data inputting seems to take place. In the case study areas, the work that was clearly taking place on the ground was not always fully reflected in the database.

It was therefore not possible to evaluate the degree to which the funded projects have followed the strategic problem-solving criteria associated with the Home Office's SARA criteria. Some of the material in the database is highly detailed and suggestive however, and in our view the use of the existing framework could be strengthened to allow for the collection of a broader and higher quality set of information about SCF practice across Wales.

## **2.4 Case study findings**

The aim of the case studies was primarily to draw out thematic lessons of wide relevance (rather than to 'evaluate' the effectiveness of particular projects/areas). The main body of the report describes the individual case studies, but this section highlights some overarching conclusions about project delivery and effectiveness.

Monitoring and evaluation have not been key priorities for most case study projects, and projects in these areas tended only to record a narrow range of information concerning activities and participants. Even in cases where projects did collect more detailed information about their activities and progress (and in some cases, short-term impacts), projects tended not to gather any rigorous or consistent 'before- and -after' outcome measures. Although some very high

quality work is currently taking place at project level, much of it is not adequately reflected either in the SCF database or in any other formal records. This is highly regrettable since although it was evident to the research team that a range of SCF-funded work on the ground resonated with what is known about good practice based on previous research and knowledge of the wider literature, a lack of adequate local information collection about such activities and their impacts made it difficult to synthesize relevant lessons in a form that could be shared across projects. The systematic determination of the impact of individual projects and interventions was thus not possible in any rigorous, scientific manner.

Identification and dissemination of the higher quality work within the SCF programme could be enhanced by SCF project managers adopting standardised recording and reporting procedures (that would include details of project outcomes as well as outputs). Project managers could be advised to record and report on SCF project activities in a more consistent and standardised manner, and also provided with regular feedback both on their own information provision, and on the contours of the overall SCF data set collected nationally.

In the absence of such guidance and feedback, some project staff in areas focused on by the research team have become disenchanted with data collection and reporting to the existing SCF database. Perceptions of this kind can in turn undermine efforts both to develop problem-solving and intelligence-led approaches to crime prevention more generally, and to generate evidence concerning the effectiveness of particular approaches to preventing or reducing youth crime and disorder.

Although the available evidence-base is limited<sup>6</sup>, the following themes are nonetheless suggestive of both tangible success and promising indicators of good practice across the three case study sites:

- There is much good work rooted in addressing local problems and needs;
- Project staff evidenced consistent dedication and enthusiasm;
- Many project staff had the requisite training and understanding to work with sometimes quite difficult groups of young people, and also to secure high levels of engagement and participation from them;
- Many projects make sustained attempts to consult both the targeted young people and members of the wider community.
- Most project staff recognised the importance of consultation both for enhancing project design, and for broadening the scope for effective project implementation and change (if required) - although time constraints were sometimes mentioned as limiting the degree of consultation that could be undertaken.

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<sup>6</sup> Some proxy performance indicators of effectiveness and success do exist (e.g.: YJB performance indicators and Home Office crime and disorder reduction targets) and these are useful to an extent - but they do not assist in building a robust evidence base. Furthermore a lack of analytical resources among the workforce limits capacity to undertake robust evaluation, meaning that partnerships may benefit from developing working links with researchers.

- Wherever possible, projects are embedded in the local community and seek to take account of the particular features and needs of such locales;
- There is widespread evidence of flexible, responsive and individualised services - features that are linked to project or programme effectiveness in the research literature;
- Feedback gathered by the research team directly from young people, community representatives, and project and agency staff, suggests that much SCF-funded work is both well-received locally and successful in generating a range of positive outcomes;
- There are examples of genuine inter-agency working and joined-up thinking in specific projects and in some cases at the local strategic level;
- The potentially competing demands of both the Welsh Assembly and YJB priorities regarding youth crime prevention and youth empowerment are often well-balanced through delivery of a creative local "project mix".

In some areas SCF funding is embedded within local multi-agency partnerships and strategies and often forms a crucial part of area-wide arrangements. SCF funding thus supports and is supported by other funds in the delivery of prevention programmes and projects. In other areas there is less integration between agencies and funding streams - an arrangement which has a tendency to weaken the overall delivery of the prevention agenda.

In summary, the SCF is *the* key source for funding youth crime prevention work across the diverse localities in Wales (on the basis of evidence gathered in the case study fieldwork and wider consultation with key local players across Wales). This evaluation found evidence of healthy implementation of practices that accord with the inclusive and 'de-criminalising' ambitions of the All Wales Youth Offending Strategy and the Extending Entitlements policy agendas. Despite the limited evidence base available in relation to youth crime prevention in general, and SCF project monitoring in particular, SCF (on the basis of the three evaluation case studies) appears to be allowing for the implementation and/or strengthening of a range of innovative and successful community safety activity focusing on young people. The case study research also highlighted difficulties faced by some local representatives in adopting consistent approaches to strategic level problem-solving, although there were also some notable examples of effective planning at that level.

### **3 Conclusions and Implications for Future Practice**

Although detailed conclusions concerning project and programme outcomes are limited by some of the factors referred to in earlier sections, the research team would like to make the following observations and recommendations:

- SCF projects are targeted at preventive issues associated with youth safety, anti-social behaviour, youth crime and substance misuse - particularly when compared to Home Office BCU and CRASB funds and also the earlier Safer Communities initiative before 2006.

- Effective and sustainable youth crime prevention and youth safety work across Wales thus depends to a great extent on the continuing financial support provided by the SCF.
- There has been a substantial fall in the rate of youth offending in Wales, with recorded youth crime lower than England since 2004/5.
- There is evidence of implementation of a variety of practices that accord with the inclusive and de-criminalising ambitions of the All Wales Youth Offending Strategy and the Extending Entitlements policy.
- Evidence from the case studies indicates that the SCF has funded appropriate interventions that are having some beneficial effects on young people and on local communities.

The evaluation has also identified a number of suggestions for change that can be clustered under the following headings:

### **3.1 Improving monitoring and oversight of the SCF programme**

Further resources could be allocated to the Welsh Assembly Government community safety team (perhaps via “top-slicing” from existing budgets) to enhance its capacity for the nationwide monitoring and performance management of activity across the 22 community safety partnerships. Training and resources to support more stringent performance monitoring would benefit a range of local policy makers, practitioners and analysts. The delivery of such training by organisations outside of the Home Office/police policy networks may help to effect a cultural change whereby performance management is more consistently applied by local community safety and youth justice policy makers and practitioners across Wales. This should not focus solely on improving performance management but rather help develop the implementation of services in line with Welsh Assembly Government social justice and extending entitlement agendas.

### **3.2 Enhancing the accountability of Community Safety Partnership commissioning roles**

Whilst there are several potential ‘rivals’ for managing the local allocation of SCF budgets, partnerships are often fragile and difficult to establish in the medium to long-term, and careful consideration should be exercised in determining the best route for funding to take. We recommend that the Community Safety Partnership remains as the local SCF commissioner - but with a much more rigorous, evidence-based, multi-agency and accountable commissioning process. To achieve this, local Community Safety Partnerships need to move away from a (perceived or actual) narrow crime and disorder reduction orientation and take shared partnership intelligence more seriously.

### 3.3 Specifying objectives for community youth crime prevention

Youth crime prevention can be considered across five basic dimensions:

1. Type of prevention (e.g. primary, secondary and tertiary 'tiers');
2. Purpose of prevention (e.g. risk-containment and/or enhancing entitlement);
3. Audiences for prevention (e.g. young people and 'everybody else');
4. Timescales for prevention (e.g. immediate, medium and longer-term);  
and
5. Targets for prevention (e.g. individuals, groups and populations)<sup>7</sup>.

These dimensions are not mutually exclusive. It is, for example, possible to have a strategy that focuses on immediate, 'early', interventions with individuals and groups who are at risk of offending that both contain these risks whilst also enhancing the entitlements of those targeted. These dimensions illustrate the broad variety of combinations of activity that can be devised under the heading 'community-based youth crime prevention'. The All Wales Youth Offending Strategy provides little steer on the appropriate weighting for tactical versus medium-to-long-term intervention; or risk-containment versus enhanced entitlements approaches. This grants local partnerships enormous discretion over the selection of objectives that they wish to prioritise. There are compelling reasons why the Assembly Government may wish to be more explicit on how the Safer Communities Fund should be used. In particular, a number of respondents acknowledged that this fund was really *the only dedicated source of support for youth crime prevention*.

More explicit guidance from the Assembly Government on the balance of effort across the five dimensions of youth crime prevention may help to avoid confusion among and tension between community safety and youth justice partners. Obviously the choice as to which types of intervention, their purpose, timescales and population targets to prioritise taken by the Assembly Government is at heart a political decision. Our recommendation is that if the principal aim is to meet both the All Wales Youth Offending Strategy and the Extending Entitlements policy (as distinct from the priorities of the Youth Justice Board and Whitehall), greater attention should be given to primary prevention, of a longer-term timescale and targeted at whole populations of young people.

Most funding programmes available to Community Safety Partnerships (e.g.: the BCU, CRASB and SMAF) are primarily concerned with 'at risk' groups and identified offenders. In contrast, SCF is the only crime prevention-related funding programme that could be used for medium-to-long-term planning of sustainable reductions in youth crime and disorder. Consequently, we wish to recommend that SCF be deliberately used to fund innovations in medium-to-long-term preventive work (e.g. work with 8 – 9 year olds as a means of planning reductions in crime and disorder five years hence, when this cohort reaches adolescence). Such a focus should be accompanied by an increasing emphasis on strategic problem solving.

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<sup>7</sup> Readers are referred to the full technical report for definition of these scientific distinctions.

### **3.4 Systematic evaluation of community-based youth crime prevention**

To help the Assembly Government and local partnerships in their ambitions to make both the national scheme and local projects more effective in the future, the research team has developed a matrix (or grid) for mapping the diversity of youth crime prevention work, using both the five 'dimensions' listed above and the five 'types'<sup>8</sup> of crime prevention used to classify interventions in this evaluation:

1. Directed leisure-based activities
2. Self-directed leisure-based activities
3. Family-based activities
4. School-based activities
5. Youth Justice-based activities

Such an approach would provide a simple way of mapping activity across Wales and of identifying any gaps in intervention approach. It provides a matrix for planning evaluation work, so that a detailed, comprehensive and cumulative understanding of the breadth and diversity of youth crime prevention can be built up.

We suggest that the use of such a matrix to structure (1) the commissioning of youth crime reduction evaluations and (2) the analysis and reporting of findings could help to address the current dearth of detailed knowledge in relation to 'what works' in youth crime prevention. Some clarification of recommended approaches to strategic-level problem-solving (or SARA) in this area of work could also help both local the targeting of resources and the collection and dissemination of the kind of evidence referred to above.

### **3.5 Maximising the potential impact of interventions**

Joined-up partnership intelligence could enhance the effectiveness of local interventions, but may require the following:

- Creation of strategies that distinguish between (1) immediate, tactical, aims and (2) medium-to-long term plans for sustaining impact – for both reducing risk, crime and disorder and also enhancing entitlements. Within this approach, there is a need to define a broad repertoire of preventive responses that deal not only with prolific and priority offenders; but also prevention work with 'at risk' groups; and prevention for the whole population of young people. This would help to deliver universal entitlements unconditionally available and free at the point of delivery – accordance with the All Wales Youth Offending Strategy.
- Development of a delivery plan that Community Safety Partnerships can use to map and validate (1) the local balance of different preventative interventions; and (2) how impact and outcomes are going to be systematically assessed. Both project and strategic-level assessment cycles need to be timed so that they can feed back effectively into the production of

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<sup>8</sup> Full definitions of these terms are included in the main report.

youth crime prevention strategies. A broadening of evaluation methods is needed that enables partnerships to assess outcomes (not just outputs) of youth crime prevention projects.

- Enhanced analytical capacity for partnerships that connects analysts with the commissioning of preventive projects; and incorporates not only police and YOS analysts, but also the other responsible authorities. To complement this more analytical approach, support from social scientists could provide advice on the 'framing' or conceptualisation of problems of youth crime and disorder, and youth safety and quality of life.