

**Motor Projects Reviewed:  
Current Knowledge of Good Practice**

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## **Policing and Reducing Crime Unit**

The Policing and Reducing Crime Unit (PRC Unit) was formed in 1998 as a result of the merger of the Police Research Group (PRG) and the Research and Statistics Directorate. The PRC Unit is now one part of the Research, Development and Statistics Directorate of the Home Office. The PRC Unit carries out and commissions research in the social and management sciences on policing and crime reduction.

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## **Foreword**

This paper presents the findings of a brief overview of the literature on motor projects, the collective term for a variety of diversionary schemes aimed at modifying the behaviour of vehicle crime offenders. The work was carried out to build on previous RDS research, and to identify what is required to make these projects work. It draws on several overview studies of motor projects and vehicle crime offenders, and several evaluation studies of individual projects. Wider literature on reducing youth offending was also drawn on where relevant to motor projects.

The report identifies a range of features that contribute to the success or failure of these projects. These cover aspects of project management, programme implementation and the need for careful and pre-planned evaluation measures to be collected. Many projects do not seem to have long-term effects (measured at two years following projects), but better short-term gains are documented by some projects. These findings emphasise the importance of careful project management, and suggest the need for further follow-up work to enhance improvements gained.

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## **Executive Summary**

This report provides a brief summary of the literature on motor projects. This is an umbrella term for a range of diversionary schemes designed to modify the behaviour of vehicle crime offenders. It draws on overview studies and evaluations of specific schemes.

The purpose of this report is to identify the key features of projects that contribute to their success or failure. To this end, research from the wider literature on youth offender diversion has also been drawn on where it appears salient to motor projects. The main finding of this work is that motor projects *can and do* work. In order to work, however, they require careful targeting and management, and need to be run professionally following exacting criteria.

While short-term gains (over the first year) appear to be shown in both participant attitudes and reconviction rates, longer-term gains are less well documented (but have been shown in some notable cases). While projects originally focused on reducing offenders criminal involvement, the emphasis has now shifted to wider community-based and education/training-focused developmental programmes. It is these latter features that appear significant in ensuring longer-term impact.

The overview studies take a wide view, and paint a generally disappointing picture. Research suggests that it may be difficult to get, and keep, the serious offenders who may most benefit from such projects. Projects need to be very carefully and clearly targeted for specific types of offender. Completion rates are frequently low and measures to engage commitment need to be carefully planned and managed. Reconviction rates after two years do generally appear to be high.

In contrast, specific project evaluations focus on successes gained, and there is ample evidence for benefits, particularly over the first year after project attendance. These projects suggest that participants who do actively engage in the project programme benefit from training and educational opportunities, greater self-confidence and self-esteem and have reduced reconviction rates (at least over a one year period). While the samples these evaluations draw on tend to be very small they do suggest the basis for success.

A range of key factors were identified, which form the basis of a project-health checklist. These are summarised below:

### **Participants**

- Willing participation and co-operation in project involvement
- Selection via careful screening

### **Project Management**

- Management accountable for programme
- Overall management separate from day-to-day running
- Trained staff – fully supported
- Clear lines of communication
- Clearly stated aims
- Clearly stated priorities

Regular interim reviews  
Sustainable resources multiple sources  
Market penetration and support  
Staff to participant ratio acceptable  
Integrity of programmes is maintained  
Publication of an annual report  
Monitoring system in place

### **Implementation Methods**

Course components are tied to course aims  
Targeted to criminogenic needs  
Targeted to offender risk-level  
Multimodal framework covering:  
    Cognitive-behavioural approaches and social skills training  
    Vocational and 'life skills'  
Responsive to participant learning style  
Incentives to keep participants involved (not racing)  
Composition of groups has sound basis  
Development opportunities presented as required  
Range of programmes available  
Programmes received accreditation  
Family, school and peer group context recognised  
Have a targeted community base  
Accredited programmes or modules

### **Evaluation Measures**

*Plan evaluation carefully (at project/programme design stage if possible)*  
Identify control (comparison) groups where possible  
Types of data  
    Age, sex, previous convictions and sentencing history of participants  
    Record of attendance and completion (and dropout)  
    Record of activities and performance on course  
    Number of referrals and success in market penetration  
    Reconviction rates and seriousness of subsequent offences  
    Feedback from participants on attitudes to driving, safety and self-esteem  
    Employability measured by further education and job uptake  
    Subsequent driving history (passing test, driving legally, licence returned etc)  
    Sentencer satisfaction  
    Post-programme reinforcement and risk assessment

# **Motor Projects Reviewed: Current Knowledge of Good Practice**

## **1. Purpose of this report and main findings**

This report summarises the literature on motor projects, the collective term for a variety of schemes, long and short term, designed to modify the behaviour of vehicle crime offenders. It draws in particular on:

- Four overview studies on motor projects and vehicle crime offenders generally; and,
- Evaluation studies of individual projects.

A full list of material examined is in the reference section.

The report identifies features that have contributed to the success or failure of projects. It also looks at what has been learned from the general literature on what works in diverting young offenders from crime, where this is relevant in considering future development of motor projects. It concludes with a checklist of aspects to be considered on future schemes.

The main finding from research and evaluation so far is that motor projects *can* work but they need to be carefully targeted, managed and run professionally, according to exacting criteria. Better and more consistent methods of monitoring and evaluation are needed. While short-term gains are observed in both participant attitudes and subsequent reconvictions, longer-term gains are not so clearly documented. The longer-term return to motor crime is likely if, following completion of a project, participants receive no further contact or support. If the opportunities do not appear to have changed for a participant then a slow return to previous modes of behaviour can be expected.

## **2. Motor projects – what are they?**

'Motor project' is an umbrella term for a variety of long-term and transitory schemes that have developed haphazardly over the years, under different agencies and with variable levels of competence. They were originally developed in the 1970s by the probation service, targeted at serious and persistent offenders convicted of vehicle crime. A range of different types of diversionary project existed, all aimed at focusing (predominantly young) offenders' interests away from criminal involvement. They sought to change the attitudes and behaviours of the offenders, with a hands-on approach using practical activities such as vehicle maintenance and 'banger' racing combined with group work. The goal was to redirect offenders' interest in vehicles in a positive direction. Projects have now shifted away from racing and towards educational and employment rehabilitation and developing 'life skills' (Crime Concern/ESVA, 1998).

While offenders have a central place, many projects have widened their scope to include community based projects and schemes for youths deemed "at risk" of offending or school failure (Crime Concern/ESVA, 1998). Improving the opportunities and achievements for the academically less able, and providing them with core employment skills. is seen as a way of addressing a number of the risk factors thought to be most contributory to involvement in crime. In many cases while the probation services are still very much involved in these schemes, multi-agency partnerships are now the favoured approach.



### **3. Evaluation of motor projects' effectiveness**

Two main types of evaluation have been carried out;

- a) broad assessments, in particular of probation-led projects (e.g. Martin and Webster 1994; Sugg 1998)
- b) specific evaluations of individual projects (e.g. Porteous 1997; Glossop 1998; Wilkinson 1997).

The messages on outcomes are mixed, with high levels of re-offending following some schemes. The wide variety of schemes, agencies and levels of competence, and the absence of agreed criteria, make overall assessment difficult, particularly since many schemes were short-lived. Future schemes need to draw on the lessons learned so far. These are reviewed below:

#### **(a) Overview studies evaluation**

Four major studies take a wide perspective, addressing the general characteristics of vehicle offenders and overviewing probation-run projects. The studies, which cover a range of offenders and programmes developed for them, are summarised in Annex A. The general picture of outcomes from these schemes is disappointing. Typically the offenders initially engage in vehicle crime for the excitement it affords, and this can make it hard to provide viable alternative activities to divert them. Consequently, diversionary schemes need to be carefully targeted to the intended participants. These need to engage the interest of those participating, and take account of their learning requirements, being based on hands-on activities. Completion rates are generally low and reconviction rates after two years appear to be high. Many projects had staff who had not had adequate training in the types of teaching methods required. These projects are not without merit, however, and they do indicate certain factors contributing to success or failure.

#### **(b) Specific project evaluations**

In addition to the general overview research, many projects are now providing evaluations of their own performance. These present a more optimistic picture of development, especially over the short term. The annual reports and evaluation of six schemes were reviewed; the 'South Bedfordshire Motor Vehicle Project'; the Bristol based 'Wheels Project'; the Merseyside based 'Car Offenders Programme (COP)'; Leicestershire's 'Motorvate' project; the 'Ilderton Motor Project'; and the 'Young Lewisham Motor Vehicle Workshop'. Two of these projects, which offered results typical of the group as a whole, are reviewed in Annex B (the South Bedfordshire Motor Vehicle Project, which covers a relatively small group, and the Bristol Wheels Project which has a much larger throughput).

Although still somewhat tentative, the messages from the individual project evaluations are more positive than those from the of Martin and Webster (1994) or Sugg (1998) would suggest. These findings are not contradictory, however. Individual project evaluations tend to focus on all possible benefits (including educational and work opportunities provided), not just the impact on reconviction. The picture of motor projects developed by Martin and Webster (1994) and Sugg (1998) is broader based and tends to consider a longer post-project period. These reviews do include some very good projects, but conclusions are tempered by less well-managed projects.

#### **4. Features contributing to success or failure of motor projects**

Following is a list of the key principles and issues identified as important to the successful design and management of motor projects. These features are drawn from both the motor project literature and relevant literature on reducing youth offending in general (for further discussion see section 5).

##### ***The participants***

- **Client co-operation** – an important criterion for accepting offenders on a project is evidence of an interest and readiness to make a new start. While participants' motives will vary, voluntary commitment to involvement is as relevant to the attitude and behaviour modification aspects as it is to the practical 'hands-on' experience.

##### ***Project management***

- **Management** – Partnership management of projects is recommended. Considerable resources may be required to run a project, especially if it has a workshop, or driving component. Projects must be run and financially managed in a flexible manner to cope with legal, political and societal changes. It is important that overall project management is kept separate from the day-to-day running of the programmes. *Projects fail through weakness of management more than any other reason.*
- **Committed, skilful staff** – Project staff are key to success. In addition to technical skills, they need to have a good understanding of the people they are training and be able to develop a good rapport with them. Staff must have had training to an appropriate standard and ideally will work in a motivating and supportive environment.
- **Clear lines of communication** – while it is important for the management of projects to be separated from the day-to-day business, it is crucial to the success of projects that there are clear lines of communication. The management board needs to know what issues are affecting the operational staff and the operational staff need to be aware of, and able to feedback on, the strategic planning of the management board.
- **Clearly stated aims** – Projects should have a clearly stated set of aims. A project can only be assessed on efficiency and effectiveness when it is known what it is expected to achieve. These aims should be written down and reviewed regularly to ensure that they are being followed in the spirit in which they were originally intended, and that they have not been diverged from.
- **Clearly stated priorities** - Aims should be clearly prioritised so that there is no confusion and their impact is not dissipated.
- **Regular interim reviews** – in addition to good lines of communication for regular communications between the management board and operational staff, quarterly reports and meetings to track progress and allow early identification of potential problem issues may be useful.
- **Sustainability** – Backing from key agencies such as the police, business and the community is needed with support of a broad management team so the scheme does not rely on any single individual. A broad base of funding is needed so the project does not collapse if any source is withdrawn.

- **Market penetration and support** – Sufficient referrals need to be generated to maintain the project, with the courts knowing and having confidence in the project. The probation service, the courts and other bodies such as the social services and schools must refer appropriate people to the project. It is important that these groups view the project as one of the regular forms of community supervision that they consider. A permanent liaison or contact with these groups may be important to ensure a projects long-term success. Documentation suitable for inclusion in Pre-Sentence Reports (PSRs) may be useful.
- **Size of groups and throughput** – Motor projects are expensive to run. To be viable there must be a sufficient number of people going through them. The number of staff will constrain the number of participants, however. It is suggested that the staff to participant ratio never exceed 1:6. The particular problems of offenders, such as short attention span and over-confidence mean that lower levels of supervision are not appropriate.
- **Flexibility** – Rolling programmes ensure referrals do not have to wait too long before the next programme begins.
- **Monitoring system in place** – The monitoring of programme performance should be a basic management function, providing essential feedback for use in both short term and strategic decision making.
- **Production of an Annual Report** – anecdotal evidence suggests that the production of an annual report will be beneficial. Producing an annual report requires knowledge of project performance, emphasising the importance of good data collection. Publication of regular reports also indicate that the project management is open to scrutiny, that they are committed to achieving their aims and that they are taking responsibility for their performance.
- **Accreditation** – The accreditation of programmes serves two purposes. It benefits participants as they can prove to potential employers, or vehicle insurers, that they have achieved a suitable standard of performance. It can also help projects show that objective standards have been set and maintained, and provide a basis for inter-project comparison.

### *Implementation methods*

- **Methods of operation link to aims** – Once aims have been established and a programme has been developed to reach them, operational matters need to be carefully managed to ensure that the programs keep to the aims. For example, participant seniority needs to be managed so that any seniority is dependent upon *merit and carries responsibility with it*.
- **Targeted programme** – Although the nature of the target offenders will shape the aims, it must be recognised that the developed programme must be flexible in order to deal with the reality of the range of offenders referred. Programmes must reflect the criminogenic needs and risk-levels of all the participants. For example, *not all motor offenders are motivated solely by a fascination with cars, other potential reasons need to be considered*.
- **Multimodal framework of delivery** – It is generally agreed that offenders need some form of cognitive-behavioural training to address, and face up to, their offending behaviour, including why they do it and the consequences of it. Practical and ‘hands-on’ training in vocational skills and basic literacy and numeracy are recognised as of importance in improving self-confidence and job opportunities.

- **Incentives** – Given the types of people targeted by the projects, some forms of incentive are necessary to keep them motivated. Youngsters in trouble for impulsive actions have difficulty learning the self-control and discipline required of them. It is important for retaining participants that there is more to be gained by staying than by dropping out, and that a sense of commitment and responsibility for success is developed. Incentives need to reflect the interests and needs of those involved. Given the potential variety of needs, the incentives need to take the form of a package or range of activities. An example of a targeted incentive may be that successful completion of the project will assist in the early return of a disqualified driver's licence.
- **Group composition** – The issue of mixing types of young people is controversial. Some projects prefer to segregate groups based on age, criminality or both. Others mix ages as the basis of a seniority system in order to organise work and establish a project culture. It has been argued that the offenders and non-offenders are not so different, all coming from deprived backgrounds with similar problems of low self-confidence and few marketable life-skills. The make-up of groups will have an impact on programme implementation and should be carefully planned with reference to stated project and programme aims.
- **Developmental opportunities** – Participants need to be able to develop both within the project and from the project on completion. Education and training are critical - literacy, numeracy, interpersonal skills, team working. For offenders with a keen interest in driving, or a need to drive legally, the opportunity for formal driver training may also be very useful.
- **Range of programmes** –The scheme should offer a range of programmes, including some with a community focus. Programmes open to the wider community can help support those focused upon offenders.
- **Community base** – Schemes should be based in the locations that the participants are likely to be drawn from. The young age and relative disadvantage (financially and in educational/work opportunities) of many offenders mean that they are typically not very mobile. It is impractical to expect such people to be able to travel any distance to a project.

### *Evaluation measures*

- **Plan evaluation** – account should be made of evaluation requirements when designing programmes. At the most basic this means keeping good records of attendance, and what people do while on the project. More detailed records could cover performance and contributions to the project and may track offenders beyond the end of their orders (or once left for voluntary participants) in properly designed follow-up studies.
- **Types of data** – no single source of data will provide all the information required to assess the performance of a programme properly. There are various sources of data on participants that can be used, ranging from pre- and post-course attitudes, subsequent offending behaviour, behaviour and performance on the course to further educational and employment achievements. Dropout rates may be particularly important as work by West Midlands Probation Service found that 39% of those starting did not complete their project. Not all measures need relate to participants, however, as sentencer satisfaction and referral rate can add

supplementary information on wider satisfaction with a project. See the checklist in section 6 for a fuller list of potential data types.

- **Post-programme follow-up** –The studies discussed indicate that while projects tend to show good results in terms of participant achievement and crime reduction in the short-term (around one year), in the longer term (by two years and longer) the figures are less encouraging. This suggests that post-programme refresher or reinforcement may be useful, including risk assessments to evaluate long term programme impacts and the factors influencing them.

## **5. Wider literature on reducing youth offending relevant to motor projects**

Many of the above key features have been identified as important interventions with young offenders more generally. Aspects of this wider experience which might also help motor projects to be effective are indicated below.

### **Offenders**

A range of factors have been shown to have importance in identifying young people at risk of offending. In addition to the educational problems identified previously, these include:

- Family risk factors such as poor parental supervision, harsh and erratic discipline, *parental conflict, parent(s) with a criminal record*
- Socio-economic and community factors including low income, poor housing and socially disorganised communities

Offenders serving custodial and community services are more likely than the general population to *have low literacy levels, few qualifications and skills, and be unemployed*. Although there are no clear causal links between unemployment and offending, research has shown that offenders with better employment records are less likely to re-offend. On this basis, educational training for offenders is seen as helping through assistance in gaining and keeping employment. Research evidence in support of this hypothesis is not clear, but some work suggests that success requires the matching of training with market needs, and close co-operation with employers.

### **Project management**

The careful management of projects is seen as being critical to their success. In the Home Office research report 'Reducing Offending', Goldblatt and Lewis (1998) outline general principles of "what works" in offender interventions. Organisational factors that are thought to be critical to effective practice include:

- Management accountability for the activity of the programme
- Adequate resources
- Staff who have been adequately trained and supported
- A system of monitoring and evaluation of activity and programme delivery
- Ensuring the integrity of the intervention programme (e.g. ensure that staff are trained and follow the programme as designed, in accordance with clear and fixed aims and objectives).
- Community-based programmes have generally shown more positive results than others.

This list encapsulates many of the lessons learned from motor projects.

### **Implementation methods**

The most effective schemes addressing the offending behaviour of adults and juveniles are skills-based, addressing problem solving and drawing on behavioural techniques to reinforce improved conduct. Work including role play and attitude modification through positive reinforcement consistently show better results than unfocused group or individual counselling. Good results do occur with non-selective groups of offenders having varying requirements, but are improved if participants are

specifically targeted. Programmes which also include social skills training seem to show the greatest benefits. The best results are achieved when programmes target high-risk offenders, focus on criminogenic problems, use active and participatory learning styles and keep to the stated aims and procedures.

### **Evaluation measures**

The emphasis on community-based schemes for rehabilitation has increased in the recent past and reconviction rates are frequently used as a key indicator of success or failure in changing offender behaviour. The case for using other measures has increasingly been made. Several reasons have been suggested for taking reconviction figures with caution. The most pertinent for motor projects include:

- Reconviction rates do not account for changes in severity or frequency of offending.
- Reconviction rates underestimate *actual* re-offending as the clear-up rate of many offences is low.
- There is lack of consistency in the length of follow-up period used in reconviction studies.

(Goldblatt and Lewis 1998)

Several ways in which the effectiveness of rehabilitative interventions can be enhanced have been identified:

- Systems for assessing the risk of re-offending and criminogenic-needs need to be paid careful attention in planning intervention programmes.
- Post-release risk management and reinforcement of programme training and messages are required to sustain beneficial changes. Some research evidence has shown that the drop in reconviction rates observed after one year is not observed after two years. It is suggested that post-programme follow-up work should serve to refresh and support offenders considered at high-risk of re-offending.
- Having a system of accreditation has been suggested to help develop and maintain a core of high quality programmes, assessed on open and objective criteria. Granting of accreditation should require explicit explanation of the programme's aims and methods of delivery, ensure its integrity and establish the monitoring and evaluation to be carried out.
- At present it is still not clear what specific types of implementation work best, under what conditions and with what types of offender. Programmes should be monitored to ensure that the correct people are being targeted and that the programmes maintain their integrity. They should be rigorously evaluated at regular periods to assess their impact.

This work serves to reinforce the messages from the motor project reviews discussed previously. The work on wider youth offending initiatives particularly emphasises the need for careful planning in the targeting of participants and the design of tailored programmes to match their requirements. The following checklist sets out the points which should be considered when assessing motor projects. It summarises what is currently known about these schemes, and includes recommendations for evaluation methods to improve on the current situation.

## 6. Checklist for assessing motor vehicle diversionary schemes

<b>Participants</b>	
Willing participation and co-operation in project involvement	
Selection via careful screening	
<b>Project Management</b>	
Management accountable for programme	
Overall management separate from day-to-day running	
Trained staff – fully supported	
Clear lines of communication	
Clearly stated aims	
Clearly stated priorities	
Regular interim reviews	
Sustainable resources – multiple sources	
Market penetration and support	
Staff to participant ratio acceptable	
Integrity of programmes is maintained	
Publication of an annual report	
Monitoring system in place	
<b>Implementation Methods</b>	
Course components are tied to course aims	
Targeted to criminogenic needs	
Targeted to offender risk-level	
Multimodal framework covering:	
Cognitive-behavioural approaches and social skills training	
Vocational and 'life skills'	
Responsive to participant learning style	
Incentives to keep participants involved (not racing)	
Composition of groups has sound basis	
Development opportunities presented as required	
Range of programmes available	
Programmes received accreditation	
Family, school and peer group context recognised	
Have a targeted community base	
Accredited programmes or modules	



<b>Evaluation Measures</b>	
Plan evaluation carefully (at project/programme design stage if possible)	
Identify control (comparison) groups where possible	
Types of data	
Age, sex, previous convictions and sentencing history of participants	
Record of attendance and completion (and dropout)	
Record of activities and performance on course	
Number of referrals and success in market penetration	
Reconviction rates and seriousness of subsequent offences	
Feedback from participants on attitudes to driving, safety and self-esteem	
Employability measured by further education and job uptake	
Subsequent driving history (passing test, driving legally, licence returned etc)	
Sentencer satisfaction	
Post-programme reinforcement and risk assessment	

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## **Annex A: Overview studies**

### ***(i) Light, Nee, and Ingham (1993) Car theft: the offender's perspective***

In a 1993 study of car crime careers (Light, Nee and Ingham 1993), research established offender motivations for vehicle crime. A 'profile' of typical offenders was identified indicating the types of issue that any diversion project would need to address:

- Offenders have low academic achievement, high unemployment and restricted leisure activities;
- Most offenders start their vehicle crime 'careers' while still at school;
- Initial involvement was generally through peer pressure, boredom and the potential for excitement;
- Around half of the offenders considered themselves to be car crime specialists and reported an interest in cars as a primary motivation; and,
- Following a short apprenticeship period, thieves rapidly become skilled and confident. Opportunities for financial gain become progressively more important as a motivation for offending.

Car theft was not seen as a serious crime by the thieves interviewed (Light & Nee 1993). Punishment, and the threat of punishment, did not seem to deter them. The excitement of taking a car overcame any appreciation of the potential threats. Most of those who said that they had stopped stealing cars cited increased responsibility and maturity as the main reasons (e.g. finding a partner, becoming a parent). This suggests that education and skills training may be a successful avenue for long term vehicle crime reduction where punitive measures have been shown unsuccessful. This may particularly be the case with younger offenders in the apprentice stage, before they progress to a more financially motivated interest.

It was concluded that appropriate risk or needs assessments should be carried out before assigning a young person to a 'motor' or other diversionary project. Any project should be designed to meet specific needs and accredited accordingly. Subsequent anecdotal evidence from Martin and Webster (1994), that youngsters treated with respect respond well, adds further support to programmes designed to engage and develop these people.

### ***(ii) Martin and Webster (1994) Probation motor projects in England and Wales***

Martin and Webster (1994) reviewed 60 motor projects being run by the probation service in 1992, 46% of which were run in association with other services or voluntary bodies (this proportion showing signs of increasing). Of the 60 projects, only 14 had been in existence for five years or more. Half of the projects (primarily the older ones) included a workshop element and 15 included some form of racing. It was general practice that offenders could not race until they had completed a programme challenging their offending behaviour, and setting the standards expected of them (such as evidence of self-discipline and appropriate behaviour).

Only 25 of the projects included some training aimed at attaining a driving licence, though disqualification and insurance were major problems for these offenders.

Contrary to popular belief, the research found that the majority of project participants were not “youthful twockers” but “young men in their late ‘teens or early twenties, most of whom are ‘seriously disqualified’” (Martin and Webster 1994, p iv). Some owned cars, and all wanted (or needed) to become legal drivers.

The motor projects considered included a wide range of diverse schemes, the common theme being the involvement of young people with motor vehicles. “Such involvement may be in the form of vehicle maintenance, road safety, teaching driving skills, vehicle preparation, go-karting, off-road motor cycling or banger-racing” (Martin and Webster 1994, p1). The emphasis was almost always on hands-on activity. They highlighted a range of issues to do with the management of projects, the delivery of the programme materials and the establishment of effective monitoring and evaluation procedures. Caution was recommended in interpreting the results, because of the ‘volatile’ nature of such projects. Many of the projects considered in 1992 were no longer in existence in 1994, and some of those still in existence had changed considerably.

*(iii) Sugg, D. (1998) Motor projects in England and Wales: an evaluation*

The Home Office also carried out research into the effectiveness of 42 probation run motor projects (Sugg 1998). Two-thirds (28) of these were run exclusively by the probation services and the remainder (14) in partnership with other agencies. The reconvictions after two years of 1087 offenders who had attended these projects between 1989 and 1993 were considered. The work aimed to consider the techniques used by the projects, the age, sex, previous convictions and sentencing histories of these offenders and the expected rate of re-offending compared with the observed reconviction rates.

Three types of technique were identified as characteristic of these projects, 1) challenging the offenders attitudes and behaviour. 2) racing and 3) car maintenance workshops. Attitude and behaviour changing components were focused on getting the offenders to think about the consequences of their actions, for both themselves and their victims. Racing gave the offenders the chance to drive fast legally and the maintenance workshops encouraged them to increase their knowledge of cars and responsible driving. Many of the projects combined two or more techniques, with the aim of changing the offenders attitudes and ultimately reduce their re-offending. Unfortunately the exact composition of the techniques employed on the projects was not known.

Two groups of offenders were identified in the projects, the first a large group of young ‘twockers’ with convictions for ‘taking a vehicle without the owners consent’. The second was a smaller group of older offenders who have convictions for driving while disqualified. Nearly 90% were male and 81% were on the projects as a result of a court order. Only 12% of the participants attended the projects voluntarily. The sample had a large number of convictions, 56% having more than six. Only 5% had no previous convictions. The most frequent offences were driving while disqualified, taking a vehicle without consent and driving without insurance.

Reconviction rates were found to be high, nearly 80% being reconvicted for ‘any’ offence within two years, three-quarters of these for motoring offences. This figure is

high, even taking into account the offenders' age and criminal history. The older offenders were less likely to re-offend than the young (under 21) offenders, regardless of the type of project they were on. The completion rates appear to be quite low, 52% for the older offenders but only 32% for the younger ones. This may contribute to the high reconviction rates, as previous research has shown non-completion to be an indicator of later re-conviction.

Sugg's (1998) research indicated some potential indicators of poor programme performance:

- The staff of many of the projects had not received proper training, particularly in the theory underlying the intervention programmes.
- Many of the behaviour modification aspects of the programmes were adapted from other projects. Previous research has suggested that such adaptations by untrained staff can reduce programme efficiency.
- Projects involving racing were shown to be particularly poor.

Sugg (1998) notes that within the projects he considered there are likely to have been some consistently out-performing others. Given the nature of the data used, however, it was not possible to identify these.

***(iv) Crime Concern/ESVA (1998) Tackling vehicle crime: a practical guide for local community safety partnerships***

In a smaller qualitative survey, Crime Concern/ESVA (1998) reviewed a number of motor projects running in 1998, drawing out the key issues that they considered to be important when assessing them. Some of the factors relate to issues already identified in Martin and Webster's (1994) and Sugg's (1998) work, but they also identified additional factors. While they offered a more optimistic evaluation of motor projects than Martin and Webster (1994) or Sugg (1998), they suggested that more research is required to evaluate motor projects and related educational schemes properly, not only in respect of re-offending but also to assess how educational components may influence subsequent risk. Crime Concern/ESVA (1998) noted that some studies had shown that participants did not re-offend while on the project, and were subsequently reconvicted at a slower rate than a control group. Attitudes to driving, road safety and education were all found to improve following attendance on a project.

## **Annex B: Specific projects**

### ***(i) The South Bedfordshire motor vehicle project***

The South Bedfordshire Motor Vehicle Project is a multi-agency initiative providing workshops and courses on vehicle maintenance and road safety to young people. The project is managed and supported by a multi-agency steering group which has representatives from Luton Borough Council, the Luton-Dunstable Partnership, Vauxhall Motors, Bedfordshire Probation Service, the Luton Crime Reduction Programme, Social Services, the Police and other local bodies. Two staff are employed to run the project; a project co-ordinator and a tutor. The project is available to young people from 14 to 25 with an interest in vehicles, 40% of the participants being referred by Youth Justice, the Probation Service and the Courts. The aims and objectives of the project are well defined and the aspects of the course have well structured curricula, delivered through responsive, flexible, teaching methods.

The project does aim to reduce offending, but this is only one aim within a much wider range, such as involving young people with whom it may otherwise be difficult to communicate, providing opportunities for legal activities involving vehicles and enhancing training and employment opportunities. The project provides taster courses which introduce vehicle maintenance and repair, levels one and two of the City and Guilds vehicle maintenance course and short courses on road and driver safety. A strong sense of progression is reported through the vehicle maintenance taster and City and Guilds training courses. In 1996, 63% of the students taking the City and Guilds level 1 course passed, and 50% of those taking level 2 passed. In surveying a sample of the respondents (13 people) the project was rated highly. The flexible and supportive nature of the project were particularly commented on.

However, the numbers attending the course, and from which conclusions are drawn are small. In 1996, 10 of the 28 participants had offended and only 4 re-offended in the following three month to one year period (two different recruitment cohorts were considered together). The evaluators conclude from these figures that the project represents considerable value for money when the costs of offending and youth justice are accounted for. It is not known whether the suggested reduction in offending is sustained over the longer term. The limitations of the sample and short time period considered are recognised and the need for further evaluation is strongly recommended. In addition to these problems, one of the professionals interviewed in the evaluation process reported that the programme was unlikely to attract the more prolific offenders and those attending might be more motivated to quit offending anyway. This does not detract from the educational benefits of the project, but does question the efficacy of the (vehicle) crime reduction component.

The recruitment of individuals involved, or at risk of involvement, in vehicle crime is difficult. Those already 'turned off' by school are not typically motivated by alternative forms of organised training, making it very difficult to encourage them to participate. The report concludes that the flexible and supportive approach is particularly effective for some young people who are not doing well at school. Outputs include qualifications, better job opportunities and increased motivation to further train of seek employment. These are suggested as possibly instrumental in reducing offending behaviour, but further research would be required to determine this.

Further monitoring and evaluation of the project, and the performance of the participants (including attendance) are recommended. It was reported that the size and scope of the project cannot be increased at present without further funding, though there are plans to include a go-kart course, to improve the course equipment, and to include further educational opportunities should such become available. Although the project is already stretched given the current level of resources, greater emphasis on the recruitment of high-risk participants is desired to increase the potential impact of the project.

***(ii) The Bristol 'Wheels' project***

The Wheels Project includes workshop activities to enable vocational skills development and classroom work where attitudes to crime and road safety can be addressed. Other practical and educational classes (and employment placements where possible) are also available for the older participants. The project is managed by a multi-agency board, consisting of representatives of all the statutory agencies. A mixture of practical and classroom group exercises are run by the police.

Various programmes are aimed at different age groups, and they are delivered to around 60 groups each year. The courses are tailored according to the identified risk levels of participants. The project deals with 12 to 25 year olds who have either been convicted of vehicle crime, or have been identified as at risk of offending. There are several programmes for different groups; a 'senior court' programme for 16-25 year olds referred by the courts, a 'juvenile justice' programme for 14-16 year olds on supervision orders, a 'truancy' group and a 'junior/out reach' group for those identified as being at risk of offending.

Initial evaluation suggests that the scheme is at least partly successful, but only incomplete results are shown. In 1997 it was found that following the 'senior court' programme 66% of the participants completed the course. Of those finishing, 56% did not reoffend within 1 year, and those who did reoffend did so at a slower rate. The Juvenile Justice programme had not been evaluated as it had only been running for a year, but early indications were good. Looking at the junior programme, 87% were not referred back for vehicle-crime in the 12 months following the course. Feedback on the course from participants has also been favourable.

***(iii) The Ilderton motor project***

The Ilderton motor project is one of the longest established and well known projects. It is based on a large workshop and garage, aiming to give those involved in car crime an opportunity to be involved with vehicles in a constructive way. There is no formal programme or structure, but participants are encouraged to taking personal responsibility for their performance. Activities are structured to enable various types of responsibility and achievement to be provided to a group of offenders identified as generally having highly deprived backgrounds.

The evaluation of the Ilderton motor project carried out by Wilkinson (1997) is almost unique in that a reference group was used for comparison following a quasi-experimental methodology. The evaluation is based on small numbers, only 35 probationers attending the project and 40 probationers who did not, using information

about arrests. The groups were matched such that their offending histories were as similar as possible. They were followed up at one, two and three year intervals.

The performance of the project appeared to be good, those attending Ilderton committing less crime, and less car crime in particular than the matched group. After two years, 65% the Ilderton group had been arrested for any crime and 42% for motor-vehicle related crime specifically. This compares against 91% for any crime and 69% for motor-vehicle related crime for the comparison group. This strongly suggests that the project did have an impact on the re-offending of the participants. While the nature of the comparison groups does mean that it is not possible to attribute this effect conclusively to the project (as other factors could not be controlled for), there is no reason to suggest that the project was not in some way contributory.



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