

Thames Valley Partnership Early Intervention Project

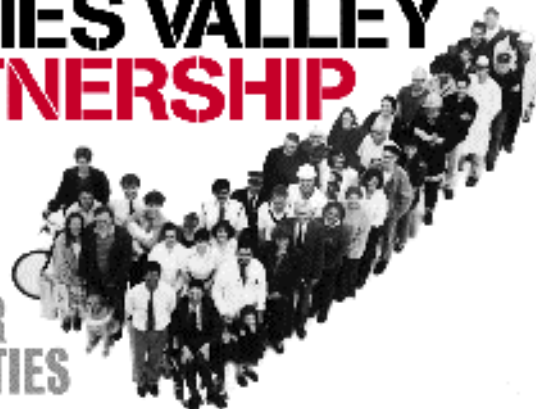
An independent
evaluation

By Jeremy Spafford

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**THAMES VALLEY
PARTNERSHIP**

WORKING
FOR SAFER
COMMUNITIES



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Key Findings

Process

- The Thames Valley Partnership has been working over two years to test ways of intervening early to promote community safety in schools and neighbourhoods using a partnership approach.
- It employed three modes of delivery:
 - facilitating inter-agency steering groups and workshops and brokering relationships between and within agencies
 - supporting the development of community based early intervention services such as a video project with young people, a teenage parents support project and a family centre
 - supporting interventions in schools such as peer mentoring, mediation, nurturing and transition work.
- It worked in three areas:
 - Bretch Hill in Banbury
 - Lower Caversham in Reading
 - Quarrendon and Meadowcroft in Aylesbury.
- Different points of entry in the three areas dramatically affected the speed at which the Thames Valley Partnership could get started and the nature of the activity that ensued.
- Inter-agency workshops in two of the areas helped to provide the Thames Valley Partnership with focus and a mandate. The absence of such a workshop in Lower Caversham may have contributed to the relative lack of local ownership of the Project.
- Audits conducted by the Thames Valley Partnership have proved very useful in Bretch Hill and Quarrendon and Meadowcroft
- The working style of Thames Valley Partnership employees is highly valued. Although the open community development approach worked well, some interviewees felt that the Thames Valley Partnership could have been less tentative about steering the work.
- Momentum was maintained through regular reflection, local ownership and an emphasis on practical interventions.
- Inputs varied. In **Bretch Hill**, the Project focussed on transition, behaviour in schools and a range of small community based interventions. In **Lower Caversham**, the Project invested in transition and peer mediation work in schools. In **Quarrendon and Meadowcroft**, the emphasis was on transition and one large community based intervention (the Family Centre).
- Bretch Hill has benefited most from grants because of an extra contribution by Vodafone. Most interviewees felt that the Thames Valley Partnership's ability to offer grants was an important part of their contribution.

Operational Impact

- Outcomes can only be measured in terms of mainstreaming. Attempts to create web based community signposting tools failed in Bretch Hill and have temporarily stalled in Quarrendon. All other initiatives appear to have a strong chance of being

mainstreamed though peer mediation and peer mentoring support in schools may need more investment than is available to enable the work to reach its full potential.

- ❑ Strong steering groups exist in each area with every chance of continuing to be effective beyond the Thames Valley Partnership's involvement.
- ❑ If the nurturing project in Bretch Hill and the Family Centre in Quarrendon and Meadowcroft are mainstreamed, these will be major contributions to the respective areas.
- ❑ The Project was unable to develop any lasting community based initiatives in Lower Caversham. Indeed, the Project overall has had significantly less impact there than in the other two areas.

Strategic impact and policy implications

- ❑ There is an ongoing challenge to introduce the notion of early intervention to the world of community safety and vice versa.
- ❑ Large statutory agencies tend to organise their services generically but need to be able to have a more geographic focus and an ability to respond to the needs of individuals and their families.
- ❑ This work exposes the need for a community development approach seeking broad outcomes and an individualised approach seeking narrow targets.
- ❑ There is a general recognition that intervention needs to be early but mainstream funding does not support this approach except through new initiatives which bring with them complicated 'joining up' strategies.
- ❑ The principles established in the Thames Valley Partnership's own research (Never Too Early) have been reinforced: the best way to intervene early in order to promote community safety is to create universal access for services with targeted interventions available at critical points.

Lessons learnt

- ❑ It is possible to do a lot with a little money but interviewees observed that it is not possible to do much with no money.
- ❑ Strategic buy-in and a willingness to mainstream must be achieved for interventions to be more than short term.
- ❑ Interventions must be focussed on a small geographical area and use a community development approach.
- ❑ A community development approach prevents the imposition of a model but can still include the promotion of principles.
- ❑ The Thames Valley Partnership does not have the resources to invest in long term capacity building in a community so can only work effectively in areas where there is some kind of community based organisation through which it can operate.
- ❑ Activity and inputs do not equate to outcomes and it is hard to demonstrate positive impact in such a short period. Impact can only be measured in terms of mainstreaming (ie impact on providers not impact on users).
- ❑ Much of the success of the Project is due to the personality of the Thames Valley Partnership and its employees including an ongoing commitment to persisting with the messiness of partnership working. An independent agency operating as honest broker can make a real difference.

Way forward for the Thames Valley Partnership

- In **Bretch Hill**, the Thames Valley Partnership could have an ongoing role to link the work of the Community Safety Partnership to the Integrated Support Service meeting.
- In **Lower Caversham**, there is potential to explore further the link between transition work, peer mentoring, peer mediation and the development of a whole school ethos.
- In **Quarrendon and Meadowcroft**, there is still much to do to guarantee the development of the Family Centre and, linked to that, the Thames Valley Partnership has a possible role in helping to untangle the complex political structures that exist in order to improve neighbourhood based working.
- The Thames Valley Partnership could offer help in developing information sharing systems to improve targeted work with individuals and their families who are known to be vulnerable.
- It is neither appropriate nor necessary for the Thames Valley Partnership to be developing new services or continuing to service inter-agency meetings. Instead it should be taking the lessons learnt from this Project and using its brokering resources to go deeper.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This report builds on the findings of an interim evaluation of The Thames Valley Partnership Early Intervention Project published in March 2003. That report presented detailed findings on context, purpose, process, impact and the future based on interviews conducted in the three areas in which the Thames Valley Partnership has been intervening. To avoid repetition, this report presents the key findings from the interim evaluation and describes how interviewees perceive these issues one year on. Readers wishing to understand what lies behind the key findings of the interim evaluation are advised to refer to that report which is available from the Thames Valley Partnership.

The Early Intervention Project aims broadly 'to improve the effectiveness of public services and make an impact upon future levels of criminality' in three localities in the Thames Valley area: Bretch Hill in Banbury, Lower Caversham in Reading and Quarrendon and Meadowcroft in Aylesbury. More specifically 'to facilitate a collaborative approach to the provision of early intervention services for children (aged 0-11) and their families, the Thames Valley Partnership will work with and through existing local providers to ensure a joined-up range of key services at critical points in children's lives.'

It has two delivery objectives:

- a) To develop a holistic approach to early intervention from pre-school ages up to the point of transition to secondary school.
- b) To bring together a range of stakeholders on a neighbourhood wide basis, to provide more accessible, universal services for families and young children and more targeted help where it is most needed.

It has two outcome objectives:

- c) To demonstrate early intervention as a key element of community safety.
- d) To learn lessons and disseminate and share experiences and results for the benefit of the Thames Valley and nationally.

This Project aims to test the proposition that early intervention is part of community safety in areas that feature as crime 'hotspots' in community safety audits but which fail to attract significant levels of investment because they represent pockets of deprivation within areas of relative affluence.

The Project is funded by HM Treasury through its Invest to Save Budget (ISB) via the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister with additional contributions from The Lloyds TSB Foundation, The Vodafone UK Foundation, Equitable Charitable Trust and the Thames Valley Partnership itself. The Thames Valley Partnership is the only non-statutory organisation to date to receive a grant from the ISB fund.

This report has been prepared by Jeremy Spafford, an independent consultant based in Oxford.

1.2 Methodology

1.2.1 This evaluation explores four themes:

- **Process** – by considering the following questions:
 - How did Thames Valley Partnership find a point of entry?
 - How did the inter-agency workshops assist with focus and ownership?
 - How did the Thames Valley Partnership’s auditing process assist with collaborative planning?
 - What has the Thames Valley Partnership added?
 - How has the Thames Valley Partnership maintained momentum?
 - In what way have the inputs and outcomes varied in the three areas and why?
 - How will the Thames Valley Partnership help to sustain the work beyond the funded period?
 - How important was it that the Thames Valley Partnership could offer money?
- **Operational impact** – by examining the impact and mainstreaming potential of each activity with a more detailed analysis of selected initiatives.
- **Strategic impact and policy implications** – by assessing the extent to which the project has influenced local strategic planning and the development of policy.
- **Way forward** – by exploring how the Thames Valley Partnership should take forward this work beyond the ISB funded period through interviews and attendance at a seminar convened by the Thames Valley Partnership.

1.2.2 The evaluator spoke with 23 people: 3 staff from the Thames Valley Partnership about the overall Project, 8 people about the work in Bretch Hill, 6 people about the work in Lower Caversham and 6 about the work in Quarrendon and Meadowcroft. In addition, he attended advisory group and board meetings for the Project and facilitated or attended the following workshops:

- 14 pupils from Highdown School in Reading that had produced a Welcome Booklet with the help of the Thames Valley Partnership
- 31 pupils and 4 teachers from Quarrendon and Sir Henry Floyd Schools that had been trained to become peer mentors with the support of the Thames Valley Partnership
- A Way Ahead seminar with 9 participants convened by the Thames Valley Partnership to explore how the work should be taken forward.

See Appendix A for details of interviewees.

The evaluator sought to explore the following questions in semi-structured interviews using prompts (Appendix C):

- What is the activity and scope of the Project and how is it different to other initiatives?
- In what way does it contribute to community safety?

- How does it contribute to policy development and strategic planning?
- How does it contribute to practice development?
- Will the initiatives it has supported be mainstreamed?
- What has worked well and what could have been done better?
- What should the Thames Valley Partnership do next to help improve the standard and range of early intervention initiatives?

In order to facilitate greater openness, all interviewees were assured that quotations would not be attributed in the text of the report.

All assertions and recommendations made within this report derive from one or more interviewees unless stated otherwise.

1.3 Structure of the report

Broadly speaking this Project has worked in three different ways:

- By facilitating inter-agency steering groups and workshops and brokering relationships between and within agencies
- By supporting the development of community based early intervention services such as a video project with young people, a teenage parents support project and a family centre
- By supporting interventions in schools such as peer mentoring, mediation, nurturing and transition work.

It has worked in three areas:

- Bretch Hill in Banbury
- Lower Caversham in Reading
- Quarrendon and Meadowcroft in Aylesbury.

It would be possible and interesting to evaluate the work by mode of delivery or by geographical patch. However, in this report, the work is examined in terms of process and impact using themes that emerged from interviews. The disadvantage of this approach is that, for readers unfamiliar with the work or interested only in one mode of delivery or one patch, it may be difficult to extract learning points. However, because the Project is ultimately about increasing our awareness and understanding of connections between various inputs and outcomes, it seems only right that the evaluation should attempt to consider each of the modes and patches under themes rather than the other way round.

The report, therefore, presents an update on the key findings of the interim evaluation based on the comments of interviewees (in section 2). It then offers a commentary on the four themes described in section 1.2.1 above (in sections 3 to 6).

The Early Intervention Project is referred to throughout this report as 'The Project'.

2. An Update on the Interim Findings

2.1 Context

For the interim evaluation, interviewees were asked to comment on the quality and range of universal services, targeted services and multi-agency collaboration on their estates. Key findings were:

- Bretch Hill and Quarrendon and Meadowcroft are relatively well served by **universal public services**. Lower Caversham seems to be a virtual service desert.
- All areas would benefit from more patch based **targeted services** operating out of an accessible local building. Bretch Hill has such a facility in the Sunshine Centre.
- **Multi-agency collaboration** is problematic in all areas but is improving rapidly thanks to the intervention of Thames Valley Partnership. In Bretch Hill, practitioners are working closely together but there is still relatively little joined up work at a strategic level. In Lower Caversham, inter-agency collaboration is in its infancy. Quarrendon and Meadowcroft has developed a complex inter-agency meeting structure which seems to be causing work to be duplicated due to poor communication.

2.1.1 Universal Services

Unsurprisingly, little has changed in just one year. However, interviewees noted that due to boundary changes **Bretch Hill** has now superseded Blackbird Leys (in Oxford) as the ward with the highest levels of deprivation in the county and is therefore beginning to attract the attention of strategic bodies in a more focussed way. Combined with the impending construction of a new building for Orchard Fields School and development of the Bradley Arcade site, there is considerable optimism that universal services will become easier to access on the estate.

In **Lower Caversham**, there is now a youth worker in post and the community centre has been brought back into use. However the centre is reported to be still poorly maintained and closed for over 18 out of 24 hours each day. A Training Employment and Advice Shop offers computer sessions and a crèche worker and Churches Together in Caversham have provided a structured toddler group with informal parenting support (called Messy Play) on a regular basis since January 2004. Attendance each Thursday averages about 5 mothers with their children and is growing. However, core funding to run the project has ceased and other initiatives such as a breakfast club, walking bus, junior youth group and after school groups have not materialised. This is partly because there continues to be low capacity on the Amersham Road estate to run services at a community level, which makes any new initiative intrinsically unsustainable. It is also because Children's Fund grants have been endangered by threatened central government cuts. However all Children's Fund monies have been reinstated so there are grounds for optimism that further investment in the estate will follow. The Children's Fund has employed a worker to help build capacity on the estate but she

is unable to work from the community centre because of concerns about personal safety. Not much has changed, therefore, but funding for community facilities arising from the proposed new housing development (known as section 106 funding) may present opportunities. However it is hard to see how it will address fundamental issues such as the absence of local schools, shops, health services and an adequate bus service. One worker commented that they were *'exhausted...in the beginning people expressed interest in our work but not much practical support has been forthcoming.'*

In **Quarrendon and Meadowcroft**, the proposed housing development on Weedon Hill, the sale of the old Thomas Hickman school site, the proposed sale by the PCT of the Quarrendon Training Centre and the move by Brightstart nursery to Fairford Leys present major opportunities for coordinated investment in the estate linked to the proposed Family Centre. However, some interviewees expressed concern that prospects for a coordinated approach are weakened by the fact that Southcourt and Mandeville is a PSA target area, which may distract strategic bodies from focussing on the needs of the estate. It was also reported by one interviewee that eight health visitor posts are due to be cut from Aylesbury Vale, which could seriously undermine early intervention work.

2.1.2 Targeted Services

In **Bretch Hill**, the development of Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD) services in both Orchard Fields School and William Morris School thanks to coordinated contributions from the Thames Valley Partnership, Vodafone, the Children's Fund and the LEA is reported to be making a significant difference already. The STEP project, which supports young parents, has also become well established and the baby clinic based at The Sunshine Centre has now been mainstreamed by local Health Visitors. Further development of targeted services looks promising with the upcoming building developments (see 2.1.1) and the work of the Integrated Support Services Group (see 2.1.3).

Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP) funding has been used in **Lower Caversham** to good effect and both the Children's Fund and Churches Together in Caversham are working hard to meet individual need as well as develop sustainable services. However, interviewees are pessimistic about the prospects for locally based services on the Amersham Road estate as long as the infrastructure remains so poorly resourced and capacity and confidence in the community remains so low.

The potential for more locally based targeted services is closely linked to the development of a Family Centre in **Quarrendon and Meadowcroft**. Ironically, at a time when huge efforts are underway to secure more joined up services for young families, the locally based Parents as First Teachers Project (PAFT) is under threat of closure due to funding problems.

'The loss of PAFT would be ridiculous.'

2.1.3 Multi-agency working

Oxfordshire County Council has established Integrated Support Services (ISS) meetings in four areas of the county in response to ongoing low academic achievement. North Banbury (including **Bretch Hill**) is one of these areas. This group is well placed to build on the work of the Early Intervention steering group chaired by the Thames Valley Partnership. Some interviewees were concerned that ISS may repeat the mistake of previous initiatives and fail to take account of work that is already taking place. However, most were confident that the significant overlap in membership of the two groups will facilitate continuity. There is still concern about the lack of capacity in Social and Health Care and the impact this has on other professionals (especially teachers) who can find themselves wrestling with possible child protection issues without adequate social work involvement. The growing interest in Bretch Hill by the County Council is creating opportunities to collaborate well on a strategic level and the creative planning work being undertaken by Cherwell District Council to release Bradley Arcade is very welcome. All interviewees valued the Thames Valley Partnership's contribution to multi-agency working and hoped they would remain involved. However, they also observed that a structure and environment now exists on the estate, which makes it unnecessary for the Thames Valley Partnership to lead or service multi-agency meetings beyond December 2004.

Most interviewees in **Lower Caversham** valued the Early Intervention Partnership meetings for networking purposes. A transitions sub group was created in June 2003 which led to the development of a Welcome booklet at Highdown School which is due to be replicated at Chiltern Edge school. Collaborative working outside these meetings remains limited however. This seems to be for four different but linked reasons:

- There are very few professionals working in the community so those that attend meetings are generally preoccupied with priorities elsewhere in the borough
- There are significant differences in philosophy between some of the key agencies
- Youth work and early years work are not joined up
- Because of the low use and maintenance of the community centre, there is nowhere for professionals working on the estate to meet and share ideas.

The Children and Young People Strategic Partnership, which is a sub group of Reading's Local Strategic Partnership, has commissioned a Best Value Review of all children's services. This may result in the Lower Caversham partnership meeting becoming a model for local groups that are given the authority to commission services. Local groups in other areas of Reading include Sure Start, extended schools and Children's Fund panels. It remains to be seen whether resources will be allocated but, if they are, the local partnership meeting could be a significant funding source for building local capacity. The Children's Fund is committed to servicing the local partnership meeting after the Thames Valley Partnership leaves in December 2004 and interviewees thought it doubtful that the Thames Valley Partnership could add anything to multi-agency working in Lower Caversham after that date.

Joint working to develop the Family Centre in **Quarrendon and Meadowcroft** is proving very effective. There is clearly a strong commitment at all levels to see the proposal through. Funding the Centre is complicated as it is linked to land sales and central government targets amidst the complexity of two tier local government. There is understandable concern that the relevant authorities may not be able to sustain prioritisation of the Family Centre through to formal commitment of funds due to the wide range of competing demands, but most interviewees remain optimistic due to the good relationships that have been developed and the sound basis of the proposal. On the estate, the duplication and competition that seemed to exist between the Network group and Community Action Partnership has been resolved and an additional meeting now takes place to bridge the two groups. This was a temporary intervention to improve coordination but seems highly valued and may continue for some time. All interviewees felt that the Thames Valley Partnership's contribution to multi-agency working has been significant and is still needed.

2.2 Purpose

Interviewees for the interim evaluation were asked to describe the purpose of the overall Project. Key findings were:

Broadly speaking,

- **Bretch Hill** interviewees saw the Project as very pragmatic and concerned with establishing highly valued, small but important initiatives on the ground with relatively little connection with strategic planning processes.
- **Lower Caversham** interviewees saw the Project mainly as an attempt to promote collaborative working to work through children to reduce conflict and promote mediation.
- **Quarrendon and Meadowcroft** interviewees described the Project as facilitative: helping agencies and residents identify what they wanted to do and communicate better with each other.
- Partnership interviewees described the Project as an attempt to establish practical projects to improve services to 0-11 year olds and their families using collaborative approaches and then to mainstream those initiatives.

One year on, there was a greater consensus about the purpose of the work. Some interviewees had a very narrow contact with the Thames Valley Partnership and were unaware of broader objectives (especially in Lower Caversham). The views of interviewees with a wider perspective could be summarised as follows:

- The Project is an attempt to test ways of generating locally owned initiatives that will increase community safety by intervening early to improve behaviour, confidence, educational achievement and healthy relationships.

2.3 Process

In each area, the Thames Valley Partnership began by meeting with an ongoing inter-agency group or convening a new group using existing networks. They went

on to produce a paper scoping the needs of and services for children and their families based on analysis of existing literature and data and some consultation. They then asked the groups with whom they were meeting, how they could use a small budget and a small amount of time (about one day per week from the director and one day per week from the development officer) to help the group identify and act on its priorities. Each area responded differently.

The key findings for the interim evaluation were:

- In each area the Partnership has found a very different point of entry into collaborative working. In **Bretch Hill**, the Sunshine Centre provided an obvious and effective access point. In **Lower Caversham**, Reading Borough Council helped convene initial meetings and tied the Project very closely to the Children's Fund. In **Quarrendon and Meadowcroft** the Partnership struggled to find the most appropriate group to work with until quite late.
- In **Bretch Hill**, the forum has generated a number of small practical initiatives, which the Partnership has been able to take forward fairly quickly. In **Lower Caversham**, work has been focussed very productively on the schools but, despite much discussion, there have been few developments to date on the estate itself. In **Quarrendon and Meadowcroft**, work is now centred around improving coordination between agencies and the development of a family centre on the estate.

'(They) are responding to need rather than (their) own agenda by attending groups and being alongside people who live there - hearing what they want and bringing people in to do things.'

Interviewees remain impressed by the Thames Valley Partnership's approach. The observations from the interim report remain true. More detailed comments on process are provided in section 3.

2.4 Impact

Beyond the crucial business of bringing agencies together to share ideas and plan, the Thames Valley Partnership has actively supported a variety of initiatives in each area with funding, worker time or both.

Funding has ranged from payment for trainers, facilitators and events such as the transition and peer mediation work through to the purchasing of equipment such as sweatshirts for a school and nappy changing equipment for a baby clinic.

Worker input has ranged from direct work with children and young people such as the Real Time Video Project in Lower Caversham through to assisting (and in some cases) leading the development of new services such as the Family Centre in Quarrendon and Meadowcroft and the young mum's group in Bretch Hill. All work by the Thames Valley Partnership has been undertaken by Simone Taylor (Youth and Community Development Worker) and/or Patsy Townsend (Director of Youth Programmes).

The interim report includes a great deal of detail about the Thames Valley Partnership's activity and how it was perceived by interviewees. Those perceptions were summarised as follows:

- There has been considerable impact already, most notably in greater collaborative working between agencies.
- Peer mediation and transitions work in schools is highly valued and has been the most substantial outcome.
- There are as yet few pragmatic outcomes in Lower Caversham and Quarrendon and Meadowcroft.
- All interviewees recognise a clear link between the Project and the promotion of community safety.
- The Partnership is particularly valued for its brokerage, independence, expertise, responsiveness, pragmatism and funding.
- Local residents have had minimal input to the development of the Project's priorities.
- There seems to be limited awareness or ownership of the Project at senior levels in statutory agencies.

Impact to date is explored in detail in sections 4 and 5. Most of the interim findings remain true except that a great deal of work has been undertaken to further the development of a Family Centre in Quarrendon and Meadowcroft and general strategic ownership and engagement in the issues raised by the Project (if not the Project itself) has advanced significantly.

2.5 The second year

Key findings in March 2003 were:

- The priority for the forthcoming year is to establish or maintain projects and then find ways of mainstreaming them
- In **Bretch Hill** the main tasks are re-establishing the young parents group, mainstreaming transition and peer mediation work and securing EBD work with both children and their parents.
- In **Lower Caversham** the main tasks are to sustain and extend peer mediation work and develop youth work initiatives in the community
- In **Quarrendon and Meadowcroft** the main tasks are to develop a family centre, complete the community audit and improve systems for identifying priorities and communicating between agencies.
- In all areas, attention will need to be paid to how collaboration will be co-ordinated after 2004 and senior management authority will need to be secured to enable staff to prioritise attendance at inter-agency meetings.

The work of the Thames Valley Partnership is explored in more detail in section 4. With regard to the issues highlighted above, considerable progress has been made in two of the three areas.

Interviewees report that in **Bretch Hill**, the young parents group has transformed into an individualised outreach and support service in response to need and is working well. It was not possible to secure the worker's post through the youth service but the Sunshine Centre is confident that it can attract funding to sustain the work over the medium term. Transition and peer mediation work at Drayton School is highly valued and the school is committed to continuing with the work. Thames Valley Partnership has offered detailed advice about how to raise ongoing funds but the school seems to remain unsure as to how best to proceed. Some interviewees report that a similar intervention is badly needed at Banbury School. EBD work at the two primary schools is funded for two years. Interviewees were optimistic that, if evidence of success can be demonstrated, a good case could be put for long-term support for the work from the LEA.

In **Lower Caversham** the peer mediation and transition work is still highly valued but interviewees expressed concern about the sustainability of the work. No community based youth work initiatives have been developed with the support of the Thames Valley Partnership.

In **Quarrendon and Meadowcroft**, interviewees noted that the community audit has been successfully completed by the Thames Valley Partnership and is proving very useful. Some concern was expressed that the audit will soon become out of date and no mechanism has been established to update it. Work to develop the Family Centre is ongoing and promising. Inter-agency communication is steadily improving.

'Our meeting was purely for networking but the Thames Valley Partnership turned us into an action group and enabled us to involve both the County and the District – a really good bridging exercise.'

Strong groups now exist in all three areas that can take the work forward and there is growing understanding and engagement from senior managers.

3. Process

Based on the comments of interviewees, this section examines how the Thames Valley Partnership has worked by exploring the following questions:

- How did Thames Valley Partnership find a point of entry?
- How did the inter-agency workshops assist with focus and ownership?
- How did the Thames Valley Partnership's auditing process assist with collaborative planning?
- What has the Thames Valley Partnership added?
- How has the Thames Valley Partnership maintained momentum?
- In what way have the inputs and outcomes varied in the three areas and why?
- How will the Thames Valley Partnership help to sustain the work beyond the funded period?
- How important was it that the Thames Valley Partnership could offer money?

3.1 The point of entry

As discussed in the interim report, having decided to work in each of the chosen areas, the Thames Valley Partnership needed to find a way of starting.

In **Bretch Hill**, they worked through a well-established community based organisation, the Sunshine Centre. In **Lower Caversham**, they worked alongside the Education and Community Service linked to the Children's Fund and in **Quarrendon and Meadowcroft** they struggled to find an appropriate partner to work with (having been advised to start with the 'Excellence in Aylesbury' initiative) until they focussed on an estate based network meeting of social and healthcare professionals. These different routes significantly affected the speed at which work could begin and the nature of the activity that ensued.

In **Banbury**, a close working relationship with a well-networked agency already providing early intervention services on the ground led to rapid introductions to key partners. The following comments from the same interviewee illustrate both the potential traps and the way in which the Thames Valley Partnership's link to the Sunshine Centre helped it avoid them.

'Most things go wrong on Breth Hill – you have to be brave to get involved...Breth Hill does not need parachuted in short term initiatives...the Sunshine Centre and Thames Valley Partnership are the successes of Breth Hill.'

Because of the Sunshine Centre's proximity to and close working relationship with a primary school that was going through major change, the Project quickly became focussed on the education system and work that would support a successful change process in that school. It also helped the Centre reach out to vulnerable groups it was struggling to engage. Thus the main activity revolved round the successful opening of Orchard Fields School, supporting transition into Drayton School, EBD work in both local primary schools and support for young parents. This is not to say that priorities were set by the Sunshine Centre, as they were all identified at

the original inter-agency workshop held in April 2002. However, the Project's link to the Centre provided an effective and pragmatic way in.

In **Reading**, a close link to the local authority led to a focus on strengthening the Early Intervention Partnership meeting. Because there was no active community based organisation, the Thames Valley Partnership struggled to find ways of supporting initiatives on the Amersham Road estate. Indeed some interviewees see the Thames Valley Partnership's function in Lower Caversham as limited to convening some networking opportunities and providing some funding for peer mediation training in the primary schools and transition work in the secondary schools.

In **Aylesbury**, the Project was slow to get going and there is a strong sense that it is too early for the Thames Valley Partnership to withdraw, as there is much to do in relation to the development of the Family Centre. Indeed, the nature of the Network group led the Thames Valley Partnership to focus on the development of a Family Centre because of the concerns of the health professionals involved. None of the interviewees wanted to challenge the need to prioritise this development but one noted that there are other concerns on the estate that the project has not been able to attend to such as inter-generational tension and the need for an ASBO protocol. Some of these concerns are outside the remit of a project focussing on 0-11 year olds and their families but highlights some of the community safety concerns, which the Project has been unable to address. However, the Thames Valley Partnership's history on the estate with the Community Action Partnership and its strong relationship with the Network is recognised as key to the successful bridging exercise that brought the two groups closer together.

'(The Partnership) goes in at a low level and works up...they were clever about how to come in. They built trust and relationships slowly and they are no longer seen as outsiders – they are part of Quarrendon and Meadowcroft.'

3.2 Inter-agency workshops

The Thames Valley Partnership organised two workshops in **Bretch Hill** with external facilitators. One early in the life of the Project set the agenda for the first year's work and a second focussed specifically on EBD. Both were well attended and highly valued by interviewees. In **Quarrendon and Meadowcroft**, a similar workshop provided impetus for the ongoing work to create a Family Centre. All of these workshops brought together a wide range of practitioners and commissioners and allowed for focussed discussion across disciplines about the needs of the geographical area. They also provided the Thames Valley Partnership with a clear steer on how to develop its workplan and provided partners with a sense of ownership of the Project.

In **Lower Caversham**, partners chose not to take up the offer of such an event and regarded the regular meetings as sufficient. It may be that a facilitated inter-agency workshop would have struggled to attract interest but the absence of one may have contributed to the relative lack of direction and ownership of the Thames Valley Partnership's work.

3.3 The auditing process

The early scoping exercises conducted in all three areas have been used to help plan developments. In **Bretch Hill**, the Thames Valley Partnership is being asked to build on this work to provide the ISS meeting with benchmark information. In **Quarrendon and Meadowcroft**, a larger mapping exercise was undertaken by the Thames Valley Partnership, which was described as *'really good'* and *'very helpful'*. Some concern was expressed about whether this exercise will be used at a strategic level and how it will be updated. However, interviewees from both areas recognised that these audits have helped provide a solid base from which to plan.

'When the council said that the first thing they wanted to do was more research, we were able to give them the Thames Valley Partnership's work and say that's enough research, let's get on with it.'

3.4 Adding value

Interviewees were highly complimentary about the skills and approaches of the two Thames Valley Partnership staff responsible for the Project. Their supportive 'can-do' approach was described as *'refreshing'*. One interviewee described how the Thames Valley Partnership *'removes stress from those who want to deliver by servicing, facilitating, coordinating and providing contacts.'*

Interviewees confirmed the findings of the interim evaluation by emphasising their appreciation of the Thames Valley Partnership's openness and willingness to work with the concerns of practitioners on the ground rather than impose their own agenda.

'They are working with us rather than doing to us.'

'They offer to support us without constraining us with their vision.'

'We give time individually but the Partnership brings us together so that what we give is more effective.'

However, one interviewee noted that the Thames Valley Partnership was too tentative. And another felt they could be bolder about explaining themselves.

'They should offer more critical reflection so we don't make the same mistakes as other areas.'

A fundamental concern for the Thames Valley Partnership is to retain a transparent and honest community development approach and carry an explicit community safety agenda. As one interviewee commented:

'Early Intervention to Prevent Criminality is a headline but sometimes written in invisible ink.'

3.5 Maintaining momentum

The Project is spread across three very different patches and involves activity ranging from research, facilitation, consultation, partnership development, service development, youth work, strategic planning and fund raising (to name but a few). This has required regular reflection by the Thames Valley Partnership officers on what is being achieved and how. They have done this through the evaluation process, at advisory group and board meetings for the overall project and at the patch based steering groups. This openness to reflection is a credit to the staff involved and, not only enables the Thames Valley Partnership to learn and adapt, it also nurtures a sense of shared ownership amongst partner agencies

This local ownership and the Project's commitment to practical interventions have helped maintain momentum in **Bretch Hill** and **Quarrendon and Meadowcroft**. These elements were not in place in **Lower Caversham**, however. In addition, the Amersham Road estate is not a high priority for the local authority because of the needs of other areas in the borough. As a result, the Project lost momentum and resulted in a decision by the Thames Valley Partnership to focus exclusively on work in schools and servicing the steering group meetings in Lower Caversham.

3.6 Varying inputs, outcomes and sustainability

3.6.1 Variability of inputs

The Thames Valley Partnership's original bid for the Project outlined four means of achieving the objectives set out in section 1.1. One was the development of community based responses to preventing domestic and other family violence and, due to the focus of each of the steering groups, has not been pursued in this Project other than by offering a production of Theatre ADAD's drama 'Behind Closed Doors' to local schools (see 4.12).

The tables below show which approaches have been used in which areas. It should be noted that some of these involved a considerable input of time and/or money whereas others were relatively small interventions.

(a) Development of integrated and targeted early intervention services for children aged 3 - 11

Bretch Hill	Lower Caversham	Quarrendon and Meadowcroft
Baby clinic Young parents' project (STEP) Road safety resources Early Start Programme (parents as educators) Web based community signposting tool	Help with Summer Splash scheme and Real Time Video project	Children's Centre development Service mapping Web based community signposting tool

(b) Encouraging better collaboration between schools to ease the transition for vulnerable pupils

Bretch Hill	Lower Caversham	Quarrendon and Meadowcroft
Drayton school transition project Support for launch of new school (Orchard Fields) Contribution to 'Attendance Matters' project	2 schools welcome booklets Transition showcasing event planned for July 04 Schools transitions sub group established	3 schools buddying scheme and welcome booklets

(c) Developing ways of influencing young people's attitudes to relationships

Bretch Hill	Lower Caversham	Quarrendon and Meadowcroft
Young Citizens Project and diversity resources for Drayton school Resources for structured play EBD work	Peer mediation programmes in 2 primary schools and peer mediators' conference planned for July 04 (link with secondary schools in development)	Schools in Action projects Peer mentor training

(d) Developing community based responses to preventing domestic and other family violence

Bretch Hill	Lower Caversham	Quarrendon and Meadowcroft
Theatre ADAD production of 'Behind Closed Doors' and inset training and resources for 2 schools		Theatre ADAD production of 'Behind Closed Doors'

In **Bretch Hill**, the Project focussed on transition, behaviour in schools and a range of small community based interventions. In **Lower Caversham**, the Project invested in transition and peer mediation work in schools. In **Quarrendon and Meadowcroft**, the emphasis was on transition and one large community based intervention (the Family Centre).

3.6.2 Variability of outcomes and sustainability

Interviewees noted that all interventions had been highly successful except the attempts to create web based signposting tools, which had faltered due to technical problems and difficulty in engaging young people in the process. In Quarrendon and Meadowcroft, the problem lay in staff illness in the youth service and problematic access to computers. It is worth noting that in Brech Hill, it was suggested that this particular intervention failed because it was an adult agenda.

Perhaps it was a good example of how community development work has to start with the concerns of the community: the young people involved were not interested in creating a community signposting tool.

It is difficult to make a confident assessment of outcomes, as the long-term effect will not be known for several years. However, the extent to which initiatives are likely to be mainstreamed is a strong indication of how successful the Thames Valley Partnership's intervention has been. This is explored in more detail in section 4. However it is fair to say that interviewees were confident about mainstreaming of inter-agency networks, community based interventions and the EBD related work. There is no doubt that the transitions and peer mediation work will have a lasting impact but there are some concerns about the extent to which the respective schools are in a position to take the work forward without further support. This means, again, that change will be least evident in Lower Caversham.

3.7 Funding

As well as offering partnership, practice, service and community development services, the Thames Valley Partnership also offered money. The spend on grants to local organisations (including funding for trainers but excluding the time and expenses of the Thames Valley Partnership staff) came to £115,020 over the three areas with donations ranging from £25 to £20,000.

Interviewees were asked to comment on the extent to which the Thames Valley Partnership's offer of funding was necessary for them to work effectively. Responses were varied though it is reasonable to conclude that most felt it was very important.

Bretch Hill has clearly benefited most financially largely due to additional funding targeted at the area from Vodafone UK Foundation. Indeed the Thames Valley Partnership has also brokered the highly valued involvement of a Vodafone representative in the management committee of The Sunshine Centre and funding for a deputy manager.

Some interviewees thought the money was an unnecessary but welcome bonus, some thought the money was absolutely essential and some thought the money was not enough.

'Their contribution of £20,000 demonstrated commitment and gave a clear message of 'put your money where your mouth is' but we could have done it without the money because of the way they work – we need their time and energy and their influence over others to contribute.'

'The money is small – you can't put a financial price on the values and experience of the Partnership'

'They must have money. No money – no difference'

4. Operational Impact

A brief description of all the various interventions is provided below with a commentary on impact and mainstreaming potential based on the views of interviewees. Some initiatives were examined in more detail than others.

4.1 Steering groups set up in the three areas

Each group has proved effective and has potential to remain so. The Thames Valley Partnership has provided focus and generated a sense of ownership.

Mainstreaming Potential

In **Bretch Hill**, it seems likely that the new ISS meeting will inherit and progress the work of the Thames Valley Partnership's steering group. In **Lower Caversham**, the Children's Fund is committed to leading and servicing the Early Intervention Partnership and the transitions sub group is now well established. In **Quarrendon and Meadowcroft**, a joint working group has been established to bridge two existing partnerships and avoid duplication. This is proving very effective and may become ongoing. Servicing arrangements will need to be negotiated before the Thames Valley Partnership can leave. If the district council is successful in appointing a community development worker for the estate, the group could provide a steering function for that work and, in return, be serviced by them. The worker would also have an opportunity to check their work with residents via the Community Action Partnership (CAP). One interviewee noted that the Thames Valley Partnership had brought wider representation from both the District and County Councils to local groups and specifically brokered County Council interest in CAP.

4.2 Scoping of issues and mapping of services completed in three areas

This work is being used to support the work of ISS in Banbury and the development work in Quarrendon and Meadowcroft (see 3.3).

Mainstreaming Potential

As stand alone pieces of work the scoping and mapping exercises were valid and helpful. Some attention will need to be paid to ensuring that the work is used by strategic planners in all three areas to inform future developments.

4.3 Training events in two areas looking at scoping of issues and developing action plans for the way forward

These events helped to generate ideas and ownership of an action plan and provided the Thames Valley Partnership with a mandate to engage in service development (see section 3.2).

4.4 1000+ pupils supported through transition projects

This work is highly valued by the schools involved. One interviewee noted that vulnerable children moving up to a secondary school with a transition project were *'doing better'* than those moving to one which paid less attention to the issue and gave telling specific examples. One of these was of a mentor who discovered that the baby brother of a Year 7 pupil had died and proceeded to take him under his wing and introduce him to a sports club. The schools involved in transition work have leant heavily on the Thames Valley Partnership to fund a range of highly imaginative events. At Drayton in Banbury, for example, the Thames Valley Partnership has funded or provided camping and bowling trips, drumming workshops and other team building events, a leadership course for mentors, a Welcome booklet, supply teachers to release staff to visit primary schools and help with a drop-in centre run by a youth worker based in the school.

Mainstreaming Potential

Given the strong evidence that seems to exist of the benefits, it must become a priority for the relevant schools to invest further in the work. Two kinds of investment are required:

- Small but ongoing funding for training for peer mentors (buddies), team building days for class groups and their buddies in both Year 6 and Year 7 and Welcome booklets.
- Commitment to promote, support and manage the transition work in all areas and carry the team building/buddying/relationship building ethos throughout the school.

At Drayton the Head of Year 7 is designated an Advanced Skills Teacher in transition and extra funds are therefore available to support the transition work. However, the school expects that their transition activities will be scaled down without the Thames Valley Partnership's support because of an apparent lack of funds.

4.5 60 student mentors trained and supported

The Thames Valley Partnership employed a trainer, Nick Luxmoore, to work with peer mentors (or buddies) in three schools in Aylesbury (Sir Henry Floyd, Mandeville and Quarrendon) and one school in Banbury (Drayton). The sessions explored listening skills, what to expect when supporting another pupil and what the trainer described as *'the art of loitering'*. The evaluator attended a workshop facilitated by the trainer one year later for pupils and teachers from two of the schools to review how the mentoring process had gone. 31 children and 4 teachers attended.

Several of the mentors commented that new pupils had not approached them as much as they thought they would, though they felt their presence had been reassuring.

'It was really helpful to meet the new pupils before they started at the school because then when they arrived they waved at us in assembly and then got to know my friends. That was nice.'

Mentors were expected to join Year 7 pupils in tutor groups but some felt that the teachers did not really understand why they were there and just used them to hand out worksheets. The mentors suggested that teachers should be included in future training.

'We're here to chat not to do the teacher's job for them.'

Those attending the review workshop were asked to make recommendations about what should change in the peer-mentoring scheme to improve it in future years. They suggested the following:

- Have a designated room available for mentors to meet with each other and with year 7 pupils
- Have ID badges for mentors
- Spend more time 'loitering' and making yourself available
- Have a rota so that there are always some mentors available
- Do more team building sessions
- Allow mentors to develop into peer mediators
- Spread the system through the whole school (not just for transition)
- Provide refresher training half way through the year
- Visit year 7 classes twice a week
- Publicise the scheme more widely
- Work hard at making relationships
- Help teachers understand the scheme better by including them in training.

Mainstreaming Potential

Sir Henry Floyd intends to use existing buddies to train the next cohort. Quarrendon will do the same but hope to be able to employ a trainer to supplement this. There is a wider point however. The peer mentor scheme is not simply about transition but is more to do with school culture. One interviewee observed that it has the potential to break down barriers across year groups leading to the possibility of *'Year 10 students taking Year 7s seriously...when older boys start to care about younger boys this helps to break down homophobia.'*

For the approach to begin to have this kind of effect it must be *'relentlessly managed'*. Mentor team meetings should be sacrosanct *'with non-attendance leading to sacking...a small committed team is better than a large unwieldy group with no focus.'*

It also needs senior management support so that staff understand that they must take it seriously. As one interviewee observed, if you ask the mentors to take responsibility and then undermine them, it could affect their preparedness to take responsibility for a long time.

There is little doubt that a well-run training event will be a positive experience for those involved and most peer mentors will grow enormously from the experience.

The challenge is to ensure that there is a wider impact on the school as a whole by publicly valuing the process of building and maintaining relationships.

4.6 Welcome Handbook written and produced by students for 200 students transferring to Reading secondary school

The youth and community development worker at the Thames Valley Partnership was invited to work with a group of 15 Year 8 pupils over a total of 8 hours to produce a booklet for incoming Year 7 pupils to Highdown School. Most of these pupils attended a workshop with the evaluator to discuss how they had found the experience. They described how they had divided into groups and selected different topics to research. These ranged from describing clubs to producing a jokes page to advising about how to manage on your first day and what to do about bullying.

They described the best things about the booklet as the map, practical advice and providing pictures of buddies. They also thought the writing style, layout and colour printing helped. They thought there were some things missing from the map (such as the toilets) and would have liked there to be more jokes and puzzles.

In terms of the process of producing the booklet, they enjoyed being in a group with a purpose and the freedom they were given to make decisions about the booklet. They enjoyed being off timetable but regretted missing some of their favourite lessons. They felt they developed their ICT skills and learnt a lot about using photographs even though the process of laying out and copying pictures was frustrating and difficult. They particularly appreciated the approach of the Thames Valley Partnership worker.

'She gave us treats and knew how to get stuff out of us.'

For the future, they felt there should be more in the booklet about how to deal with difficult teachers. They would also like to give more information about buses to school and, perhaps, a list of pupils arriving from different primary schools *'so that you can find people you know more easily.'* They thought the map could be improved and that it was pointless printing the booklet unless it was in colour.

When asked why they thought the booklet was worth doing, they said

'It helps people who are shy...stops you feeling stupid...you can carry it around and refer to it.'

The Year 7 manager described the Thames Valley Partnership's contribution as excellent, referring specifically to the student centred approach, team building process and the way in which the students' sense of responsibility was developed. She also valued the help the Thames Valley Partnership has given in helping to re-launch their homework club and in bringing experience and good practice from elsewhere.

Primary schools are reported to have found the booklet very useful.

Mainstreaming Potential

Highdown School has conducted an audit of all its transition arrangements in preparation for creating a new strategy for transition. Research amongst Year 7s conducted by the school shows that the Welcome booklet rated third in a list of interventions that helped them prepare for coming to the school (after visiting the school and meeting a Highdown teacher in their primary schools). It seems that the school is serious about finding ways of improving transition and sees the Welcome booklet as an intrinsic part of this process. The Thames Valley Partnership will be providing the school with a CD copy of the booklet for them to amend in future years and it is hoped that the school will find the resources to print future copies in colour. The focus of transition is reported to be switching from social to academic concerns and the school is keen to move social transition activity to the end of the summer term (in Year 6) so that students *'hit the ground running'* in the autumn. Three other schools are now being supported by the Thames Valley Partnership to produce Welcome booklets for the summer term 2004. It is to be hoped that the skills acquired by this cohort can be used to train future Year 8 children to edit and update the booklets.

4.7 44 peer mediators and 22 staff trained in 2 Reading primary schools

This work arose from concerns expressed at the transitions inter-agency sub group in Lower Caversham that there was a *'social discrepancy'* between children from the Amersham Road estate and other children from the area which required attention to facilitate greater integration. One interviewee described a cultural problem whereby parents regard the school as an authority figure and behave aggressively towards staff.

'They don't see it as their school and the children copy the parents' behaviour.'

Trainers from the Centre for Restorative Justice in Education were funded by the Thames Valley Partnership to provide training in peer mediation and restorative justice techniques to children, teachers, and Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) in both Thameside and Micklands primary schools. The training was regarded as a great success and enabled participants to develop their listening skills and explore ways of mediating. It seems reasonable to conclude that the training was a very affirming and useful experience for nearly all of those involved. However some concern was expressed that the values and approaches being promoted by the training were not necessarily in line with those of the schools as a whole. Some of the teachers involved in training, for example, struggled to see the relevance or appropriateness of some of the methods that were being promoted. This is partly due to the huge pressure on staff to meet a variety of targets, which are seen as a higher priority, and partly due to the limited follow-up available to support the work after the training and embed it in the schools. One interviewee expressed surprise at how little the training had been used. The risk to the children involved is that the training creates an expectation that a whole school restorative justice approach will be adopted, which the school is unable to deliver. As one interviewee commented:

'I'm not sure peer mediation is sustainable but the training has been helpful in helping to change the culture of the school. We talk about things more. But we have a long way to go and it is a slow process.'

They also noted that concepts such as peer mediation could seem like a luxury when foundations are not in place.

'We need help with the basics such as getting children to school on time and providing an affordable after school club.'

Others argued that a culture that supports peer mediation is a basic.

The transitions inter-agency sub group is investigating ways of bringing the peer mediation skills of primary school children into the secondary school as they move up. Training is being provided to Highdown School staff to help them identify and support peer mediators as they move up.

Mainstreaming Potential

For the work to be made sustainable, it was suggested that

- The head teacher and senior staff should be fully engaged and supportive of the ongoing importance of the work
- A link worker in the school should be given time off timetable to take the work forward (supporting peer mediators and staff) and be rewarded with a scale point.
- A second link worker should also be involved so they can support each other
- A programme is put in place for teachers and children to bring on new teachers and children each year to become involved as peer mediators and link workers
- A borough wide network of support is created via, perhaps, the Behavioural Education Support Team (BEST). A peer mediators conference and network meeting is planned for six Reading primaries in July 2004. This will include 100 pupils and 50 staff.

4.8 Nurturing programme for EBD children in two Banbury primary schools set up in January 2004

The nurturing project was conceived at an inter-agency workshop facilitated by the Thames Valley Partnership in November 2003 in response to concerns about the number of children with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) in Orchard Fields and William Morris primary schools.

'The EBD training day brought agencies together and helped influence the next level up in education.'

The scheme consists of a Teaching Assistant (TA) in each school supported by a designated teacher at Orchard Fields, a home school links worker and some game based skill-building resources. The TAs are able to focus on the child while the Home School Link Worker can focus on the family. Various elements of the scheme are funded for two years by the Thames Valley Partnership, Vodafone, Children's Fund and the LEA.

The schools began by carrying out baseline EBD assessments (known as Boxall profiles) of all children referred by teachers. This enables the schools to measure progress and the effectiveness of interventions.

Although the project has only been up and running since January, teachers were able to cite an example of one boy who would not go into class and was very close to exclusion. Thanks to the efforts of the TA, this child is now attending classes – *'a very successful preventative measure'*.

Another interviewee described a girl in Year 6 who walks out of class several times a week. She now has structured time out for 10 minutes each day with a TA so no longer feels the need to storm out. Outbursts have reduced after only a few days' intervention. A school refuser hanging on to their mother at the school gates is now getting support in the break from a TA and is attending class.

The link to Drayton is eased by the Behavioural Support Teacher who offers personalised transition support for pupils with EBD and by the school's learning centre. Drayton has worked hard to avoid exclusions (just 4 in 2 years) and is reportedly becoming a popular school because there is a real sense of improvement and support is strong. The school spends £73k on attendance and has improved attendance from 84% to 90%. This has helped to raise achievement at Key Stage 3 but not yet at Key Stage 4. As budgets tighten, one interviewee noted that the school may lose its youth worker and attendance worker and will need to concentrate more on core teaching tasks and *'stop covering the work of social services.'*

One interviewee noted that *'most initiatives fail to deliver but this had funding attached so enabled us to make a start.'* They also noted that the Thames Valley Partnership was able to bring time, careful facilitation and *'the capacity to engage strategists on our behalf.'*

Another interviewee noted that Orchard Fields, in particular, has a massive management agenda with termly HMI inspections and the merging of two staff teams. Despite this they have succeeded in reducing the incidence of unacceptable behaviour and, in interviews, children are reported to have expressed their gratitude for what the teachers have done.

'Nurturing is what social inclusion is all about. Nurturing groups are the way forward for individual progress and to stop disrupting others.'

Mainstreaming Potential

The schools are hoping to further develop the nurturing project through additional government funding and are currently working with the LEA on this. One interviewee suggested that the work would probably be mainstreamed because schools now see behaviour management as a way of raising achievement. In any event the project will spend the next two years gathering data to prove effectiveness and hope that not only will the LEA support mainstreaming but will want to use the lessons learnt to roll out similar ways of working across the county. It was suggested that the TAs could be included in mainstream SEN provision.

One interviewee suggested that the links to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services are not yet strong enough. When Orchard Fields moves into a new building in 2006, it will have a nurture room, which will make it easier for outside agencies to work within the school. There is no immediate prospect of William Morris having such a facility.

It was noted that primary schools tend to be drawn to the needs of Years 4, 5 and 6 and that it is essential that they find ways of paying attention to children in nursery and reception classes and involve health agencies more actively.

There is some anxiety that Drayton School's budget deficit will impact on the learning centre, which has proved to be an excellent resource for nurturing children with EBD.

Although one interviewee felt the Thames Valley Partnership should stay involved longer to see the project through, most acknowledged that it had always been clear about its time limited involvement and had worked hard to ensure that mainstreaming of the work would happen.

4.9 Health clinic set up in Banbury

Conceived at the inter-agency workshop in April 2002 the baby clinic was established at the Sunshine Centre with seed funding from the Thames Valley Partnership. The clinic is described as '*thriving*' with around 12 mothers attending each week and providing a broader service to parents and older children as well as babies.

Mainstreaming Potential

This clinic has now become core business for local Health Visitors.

4.10 Teenage parents project (STEP) started and development worker appointed

Funded by the Thames Valley Partnership and Oxfordshire Community Foundation this project is now managed by the Sunshine Centre because the Youth Service was unable to maintain it. The development worker supports young parents on an individual basis to help them access services and further education opportunities.

Mainstreaming Potential

Funding is only secure for 12 months but the Sunshine Centre is optimistic about attracting further funds with the help of the Teenage Pregnancy Coordinator.

4.11 Developing a Family Centre in Aylesbury - joint initiative with the Early Years Team/Sure Start Children's Centre initiative and community groups

The multi agency workshop facilitated by the Thames Valley Partnership provided new impetus to the development of a Family Centre on the estate. Following various attempts to secure a site, a Best Value Review of district council properties

has shown the Jonathan Page Centre (attached to the Community Centre) to be under used. This site provides opportunities for strong links to wider community activities such as the Credit Union, services for elderly people and a range of sporting activities.

This initiative is all about mainstreaming. The Thames Valley Partnership has helped engage the County Council, District Council and Head of Early Years in supporting the development.

'The Partnership added weight to the proposal.'

£200,000 capital has been secured to adapt the building and work is underway to secure revenue funding. The Thames Valley Partnership has committed £20,000 over two years.

Some interviewees were concerned that, because Early Years money is linked to day-care and the Brightstart nursery has moved off the estate, some of the funding may be diverted away from the Family Centre. The PSA target area of Southcourt and Mandeville may also provide competition for the necessary resources. It was suggested that the Thames Valley Partnership should approach the County Council scrutiny committees to secure support for the Family Centre.

However, interviewees report that the relevant portfolio holders in the local authorities are fully engaged with the development.

'They respect and listen to the Thames Valley Partnership. As outsiders, the Partnership can be strategic and unemotional and can help reassure those who are nervous of revenue implications by bringing in business planning expertise and a range of possible revenue contributions.'

'The Partnership keep us on track, challenge silo thinking, help us be more pragmatic and keep our spirits up. We'll miss them.'

The Thames Valley Partnership also introduced the Family Centre working group to the Sunshine Centre in Bretch Hill which one interviewee described as *'inspirational'*.

Some felt it was important for the Thames Valley Partnership to stay involved for longer because the Family Centre development is still at a delicate stage. Others thought the groundwork had been done and the Thames Valley Partnership could safely move on.

'Thanks partly to the Thames Valley Partnership, Quarrendon and Meadowcroft is ahead of the game in terms of a local inter-agency approach but we will need help for longer to get the Family Centre off the ground.'

'It won't fizzle out now as it is embedded.'

4.12 Domestic violence project in schools

Four visits of Theatre ADAD's production of 'Behind Closed Doors' were arranged for three target schools reaching a total of 680 students. Two more performances are booked for May 2004. Although the work of Theatre ADAD is highly regarded, these particular interventions have not been evaluated. Indeed one interviewee noted that the Thames Valley Partnership had presented work on domestic violence as a mode of delivery in its original bid but that the theme did not emerge from its consultation events. Linkage with domestic violence work in the local communities was not made so the theme was never owned by partners in the area and was never really incorporated into the core activity of the Project.

4.13 Other one off pieces of work

- Welcome handbooks based on the work at Highdown school in Reading developing in three other secondary schools in the three areas for the summer transfer 2004.
- Contribution to 'Attendance Matters' project - encouraging poor attenders at target primary schools in Banbury.
- Peer mediators network to be set up in July 2004.
- Road safety packs provided to primary school children in Bretch Hill.
- Book bags and sweatshirts provided to pupils joining the newly launched Orchard Fields Primary School.
- Free internet access via a 'surf-it pod' in Bretch Hill Youth Centre, Amersham Road Community Centre and Quarrendon and Meadowcroft Youth Centre funded by Vodafone.

5. Strategic Impact and Policy Implications

Interviewees were asked to consider the impact of the Project on strategic planning and the development of policy.

5.1 Two tier authorities

All interviewees valued the brokerage that the Thames Valley Partnership has undertaken not only between organisations but also within the larger statutory agencies such as county councils. As the Project has developed, it has begun to have a greater impact on the thinking of the larger strategic bodies.

Interviewees report some success in helping to find common ground between the local authorities by helping to broker joint planning at a senior level for the Family Centre in Quarrendon and Meadowcroft and facilitating the 'bridging' inter-agency group on the estate. They also seem to be succeeding in influencing planning in North Banbury through the new ISS meeting and ongoing involvement in the Cherwell Community Safety Partnership. However, one interviewee noted that impact on PCTs had been negligible.

District councils have responsibility for leading Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships and yet *'they are not measured on early intervention initiatives so it is hard to get them to focus on them'*. One interviewee described early intervention as *'95% county council business – what the district brings is icing on the cake'*. However, another observed that, although community safety as an ambition features in the strategic plans of all local authorities, it is not always a corporately owned priority. Community safety tends to feature highly for district councils but early intervention is sometimes seen as the business of the county. Conversely, the county councils sometimes see community safety as a district responsibility whilst wanting to focus on early intervention. This is a crude generalisation but reflects the views of several interviewees. This presents the Thames Valley Partnership with an obvious and important role given its determination to promote the concept of early intervention as a crucial element of community safety work.

5.2 Introducing Early Intervention to Community Safety and Vice Versa

Reading is a unitary authority, which should offer greater opportunities for joined up planning. The Thames Valley Partnership has had less impact in Reading than in other areas, largely because it has not achieved the same level of service development work so has had less cause to engage the local authority and partly because the work was owned from very early on by Education and Community Services and the Children's Fund at the Borough Council so strategic buy-in has been left to them. However the Thames Valley Partnership has now been invited to address the Children and Young People Strategic Partnership in June 2004.

The Council's community safety agenda is reported to be focussed on crime and disorder reduction, which has led it to be preoccupied with young offenders and anti-social behaviour rather than the development of services for young people.

Community development work in the borough seems to be focussed on the needs of tenants and residents who often see young people as the problem and, because community safety work is police led *'child welfare and child safety gets lost.'*

One interviewee noted that their district council members had traditionally been interested only in crime reduction initiatives such as CCTV but had now been persuaded of the benefits of investing in diversionary activities for young people as well.

'The Partnership takes the longer view but we need a quick return.'

Another noted that they were trying to introduce early intervention to the next Community Safety Strategy but that its inclusion would not have unanimous support locally. This is partly because community safety partnerships tend to prefer narrow targets to broad outcomes. Interviewees had no difficulty in identifying long-term community safety benefits in early intervention work but struggled to be able to offer hard measures to prove that relationship. For example:

'EBD and behaviour management knocks on to impact on crime but there is no direct line... If agencies can work beyond boundaries and adults start to communicate better with each other, it MAY impact on crime.'

The Thames Valley Partnership has been asked to present its findings on the value of early intervention at a meeting of Aylesbury Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.

Given that community safety targets remain largely geared towards enforcement, it is interesting to note that Youth Offending Services and the Youth Inclusion Support Panel are increasingly investing in prevention work. Indeed there seems to be a general recognition that early intervention is crucial but mainstream funding does not support this approach except through new initiatives such as the Children's Centres and the Children's Fund which bring with them complicated 'joining up' strategies.

A Best Value Review of children's services in Reading has included a large survey of children and young people. This will inform the development of a Children and Young People Strategy based on the Reading 'Super Six' priorities for children. The invitation from the Children and Young People Strategic Partnership to present on this Project is therefore very welcome.

5.3 Targeting a community

Central government and local authorities have tended to organise and fund their services generically or by issue (for example housing or elderly services or mental health or disability or education or environmental health). In terms of education and support, services are further sub-divided by age: service development and delivery for early years is completely separate to schools or the youth service. Several interviewees commented on how unhelpful and artificial this separation can be when trying to address the needs of a community. The Single Regeneration Budget was conceived as an attempt to work across these funding silos to foster

regeneration across a geographical patch. However, despite all the talk of 'joined up' work and neighbourhood renewal, interviewees report that geographic targeting has not been mainstreamed. Indeed it seems that community safety agencies are the only ones that have developed ways of, for example, co-mapping educational under-achievement with incidence of crime and anti-social behaviour. One interviewee suggested that county councils tend to see district council areas as 'local' and are unable to gather data or plan service development at the neighbourhood level that is most meaningful to those living there.

Youth Offending Services, Drug Action Teams and Community Safety Partnerships are all trying to combine to offer a local response but the large traditional mainstream services struggle to do so. It is to be hoped that the new council Area Committees will help create a geographic focus but several interviewees noted that there is still no corporate or cross agency commitment to this approach. This may be because it requires agencies and departments to pool budgets without having enough confidence that core business is protected or enhanced. It may also be simply that it is very difficult to do.

Generic service delivery systems can only measure inputs and activity rather than outcomes. Service managers therefore become preoccupied with whether, for example, child protection teams are properly staffed and trained across the county rather than on what range of interventions would make children on a specific estate more safe.

'The challenge for the Partnership is to pull us towards a geographic focus - helping us to make sense of it – giving us a vision and oiling the wheels.'

Even if all relevant agencies could find a way of pooling resources in order to provide more coherent and flexible services to a local community, there is no way of measuring all services against tight targets.

'We need clarity about broad outcomes and a common understanding about the philosophy of community cohesion – core professionalism can be complemented if we can find that common philosophy.'

There is also another fundamental problem:

'Where leadership is from outside the community, the community is not empowered. If the initiative is resource driven and the resource is withdrawn, the initiative fails (for example an LEA behaviour management investment of £100k was withdrawn and behaviour has not improved in the long term).'

Both the interim and final evaluation processes highlighted the value placed by local agencies on the Thames Valley Partnership's community development approach. For targeting of communities to work, service development has to build on existing facilities and be rooted in those communities. Youth services are less able to be involved in community development work as they become more concerned with NEETs (people who are not in education, employment and training). The Children's Fund has employed a development worker in Amersham Road and Aylesbury Vale District Council is employing a community development worker for Quarrendon and

Meadowcroft. The challenge will be to find ways of ensuring that community development work is able to influence and be influenced by service restructuring and development.

5.4 Targeting individuals and their families

If agencies find it hard to organise themselves around the needs of a geographical patch, that is nothing compared to the problem of responding to the needs of an individual. That is not to say that individuals do not receive excellent public services, it is just to observe that they can only usually receive those services if they meet specific criteria such as age or problem. Providers, again tend to be concerned with inputs rather than outcomes so that, for example, they will try and guarantee that a certain amount of support has been offered to young parents rather than that the young parents feel more supported and are better able to look after themselves and their children as a result.

Several interviewees commented on the need to widen the focus of early intervention. Some highlighted vulnerable adults, mothers on low incomes choosing not to work and children aged 11 to 13 as groups that required more attention.

There is growing pressure from government through its 'Narrowing the Justice Gap' initiative to target services at certain individuals. Community Safety Partnerships are being asked by government to identify the 20 most prolific offenders in their area and target resources at them and their families to reduce offending. The Thames Valley Criminal Justice Board is leading a programme to identify and track prolific offenders and the new Criminal Justice Interventions Programme is requiring drug treatment and criminal justice agencies to do the same with prolific offenders using drugs. Oxfordshire is identifying the top 150 'risky' children and offering packages of support funded by the Children's Fund. Reading has a Junior Youth Inclusion Programme and Buckinghamshire has a Youth Inclusion Support Panel.

Meanwhile, educational under achievement is becoming a major preoccupation for schools and LEAs leading to the Aylesbury Town Task Force and the North Banbury ISS.

Interviewees identified a series of measures that would assist effective targeting:

- Joining up the targets: the PCT, for example, is a statutory member of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership from April 2004 but has no community safety targets
- Improving data exchange and information sharing (though it is easier in areas where there is strong inter-agency trust such as those involved in this Project)
- Pooling budgets based on outcomes rather than ring fenced short term pots
- More challenging and rigorous self-assessment processes.

One interviewee suggested that a 'virtual child' model linked to risk factors could be used to better understand what services are and could be in place. More formalised information sharing should also improve how agencies identify, track and refer individuals with ongoing problems.

This highlights the tension between an individually targeted approach and a community development approach.

'Community development is good but dangerous because it can end up landing on community safety agencies but community safety work has to be targeted. The outcomes for community development work are not clear enough and the measure becomes activity again instead of outcomes. (The Thames Valley Partnership) could be offering rigorous work planning to mitigate against an entirely open agenda and help with understanding how to carry out a cost benefit analysis of crime interventions.'

So the Thames Valley Partnership is being asked to support the open agenda of community development work to promote more flexible and personalised services and more rigorous individually targeted interventions with high-risk groups to help tackle crime and anti social behaviour. The challenge is to do both, which requires a combination of broad and narrow approaches.

5.5 An Early Intervention Model

The Thames Valley Partnership set out to develop and test a model suggested by its own research in Never Too Early (Mog Ball and Sara Awan, February 2001). This model is a layered approach offering universal and targeted services based on partnership working. It also intended to help develop data collecting and sharing systems in each locality to assist with tracking and referrals. However, because it was committed to working with the agenda of the agencies operating within the various local communities, it found that creating a system or model that could be easily described was not achievable.

'A community development approach does not allow you to drive anything.'

However the Project has reinforced the basic principle, outlined in Never Too Early and reinforced significantly by Every Child Matters, that the best way to intervene early in order to promote community safety is to create universal access for services with targeted interventions available at critical points.

This principles has been applied throughout the work of the Project and has enabled services to be developed that benefit all members of the community but give space for those with particular needs to receive more focussed attention.

6. Lessons Learnt

The Project has demonstrated:

- It is possible to do a lot with a little money but interviewees observed that it is not possible to do much with no money.
- Strategic buy-in and a willingness to mainstream must be achieved for interventions to be more than short term.
- Interventions must be focussed on a small geographical area and use a community development approach.
- A community development approach prevents the imposition of a model but can still include the promotion of principles.
- The Thames Valley Partnership does not have the resources to invest in long term capacity building in a community so can only work effectively in areas where there is some kind of community based organisation through which it can operate.
- Activity and inputs does not equate to outcomes and it is hard to demonstrate positive impact in such a short period. Impact can only be measured in terms of mainstreaming (ie impact on providers not impact on users).
- Much of the success of the Project is due to the personality of the Thames Valley Partnership and its employees including an ongoing commitment to persisting with the messiness of partnership working. An independent agency operating as honest broker can make a real difference.

7. Way Forward for the Thames Valley Partnership

Despite a general consensus that early intervention and neighbourhood-based services are necessary, interviewees noted that policy trends are contradictory. For example, health provision is becoming less universal as the health visitor role is revisited whereas huge advances are being made in the provision of nursery education.

It seems that pressure is on to deliver against tight agency targets in a policy environment that recommends broader outcome focussed inter-agency work. The two demands are hard to reconcile.

Interviewees clearly see a role for the Thames Valley Partnership in helping to negotiate a way through some of these complexities.

Specifically, the Thames Valley Partnership has an ongoing role in **Banbury** to link the work of the Community Safety Partnership with the ISS meeting to try and ensure that community safety and early intervention initiatives are joined up. In **Lower Caversham** there is potential to explore further the link between transition work, peer mentoring, peer mediation and the development of a whole school ethos. In **Quarrendon and Meadowcroft** there is much still to do to guarantee the development of the Family Centre and, linked to that, the Thames Valley Partnership has a possible role in helping to untangle the complex political structures that exist in order to improve neighbourhood based working.

More generally, the Thames Valley Partnership could revisit the issue of information sharing to facilitate collaborative working with individuals and their families who are known to be vulnerable.

It is neither appropriate nor necessary for the Thames Valley Partnership to be developing new services or continuing to service inter-agency meetings. Instead it should be taking the lessons learnt from this Project and using its brokering resources to go deeper.

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Appendix A Interviewees

Thames Valley Partnership

Sue Raikes	Chief Executive
Patsy Townsend	Director of Youth Programmes
Simone Taylor	Youth and Community Development Worker

Bretch Hill

Brenda Lofthouse	Primary Schools Advisor, Oxfordshire County Council
Eileen Thompson	Class Teacher, Orchard Fields School
Grahame Handley	Chief Executive, Cherwell District Council
Jill Edge	Manager, Sunshine Centre
Maggie Twydell	Headteacher, Orchard Fields School
Nathalie Owen	Behavioural Support Teacher, Oxfordshire County Council
Sally Newman	Headteacher, William Morris School (<i>tel</i>)
Surekha Kamath	Deputy Headteacher (Pupil Support), Drayton School

Lower Caversham

Belinda Hopkins	Transforming Conflict, Centre for Restorative Justice in Education (<i>tel</i>)
Elizabeth Wilson	Year 7 Manager, Highdown School
Hilary Fawcett	Headteacher, Micklands School
John Terry	Planning and Projects Manager, Education and Community Services, Reading Borough Council
Rebecca Little	Family Support Worker, Churches Together in Caversham Youth and Families Initiative (<i>tel</i>)
Richard Stowell	Children's Fund Programme Manager, Reading Borough Council

A workshop with 15 Year 9 pupils who had produced the Highdown School Welcome booklet:

Chris Hampson	Jacob Lang	Danielle Mines	Jenny Wright
Joshua Shires	Jake Whiteway	Charlotte Waite	Rebecca Potter
Jack Guppy	Megan Esslemont	Carl Embrey	Helen Plows
Elizabeth King	Rachel Buckley	Haroon Qureshi	

Quarrendon and Meadowcroft

Geraldine White	Community Safety Manager, Buckinghamshire County Council
Jean Chinery	Community Safety Manager, Aylesbury Vale District Council
Mary Baldwin	Councillor, Buckinghamshire County Council
Nick Luxmoore	Trainer
Patricia Stradling	Community Paediatrician, Vale of Aylesbury PCT
Ros Hill	Project Worker, Parents as First Teachers

A workshop with 31 Year 9/10/11 mentors from Quarrendon School and Sir Henry Floyd School and four of their teachers facilitated by Nick Luxmoore.

Attendees at Way Ahead Seminar on 5th February 2004

Caroline Newbold	Prevention Manager, Oxfordshire Youth Offending Team
Geraldine White	Community Safety Manager, Buckinghamshire County Council
Jeremy Spafford	Facilitator and evaluator
Mike Simm	Head of Community Safety Services, Oxfordshire County Council
Patsy Townsend	Youth Programme Director, Thames Valley Partnership
Richard Stowell	Children's Fund Programme Manager, Reading Borough Council
Simone Taylor	Youth and Community Development Worker, Thames Valley Partnership
Sue Raikes	Chief Executive, Thames Valley Partnership
Tan Lea	Director, Rose Hill and Littlemore Sure Start, Oxford

Appendix B Advisory Group and Board Members for the Project

Early Intervention Project Board Members

Jean Chinery	Aylesbury Vale District Council
Jill Edge	The Sunshine Centre, Banbury
John Paton	Lloyds TSB Foundation
John Terry	Reading Borough Council
Sarah Shillito	The Vodafone UK Foundation

Early Intervention Advisory Group Members

Andrew Thompson	Thames Valley Partnership Associate
Jeremy Spafford	Project Evaluator
Melvyn Davis	Leaving Care Services, Coram Family
Mog Ball	Evaluator, National Sure Start Team
Tan Lea	Rose Hill and Littlemore Sure Start, Oxford

Appendix C Sample Interview Prompts

Thames Valley Partnership Early Intervention Project

Evaluation by Jeremy Spafford

- 1 How would you summarise the activity and scope of the initiative?
- 2 How is this initiative different from others?
- 3 In what way is the initiative contributing to community safety?
- 4 What form does your involvement take? How does the initiative fit within the plans of your organisation?
- 5 To what extent has the initiative contributed to the development of national and local policy?
- 6 To what extent has the initiative influenced strategic planning at a local level?
- 7 To what extent will the projects supported by Thames Valley Partnership be mainstreamed?
- 8 How would you describe the contribution made by Thames Valley Partnership?
(a) What has worked well? (b) What has worked less well?
- 9 Is there a role in the future for the Thames Valley Partnership in the development of early intervention policy, strategy and/or service development?
If so, what should it be?
- 10 Anything else?

Interviews will last a maximum of 60 minutes and will be semi structured leaving opportunities for the interviewee to raise issues of importance to them, which are not covered by these questions. Interviewees will be identified in the appendix of the report but comments and quotations will not be directly attributed. A report will be available in May 2004 and will be the property of the Thames Valley Partnership.

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Appendix D

Abbreviations/Acronyms

ABC	Acceptable Behaviour Contract
ADD	Attention Deficit Disorder
ADHD	Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder
ASBO	Anti Social Behaviour Order
BEST	Behavioural Education Support Team
BIP	Behaviour Improvement Programme
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CAP	Quarrendon and Meadowcroft Community Action Partnership
CD	Compact Disc
CDRP or CSP	Crime and Disorder Reduction or Community Safety Partnership
CJB	Criminal Justice Board
CJIP	Criminal Justice Interventions Programme
CPA	Comprehensive Performance Assessment
DAT/DAAT	Drug Action Team/Drug and Alcohol Action Team
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
EAZ	Education Action Zone
EBD	Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties
GP	General Practitioner
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IRT	Identification, Referral and Tracking
ISB	Invest to Save Budget
ISS	Integrated Support Services
LEA	Local Education Authority
LSA	Learning Support Assistant
NEETS	Not in Education Employment or Training
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
PAFT	Parents As First Teachers
PAYP	Positive Activities for Young People
PCT	Primary Care Trust
PSA	Public Service Agreement
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SRB	Single Regeneration Budget
TA	Teaching Assistant
YISP	Youth Inclusion Support Panel
YOS	Youth Offending Services
YOT	Youth Offending Team
£1k	£1,000

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The Equitable Charitable Trust



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