

POLICY • RESEARCH



**The Evaluation of Four  
Early Intervention Substance Misuse Projects**

**Part 2: Baseline and Intervention Data**

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**Policy Research Bureau**

**Final Report to  
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham Health Authority  
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Laura Brazier and Deborah Ghate

Policy Research Bureau  
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## Section 1: Introduction

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### Background to the evaluation

In 1998, the Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham Substance Misuse Joint Commissioning Group commissioned four early intervention projects. These projects were aimed at intervening to reduce substance misuse amongst vulnerable young people in South London. The Policy Research Bureau was commissioned to carry out an evaluation of the implementation process and the effectiveness of the projects, over a two year period, from September 1999 to September 2001. This report is the second part of two reports of the findings of the evaluation<sup>1</sup>. For information on how to obtain further copies of this report, contact [admin@prb.org.uk](mailto:admin@prb.org.uk).

### Policy context of the Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham projects

Since 1998, a central aim of the government's ten year strategy for tackling drugs has been: *'to help young people resist drug misuse in order to achieve their full potential in society'* (The Stationery Office, 1998). National strategic long-term targets, to be met by 2008, include the substantial reduction of young people under twenty five years of age reporting use of illegal drugs, and in particular, halving the proportion of young people using heroin and cocaine. In the short-term, by 2002, the Government aims to reduce by twenty per cent the number of 11 to 16 year olds who use Class 'A' drugs (drugs such as heroin and cocaine; Home Office, 2000).

As a means of achieving these targets, emphasis has been placed in particular on early intervention and prevention with high-risk groups, including: *'children and young people who are looked after by local authorities, those who truant or <sup>2</sup>who have been excluded from school, those with drug-using parents, and those working in the sex industry or who are homeless'* (Home Office, 2000). Thus, the four projects funded by Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham Health Authority were aimed at clients identified as central to the government's early intervention strategy.

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<sup>1</sup> The first report, *The evaluation of four early intervention substance misuse projects - Part One: The Process Evaluation* (Patricia Moran, Policy Research Bureau, 2001) will be available shortly; for further details contact [admin@prb.org.uk](mailto:admin@prb.org.uk).

## **The Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham early intervention projects**

To respond to these wider policy issues and local needs within South London, four early intervention substance misuse projects were set up across the three boroughs. The four projects targeted high-risk client groups in different contexts, and each is outlined below. (A fuller description of the four projects is given in our Part One report).

### **1. Lewisham Youth Offending Team substance misuse intervention**

The first of the four projects focused on young offenders, and involved funding a substance misuse worker to be based within the multidisciplinary Youth Offending Team (Yot) at Lewisham.

### **2. Ashby Road therapy service (ARTService) for children of substance-misusing parents, Lewisham**

The second project involved a drama therapist working with the children of substance-misusing parents or carers. It was based within in a statutory adolescent mental health team in Lewisham, sharing the same building as the Yot.

### **3. Southwark 'In-reach' project**

The third project targeted vulnerable young people excluded from school or at risk of school exclusion. The intervention took place in schools, but was run from an office in Southwark's education services resource centre in Peckham. The project employed two project workers and a part-time manager.

### **4. Lambeth Outreach project**

The fourth project was an outreach project based within the Youth Service in Lambeth, and targeted socially excluded young people including homeless young people and young sex workers. It was run from an office base shared with the 'Smart' drug agency in Streatham (a branch of Mainliners drug agency for adults), and employed two sessional outreach youth workers and a project manager.

## **Aims, objectives and structure of this report**

As described in the Part One report, it was necessary to adopt a very fluid, flexible approach to the evaluation. The projects were just starting up as the evaluation got underway, and firm decisions were still to be made within the

projects about the nature of the interventions and the outcomes that were expected. There were also considerable delays in establishing the projects. Whilst any new intervention or service requires time to establish itself and build a client base, and this was recognised in the initial planning of the research, it is fair to say that the delays encountered by the four early intervention projects were considerably longer than were anticipated at the outset. This had a knock-on effect for the evaluation, and is reflected in the two reports that have been prepared. In our Part One report, the results of the *process* evaluation, we focused on whether it was possible to implement the projects as planned. The first eighteen months of the lives of all four projects were described, recording the challenges they faced in establishing themselves and the perceptions of both the service providers and users. This largely qualitative analysis provided a full analysis of the context of the projects' development, an account of the implementation process, and some learning points for future practice. As will be noted from that report, until relatively late into the two year evaluation period, only two of the four projects, **Lewisham Youth Offending Team substance misuse intervention** (henceforth referred to in the report as '**Lewisham Yot SMI**'), and the **Therapy service for children of substance-misusing parents in Lewisham** ('**ARTService**') had sufficient numbers of young people and felt sufficiently far advanced in terms of service delivery to make any kind of further evaluation possible. The current report, Part Two, therefore aims to provide descriptive baseline and some intervention data taken from these two services only. It provides a profile of the clients using the services and some information about those who received an intervention. The data on which the Part Two report are based are mostly quantitative data and were collected not direct from the young people but from the project workers during the course of their standard assessment and intervention work with the young people. To the extent that we were able to collect staff perceptions of how young people had responded to the services, we have some data that touch on outcomes. However, for reasons further explored Section Two of the report (Methodology), the analyses presented here should be regarded mostly as a descriptive study of the characteristics of the young people accessing the services in their first few months of operation, and not as an 'impact' evaluation.

The report first examines the Lewisham Youth Offending Team Substance Misuse Intervention before moving on to look at the ARTService therapy for children of substance misusing parents. We chose to treat the two projects separately for the purposes of analysis due to the very different nature of the interventions provided by each service, and also because of differences between the two client groups in terms of the characteristics of the young people; issues that we pick up later in the report.

For each service, therefore, the reports documents findings as following:

- A quantitative 'baseline' description of young people who were referred to or assessed for the service in terms of their demographic characteristics (sex, age, ethnicity, living arrangements etc.)
- Baseline data on staff perceptions of levels of need and presenting problems, including the extent and chronicity of young people's substance use and misuse
- Information on the referral process
- Information about the intervention including young people's perceived willingness to participate in the interventions, the amount of contact they had with the service, the form of the intervention and the extent to which staff thought the interventions had had any benefits for young people.
- Points for discussion arising from the analyses and some overall conclusions.

## **Section 2: Methodology of the evaluation**

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This chapter describes the methods used to collect the data from both the Lewisham Youth Offending Team substance misuse intervention (Yot SMI) and the ARTService therapist for children of substance misusing parents.

### **The original research design and the eventual data collection exercise**

The original research design as laid out in the research proposal anticipated the collection of outcome or impact data as well as process and implementation information, using methods that required data from both projects' workers and the young people participating in the projects. Data collection was planned to take place from Spring 2000, over a one year period. To measure the context in which the work took place, the research team planned to ask workers to provide baseline data on all young people with whom the projects had contact (for example, reasons for referral, presenting problems etc). To assess the impact of the projects, the team planned to assist the projects themselves to organise quantitative data collection direct from the young people, as well as independently to conduct a range of qualitative (in-depth) interviews with young people. Critically, our research design incorporated a 'before' and 'after intervention' model that intended to measure change in specific areas of need and risk.

However, for reasons explored in detail in our Part One report, the feasibility of assessing the effectiveness of the projects in this way diminished over time. Projects were delayed in getting started, there was a lack of clarity about how many young people were eligible to be included in the evaluation, and the projects themselves felt unable to cope with the demands of participating in and helping facilitate data collection until comparatively late in the overall two year timetable. Some of these issues are familiar ones, routinely faced by projects and evaluators in this field (see for example Ghate 2001); however, from the point of view of the evaluation (and indeed for the projects) the magnitude of the problems for this study was perhaps greater than might have been hoped. In the event, therefore, data collection did not actually commence until autumn 2000<sup>3</sup>, and then only in two projects and in a much reduced form from that originally anticipated. The eventual dataset, therefore, provides what is predominantly a 'baseline' analysis of client characteristics and need in the two services. Some element of the 'before' and 'after' design was also retained, however, by

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<sup>3</sup> Some data for Lewisham Yot was however 'backdated' (entered into the data collection tools retrospectively) to around April 2000, so the sample includes young people referred over the course of one year.



administering questionnaires at the point of entry to and exit from the projects (referred to as Time One and Time Two later in this report) and this enables us to make some comments about the interventions themselves, though numbers in the 'after' groups were small and analysis is limited by this. However, the data do not give us much to go on in terms of assessing the 'impact' or effectiveness of the projects, and further research, once the projects have bedded down more thoroughly, will be necessary before impact can be commented upon.

## **The sample**

Data were recorded by project staff about young people referred to their service from around April 2000 to March 2001 in Lewisham and from October 2000 to March 2001 in ARTService. The sample were defined and identified by project staff, and the research team at PRB had no independent access to information about the sample. The information in this report thus gives a brief snapshot of this six month period in the projects' lives.

### **Lewisham Yot SMI**

In total, 110 Time One questionnaires were completed for the young people referred to the Lewisham Yot SMI. Of these 110 young people (the '*referral group*'), ninety six (87%) went on to meet with the worker for an initial assessment or introductory session (the '*baseline group*'). During this meeting, young people's needs and circumstances were assessed and there was a brief discussion on drugs education issues including aspects of harm minimisation. Resulting from this initial assessment/introductory session, twenty one of the 96 young people (22% of those assessed; 19% of all the initial referrals) were judged by the worker to have drug use behaviours that were impacting upon their social functioning or health, and went onto receive a further intervention (the '*intervention group*'). Thus, Time Two data are available for 21 young people who attended this service during the data collection period.

### **ARTService**

In total forty Time One questionnaires were completed for the young people referred to ARTService (the '*referral group*'). Of these young people, twenty (half, or 50%) went onto meet with the worker for an initial assessment/introductory session (the '*baseline group*'). Subsequently, fifteen of the 20 young people went onto receive a further intervention – three quarters or 75% of those assessed, or 38% of those initially referred (the '*intervention group*'). Accordingly, 15 Time Two questionnaires were completed by workers for those young people who completed an intervention at ARTService. See Table 2.1.

<b>Table 2.1 Summary of the sample – numbers of young people in different groups in the two services</b>			
	<b>Referral Group (all referred to project)</b>	<b>Baseline Group (had introductory or assessment session)</b>	<b>Intervention group (attended beyond introductory session)</b>
<b>Lewisham Yot SMI</b>	110	96	21
<b>ARTService</b>	40	20	15

## **Data collection**

After meeting with the research team, the project staff agreed to complete simple, structured questionnaires designed by PRB to collect basic about young people at the point of referral to the service ('Time One'). These data can be viewed as providing '*referral/baseline*' information about the nature of the client group for the two projects, their needs, and how they came to be referred to the service. For a sub-group of those young people who went on to access the service for any length of time beyond an initial assessment session, staff also recorded information on a separate questionnaire at the end of the client's contact with the service ('Time Two'). These data can be viewed as providing '*intervention*' information, such as the specific characteristics of those young people who went on to some deeper level of engagement with the service, what kind of service was delivered, and how staff felt young people responded to the intervention.

Even though the actual data collected were, in the end, only forthcoming from two of the four interventions, the questionnaires were originally designed to be used in all four projects. Note that all data in the analyses that follow originate from project workers, who filled in the questionnaires about young people on the basis of information already known to them, or collected as part of their screening and assessment processes. We were not able to collect any data direct from young people themselves. Copies of the Time One and Time Two questionnaires are appended to this report. The content of the questionnaires is outlined in Box 2.2.

## **Box 2.2 The questionnaires: outline of structure**

<b>Time One questionnaire</b>
<b>Referral Groups</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Demographic information Age, sex, ethnicity, living circumstances etc</li><li>• Recent (last 12 months) and current (last 4 weeks) drug use. Checklist of substances thought to be used in reference period</li><li>• Referral details Referral date, source, reasons, outcome, Further referrals</li></ul>
<b>Baseline Groups</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Attitudes to taking part, point in judicial process (Yot) only.</li><li>• Substance misuse issues (overall perception and significant areas of concern)</li><li>• Parental substance misuse (ARTS only)</li></ul>
<b>Time Two questionnaire</b>
<b>Intervention Groups</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Attendance and compliance Start and completion dates, attendance and 'compliance' rates, Duration and total hours of contact, Reasons for non-completion</li><li>• The Intervention Form (group vs. one to one), content/activities Problems addressed and helped Perception of satisfaction with service and benefit to young people</li><li>• Referral onwards</li></ul>

## **Analysis of the data**

Questionnaires, identified only by a unique individual serial number allocated by the project, were returned to PRB for data entry and analysis. The data were entered on to SPSS for Windows for analysis. The small numbers involved mean that we have in general restricted the analysis to descriptive measures, especially as regards the intervention groups in each service.

## **Limitations to the data**

The first caveat to bear in mind when reading this report is that the data are based entirely on the workers' knowledge and reports of the young people with whom they came into contact. As such, the information presented reflects what we may think of as expert opinion, but may not always be factually

comprehensive or accurate. For example, data on young people's substance use and misuse represents the situation as far as workers were aware or able to ascertain. It is of course possible that workers did not have 'the full story' in relation to issues like these. Young people may have been reluctant to reveal the full extent of their drug or alcohol use, for example. Whilst this type of data provides a valuable picture of the young people and is an indication of the key issues, caution must be exercised when drawing firm conclusions.

Second, the final data set (especially at Time Two for both services, and at both points in time within ARTService) contains relatively small numbers of cases. As such the data is limited to a descriptive analysis, because of issues of 'statistical power' (that is, that with small numbers it is often not possible to ascertain whether perceived differences within the sample are 'real' or merely an artefact of other differences – including random ones - within the groups being compared). Thus, it was not possible to use comparative statistical techniques to ascertain why some young people went onto to receive an intervention but others did not, for example, nor to draw more than the broadest conclusions about the comparative workings of the two different services.

Third, and perhaps most important, the findings of the evaluation were not, in the end, sufficient to allow us to draw conclusions about the impact of the interventions in terms of their key objectives: to prevent substance misuse by young people in Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham. To do this, we would have needed larger numbers in the Time Two samples, and to have collected more detailed data direct from young people themselves as well as from workers.

### **Data presentation conventions**

All figures in the report have been rounded to the nearest whole number. Figures in tables may not add up to the base due to rounding or because response categories are not discrete.

For all tables and figures in this report, where base numbers are small (for example, in the ARTService groups) we have given numbers of cases rather than proportions of the sample expressed as percentages. Bases (numbers of cases included in the tables and figures) on which analyses are based are given underneath all tables or figures.

## **Section 3: Lewisham Youth Offending Team’s Substance Misuse Intervention**

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In this section we describe worker reports of the characteristics of the young people referred to and assessed by the Lewisham Youth Offending Teams’ Substance Misuse Intervention (Lewisham Yot SMI), and the experiences of those who went on to participate in the intervention. As described in the introduction and in detail in our Part One report, this early intervention substance misuse project is based within Lewisham Yot. It aims to focus on young people in the age range of ten to seventeen years old who are at risk of offending, or who are already involved in offending behaviour.

### **Referral to the project**

#### **Referral Source**

In total 110 young people were recorded by the worker as having been referred to the Lewisham Yot SMI project. Another Yot officer was the primary source of referrals with 89 of the young people (81%) coming via that route. 15 of the young people (14%) were referred by the police. Only three of the clients (3%) came directly from the substance misuse worker within the Yot<sup>4</sup>. There were no referrals reported as having been come through social services, school or pupil referral unit (via teaching staff), education social work service, health services (e.g. GP, child and adolescent mental health services, school nurse), or via the local youth service. No young people self-referred or were referred by friends. See Table 3.1 below.

<b>Table 3.1 Referral routes to the Lewisham Yot SMI</b>	
<b>Referral Agencies</b>	<b>Number and Percentage (%)</b>
Other Yot officer	89 (81%)
Police	15 (14%)
Yot substance misuse worker	3 (3%)
Voluntary agency	2 (2%)
Other	1 (1%)

Base = 110 (All in Referral Group)

Although none of the referrals received were rejected by workers as ‘inappropriate’ for the intervention, fourteen young people were not seen for an initial assessment or introductory session. Of these fourteen young people, three

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<sup>4</sup> These young people were seen by the worker on a one-to-one basis.

said they did not wish to participate so the referral was not pursued. In the case of the other eleven clients, (10%) workers stated 'other reasons'. These included the '*Client did not attend*' and '*Client absconded*', for example.

Thus, ninety six young people were included in the evaluation as the Baseline Group, and went on to have an initial assessment or introductory session at which more detailed information was collected. For those 96 young people workers were asked a further question about referral, relating to their position in the judicial process. Almost three quarters (72%) of the Baseline Group young people were referred post-sentencing. Eight young people (7%) were referred after leaving custody. Five clients (5%) were referred at Final Warning stage and two clients (2%) were referred before they attended court. See Table 3.2 below.

	<b>Number and Percentage (%)</b>
Post-sentence	79 (82%)
Post-custody release	8 (7%)
Final Warning	5 (5%)
Pre-court	2 (2%)
Not stated/unknown	2 (2%)

Base = 96 (All in Baseline Group)

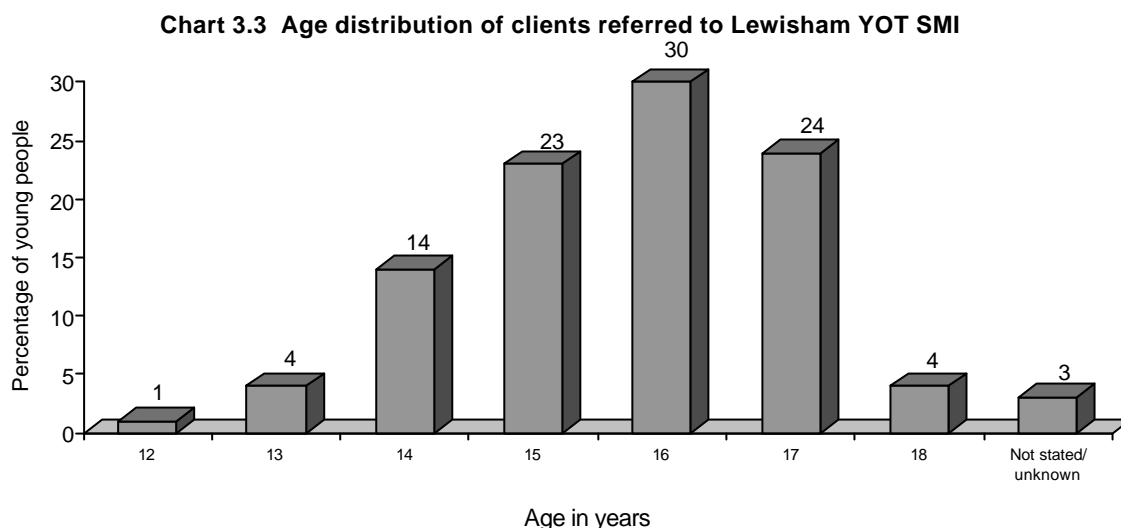
As well as specifying the referral route, an open response question was included to give workers the opportunity to specify the reason(s) why the client was referred to them. As might be expected, a common reason for the referral was screening the young person for substance misuse issues, particularly in relation to offending behaviour. Thus for example reasons included '*because of behaviour whilst under the influence of alcohol*'; '*cautioned – offended whilst drunk and admitted to cannabis use*'; '*final warning – highlighted excessive alcohol use in one incident*' and '*because of excessive drug use and offending behaviour*'. In some cases the young person themselves expressed concern about their substance misuse and wanted '*support in stopping crack*, or '*to stop using cannabis and cigarettes*'. In one case addition, a substance misuse assessment was used to inform a pre-sentence report and to determine an appropriate intervention.

## **Profile of the young people referred**

### **Sex and age**

Most of the sample were male. Of the 110 young people that were referred to the Lewisham Yot SMI, 90% were male and 11% were female. The mean age of

young people was fifteen to sixteen and ages ranged from twelve to eighteen. See Chart 3.3:



Base = 110 (all in Referral Group)

Note: Missing data for 3 young people. However, 2 are assumed to be 16 or below based on educational status and 1 is assumed to be post-16 based on occupational status

## Ethnicity

Workers were asked to describe which ethnic group best described the young people. The largest ethnic grouping (64%, n= 70), with just under two thirds of the sample, was white. Just over a quarter of the sample were described as black (26%, n= 29). Nine young people (8%) were described as mixed race. Only one client was described as Asian, see Table 3.4.

<b>Table 3.4 Ethnicity of young people referred to Lewisham Yot SMI</b>	
<b>Ethnic Group</b>	<b>Number and Percentage (%)</b>
White	70 (64%)
Black	29 (26%)
Asian	1 (1%)
Mixed	9 (8%)
Not stated	1 (1%)

Base = 110 (all in Referral Group)

## Current living situation

Workers were asked to describe the young person's current living situation, as far as they were aware. Living at home with parent(s) or step-parent(s) best described most of the young peoples' situations, with 74% of the sample falling into this category. However there was a range of situations reported, from living with other (non-parental) family members (4%) or alone / with friends (peers) (2%), to being looked after by the local authority in foster care (3%) or another residential setting (2%), see Table 3.5.

<b>Table 3.5 Living situation of young people referred to Lewisham Yot SMI</b>	
<b>Current Living Situation</b>	<b>Number and Percentage (%)</b>
Living at home with parent(s) or step-parent(s)	81 (74%)
Living with other family member(s)	4 (4%)
Living alone / with friends (peers)	2 (2%)
Living in foster care	3 (3%)
Living in other residential care (e.g. children's home)	2 (2%)
Other	4 (4%)
Not stated/unknown	14 (13%)

Base = 110 (all in Referral Group)

## Educational Status

If the young person was of statutory school age (16 or below, n=79), workers were asked to describe their current educational status. For just under half the sample (49%), the worker did not know the young person's current education status. Only nine young people (8%) were reported to be currently in mainstream school and four of the young people (4%) were at a Pupil Referral Unit or other alternative provision. Eleven of the young people (10%) were out of school with no alternative provision. See Table 3.6.

<b>Table 3.6 Educational status of young people 16 or below referred to Lewisham Yot SMI</b>	
<b>Educational status</b>	<b>Number and Percentage (%)</b>
Out of school (with no alternative provision)	11 (10%)
Mainstream school	9 (8%)
Pupil Referral Unit or other alternative provision	4 (4%)
Other situation	1 (1%)
Not stated/Unknown	54 (49%)

Base = 79 (all young people aged 16 or below)



## Activity or Occupational Status

If the young person was over statutory school age (over 16, n=31), workers were asked about their current activity or occupational status. Workers were unsure of the status of eleven of the clients (36% of the sample), but of the rest, three young people (10%) had gone on to continue their education in sixth form or a further education college full or part time, four of the young people (13%) were in paid employment, and twelve were unemployed. See Table 3.7.

Table 3.7 Activity/ Occupational status of young people aged 17 or more referred to Lewisham Yot SMI	
Educational status	Numbers
Unemployed	12
Working full or part time	4
Sixth form college full or part time	3
On a training course part time	1
Not stated/unknown	11

Base = 31 (all young people aged 17 or above)

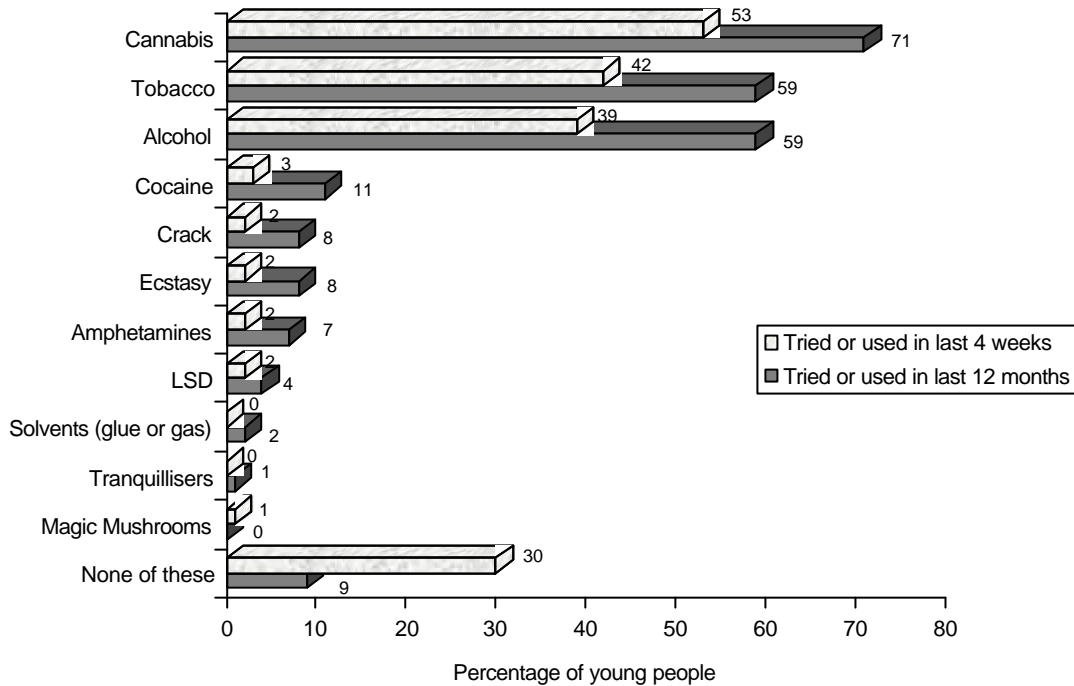
## Young people's reported patterns of substance use at referral

Based on the worker's reports of the young peoples' behaviour, a description of Lewisham Yot SMI clients' substance misuse – as ascertained by workers at the time of first referral to the project - is presented in Chart 3.8. Workers were asked to indicate which substances (including tobacco and alcohol as well as illegal substances) they believed their client had tried or used, both '*currently*' (in the last 4 weeks) and '*recently*' (in the last 12 months). Cannabis, tobacco and alcohol were indicated by workers to be the 'top three' substances they believed the young people had used, both currently and recently. Cannabis came top for both time frames, followed by tobacco and alcohol (and note of course that at least some of the young people were of legal age to use alcohol and cigarettes).

Over half of the young people who were referred were thought to have taken cannabis in the last four weeks, and around one in ten were thought to have used cocaine, crack or ecstasy in the past year. Workers did not perceive any of the young people to be misusing heroin, and estimated relatively low levels of use of drugs such as cocaine, crack, ecstasy, amphetamines and LSD in the very recent past (which provides a proxy indicator of frequent, habitual use). Thus - and though of course misuse of any substance, legal or otherwise, may be problematic depending on the circumstances and level of use - in general the picture from the referral group data is mainly of 'lower level' substance use,

whether judged in terms of the type of substances involved, or their reported frequency of use.

**Chart 3.8 Recent and current substance (mis)use by young people referred to Lewisham YOT SMI**



Base = 110 (all in Referral Group). A young person could have tried or used more than one substance.

## The initial assessment or introductory session

For the ninety six young people whose referral to the project led on to an introductory or assessment meeting with a worker at the project, workers provided some further information about the nature of this 'baseline' client group in terms of issues of concern, and attitudes to the service itself.

### General client problems

If the young person attended an initial assessment or introductory session, the worker was asked what they regarded to be the most significant areas of concern for each young person. A wide range of concerns was raised. In line with the context of the project (based within a youth offending team), *offending behaviour* emerged as the worker's most frequent concern for just under a third (32%) of the young people. *Drug use* was the second most frequent significant area of

concern for workers, for just over a fifth (21%) of the sample. Other areas of concern, detailed in Table 3.9 below, ranged from *health concerns* (both physical and emotional) to *problems with life and social circumstances* (education, training and accommodation living arrangements). In total, though half the group (53%) were reported as having no significant problems, one third (33%) were reported to have two or more different problems by workers, and twenty young people had four or more problems.

<b>Table 3.9 Significant areas of concern in relation to young people at Lewisham Yot SMI</b>	
	<b>Number and Percentage (%)</b>
Offending behaviour	35 (32%)
Drug use (including frequency, quantity or type of drug)	23 (21%)
Problems with education / training / work / unemployment	19 (17%)
Coping with family problems	19 (17%)
Attitude towards drug use (e.g. client doesn't think s/he has a problem)	14 (13%)
Coping with relationship problems	13 (12%)
Unsafe drug use	12 (11%)
Emotional / psychological problems	10 (9%)
Problems with accommodation / living arrangements	9 (8%)
Poor physical health	9 (8%)
Sexual behaviour (including unsafe sex)	2 (2%)
Other problems	2 (2%)
(None of these)	58 (53%)

Base = 96 (All young people in the Baseline Group). Workers could name more than one areas of significant concern.

### **Perception of the extent of drugs-related problems in the baseline group**

If the young person attended an initial assessment or introductory session, workers reported their overall understanding of the clients' drug use. In around a third of cases, the worker thought that the young person was probably not using drugs at all. A fifth of the young people were perceived as using drugs but without appearing to have any associated problems, and in almost a quarter of cases (23%), the worker perceived the client to be using drugs but having 'minor' problems as a result. In only 14% of the cases did the worker perceive 'significant' problems as a result of using drugs, further supporting the general picture of 'lower level' substance misuse presented in Chart 3.8. See Table 3.10.

	<b>Number and Percentage (%)</b>
<i>Young person is probably not using drugs</i>	35 (32%) <sup>5</sup>
Young person is using drugs but does not appear to have associated problems	20 (18%)
Young person is using drugs and has minor problems as a result	25 (23%)
Young person is using drugs and has significant problems as a result	15 (14%)
Not stated/unknown	1 (1%)

Base = 96 (All young people in the Baseline Group)

### **Drug use and offending behaviour**

The last question in relation to drug issues, the Yot substance misuse worker was asked if the young person could 'see a link' between their offending behaviour and substance misuse. For those young people who were thought to be misusing drugs (n = 60), the worker estimated that around half (31 out of 60) could see a link.

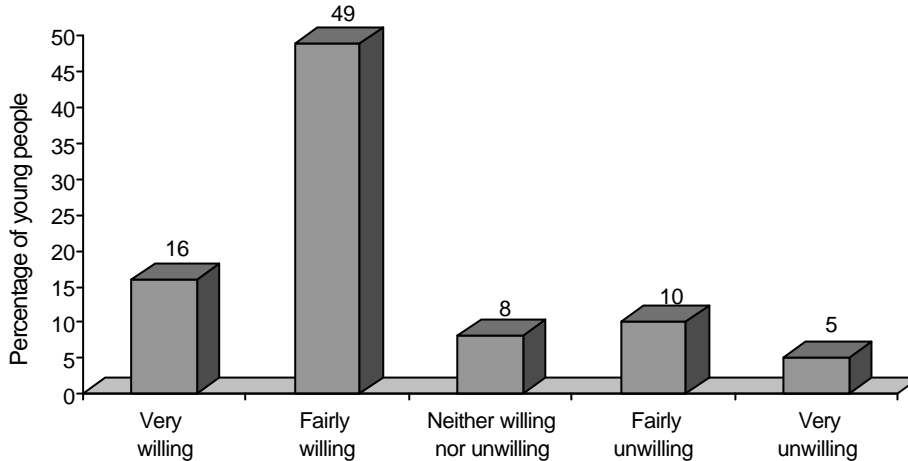
### **Attitudes towards the service: willingness to take part and amount of contact**

Workers were asked how willing young people in the baseline group appeared to be to take part in the intervention. Just under half the young people were reported to be *fairly willing* to take part in the intervention. The other half of the young people ranged from *very willing* to *neutral* to *very unwilling*, see Chart 3.11 for details.

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<sup>5</sup> Note the slight increase in numbers here from Table 3.8, which may reflect workers' changing perception of the young people over time.

**Chart 3.11 Clients' willingness to take part in the service/intervention at Lewisham YOT SMI**



Base = 96 (All young people in the Baseline Group)

## **The Intervention**

Twenty one young people were judged by the workers to have substance misuse problems of sufficient magnitude for them to warrant receiving a further intervention beyond the initial assessment or introductory session. For these young people, the workers were asked to complete a second ('Time Two') questionnaire at the end of their contact with the young person. The second questionnaire focused on both the practical details of the intervention such as amount of contact, and also asked some questions about the workers' perception of the impact of the intervention.

### **Amount of contact**

A range of questions about the young people's amount of contact with the service was asked, see Table 3.12 for details.

First, workers were asked to record the duration of contact with the young people involved (i.e. the number of weeks elapsed between referral to departure). This ranged across the group as a whole from one to twenty four. The mean average number of weeks clients was in contact with the project was eight.

In terms of the recommended or expected length of the intervention in terms of the number of sessions a young person was expected to attend, this varied from one to fifteen, though the average number of planned sessions was six. However in practice although workers estimated the number of sessions the young people ought ideally to attend, the mean number sessions the young people *actually attended* was less than this. Actual attendance ranged from one session to eleven, but the mean number of sessions that young people in the Intervention Group actually took part in was four. Similarly, the total number of client contact hours ranged from one to eleven hours, and the mean number of total contact hours with the service was also four.

<b>Table 3.12 Amount of client contact at Lewisham Yot SMI</b>		
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Range</b>
Number of weeks clients attended the intervention/service	8	1 to 24
Number of sessions the client <i>should</i> have attended	6	1 to 15
Number of sessions that the client <i>actually</i> attended or took part in.	4	1 to 11
Number of hours contact the client had with the service.	4	1 to 11

Base = 21 (All young people in the Intervention Group)

Only five young people attended all the session they were supposed to. Sixteen failed to attend all the sessions, with reasons given by workers ranging from 'joined part way through the course' (n = 13); 'missed odd sessions' (n = 12); and 'didn't finish the course' (n = 7).

### **Methods of delivery and content of the intervention**

Workers were also asked how the intervention was delivered to the client. All young people had one-to-one sessions with the worker; six also took part in a group intervention.

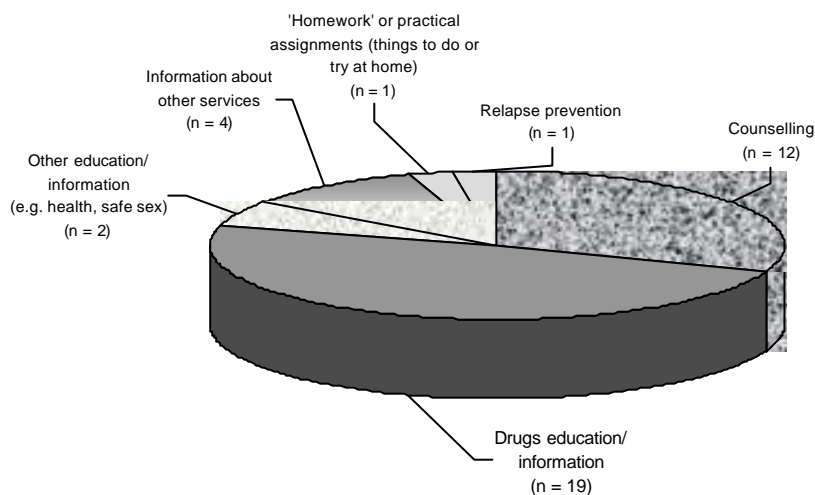
<b>Table 3.13 Methods of delivering the intervention at Lewisham Yot SMI</b>	
<b>Types of session(s)</b>	<b>Number</b>
One to one session(s) only	15
One-to-one sessions and group work	6

Base = 21 (All young people in the Intervention Group)

In addition to the method of delivery of the intervention, workers were asked about the nature of the intervention, and the sorts of activities undertaken with

the young people during the sessions. There was no standard format or model for intervention, and workers commented that the specific nature of the sessions depended on the background of the worker and the young persons needs. The most common activity was *providing the young person with drugs education or information*. For 19 out of 21 clients this was the case. Twelve clients received more focussed session of *counselling*. Four clients received *information about other services* and two clients received *other education or information*. For one client, sessions were specifically focussed on *relapse prevention*. One client was given homework or practical assignments to work on outside the sessions. See Chart 3.14.

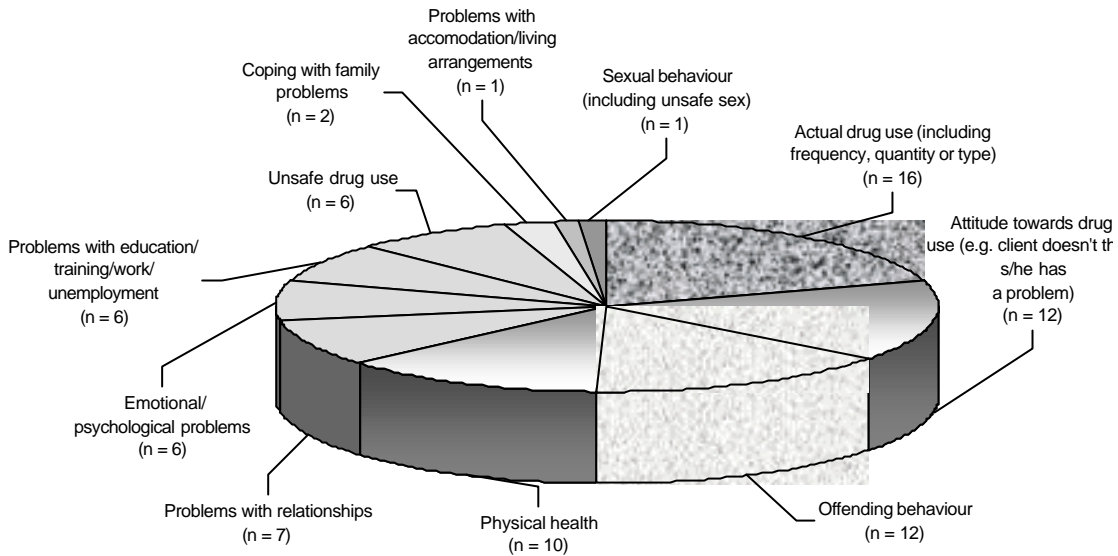
**Chart 3.14 Content of the sessions at Lewisham YOT SMI**



Base = 21 (All young people in the Intervention Group). A young person could receive more than one type of intervention.

As well as indicating the types of activities undertaken with the young people, workers were asked to indicate the range of specific issues addressed during sessions, using the same list discussed earlier to indicate areas of significant concern. A range of issues were addressed including *offending behaviour, actual and attitudes to drug use, health problems, unsafe drug use, life circumstance and social problems* (such as education and living arrangements). The major areas addressed with the young people seemed to focus directly on substance misuse, and actual drug use, including the frequency, quantity or type of drug was addressed with just over three quarters of the group. Furthermore, attitudes towards drug use were addressed with over half of the young people. See Chart 3.15 for details.

**Chart 3.15 Areas addressed with the client during the intervention at Lewisham YOT SMI**



Base = 21 (All young people in the Intervention Group). More than one area could be addressed with a young person.

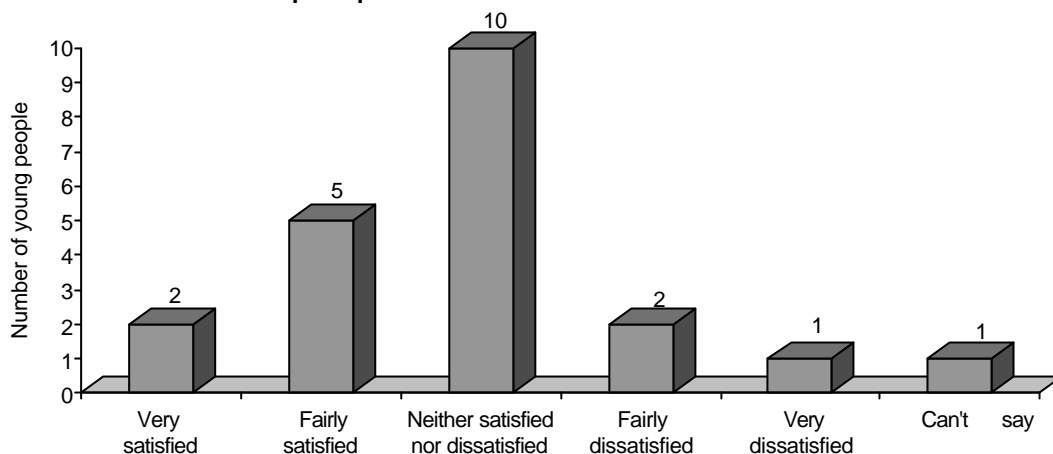
### **Impact of the intervention: worker's assessment**

As we have said earlier, we do not have sufficient data to comment on the effectiveness of the intervention in terms of changing young people's behaviour or attitudes in relation to substance misuse. However, some general questions about the results of the intervention in relation to young people in very broad terms were included in the second questionnaire that the workers completed for the Intervention Group. We do, therefore, have some data on the workers' assessment of the way in which young people responded to the intervention.

At the end of the intervention workers were asked to describe the client's satisfaction with the service on a scale from *very satisfied* to *very dissatisfied*. Around one third were reported to be satisfied, and a small number (three individuals) were dissatisfied. Workers rated just under half (48%) of the young people as *neutral (neither satisfied nor dissatisfied)*. See Chart 3.16 for details.



**Chart 3.16 Workers' perception of level of client satisfaction at Lewisham YOT SMI**



Base = 21 (All young people in the Intervention Group)

In addition to estimating client satisfaction levels, workers were asked to estimate how much the young person benefited from the intervention/service on a scale from *no benefit at all* to *benefited a great deal*. Most young people (n=19) were thought to have benefited to some extent, though only one young person was thought to have benefited a great deal. The remainder of the young people fell between the two extremes. See Table 3.17.

Table 3.17 Worker's view of how much the client benefited from the intervention at Lewisham Yot SMI					
Level of Benefit (score on scale)	1	2	3	4	5
	Client did not benefit at all <span style="float: right;">→ Client benefited a great deal</span>				
Number	2	7	7	4	1

Base = 21 (All young people in the Intervention Group)

Workers were also asked to indicate the specific areas in which they felt they had been helpful with regard to the individual young people.

Workers estimated that the intervention had been helpful in changing *attitudes towards drug use* with most of the young people (17 out of 21), and had had a positive impact on *actual drug use* (16 out of 21). In just under half of the cases,

workers thought they had been of some help in reducing young people's offending and improving their physical health (10 out of 21 cases). See Table 3.18 for details.

<b>Table 3.18 Intervention areas in which young people were thought to have benefited at Lewisham Yot SMI</b>	
<b>Areas of positive impact</b>	<b>Number</b>
Attitude towards drug use (e.g. client doesn't think s/he has a problem)	17
Actual drug use (including frequency, quantity or type)	16
Offending behaviour	10
Physical health	10
Unsafe drug use	7
Problems with education / training / work / unemployment	5
Problems with relationships	6
Emotional/psychological problems (including self-esteem)	3
Sexual behaviour (including unsafe sex)	3
Coping with family problems	2
Problems with accommodation / living arrangements	1
Other	2

Base = 21 (All young people in the Intervention Group) More than one area could be cited for positive impact.

### **Referring on to other services**

Lastly, two of the twenty one Intervention Group clients were referred onto another service. In both cases these were health services: a GP, and a GUM clinic.

## **Section 4: Ashby Road Therapy Service for children of substance misusing parents**

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In this section we describe worker reports of the characteristics of the young people referred to and assessed by the ARTService therapy for children of substance misusing parents (ARTService) and the experiences of those who went on to participate in the intervention. As described in the introduction and in detail in our Part One report, this early intervention substance misuse project is based within ARTService. It aims to focus on young people who are thought to be at high risk because of their parent's substance misuse. As before, the descriptions of the young people attending the intervention are based on questionnaire data provided by the worker on the project, and as such represent the worker's perception and knowledge of the young people.

### **Referral to the project**

#### **Referral Source**

In total forty young people were recorded by the worker as having been referred to ARTService. Young people could access ARTService through a variety of agencies. Social services were the primary source of referrals with just over half of the young people (n = 21) coming via that route. The workers also specified other referral sources for five young people. These were Lewisham Hospital for three young people, the Family Adolescent and Support Team for one young person and Orexis (a street drug agency) for one young person. In contrast to the Yot SMI, whose primary referral route was via youth justice agencies, only one young person was referred to ARTService via another Yot officer. There were no referrals reported as having come through the Yot substance misuse worker, School or Pupil Referral Unit (teaching staff), education social work service, police, local youth service, voluntary agency, or 'peer' referral (e.g. via existing client). See Table 4.1 below.

<b>Table 4.1 Source of referrals to ARTService</b>	
<b>Referral Agencies</b>	<b>Number</b>
Social Services	21
Health Service (e.g. GP, CAMHS, School nurse)	8
Self referral (no agency involved)	3
Other Yot officer	1
Other referral route	5
Not stated / unknown	2

Base = 40 (all in Referral Group)

Although the service received forty referrals, half of the young people were not seen for an initial assessment or introductory session. For these twenty young people, workers were asked to give the reasons why they were not seen. Seven referrals were considered inappropriate. The worker specified two main reasons for referrals being not appropriate; the age of the young person (too young) or a court hearing pending. Three of the clients did not wish to participate so the referral was not pursued. A range of reasons were indicated for the remaining young people that did not attend ARTService for an initial assessment or introductory session. These included the client attending another service such as a family assessment/rehabilitation with parents, or no further contact from the referring agency and difficulty with engaging the young person and getting them to keep an appointment. In addition, workers were asked if the young person was referred onto another service. Of these twenty young people that were not seen for an initial assessment or introductory session, one was referred on to the Family and Adolescent Support Team.

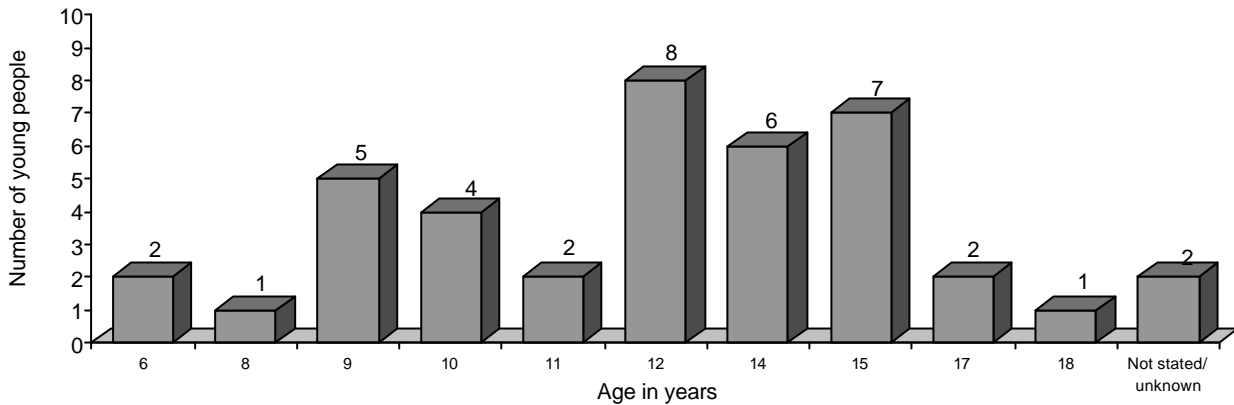
As well as specifying the referral route, an open response question was included to give workers the opportunity to specify the reason(s) why the client was referred to them. A wide range of reasons were given and a combination of reasons was very common. For example, young people witnessing drug abuse and domestic violence in the home, or emotional and physical abuse or neglect by parents were issues in some referrals. In some cases the worker specified that the reason for the referral was that the parent or carer was concerned about the impact of their own or a partner's substance misuse on the young person. The parents/carers of some young people were also in custody or in some cases rehabilitation for substance misuse. Other reasons included the young person self harming and offending, having emotional and behavioural issues, or problems at school.

## **Profile of the young people referred**

### **Sex and age**

Of the forty young people that were referred to the ARTService, twenty three were male and seventeen were female. The mean age of young people was twelve and ages ranged from 6 to 18. See Chart 4.2 for details.

**Chart 4.2 Age distribution of young people referred to ARTService**



Base = 40 (all in Referral Group)

### **Ethnicity**

Workers were asked to describe which ethnic group best described the young people. The largest ethnic group was white (29 of the young people). Eight young people were described as black and three young people described as mixed race. See Table 4.3.

<b>Table 4.3 Ethnicity of young people referred to ARTService</b>	
	<b>Number</b>
White	29
Black	8
Mixed	3

Base = 40 (all in Referral Group)

### **Current living situation**

Workers were asked to describe the young person’s current living situation, as far as they were aware. Living at home with parent(s) or step-parent(s) best described over half of the young people’s situation. However there was a range of situations reported and for four young people the worker did not know or was not sure, please see Table 4.4 below for details.

<b>Table 4.4 Current living situation of young people referred to ARTService</b>	
	<b>Number</b>
Living at home with parent(s) or step-parent(s)	25
Living with other family member	6
Living in foster care	4
Other	1
Not stated / unknown	4

Base = 40 (all in Referral Group)

### **Educational Status**

If the young person was of statutory school age (16 or below), workers were asked to describe their current educational status. Almost three quarters of the young people were in mainstream school. Two of the young people were at a Pupil Referral Unit or other alternative provision and three were out of school with no alternative provision. However, workers were not sure about five of the young peoples' current educational status. See Table 4.5.

<b>Table 4.5 Educational status of young people 16 or below referred to ARTService</b>	
<b>Educational status</b>	<b>Number</b>
Mainstream school	26
Out of school (with no alternative provision)	3
Pupil Referral Unit or other alternative provision	2
Other situation	1
Not stated / unknown	5

Base = 37 (all young people referred aged 16 or below)

### **Activity or Occupational Status**

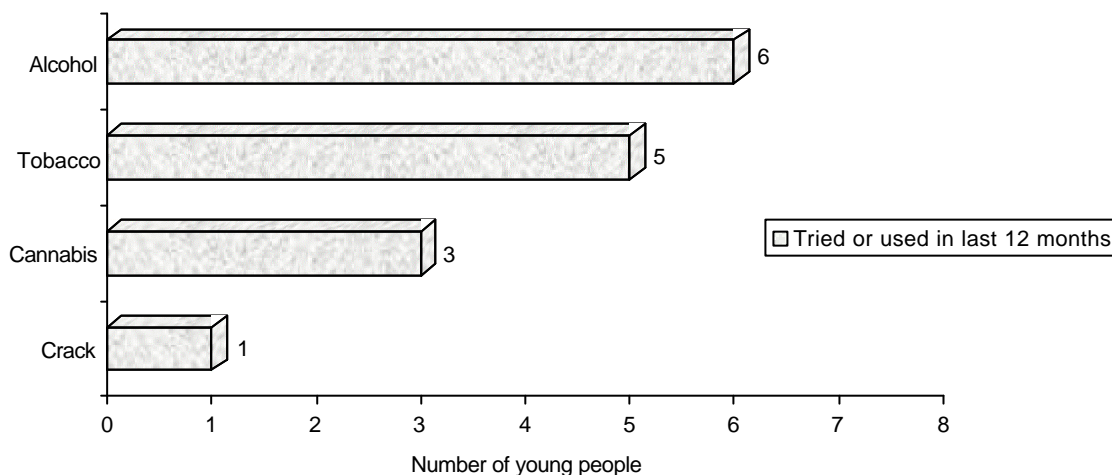
If the client was over statutory school age (three young people referred to ARTService were over 16), workers were asked about their current occupational status. The worker reported that two young people had gone on to sixth form or college full time but that for one young person their occupational status was unclear.

### **Young people's reported patterns of substance use at referral**

Based on the worker's perception of the young people's behaviour, a description of workers' awareness of ARTService clients' substance misuse is presented in Chart 4.6 below. Workers were asked to indicate which substances they believed a young person had tried or used, both *currently* (in the last 4 weeks) and *recently*

(in the last 12 months). In the past four weeks the worker indicated that they believed that none of the young people had tried or used any substances. In the last 12 weeks, some substances were thought to have been used by young person, include alcohol, tobacco and cannabis, which were indicated by workers as the “top three” substances that they believed the young people had tried or used. Alcohol was the most frequently indicated by the worker as being tried or used by six of the young people. This was followed by tobacco which was indicated by workers as being tried or used by five of the young people, and cannabis which was indicated by workers as being tried or used by three young people. In addition, the worker reported that they believed one client had tried or used crack in the last 12 months.

**Chart 4.6 Substance (mis)use by ARTService clients in the last twelve months**



Base = 40 (all in Referral Group). Workers could indicate more than one substance

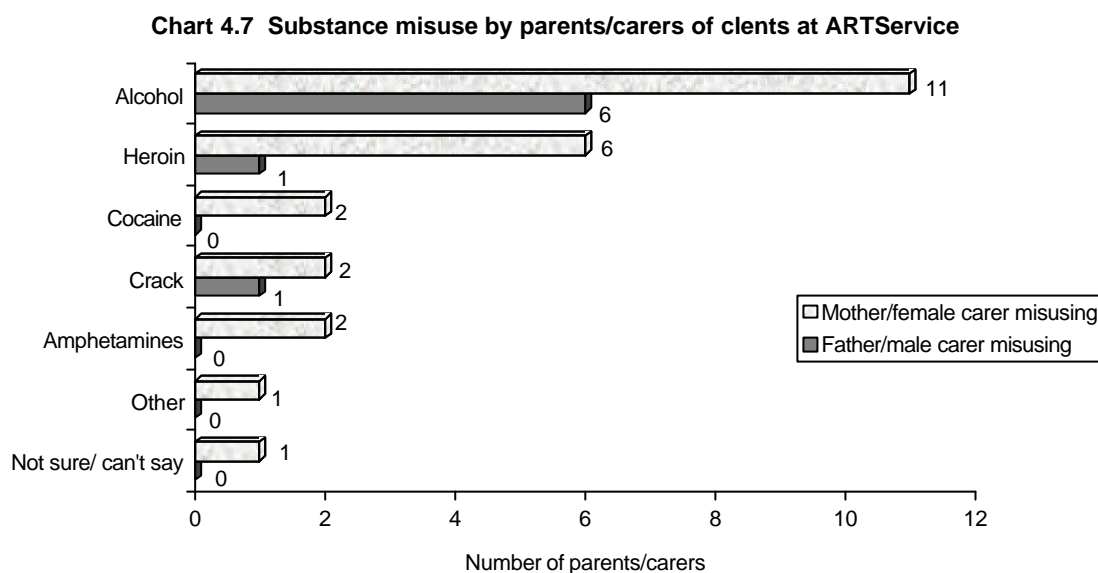
## **The initial assessment or introductory session**

After the initial referral, if the young person was seen for an initial assessment/introductory session (The Baseline Group), the worker was able to assess a number of other factors. These included parental substance use, overall perception of young person’s substance use and any significant areas of concern. In addition, this first session allowed the worker to assess if the intervention was suitable for the young person. There were twenty young people in this group.

### **Parents’ / carers’ reported patterns of substance use at referral**

Workers were asked to indicate their perception of the young person’s parent or carer substance misuse. Again this does not necessarily reflect the *actual*

substance misuse of a young person's parent or carer; rather it represents the workers' *perception* of their behaviour. Alcohol was most frequently indicated by workers as the substance they perceived to be misused by both mother/female (n = 11) and father/male (n = 6) carers. Workers perceived mother/female carers to be misusing heroin (n = 6), cocaine (n = 2), crack (n = 2) and amphetamines (n = 2). See Chart 4.7 for details.



Base = 20 (all in Baseline Group). Workers could indicate more than one substance

### General client problems

In addition to indicating an overall perception of the young person's substance use, the worker was asked what they saw as significant areas of concern in relation to the client. Consistent with the nature of the intervention, as a service for young people with substance misusing parents, *coping with family problems* emerged as the most frequent area of concern for all (n = 20) of the young people. Similarly, *emotional/ psychological problems* (n = 19) and *coping with relationship problems* (n = 18) were perceived as significant areas of concern by workers. Other areas of concern, detailed in Table 4.8, ranged from practical problems such as *accommodation/living arrangements* to clients *physical health* and *attitude toward substance misuse*. Illustrating the overlap between areas of concern in this group, all young people were described as having at least three different sorts of problems, and three quarters of the group were thought to have five or more different problems on the list.



<b>Table 4.8 ARTService workers perception of significant areas of concern in relation to clients</b>	
	<b>Number</b>
Coping with family problems	20
Emotional / psychological problems (including self-esteem)	19
Coping with relationship problems	18
Problems with accommodation / living arrangements	16
Problems with education / training / work / unemployment	15
Attitude towards drug use (e.g. client doesn't think s/he has a problem)	8
Poor physical health	6
Offending behaviour	4
Sexual behaviour (including unsafe sex)	2

Base = 20 (all young people in Baseline Group)

Note: numbers do not add up to 20 as worker could indicate multiple significant areas of concern

### **Perception of the extent of drug-related problems amongst young people in the baseline group**

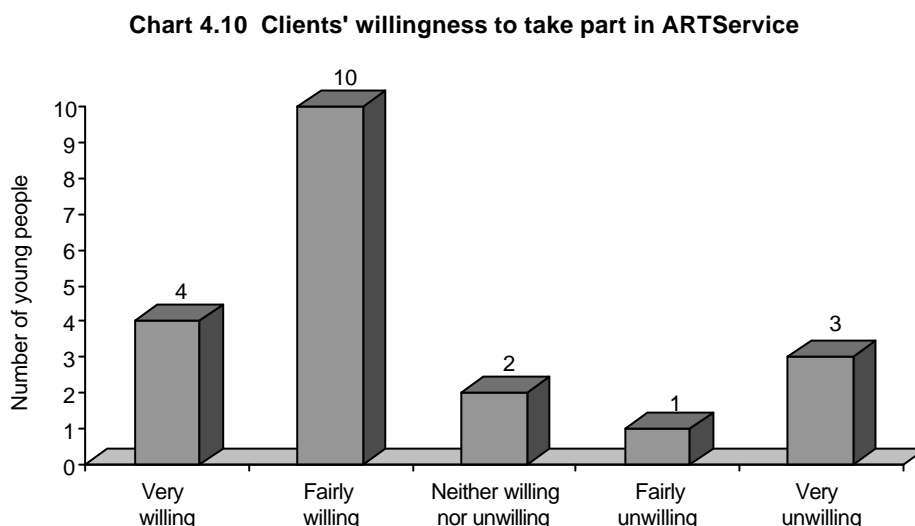
If the young person attended an initial assessment or introductory session, workers were asked their perception of young people's substance misuse. For half the young people, the worker was unable to provide firm information on this issue. However, workers perceived just over a third of the young people as probably not using drugs. In the case of two young people, workers felt that they were probably using drugs but did not appear to have associated problems. Minor problems as a result of substance misuse were perceived for one young person. No young people were thought to have serious substance misuse problems themselves. See Table 4.9.

<b>Table 4.9 ARTService worker's perception of the young person substance use</b>	
	<b>Number</b>
Client is probably not using drugs	7
Client is using drugs but does not appear to have associated problems	2
Client is using drugs and has minor problems as a result	1
Not stated / unknown	10

Base = 20 (all young people in the Baseline Group)

## Attitudes towards the service: willingness to take part

Workers were asked to indicate how willing the young person seemed to take part in the intervention. Responses could range, as detailed in Chart 4.10, from *very willing* to *very unwilling*. Half the young people were *fairly willing* to take part in the service/intervention.



Base = 20 (all young people in Baseline Group)

## The Intervention

The initial assessment or introductory session enabled the worker to ascertain if the more intensive intervention provided by the project was appropriate for the young person. Of the ARTService Baseline Group (20 young people), fifteen young people went onto to receive an intervention.

For the fifteen young people that did go onto receive an intervention, forming the *intervention group*, workers were asked to complete a second questionnaire. It focused both on the practical details of the intervention such as amount of contact, and the workers perception of the impact of the intervention.

## **Amount of contact**

Workers were asked a range of questions about the young people's amount of contact with the intervention/service, see Table 4.11 for details.

Initially the worker was asked for how many weeks (from start to finish) the project was in contact with the young person. The minimum number of weeks that the project was in contact with a young person was one and the maximum number of weeks was thirty. The mean average number of weeks the young person was in contact with intervention was eight.

At the beginning of the intervention, workers estimated how many sessions the young person should ideally attend. The minimum number of sessions the worker estimated a young person *should have* attended was five and the maximum number of sessions was twenty three. For the group as a whole, the mean average number of sessions the worker estimated the young people should have attended was nine.

However, the young people did not always attend the planned number of sessions. Workers were also asked to state how many sessions the young person *actually* attended. This ranged from one to nineteen. The mean average number of sessions that the young people attended was five. Since sessions were approximately one hour long, these figures are also the number of client contact hours.

None of the young people completed all of the planned number of sessions and workers were asked, if known, to state the reasons. The main reason for non attendance was that the client "*didn't finish the programme*". This was the case for twelve of the young people. Four clients "*missed the odd session(s)*" during the course of the intervention. Other reasons included a young person getting a job (and feeling that things were going better), school holidays, dislike of the therapy setting (which in this case took place at another drug agency) and finally a young person simply would not co-operate.

Table 4.11 Amount of client contact at ARTService		
	Mean	Range
Number of weeks clients attended the intervention/service	8	1 - 30
Number of sessions the client <i>should</i> have attended	9	5 - 23
Number of sessions that the client <i>actually</i> attended or took part in.	5	1 - 19
Number of hours contact the client had with the service.	5	1 - 19

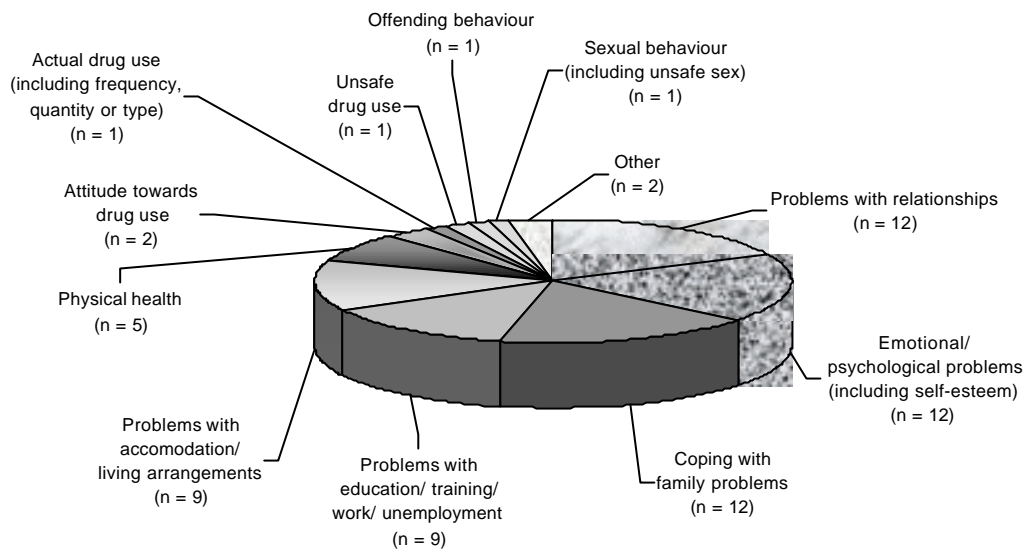
Base = 15 (all young people in the Intervention Group)

### Methods of delivery and content of the intervention

All young people were seen on a one to one basis. There were two main activities undertaken during sessions with the young people at ARTService. These were *counselling* (11 young people) and *drama therapy or role play* (8 young people). More than one activity could be undertaken with a young person during the time they were receiving an intervention.

A range of issues were addressed during the sessions, including *attitude to drug use, unsafe drug use, practical problems (such as education and living arrangements), coping with relationships (family or other personal relationships), and behavioural problems (such as offending or sexual behaviour)*. The major areas addressed with the young people attending ARTService were *emotional /psychological problems* (12), *coping with family problems and problems with relationships* (12). For one young person the worker specified that *bereavement* issues were addressed. The worker addressed substance misuse issues such as *actual drug use or unsafe drug use* with relatively low numbers of the young people. See Chart 4.12 for details.

**Chart 4.12 Areas addressed with the client during the intervention**



Base = 15 (all young people in the Intervention Group)

Note: numbers do not add up to 15 as more than one area could be addressed with a young person.

### **Impact of the intervention: workers' assessment**

Questions about the impact of the intervention on the young people were included in the second questionnaire that the workers completed for the fifteen young people that went onto receive an intervention. Workers were asked to describe the young person's satisfaction with the service. For eight young people workers were unable to estimate satisfaction with the service. Four young people were rated as *fairly satisfied* with the service and three young people were rated as *very satisfied*.

In addition to estimating client satisfaction levels, workers were asked to estimate how much the young person benefited from the service. This was based on a five point scale beginning with 1, (young person did not benefit at all) to 5 (young person benefited a great deal). None of the young people were felt to have benefited a great deal from the service. The worker indicated that they believed six young people did not benefit at all. The remainder of the young people fell between the two extremes with the worker rating five young people as somewhere in the middle; see Table 4.13.

Table 4.13 Worker's view of how much the client benefited from the intervention at ARTService					
Level of Benefit (score on scale)	1	2	3	4	5
	Client did not benefit at all				Client benefited a great deal
Number	6	3	5	1	0

Base = 15 (all young people in the Intervention Group)

Workers were also asked to indicate the areas in which they felt they had been helpful to the young people. Again this reflects the worker's opinion of the areas helped and is not necessarily the *actual* areas the young people were helped. Workers were given the same range of options to specify as they were for the areas addressed with the young people. These included attitude to drug use, unsafe drug use, practical problems (such as education and living arrangements), coping with relationships (family or other personal relationships), and behaviour problems (such as offending or sexual behaviour). See Table 4.14 for details.

The worker estimated that *emotional/psychological problems* were helped with seven of the young people. However this area was addressed with twelve young people which would indicate that the worker did not always perceive this area to be helped with the young people, even if it was addressed. This was also the case for *problems with relationships*; although this area was addressed with twelve young people, the worker only reported have been helpful on this issues for six young people. This situation was also repeated for *coping with family problems* which were addressed with twelve young people but helped with only six, and *physical health, unsafe drug use and sexual behaviour*, which were 'addressed' in five cases but 'helped' in none.

<b>Table 4.14 Intervention areas in which young people were thought to have benefited at ARTService</b>	
	<b>Number</b>
Emotional/psychological problems (including self-esteem)	7
Problems with accommodation / living arrangements	7
Coping with family problems	6
Problems with education / training / work / unemployment	4
Problems with relationships	4
Attitude towards drug use	1
Actual drug use (including frequency, quantity or type)	1
Offending behaviour	1

Base = 15 (all young people in the Intervention Group)

Note: numbers do not add up to 15 as more than one area could be helped with a young person.

### **Referring on to other services**

Lastly, for the fifteen young people who went on to receive an intervention, workers were asked if they referred the client to another service during or at the end of the intervention. Three clients were referred onto other services. These were the Family and Adolescent Support Team, to the Lewisham Park Team and for Psychiatric assessment at Lewisham Park.

## Section 5: Discussion and Conclusions

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In this report we have focussed on describing the characteristics of the young people seen by the two of the four projects in the group of four early intervention projects funded by Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham Health Authority. We have also reported simple quantitative data on workers' perceptions of the way in which young people responded to the services. Below, we highlight some issues that emerged from the analysis that may shed light on some of the wider policy and practice issues in this area of work.

### **Differences between the client groups of the two projects**

Both projects were set up with a remit to work with high need, at risk young people in South London. What the results of the evaluation show are that to a large degree, projects were successful in reaching this target group despite facing numerous challenges to obtaining referrals (discussed in our previous report, Part 1: The Process Evaluation). In both projects, levels of young people's 'significant' problems were substantial, and the range of concerns reported by workers was wide. However, there were a number of differences between the client profiles of the two services that are important to note. Key differences were:

**Referral routes:** key referral routes reflected the context and location of the services, and, to a degree, different emphasis in respect of the types of 'significant' problems reported for the young clients. For example, the focus of ARTService as a whole is on mental health and is therapeutic in orientation, and ARTService itself is also situated in social services premises. Correspondingly, social services were a primary referral route for the therapist of children of substance misusing parents based at ARTService. On the other hand, at the Lewisham Yot SMI project, which was based within a Youth Offending Team, a key referral route was through Yot officers.

**Age:** the ARTService project served a wider but also younger group of children and young people, ranging in age from as young as six years old to eighteen years old, with an average age of twelve. By contrast the Yot clients ranged from twelve to eighteen, with an average age of fifteen and a half years. Correspondingly, whilst a substantial proportion of the Yot clients were unemployed (or their activity status was not known), most of the ARTService young people were in education provision of some kind.



**Sex:** whilst the Yot project was dominated by young male clients (nine in ten of those referred), the ARTService project was more evenly divided between the sexes.

**Significant concerns:** there was a wide range of concerns expressed by workers about young people in both projects. However, in line with the different remits of the projects and their different locations and routes of referral, the 'profile' of concerns was different and (though numbers were small at ARTService) the absolute extent of problems also appeared to vary. For the children and young people in the ARTService project, the predominant concerns were, as might be expected, connected with family problems and relationships. There were also high levels of emotional and psychological problems reported for this group. On the other hand, the main issues for the Yot sample were offending behaviour and drugs issues, with family, relationship and emotional problems reported to be much less important. Overall, the Yot sample also had absolutely lower levels of problems, in the worker's perception, to the extent that half of the Baseline group that were seen for an introductory session were reported to have none of the problems on our list. By contrast, all the ARTService young people were reported have at least three different problems on the list, suggesting a generally higher level of need in this group.

### **The projects viewed in the context of early intervention and prevention in substance misuse**

There were some interesting findings in relation to substance misuse issues in particular. Substance use and misuse levels were particularly high amongst the young people in Lewisham Yot SMI compared to young people of a similar age in the wider population, and bear further comment. It is not possible to make precise statistical comparisons due to the older age composition of our sample compared to that used in national surveys, and because the methods of data collection (worker report in our study, and self report by young people in national studies) are different. However, even despite this, the differences are clear. A recent large scale national survey of seven thousand 11-15 year old young people (Department of Health 2001) found that only 14% of the sample as a whole and 29% of 15 year olds (closer to the mean age of the Yot sample) had used drugs (excluding alcohol and tobacco) in the past year. By contrast, our findings show drug use levels two and a half times as great, with 75% of young people in the referral group at Lewisham Yot SMI reported as having used an illegal drug in the past twelve months. For example, whilst 28% of fifteen year olds nationally have used cannabis in the past year, 78% of young people in the Yot sample were reported to have done this.

Though the absolute levels of drug misuse were very different in the Yot sample compared to the national picture, the patterns of substance misuse relative to one another are similar, however. In national surveys and in this study, the 'drug of choice' of young people both in the very recent past and over the longer time frame was cannabis. Use of opiates and stimulants (cocaine, ecstasy, amphetamines) is reported to be relatively low in national samples (for example, four percent in the Department of Health sample of 11-15 year olds), and was also much lower than use of what are popularly thought of as 'softer' substances in the Yot sample (ranging from eight percent to twelve percent of the sample, depending on the substance in question). Thus, though the young people using Lewisham Yot SMI were involved in absolutely more drug misuse than young people in general, like drug-using young people in the wider population, they were predominantly using cannabis, tobacco and alcohol rather than Class A drugs.

The finding that the young people attending the Lewisham Yot SMI were mainly cannabis, alcohol and tobacco (mis)users is interesting, given that we reported in our Part One report that potential referrers to the project were thought to be generally better at detecting 'serious' substance misuse issues rather than lower level problems of the type suited to early intervention. Certainly the data reported in this part of the study tend to suggest that this problem had been overcome to some extent.

Interestingly, though the young people in the Yot project had higher levels of substance misuse than young people in the wider population, the young people in the ARTService project were reported to have lower levels of substance use than in the wider population of young people. Though the base numbers are very small and we must be cautious about interpretation, it appears that most (37 out of 40) of the young people at ARTService were thought not to have used any illegal substances in the past year, and none were thought to have used any in the month before the data collection took place. For this group, then, personal misuse of substances did not appear to be a major problem.

## **The interventions**

**Challenges of working with this group:** Both projects reported reasonable levels of willingness to take part in the project's work by young people, which must be seen as encouraging. However, the attendance levels at both projects demonstrates with clarity the difficulties of working with and engaging these 'at risk' young people within a community setting. At the ARTService, no young person managed to attend all the scheduled sessions, and within the Yot, only five overall attended all the sessions.

**Content:** A somewhat wider range of activities undertaken as part of the intervention was reported by the Yot SMI worker, with drugs education dominating, as expected. In general, the issues addressed with the young people in the two projects very much reflected the nature of the significant problems reported by the staff, showing that the projects were effectively tailored to the perceived needs of the young people. Thus, in the ARTService, emotional and psychological problems were addressed with a majority of young clients, whilst the Yot SMI work focussed on drugs prevention and offending behaviour.

**Young people's response to the service:** In terms of young people's 'satisfaction' with the projects, there are limitations in expecting workers to necessarily be able to assess this (and satisfaction levels, of course, depend on the expectations young people bring with them to a service, which we are unable to gauge). However, it appeared that in the Yot project, the worker's impression was that though young people were more likely to be satisfied than not, most young people were at best ambivalent. Similarly, in ARTService, though just over half were thought to be satisfied to a greater or lesser degree, the worker was unable to assess satisfaction in almost half the cases.

**Benefit to the young people:** In terms of *specific areas* in which workers felt they had offered useful help to young people, at the Yot project the worker reported that at least to some extent, what the project set out to do had been achieved: that is, to influence attitudes towards drugs, and actual patterns of drug use. At ARTService, reflecting the particular needs of the group, the worker reported that seven out of the forty had been helped to some extent with emotional and psychological problems. Nevertheless, workers also reported that they had been unable to help some young people in specific areas, despite having tried specifically to address particular issues.

In terms of *overall benefit*, in the Yot project, most young people were thought by staff to have benefited from their contact with the project to some extent, but on the whole workers did not assess the work to have been resoundingly beneficial. In ARTService, the picture was even less positive, perhaps reflecting the greater needs of this group, as discussed previously. No young person was reported as benefiting a great deal, and six were thought to have derived no overall benefit at all from the service. Further research is clearly needed to unpack these responses and to understand better what was felt to be effective and less effective with these client groups, and why.

## Conclusions

Though it was frustrating not to be able to go further in terms of analysis of the projects' operations and effectiveness in this evaluation, even from the relatively limited data that we have we are nevertheless able to draw some inferences about the way in which the two projects worked during the period in which information for the evaluation was collected. We are able to see, for instance, that the two projects were successfully reaching the target need groups they set out to reach, and that they were tackling a wide (and demanding) range of problems in these young people's lives. Though at this point the projects reported only partial success in helping young people to address and cope with their problems, as both our Part One report, and the data reported in this Part Two report show, working with high need young people in these settings is extremely challenging. However, the (albeit tentative) findings of the evaluation to date give us no reason to think that projects such as these cannot be effective in improving outcomes for at risk young people, once implementation difficulties have been resolved and given a long enough period to 'bed down' and become more established, confident and systematised in their work.

Lastly, perhaps a key learning point from the analysis reported here relates to the nature of substance misuse intervention itself. Of the two projects who provided data for the evaluation, one was dealing with a group of predominantly 'lower level' substance misusers (judged in terms of the substances involved, the frequency of use and the reported incidence of significant impairment of functioning), some of whom were also offenders, and one was dealing with children and young people with mainly family and emotional problems rather than personal substance misuse issues. Both of these client profiles are entirely consistent with an early intervention model, but in addition, what they underscore is the wide nature of the territory that substance misuse interventions aimed at young people must cover. Indeed, in the context of what projects are actually faced with when working with young people at risk, substance misuse issues themselves may, in fact, be rather secondary compared to the other problems they encounter. This is not to minimise the importance of what we have characterised as lower level substance misuse or to say that this kind of substance misuse is not an issue that should be taken seriously. What we have captured here, however, highlights the tension between what the media and public (and some policy makers too, perhaps) often think of as 'drugs misuse' by young people – that is, the 'shocking' extremes of injecting drug use - and what interventions like these are often faced with in reality - that is, little use of 'hard drugs' like cocaine, crack, ecstasy, or LSD on a regular basis, no use of heroin, and a relatively small proportion of the sample regarded as having 'significant' problems due to substance misuse *per se*. This, then is the 'real' nature of what early intervention substance misuse projects are faced with, the key issue being

that tackling the underlying and associated social problems of young people may, in the end, be as big a part of their work as 'drugs education' work. In fact, the young people using these projects were using the same substances that are commonly misused by large proportions of young people in the wider population – they were, arguably, just using them more frequently and perhaps more overtly, and within a social context characterised by multiple individual and family problems that magnify the risk of poor outcomes.

Thus, though 'substance misuse prevention' may be the route by which young people are reached, as the work of the projects evaluated here exemplifies, the eventual service provided needs to go much wider than this. Though substance misuse projects in the UK are frequently perceived by politicians, policy makers, the media and the general public to be simply about 'stopping young people misusing drugs', professionals at the coal face confirm that the work is as much about child and adolescent health, child welfare, and family support as it is about substance misuse. In this respect, the findings of this evaluation add to the growing body of evidence that demonstrates the vital importance of designing and developing services for young people within an holistic, multi-disciplinary model that can take on board multiple risk factors in young people's lives, and is not constrained by one-dimensional thinking about any given 'presenting' problem.

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