

Mentor UK Rural Youth Project

Involving rural young people in evaluation



**Mentor UK Rural Youth Project
Involving rural young people in evaluation**

**Final Report
April 2003 – June 2004**

Contents

Foreword Nick Lawrence, Department of Health	4
Foreword Eric Carlin, Mentor UK	5
1. Executive Summary	7
2. Recommendations.....	9
3. Introduction to the Rural Youth Project	11
4. Objectives of the Rural Youth Project	13
5. Methodology.....	15
6. Summary of the project.....	19
7. Key Findings	25
Appendix A	
The numbers in the Young People’s Reference Groups and the rural drug prevention projects	29
Appendix B	
Timetable of activities for the Rural Youth Project	31
Appendix C	
Criteria for project selection	33
Appendix D	
Mentor UK Rural Youth Project Evaluation Report	37
Appendix E	
Members of the Rural Youth Project Advisory Group.....	51
Appendix F	
Questionnaires and Full findings	53

Foreword

The Government's drug strategy, published in 1998, "Tackling Drugs to build a better Britain" and updated in 2002, clearly sets out aims and objectives.

The overall aim of the strategy is to reduce the harm that drugs cause to society – communities, individuals and their families. The section concerning young people specifies the objective of "preventing today's young people from becoming tomorrow's problematic drug users".

There are many factors that may increase young people's vulnerability to substance misuse. One of these is living rural areas, where poor transport links and lack of leisure facilities can result in boredom and the desire to experiment with illegal drugs as a means of escapism. In order to tackle these issues, it is first necessary to establish the extent and the nature of the problem, and in particular to obtain the views of young people themselves. The Mentor Rural Youth Project was commissioned as a means of achieving this, building upon the evidence base of what is effective drug prevention practice with young people.

The project provided an excellent opportunity to work with young people across 4 rural areas, using action research techniques to identify their behaviour and to uncover their needs in relation to drug education and substance misuse prevention.

This report details the findings of the project, highlighting the specific problems encountered by young people in rural areas, and making recommendations for future working with this vulnerable group.

The Department of Health is pleased to have supported this work in partnership with Lloyds TSB Foundation for England and Wales and the Henry Smith Charity. As part of the ongoing programme of developing the evidence base of effective drug prevention education, the Department of Health has now commissioned Mentor UK to lead a second phase of this work, focussing on young people in coastal and ex-mining areas.

Nick Lawrence
Substance Misuse Programme Manager
Department of Health

Foreword

It is not unusual for young people to complain that no-one listens to them. The remarkable thing about the four groups of teenagers from the countryside who worked with us on this project was that they believed us that if they told their stories of how life is in rural areas, warts and all, important people would listen. They told us many good things – for example, several described the beauty of their environment – but we also heard a lot about feeling bored and isolated, with alcohol often being used to make it more bearable. Illegal drugs were also becoming more readily available, despite the denial of this reality by local communities. Not only did they tell us about their problems and frustrations, they also made suggestions about how things could be improved for themselves and others like them.

I hope the young people whom we got to know a little will see that, by telling their stories, they are helping to shape the future. Government and planners are reading this report and listening to what they said. That's very powerful. This isn't a depressing story – it is a hopeful one. Thanks to all of them and to Clare Isaac for her vision and commitment.

Eric Carlin
Chief Executive, Mentor UK



1 Executive Summary

Introduction

- There is a lack of information about the needs of young people in rural communities in relation to drug misuse.
- This project aimed to increase our understanding of the experience of young people living in rural areas, including their experience of drugs and alcohol.

The objectives of the Rural Youth Project

1. To establish four rural Young People's Reference Groups to learn directly from young people about living in rural communities and about substance misuse in rural areas.
2. To support the evaluation of fourteen local drug prevention projects in rural areas.
3. To determine which drug educational support materials might be the most effective for young people in rural areas.
4. To evaluate the overall project for its effectiveness.

Methodology

- Mentor UK recruited young people from four rural areas.
- Mentor UK worked with these young people and experts in the field of substance misuse prevention to identify fourteen drug prevention projects in rural areas.
- The prevention projects were provided with evaluation training and expert support.
- The young people received training and support and met as Young People's Reference Groups to assess the prevention projects and give feedback on prevention resources.

Findings

Findings relating to objective 1:

- Young people have little to do in rural areas and feel bored. There is a lack of hope and aspirations among many young people in these areas and they feel living in a rural community has more disadvantages than advantages. Transport is a key problem.

- There seems to be substantial underage drinking. It is often easy and acceptable for under-18's to get served alcohol in village pubs. Alcohol is the first drug of choice and cannabis smoking is seen by many as normal / unproblematic.
- Limited Internet access and poor transport are challenges to those working in rural areas.
- Prevention work in rural areas relies on local staff to maintain motivation & organise travel.
- Young people believe that support is needed for parents.

Findings relating to objective 2:

- There are very few specific drug prevention projects in rural areas.
- Staff working in rural agencies lack formal evaluation training.
- Rural projects working with young people are often running at full capacity.
- Evaluation support for rural projects needs to be easily accessible and clearly targeted.

Findings relating to objective 3:

- Many rural young people do not come into contact with drug educational resources.
- The main sources of information for young people in rural communities are youth clubs/workers, friends, the Internet and personal research.
- Rural young people want more information on alcohol.
- Rural young people considered the following to be important features in prevention resources: not too much text, clear and easy to follow and providing a lot of information.

Findings relating to the methodology:

- The lead-time for development work in rural areas was greater than anticipated.
- Recruiting young people onto Reference Groups and supporting them once they are on the Reference Groups can be challenging and time consuming.
- By recruiting through Connexions, Entry to Employment and youth agencies, a diverse and 'at risk' group of young people can be recruited.
- Local workers can maintain young people's motivation and help organise travel.
- Providing evaluation support to rural projects was appreciated but this did not mean that evaluation reports were completed without problems.



2 Recommendations

Government and commissioners need to recognise that there are drug problems in rural communities and to prioritise developing models for working to prevent substance misuse in these communities.

Government and commissioners need to recognise the extent of alcohol misuse in rural communities and the community behaviour which encourages alcohol misuse at an early age and take measures to prevent alcohol related harm within these communities.

When working with young people:

- Encourage young people to set personal objectives at the onset of a project, so they take responsibility for their own involvement.
- Involve young people in the evaluation of projects aimed at young people. These young people could be service users or young people who do not use the service.
- Recruit young people involved in existing youth groups or youth forums for projects running over a short period of time (e.g. a year or 18 months) as these young people are likely to have already bonded and the group is likely to be more sustainable.

When planning work with young people in rural communities:

- Be aware that young people may have very little access to the Internet. To address this, communication should be flexible and involve local workers.
- Ensure support provided to rural projects is tailored to the needs of the project / agency as these projects are often running at full capacity.
- Take into account the very serious lack of transport.
- Offer activities for a range of ages throughout the year, including the summer.
- Support parents.
- Find a way to increase the hopes and aspirations of these young people.

Resources targeted at young people in rural communities should:

- NOT include too much text.
- Be clear and easy to follow.
- Be eye catching.
- Include lots of information, including where to get information, support and advice locally.
- Provide slang and proper names of drugs.

When managing projects involving young people from rural communities:

- Carry out a needs assessment first so the needs of the target audience are met by any programmes / projects that are developed.
- Ensure that raising the profile of a project and planning the dissemination of its findings are ongoing throughout the project, and not just an add-on at the end.
- Draw up and sign contracts for working with partner agencies, establishing clear roles and responsibilities of all partners and local workers.
- Ensure that tasks are realistic and achievable and take into account possible constraints, particularly those specific to rural communities e.g. poor transport and long distances to travel.



3 An Introduction to the Rural Youth Project

“The issue of drug use in rural areas is a very serious matter. The principal distinguishing feature of drugs prevention work in rural areas is often a marked reluctance to acknowledge that there is a problem. Added to that, the relative lack of anonymity within rural residential areas has led to a fear of identification in young people. As a result there is a low awareness of services available, and many service areas are under-resourced. Projects such as yours which involve young people with the evaluation of local drug prevention projects and materials are essential if we are to successfully tackle this problem in rural areas.”

THE MINISTER FOR RURAL AFFAIRS AND LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
The Rt Hon Alun Michael MP

The UK Government’s 10-year Drugs Strategy¹ aims to reduce the use of Class A drugs and the frequent use of any illicit drug among all young people under the age of 25. ‘Every Child Matters’² drawing on the Drugs Strategy, reiterates the importance of drug education in schools and commits those working with children to embed a full range of substance misuse services in mainstream services. Both papers recognise that some children are more at risk of substance misuse than others, including those that are looked after, homeless, truants and young offenders.

While the Drug Strategy specifically states that it aims to reduce drug misuse among all young people, drug use among young people in rural areas rarely receives the attention given to drug use in urban areas.

From Mentor UK’s previous work in rural areas, we have established that:

- The image of contemporary drug use is predominantly urban.
- Rural drug use has received little attention in research or policy terms.
- National surveys rarely examine rural patterns and official statistics only break down to police force areas, which include both rural and urban³.

¹ Home Office (2002) *Updated Drugs Strategy 2002*. Crown copyright 2002.

² Department for Education and Skills (2003) *Every Child Matters*. Crown copyright 2003.

³ Davidson, N. Sturgeon-Adams, L. Burrows, C. (1987) *Tackling Rural Drugs Problem: A Participatory Approach*. Police Research Group London: Home Office, 1997.

- There is very little prevention work taking place in rural areas and the work that is taking place is undertaken in isolation by individuals or single agencies.

The lack of sufficient specifically rural information or research can make understanding substance misuse in rural areas difficult⁴. However, it is clear from a review of research on drug use in rural areas, commissioned by the Home Office in 1998⁵ that drugs are widely available and widely used in rural areas and that drug availability has increased, with the nature and extent of use varying from area to area. This review of research findings also established that:

- There is a reluctance to acknowledge drugs misuse as a problem in rural areas.
- Fear of being labelled a 'drug user' may help to reduce drug misuse, but also helps to ensure it is more underground, and therefore more difficult to treat.
- The lack of anonymity in rural areas results in fear of identification or stigmatisation.
- Young people are more visible and therefore attract more attention and stronger policing of their behaviour.

Mentor UK is committed to identifying what helps young people avoid harm from substance misuse and ensuring that this information is widely disseminated to inform work with young people at local, regional, national and international levels. To help identify what helps young people in rural areas avoid substance related harm, Mentor UK developed the Rural Young People's Project, involving rural young people in the evaluation of promising local drug prevention projects and materials targeted at children and young people in rural areas.

The Department of Health, The Henry Smith Charity and the Lloyds TSB Foundation generously funded this fifteen-month project. We are grateful to our funders for making this work possible and for investing resources in preventing harm to young people.

Thanks also to Clare Isaac, who managed the project and Bill Miller who conducted the external evaluation.

4 Brown, J. Young, C. (1995) *Substance Misuse in Rural Areas* London: NCVO, 1995 Leaflet.

5 Henderson, S. (1998) *Drugs Prevention in Rural Areas: An evaluation report*. Home Office Drugs Prevention Initiative (DPI), Paper 17 London: Home Office.



4 The Objectives of the Rural Youth Project

- 1 To establish four rural Young People's Reference Groups to learn directly from young people about living in rural communities and about substance misuse in rural areas in order to:
 - Identify needs and assess the rural environment.
 - Assess the rural dimension in relation to drugs and drug misuse prevention.
 - Give guidance on effective approaches.
 - Carry out more detailed work with drug prevention projects and materials which might be most useful.
- 2 To support the evaluation of fourteen local drug prevention projects in four rural areas that are:
 - Targeted at children and young people.
 - Innovative and appear to be effecting some positive outcomes.
 - Not sufficiently evaluated.
- 3 To determine which drug educational support materials might be the most effective for young people in rural areas.
- 4 To evaluate the overall project for its effectiveness.



5 Methodology

There were two main components of the Rural Youth Project:

- The Young People's Reference Groups.
- The evaluation training and support to rural drug prevention projects.

Please see **Appendix A** for information tables about the numbers involved in the Young People's Reference Groups and the names of the rural drug prevention projects and **Appendix B** for a timetable of activities.

The Young People's Reference Groups

Training in drug awareness and participating in groups was provided to all members of the Young People's Reference Groups. The groups from North Yorkshire and Suffolk attended a weekend training course. The Welsh group attended a day's training, rather than a whole weekend, as this group consisted of members of the Youth Forum in Wales, which is already an established forum with experience of group work. A further training weekend was held for all three groups 6 months after the project was launched.

After the first training session all the groups planned to meet bi-monthly for six months, (one group did meet three times the other two groups met twice, one meeting being cancelled due to severe snow). In addition to the bi-monthly meetings these three groups attended a Drug Educational weekend, where they contributed to the evaluation of drug prevention materials, with a view to identifying which material might best help young people avoid harm.

The Young People's Reference Group meetings addressed the following issues:

- Establishing criteria for the selection of drug prevention projects and selecting two projects per area (October 2003).
- Presentations from the two selected drug prevention projects; Mentor facilitating evaluation work with young people and representatives from the projects (December – January 2004).
- Drug educational weekend in Brighton to determine which materials are the most effective with young people in rural areas (February 2004).
- Presentations and evaluation work with the new drug prevention projects due to additional funding from the Department of Health (April 2004).

In Cornwall, we experienced some difficulties recruiting young people. Despite attempts to establish clear contracts with partner agencies, the rural youth

agency in Cornwall that had recruited young people to sit on the Young Peoples' Reference Group withdrew from the project after the first training session. Recruitment was then recommenced via Entry to Employment, Connexions, Job Link and the Youth Forum. Mentor UK also placed two adverts, in the local press and in a national youth magazine. Recruitment was ongoing until April 2004, when twelve young people from the Cornwall Youth Forum were recruited. Because the Cornish young people were recruited so late in the fifteen month project, the Cornish Young People's Reference Group met twice: attending a training/ consultation day early in April 2004 and, later in the same week, participating in another consultation day.

We used a range of approaches to recruit young people including press adverts, newspaper adverts and working with local agencies e.g. Connexions, Youth Agencies and existing groups such as the Youth Forum in Wales. Because of the range of approaches used, we managed to successfully recruit a diverse group of young people.

Evaluation training and support to drug prevention projects

Mentor UK researched local drug prevention projects in the four rural areas of Suffolk, North Yorkshire, Cornwall and Carmarthenshire, Wales. Two projects were then selected from each area, according to a set of criteria (see **Appendix C**) that had been drawn up after consultation with:

- The Young People's Reference Groups.
- Representatives from the Drug Education Forum.
- Mentor's International Scientific Advisory Network.
- The project's Advisory Group.

Once the projects had been selected, staff at these projects were provided with the following training and support:

- One-day evaluation training at the University of Surrey Roehampton.
- An evaluation portfolio, which contained advice, case study examples, and an evaluation-reporting template.
- Meetings with an evaluation consultant (the designer of the portfolio) and Mentor UK staff.

The evaluation portfolio was designed to assist the staff in evaluating their work with young people. The portfolio contained advice on how to evaluate work, examples of work that had been evaluated and a template for staff to follow when reporting on the project evaluation that they were to undertake.

The portfolio was given to projects at the outset to guide staff as they planned, implemented and reported on the evaluation of their work.

The project representatives presented their project to the Young People's Reference Groups and carried out evaluation tasks with the young people. Some of these tasks had to be scaled down due to the following constraints:

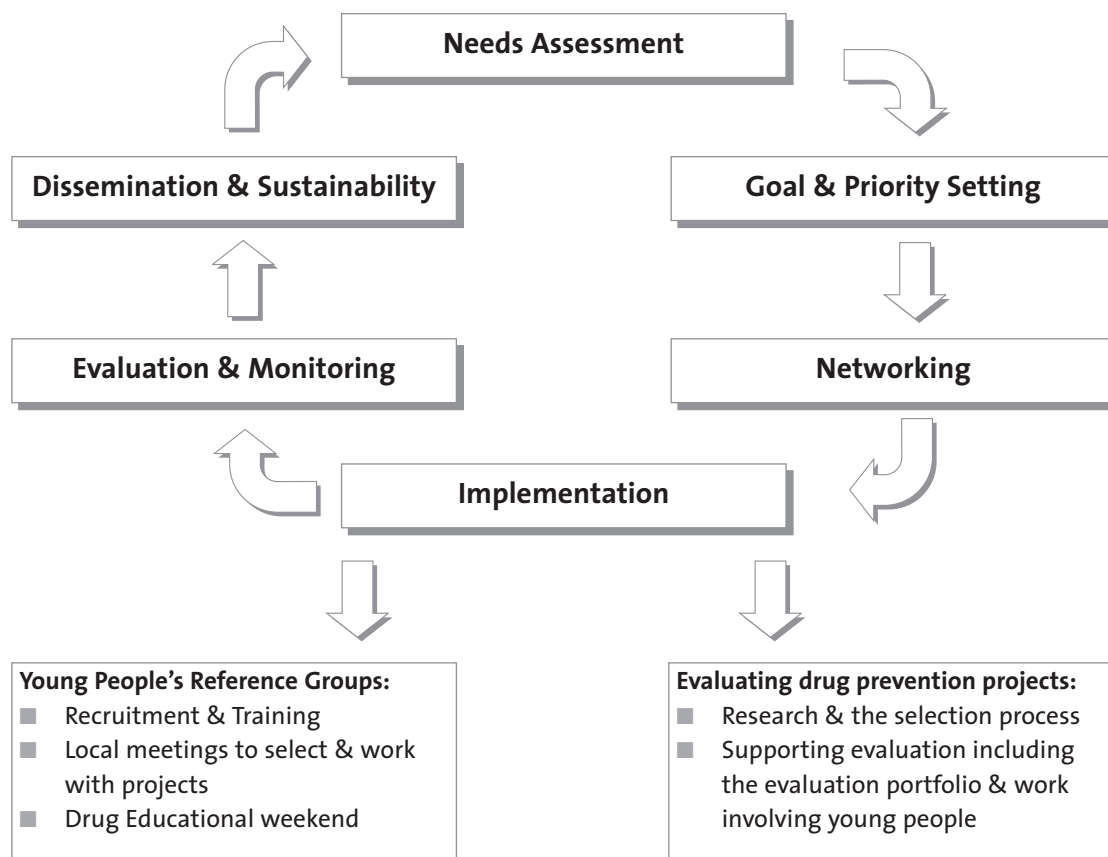
- Lack of time for project staff and young people to develop working relationships.
- The long distances to travel and the constraints on travel – one session had to be cancelled due to heavy snow.
- School requirements, limiting how much work could be undertaken by some young people.

The Department of Health provided funding to extend the project, which was initially to take place over 13 months, for a further two months, which meant that six additional drug prevention projects could receive evaluation training and support. These six projects were selected in the same way as those involved in phase one. The six project representatives then attended a further day's training at the University of Surrey Roehampton.

The evaluation portfolio includes a reporting template. We have worked with the agencies to support them in producing their reports.

6 A Summary of the Project

The Planning Cycle



Young People's Reference Groups

Recruitment and training

To involve and consult young people from the outset, Mentor UK conducted a focus group of rural young people at the start of the project. The focus group of six young people informed Mentor UK that:

- Rural young people would get involved with the Rural Youth Project because they wanted something to do.
- To keep them motivated, young people would need to be kept informed throughout, as well as having the opportunity to travel, meet people and have their voices heard.

Mentor UK recruited a diverse group of forty young people: 16 young men and 24 young women; some were in school, others were working or unemployed; a few were single parents; they were either living in supported housing, had their own flats, lived with parents or grandparents or were in care. They came from all over their counties, from remote rural areas to rural villages.

Implementation: Young People’s Reference Groups

Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In rural Cornwall, North Yorkshire, Wales & Suffolk ■ Criteria ‘diverse rural young people aged 16-19 yrs’ ■ Connexions, rural youth agencies, Youth Forums
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Held over UK (London x2) ■ To engage young people in project and provide overview of drug prevention ■ Contracts established
Local meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Held bi-monthly ■ To find out about rural young people and drugs ■ To select local projects and carry out evaluation work with projects
Drug education materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To find out rural young people’s opinions about drug educational materials during a residential weekend ■ Feedback

Challenges

Recruiting, co-ordinating and maintaining the Reference Groups was difficult. Some of the problems we encountered were specific to work in rural communities: e.g. the majority of young people had limited access to the internet/email. This meant that to organise meetings we had to telephone, text and write letters. It also meant that the Web page and Internet chat-room, which we had planned to use throughout the course of the project, had to be abandoned, as young people could not access these resources. The problems of lack of transport and the isolation of some of the communities which we were working with, coupled with the lack of Internet access, meant that we relied on staff working locally to assist with organising meetings, maintaining the motivation of the young people in between meetings and helping to organise travel.

Other problems were more general and are encountered in any project working with young people: e.g. the young people’s changing circumstances affected their participation in the project, for example one found employment, others had end of year exams and a few moved accommodation. Some young people

were engaging with adults in this type of work for the first time, and the behaviour of a minority reflected the challenges of developing constructive dialogue with other young people and the trainers without previous experience in this type of setting. However, the majority of young people engaged actively in the training and were enthusiastic about the task ahead.

Evaluating drug prevention projects

Selecting projects

We found that there is very little specific drug prevention work being undertaken in rural areas. However, there are rural youth agencies carrying out small drug projects within their broader remit addressing young people's needs. In total, we found eight projects in North Yorkshire, ten in Suffolk, four in Carmarthenshire and seven in Cornwall that met our broad remit.

Implementation: Evaluating projects

Selecting projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Research – statutory organisations, local agencies, DATs ■ Criteria for selection ■ Consultation with young people, DEF and Mentor's SAN
Evaluation training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To provide an overview of evaluation and its application ■ One day training at University of Surrey Roehampton ■ Excellent feedback
Evaluation portfolio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To help evaluate projects and programmes ■ Contains advice, useful examples and some help re-getting started ■ Provides evaluation reporting template
Involving young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Presentation by projects to young people ■ Evaluation work facilitated between the projects and young people at local meetings ■ Activities included carrying out data collection and acting as a consultative group to improve services

Selecting projects

An agreed set of criteria adapted from Mentor's Prevention Awards and informed by consultation with Mentor's Scientific Advisory Network was drawn up. Using these criteria, the Young People's Reference Groups and experts from the Drug Education Forum ranked the projects and selected two projects per

area, giving a total of eight projects. With additional funding from the Department of Health we were able to support a further six projects (two from each area excluding Wales), in the final two months of the Rural Youth Project.

Evaluation training, portfolio and involving young people

Mentor UK carried out a telephone needs assessment to identify what evaluation was being carried out in the projects and what the project representatives knew about evaluation themselves. We found that most staff members had some experience of evaluation and that data appeared to be monitored thoroughly. However, there were gaps in project evaluation and staff were experiencing problems in how to measure the impact of their work and how to record informal evidence, including feedback from service users.

Mentor UK provided the chosen projects with a day's evaluation training at the University of Surrey Roehampton. The aim was to give an overview of evaluation and its application to those responsible for planning, implementing, and evaluating projects designed to address the needs of a range of youth clients in rural settings, around drug related issues.

We received very positive feedback from the training day by all participants:

“a highly informative workshop that provided accessible theoretical and useful practical examples.”

“informative, enjoyable, paced very well. Learned that our organisation does evaluate continuously but does not evidence this.”

PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

We have also received very positive feedback about the portfolio which the local projects used to draft their own evaluation reports.

Young people contributed to evaluation work in a wide range of ways. For example: some young people agreed to interview other young people in the community about the impact of the project; some planned to visit a project to give objective feedback on how to improve services; and others designed young people friendly questionnaires.

Evaluating the project's overall effectiveness

Mentor commissioned an evaluator to carry out an external evaluation of the project, please see evaluation report **Appendix D**.

Internal evaluations included structured feedback from the young people attending the training sessions and the evaluation training day, as well as more informal feedback mechanisms, which arose from regular contact with the young people. Mentor UK took corrective action as necessary based on feedback and the learning that took place throughout the project.

To produce a report to disseminate the learning gained and good practice developed

At the outset of the project Mentor UK established two Advisory Groups in Wales and England with representatives from the Home Office, Department of Health, DEFRA, National Children's Bureau, the Countryside Agency, Department for Education and Skills, young people, youth work, Health Promotion, rural research and local government (see **Appendix E**). This helped to ensure that the findings of the project would be heard by both users, providers and purchasers of services as well as policy makers and planners across England and Wales. Mentor also worked with the Health Development Agency (HDA) to ensure that the project's evaluation findings would be consistent with the HDA's work to collate evidence of good practice in drug prevention.

As well as disseminating this final report to the young people, our funders, the Advisory Groups, national and local agencies and to Mentor's network via our database and the website, we will hold a national dissemination event to share the findings of the project with all those involved, and other interested parties.



7 Key Findings

The key findings of the project are as follows: (Please see Appendix F for a summary of all the findings)

In relation to the first project objective:

To establish four rural Young People's Reference Groups to learn directly from young people about living in rural communities and about substance misuse in rural areas in order to:

- **Identify needs and assess the rural environment.**
- **Assess the rural dimension in relation to drugs and drug prevention.**
- **Give guidance on effective approaches.**
- **Carry out more detailed work with drug prevention projects and materials which might be useful.**

The key findings are:

- Young people have little to do in rural areas and feel bored.
- Transport is a key problem for young people seeking to access any services, including activities which could prevent harm from substance misuse.
- There seems to be substantial underage drinking among young people.
- Young people often do not see drug and alcohol use as a problem. They perceive other issues, such as having no job, being young single parents and having a lack of opportunities, as more problematic.
- It can be difficult to recruit, co-ordinate and retain groups of rural young people who have limited access to email/internet, changing responsibilities and poor transport provision.
- Drug prevention work in rural areas is likely to have to rely on local workers to keep motivation maintained and to help organise travel.
- There can be a lack of hope and aspirations among young people in rural areas.
- Young people often feel that living in a rural environment has more disadvantages than advantages as there is a lack of privacy and they believe they are labelled and watched. However, they also believe that communities do watch out for each other and will intervene if someone's drug behaviour becomes unacceptable.
- Alcohol appears to be the first drug of choice but most young people see cannabis smoking as normal and unproblematic.

- It is often easy and acceptable for under-18's to get served alcohol in village pubs.
- Parents and family members will often buy young people drinks in the pub.
- Young people feel strongly that support for parents is more important than drugs education for young people

In relation to the second project objective:

To support the evaluation of fourteen local drug prevention projects in four rural areas that are:

- **Targeted at children and young people.**
- **Innovative and appear to be effecting some positive outcomes.**
- **Not sufficiently evaluated.**

The key findings are:

- Very few drug prevention projects are currently established in rural areas. Instead rural youth agencies undertake small drug projects within their broader remit.
- Staff working with young people in rural agencies may lack formal evaluation training, and while they may monitor their work effectively, they frequently don't have the resources or training to undertake effective evaluation.
- All the rural projects working with young people taking part in this programme were running at full capacity. Evaluation support for rural projects needs to be easily accessible and clearly targeted to meet their needs, to avoid putting additional pressure on staff who already report feeling very stretched.

In relation to the third project objective:

To determine which drug educational support materials are the most effective for young people in rural areas.

The key findings are:

- Many rural young people do not often come into contact with drug educational resources and, if they do, they often do not read them.
- Their main sources of information are youth clubs/workers, friends, the Internet and personal research.
- Rural young people want more information on alcohol.
- Our group of young people did not prefer any particular resources but

were clear about what they considered to be important features in drug education materials:

- Not too much text.
- Clear and easy to follow.
- Eye-catching.
- Provide slang and proper names of drugs.
- Include lots of information as well as local information.

In relation to the methodology of the project:

The key findings are:

- The lead-time for the development work was longer than anticipated as we underestimated the time necessary to identify the appropriate participants in rural areas and to co-ordinate activities in rural areas.
- Recruiting and maintaining young people on the Reference Groups was challenging – some young people do not wish to give up their free time whilst others are involved in youth forums and local youth agencies.
- By recruiting through Connexions, Entry to Employment and youth agencies we managed to recruit a diverse, and ‘at risk’ group of young people rather than only recruiting through established Youth Forums, who tend to be in contact with young people via schools and as a result the young people they are in contact with seem to be less ‘at risk’.
- Reliance on local workers was key to maintaining the young people’s motivation and organising travel.
- Providing evaluation support to rural projects by bringing them together for a days training and using a portfolio was appreciated as staff were clear that they required more training and support in evaluating prevention work with young people. However, this has not meant that completing the project evaluations using the portfolios has been straightforward.

Appendix A

The numbers in the Young People's Reference Groups and the rural drug prevention projects

Numbers in the Young People's Reference Groups

Young People's Reference Groups	Gender		
	Female	Male	Total
Carmarthenshire, Wales:	6	4	10
Cornwall	7	5	12
North Yorkshire	9	3	12
Suffolk	2	4	6
Total	24	16	40

The rural drug prevention projects in the four areas

Local areas	Drug prevention projects	
	Phase 1	Additional projects
Carmarthenshire, Wales	The Validate Scheme Peer Education	–
Cornwall	EEFO website CADA drop in	ACHE Real-Base Training
North Yorkshire	The Van Arts as an Alternative	Don't Die Young The Buddy Scheme
Suffolk	Cyds Safer Clubbing	Going Large Young Carers
Total	8	6

Appendix B

Timetable of activities 2003-2004

	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mrch	April	May	June
Advisory Group meetings, England		23rd			20th				5th			18th			
Advisory Group meetings, Wales			23rd			29th			2nd			2nd			
Young People's Reference Group															
Focus group of young people		28th													
Recruitment of young people															
Training w/end 1, England groups			28/29												
Training day 1, Welsh group				22nd											
Training w/end 2, England & Wales								28/29							
Cornwall training / consultation day													3rd		
Research drug prevention materials															
Drug Educational weekend - all Reference Groups											20-22				
Bi-monthly meetings, North Yorkshire							10th		12th				24th		
Bi-monthly meetings, Suffolk							6th		8th				Cancelled		
Bi-monthly meetings, Wales							7th			13th			Cancelled		
Cornwall consultation day													7th		
Rural Youth Project web page & chat room															
8 Drug prevention projects															
Research drug prevention projects															
Establish criteria for selection															
Consult with DEF to select projects								1st							
Consult with Young people to select projects								6, 7, 10							
Confirm involvement of projects															
Evaluation Needs Assessment of projects															
Evaluation training @ Roehampton									20th						
NY projects meet NY young people										12th					
Suffolk projects meet Suffolk young people										8th					
Welsh projects meet Welsh young people											13th				
Evaluation support & visits to 8 projects															13th
Evaluation consultant meets Suffolk projects											10th				
Evaluation consultant meets Wales project												23rd			
Evaluation consultant meets Cornwall projects												2nd			
Evaluation consultant meets N Yorkshire projects												25-26			
Additional projects															
Confirm involvement of 6 projects															
Evaluation Needs Assessment of projects															
Evaluation training @ Roehampton												30th			
Evaluation consultant meets projects												29-30th			
1 Cornish project meet Cornwall young people													7th		
1 NY project meets NY young people													24th		
Evaluation support for projects														13th	
External evaluation														13th	

Appendix C

Criteria for project selection

1. Introduction/Overview

These guidelines are for the Selection committee to assist with the selection of rural drug prevention projects. The projects that are finally selected will receive evaluation training and support from Mentor UK.

The guidelines describe the criteria and reflect Mentor's position about key elements that constitute a "best practice" drug misuse prevention project where the primary target group is rural young people.

- The *essential criteria* should be met by all projects in order to comply with Mentor's values.
- The *general criteria* are considered to be elements that contribute to best project practice and are considered aspirational. Mentor understands that the standards described are high and that there probably does not exist a project which meets all criteria fully.
- The *internal criteria* are also listed.

How to use these guidelines

- Step 1: Read through guidelines for selection
- Step 2: Read through project summaries
- Step 3: Establish which projects fit the essential criteria of guidelines
- Step 4: Rank in order of preference the projects that have fitted the essential criteria

2. Essential Criteria

- The project's aim should reflect the intention to change the personal, social or environmental factors that contribute to delaying or avoiding the onset of drug use, or its progression to misuse. Rural drug misuse prevention projects for children and young people up to age 25 are the intended target groups of the Rural Youth Project and projects should indicate the age group or groups that are their ultimate (or primary) focus.
- The project should also seek to promote the health and well-being of young people in rural areas.
- The project should, amongst other outcomes, aim to prevent drug misuse and the harm that drugs can cause. Drugs are defined as psychoactive substances that in small amounts can produce significant changes in thinking or mood. Misuse is defined as use which could significantly negatively affect physical or psychological health, social performance and/or behaviour or other areas.

- Drug misuse prevention projects can be classified as either “universal” ie. targeting general populations of young people eg. School or community; “selective” ie. aimed at those already showing risk behaviours; or “indicated” i.e., targeted at youth already starting to use drugs. Projects should indicate which group is the primary, or ultimate, target group of the project.
- The project should show the promise of improvement over existing approaches.
- The project has to agree to participate with the Mentor UK Rural Youth Project.

Ethics

- **Children’s Rights.** Both process and outcome of the project are in conformity with UN Human Rights Charter and the UN Declaration of Children’s Rights.
- **Norms.** Process and outcome are both socially desirable in the society where the project takes place and do not violate the societal norms of the international community.

3. General Criteria

Research

- Projects should have a focus on a clearly and explicitly identified need. The project should reflect an understanding of the extent, gravity and social cost of the problem it seeks to remedy, as well as the contextual and environmental factors associated with the problem. It should also be based on awareness of risk and protective factors that may have contributed to the problem and the degree to which these factors can be influenced. Finally, potential barriers to, and the risks and negative effects of, the project should have been taken into consideration.
- To the extent available, epidemiological information and scientific information or other forms of needs assessment should be indicated as informing the initial project development.

Planning

- The intended target group and other stake holder group involvement in the planning of the project is a positive aspect of project planning.
- A project should indicate a clear and precisely defined focus. The goals, objectives and intended outcomes of the project should be explicitly stated in an manner that makes it possible to evaluate objectively to what degree they have been achieved.

- This focus should include the intermediate and final target group(s), the short- and long-term intended objectives and the strategies and methodologies to be employed.
- A written project plan is an indication of a well thought out project. The plan should describe the project goals and objectives in the form of specific activities. The resources (e.g. staff and materials) needed to perform these activities should be explicit. There should be a time plan which systematically arranges the project into distinct phases ending in milestones. There should also be a realistic budget plan.
- The project should indicate whether their project is envisioned as an isolated one-time activity or whether it has been designed to accommodate reproduction and sustainability in the original and other environments/settings.
- The project should be operating within budget. Funders' money should have been used in the most economic and cost conscious way available. The value created should exceed the costs expended.

Resources

- The resources engaged in the project should be of the highest quality possible. Staff members should have been well selected.
- Staff members should have been well trained and supervised.
- Practical materials should have been geared to the needs of the target group; and up-to-date information should have been made available to all involved. Relevant materials and products should be designed to be attractive to the target group and be made available through multiple channels at reasonable cost.

Evaluation

- Projects should indicate how they have or intend to be monitored and evaluated.

Sustainability

- Projects should indicate how they intend to be continued once initial funding support ends.

4. Internal Criteria

- **Relevance.** The project is easy to comprehend. It has an intuitively understandable target group, approach and desired outcome. The project is practical and down-to-earth as opposed to being theoretical or of interest to a narrow scientific question.

- **Clean Track Record.** The recipient is free from potential ethical problems, i.e. funded by a cigarette manufacturer or employing a child molester. It is not publicly supported by a questionable political regime or party and there is no risk that it will be used to such end. There is no black spot that the media could focus on.
- **Financial Competency.** The organization's financial management is sound, clean and transparent. The organization is regularly audited and ideally supervised by a national agency.
- **Demographic Bias.** Any constellation of selected projects must be avoided that gives the impression that Mentor discriminates individuals, organizations or projects. Factors for discrimination may be geographic region, race, language, gender, political affiliation, socio-economic status, age, sexual orientation, size of organization, approach to prevention or others.

Appendix D

Evaluation Report

Summary & Introduction

Scope and purpose of this evaluation

This evaluation report is one element of a variety of documents and reports related to the Mentor UK Rural Youth Project [for the sake of clarity, from now on in this report we shall refer to the Rural Youth Project as the programme, and all the local activities as projects]. Our evaluation role had specific and particular objectives, and complements those other reports produced by the participants, rural project leaders and the Mentor UK programme manager.

This report is not descriptive of the programme, and avoids duplicating facts and information that can be found in the reports produced by Mentor UK.

External evaluation objectives

The overall intention of the external evaluation was to make a judgement about how effective the programme was as an approach to achieving the original objectives. The main question to be answered is does this strategy encourage and enable young people in rural communities to become involved in, and add value to, drug intervention projects through the process of evaluation?

The specific objectives of the external evaluation were to assess and make judgements of

- a. *The effectiveness of the rural reference groups and the impact of the programme on the young people in the reference groups;*
- b. *The impact of the programme on local agencies seeking to evaluate the services they provide to young people at risk of drug and alcohol misuse;*
- c. *The effectiveness of the evaluation tools used to assess each initiative;*
- d. *The process of how the educational materials were evaluated and selected at the weekend session;*
- e. *The quality and accessibility of the information disseminated to other agencies and informed by the evaluation of prevention strategies.*

These were negotiated and agreed at the beginning of the programme. It was also agreed that the external evaluation should embody the principles of:

Process evaluation – the evaluator would participate closely in the planning and development of the programme to provide developmental feedback to the programme manager and other participants

Empowerment evaluation – the evaluation should give opportunities for participants in the programme to have a role in shaping and defining the process and outcomes– “to foster improvement and self-determination” (Fetterman, 2001)

Structure of this Evaluation

A project evaluation plan giving details of the external evaluation activities and timescales was agreed with Mentor UK. This plan was matched to the Rural Youth Project plan, and provided a number of opportunities for the process of evaluation to contribute to the development of the programme. An outline of this plan is shown in the following table, which summarises the main objectives of the Rural Youth Project and the main evaluation activities agreed at the beginning of the programme in 2003.

Mentor UK Rural Youth Project – External Evaluation Plan

Project Objectives	Evaluation Activity
<p>To establish rural Young People's Reference Groups to learn directly from young people about</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) identifying needs and assessing the rural environment ii) the rural dimension in relation to drugs and drug prevention iii) giving guidance on effective approaches iv) more detailed work on projects/materials which seem most useful 	<p>Work with Mentor UK in the design phase of the project to ensure that process evaluation strategies are built into each element of the project</p> <p>Work with the YPRGs on their weekend workshop(s) to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Baseline their experience and knowledge <input type="checkbox"/> Monitor their learning and development during the workshop <input type="checkbox"/> Assess the impact of the workshops on their ability to contribute to informing policy and practice – self reported <p>Consider and comment on the assessment tools developed to assess the drug prevention projects (to include some feedback/training/advice to the young people's reference groups to enable them to contribute to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> the development of the assessment tool <input type="checkbox"/> their effective use of it. <p>Follow up the reference groups twice – during and at the end of the programme, by meeting and structured interview, and/or by phone/questionnaire. (Sample for interview, questionnaire for all).</p>
<p>To support the evaluation of local drug prevention projects in rural areas which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) targeted at children and young people. ii) innovative and appear to be effecting some positive outcomes iii) not sufficiently evaluated. 	<p>Research an overview of the local agency evaluation strategies, before they have comment/feedback from YPRGs, and after they have revised/amended them in response to the comments and suggestions from YPRGs (and others)</p> <p>Interviews with local agencies, once before and once after their project has been evaluated.</p> <p>Discussion with YPRGs to measure their perception of their contribution to the improvement of evaluation tools.</p>
<p>To determine which drug educational support materials are the most effective for young people in rural areas.</p>	<p>Attendance at second weekend sessions, and participation in workshops</p> <p>Focus discussion groups with sample of YPRG members and experts</p> <p>Analysis of the consultative process used to assess and select materials (collect photographic/audio evidence from activity groups?)</p>

Mentor UK Rural Youth Project – External Evaluation Plan (continues)

Project Objectives	Evaluation Activity
To evaluate the project for its effectiveness.	Reporting Bi-monthly meetings with Mentor UK for verbal report and review of data gathering strategies, and preliminary analysis. Produce draft report May/June 2004 – Final report by June 2004
To produce reports to disseminate the learning gained and good practice developed.	Review the information disseminated Arrange meetings with representatives of local agencies (including YPRG members) to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Where possible, review and comment on materials in draft stage <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss and develop local strategies for its dissemination and implications for training and development programmes Target sample of DATs specifically in rural areas through telephone interview to assess their <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> awareness of information <input type="checkbox"/> access to information <input type="checkbox"/> possible response to or use of information. Target a small sample of members of Mentor UK national and international networks for web-based survey following distribution of materials/information.

Key project phases being evaluated

Data gathering strategies

Data was gathered by the evaluator from all the key events identified in the Evaluation Plan. The main data gathering techniques used were

- Observation and participation in key programme events
- Structured and unstructured interviews (face to face, telephone, and email)
- Questionnaires
- Reviews of written materials produced as part of the programme.

The key data gathering events were

- The residential weekends for the young people in the reference groups
- Meetings with the leaders of most of the rural projects, and visits
- The one-day evaluation workshops at Roehampton Institute
- Meetings with the Mentor UK programme manager.

When the programme was extended, it became possible for us to visit several of the projects and see them in operation, meet the project leaders, and have direct discussions with the participants of some of the rural projects. This added considerable value to the process of evaluating the possible direct effects of Rural Youth programme.

The main types of data collected were

- notes written from discussions and interviews by the evaluator and the project manager
- notes, questionnaire responses and reports written by the project leaders
- email responses and notes written by the young people
- video and photographs.

As far as possible, we attempted to quantify at least some of the elements of the data we gathered. Examples of this are the levels of experience of the project leaders, the quality of the project proposals, and the degree of involvement of the young people.

Programme phases – analysis of data

Programme design and planning

The design and planning of the Rural Youth Project was thoughtful and thorough. One of the strengths of the whole programme is that it set out to add value to the work of existing projects, and to increase the capacity of the project leaders, other workers, and the young people involved to make their own project work effectively. There were a number of elements to this process. The most influential were

- Establishing a procedure for identifying and selecting projects that already had characteristics likely to enable them to benefit from participation in this programme
- Developing the ability of the young people in the reference groups to participate through weekend residential workshops
- Working with the rural project leaders, both ‘on the job’ in their own localities, and in the one-day evaluation workshops
- The development of an evaluation portfolio for use by project leaders
- Wherever possible, strengthening the links between the YPRGs and the project leaders.

These elements were well-planned and designed, and this was done with a clear strategy of getting the most positive response possible from participants to the programme activities. The elements were also phased in a way that was logical and developmental, and improved the programme’s chances of having a significant impact on the rural projects. In addition to these features, the programme elements were mutually reinforcing, each presenting a different perspective. For example, a young person may well have been involved in the

weekend workshops with their peers, attend the locality meetings to discuss project progress and see presentations, and also be involved when the programme manager from Mentor UK visited the project they were working with; this created different contexts in which they could understand and learn about project evaluation. Not all young people were able to experience all the contexts, but anecdotally, it seemed that the more contexts they experienced, the more developed was their capacity to contribute to both the rural project and the Mentor UK programme.

One of the most significant strengths of the programme was its flexibility and adaptability. It was responsive to the needs of the participants, and the feedback that came from a variety of sources, including young people, project leaders, steering group, and the external evaluator. This characteristic of being developmental, but focussed on key outcomes, was an essential ingredient of success.

Each of the main stages, and its contribution to the programme, is discussed in more detail below.

Identification, recruitment and selection of projects

The four rural areas selected for the focus of the programme were well-chosen. The preliminary research carried out with DATs and DPAS, the consultation with the Home Office and Drugscope, and discussions with other agencies, helped in the identification of rural localities that matched the programme criteria.

It was a good idea to operate a selection process for projects, and to involve others in this process. In particular, this

- provoked initial thinking about exactly what are the characteristics of projects that are likely to benefit from external intervention and support
- made the project leaders think constructively about their own objectives and evaluation strategies, and how to describe them
- created a feeling of 'valuing' the selected projects
- helped to develop the selection committee's understanding of the programme's aims and objectives
- contributed to the process of individual project evaluation
- began the process of establishing a common language to discuss project evaluation.

The project leaders

The project leaders who took part in the programme were self-selecting – they had responded to the invitation to take part, provided summaries and

descriptions of their projects, and were enthusiastic about involvement. They had a wide range of previous experience of evaluation. Some had not been involved in the process of evaluation very much at all, Others had taken part in quite intensive project evaluation. A small minority had done some formal research and evaluation study, usually as part of a youth work qualification.

We assessed the project leaders' experience, views on evaluation, and the actual level of evaluation planned or already carried out for their current project. In summary, we found that

- They had a good understanding of what evaluation is about in principle.
- They had knowledge of, and a range of experience of, what evaluation looks like in practice.
- They were not actually engaging in very much evaluation process in reality.

These are generalisations, and there were some exceptions that were excellent examples of good practice. We concluded that several factors contribute to this lack of real evaluative activity.

- Many project objectives are described in highly ambitious terms that made evaluating their achievement seem almost impossible – for example, 'raising self-esteem' or 'are young people moving on?'
- Project workers usually see each young person as having a unique set of needs, with a unique set of outcomes, about which it is very hard to generalise
- Most of the project leaders were dedicated practitioners, very committed to their projects and their clients, and sometimes sceptical about the value that evaluation might add to their work
- Bids and funding proposals often encourage quite low level monitoring accountability, often focussed on numbers and quantities.

There are other aspects of this issue, but these are enough to illustrate the starting point for the programme. It is greatly to the credit of the project leaders who stayed with the programme that they were enthusiastic about evaluation, very keen to learn more, and willing to use some of the strategies in their own projects.

We give ourselves key targets which specify what percentages [are] to be reached.

We evaluate people's perceptions at the end of the project.

We would like to demonstrate how far young people have travelled in terms of personal and social development when involved in youth work.

One of the key measures is numbers of people coming through the door.

Number of cards that were issued.

There is an evaluation log that I have been carrying out that records my thoughts and some evaluation...

The project doesn't have specific targets – it is incredibly vague.

We will measure self-esteem and confidence.

Recruitment of the Young People’s Reference Groups

I became a member of my local youth council, then became the secretary of Carmarthen Youth Council. Through the council I joined AMAN Forum, which [holds] regular meetings with different local youth clubs. I then became a member of the county youth council..... and got asked to put my name forward to the Mentor UK project, and then I got selected.

I was approached in my local youth facility and asked to sit on the committee of the youth club and get involved in small projects similar to this.

I was on holiday when my friend put my name down for this course.

The recruitment of the YPRGs was always going to be one of the most complicated elements to manage. The decision to work with young people who were possibly at risk, the remoteness of the rural projects they would be associated with, and the centralised nature of the programme were all factors that potentially presented considerable problems. It is to the credit of the programme design, and the determination of the programme manager and her colleagues, that these factors were planned for and largely overcome.

The young people entered the programme from a variety of routes, and with a wide range of different experiences. Some were already involved and committed to youth councils, training programmes and youth worker careers; most were on youth forums or youth

club committees. The majority were invited to take part in the Mentor UK programme by a youth worker who was part of one of the selected projects; a few volunteered themselves after being told about the programme in discussions.

Most of the young people had not been involved in the evaluation of intervention projects before. For some this was the first time they had engaged with adults in such work; the communication strategies, specialist language, and interpersonal skills all had to be developed. Others had already developed some competence in these, had some expectations of this programme, and a basic understanding of its relationship to their local projects.

The novelty of the consultative role for some young people was sometimes reflected in their behaviour. A minority found it difficult to adjust to the expectations of the programme and lacked the interpersonal competences necessary to engage in a critical dialogue with their peers and other adults. The facilitators worked very effectively with the young people in the workshops to develop their ability to contribute, and they were highly productive.

Expectations

I was hoping to get a lot of information about drugs and alcohol.

Learn about drug problems in rural areas (young person).

I came into this project not only to learn..... but also to help the mentors get their answers (young person).

Meeting people, seeing places...

I was hoping to make a difference...

Contributions

My experiences, views and opinions...

Hopefully, some useful, clear information that will help the project.

I have done well for my City and Guilds...

Being able to listen and get actively involved – I think I have given fresh realistic ideas on the issues discussed.

One illustration of the contribution the programme made to the development of the young people is to compare their **expectations** of the programme (before they began) with their account of how they felt they **contributed** to it (after the completion of the workshops). In general, their expectations were about 'learning about drugs' and 'making new friends'; their views of their contributions concerned 'offering personal views and experience', using 'group skills' 'increasing their own knowledge of the project' These were very positive responses, and reflect what for some was a considerable change of perspective.

Involvement of the young people in the consultation process

There has been a fair amount of research on the involvement of young people in consultation (see the bibliography for recent examples). We used a list of characteristics of **active consultation** taken from Madeleine Swords' work for the New Opportunities Fund to assess this programme. Swords proposed that it is essential to ensure that

- A range of consultation methods** is used
- Evaluation documentation is piloted** with young people
- Researchers are skilled** in working with young people
- consultation arrangements **make it easy** for young people to participate
- Young people and others receive **appropriate initial briefings** explaining why they are being consulted
- Young people receive **meaningful feedback** on the impact of their involvement.
- Young people do not perceive participation in consultation as an **additional burden**.

We concluded that this programme fulfilled all these criteria at least satisfactorily, and in some areas was good or very good (range of consultation methods, skilled researchers, easy consultation strategies, good initial briefing process).

Assessment of the Rural Youth Project Strategies

The details of the programme activities and their relationship to the programme objectives are documented in the Mentor UK report.

We took part in and evaluated the whole range of programme activities, with the exception of the group meetings held in the four rural localities and steering group meetings. In the course of this participation we were able to meet and have discussions with representatives of most aspects of the

programme, including project leaders, young people in the reference groups, workshop facilitators, some locality managers, and some clients of the projects.

Capacity building

We have already suggested that each of the various elements of the programme played a role in developing the participants' ability to participate and contribute to their projects. We were particularly interested in 'what worked best for whom', and we considered this at three levels:

Tactical	elements that enabled those who took part to understand their role in the project (and the programme) and go and do it – getting it done
Strategic	elements that helped participants think longer term, and contribute to the effectiveness of their project – planning for the future
Capacity building	elements that increased the ability and capacity of local projects to evaluate, and to respond to this evaluation – investing in people

We used this framework because in our experience investigative projects often focus on the tactical and sometimes the strategic aspects of their work, and undervalue the need to develop capacity.

These assessments are based on our own experience of each element, and our judgement about its ability to impact on the programme objectives. The categories (tactical, strategic, capacity building) are not mutually exclusive; an activity that is tactical can also be designed to contribute to capacity building.

We have included other groups of beneficiaries of the projects, such as the local supporters and sponsors, and the clients and community. These groups were clearly not directly within the remit of the objectives of this programme, but equally clearly they are ultimately important beneficiaries. We wanted to pose the challenging question of how they might be involved in future in developing project capacity through evaluation – essentially the task of the local rural project leaders.

The contribution of various elements to the development of participants

	Project participants		Other beneficiaries of Rural Projects	
	Project leaders	Members of YPRGs	Sponsors/ Supporters	Clients and Community
Key programme events				
Project selection	★★		★★	
Visits to projects	★★★★	★		★
Locality meetings	★★	★★★★		
YP residential workshops		★★★★		
Evaluation workshops for project leaders	★★★★			
Evaluation Portfolio	★★[★]	★	★★	
Communication (Website, Email, text)	★	★★	★	
Steering group meetings			★★	

★ Tactical ★★ Strategic ★★★★ Capacity building

This project is particularly strong in capacity building activity. The table illustrates a number of learning points; we will focus on two in particular here.

- The programme structure provided a number of strategic and/or capacity building elements for different groups of the targeted participants. These are real strengths, because they establish pathways, communication and learning which did not previously exist. It also illustrates that the young people and the project leaders, the main focus of the programme, had plenty of exposure to events that enabled them to interact more effectively with their project.
- The challenges to future programmes, and to local projects, are
 - How to ensure that whenever possible key events are capacity building
 - How to extend the range of involvement in the process of evaluation to as many groups of beneficiaries of the project as possible.

A good example of capacity building in this programme is the way in which the combination of project visits, evaluation workshop, and the evaluation portfolio enabled project leaders to evaluate their own work, report to their sponsors with more confidence, and develop their own professional competence.

Effectiveness of project elements

The various elements of the programme are described in some detail in the report produced by Mentor UK. We assessed the relative effectiveness of them and identified the main features we felt contributed to that. For the events we did not witness at first hand (steering group meetings, and locality meetings) our judgements are based on discussions and associated documentation. Our judgement of effectiveness was based on assessment of the contribution the particular element made to the overall success of the programme. However, we do not suggest dispensing with those elements that appeared to make a lesser contribution, because in our view they are all essential parts of the programme.

The effectiveness, and strengths and constraints, of the key elements of the Rural Youth Project

Key programme events	Effectiveness	Strengths	Constraints
Project selection	★★	Identified projects likely to benefit from programme Helped to construct views of how to evaluate projects (and how to describe them) Linked project leaders with 'selection panel'	There is not a record of all the projects taking place in a locality, so some suitable projects might be missed
Visits to projects	★★★	Essential – valued the project work, gave first hand experience of rural context Established good working relationships with Mentor UK Very good learning opportunities for project leaders	Involves a lot of travelling!
Locality meetings	★★	Brought project leaders together Created discussion and presentation opportunities Contributed to establishing common view of project effectiveness and evaluation Involved YPRGs	Hard to get YPs to attend, so their contribution is less significant Communication with young people is not easy
YP residential workshops	★★	Effective in establishing a 'rural' view and getting a picture of their experience Best way to develop YPs understanding of and contribution to programme Good first hand experience for facilitators (and evaluator!)	Variety of YPs expectations of what was expected of them Differences in YPs ability to work in this context – facilitators work hard to develop YP skills

★ Some effectiveness ★★ Significant effectiveness ★★★ High effectiveness

The effectiveness, and strengths and constraints, of the key elements of the Rural Youth Project (continues)

Key programme events	Effectiveness	Strengths	Constraints
Evaluation workshops for project leaders	★★★	Very good development opportunity for project leaders Good networking Established common language and focus on measuring impact Valuable time to consider 'broader view'	Not every project leader could be there A 'one-off' – ideally, should be sustained beyond the life of the project Could be accredited as part of a professional qualification (with portfolio)
Evaluation Portfolio	★★	Established common practice Created a manageable model of basic evaluation processes Easy to disseminate Helped projects to evaluate and report	More paperwork Could be accredited if used as part of a HE programme.
Communication (Website, Email, text)	★	Very necessary because of dispersed nature of programme – good to have variety of means of communication Good document distribution method Quick feedback on surveys, questionnaires	YPs sometimes difficult to maintain contact with (text worked best) Not all project leaders use IT comms regularly Website discussions groups not much used
Steering group meetings	★	Important to keep them in touch with such a developmental programme	Hard for them to experience programme at first hand A conference to bring them together with local projects would be good

★ Some effectiveness ★★ Significant effectiveness ★★★ High effectiveness

Internal Programme Evaluation

Internal evaluation of the Rural Youth Project was important, because it was developmental in design, and involved a number of different agencies and participants in a number of different phases. All elements of the programme were well documented. Meetings were planned with clear and precise agenda, visits had specific objectives explained in advance to project leaders, and the one-day and residential workshops had detailed planning, objectives and evaluation activities. The programme leader met regularly with us, and these meetings enabled us to have a clear view of the development of the programme, and to contribute to its evolution– good process evaluation.

Feedback from the participants enabled the programme leader to adapt and develop features of the project plan; this facilitated increasing programme effectiveness.

The evaluation training and portfolio have proved very useful...and we intend to use this process with young people and staff (project leader)

I have learnt a lot from the evaluation process...a good exercise and now a necessary one! (project leader)

There were a number of opportunities for the programme to model good evaluation behaviours to the participants, and it did this well. The young people and project leaders were all able to experience good practice by working with Mentor UK, and to learn from the programme structure and delivery. The evaluation portfolio became a significant element of this, because it established

a format and process that project leaders could use. Preliminary feedback from them is that the combination of visits, workshops and portfolio has proved very useful to them in their own work.

Bibliography

Fetterman D M 2001 Foundations of Empowerment Evaluation Sage

Swords M 2002 Built-in, not bolt-on: engaging young people in evaluation New Opportunities Fund

Bryson S and Kirby P 2002 Measuring the Magic? Evaluating and researching young people's participation in public decision-making Carnegie Young People Initiative

Tressider P 1988 Empowering Children and Young People Save the Children

Overall assessment of success (How well the objectives were achieved)

Rural Youth Project Objectives	How successfully they were met	Strengths	For development
<p>To establish rural Young People's Reference Groups to learn directly from young people about</p> <p>i) identifying needs and assessing the rural environment</p> <p>ii) assess the rural dimension in relation to drugs and drug prevention</p> <p>iii) give guidance on effective approaches</p> <p>iv) carry out more detailed work on projects/ materials which seem most useful</p>	<p>★★★</p> <p>★★★</p> <p>★★</p> <p>Not evaluated</p>	<p>Contact with young people established early in programme</p> <p>Well-planned and delivered weekend residential workshops</p> <p>Skills of Mentor facilitators</p> <p>Established scope of urban/rural differences – and destroyed some myths!</p> <p>Opportunities for young people to work with project leaders and discuss their involvement</p>	<p>Needs assessment of young people and their commitment to programme</p> <p>Plan some re-programme activity at a local level with project leaders</p> <p>Involve some young people from urban setting to stimulate discussion about differences</p> <p>Encourage project leaders to plan YPRGs involvement right from the beginning of their projects</p>
<p>To support the evaluation of 8 (amended to 14) local drug prevention projects in rural areas which are:</p> <p>i) targeted at children and young people.</p> <p>ii) innovative and appear to be effecting some positive outcomes not sufficiently evaluated.</p>	★★★	<p>Selection process</p> <p>Training and development for project leaders</p> <p>Visits and follow up professional development</p> <p>Evaluation Portfolio</p> <p>Involvement of external evaluator</p>	<p>Now the evaluation portfolio is complete, distribute at beginning of programme to project leaders. Stimulate more knowledge of ways in which young people can be involved in projects</p>
<p>To determine which drug educational support materials are the most effective for young people in rural areas.</p>	★★★	<p>This activity was an important part of the residential weekend</p> <p>Good variety of materials for young people to access, including websites</p> <p>Good collection of feedback from young people</p> <p>Good facilitation</p>	<p>Would benefit from further work on specific materials; possibly a YPRG group</p> <p>How can young people be involved in materials development?</p>
<p>To evaluate the project for its effectiveness.</p>		<p>Level of involvement of external evaluator in project planning and activities</p> <p>Good communication with programme leader</p>	
<p>To produce a report to disseminate the learning gained and good practice developed.</p>	Not yet evaluated		

★ Partially successful ★★ Successful ★★★ Very successful

Appendix E

Members of the Rural Youth Project's Advisory Group

England

- Andrew Brown, National Children's Bureau
- Tricia Carrick, Home Office
- Alison Corless, National Drug Prevention Development Team
- Alastair Cox, The Countryside Agency
- Robert Drake, Department for Education and Skills (DfES)
- Sheila Henderson, Rural researcher
- Nicki O'Hara, Suffolk Drug Action Team
- Tracey Longton, Young person representative
- Conor Ritchie, DEFRA
- Miguel Llobera, Young person representative
- Catherine Wistowsky, Connexions North Yorkshire Substance Misuse worker

Wales

- Kerry Barnes, Youth person representative
- Menna Boyd, Sudds project
- Chris Davis, Youth Service
- Lisa Hagley, Streets youth agency
- Wendy Heron, Associate Adviser for PSE
- Jonathan Roberts, Health Promotion Officer
- Rhys Sinnet, Senior Health Promotion Officer

Appendix F

Summary of full findings of the Rural Youth Project

Responses to questionnaires

Mentor UK designed a questionnaire for young people to interview each other and another confidential questionnaire which they completed alone. See below:

Mentor UK Rural Youth Project
Young people drugs & alcohol in rural areas
Instructions for the facilitators

Purpose: To find out more about young people and drugs in rural areas.

Note: It is essential to record as much information as possible and as accurately as possible.

Questionnaires

- Explain the purpose of this session and how we are going to do it: first they will work in pairs and then work together as a group to get everyone's feedback.
- Ask them to find a partner who they do not know.
- They are going to interview their partner and write down the answers on the questionnaire.
- Give the pairs 30 minutes to interview each other. We suggest they take it in turns to answer question 1, then question 2 etc. so both of them get time to do both parts.
- There is 20 minutes for feedback – please feel free to go off on a tangent if it seems interesting and worthwhile, but please record.
- We can either get feedback altogether or divide them into groups of 3 with Eric, Paulo and Clare getting feedback from each group.

Personal questionnaires

- Give each young person the second questionnaire.
- Explain that this is to find out more about their personal drug and alcohol taking behaviour and is confidential.
- It should not take longer than 10 minutes.
- Ask them not to put their name on it, and when they have finished, put it in the confidential envelope.
- Seal the envelope when you have collected all the questionnaires and hand to Clare.

Thank you

Mentor UK Rural Youth Project

Young people drugs & alcohol in rural areas

Find a partner and ask them the following questions. Record their answers in the spaces provided:

1. Are drugs and alcohol an issue with young people in your area? If they are, then how?
2. What would you say about young people taking drugs and drinking alcohol in your neighbourhood? (For example I don't know, it is rising, falling, or it is the same)
3. Do you personally come into contact with people who take drugs? If so, where do you come into contact with them?
4. Do you know how drugs come into your area? If you do, then how?
5. What are you aware of people taking in your area?

