

**ASTRA Project
Family Work
August 2003 to March 2004**

**Gwyther Rees & Ros Medforth
The Children's Society**

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Further information

For any queries about the ASTRA Project, please contact:

ASTRA Project
Chequers Bridge Centre
Painswick Road
Gloucester
GL4 6PR

Telephone: 01452 541599

E-mail: astra@gloscc.gov.uk

Website: www.astraproject.org.uk

For any queries or further information relating to this report, or the research programme in general, please contact:

Research Unit
The Children's Society
Gallery House
125-131 The Headrow
Leeds
LS1 5RD

Telephone: 0113 246 5131

E-mail: ru@chidsoc.org.uk

1: Introduction

Project origins

In the Autumn of 2002, the Social Exclusion Unit and the DfES (through the former Children and Young People's Unit) announced a short-term development fund for work with young runaways. Projects were invited to bid for funding to provide innovative services to support young people who had run away, been thrown out of home or were at risk of being in one of these situations.

Alternative Solutions to Running Away (ASTRA) made a successful application and was provided funding to establish a family work pilot to provide support to parents of young people within the project's target group. This was an extension to the current service provided by ASTRA to young people who have run away or been thrown out of home or care in the county of Gloucestershire.

As part of the funding of the project, there was a requirement that the development project would be evaluated. The Children's Society's Research Unit were approached to conduct this evaluation based on their extensive past experience of research into running away. The Unit is a partnership between The Children's Society and The University of York.

Description of the ASTRA project

The ASTRA project was set up in 1997 to reduce the incidence of persistent running away among young people under the age of 18 in the city of Gloucester. The service was later expanded to cover the whole county, including Cheltenham, Stroud, Tewksbury, the Forest of Dean and the Cotswolds.

The objectives of the service are as follows:

- To provide a safety net for young runaways
- To offer information, advice and support on a one-to-one basis to young people who have run away or have been thinking about running away
- To work in partnership with other organisations to support the needs of young people who run away or are at risk of running away.

Overview of the family work initiative

The rationale for, and aims of, the service

The initial thinking behind the proposed family work was to provide an additional service which could complement the existing service ASTRA provided which focuses on the young person. The project had recognised for some time that families of the young people with whom they worked would often benefit from support, and that this in turn could benefit the young people themselves. However, the project's philosophy had always been to focus on the young person. There was a risk, if the same workers also engaged extensively with other family members, that it would compromise their successful model of working with the young person. On the other hand, the project had recognised that focusing on the young person was often only working on one side of the problem. Hence the idea was that a dedicated family worker would allow for a more balanced consideration of need and provide a more holistic service.

The purpose of the family work was seen as being to provide parents with support and assistance with coping strategies. It was also hoped that it would plug the gaps in other services meeting the needs of the parents of young people who are in contact with the ASTRA project.

ASTRA's work with young people has tended to focus on trying to return young people back home wherever possible, or to find a safe alternative. The project has aimed to maintain links

between the young person and parents and carers. It was hoped that the family work would contribute to achieving this aim.

The 'target group' and remit of the family service

The target group for the family work initiative was parents and carers in the county of Gloucestershire linked to a young person who had been referred to ASTRA and who has requested the support of the family worker. Additional criteria were that the referred family members were ready, willing and able to address the issues that affect their capacity to parent the young person, and that they were not already receiving support from local social services.

Description of methodology for the report

The main aims/objectives of this report are as follows:

- To assess the level of uptake of the family service amongst families who are offered the service
- To describe the family work undertaken
- To detect patterns in usage of the family work service
- To explore the effectiveness of the family work in terms of styles of working and the outcomes of the work for families and young people
- To identify key learning points from the material gathered which can inform future developments in work with the families of young runaways, both at ASTRA and elsewhere.

In order to achieve the above, and given the limited resources available, it was decided that the main component of the evaluation would be a monitoring system to quantify the volume and pattern of need, incorporating staff's perspectives on the outcomes of each piece of work. The evaluation uses a realist approach,¹ which emphasises not simply the outcomes achieved by the work but also the mechanisms at play that may have influenced these outcomes, such as the context and factors that have helped and hindered access and referral.

Monitoring of direct work carried out

The research team developed a monitoring system which was maintained by the family worker, consisting of two forms:

- A 'referral and initial contact' form completed by the family worker, which gathered information about the family's situation at the time of referral and also at the first meeting between the family worker and family member(s). It included information on the presenting issues within the family and their reasons for referring to the service.
- An 'end of contact' form which was completed by the family worker at the end of the period of contact with the family member(s) and provided information on the actual work carried out, perceived outcomes and reflections by the family worker on what helped or hindered the work with the family member(s).

Information was recorded in relation to 24 referrals.

In addition, the research team were also involved in a more general monitoring exercise about the project's work as part of a national evaluation of young runaways projects. This meant that some additional contextual data was available on the young people to whom the family work related.

¹ Pawson R & Tilley, N (1997) *Realistic Evaluation* London: Sage.

Information-gathering from parents/carers who have used the service

All parents/carers who used the service were invited to complete a short evaluation form at the end of their contact. At the end of each family's contact with the service, the family worker handed out a letter (written by the researcher) introducing the research and a consent form asking if they would like to participate in the research and if so to provide their contact details. An SAE was also provided with this information, to encourage parents to participate in the research. On receipt of a consent form (and agreement to participate) from the family member, the researcher sent out an evaluation form by post, again with an SAE for its return to the Research Unit. This form included questions on parents' perceived usefulness of the work, perceived supportiveness of the family worker, whether they felt the work improved the situation, what they liked/disliked about the service and their ideas for improvements. Five family members agreed to complete the evaluation form. Four family members returned completed forms to the unit.

Parents/carers who completed and returned evaluation forms were then asked if they would like to participate further by taking part in an interview to gather their more in depth views and to assess any outcomes of the family work. The interview focused on:

- Historical context: the parents background including any important issues (family related and personal) in their past, and any prior agency involvement
- Context at the time the family work commenced, why they referred to the service
- Work carried out by the family worker, referrals to other agencies
- Parents thoughts on, and experiences of, the family work and their views on its usefulness (including ideas for improvements)
- Perceived outcomes of the family work
- Perceived enabling and hindering factors

Two parents gave more in-depth views about the work – one by talking over the phone with the researcher about the family work on the topics above, the other by providing views in writing. Another family member spoke briefly over the phone about the family work.

Interviews with project staff

The above data was supplemented by two visits to the project and some telephone interviewing. The initial visit was made to the project in Spring 2003 to learn about the new initiative and its aims and objectives. The second visit, after the end of the scheme's operation, focused on the following areas:

- Access and referral – i.e. whether the service reached the target group
- Service delivery and factors that helped and hindered delivery
- Perceived outcomes
- Key recommendations from practice learning

Key members of staff who weren't available for these visits were interviewed separately via telephone.

2: Summary of the family work

This main section of the report covers the following areas:

- A brief description of the model of working
- The characteristics of the families and young people referred
- The circumstances in which referrals took place and the reason for referral
- The work done by the project
- The outcomes of the work
- Other learning from the initiative

Description of the model of working

Staffing levels

It should be noted from the outset that this was a fairly small scale initiative, consisting of one part-time family worker. The family worker was available in the office 18 hours per week, and any contact and face-to-face work took place during these hours. Given this level of resources the average case load at any given time was restricted to between five and seven cases, with some flexibility to respond to urgent situations.

Referral to the service

The service was not advertised prior to commencing. It was mainly publicised through word-of-mouth. At a later date a leaflet was produced and information about the service was placed on the project's website. However, the intention was that the majority of referrals would come via the staff team through their contacts with young people.

Model of working with families

The work carried out by the family worker had a number of different aspects and was formulated flexibly in relation to the individual family's circumstances. More detail is provided about the nature of this work later in the report.

In terms of general philosophy, the family worker had a youth work background and was training to be a counsellor during the period that this review covered. A systems approach to working with families was used and this regularly involved counselling skills and behavioural techniques.

The intention was to work with families for periods of up to three months or more, and to refer to other services during or at the end of this period as required.

Extent of project usage

The review covers the family work undertaken over a nine month period to the end of March 2004. During this time there were 24 internal referrals to the family worker over a six month period (late August 2003 to early February 2004), and in 14 cases these referrals led to ongoing contact with family members.

To put these figures into context, during this period the ASTRA Project received referrals in relation to a total of 133 young people and worked with 56 of these young people. Thus family work referrals were made in relation to 18% of all young people referred and 43% of young people in contact with the project during the period.

Characteristics of families and young people

The most common family structure was a lone parent, which accounted for half of all families referred. Eleven of these were lone mothers and one was a lone father. Just over a quarter (seven) of families consisted of one birth parent plus a stepparent, and only five were families

with both birth parents. These proportions are comparable to the characteristics of the families of all young people in the ASTRA Project's user group as shown in the table below.

Table 1: Family structure

Family structure	No. of referrals	% referred to family work	% in project user group
Lone parent	12	50%	46%
Parent and step-parent	7	29%	29%
Both birth parents	5	21%	18%
Extended family	0	0%	7%
Total	24		

Eighteen (75%) of the young people to whom the referrals related were female, five were male, and in one case the gender was not recorded. This compares with proportions within the project's overall user group of 59% females and 41% males.

In terms of age, the age profile was concentrated in the 14- to 15-year-old age range (two-thirds of young people were in this age group). This is slightly older than the project's overall user profile.

Circumstances, contexts and reasons for referral

The large majority (79%) of young people were living at home at the time of the family work referral. Almost half (46%) were classified as either recently or currently been staying away without parental permission. A much lower proportion (29%) had recently run away, and a significant minority (21%) had either currently or recently been thrown out.

The significant thing about these figures is how they compare to the situations of the young people in the project's user group as a whole. The family work referrals have an over-representation of young people who had stayed away or been thrown out and an under-representation of young people who had run away. This suggests that family work may have been seen as more relevant for certain types of incidents than others.

Table 2: Situation of young people to whom family work referrals related

Type of incident	Currently	Recently	Total	% of family work	% in project user group
Run away	0	7	7	29%	54%
Stayed away without permission	1	10	11	46%	30%
Thrown out	4	1	5	21%	6%
Other	n.a.	n.a.	1	4%	11%
Total	5	18	24	100%	100%

The family worker provided 'pen pictures' of the family's current situation and history and five key themes are evident:

- The impact of family change (16 cases). This theme is hardly surprising given the evidence on family structure above. In at least 12 of these 16 cases there had been a recent significant change within the family or the young person's living situation – e.g. parental separation or reconciliation, introduction of step-parent, bereavement, or a move between two parents by the young person.

- Parent’s concerns about the young person’s behaviour (10 cases). These concerns were usually related to either aggression and/or excessive risk-taking on the young person’s part. Often parents felt unable to cope with this behaviour.
- Violence or abuse within the family (8 cases). In four of these cases there was current or historical domestic violence within the home. In the other four cases there was historical child abuse related either to the young person or siblings.
- Breakdown in relationships between young person and parents (4 cases). In these cases the relationship was described as having completely broken down.
- Issues around boundaries and control (4 cases). These were cases where the parent(s) were struggling to establish fair and consistent boundaries with young people.

The reasons for referral related closely to these contexts and broadly broke down into two categories. In 14 cases, the main initial identified need was support for parents in dealing with the behaviour of the young person. In the other ten cases, the identified need was for support or mediation in terms of relationships within the family (usually including between the parent(s) and the young person).

Work done by the family worker

The family worker made initial face-to-face contact with family members in relation to 21 of the 24 referrals, in the remaining three cases the family declined the offer of family intervention without meeting the worker.

In 14 cases, the initial contact led to an ongoing engagement with the family. The duration and extent of contact with the parent(s) in these cases is shown in the tables below:

Table 3: Extent of ongoing contact after initial contact(14 cases)

Number of face-to-face contacts	No. of families
One	1
Two to five	6
Six to nine	6
Ten or more	1
Total	14

Table 4: Length of ongoing contact (14 cases)

Length of contact	No. of families
Less than one month	2
One to three months	5
More than three months	7
Total	14

Thus there was often quite extensive contact, with half the ongoing cases involving at least six contacts and, similarly, half involving contact over more than three months.

It should be noted that in only one case out of these 14 did the project not also engage in ongoing individual work with the young person during the period of the family work. So the family work was primarily a supplement to such work rather than an alternative to it.

Based on case recording, the work undertaken by the family worker fell primarily into the following four categories

- Work aimed at developing parenting skills, enabling the parent(s) to deal with young person's behaviour, and establishing boundaries (Eight cases)
- Work aimed at improving communication between family members (Five cases)
- Supporting a parent with their own issues (Five cases)
- Mediation between the parent(s) and the young person (Three cases)

One or more of the above types of work were done in 11 of the 14 ongoing cases. A detailed illustrative case study giving an example of the type of work undertaken and the way it related to individual work with a young person is provided later in this chapter.

In the remaining three cases, the work consisted of an initial exploration of the issues but didn't proceed any further than this.

As stated earlier the family worker used a 'systems approach'. The work often involved 'normalising' the situation, including imparting information (e.g. Eriksson's stages of development).

It helps parents to put the behaviours into perspective...and then to adjust their own behaviours in response. [Family worker]

The approach seemed to have been appreciated by the parents who responded:

I've been taking a different approach to things (since family work). [Parent]

The family worker came up with good ideas and things to try. [Parent]

That (family worker's advice) was a really good idea, a really sort of diplomatic way of dealing with it...and that really worked and really helped. [Parent]

I feel that much more positive...I feel I can conquer anything now! [Parent]

Parents also found the opportunity to talk and receive support positive:

The worker came to support me as a mother and individual and help me come to terms with the situation, she was also able to inform me of my rights and any legal issues. [Parent]

(I liked the fact that the worker was) very friendly and easy to communicate with, plus it was easy to initially set up meetings and ask for advice and help. [Parent]

I thought she was very professional, she didn't make me feel like I was alone which I was feeling...I think that was the most important thing because I knew that things weren't right and I didn't know who to talk to. She made me feel that what I was doing was really positive. [Parent]

[The worker] was approachable and easy to talk to and she gave me good sound advice and she offered me support and not like a one off thing. [Parent]

Although one parent commented that:

The family worker was friendly and supportive although a lot of information was obvious, I already knew, and felt I was a text book case not an individual. [Parent]

Outcomes of the work

We are dependent primarily on the family worker's perceptions about the outcomes of the work, since only in a few of the ongoing cases did parents choose to participate in the evaluation. Thus in this section the term 'outcomes' is used loosely for brevity to refer to tangible changes in the situation noted by the family worker at the end of contact.

In six cases the worker noted solely positive changes in the family's and/or young person's situation which they felt were linked to the work they had been undertaking, and in a further four cases there were mixed changes including some tangible positive ones. In two cases there was no substantial change noted. Finally in two cases, the situation seemed to have

deteriorated during the period when the family worker was involved (although this was not clearly linked to the work undertaken).

The types of positive changes noted by the family worker were as follows (see also Figure 1):

- Increase in parent's confidence in responding to young person
- Improved parenting skills
- Improvement in relationships between parent and young person
- Stabilisation of home situation
- Facilitating access to other services

One of the intended purposes of this review of the family work was to try to identify patterns within the data that might indicate the contexts in which this type of intervention might be more or less successful. Given the small sample and the fact that data on 'outcomes' was gathered primarily from staff, any patterns observed in the data are best seen as potential hypotheses for further investigation rather than as 'research findings'.

From the family worker's point of view the key issue was the nature of the family members' engagement with the work:

It comes down to "willing and able" in the end because some families will fight through the most amazing complicated difficulties with support. [Family worker]

This was not just a question of willingness to be engaged but also of having the 'emotional intelligence' to engage and to work on what were often difficult and challenging issues:

Some of the issues are just so massive it is a miracle that they have survived at all really. [Family worker]

Successful family work often depended on parents being able to see their own part in the problems that had led to the young person being away from home. Some parents presented the problem as being wholly with the young person, when actually the young person was being used as a scapegoat.

Turning to an analysis of the monitoring data there were no discernible patterns in terms of the likelihood of positive outcomes according to the data on family form and young person's characteristics presented earlier.

However there were some apparent differences in relation to the contextual factors within the family home discussed earlier. None of the 'positive' cases featured current abuse or violence within the home environment, although in some of these cases this had been part of the historical context. Similarly, positive change was not evident in cases where there had been a complete breakdown in relationships. On the other hand, recent family change appeared more likely to assist in achieving positive change rather than to be a barrier, perhaps suggesting that these situations offered an opportunity to make a fresh start with certain issues.

In addition, cases where 'coping support' was required were much more likely to lead to positive change than cases where the intervention focused on resolving relationship issues.

These patterns are based on a small sample and are presented here tentatively. A summary of the data is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Reasons for referral, contexts and changes for 14 cases involving ongoing work

Reason for referral	Context	Changes noted	Assessment of change
Coping support	Mother struggling with adolescence Recent move of area	Increase in mother's confidence in dealing with issues	Positive
Coping support	Concerns about risk taking / staying away Recent return of older sibling	Mother reassured about her approach and gained some additional coping strategies	Positive
Relationships work	Historical abuse of young person Young person risk taking	Improved relationship between mother and young person Mother accessing other services	Positive
Coping support	History of domestic violence Recent introduction of stepparent Young person's aggression and anger	Improved parenting skills (including negotiation and communication) Improved family relationships	Positive
Coping support	History of domestic violence Unstable relationship between mother and partner Concern about young person's behaviour	Disengagement of parent Deterioration of young person's behaviour	Negative
Relationships work	Current domestic violence Couple attempting reconciliation	Changes in family structure and disengagement of parent	Mixed
Relationships work	Separation of parents Concern about young person's behaviour	Some small improvements but family relationships still fragile Referral to Social Services	Mixed
Relationships work	History of domestic violence Relationship between young person and mother had broken down	Situation in family deteriorated further Parent disengaged from project	Negative
Coping support	Recent moves between two homes YP aggression	Situation stabilised Young person settled	Positive
Relationships work	Historical abuse of siblings Boundaries issues Breakdown in communication	Some improvements in parents' confidence and communication	Mixed
Relationships work	Boundaries issues Breakdown of relationships	Young person still away from home No perceived changes in situation	None
Coping support	Recent move of area Young person's violent and aggressive behaviour	Parents feeling more confident in dealing with young person Situation more stable	Positive
Relationships work	Historical abuse of siblings Chaotic family	Ongoing work, no significant changes to date, volatile and aggressive environment	None
Coping support	Young person is erratic, unpredictable and destructive	Young person accommodated Family more confident in enforcing boundaries	Mixed

CASE STUDY

Jade

Jade, aged 13, usually lives with her mum and younger brother. Recently she had run away and was staying with an aunt as the relationship between Jade and her mum had completely broken down. She had been physically abused by her father in the past (he had left the family home a year ago) and around this time she had become verbally aggressive towards her mum, and had recently started to misuse alcohol. She was referred to ASTRA and started to see a young person's project worker. At referral she wanted to return home to her mums – as she was missing her family – but was unable to control her temper and would lash out at her mother – who herself was at the end of her tether and worn down by the ongoing arguments.

The initial intervention consisted of anger management sessions carried out by the project worker, along with some work around the dangers of alcohol misuse. Jade responded well to the anger management and alcohol work - as she was very motivated to sort things out and go home. Her anger outbursts reduced drastically as did her alcohol intake. At this time a mediation session between mum and Jade was also carried out. However this was not particularly successful – Jade's mum was very angry with her and seemed unable to take on board why Jade was acting the way she was. As the project worker did not want to compromise her own work with Jade – she did not do any substantial work with mum even though they had a good relationship. Jade started to become despondent and frustrated feeling that she was the only one making any changes. The project worker felt that mum was scapegoating Jade for the family's problems because her behaviour had been noticeably aggressive. She also started to feel that she could do nothing more to help the situation.

Shortly after this, the family worker started work at ASTRA and was brought in to work with Jade's mum. The input from the family worker (some individual coping support for mum and a further two mediation sessions – including strategies used to facilitate communication between the family members) and also valuable support from Jade's aunt (who was perceived by workers as very 'emotionally intelligent') helped mum to see how her own behaviour was impacting on the situation and things started to improve dramatically. A couple of weeks later, Jade returned home and the situation stabilised. Jade's mum was referred on to a counselling service by the family worker for help with issues to do with her own childhood. Mum struggled with depression during the course of the work (it had brought up some uncomfortable and painful feelings for her), but with the support of the family worker she was able to put into practice the strategies she had been provided with. In terms of positive change, both Jade, her mum and brother can now accept responsibility for their own actions and they are now talking much more openly. The relationship between Jade and her mum has improved greatly as a direct result of the family work. The family have been reunited.

After the case was closed, Jade and her mum were still able to ring ASTRA for support and encouragement in times of crisis - when the family would be reminded of the strategies they had been given previously. When the family worker became involved, mum engaged fully in the work as did Jade - both were willing and able to effect the changes that were needed. Both wanted to resolve the tensions and enjoy an improved relationship.

The project worker working with the young person commented of this case:

The family worker was a great help to the case – without her the young person would probably not have gone home.

Other learning

We conclude this section with a summary of other key learning points which arose from the interviews with project staff and the data gathering from family members. First we look at four factors which the project staff identified as strengths of the model – independence, flexibility, availability, and realism. Then we go on to discuss some of the challenges and issues experienced through the work – dealing with referrals, team working, dependency and accessing other support.

Perceived strengths of the model

In the experience of the family worker, parents' perception of the independence of the initiative was an important ingredient in its success.

In addition the flexible approach was seen as a strength:

It is very much about responding to individual needs...don't go in with many preconceived ideas...no plans. [Family worker]

The team felt that a rapid response to telephone contacts was important and this was backed up by one of the parents:

I liked the fact that I could call at any time and if no one was available a return call would come quite quickly. [Parent]

Finally, the family worker felt that realism about the extent of the potential for change was vital in giving parents achievable targets to aim for:

Really so long as the young person is happy enough we have achieved our target even if the family is still in chaos. [Family worker]

Again this was the subject of positive comment from a parent

She was really realistic – wasn't a fantasy thing. [Parent]

Dealing with referrals

As explained earlier in the report the initiative was perceived as offering a targeted intervention to families of runaways where other services were not involved. The family worker noted that the work took in two extremes – families where there had been no agency involvement, and cases of 'revolving doors' where families go from one service/scheme to the next.

The project had aimed to maintain a tight focus on the intended target group by only taking referrals via a project worker. This had turned out to be important as there had been some experience of other services attempting to refer families with no direct link to the issue of running away. This was perhaps symptomatic of the shortage of resources for family support services in general.

A few referrals had come directly from parents in distress and parents felt that the project should have advertised the service more:

They don't advertise themselves very well I don't think, that's one thing I don't like...I never knew about it. [Parent]

It would be important to have clear criteria for referral (linked to evidence of running away) if the project publicised the service more widely.

Issues relating to team work

The family work was conceived as part of a team work approach, and workers felt that this had generally been an important feature:

We work in parallel and that really works...it is very powerful. [Project worker]

It was acknowledged, however, that there were issues to resolve around confidentiality and that the project had given this considerable thought:

All issues disclosed during family work will remain confidential to the team. Separate records will be kept and information will be accessed on a 'need to know' basis. No information disclosed during family sessions will be passed on to young people under any circumstances. Similarly, no information provided by young people will be shared with other members of the family. Information may be shared with other professionals only when someone is at risk of harm. [Project documentation]

Parents appeared to have a clear understanding of the separation of the work: “*they are discrete*”. In one case, however, there had evidently been a negative side to the team working from the perspective of a parent who felt that the separation of work with her and her child had created complexity and confusion:

I felt eventually I could not trust the family worker over certain matters. [Parent]

Whilst this is an isolated case, it highlights the fact that this model of working does require absolute clarity about the respective roles of the young person’s worker and the family worker, and about information-sharing between them.

Issues of dependency and gaps in provision

The family work was conceived as a relatively short-term intervention. However in some cases the involvement had become quite lengthy and the family worker had become concerned about the potential for dependency:

Sometimes when you have got a family you do work with very well there is a danger that they can look to you to rescue them all the time and that undermines the whole work we do. [Project worker]

When you get a family you work well with and have had a lot of success with and actually had terrific boosts from because of the success of that family work or whatever sometimes you can be only too keen to go back in on your white horse cos it is really quite a good place to be! [Family worker]

Related to the above point the project had experienced difficulties in helping families to access other support services in the area. Some of the gaps identified included: access to family therapy and counselling, respite care, support from Social Services, and housing issues.

3: Summary and conclusions

This review has covered a small but important development in the field of working with young runaways. Previous research² has identified the tendency of young runaways projects to focus exclusively or primarily on working with young people, and neglecting the potential for work with other family members.

A summary of the main points of the report is as follows:

- During a nine-month period the family worker received 24 referrals and worked in an ongoing way with 14 families.
- The structure of the families was closely comparable to the project's overall user group, and the young people to whom the referrals related were also a fairly broad cross-section, although perhaps slightly more likely to be older females in comparison with the overall user group.
- The referrals, primarily made by project staff, tended more often to relate to young people who had been categorised as either staying away without permission, or having been thrown out, rather than having run away.
- The families referred to the service were clearly facing a range of difficult issues including: structural change, historical and current violence and abuse, challenging behaviour on the part of the young person, and breakdowns in relationships within the family.
- The needs identified at referral broadly fell into two categories: supporting parents in coping with young people's behaviour, and working on improving family relationships.
- The family work was associated with substantial positive change in six of the 14 cases and some positive change in a further four cases.
- Although the sample is too small to draw firm conclusions, it seems that positive change was more likely where 'coping support' was required than where the work involved attempting to improve general relationships. Additionally, the current incidence of violence and abuse, and/or situations where relationships had already substantially broken down, were the least likely to lead to positive change. There are some suggestions also that families undergoing some form of transition were more likely to be susceptible to positive change. These patterns are tentative but could form the basis for some further exploration of the potential for targeted work with the families of young runaways.
- Some of the most important ingredients of the model identified by staff are: independence, flexibility, responsiveness and realism.
- Issues which arose in the course of the work, and which require careful thought in terms of the model, were: team working and boundaries, clarity about referral criteria, risks of dependency, and the lack of other support services to which to refer families.

The learning from this small initiative will hopefully be of value both to the project in further developing its work and also to other people considering undertaking work with the families of young runaways.

² Rees G (2001) *Working with Young Runaways: Learning from Practice*. London: The Children's Society