DIVERTING YOUNG PEOPLE FROM THE VICTORIAN JUSTICE SYSTEM

Pilot Evaluation Report | October 2012

A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION:





Youth Connect has been providing services and support to young people aged 13 – 24 at risk of disengaging or disengaged from Education, Training and Employment for 20 years. This support is provided through one-on-one case management in schools and in the community as well as through group activities including workshops and brokering Vocational Education and Training (VET) Programs. We also work with parents and business to support and educate them about the school, training and university systems including how to recruit and retain young people.

Youth Connect's vision is a community where school to work pathways and career choices for all young people are equally valued and respected.

Right Step is aimed at reducing the number of Recidivist Youth Offenders aged 10–18. The program has been developed through extensive community consultation and a partnership between the Victorian Police the Moorabbin Justice centre and Youth Connect acknowledging that the region is over represented with young Recidivist offenders. The Right Step program provides five key areas that are addressed to support young people and reduce the likelihood of continued risk taking and criminal behaviour. They are; Life Skills, Capacity Building, Information and Referral, Mediation and Mentoring.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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STEERING COMMITTEE

The following people were members of the committee facilitated by Youth Connect over the period of the pilot.

Department of Human Services – Youth Justice

Jenny Anderson Anita Bell Rae Christeson

Moorabbin Justice Centre

Rosemary Carlin Danielle McMullen Stuart Pope Paul Smith

Victorian Legal Aid

Jeremy Cass Leigh Derrick Victoria Harper Ros Porter Bree Solomon

Victoria Police

Sabrina Avedissian Meagan Elkins Mat Griffiths Andrea Lyons Neil Paterson Lisa Prince Jill Shepley Michael Smith Merryn Wallace

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Youth Connect



RightStep

Prepared by Professor Bruce Wilson, **RMIT University**

Presented by Mr Danny Schwarz, Chief Executive Officer Youth Connect For more information on Right Step or the contents

of this report please contact: Danny Schwarz, CEO Youth Connect

3/1001 Nepean Hwy Moorabbin, VIC 3189

Phone (03) 8306 6300

Email d.schwarz@youthconnect.com.au

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All members of the community have the responsibility to provide young people with the opportunity to

IEXIECUTIVIE SUMMARY

RIGHT STEP IS AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO DIVERSION FOR YOUNG OFFENDERS, CURRENTLY IMPLEMENTED ONLY IN THE MOORABBIN CHILDREN'S COURT. IT HAS BEEN OPERATING NOW FOR THREE YEARS UNDER THE AUSPICES OF YOUTH CONNECT, AND HAS ATTRACTED STRONG SUPPORT FROM A RANGE OF STAKEHOLDERS INCLUDING THE MAGISTRATES, POLICE, PARENTS, EMPLOYERS AND POLITICIANS.

It engages more fully with the issues that may have led to the criminal behaviour of the young person, including issues such as substance abuse, homelessness, mental health, family breakdown and disengagement from education, training or employment and provides support which is tailored to the young person's specific needs.

The learning from Right Step is an important resource for the examination of options being undertaken by the government. Youth Connect has undertaken a structured evaluation conducted under the oversight of Professor Bruce Wilson from RMIT University. This report is based on three years of experience and uses the evaluation to provide a detailed understanding of Right Step in the context of the discussion paper.

This report will assist stakeholders to understand how Right Step operates, its early achievements and challenges.

A TIME FOR CHANGE

IT HAS BEEN RECOGNISED FOR DECADES THAT DIVERTING YOUNG OFFENDERS FROM THE FORMAL PROCESSES OF ADJUDICATION IN THE COURT SYSTEM CAN BE VERY SIGNIFICANT, NOT ONLY IN REDUCING RECIDIVISM BUT ALSO IN PROMOTING BETTER OUTCOMES FOR VICTIMS.

Initiatives and programs have ranged from specific actions by police (such as police cautions) to formal interventions which involve a range of stakeholders. Targeted diversionary programs can reduce reoffending, enable young people to avoid the stigma of a conviction, and reduce the workload of the court system (see Cass, nd).

The Right Step program, currently delivered only in the Moorabbin Children's Court is an innovative approach to diversion for young offenders. It has been operating now for three years under the auspices of Youth Connect, and has attracted strong support from a range of stakeholders including the police, magistrates, parents, education providers, employers and politicians. It engages more fully with the issues that may have led to the criminal behaviour of the young person, including issues such as substance abuse, mental health, family breakdown and disengagement from education, training or

Treat young people fairly, taking into account the views of the victims.

employment, and provides support which is tailored and flexible to meet the young person's specific needs. In addressing these specific needs the intensive case management model that Right Step offers aims to ensure that both the criminal behaviour and the reasons that led to the behaviour are supported and addressed. It has the flexibility that it can cater with a young person who needs additional help through having the program extended. Other key features include that it requires the young person to take responsibility for their actions, themselves and not depending entirely on others.

Considerable interest has been shown by senior members of Victoria Police and the justice system including senior members of Victorian Legal Aid, Coordinating Magistrates and the President of the Children's Court of Victoria in the extension of Right Step to other parts of the state; as the initial financial support has been provided from philanthropic sources, it is anticipated that the Right Step model will be included in suite of diversion programs supported and endorsed by the Victorian Government.

PRACTICAL LESSONS, FAIR CONSEQUENCES

THE VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT, THROUGH THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL AND THE MINISTER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES, HAVE RECOGNISED THE OPPORTUNITIES TO ENHANCE MEASURES TO ENABLE YOUNG PEOPLE TO ADOPT A LAW-ABIDING LIFESTYLE.

In August 2012 they released a discussion paper entitled Practical Lessons, Fair Consequences: Improving Diversion for Young People (Department of Justice, 2012), as a means of enabling discussion about opportunities to improve diversionary arrangements, within current resourcing.

The learning from Right Step is an important resource for the examination of options being undertaken by the Ministers. In compiling this Evaluation, a range of documents and statistical evidence were reviewed, and interviews conducted with key stakeholders including young people, parents, and a range of professionals including magistrates, police, youth sector service providers representing different perspectives on the justice system, youth support services and the Right Step program.

Young people look at the reasons for their offending behaviour and do something about it.



BACKGROUND TO RIGHT STEP

THE IDEA FOR RIGHT STEP CAME FROM CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN VICTORIA POLICE AND THE COORDINATING MAGISTRATE IN THE CHILDREN'S COURT AT MOORABBIN IN SOUTH-EASTERN MELBOURNE, WHO WERE CONCERNED AT THE INCREASE IN OFFENDING IN THE REGION AND TO HAVE A BETTER MEANS OF INTERVENTION THAN WAS THEN AVAILABLE.

The intent was to find a process which avoided a finding of guilt, thus preventing a young person's issues becoming more entrenched in the judicial system, and enable the young person to become a contributing and productive member of the community.

The Chief Executive Officer of Youth Connect, a communitybased organisation that supports young people to remain engaged in education, training or employment, became involved in a series of roundtable discussions over 6–8 months. This led to the proposal for a pilot program to be trialled. It was to be targeted at young people living in the municipalities of Bayside, Glen Eira and Kingston who:

- were charged with an offence to be heard in the Children's Court;
- acknowledged the circumstances of the offence;
- had committed an offence which was not too serious; and
- met the criteria of assessment conducted by the Right Step officer.

In addition, the referral to Right Step was to be made by the Police Informant, with the consent of the victim. Once successfully referred to the program and endorsed by the Magistrate, the young person would be required to engage in an intensive eight week program of counselling and case support. This was expected to be sufficient to begin addressing the issues that led to the criminal behaviour by the young person, and fitted with the cycle of Children's Court hearings at Moorabbin (in the third week and fourth week of each month).

RIGHT STEP IMPLEMENTATION

FOLLOWING THE RECRUITMENT OF A CASE MANAGER, SUPPORTED BY MIXED SOURCES OF FUNDING FROM THE PHILANTHROPIC AND COMMUNITY SECTORS INCLUDING ROTARY, THE PROGRAM COMMENCED IN OCTOBER 2009. 32 CLIENTS WERE ASSISTED IN THE FIRST 12 MONTHS.

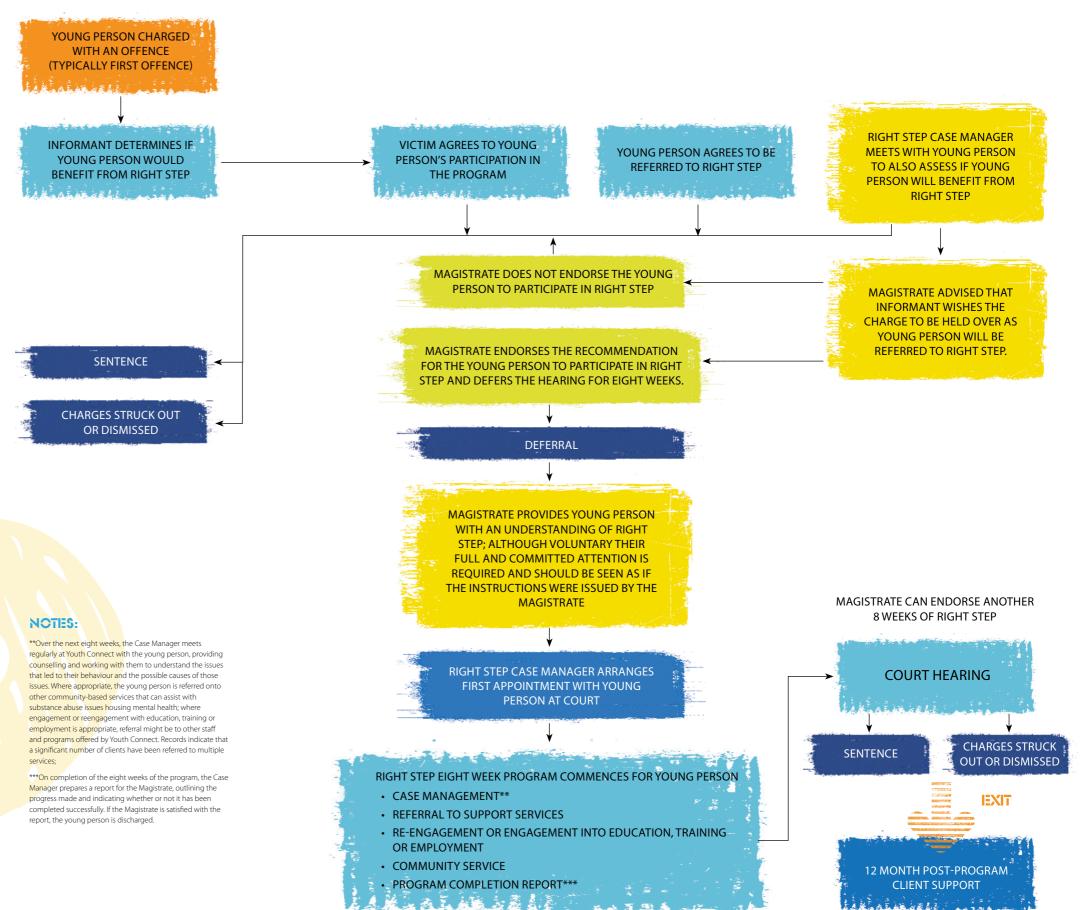
A second Case Manager was employed in October 2010, and a further 68 clients have been supported by Right Step in the two years since then. The most clients at any one time has been 15, but the typical client load is 7–8. Overall, there have been 25 from Bayside, 22 from Glen Eira, and 53 from Kingston.

Right Step has four distinct objectives:

- 1. Individual client outcomes related to: community participation; family and peer connections; information access; celebration of success; and increased collaboration amongst youth justice stakeholders;
- 2. Overall reduction in the level of youth offending and of recidivism amongst the majority of offenders who are eligible for participation in Right Step; and
- 3. Identification of and intensive case managed support to address the issues that led to the criminal behaviour and
- 4. Advocacy for youth justice diversionary programs and legislative change.

The critical intervention is that Right Step is directed at the causes of offending. It is more intensive than other diversionary programs and is able to deal with early offenders, not only those offending for the first time. It offers young people an opportunity to 'explore their side of the story', understand how their life circumstances have led to the offending behaviour, and understand the potential consequences, as well as offering them options which enable them to address the issues that led to the criminal behaviour and support them to break the pattern of offending early.

The following diagram provides an overview of the progression a young person can take once a charge has been laid which results in the requirement of a court appearance.



RIGHT STEP IMPLEMENTATION CONTINUED...

As the program has evolved, the Youth Resource Officers (YROs) in each of the three local government areas have come to play an increasingly important role in liaising with the Right Step Case Manager. They have played a key role in informing other police officers about the program, and promoting its advantages for both young offenders and for the community. Nevertheless, the principle remains very clear that the decision to seek to refer a young offender to Right Step lies with the informant's. Solicitors representing young people have become aware also of the advantages of Right Step and in the absence of any other initiative; there have been instances where they have approached the Police YRO or Right Step Case Manager about the possibility of referral. In those cases, where necessary, the case is adjourned while the YRO checks with the Informant on whether they might choose to make the referral. Underlying each of these processes is care that the respect for the court is not undermined. The young offender also needs to consent to joining the program; two have refused since Right Step began. There have been a small number of cases where the Magistrate has not endorsed the young person's participation in Right Step on the grounds that the offence has been too serious.



When the Right Step report is received in the Court, even where the Magistrate accepts the recommendation and the case does not proceed, there might still be orders for restitution or compensation, but not conviction. In three instances where the program has been completed successfully, the Magistrate has still recorded a conviction; the impact on the rehabilitation of the young people, one of who had offended initially under very stressful personal circumstances, was very damaging. Each of these convictions was overturned on appeal to the County Court.

"If kids are caught up in the court system they tend to stay there, but if they're diverted from it at an early stage they tend not to reoffend."

Glen Eira youth resource officer Senior Constable Lisa Prince: 2009

PROGRAM ACHIEVEMENTS

AT THE TIME OF PREPARING THE EVALUATION REPORT, 100 YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE BEEN REFERRED TO RIGHT STEP, AND HAVE COMPLETED THE PROGRAM, A FURTHER FIVE WERE PROPOSED FOR REFERRAL BUT WERE DEEMED UNSUITABLE BY THE COURT.

This Table provides statistical data of the number of young people that participated in Right Step between October 2009 and October 2012.

	Male	Female	Total
Enrolled in Program	76	24	100
Area:			
Bayside	16	9	25
Glen Eira	17	5	22
Kingston	43	10	53
Offence against:			
Person	44	15	59
Property	115	22	137
Completion, no further offence	50	17	67
Completed yet Reoffended	26	7	33

In short, this data demonstrates that two thirds of program participants have completed successfully and not reoffended; more than three quarters did not reoffend within 6 months. Even amongst the proportion who has reoffended, there were participants for whom some progress towards reengagement has been made, and the severity of the offence has been less than might otherwise have been expected.

While Right Step clients, by definition, are at an early stage of offending, they can bring very serious issues with them. Right Step is a positively demanding program and some clients do drop out. However, it does enable young people to disclose issues of concern in an environment which offers support and access to services, rather than further charges. Often young people who have completed the program successfully and have had their charges discharged continue a link with Right Step, partly as a

source of support, but also because the relationship helps to reduce the ongoing level of risk.

There are a number of risks in the program itself. Firstly, because of the background issues there is a risk of triggering further inappropriate or criminal behaviours. Secondly, some young people seem to enter the program so as to avoid the court process and are quite negative initially; this can waste quite a lot of time. In most instances, the young person has changed once in the program and has become enthusiastic about it. They come to recognise the importance of avoiding a criminal record, and make choices about reengaging with education and training which would not have occurred without Right Step.

Those young people and their parents who agreed to be interviewed typically described the importance of Right Step in stabilising their situations, and offering key support in

reengaging with either school, family or employment. In several cases, the young person was in counselling already, either from a psychologist or drugs and alcohol workers. While some parents could see only short term benefits and felt that the program was too short, others commented on the specific value of support in managing anger. Several referred to the dual benefit of a focus on one hand on greater empowerment of the young person, and the encouragement for them to take greater responsibility for their actions. A significant proportion of the parents interviewed commented on the broader benefits from the program, leading to much more balanced social relationships (not just the diversion from the justice system).

Several interviewees referred to the benefits for the court system and processes. There have been real efficiencies both in reducing demands on court time, and in reducing the elapsed time from the charge being laid to completion of the process.

Feedback from parents also included the following comments:

These in relation to some of the key features of the program

"My child received counselling through the RS program. Both our family and my child benefitted from the support of Youth Connect, which was shown particularly in my child's increased confidence. Support included preparing them for the court processes as well as the counselling to address other issues. There was also a large focus on their interests, making engagement more meaningful."

"My child's counselling was focussed around their interests and was encouraged to reengage

with school and education. The focus around empowering them as well as encouraging them to take responsibility for their actions was ben<mark>eficial for the</mark> vouna person and family."

These in what parents saw as outcomes of the program

"As a result of Right Step, there was a referral to family mediation. Counselling and family mediation was beneficial to family, but my child disengaged. They were encouraged to further their education and as a result engaged in training towards an apprenticeship"

"The support network provided to my child and family was extremely beneficial. Also the huge improvement in their confidence had a positive effect not only for them, but for our family too. They also learnt to take responsibility for their actions and acknowledge the effects of their actions on themselves, family, friends and others."

"Getting my child to take responsibility for their actions and thinking about the effects their criminal behaviour had on their victim, family, friends and self, was one of the most successful elements of the program. It has led them to focus on their future and how they can best apply themselves to succeed in what they want to do"

"Both my child's familial and social relationships have improved since involvement with the RS program. They have maintained a good social network and friends have been supportive. There is more trust between them and our family, and with their improved confidence, they are now speaking up more".

LEARNING ABOUT DIVERSION PROGRAMS

WHILE THE DATA IS LIMITED, THE EVIDENCE FROM RIGHT STEP IS THAT IT HAS HAD A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT IN REDUCING THE RISK OF REOFFENDING, AND OF MINIMISING THE SERIOUSNESS OF SUBSEQUENT OFFENCES, THIS INCLUDES THOSE EXAMPLES OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAVE COMMITTED RELATIVELY SERIOUS OFFENCES.

The overall achievements of Right Step are very positive, in terms of both the success in ensuring that young people complete the program and do not reoffend, and in winning the support of a diverse range of stakeholders. Implementation of the program has illustrated various aspects of diversion programs which warrant careful attention.

CVERALL STRATEGY

Key stakeholders believed that effectiveness of any youth diversionary intervention depended on it being exercised as part of an overall strategy for reducing youth crime. Informal warnings, formal cautions, referral to the ROPES program and Right Step were each appropriate for young people at different stages of offending. From the perspective of Victoria Police at Moorabbin. their overall strategy to reduce youth crime was an important framework within which Right Step had become a key intervention, focused on young offenders who had not responded to the less formal or cautionary advice, and whose backgrounds suggested that a more intensive and supportive intervention might be useful. By implication, Right Step was directed not simply at 'first' offenders, but at those whom had been charged for the first time. While the primary principle was that all young offenders might be entitled

to at least one opportunity to participate in Right Step, there were specific conditions to be met, such as the level of offending, and their preparedness to be in the program. Each case was to be assessed on its merits.

OTHER DIMERSIONARY CIPTIONS WITHIN MCTORIA

These are a number of diversionary interventions available in other parts of Victoria. As part of this evaluation process and research undertaken about the other programs, it was evident that Right Step is a more intensive and individualised program.. Right Step requires a commitment which extends over eight weeks and engages with a range of underlying issues which might have contributed to unacceptable behaviour. It is appropriate for those young people who have to face a range of background challenges as it offers a much more concentrated and extensive process and enables them to be connected with specialist services. Other programs have been successful in enhancing trust and connections between some young people and police officers, whereas Right Step offers a more comprehensive framework of support and pathways to engagement or re-engagement in education, training, employment and the community.

ROLE OF THE RIGHT STEP CASE MANAGER

The role of the Right Step Case Manager is critical. Their counselling expertise requires the personal capabilities to form open and trusting relationships with young offenders who are encountering the justice system typically for the first time, to identify appropriate interventions and encourage successful take up of those opportunities. It has proven to be useful to have a sound understanding of Youth Justice, a clear understanding of the theoretical principles which underpin diversion programs, and a very close set of relationships with other key local service providers. It is important also to have available appropriate organisational support and professional supervision, and access to timely and relevant professional development. Applicable to the Right Step program, a sound knowledge of regionally based programs and services that can support, engage and re-engage participants has played an integral role in the success of the case management role.

> Right Step develops young people's pro-social skills, recreational skills and self-esteem.

One respondent set out the

Right Step Case Manager:

behaviour

and

following selection criteria for a

A good understanding of youth

Really good knowledge of the

Capacity to build good rapport

Good knowledge of various

strong case management to

establish goals, make positive

strides and reinforce success

A capacity to support a young

person to overcome barriers.

enable young person to

pathways opportunities

children's justice system

with young people

The quality of relationship amongst the last involved in the implementation of the program is critical. The two primary roles are the YRO and the Right Step Case Manager, with other key partners being the Victorian Legal Aid solicitors, the prosecutors and key community services who provide specialist support to young people undertaking the program.

> The YRO in particular is a key bridge amongst police officers, local government, schools, community organisations and young people themselves. Their effectiveness depends on their capacity to generate trust and to promote better understanding of the perspectives of others. Working with Informants to support referral of offenders to Right Step requires them to have a good understanding of local young people, the potential value of diversion, of the program itself and of the wider service system. They work across the three local government areas and so are under pressure regularly to be visible and in touch with local issues.

Not all police officers know of Right Step, nor do they agree immediately. However, most have been prepared to give it a go and believe that through increased professional development they will be able to make better decisions about diversionary options.

The role of other community services is critical, both general vouth support services, specialist services in drugs, alcohol, housing and health and Youth Connect's

own education and employment programs and services. Right Step is very active not only in linking a young offender with these services, but provides active support such as transport and support in a first appointment, until there is a clear indication that the young person will take advantage of the service. This has led to really good inter-service working relationships. Records indicate that Right Step has formed good working relationships with more than 40 partnering services.



CVERVIEW OF THE PARTNERSHIP CONNECTIONS

LOCAL GOVERNMENT YOUTH SERVICES MOORABBIN JUSTICE CENTRE SOUTHERN YOUTH YOUTHCONNECT JUSTICE UNIT RightStep EDUCATION PROVIDERS LEGAL AID

LEARNING ABOUT DIVERSION PROGRAMS CONTINUED

MAGISTRATIES' SUPPORT

This has been a significant issue for the program, demonstrating that the effectiveness of implementation depends very much on clarity of roles and partnership amongst the key stakeholders. In all bar three situations, the reports presented at the conclusion of an offender's Right Step program have been accepted by the Magistrate, reflecting the level of confidence and mutual respect which has been achieved.

However, in two instances, Magistrates' have rejected a positive Right Step report and recorded a conviction against the young offender. Victorian Legal Aid has then appealed successfully against the convictions, ensuring the terms on which the police, the victim, the offender and Youth Connect had cooperated are honoured.

In other cases, Magistrates have used their discretion to require a case to be heard rather than referred to Right Step, on the grounds that the offences were sufficiently serious that diversion would not be considered an appropriate response. In general, these situations demonstrate a lack of clarity in the formal or legislated expectations or guidelines for the roles of the Magistrates, and the importance of maintaining the integrity of the program so that the mutuality of the partnership can be sustained.

Each Magistrate has the right to exercise their own judgement; the only quide is the statute which gives very wide powers, subject to Supreme Court decisions. One construction of the role is that referral is actually an exercise in prosecutorial discretion, and that it is by implication the Informant who withdraws the charge if the program is completed successfully, leading to the discharge. This is not a sentencing matter.

One suggestion has been that it would be useful to prepare a Briefing Note for Magistrates so that they can understand more about the intent of the program, and see their role in perspective. This could be very useful for new Magistrates coming to the Children's Court.

In a letter of support for funding a Magistrate noted:

"The program allows the court to work with community organisations to bring about the rehabilitation of young offenders. Youth offending is a community problem, and it is fitting that community organisations with the requisite skills be involved in reducing the incidence of youth offending."

TARGET GROUP/ **CLIENT ELIGIBILITY**

Most of the key stakeholders interviewed to date believe that 70–80 per cent of first-time young offenders would benefit from Right Step. For various reasons, they have become associated with the 'wrong' group and the issue needs to be addressed early.

'I am overwhelmed by your drive and passion for the support of our future's youth and the amount of work it takes to make a change in their lives. Thank you all so very much'. Parent of Right Step participant;

February 2012

The key elements of the reorientation are seen to be accepting responsibility for the offending, understanding why it occurred, finding other pathways (related to education, training and employment) and building skills to deal with risk situations.

This presumes that the eight week program is sufficient for them to get help with underlying issues, and in some cases an extended period might be preferable; this has been agreed for a small number of participants.

prosecutors and Magistrates have sentence.

CONCLUSION

THERE ARE MANY CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE A YOUNG PERSON SHOULD BE ABLE TO AVOID A CRIMINAL RECORD. THIS IS A KEY OBJECTIVE AND INCENTIVE OF RIGHT STEP. THE OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE A SECOND CHANCE IS A KEY MOTIVATING FORCE TO ENCOURAGE YOUNG PEOPLE TO REFLECT ON THEIR BEHAVIOUR, IDENTIFY BARRIERS AND ISSUES WHICH MAY BE PREVENTING THEM ON THEIR PATHWAY TO GREAT ENGAGEMENT.

There are mechanisms which could be implemented to improve Right Step. At present, the Police Youth Resource Officers (YRO) play a critical role in coordinating various aspects of the Right Step program. This reflects partly the importance of Informants being responsible for the initial decision to refer a young person to Right Step. However, the effectiveness of the coordination depends on the overall workload and orientation of the YRO. The longer-term sustainability of the program depends on a mechanism being developed within Victoria Police to support the broad framework of diversion initiatives in Victoria

There has also been some discussion regarding involvement from the legal representatives who could do more of the background work currently undertaken by the Police YRO's.

Within the resource constraints faced by governments a comprehensive review of costs of the justice systems would recognise that very significant savings accrue from preventing young people from having prolonged contact with the justice system, and particularly corrections. The re-allocation of current resources to diversion programs such as Right Step,

together with embedding such programs within the system, would reduce significantly the costs of managing young people in the justice and corrections systems. While it has not been possible to undertake a detailed cost-benefit analysis of Right Step, the indications are the cost per client is no greater than \$2,500 to \$3,500 per capita.

The flexibility of the case managed model means that Right Step has and is able to work with groups with specific needs such as young people with disabilities, CALD and Koorie young people and young people at risk of disengaging.

While Right Step is currently funded by the Philanthropic Sector it is an initiative from the community sector in collaboration with the Police and the Justice system which Victoria can learn to both adopt the successes and avoid the failures of Right Step.

The availability of a communityfocused service system which can provide young people with support in relation to education, housing, employment, substance abuse and more general engagement opportunities is a key part of the effectiveness of the Right Step program. Clients, their parents and other stakeholders report on the value of the

who have been charged with the same offence. However, both disagreed at times with whether an offence is too severe or not. Cases are excluded from referral also where there is a mandatory

The broad view of the Right Step

could be referred in relation to

Steering Group is that an offender

almost any offence, depending on

the circumstances, the nature of

the young person's participation,

and the response of the young

the behaviour of young people

person themselves. This is because

there is such a wide divergence in

connections that have been made through local partnerships with a network of service providers.

Youth Connect endorses the Smart Justice for Young People principles that must underpin any diversion framework for young peo<mark>ple.</mark>

There has been widespread acceptance amongst key stakeholders about the effectiveness of Right Step in diverting a significant proportion of beginning young offenders into more productive pathways which increase community well-being and safety, and reduce the costs of the justice system.

Reference

Cass, J., nd 'Improving Diversion and Bail Support Services for Young People in Victoria' Victoria Legal Aid, Melbourn

Young people look at the reasons for their offending behaviour and to do something about it

CASE STUDY 01

BACKGROUND

Young male aged 17 years old.

Matt* was charged with robbery, theft, assault and graffiti.

RIGHT STEP PROCESS

Matt met with the Right Step (RS) Case Manager and expressed his desire to work on getting back on track.

Matt was accepted onto the program and during the assessment phase the following issues were identified:

- Anger management
- Breakdown of significant family relationships
- Disengagement from
 education
- Exploitation by employer
- With his Case Manager the following plan was agreed too.
- Engage in counselling to
 address anger
- Improve communication and relationships with family members
- Address issues with employer
- Reconnect with education or employment
- Gain understanding of
 importance of education
- Seek alternative employment
- Participate in community service as restitution for fine incurred as a result of robbery charge
- Build and demonstrate rapport with adults and customers through community service placement

- Demonstrate dedication to community service placement via attendance and punctuality
- Demonstrate good work ethic at community service placement by being enthusiastic and following orders
- Develop a savings plan in order to be able to repay \$1000 fine incurred as a result of robbery charge as well as explore savings concepts.

OUTCOMES

Matt was referred to and attended counselling sessions with a Youth Connect psychologist and through this worked on his anger and relationship issues. This proved extremely effective, evidenced by significant changes in his interpersonal communication and interaction in particular with his family and friends.

RS case manger supported Matt's to re-evaluate his current employment environment that was impacting his ability to rehabilitate as the employer provided him with minimal support in working towards securing an apprenticeship. RS case manager referred for individualised employment support however through the course of his counselling he decided that his preference was to return to school. He was then provided with support by Youth Connect to enrol into an Alternative Community Education program.

RS case manager referred Matt received an opportunity to participate in community service via a local opportunity shop. Matt participated in community service at this venue three times. Through this experience Matt built and demonstrated good rapport with the supervisor and other employee's. Matt demonstrated good work ethic via following instructions and having a positive attitude. Newly developed communication skills were put into practice whilst serving of customers. Matt was punctual and attended all participation days offered

Feedback from Opportunity shop supervisor was positive, supervisor stated that Matt was a friendly, respectful and polite young man. Matt was extremely helpful to the opportunity shop and all employees enjoyed having him in board. The opportunity shop supervisor stated she enjoyed exploring the opportunity of having a young person help out for community service and would be something she would engage in again.

RS Case manager and Matt collaborated to develop a small savings plan in order for Matt to begin to pay the \$1000 fine. Matt managed to save up the sum of \$250 during Right Step. RS case manager acknowledged this achievement positively, Matt also acknowledged this and stated he now understands the concepts and rewards of saving.

POSITIVE 'RIGHT STEP'

As a result of his active participation in the program, Matt's court report was able to reflect in real terms the action he had taken over 8 weeks to address his problem behaviours and begin taking his life in a new and more positive direction. Through Matt's enduring connections to the community which had been developed through his reengagement in education and his connection with Youth Connect, upon returning to court his charges were dismissed and his fine was also cleared in light of \$250 he had saved towards it and the community service he had undertaken demonstrating remorse for his offences.

At the 1 month follow up it was ascertained that the Matt had not reoffended, was still engaged in counselling, that his anger issues were well under control, his interpersonal relationships prospering and he reengaged into education. Matt reported that he felt he had gained a great deal from the program, that his life was very different, that he felt more able to cope effectively when things didn't go well and that he felt positive knowing that he could turn to Youth Connect for additional support at any time should he need it. *De-identified to protect the

young person's privacy

CASE STUDY C2

BACKGROUND

Young female aged 14 years old. Susan* was charged with shop steal.

RIGHT STEP PROCESS

Susan met with the Right Step (RS) Case Manager. She expressed her desire to work towards getting back on track and addressing the issues that may have influenced her to offend. Susan was accepted onto the program and during the assessment phase the following issues were identified:

- Anger management
- Anxiety
- Peer group pressure
- Disengagement from
 education
- Client Action Plan:
- Attend 8 sessions over 8 weeks
- Engage in counselling to
 address anger and anxiety
- Reconnect with education
- dentify underlying issues
- Connect to relevant services
- Engage in social activity to assist in preventing recidivist behaviour

OUTCOMES

Susan actively participated in the Right Step Program and attended all appointments except one which was due to illness. During the appointments, Susan was willing to discuss and explore the offending behaviour in a productive and open manner. Susan identified peer pressure and seeking of peer acceptance as an underlying issue to the offending behaviour. This also triggered anxiety and anger issues that she wanted to manage.

RS Case manger supported Susan to explore benefits of addressing these issues. Susan obtained a mental health care plan in order and attended counselling sessions with a Youth Connect psychologist.

RS Case manger also identified a need for Susan to re-evaluate her current school attendance record and supported Susan to understand the importance of education and school attendance. Future aspirations to complete school and begin a career in Hairdressing came from this exploration. Susan improved school attendance during Right Step.

It was also discussed that Susan would benefit from engaging in extra curricula/social activities that will improve her confidence, social skills and have a positive impact on her rehabilitation. Susan reengaged in Gymnastics classes as an after school recreational activity.

POSITIVE 'RIGHT STEP'

As a result of her active participation and positive experience in the Right Step program, Susan has since developed new friendships and the seeking of peer acceptance and experience of peer pressure has ceased. Susan became up-to-date on previous school work she fell behind and her teachers are now complimenting her efforts and commitment to completing her education. Susan continues to attend her Gymnastic classes which keeps her challenged, provides an opportunity to socialise outside of school and continues to keep her connected with the community.

She demonstrated remorse for her actions and spoke to the RS Case Manager about also developing a sympathetic and understanding attitude towards business owners and the financial burden caused by her offence, as well as an awareness of the negative implications caused by this offence to herself, her family and the community. Susan understands the implications of having a criminal record and how it could impact on her achieving her career aspiration of undertaking a traineeship and securing employment.

Susan's court report was able to reflect in real terms the dedication and action she had taken over eight weeks to address her problem behaviours and begin taking her life in a new and more positive direction. Susan returned to court and had her charges dismissed by the Magistrate.

During the post program support, Susan has continued to remain engaged with education and gymnastics and has not reoffended.

Susan has also ceased counselling as she feels she has been able to overcome issues through engagement in gymnastics and education.

*De-identified to protect the young person's privacy



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Level 3, 1001 Nepean Hwy, Moorabbin, Victoria, 3189 P (03) 8306 6300 F (03) 8306 6301 E info@youthconnect.com.au www.youthconnect.com.au