

## Update Number 1: Project Outline

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### 1. Background

The principal elements of Risk and Response are concerned with the development of concepts of risk, as defined by care and control agencies, and how these are translated into information gathering, dissemination, and ultimately action, related to intervening and responding to the needs of those young people who are at the greatest risk from drug use.

This project is being conducted by Lifeline Projects and is a commission from the Drugs Prevention Advisory Service. The project is due to be completed by the summer of 2002.

#### 1.1 Project Aims & Objectives

##### 1.1.1 Aim

To distinguish and disseminate principles of useful practice in identifying and addressing the needs of high risk target groups of young people in relation to reducing the harm of drug use.

##### 1.1.2 Objectives

A number of objectives identified in the project may be summarised as:

- To identify how concepts of risk are understood and defined;
- To explore the mechanisms via which information on individuals and groups is gathered and disseminated as it relates to identified risk;
- To identify useful interventions triggered by identified risk;
- To assess the extent to which useful practice dovetails with existing programmes, including those designed to address drug use specifically and those subsidiary to this aim;
- To disseminate useful practice that may be used to enhance practice and interventions.

### 2. Introduction

There is a substantial body of literature, grounded in academia, policy and practice, which examine risk factors as precursors for young people using drugs. The range of factors is diverse, and includes: having a drug using parent or guardian; being in care; and being (self-) excluded from school. However, it should be stressed a linear relationship between identified risk and resultant drug use does not necessarily occur. Therefore, to suggest that all those young people who have been in care will develop drug using behaviour is unsafe. However, it can be asserted that they, as a group, are at greater risk than the general population of young people. It is the intention of Risk and Response to develop an understanding of how those young people with the

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potential of greatest risk can be identified early enough to enable the targeting of interventions that attempt to reduce the harm associated with drug use.

### **3. Approach**

A timeline, running from pre-birth to 19, forms the conceptual foundation for the project. Risk and Response will use this timeline to plot risk factors, interventions and current programmes to provide a guide for future young people's planning. This work will be supplemented by examples of current intervention practice at strategic points along the timeline. Interventions will include both those aimed at individuals and those targeted at specific groups. In addition to providing particular insights at specific points on the timeline, each example will be used to explore common themes such as assessment, information sharing, and engagement.

The figure on the facing page illustrates key features of the project. While it is not an exhaustive list, a number of risk factors are given. Each has the potential for impact within specific time frames. Their accumulative effect should also be recognised. Each factor represents the potential for a response trigger, be this either via assessment of the individual (e.g. presentation to a YOT) or via strategic planning (e.g. Youth Inclusion Programmes identifying the Hot 50). This interplay is the key dynamic to the project.

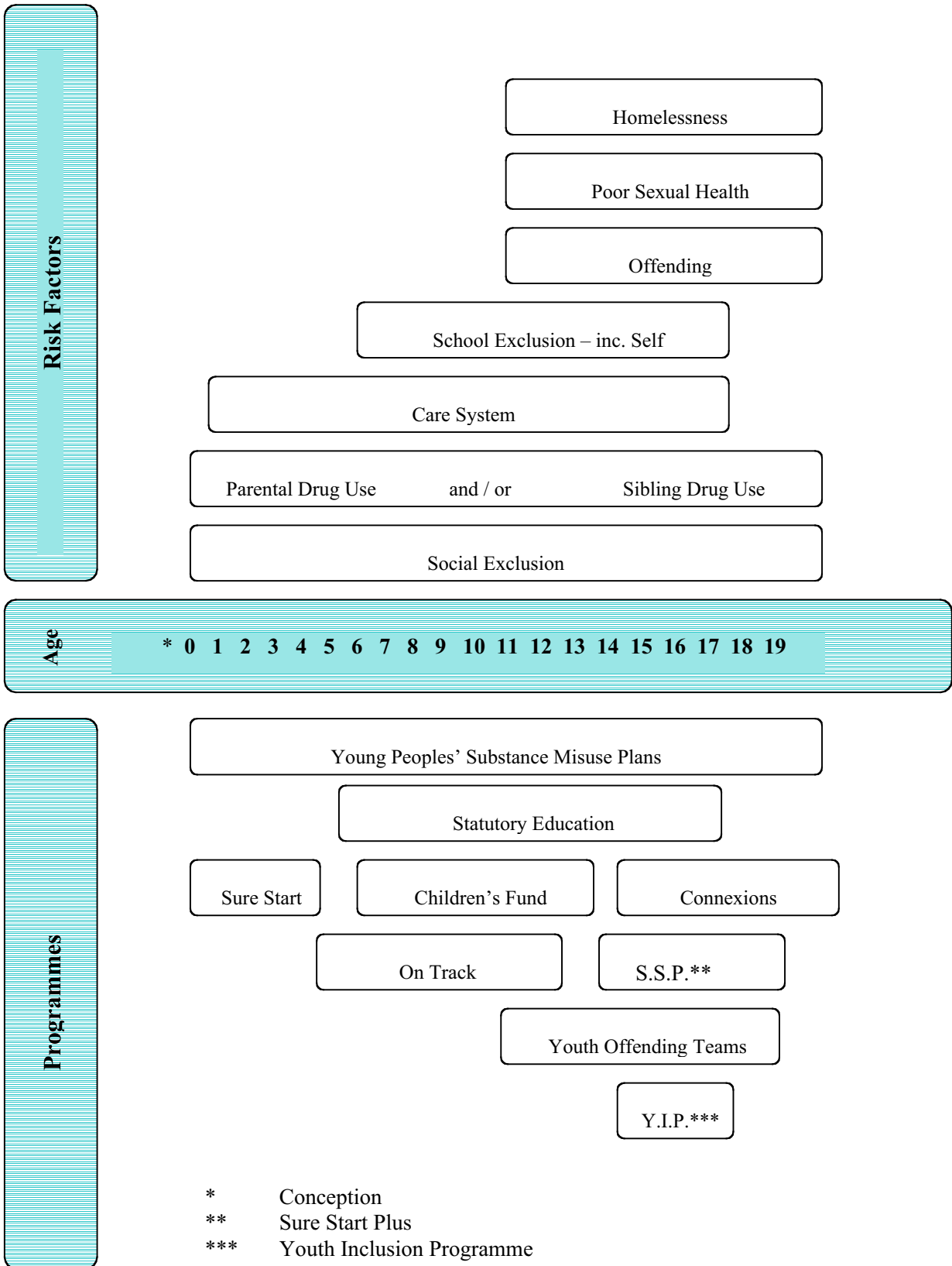
Within this interplay Risk and Response will pursue a critique of risk factors, their role in assessment, the extent to which they drive intervention and their role in generating information on individuals and groups of young people identified as being at risk. Often viewed in juxtaposition with risk factors are protective factors (e.g. positive family relations). These will also factor in the exploration of risk and attention paid to their potential to act against, or to buffer, the actual or potential impact of risk.

An exploration of information management and sharing will also be made to ascertain the extent to which information is and may be shared, its accuracy, and the extent to which agencies not responsible for the generation of the original data act upon it.

The figure opposite also shows a selection of programmes and the ages across which they operate. Some have specific drugs components others do not. It is the intention of Risk and Response to match risk factor analysis to existing programmes and while the project will be concerned with traditional approaches and responses (e.g. YOTs and referrals to specialist drugs agencies) there is also the intention to concentrate efforts further down the timeline in the early years and non drug specific programmes (e.g. Sure Start).

Risk and Response will be concerned with both individual specific and community based interventions and their interplay. Known useful practice will be included and supplemented by examples of interventions at strategic points on the timeline. It is the intention to build a body of knowledge as the project progresses and disseminate that knowledge as it is gathered.

**Risk and Response Timeline:**  
**Risk Factors And Intervention Programmes**



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#### **4. Partners**

A number of examples of useful practice are currently being sought as illustrations of activity at strategic points along the timeline. It is hoped that, amongst other, these will include:

- One stop shops for pregnant drug users;
- Positive parenting for early years – specifically targeted at drug using parents;
- Common assessment tools for young people;
- Specific interventions for minority ethnic communities.

Risk and Response is currently contacting DAT co-ordinators, senior policy makers, commissioners, service providers and those responsible for managing data and information systems. Following the establishment of contacts with key examples, a wider search will be made to identify pockets of useful practice elsewhere.

#### **5. Outcome**

Informed by a comprehensive literature review and referenced to national policy priorities, the outcome of Risk and Response will be a report and a series of events aimed at providing guidance for young people's drug strategy planning. Furthermore, it is our intention to bring together substance misuse and children's service planning to draw attention to work that could be done in this area.

#### **6. Update Number Two**

The next Update will be sent out to you in October and will focus upon drugs, childbirth and ante-natal services. If you have any comments to make in relation to this or any other issue please contact us, we would be happy to hear from you.

#### **7. Contact Details**

Risk and Response is being carried out by the Research Department of Lifeline Projects. The key staff currently working on the project are:

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