YOUTH DESIGN AGAINST CRIME
A catalyst for change amongst young people

Andrew B. Wootton, Dr Caroline L. Davey and Melissa Marselle

Design Against Crime Solution Centre, The University of Salford
a.wootton@salford.ac.uk

Abstract

The literature reveals a number of programmes across Europe to involve young people in design, planning and/or community safety. This paper describes a programme developed by the Design Against Crime Solution Centre in partnership with the young people's charity Catch22 that engages young people in design-led crime prevention—Youth Design Against Crime (YDAC). The programme is novel in that it targets young people labelled as 'at risk of offending' or 'problem individuals' by the police or education system. Supported by youth workers and teachers, and mentored by local police officers, teams of young people are challenged to address issues of crime and community safety occurring in the area in which they live using a process of research and design developed by the Solution Centre. Three such YDAC projects have been initiated to date. This paper shows how the development of research, team working, creative thinking and design skills can enable groups of young people labelled 'problem individuals' to develop solutions to real problems in their communities and convince key stakeholders of the value of their design ideas.

Introduction

Crime and security are key issues for children and young adults. In England & Wales, the British Crime Survey reveals that adults aged 16 to 24 experience higher levels of victimisation than other age groups (Flatley *et al*, 2010). Furthermore, the 2006 Offending, Crime and Justice Survey shows that just over a quarter (26%) of young people aged between 10 and 25 had been a victim of either personal theft or of violent assault in the last 12 months (Roe & Asche, 2008).

Young people—especially males—are also more at risk of committing criminal offences or engaging in anti-social behaviour. The risk of offending peaks between 14 and 24 years, and then declines. Offending is especially high amongst young people exposed to neglect, violence and abuse in childhood. Children are more likely to become delinquent or offenders if living in families on low income, with a history of

unemployment. Offenders are prone to negative beliefs and emotions, including low self-control, anger, hate and distrust of others. They seek the immediate rewards that criminal activities appear to offer—rather than longer term life goals—and adopt a confrontational style that may mitigate against educational and career success (Burt *et al,* 2006).

The general public generally associate young people 'hanging around' in the urban environment with crime and, more often, anti-social behaviour—often assuming that all young people are a potential threat. These expectations and experiences can generate feelings of insecurity and reduce quality of life—especially amongst vulnerable groups, such as older people—and may act as a barrier to citizens visiting certain locations, using particular amenities or participating in neighbourhood activities (ICVS, 2007; Walker *et al*, 2009).

Crime prevention methods to reduce feelings of insecurity amongst users of the urban environment often 'target' young people for surveillance or expulsion, moving them on and punishing persistent offenders with exclusion orders. In the UK, the "mosquito" device (listed in the Home Office's (2006) Respect Action Plan to tackle anti-social behaviour) and so-called 'Manilow method' employ sonic techniques (in the latter case, 'uncool' music) as a means to encourage young people away from public areas (http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/cliff-vs-the-asbo-kids-481920.html). In addition, amenities such as seating may be removed and Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) issued to exclude young people.

The design approach to community safety—what we term '*Community Safety by Design'*—offers alternative methods for dealing with feelings of insecurity, anti-social behaviour and crime issues related to young people. Such methods are designed to meet some or all of the following objectives:

■ To engage young people in activities related to design, planning, urban development and community safety

■ To support young people interested in gaining skills and knowledge related to creativity, problem solving, design, planning, communication and teamwork.

■ To provide young people with the skills and confidence to effectively contribute to design, planning and community safety processes and procedures

■ To develop mechanisms that support meaningful engagement between young people and key stakeholders—where young people's ideas can be heard

■ To develop mechanisms that allow young people and stakeholder groups to critically evaluate ideas and implement solutions that meet the needs of young people and improve actual and perceived community safety.

This paper describes one such *Community Safety by Design* programme to engage young people in design-led crime prevention, developed by the Design Against Crime Solution Centre in partnership with the young people's charity Catch22—Youth Design Against Crime (YDAC). Supported by youth workers and teachers, and mentored by local police officers, teams of young people are challenged to address issues of crime and community safety in the area they live using a process of research and design developed by the Solution Centre. Each YDAC project involves four or five groups of up to nine young people, and a partnership of outreach workers, community

organisations and schools. The project is supported by key local stakeholders in community safety, such as the police, planners and local councils.

The literature reveals a number of programmes across Europe that aim to engage young people in design, planning and/or community safety. The YDAC programme is novel in that it is aimed at young people with 'behavioural problems' that have come to the attention of school and/or police authorities. This paper shows how the development of research, team working, creative thinking and design skills can enable groups of young people labelled 'problem individuals'—and, in some cases, considered at risk of offending—to develop solutions to real problems and convince key stakeholders of the value of their design ideas.

Young people and urban environments

As already stated, young people in the urban environment are often associated with problems of crime and anti-social behaviour. Typical behaviours considered problematic include: groups of young people 'hanging out' on street corners or in public space, intimidating (often by their mere presence) those who walk by; bicycles and motorbikes being used in public spaces where they 'don't belong'; ball games that disturb residents or damage property; and skateboarders who use items of street furniture as jumps, 'grind rails' and obstacles in their play (van Soomeren & Flight, 2010). However, such behaviour—although potential anxiety inducing amongst some groups—is generally not criminal or even anti-social.

The majority of young people are law-abiding. In England & Wales, over three-quarters (78%) of young people aged from 10 to 25 had not committed any of the 20 core offences covered by the 2006 survey in the last 12 months. Just over a fifth (22%) of young people aged between 10 and 25 years reported that they had committed at least one of the 20 core offences in the previous 12 months. Amongst those that did break the law, many did so only occasionally or committed relatively trivial offences. Four per cent of 10- to 25-year-olds were both frequent and serious offenders, while one per cent had committed serious offences frequently (Roe & Ashe, 2008 p. 6).

In the UK, designers and crime prevention experts have attempted to design facilities that specifically cater to the needs of young people, enabling them to safely 'hang out' and play ball games without causing fear or disturbance to other users or local residents. A key aspect of designing successfully for young people is effective and meaningful consultation. This encourages young people to 'own' and use facilities, discourages vandalism and helps resolve competing needs and requirements. (See: DAC case studies on Hulme Park in Manchester and Northmoor in West Yorkshire, Davey *et al,* 2002; and guidelines on developing 'Youth Shelters' by Hampshire & Wilkinson, 1999).

In Germany, a programme funded by the Federal Ministry for Transport, Building and Urban Affairs has enabled young people to contribute more fully to the development of cultural and physical aspects of urban environments, towns and cities. *"Jugend macht Stadt!"* (in English, *Youth makes the City!*) enables young people to participate in developing and implementing a whole range of model projects tailored both to their needs and the local context. Example projects include: the development of facilities and spaces for young people; musical events for young people in unused parts of the city; a 'manifesto' for young people to communicate their views on the future development of

the city; the creation of film and music pieces about young people and the city. The projects counter the view that young people are a 'problem' and demonstrate that young people should be considered a key element of the city and its future (BMVBS, 2010a & b).

A number of the *Jugend macht Stadt!* projects were presented at an innovative seminar in Germany organised by the architecture and planning consultancy Plan Zwei. The event involved leading politicians, subject experts and professionals, but was co-chaired by a group of young people—a fact that successfully demonstrated to adult participants the value of youth involvement in urban affairs. The seminar resulted in a leading politician from the Federal Ministry for Transport, Building and Urban Affairs offering to consult with a group of 10 to 20 young people and their representatives on a regular basis.

In the Netherlands, research, design and urban management consultancy DSP-groep has worked with the Dutch Ministry of Youth and Families and the Dutch National Playground Association (see www.NUSO.nl) to develop facilities for young people. It has also developed *'Kids & Space'* for involving young people in the development of plans for public space *(see www.kidsandspace.nl)*. Kids & Space enables young people aged between 12 and 18 years to make their wishes known and develop ideas for public space and built facilities. The young people develop plans, build models and present their ideas to city planners. DSP-groep employs experts in the fields of socially safe design, youth participation and neighbourhood development, who work in cooperation with (multi) cultural organisations and schools. The programme takes around three months, but can be adapted to different contexts and clients. Information about the projects is disseminated via websites such as www.livingstreets.org.uk).

Youth Design Against Crime

Background

The Design Against Crime (DAC) Solution Centre has been supporting designers in addressing problems of crime, anti-social behaviour and feelings of insecurity since 2000 (Davey et al, 2002; Design Council, 2003; Town, Davey & Wootton, 2003; Wootton & Davey, 2003, 2005 & 2007). The term 'design' does not simply refer to the physical design of the environment or products within it, but also relates to: (a) the process of research, analysis and evaluation; and (b) the formulation of integrated systems of delivery and value adopted by stakeholders. The Solution Centre's values, methods and approach are informed by Human-Centred Design and Systems Design—a focus on the constituent systems of meaning, learning, delivery (practice) and value (impact). Recent research projects have focused on community safety and addressing the social causes of crime in existing environments, which led to the Solution Centre supporting the development of the Youth Design Against Crime Programme.

The research project *"City Centre Crime: Cooling Crime Hotspots by Design" (Aug 2007 – Jul 2008)* investigated problems areas (so-called crime hotspots) in Manchester's city centre, and involved the development of a methodology for determining the relationship between the design, management and use of the urban environment and crime problems occurring within it. The research project resulted in 20 practical design interventions to address crime and anti-social behaviour issues. The

implementation of one intervention was widely publicised and led to the Solution Centre being contacted by the UK charity Catch22 about the possibility of engaging young people in design against crime.

The Youth Design Against Crime Programme

In collaboration with the charities Catch 22 and Prudential for Youth, the Solution Centre developed the *Youth Design Against Crime* programme to enable young people to generate ideas to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour problems in their neighbourhoods. The programme acknowledges that young people are often seen as "trouble-makers" and that their opinions of ignored by adults. It offers teams of young people the opportunity to challenge such stereotypes by creatively tackling crime and anti-social behaviour in their community and developing design ideas that "make a real difference". In addition, young people completing the programme an associated workbook, have the chance to gain ASDAN Wider Skills Level 2 Problem-solving accreditation—which is equivalent to a higher grade GCSE (Manchester Workbook, 2009, p2).

The YDAC programme is structured to run over an eight to ten week period, as shown in Figure 1, below.

Week 1:	– Deciding on a focus area – Understanding the challenge and setting ground rules
Weeks 2 & 3:	– Scanning & mapping – Assessing the problem – Developing a place-centred map – Completing a Problem Profile
Weeks 5 & 6:	– Developing a response to the problem – Brainstorming design ideas – Evaluating ideas – Reviewing – Select final design – Collecting feedback about final design
Weeks 7 & 8:	– Developing a visual format for the final idea – Model, drawing or poster development – Presentation development and rehearsal – Completing the YDAC workbook
Week 9:	– Hand in completed YDAC workbook – Participate in YDAC Showcase Event

Figure 1 – Example YDAC programme schedule

The young people choose the area on which their team will focus in week 1. Some focus areas explored in YDAC projects so far include: a misused public park; an underused playground; a motorway underpass / subway; a shopping centre walkway; and an area of public seating. The young people also undertake team-building activities, including identifying individual strengths and weaknesses and creating a team name.

The *Scanning & Mapping* stage (weeks 2 & 3) involves identifying an area to focus on, considering why the area is important to team members and identifying whether this area needs improvement and why. This enables young people to tackle problems of concern to them, and to use their own personal experience to identify and understand issues.

In collaboration with the police mentor, the team members must research crime and anti-social behaviour problems in the area as experienced by other users. This might involve discussions with police officers, interviews with local people (e.g. residents, shopkeepers and management and maintenance staff) and visiting websites (e.g. www.upmystreet.com and www.mindyourstreet.com). The young people are provided with a template and questions for conducting a structured interview to identify the location of problems and the causal factors associated with crime and anti-social behaviour. The research enables the young people to understand the problems and issues from the perspective of different stakeholder groups—offering the potential for design concepts to be developed that meet the requirements of other stakeholder groups. It also opens up a process of consultation with local people.

From information collected from interviews, site visits and observation, the young people develop a 'Place-centred Map' detailing changes in legitimate and illegitimate usage of the area over time. For example, this might indicate where young people choose to 'hang out' (and why), where families choose to gather (and why), and the activities taking place in different areas at different times.

Through this work, the young people also identify the most common / serious crime and anti-social behaviour issues, and gain insight into their causes by developing a 'Problem Profile'. This involves organising their research findings about offenders, victims and the environment into a structured format that helps identify the causal factors associated with different crime or anti-social behaviour issues.

In weeks 5 & 6, the group use creative ideation and brainstorming methods to develop design concepts in response to the problems identified. These design ideas are evaluated by the young people in terms of their potential impact on users, on crime and anti-social behaviour and on the quality of the area. The group also considers whether any aspects of their design proposals might cause the seriousness of crime or ASB problems to increase. A final design concept is selected and further feedback sought from stakeholders regarding its strengths and weaknesses (Manchester Workbook, 2009).

In weeks 7 & 8, the young people develop drawings, models, presentation materials and argument to communicate the benefits of their final design proposal to the judging panel at the final YDAC Showcase Evening. They include details of how the design was researched and developed, as well as how the team developed in terms of its thinking, skills and ability to work together.

At the showcase event, each group is given 10 minutes to present their finished design to the judging panel in front of an audience of family, friends and invited stakeholders. This presentation can take any form that the group chooses. The groups are judged on: the quality/appropriateness of the design idea; the development of the idea; and teamwork. One group is selected by the judging panel as the YDAC winner, and receives a trophy. All runners up are awarded medals.

The structure and content used in the Problem Profile and interview questions are derived from the *Crime Lifecycle Model* developed by Wootton & Davey (2003). The Model was developed to help design professionals consider potential causes of crime and generate ideas during concept design development. The methodologies used to research users, offenders and the environment in weeks 2 to 6—including the Problem Profile—was initially developed and tested during the *City Centre Crime* project (Wootton *et al*, 2009). *City Centre Crime* was a 12-month research project funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and conducted by experienced researchers from the Solution Centre. The level of data capture and analysis was therefore reduced for the YDAC programme, and the text made easier to understand for individuals of a younger age group who had not been trained in either design or crime prevention.

Running the programme

In Greater Manchester, 23 young people aged between 12 and 19 years from schools and youth groups in Manchester and Salford participated in the initiative. The young people had generally poor educational backgrounds, with some having been excluded from school or involved in anti-social behaviour and therefore identified as 'at risk of offending'.

In their four teams, the young people identified the following problem areas on which to focus:

- An isolated subway (main road underpass) close to the group's school that attracts to anti-social behaviour problems and serious crime.

- A pedestrian route to a local shopping precinct with several problems. For example, groups of street drinkers and drug users congregate on the public seating in the area, creating a climate of fear.

- A local public park and sports ground that is underused (except by drug dealers and their clients), poorly lit, poorly maintained and considered unsafe by local residents.

- The playing fields next to the group's youth centre, which have become a hotspot for drug dealing.

At the final showcase event in November 2009, all four teams presented their design interventions (see figure 2). A Judging Panel made up of senior decision-makers working in the areas of crime and community safety in Salford and Manchester were tasked with selecting the winning team. Inspired by the standard of the ideas, the judges pledged on the night to provide funding to implement the design solutions of all four teams.

Figure 2 – Greater Manchester YDAC Showcase Evening

Three YDAC projects have been initiated to date: Salford & Manchester YDAC (2009); Southwark YDAC (2010); and Lambeth YDAC (2011), with the latter due to be completed in March 2011. The financial services firm J.P. Morgan has financially supported the two London YDAC projects as part of their corporate social responsibility activities. Funding to undertake further YDAC projects in other areas of the UK is being sought. The two YDAC projects run in London differ slightly from the original Salford & Manchester programme, as each has involved young people from a single school: so-called 'alternative curriculum' students. This means that their YDAC activities were undertaken as part of their school lessons, falling under the subject area of 'citizenship'.

Figure 3 – Southwark YDAC Showcase Evening

Discussion & conclusion

The literature review provided examples of some existing efforts across Europe to address the needs of young people through design, urban development and planning processes (van Soomeren & Flight, 2010; BMVBS, 2010a, b). The YDAC differs from existing programmes in that it is targeted at young people considered 'at risk' by police and school authorities, providing them with educational skills, knowledge and qualifications. The emphasis is on integrating crime and anti-social behaviour into a design process that is led and delivered by young people—rather than providing a consultation route for urban planning activities.

The YDAC approach adopted by young people is built on standard design processes and activities—involving research, idea generation and evaluation (Design Council, 2010). The emphasis is on understanding behaviour of all users—both legitimate users and offenders. This echoes the importance of the design research into user needs and requirements (sometimes called requirements capture). However, the YDAC process introduces methods specifically developed to enable designers to address crime and security issues (Wootton & Davey, 2003, 2005).

The fact that the young people themselves identify the problem area on which they will focus is important for two reasons. Firstly, it helps generate a sense of ownership of the project and a motivation to create a good design. Secondly, the young people bring to their projects a level of insight and 'inside knowledge' of the problems and issues in their local areas simply unavailable to outsiders. For example, one group of young people identified in their area problems related to prostitution that the police had no knowledge of whatsoever.

The YDAC process enables the young people to research crime and ASB problems from different stakeholder's perspective. This not only helps them come up with better ideas and communicate them to others, but also from a 'community building' perspective, builds bridges between the young people and different social groups where they live.

Designers are aware of the power of creativity, and that much of that possessed by young people goes untapped. However, 'design' is not 'art'. Design is the focused and intelligent use of creative thinking to solve problems and meet identified needs in an elegant way (in terms of costs, resources and aesthetics). Therefore, really *understanding* problems and needs, is the key to developing successful new designs. For this reason, the research process adopted is central to the success of YDAC.

Participation in the YDAC project improved the confidence, knowledge and skills of the young people. Indeed, an intentional 'side effect' of process is that it helped generate better relationships between the young people and teachers, residents, community workers and the police. As one police mentor remarks:

> *"...I feel I have broken down a barrier between myself as a Police Officer and the group. What I have been a part of in the past few weeks has opened my eyes and made me realise that these young people really do care about their community and really do want to make a big difference."*

Police Mentor, Manchester

Young people often have direct experience of crime and anti-social behaviour and therefore bring new insights to design activities—sadly young people are over-represented in the crime figures both as victims and offenders.

The Solution Centre is tracking the results of the YDAC projects completed so far, and is seeking funding to conduct impact evaluations of the programme in the UK. Also, in partnership with Catch22 and partners in several European countries, the Solution Centre is exploring ways in which the YDAC programme might be extended to include teams of young people in other countries.

References

BMVBS (2010a) "Jungend Macht Stadt", Bundesministerium fuer Verkehr, Bau und Stadtentwicklung, Berlin: Germany. Available for download from stadtquartiere@bbr.bund.de

BMVBS (2010b) "Freiraeume Fuer Kinder und Jugendliche", Praxis Heft 70. Bundesministerium fuer Verkehr, Bau und Stadtentwicklung, Berlin: Germany. Available from silvia.wicharz@bbr.bund.de.

Burt, Callie Harbin, Simons Ronald L, and Simons, Leslie, G. (2006) "A Longitudinal Test of the Effects of Parenting and the Stability of Self-control: Negative Evidence for the General Theory of Crime". *Criminology*, Volume 44, Number 2, pp. 353–396.

Davey, C.L., Cooper, R. and Press, M. (2002) *Design Against Crime: Case Study Exemplars.* Design Policy Partnership, University of Salford.

Design Council (2003) *Think Thief: A Designer's Guide to Designing Out Crime.* Design Council and Design Policy Partnership. *Design Council: UK*

Flatley, J. Kershaw, C., Smith, K, Chaplin R. and Moon, D. (2010) "Crime in England and Wales 2009/10. Findings from the British Crime Survey and police recorded crime" (Second Edition). *Home Office Statistical Bulletin.* 12/10, July 2010. http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs10/hosb1210.pdf

International Crime Victimisation Survey (2007) Criminal Victimisation in International Perspective. Key findings from the 2004 – 2005 ICVS and EU ICS. (Eds. Van Dijk, J., van Kesteren, J. and Smit, P.) WODC: Den Haag, Netherlands.

Town, S., Davey, C.L. and Wootton (2003) *Design Against Crime: Guidance for the design of residential areas.* University of Salford. Second Edition. ISDN 0 902 896520. http://usir.salford.ac.uk/12532/.

Hampshire, R. and Wilkinson, M. (1999) *Youth Shelters and Sports Systems.* Thames Valley Police. London.

Roe,S. and Ashe, J. (2008) "Young people and crime: findings from the 2006 Offending, Crime and Justice Survey". *Home Office Statistical Bulletin*, 09/08, 15 July 2008. http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs08/hosb0908.pdf

Van Soomeren, P. and Flight, S. (2010) "Engaging Young People in Community Safety". Techical project prepared for project proposal *Design for Community Safety*, (Eds) Davey, C.L and Wootton, A.B., University of Salford. Submitted to the EU Commissions Framework 7 programme.

Walker, A. Flatley, J., Kershaw, C. & Moon, D. (2009) "Crime in England and Wales 2008/9. Volume 1: Findings from the British Crime Survey and Police Recorded Crime". *Home Office Statistical Bulletin*, 11/09.

Woolf, M. (2006) Cliff vs the Asbo kids. Local councils to follow Australian experiment of driving away hoodlums with uncool music. Sunday 11th June, 2006. http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/cliff-vs-the-asbo-kids-481920.html

Wootton, A.B., Marselle, M. and Davey, C.L. (2009) City Centre Crime: Design Thinking for Safer City Centres. 8th European Academy of Design Conference - 1st, 2nd & 3rd April 2009, The Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, Scotland. http://usir.salford.ac.uk/12531/.

Wootton, A.B. and Davey, C.L. (2005) *Design Against Crime Evaluation Framework. A Framework to support & Evaluate the Integration of Design Against Crime within Development Projects.* Design Against Crime Solution Centre: Salford.

Wootton, A.B. and Davey, C.L. (2007) *Crime LifeCycle. Leitfaden zur Entwicklung von Design Against Crime Ideen*. Design Against Crime Solution Centre: Salford, UK.

Wootton, A. B. and Davey, C.L. (2003) *Crime Life-Cycle. Guidance for Generating Design Against Crime Ideas*. The University of Salford: Salford.

Acknowledgments

- Those who participated in the *City Centre Crime* project, which was initiated by Manchester Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) and conducted in collaboration with Greater Manchester Police, Greater Manchester Against Crime (GMAC), Manchester City Council and Northumbria University.