On Track Thematic Report: Community & Schools Engagement

Carl Parsons, Brian Austin, Hazel Bryan, Jean Hailes and William Stow
Canterbury Christ Church University College
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report focuses on the extent of community engagement, empowerment and partnership and the extent of engagement in schools, mainly in eight of the 24 On Track areas for which the Canterbury Local Evaluation Team (LET) served as evaluators. The twin focus of this work – school engagement and community engagement – was agreed with the CYPU as it touched on enduring challenges for multi-disciplinary, preventative projects.

Interviewing took place during the Autumn 2002 and Spring 2003. A total of 108 qualitative group or individual interviews were conducted with stakeholders, including children and their parents…

Key findings

Research literature on Area Based Initiatives (ABIs) suggests that challenges to their implementation and stable incorporation are considerable and include the tension between discretion allowed to the local area and central control, how collaborative advantage can be maximised especially when funded short term, and the displacement of power and resources from mainstream services to projects which have more autonomy to develop innovative ways of working yet are outside mainstream structures. The community role in this is not easily discernable. Schools have a narrowed professionalism which preventative multi-agency projects like On Track ‘stretch’. Multi-professional projects based largely in schools involve schools in new kinds of work and responsibilities. To take these developments further, and make ‘full service’ or ‘community’ schools, requires substantial change in the way schools are organised, the way head teachers see their roles and the manner in which teachers relate to other professionals and prevention project workers.

The major conclusions reached from this study are listed under six headings as set out below, with some being straightforward points while others are more complex and composite.

1. On Track is a ‘joined up’ project with workers with multi-professional skills and a coherence in its provision of services to a small geographical area.

2. Schools are central to the operation of On Track with around nine in ten interventions being school-based or school-managed.
3. The degree of targeting or the model of management used does not appear to effect the engagement of community or school; it is the specific, dedicated staffing which determines the extent and effectiveness of consultation, communication and community participation.

4. **Community engagement** is happening in all the projects but it faces a range of challenges, especially if it is to extend to partnership and empowerment. To date, engagement of communities has been limited. Representation on steering committees etc is limited, both in number of people from the community and the role they can play. Facilitating factors for community engagement that were found in On Track areas include the following:

**Structural engagement – building capacity**

- Consultation with the community prior to delivery planning
- Planning for management structure or interventions to include community link workers
- Careful selection of community representatives (political/voluntary sector/faith group) on steering/management/partnership committees
- Reciprocal membership of other ABI committees
- Careful planning of project office location within the community

**Developing a presence in the community – sharing information and identity formation**

- Regular meetings of project team
- Media-management budget to enable:
  - advertising
  - strategic use of local media networks
  - maximisation of publicity opportunities
  - visual identity for the project

- Key workers using language of project and reiterating project aims and their commitment to multi-agency work
- Building good relationships with schools and publicising project through and with them
- Drop-in centres or other informal networks for community contacts

**Engaging fully with the community – operating partnerships**

- Vision and commitment of project manager to co-ordinated and non-stigmatising delivery and community partnership
- Quality of personnel in community link roles – showing empathy for the community/having first-hand knowledge of the community
- Employment of local people in intervention delivery
- Empowering interventions which:
  - help to create new social networks in the community
  - provide a variety of opportunities for hard-to-reach groups to engage
  - allow users to gradually build up their confidence to make decisions and influence the shape of delivery
  - are needs-led
  - provide access at earliest point of entry to the education system, meeting language and cultural needs of hard-to-reach groups
  - allow for negotiation over pace, content, location and direction of interventions.
5. **Schools are heavily engaged with On Track** being a central location for the delivery of interventions, for reaching into the community and for being the point of access for reaching children and families. Below, a range of facilitating factors in relation to effective engagement of schools by On Track projects is set out:

**Pilot stage**
- Prior consultation with schools
- Time for communication with schools built into lead-in stage

**Strategic (macro) level: Delivery planning**
- School representation on steering/management/partnership groups
- Budgeting for formal/informal communication between schools and projects – time release for school staff/project managers
- Service Level/Partnership Agreements:
  - identifying key link personnel and lines of communication
  - clarifying roles and responsibilities – referral/targeting
  - setting out line management structures
- Intervention selection – school-based family link workers, to bring tangible benefits to schools in early stages of projects
- Staffing of project team to enable reliable quick response to school, project and community queries

**Operational (micro) level: Quality partnership**
- Quality of personnel – commitment of project managers to open communication.
- Efficient project management of meetings: chairing/minuting and distribution of minutes/preparing agendas/communicating time and location of meetings
- Early liaison with schools to identify scope of project
- Project management and workers operating as a team, using consistent language about the project in schools
- **Interventions** providing:
  - open and flexible communication
  - opportunities to negotiate intervention delivery and content
  - professional approach to delivery
- **Schools** having:
  - involvement in targeting and referral
  - say over types of and delivery of interventions in schools
  - open attitudes to working as part of a multi-agency project
  - project aims integrated with school development agenda/OFSTED inspection evidence
  - physical space to host interventions including project in induction for new staff.

6. **The special relationship formed within On Track areas** means that the engagement of schools and the engagement of communities are not two separate processes but a dynamic, interactive experience evolving and being shaped in each neighbourhood according to local history, service provision and conditions. The On Track project is an addition to what is an already rich mix of activity and provision. The engagement of schools operates in a fairly
straightforward formal fashion. There are tensions which can be resolved and there are demands made on head teachers and teachers which go beyond their training and conventional expectations. Multi-agency work brings a new set of care workers into the school and this brings with it a need to liaise and tackle problems in a shared way. It extends the school’s work into preventative spheres beyond curriculum provision and the management of learning (though learning is a key goal and a strong protective factor). The school is ascribed a community role and resourced to fulfil it. The school, situated within the community and a major service provider known to all, is a key link for other services into the community.

On Track works predominantly in and through schools and accesses the community mainly through the school based workers. This is the solid core of the projects’ work after two years of operating and the outreach into the community can now be viewed to consider if the special relationship needs adjustment as On Track projects mature. It is recognised that the community is not strongly represented and that the sense of empowerment is present only for a few. Drop-in and community-based opportunities to engage with On Track are very few and may not be effective or efficient. Schools are where all children (should) go and they offer viable, sustainable access to the community. This could be built upon in the move to community schools and greater training of teachers as members of multi-professional teams.

Undoubtedly, On Track has contributed to the social infrastructure through new and enhanced services and developed social capital. If On track were to build on this to influence further the social organisation of the community, there would need to be dedicated community development and outreach work and involvement of community members in real decision-making and resource allocation tasks. On Track has established a sound basis for moving forward on this.
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

On Track was conceived primarily as a crime reduction programme based on multiple interventions. It was managed initially by the Home Office but as part of a battery of cross-departmental programmes designed to address aspects of social exclusion. On Track is focussed on 22 ‘deprived’ areas in England and two in Wales and the areas are usually the size of one or two electoral wards. These small areas face a range of economic and social problems and services tend to be overstretched to meet need, especially in preventative terms. As an early multiple intervention project, On Track focussed on Children in the 4 – 12 age range together with their families and communities. The area may cover 1000 to 3000 families with children in this age range. Funding of about £500,000 per year was proposed for seven years, tapering towards the end, but this was still a sustained period, recognising the problems being addressed.

The programme was designed to develop areas of excellence in early prevention and models that would lead to substantial reduction in offending by young people in high crime, high deprivation areas. Specifically it was stated that ‘the programme will:

- bring together a range of support services and programmes which can respond to the needs of children and their families at critical stages;
- ensure mechanisms for identification of children at risk and their referral;
- develop improved coordination and joint management between and across services and model improved structures for preventative service delivery.’\(^1\)

The invitation to Local Authorities to tender for On Track stated that, ‘the underlying model is the development of a continuum of support which is likely to be more effective than any single intervention … some new service provision may be needed but the expectation is that funds for core services will be used primarily to develop and enhance existing services to meet evidence-based standards.’\(^2\) Five core intervention categories were proposed:

- Home visiting;

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Pre-school;
Parent support and training;
Family therapy;
Home-school partnerships;
and a sixth category – Specialist or additional interventions.

Local On Track projects devised or selected interventions, varying in number from one to six or more in any of the above categories. Some had no intervention in certain categories – eg pre-school. The core interventions were regarded as ‘evidence-based’, though local adjustment and creativity were permissible.

Examples were given of the sorts of interventions falling within these categories\(^3\) which had been of proven worth elsewhere. These examples were mainly from the USA – Syracuse Family Development Programme, Headstart, High Scope/Perry Pre-school Programme, Oregon Social Learning Centre, FAST Track – though a number are British with local evidence to support their efficacy – NEWPIN family ‘befrienders’ and Home start. They are potentially the kind of provision that could be made by one or other of the statutory services or by other organisations, such as local or national charities or commercial enterprises.

As reported by the National Evaluation Team, participation of local communities had a somewhat muted place at the outset and the speed of implementation meant consultation was limited\(^4\) and professionals took the lead. Kinder and Doherty (2003) concluded at the end of one year that ‘despite the progress that has been made, community consultation to some extent “lags” behind implementation’. In line with many other neighbourhood support schemes, participation has assumed greater importance and this has been emphasised within On Track and by Children’s Fund documentation and requirements; services should be delivered \(\text{with}\) local people and not simply \(\text{to}\) them. Inter-agency collaboration was regarded as vital to the successful operation of On Track in addressing multiple risk factors.

On Track was overseen by the Early Multiple Intervention Team (EMIT) within the Home Office’s Family Policy Unit (FPU). The aim was to forge links across government departments


\(^4\) On Track National Evaluation Team Newsletter 1, 2001
(ten were concerned with different aspects of family policy) but at local level too, Johnston, then of the FPU, claimed ‘it is certain … that programmes will only work if agencies working with families and children are prepared to cooperate to identify children at risk and referring them to appropriate services’ (Johnston, 2001: 34).

Schools are a central agency for the delivery of many of the planned services or key access points to children, families and communities. Whilst seeking to reduce crime in the long term, On Track focuses on the known risk factors and would expect, as intermediate and proxy indicators of success in addressing these, better attendance, reductions in behaviour problems and exclusions, raised attainment, greater positive interaction with parents and a safer community more positively disposed towards schools and the education of the children. The strengths of the schools’ links with the On Track project, with other agencies and with the community appear crucial if provision is to be made across the community that targets at risk individuals and families. The rationale for the focus of this study is that these structures and processes must be successfully created or developed if the intended outcomes are to be possible. The cases of Area 5 and Area 7 below give illustration of the content of two of the projects showing the choice and diversity in the number and type of interventions they contained.

**Area 5**, which focussed on a mainly Asian area, had proposed 15 interventions. Eleven were running (September – December, 2002) including a *Home Visiting* programme operated mainly by a drop-in centre, six *Home-School Partnership* interventions which ranged from a full-time family worker and a learning support assistant in each of the six schools to less expensive provision such as playschemes. They provided no pre-school input but had Parent Support and Training offered by the YOT with a Webster-Stratton parenting education programme planned to begin in 2003. Amongst the Specialist interventions, there were the school nurse, health link worker, the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, and learning mentors as well as a primary-secondary transition initiative. Some of the interventions were universal, such as the playschemes, while others had a strong targeted dimension where the worker had a case load of those deemed at risk.

**Area 7** proposed 24 interventions of which 16 were running (September – December, 2002). This included *Home Visiting* by family support mentors and 12 *Home-School Partnership* interventions which listed separately the child development workers in the four schools and encompassed the after-school activities, parenting group, ‘Stop Think Do’ and a targeted element.
Family Therapy is represented by a therapeutic programme focussed on domestic abuse and the six Parent Support and Training interventions, of which three are running, included another home visiting arrangement, strengthening families/strengthening communities and something called ‘breathing space’. Some interventions cater for just a handful of children or families while others are open generally.

Figure 1 sets out for all eight projects the number of interventions by Home office category though the categorisation is widely accepted amongst evaluators and projects as somewhat arbitrary.

**Figure 1: Distribution of different categories of intervention by area (Oct-Dec 2002)**

The major concentration of interventions is in two categories: specialist or additional, which is very much a catch-all category; home/school partnership which also covers a fairly wide range of interventions. Most are delivered in or through the school and many have a strong community outreach aspiration.

Table 1, below, describes briefly the socio-economic contexts in which the projects operated. Most are compact areas in cities and all are characterised by poverty and degrees of marginalisation. Beyond that, the differences are marked.
Table 1: On Track Area Descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION OF ON TRACK AREA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area 1</td>
<td>At the heart of a large urban borough with an ethnic minority population of more than 50%, with problems of severe deprivation and crime. The area ranks in the top 2% of most deprived boroughs in the country, with an unemployment rate in excess of 12%.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 2</td>
<td>A 1960s urban development on reclaimed land with decaying infrastructure and bleak retail facilities. A 35% rise in the local population between 1981 – 1991 with a similar rise expected between 1991 and 2001. In 1991, 24% of households with dependent children were lone parents. In the borough as a whole 65% of lone parents were economically inactive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 3</td>
<td>Focused on a single ward with high population density for borough, high unemployment and high levels of asylum seekers and refugees. The project aims to take two approaches – a school-led, home-school partnership and an ‘assertive outreach’ programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 4</td>
<td>A rural setting with many of the problems normally associated with urban areas due to rapid growth of the town during 1960s/70s. Low levels of numeracy/literacy, large number employed in low paid part-time jobs and concern over extent of anti-social behaviour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 5</td>
<td>A single ward, compact neighbourhood located close to heart of town with very poor housing. Most residents are of Pakistani or Bangladeshi origins. Unemployment is 2.5 times national average. Jarman index identifies area as most deprived in the borough with high levels of income support, low household income, housing lacking amenities and extreme overcrowding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 6</td>
<td>A ‘New Town’ development characterised by a lack of ‘community’ and overwhelmingly populated by ‘young’ people. The proportion of households with dependent children is 71% compared to 32% in the town.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 7</td>
<td>Urban residential area which has suffered decline following the loss of heavy steel and engineering industries. Split into two areas, one part has a high proportion of Black and Multi Ethnic residents living in poor housing on low income.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 8</td>
<td>This area consists of two adjoining wards, with high levels of crime, including youth crime. Two-thirds of households are council tenants and there is a high proportion of single parents. There is a large refugee and asylum community. There is considerable youth crime in the area, particularly shoplifting, and unauthorised absences are above the national average.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This study, working in the eight On Track areas listed in Table 1, has the following aims:

- to determine the extent to which the community has been engaged, empowered and treated as a partner in the local On Track projects;
- to illustrate the ways in which such engagement has or has not occurred;
- to identify facilitating and inhibiting factors in relation to the full engagement of the community;
- to determine the extent and forms of school engagement with On Track;
- to identify facilitating and inhibiting factors in relation to the full engagement of schools;
- to examine the broader relationships across On Track, schools and community/ies which might usefully be considered in On Track policy and planning.

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5 These descriptions are taken from original delivery plan documentation.
The background, complexities and aims of the study have been laid out in this section. The chapter now deals with the variety within On Track projects including numbers of ‘users’, targeting and models of delivery. It goes on to deal with the wider issues of partnership and participation, community engagement, school engagement, the professional expertise required of interventions and the key research questions which all these prompt.

1.2 Participation and Partnership

In examining the extent of community engagement, empowerment and partnership and the extent of engagement in schools by On Track projects, it is important to set out the concepts, potential scope, levels and purposes of that engagement. Engagement is the overall term for relationships between schools, community and On Track. In terms of the community, this engagement can take many forms from slight involvement through receiving information, to having an input into the nature of the provision received to contributing to policy formation. Similarly, schools can be simply the location of an intervention or be partners in shaping, complementing or delivering it. A further consideration is the extent to which the community can be accessed through the school and the extent to which school-based (OT) workers can make the school a more inviting place for parents and community to visit.

Figure 2 sets out schematically the relationships between schools and community and with On Track. Also part of the picture are voluntary and statutory organisations with which, and through which, On Track will often work. There are three dimensions to the engagement of schools and communities: firstly, the extent to which schools and communities have been consulted about the interventions, including how and where they are delivered; secondly, the nature, range and quality of the services delivered to schools to support them in doing their work and to communities to help them address challenges and issues; thirdly the extent to which community members and school personnel feel that they have been empowered and have a real say in the development, evaluation and maintenance of the services which On Track provides.
On Track’s location within the school community and agency environment is complex and different for each project; in Area 2, for instance, On Track is located in a school; in two of the other On Track projects, the project offices are located within the buildings of statutory or voluntary agencies. Some services appear to be delivered directly by schools, and this will especially be the perception of some children and parents.

We place On Track uncertainly at the centre because, although a distinct funded organisational entity and a hub of many activities, it may in operation and in the exercise of power and influence be one partner among many and/or even be subservient to the demands of others. As represented here, it consults with agencies, voluntary and statutory, with schools and the community. One task is to determine the extent to which this consultation occurs. On Track delivers services to children and families through both schools and communities. Schools and communities (or community members, including parents) are intended to be empowered by the experience of
working with On Track; in this context, that means being able to address risk factors and generate protective capabilities more efficiently and effectively for the benefit of the children. Interviews were intended to elicit evidence of the extent of involvement and empowerment of school personnel and community members.

The ultimate goal for pilot projects of this sort is that initiatives or remodelled ways of working that are deemed successful should become the norm in the area and established within standard mainstream practice. With a long term eye on this mainstreaming policy, some projects have tried hard to link with existing statutory agencies; some advertise their existence and role to social services and health with the goal of having doctors or social workers referring children in the On Track area to On Track interventions. Being known and playing a role in the network of referrals are arguably pre-requisite steps towards mainstreaming. Finally, Figure 1 hugely over-simplifies the local scene which, in these areas, is invariably characterised by multiple projects and funding streams.

1.3 Variation in On Track interventions

The varied forms that On Track takes are illustrated below in terms of the approach to targeting, the numbers and types of interventions, the different Home Office categories the projects’ interventions fall into, models of management and the numbers of children and families served.

Targeting
As well as differing widely on the types of interventions operating, projects can differ in their degree of targeting – the extent to which the intervention is provided for children diagnosed as at risk. Table 2 gives the number of interventions under three headings of ‘universal’, ‘drop-in/self-referral’ and ‘targeted’. Universal refers to those either received by all children because it is part of the standard provision, eg. Cognitive Enrichment Advantage curriculum pack, or those attracting large numbers such as holiday schemes. The drop-in/self-referral interventions are those where children and families (or professionals) choose to put themselves forward such as with the CAMHS parent teacher drop-in or some forms of parenting classes. Targeted are those where a child or family is identified as having difficulties and particular services are directed at them; Family Workers, Child Development Workers or counsellors will generally have a case load of at risk youngsters. The total is more than the sum of interventions since some are deemed to fall into two columns. The degree of targeting is shown crudely here. A more accurate view
may emerge from the analysis of data relating to expenditure on each intervention and the numbers of children and families served by the targeted interventions. The variation is in itself interesting and contributes necessary background to the debate about whether the focus should be on risk or protective factors, a debate about which projects appear to have become more confident.

Table 2: Distribution of Active Interventions and Percentage Targeted (Oct – Dec 2002)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Total active interventions Oct – Dec 2003</th>
<th>Universal</th>
<th>Drop-in/ Self-referral</th>
<th>Targeted</th>
<th>% targeted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area 1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is the targeted interventions that one would expect to be most strongly involved with the Identification, Referral and Tracking (IRT) policy. At the level of government policy, there is considerable emphasis on IRT as a means of tackling disadvantage, but more particularly crime and anti-social behaviour that can arise from it. Systems for targeting are variable across the eight projects with some more inclined to target identified at risk individuals and families than others. Two particular dilemmas arise: firstly, that the targeting can stigmatise and actually be unhelpful in achieving the risk reduction goals; secondly, the collecting of detailed information (as per the standard tracking requirement) is not just intrusive but quite difficult in some circumstances eg with a family not coping and in need of help, support and confidentiality. However, the case for IRT is strong with a very clear understanding amongst coordinators and intervention staff that the risk factors are known and interventions to address risk factors at the level of children and families can be efficiently mobilised. The debate is going on within projects, and sometimes across projects, about the desirability and likely effectiveness of tighter targeting. There is also an awareness of the need to impact on communities and that the individual child or family focus may have limited effect if the physical and social environments children and families live in
undermine the work interventions do. A high proportion of universal opportunities, combined with optional drop-in services and a set of targeted interventions is the general compromise model. There is a range of proportions of targeted interventions, crudely calculated, from 27% (Area 3) to 78% (Area 1). The joining together of the range of intervention options is not always possible or clear and the extent to which multiple interventions are targeted in a planned way at groups or individuals is difficult to detect.

In the emphasis on IRT lies both a unifying and divisive force: it can bring professionals together, particularly school staff and On Track management, in seeking to route ‘at risk’ young people and families into interventions. On Track is working in areas where statutory services are already busy and other projects are under way; ‘joined up’ means finding ways to coordinate, collaborate and avoid competition and duplication and this might be aided by more rigorous identification and referral mechanisms. IRT can be divisive if it excludes the community in discussion and becomes a professional control enterprise with consequent diminished participation from local people.

Many of the activities rely on fixed period funding and have to become established and ‘deliver’ quickly. That is not always the best way to produce services that will survive and become embedded. Add to this the IRT requirement and interventions have to be managed very sensitively in their recruitment of clients if they are not to stigmatise and alienate. Consequently, the solution which has evolved in a number of projects is that many services are open access but some ‘at risk’ families or children are encouraged to join. To arrive at this stage requires a maturity in the development of the project and its relationship with its clientele.

**Numbers**

There are many interventions serving large numbers of children that have very direct impacts on the community. Before school, after school and in the holidays, provision is made for the care and entertainment, and indeed education of the children. It might be reasonably expected that these activities would attract greater community involvement.

Projects differ widely in the numbers and types of interventions operating and there is variation over time in these numbers and how they are categorised under the five ‘core intervention’ headings. Sixty seven per cent of the interventions are in the Home/school partnership or Specialist categories (68% across all 24 projects). Furthermore, an examination of the figures
shows that over 95% of child/intervention counts are in the two categories – Home/school partnerships and Specialist (Figure 3). In terms of families, over 55% of the family/intervention counts are with those same two intervention categories (Figure 4).

The Home/school partnership interventions include some targeted provision such as Family Link Workers or Mentors with a case load, but also, generic primary inclusion activities such as holiday schemes, after-school clubs and some directed at boys or a minority ethnic group. The Specialist category also contains the targeted interventions such as Speech and Language Therapy and CAMHS but similarly has the universal interventions such as school nurse and playschemes.

**Figure 3: Number of children served by the different intervention categories in the eight On Track projects, July – Sept (1) and Oct – Dec 2002 (2)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention Category</th>
<th>Number of Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home visiting 1</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home visiting 2</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home/school partnership 1</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home/school partnership 2</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-school 1</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-school 2</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Support and training 1</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Support and training 2</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Therapy 1</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Therapy 2</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist 1</td>
<td>1630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist 2</td>
<td>3576</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The numbers are large but those given vary greatly across projects from 2800+ children in one case down to 140 in another. All projects will actually expect some services to be universally available and to be reaching large numbers but the variations are accounted for by the different ways of counting adopted by the projects, with some counting all universal intervention participants while others did not.

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6 Note that this represents a count of numbers registered on each intervention from the Implementation Update 2 work carried out by CCCUC for the period October – December, 2002. There will be double counting within categories where the same child receives several interventions in the same category. There will also be multiple counting across intervention categories.

7 From Implementation Update 2, March 2003, produced by Canterbury Christ Church University College.
Parent support and training play a prominent role where specifically families are concerned, as shown in Figure 4. This figure also shows the variation in numbers from one time period to the next.

Figure 4: Number of families served by the different interventions in the 8 On Track projects, July – Sept (1) and Oct – Dec 2002 (2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Number of Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home visiting 1</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home visiting 2</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home/school partnership 1</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home/school partnership 2</td>
<td>390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-school 1</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-school 2</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Support and training 1</td>
<td>233</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parent Support and training 2</td>
<td>266</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Therapy 1</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Therapy 2</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist 1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist 2</td>
<td>586</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Home visiting will often serve both parents and the child and Home/school partnership covers a range of interventions including family workers and child development workers where parents are important partners in the work. Parent support and training covers diverse interventions such as self help groups, Webster-Stratton parent training, parent mentors and language learning. Specialist interventions include Speech and Language Therapy, Child and Adolescent Mental Health, School Nurse as well as holiday scheme outings and primary-secondary transition.

Models of Delivery

The delivery structure set up to manage On Track services may or may not result in greater innovation and responsiveness to partners and the community. Management structures are as set out below in Figure 5. There has been no substantial change over time and projects remain largely within the model which applied when they were first set up. The models have two aspects to them – the location of the management and the sub-contracting of the interventions. The structure of the project could have implications for community involvement and for relationships with schools. In fact, none of the eight projects which form the basis of the study have adopted the Model 3 delivery structure, though it is reportedly used in two of the other 16 On Track projects.

8 From Implementation Update 2, March 2003, produced by Canterbury Christ Church University College.
Figure 5: On Track management structures

Model 1: Centralised and integrated model of delivery

LEA Statutory Services
Managing/Co-ordinator of OT services
Manages delivery of in-house interventions

Model 2: Centralised, disaggregated model of delivery

LEA Statutory Services
Managing/Co-ordinator for OT
Intervention 1
Intervention 2
Intervention 3
Intervention 4
Intervention 5

Model 3: Contracted out management of multi-professional team

LEA Statutory Services
Managing Agent for OT
Multi-disciplinary team

Model 4: Contracted out and disaggregated model of delivery

LEA Statutory Services
Managing Agent for OT
Intervention 1
Intervention 2
Intervention 3
Intervention 4
Intervention 5

This typology builds on the NET First Interim Report where three models for the management of On Track were presented: The centralised model, the contracted out and the mixed economy. Four models are presented here which range from a highly centralised approach to one where the management is contracted out and the managing agent further subcontracts to providers of interventions. The choice of delivery structure appears to be greatly influenced by the existing relationships between the organisations in the local authority. Where there are historical links between the local authority and the external agency, and even a base locally, the collaboration to meet local goals appears to be well integrated. The decision is also influenced by the capacity of existing local authority agencies to manage the new tasks On Track brings with it. Table 3 sets out where each project is situated in relation to these models.

9 The NET First Interim Report, 2001
Table 3: Projects and management structures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Model 1: Centralised and integrated model of delivery | Area 3  
Area 4  
Area 6 |
| Model 2: Centralised, disaggregated model of delivery | Area 1  
Area 7  
Area 8 |
| Model 3: Contracted out management of multi-professional team |        |
| Model 4: Contracted out and disaggregated model of delivery | Area 2  
Area 5 |

Model 1 keeps control and management of the project within local authority structures. A team consisting of a range of professionals delivers most of the services. In Area 3, a team, centrally led by the coordinator delivers the home visiting, the home-school partnerships and most of the additional interventions such as the playschemes and before- and after-school clubs. Educational Psychology is provided by colleague professionals within the local statutory services. Three interventions are still contracted out – parent support and training, family therapy and mentoring.

Area 4 has almost all in-house interventions and the coordinator is located within Community Safety. ‘When we cannot deliver in-house, we are contracting out … We are not going to contract if we can deliver ourselves’. The coordinator acknowledged the benefit of buying in ‘to get things going’ but preferred to develop collaborative relationships with other agencies – ‘crucial to On Track thinking’. The concern was expressed that ‘you have less control over the contracted out interventions, as we are discovering. They may not fit your philosophies and objectives’; model 2 demonstrates this last concern to a greater degree.

The model 1 arrangement would appear to offer the greatest prospects for strong coordination, enhancements from other sources where deemed necessary and good prospects for later mainstreaming because of the current integration and mesh with future plans. Areas 3, 4 and 6 conform mostly to this model though each contracts in some outside services.

Area 4, situated relatively distant from the centres of Local Authority power, appears not unlike Area 5 which, though a contracted out organisation, has strong links into Education and Children and Family Services. Though having further contracted out interventions, there is a supervisory
and training role exercised supportively from the project central team. Thus, as confidence and experience develop, ways of working and relating evolve.

Model 2 is operated by areas 1, 7 and 8 where the ‘in-house’ control is retained but to contract in the separate services. It is often difficult to have staff allocated, on short term contracts, to projects and this model can provide something of a solution. This contracting sometimes takes the form of Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with partner local authority agencies; this is mainly the case with area 8, which calls upon the services of Educational Psychology and Speech and Language Therapy as well as local health trusts for Webster Stratton. Where expertise exists close by in another organisation, as in this last case, it can be wise to use it.

Projects managed in this way can normally be expected to get up and running more quickly because, to appoint a co-ordinator, they can identify from within or appoint from without, and then shop around for the providers of interventions. Mainstreaming may face greater challenges than with model 1. In hard-pressed local authorities with high staff turn-over and difficulties in recruitment model 2 can be the logically preferred structure. However, a project co-ordinator explained that her experience of delivering interventions using the centralised, dis-aggregated model had a number of problems. She found that using this model prevented her from being involved in the professional development of the intervention staff and that issues of accountability and joint management had to be clarified. Furthermore, the greater distance, administratively and sometimes physically, can mean that if problems occur, the co-ordinator is the last to know. She gave examples of staff leaving and time elapsing before news reached her that the intervention was not fully staffed. However, the project co-ordinator felt that using model 2 to deliver interventions was inevitable and the right way to proceed and, ‘there is a plus in that you can cancel at the end of the Service Level Agreement’.

Model 3, for which we have no illustration from the eight projects in which we worked, involves a contracted, non local authority agent managing the On Track project and recruiting a team specifically for the work. The team would include the full range of professionals and have a unity and shared staff development. Model 3 has considerable merit if it pilots for a local authority a way of working which it can continue to fund beyond the pilot phase, either continuing to use the contracted agency or by replicating it in-house. The weakness is that it may be too distanced from the local authority strategic decision-making.
Model 4 most closely characterises the management of Areas 2 and 5. Hard-pressed services can find it easier to fund both the production of the bid to the Home Office and the running of the On Track projects to an outside agency. Where there has not been time to identify a bid writer in the local authority with the time - and often timescales are short - outsourcing is attractive. Similarly, allocating the running of the project to an outside organisation can save disruption to existing services and projects. This approach does not always speed matters up as both projects had difficulties in finding and appointing co-ordinators. People with the skills to run multi-professional projects are in short supply. Area 2 was the last to appoint a co-ordinator (June 2001). A charitable organisation co-ordinated the project and this resulted in substantial delays in the delivery of most interventions for a number of reasons.

A problem inherent in model 4 can be the detachment of the project from mainstream services. In Area 8, there was the additional difficulty that information sharing protocols were not in place; these had to be set up to allow the sharing of confidential data. The On Track project in Area 5 had a longstanding relationship with the local authority, indeed already had a base in the area and ran other projects. It claimed as a strength the fact that it already had established protocols and was not allied to any one service. It, therefore, felt it could more easily operate in a multi-professional way without arousing jealousies. Thus, the prospects of external agencies (Coram Family Trust, Crime Concern or NSPCC) managing such projects depend on their local knowledge and the extent of networks, structures and trust already established. Where these also have to be developed at the implementation stage of the On Track project, the job is harder.

A further danger of model 4 is that service delivery becomes too disaggregated and the purpose of the project as a whole becomes undermined. However, the On Track projects have dealt with this in a variety of ways. In Area 2 co-ordination at the level of implementation was first facilitated by the three key workers, one in each of the On Track schools, who pulled together the various interventions. Later the arrangement was for two link workers, one for the school and one for the community. Area 5 had an Implementation Manager and efforts are made, with some success, to develop a team approach with workers operating in, and from, six schools. Training across the full range of professionals was arranged and communication and support from the co-ordinator and the Implementation Manager were frequent. Tensions arise over who line manages the workers in primary schools and in this case it is head teachers who have this responsibility. The identification, assessment and referral of children and families offers a further unifying force since it is the allocation of services and the monitoring of these to the at risk population that needs
co-ordination. Possession of data at the centre and the ability to review cases and adjust provision is a strength of the projects – to be expected when they reach this point.

The models may have implications for the engagement of the community or of schools. Models 1 and 2 have greater access to points of power or influence while models 3 and 4 may benefit by NOT being associated with official agencies.

1.4 Community Engagement

Substantial funding has been put into helping communities to solve their own problems. New Deal for Communities is one government sponsored scheme which has great hopes pinned to it and is happening in many areas of the country (Lupton and Power, 2002). Similarly, Single Regeneration Fund and many community development projects seek to support a community’s capacity from within to generate solutions to problems and address risk factors identified in the community. These projects have a broad remit while On Track, as an Area Based Initiative (ABI), is distinctive in its focus on a specific age range and its crime reduction rationale. The number of ABIs in On Track areas is fairly extensive; one study reports as many as 30 other ABIs present in the On Track areas including large and focussed schemes like Education Action Zones and New Start to other, smaller initiatives such as Community Chest, Healthy living Centres and Positive Futures (McCarthy et al, 2003)

The key rationale for ABIs is that such initiatives encourage agencies to work together to address the interlocking needs of a relatively small area. ‘Area’ or ‘neighbourhood’ are often used instead of ‘community’ as the designation of the geographical location of a project. Community has to be seen as more than the collection of people living in one place. Essentially, community is about social infrastructure (Richardson and Mumford, 2002, p.203) and comprises services and facilities and social organisation. Services and facilities covers provision for children and young people including schools and holiday and free time schemes. Social organisation refers to friendship networks and informal mutual aid, voluntary groups social controls and norms. It has long been known (Levitas, 1998; Social Exclusion Unit, 2001) that in ‘deprived’ communities, where social disadvantage reigns, where the multiple deprivation index is high, the human and financial resources to address problems of inadequate services and facilities as well as poor social organisation, are limited. Others see this as a need to develop what they term ‘social capital’
(Riddell and Tett, 2001, p.5) addressing both social justice concerns as well as social problems. Stewart and colleagues (Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, 2002) rehearsed many of the problems faced by ABIs and summarised the problems projects confront. Collaboration and co-ordination are identified as the chief challenges for ABIs, pointing to three main themes around which lessons can be learned: discretion and control; collaborative advantage; area and function. These notions of control, collaboration and the area focus will figure strongly in the subsequent sections dealing with data on school and community engagement.

Discretion and Control
Discretion and control concerns the respective power of the centre and the local area. The tension here is between often inflexible requirements and central dominance of the commissioning agency or government department set against locally identified need, innovation and new ways of working. The ‘centre’ has a legitimate interest in specifying service objectives, but local decision-makers, from agencies and community, may have much to contribute about the means and flexibility in delivery. On Track has a framework of objectives and intervention categories within which projects work but few would argue that this has been very constraining on the form local projects have taken. Local engagement from professionals and voluntary groups has been strong where there is great devolved power, and in some senses may have formed another ‘centre’ which has not involved the community greatly. The centre and community tension can arise at the local level between On Track management and the schools and/or community, where the degrees of consultation, participation and control are not at agreed levels.

The local centre control can be control by professionals which sets community members in the role of clients and beneficiaries rather than as partners and co-workers. Empowerment may not stretch beyond the intervention workers and schools to the community.

Collaborative Advantage
Collaborative advantage is about the extra benefit to organisations of working together, in terms of individual organisational interests or collective benefit (Huxham, 1999). The bringing together of a range of skills, avoidance of duplication and the general increase in expert and sustained attention to individual cases should lead to reduction of risk and the increase in protective factors. There need to be incentives to reward collaboration as well as structures to enable and legitimate it. Local Strategic Partnerships are being established in every local authority in the country to provide and monitor the structural framework for collaboration both across agencies and across
diverse projects. They are untried as yet in their ability to generate collaboration at policy and practice levels. It is clear that partnership is dependent upon key individuals and it is suggested that ‘successful partnerships take ten years to develop’ (Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, 2002, p. 126). Short-term projects do not provide the opportunity for this but partnerships grow out of local histories and are affected by current stability or turbulence. One area in which On Track functions has had its education service taken over by a private firm (which then had its contract discontinued); this contrasts with another which is judged to be amongst the most successful and assured unitary local authorities.

**Area and Function**

The prime goal of ABIs is to ‘make closer linkages between the functional perspective of the service planning and delivery and the spatial perspective of the neighbourhood renewal’ (Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, 2002, p. 127). The core problem is to remove some power from the mainstream services (which do not have a track record of collaboration over time) and weld them into a joint force focussed on an area. On Track areas are usually small, one or two wards, and the function is to collectively diagnose, work on and monitor the risk factors in the area. Projects often are not equipped to survive beyond the short term funding, though On Track has seven years. ABIs are vulnerable because they are cut free from mainstream services, the case with On Track, yet must have a degree of autonomy in order to develop innovative ways of working together to address serious social exclusion problems. Arguably, On Track has this autonomy.

**1.5 School Engagement**

A great deal has been written in recent years about the full service school, extended schooling, community schools (Dryfoos, 1994; Adler, 1994). The blueprint for these, in their fullest form, includes location on the school site of the whole range of professionals and an outreach and community engagement function fulfilled from the school base. Furthermore, the school is open to the community beyond normal school hours. The idea of a multi-professional base operating out of the school is an attractive one. The children are accessible in this one place and parents are often drawn to it simply because their children are there. The facilities themselves offer opportunities for community activities after school hours and in the holidays. The facilities the school offers can be used by youth workers, clubs etc for children and for adults in a way which will make the school more accessible, pleasing and useful to local people, children and adults.
There is a need, as Corrigan (1997) has pointed out, for teacher training, including head teacher development, if this broader remit is to be feasible.

An issue with multi-professional work has long been its co-ordination and coherence. Ways need to be found by any project to ensure that line management is appropriate and within a vision which maintains the broad community remit of projects. Having the multi-agency team working in one place close to the client group has great advantages. The idea of a multi-agency Czar (Parsons, 2003) has some attractions in that the various professionals contributing to the care and development of children could be co-ordinated by one person – and that one person may best be the head teacher\(^\text{10}\). In fulfilling that role, the head teacher would need to view their role as much more than a curriculum and staff leader; he or she would have a broad community role and a view of their task which extended well beyond education provision in recognition of the other facets of a child’s life that contribute to the child’s learning and broader development. Articulating the head teacher’s role in this fashion is currently embryonic. Exciting possibilities for, and illustrations of, the broadened role of the school exist. A New York public school was transformed into

‘a focal point in the community to which children and their parents could turn for education as well as a vast range of other supportive services. Medical, dental, mental health, recreation, youth programs, family life education and summer camping services would all emanate from this one institution, while the clear focus of every activity remained on academics and learning. And the institution would be open six or seven days a week, 15 hours a day, year round. What we proposed was not simply to use schools in the after-school hours, but to work alongside with the parents, teachers and community to ensure that children are given every chance to succeed’ (Children’s Aid Society, 1997, p5)

The relationship of On Track provision to this arrangement is explored in later chapters. The largest scale plan to develop schools in this way in the UK is in the New Community Schools (NCSs) in Scotland. One caution amidst the euphoria from Nixon et al (2002) concerns whether there is a potential for a new authoritarianism or genuine support for inclusion and democracy, debates precisely paralleling those about discretion and control in relation to ABIs generally.

\(^{10}\) This paper goes on to suggest, not entirely tongue in cheek, that the czar should operate in a Stalinist environment where interventions are positively directed and coordinated to ensure complementarity and avoid both gaps and overlap. The head teacher’s role becomes a very different one in these circumstances.
Young (2000) urges that democratic processes are critical to building collective social responsibility and ensuring individual and social development. Through local democratic processes, people can promote their own interests and hold policy makers to account. It requires problem solving by all those significantly involved in, or affected by, decisions about the area. The question to pose On Track is whether the projects have invested sufficiently in generating, inviting, valuing and using local opinion. Experience in these projects and in other areas shows how hard it is to develop this community involvement.

The full service school has been advocated by some as offering the holistic care; Dryfoos (1994) calls this ‘a revolution in the delivery of health and social services for the nation’s children, youth and families’ (p. 205). This requires an adjustment of the teacher’s role.

1.6 Professional expertise or informal neighbourliness
The joined-up agenda is most strongly urged of statutory agencies, though increasingly the voluntary sector is included in the intended network. In On Track, it is clear that there is a range of skill levels. Indeed, increasingly there appears to be a slow move to spending on relatively simple interventions such as playschemes in the holidays and on roles such as Family Liaison Officers which are less expensive (and lower status) than teachers. The ordinariness of the role and the approachability of the worker appear to be significant, as reported later. Work elsewhere suggests that it is not always highly skilled and qualified roles that are needed to work successfully with children and families at risk; Lloyd and others (2001) write of ‘some woman [who] came round’ where those interviewed were positive about the support they had received but did not know the job or the specific skills of the person who had come to see them.

The generation of modest levels of expertise amongst local people, where their role can be sustained in supporting families or young people, may be of greater benefit than highly qualified and expensive, and also rather distanced, support.

1.7 Summary and Hypotheses

The issues with which On Track grapples in its early stages are very similar to those encountered by other ABIs. A number of hypotheses arise from the review of this material and the character of On Track which will be addressed in later chapters. Hypotheses relate to several areas which might effect the likelihood of community or school engagement: types of interventions, models of
management; numbers of interventions; contributing to social organisation; control, empowerment and democracy in the community; coordination of school engagement; and the distancing of high levels of expertise.

**Types of interventions**

a) the higher the proportion of targeted interventions the more control professionals will have and the more distanced communities will be;

b) communication will be greater the more home-school partnership and universal interventions there are;

c) the more centralised the control and management of On Track, the easier to relate to schools and communities.

**Numbers of interventions**

d) the greater the number of interventions the more diffuse a project becomes and the less able to target.

**Models of management**

e) a central team managed from within the Local Authority may have greater sway with schools but might be more distanced from the community.

**Control, empowerment and democracy in the community**

f) recruitment to committees of people who are properly representative of the community will be difficult;

g) difficulties will be encountered in harnessing active and empowered involvement of community members in less formal ways;

h) professionals will outweigh local people in their influence.

**Coordination of school engagement**

i) there will be struggles over control and line management of some interventions;

j) multi-agency projects with multiple interventions will tax management capacity in schools;

k) the school is the main conduit to the community.

**The distancing of high levels of expertise**

l) fairly low levels of expertise may be amongst the most valuable in forging links with community members.
Chapter 2: Methodology

The Canterbury Local Evaluation Team (LET) focused on two inter-related themes: the extent of community engagement, empowerment and partnership; and the extent of engagement in schools. The twin foci come together and are essentially about the extent of ‘joined-upness’, partnerships and participation in which On Track projects are involved. The Canterbury LET worked with eight On Track projects as set out in Table 1, Chapter 1.

The investigations were essentially qualitative, seeking to weigh up the evidence from interviews to understand how the engagement of the community and the schools worked. Some quantitative material has been presented as background (see Chapter 1) to demonstrate the complexity and variety of the projects. The findings are indicative only, interim also as the projects continue to progress and can be seen alongside the many other Area Based Initiatives currently funded by government departments.

Face-to-face interviews took place with a range of stakeholders and project personnel through to children to ask about the role they felt they played in relation to On Track management and the delivery of On Track services. Interviewing took place during the autumn and spring terms. Interview schedules were drawn up to gather data from the following stakeholders in the On Track enterprise:

Children
Community representatives
Intervention leaders
Parents of a child participating
Parents participating
Project coordinators/managers (referred to throughout the report as project managers)
Head teachers or senior staff in schools

In the event, there were other respondents (e.g. Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant [EMAG] co-ordinator and community development worker) who were also able to provide data. The schedules were discussed amongst the team and trailed with the first round of interviewees. After the first set of field visits, the instruments were reviewed to see that they were workable; small amendments were made. The schedules are in Appendix A.

The numbers and types of individuals interviewed in each project are as set out below in table 4. The sample to be approached was negotiated through the projects and the schools. It was
necessary particularly to work through the schools or particular interventions to make
arrangements to meet parents and children and some selection bias can be expected in this
because they will be parents who are involved (almost certainly positively) as recipients of
services. Our judgement was that the bias did not affect the validity of the picture formed about
engagement. Indeed, the difficulty of getting community representatives and the fact that these
were often working in the school, was significant in itself in pointing to the limited community
engagement. It is noteworthy that there were few community representatives over all and, in two
projects, we were unable to interview any.

Table 4: Roles of those Interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>On Track Coordinator/Manager</th>
<th>Intervention Provider</th>
<th>Heads</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Community Rep.</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Other</th>
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The approach used in the interviewing was very much a consultative and formative process. The
message given was that we, as well as they, were wanting to learn about the networks,
relationships and communication between On Track and the various other groups. In many cases
telephone calls followed up the interview to clarify points.

The thematic studies, when complete for each of the eight On Track projects were sent back to
project co-ordinators, though no member of staff or institution was to be explicitly recognisable
in these drafts.
Chapter 3: Community Engagement

3.1 Introduction

Debate continues about whether geographical communities or neighbourhoods are significant interactive sites (analytically and practically) for decision-making, social organisation and for the delivery of services and facilities. Richardson and Mumford (2002) define small geographical areas as communities where there is social infrastructure for the delivery of services and social organisation such as friendship networks, informal ties and social controls. In the case of social inclusion projects with a community focus, decisions have to be made about where investment will occur and who will be consulted.

The notion of ‘community’ for On Track is the neighbourhood within which at risk children and their families exist. In this respect, ‘community’ has a wide reaching identity, spanning faith, social and cultural groups and those living in close proximity. It is plain that it is easier to intervene through formal structures and services than through the informal social networks. The central, common formal structures of the community, which provide access to the people of the neighbourhood, are the On Track schools. Other than this, the notion of community is amorphous and engagement with such a concept has been challenging. Within defined geographical areas, diverse communities co-exist, and, therefore, On Track community engagement has occurred at different levels. For the purposes of this section, it has been useful to understand this in terms of ‘levels of intensity of engagement’ with the community.

In order to understand these levels of intensity of engagement with the community, the methodology comprised interviews with parents of children receiving On Track services, parents directly involved with On Track, service providers, community representatives and children. Members of the community who were not directly involved in, or associated with On Track, were not interviewed; in two cases, their involvement was as members of the steering group.

On Track engaged most obviously with the social infrastructure of the community by establishing new services and facilities or by enhancing existing ones. This was much valued. The levels of engagement with the social organisation of the community can be seen operating at three levels. The first level of engagement was the way in which management teams put structures in place to engage the community in On Track. Consideration was given, for example, to the members of the
community who might play a key role on committees. In addition, *structures* were put in place to develop the concept of a team with intervention providers. The geography of the respective area and the location of On Track offices were all given consideration at this first level of engagement.

The second level of engagement, for the purposes of this report called *developing a presence in the community*, explores the way in which On Track teams made contact with targeted groups. This level of engagement was concerned with advertising On Track, raising a colourful, positive profile in the community and encouraging children and parents to find out more.

The third level of engagement, for the purposes of this report called *empowering local people*, considers the way in which On Track teams and intervention workers attempted to work in intense, fruitful ways with children and their families.

### 3.2 Structures

The most successful projects had carefully planned strategies for initiating community links at the setting up stage of On Track. Central to the development of these community links was the vision and leadership of the project manager. Community links were conceptualised at many different levels. Structurally, community development workers roles were designed to engender community development at the outset, and to develop this into the mature phase of the project. Engendering community development included, for example, networking, community liaison and publicity ventures. In the early phase of the project, there were complex issues around which community initiatives should be developed. These issues were debated and often dominated, by professional zeal, considerations about the suitability of any given intervention within the local context, and issues of equality of opportunity. It is important to note that full community engagement and involvement in project development at the setting up stage, was inhibited by the fact that projects were unable to fully consult with communities until funding had been secured (Home Office report, p.55). This resulted in low levels of community engagement (in terms of joint strategic planning) and little community participation in actually delivering services. This was the case at the outset, was reported by other local evaluators (Kinder and Doherty, 2003) and continues to be a feature with which all projects grapple.

As a key part of community involvement, one project manager (Area 6) made the strategic decision to engage the interest of a local councillor at the start of On Track. This elected community representative was someone who worked at cabinet level and who could draw on
local government for support. This was, strategically, a powerful move, as the councillor had strong professional links. The project manager invited the councillor and all major local services to the initial meeting. This approach presented On Track as a genuine multi-agency initiative, and one which was supported at the highest level. The councillor commented that On Track could be ‘the answer to a great deal’ and felt that it was a throw back to some of the more enlightened social ideas of the 1960s. She felt the aims of On Track were ‘entirely and absolutely appropriate for the area’ and that it was ‘getting through to children another way of living, helping the school try and stop the cycle of neglect.’ Another project (Area 5) was fortunate enough to have a councillor as chair of the On Track steering committee. This councillor was a member of the Education Committee. He attended every steering committee, three On Track national conferences and championed On Track in the local community. Where difficulties arose in school, and negotiations between the coordinator and head teachers became problematic, he visited schools with the Deputy Director of Education to emphasise to the head teachers the broader role of On Track, the community aspect and the need for head teachers to support it. He discussed the required change of management style if On Track were to become part of the thinking process of the school. Clearly, support for On Track at this level was highly advantageous.

Community representatives also offered the potential for contribution to steering committees. Their presence provided the opportunity for the local community to have a voice. They were in a position to tell their community's story, to have an opinion. This role was important as they could, in theory, take information back into the community. There was little evidence, however, that the community representative was in a position to report back to the ‘community’. The support of people in the voluntary sector and the local MP was also reported to be significant factors in On Track success. From the interviews with the community representatives and with a range of On Track and school staff it was evident that the contributions from community representatives with no formal representative role, though welcomed and valued, were of minor significance.

Committee Membership
Lloyd (Home Office, 2003) reported that at the setting up stage of the projects, initial ‘strategic’ and ‘operational’ partnerships included representatives on steering committees of county, district and borough councils, police, Youth Offending Team (YOT), health authorities and trusts, voluntary sector and probation service, National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), social services, housing and ethnic minority representatives. Additionally, there were
plans for representatives of schools, NHS trusts, Crime and Disorder Partnership, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and the Early Years Partnership. In addition to the consideration of personnel on key committees, structures were put in place at the setting up stage of projects to complement services already operating in the community, such as Sure Start, Excellence in Cities, Education Action Zones, and Healthy School Schemes. Project managers identified the need to work in partnership with projects to support families. Attendance by On Track at other services’ meetings happened to some extent with all the projects and this enhanced their contribution to the community. It meant that the lessons learned by On Track interventions could be disseminated to other projects and vice versa. Such attendance also afforded On Track (usually the project manager) the opportunity to share not only what they were doing, but also what they were thinking, their ideas and intentions. For example, one intervention (Area 8), commented that if they were to hear their parents asking for something, and if other services had parents asking for the same thing, they would be in a position to undertake joint thinking, planning and training to address the issue. Multi-agency meetings afford the possibility of shared thinking, and therefore integrated strategies. In this way, attendance by On Track at other services’ meetings enhanced the contribution they made to the community. Where there were strong links with, for example, the Director of Education, and where training for community workers was in place, it was reported that the ‘language of On Track’ was used with parents and others in the community. By using the ‘language of On Track’, workers spoke in collective terms about On Track services provided and the integrated nature of the interventions. It was felt that consistent reference to On Track, rather than individual interventions, resulted in raised awareness of the collective nature of On Track.

Location
On Track projects covered a wide variety of geographical areas. One project, (Area 7) for example, operated on a split site, divided by industrial land and a motorway. Another split site project (Area 2) had two areas joined by broad highways and one project (Area 4) was spread across a town and surrounding rural areas. Project managers were faced with the task of developing a community ethos and an On Track presence within the community. Where there was no one focal community point, this proved somewhat problematic. The need here was to operate through local area structures or ward forums. This issue was variously enhanced or exacerbated by the location of the On Track office. In some cases the office was centrally located, such as in a shop (Area 4) or on the high street, and in one case (Area 2) the office was housed within one of the schools. Access to On Track workers for members of the community was both
enhanced and inhibited by office locations, and project managers sought to provide a range of access points, but for several projects, there was not an expectation that the public would drop in. One project had the whole team located within the same building (Area 6). It was reported that this made communication very easy. There were regular formal and informal meetings to discuss families. Where On Track teams were not located within one office, project managers worked to establish an extended team, who although not physically in the office, regarded it as their collective home. One project manager (Area 8) said she felt the ‘concept of the team is now there’. She had achieved this through liaison meetings, practitioners’ days, and team building days. She saw this team-building aspect of her role as paramount to the success of On Track, commenting that ‘they must see it as a package…. they have to feel they are part of something’.

This sense of belonging to a whole, to an On Track team, was a central theme running through projects. Where new head teachers were appointed the project management team worked to develop close and positive relationships as the school was recognised to be the conduit for much community work.

The structural considerations outlined above were mostly put in place by the project managers at the setting up phase of the project. With these factors in place the projects were faced with two key elements to consider in relation to their work in the community. Firstly, finding ways to develop a presence in the community, providing the community with On Track information. Secondly, developing ways in which On Track could actually engage with the community.

3.3 Developing a Presence in the Community

Advertising

The value of local media networks to advertise On Track initiatives was understood by all project managers. This, however, was not without problems, and one local newspaper painted a negative picture of On Track children and families. One project (Area 6) initiated a carefully managed media communication strategy that resulted in supportive reporting of On Track in local newspapers, which further aided the creation of a positive image. Clearly, one of the roles of the project manager is to understand the ways in which local media networks should be managed to engage the community in a positive fashion. The projects which felt they were most successful and judged that they had highly effective communication strategies in place to inform and update the community used a wide variety of methods.
Highly effective communication strategies are multilayered and can be understood in terms of set meetings, marketing and personal contact. Set meetings were divided between meetings with schools, meetings with the wider community and practitioner meetings. Meetings with schools were found to be problematic as staff often had problems finding time to attend. On Track teams addressed this by holding the meetings within the school buildings, after pupils had gone home. In this way, senior management representatives were able to attend, thereby becoming part of the thinking process behind decision making. Meetings with the wider community were again somewhat problematic, due to the nature of the On Track community. One On Track team (Area 8) decided to hold a high profile, high status annual conference. They had previously held two half yearly reviews which had been poorly attended and this was their new strategy and attendance was greatly increased. Communication on a personal level was valued by both schools and On Track workers, through prompt one-to-one exchange via email, telephone or visit. As many On Track projects were spread out geographically, with little access to a central, focal point, the local newspaper was felt to be invaluable. One On Track area (Area 4) covered a town and surrounding rural areas, and the newspaper was the key means of communication. In addition to press releases and articles, most projects produced leaflets informing the community of their activities. Some had banners, balloons, stickers and pens produced.

One project team (Area 3) covered their entire On Track area on foot, pushing On Track leaflets through front doors. Other projects have sought to communicate On Track information to the community by displaying leaflets and posters in local supermarkets, local shops, burger bars, at the local football club and even pinned on trees. This method of communication clearly relies on interested members of the community being able to read, being able to read English, feeling that the poster had something important to say to them and importantly, having the confidence to seek out further information. Some projects had leaflets translated into two, three or four of the main community languages.

It is not possible to judge which methods work or whether it is necessary to have a publicly branded On Track scheme. What is important is that people know the services and interventions that are available.
**Schools**

All projects sent leaflets out to parents via schools. This method of communication with the community had the advantage of a captive audience, in that children would take the letters home. However, one parent reported that she never read the leaflets from school. Again, the issue of feeling the leaflets might be of interest to parents, the issue of reading and specifically, the ability to read English, are all significant here. Combined with this is the issue of the logo on the leaflets. Some projects put the school logo on leaflets. This was felt to present On Track as working in partnership with school, and therefore something parents would feel secure with. Some projects (coordinators/intervention workers), however, felt that parents needed a certain distance from the school, anonymity, if they were to make contact with On Track for support, advice or help. Our few parent interviews did not provide confirmation for that. In these instances, only the On Track logo was printed on the leaflets. Projects sent out On Track newsletters via schools. These were colourful, inviting newsletters containing photos of the project manager, school liaison worker, community liaison worker and project administrator. The newsletters updated readers on initiatives, reported on successes and invited comments and information. They contained comprehensive information such as phone numbers, e-mail addresses and other useful contact details.

Big events with entertainment and food appeared to attract children and parents and gave many an introduction to what On Track had to offer. Religious celebrations organised by a local group, holiday period outings and other mass, universal offerings have certainly been mentioned positively in three of the projects by parents and community representatives.

**A Physical Presence**

These first level communication initiatives were complemented by the On Track team’s physical presence at a variety of community functions. One project manager reported that she felt the On Track message needed to be communicated both ‘visually and verbally’. Much effort was put into raising a colourful, energetic high profile at a variety of community events. On Track teams reached into the community, taking their message with them at school summer fairs, nursery fairs, barbecues and community fetes. The On Track logos were very visual and advertising was enhanced by On Track balloons and badges. Schools also provided On Track with a valuable means of making contact with parents, and to this end there was On Track presence at school concerts and plays, at governors’ meetings, open evenings and parents' evenings, at staff meetings and school AGMs. In many cases, this initial contact gave rise to greater engagements at a later
stage. The On Track message was taken into the community through awareness raising days, such as the ‘Make a Difference Day’ run by one project. The total impact of such blanket publicity is unclear. It may be less important to know that On Track is the provider of those clubs, family workers, home visiting and holiday activities than to know that these are available. In Area 7, there was evidence that people did not know that holiday schemes, and some other activities, were On Track funded. They merely saw them as part of what the school did. It is also important to note that the message is about support and is consciously detached from the crime reduction motive of the original Home Office projects.

Drop-in Centres
Projects set up more particular ways to engage parents; some projects had organised drop-in centres for parents. These drop-in centres provided a means through which parents could talk to other parents about their children, about their own situation and, additionally, they could engage with the On Track community worker. Three projects had interventions which were named as ‘drop-in’ though they operated in very different ways: one was for parents with pre-school children; one was with a therapist and was for teachers or parents with a problem to discuss; one was not running but was an open opportunity to come in and chat. Additionally, there were the activities which it was possible for parents to ‘drop in’ to without commitment. Area 4 had a number of these – Wednesdays for Women, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) support group, parent training and support. Stretching the ‘drop-in’ notion further, in some projects, family workers had an office and parents could come in to see them. This did not often happen unless the family worker had been seen out and about mixing with parents in the playground before and after school and at the school gate.

This kind of incidental contact was felt to be the first step in empowering families; as parents developed relationships with each other and developed trust in the On Track community worker, family worker or child development worker, it was hoped they would attend On Track strengthening families courses. These courses, as well as modelling good parenting, raised awareness of the support that is available to families. The settings within which the drop-in centres were run were a cause of debate. The drop-in centre run on school premises had the advantage of ease of access once children have been dropped off at school. However, drop-in centres run in other buildings had, it was said by professionals, the advantage of distance from the school and, therefore, anonymity.
Word of Mouth

In addition to the media strategies and physical presence of On Track workers at events, On Track information was given to parents and the wider community by word of mouth from fellow professionals. One woman reported how she had heard about On Track from her Health Visitor. Other parents had been referred by the Special Educational Needs co-ordinator in school, or other professionals such as nursery staff. This clearly highlights the central importance of having a strong On Track identity within the professional team of intervention leaders; if On Track is conceived of as a package, and as part of the thinking process of the school, then word-of-mouth recommendation is highly effective, particularly as it has come from professionals with whom parents already have a relationship and, therefore, trust. This notion of trust is most important; where communities are disaffected, or simply struggle to make contact because of language barriers, trust is essential. The role of the community representative on steering committees is valuable in this respect; community representatives can bring suggestions to the meetings and therefore have the community voice heard, but also, importantly, can report back to the community. As a trusted, respected member of the community, their potential to present On Track in a positive fashion and to engage others, is significant. However, doubts about whether they can or do feedback or liaise with the community exist. The problematic nature of the term ‘community’ has been described in the opening paragraph of this chapter. By its very nature, the On Track community is a loosely defined geographical area comprising families receiving On Track services. These families represent a cultural and social cross section of the broader community and as such, the term ‘community representative’ can be seen to be problematic. Community representatives, whilst residing in a geographical area, are not necessarily placed to have a representative voice within the wider community. For this to happen effectively, there would need to be systems in place for feedback to take place. It seems that community representatives, whilst living within the community, are not necessarily placed to have a voice within their community.

3.4 Empowering local people

The concept of working with the community has been underpinned by the notion of empowerment for most projects. Empowerment, as a central theme for project managers, community development workers and outreach workers has caused projects to develop strategies whereby members of the community do not find themselves entirely dependent upon On Track to
address their problems, but rather, regard the initiatives, as a partnership. Of course, there are some cases, such as high risk families, where this relationship is weighted toward dependency, but Project Managers have sought to establish a balance.

**The Community Development Worker**

Meaningful engagement with the community has been conceived of, and undertaken at a variety of levels. The role of the community development worker (known in one area as the community link worker), was not specified in the ‘Process and Early Implementation Issues’ report (Home Office, 2003). This report outlined the role of the Project Manager or Project Coordinator, and reference was made to the ‘On Track project team’. However, the role of the community development worker evolved in some projects in response to a perceived need within the community. The role was inspired by a realization that more was needed if the community were to become engaged with On Track. The community development worker potentially plays a major role in developing initiatives and engaging the community. Three of the projects had a person with a specifically community development role.

The appointment of a suitable person to this role is paramount, as they must be able to establish trust within a community whilst at the same time be viewed as ‘of On Track’, and a professional to whom one could turn with a problem, or for advice. In this respect, the community development worker must be regarded as a member of the community; where this happens successfully, parents speak to the community development worker where they would not, perhaps, approach a teacher. In one project where this has happened, the community development worker understood the young people and the estate where they lived. As someone who lived within the community, it was reported that she understood the ‘cannot back down, have to retaliate’ attitude of some young people. This community development worker commented that On Track ‘learns them how to deal with situations themselves’. The employment of workers who can develop and maintain links with parents, gain trust and draw them into involvement in interventions in non-threatening ways, is vital. As a professional, the community development worker might have a role to play in school, acting as a buffer between the school, the child and the family.

**The Employment of Local People**

The employment of local people to key On Track positions has many positive elements. In one project, the school had a Social Inclusion Co-ordinator who attended monthly multi-agency
meetings. She said ‘I do feel appreciated by the parents’; there was clearly a sense in which she was ‘one of them’. It was evident that her role and confidence had grown and she now organised midday supervisors, first aiders and undertook termly reviews of supervisors. As a resident of the community and a member of On Track, she has a positive role in contributing to the way in which tasks are undertaken. In this sense, community members working in schools are a powerful conduit for messages from parents in the community. They are in a position to relay views, reactions, and needs through their networks. This works very powerfully in On Track’s favour where the community member is involved as an employee or volunteer. For example, one community representative interviewed was a learning support assistant who had a child at an On Track school. She initially became a volunteer at the after school club for one night a week. The community development worker spoke to her about a school meeting, and she is now a school governor. The employment of local people to On Track interventions adds importantly to the ethos of community engagement and involvement.

Volunteer involvement has an equally crucial role to play here. Volunteer involvement with On Track has been achieved through toddler groups, after school clubs and secondary transfer meetings. Parental involvement with an intervention may lead to their child participating; this can be highly informative and can lead, potentially, to additional volunteers or employment. In this important way, community engagement leads to empowerment for families, rather than positioning them as mere recipients of services; volunteers for after-school clubs, for working parties and those attending parent association meetings are actively engaged in shaping interventions and making a positive contribution to their community. Some On Track projects have provided training for volunteers. All of this is empowering. One project allotted £500 to the parent association in each school to spend as they saw fit for the benefit of the children. Although local meetings to decide on this expenditure were not well attended, the opportunity to consider all options was a tangible role for those who turned up and an important resource allocation responsibility.

On Track projects developed a variety of interventions suitable to their specific local context. Strengthening families programmes, sometimes known as parental training, constituted a key intervention. The community development worker in Area 2 was most enthusiastic to instigate this course, as it was felt it would enable recipients to make new friends and to help them understand their children. By understanding their children and having skills and strategies to deal with problems or issues, parents become empowered. The community development worker
felt that for some parents, it was a means through which they could improve their English. Strengthening links within families and between families and others in the community is at the heart of On Track community work. It was reported that one boy (Area 7), who had been supported by On Track, had an aunt who was encouraged by the community development worker to undertake one of the parenting courses. She felt it had helped her become a better parent and sister in law. Another mother who attended secondary transfer classes came along subsequently to lend support and help out. The On Track project manager asked her if she would like to give a formal presentation to parents and pupils. She reported that it was one of her greatest achievements and that she felt she had a central role to play in supporting pupils and parents during secondary transfer.

Other initiatives involving the community were equally successful. The holiday play schemes and summer programmes were universally praised, criticised only for being too short. On Track teams felt that these initiatives were highly empowering for children and their families. From the children's point of view, they were able to link up with other friends from within their community and engage in exciting activities. Some children were given tasks of responsibility and many were involved in organising events. From the parents' perspective, On Track workers felt that friendships, which would not normally have occurred, because of different social or cultural circles, had blossomed as a result of a shared interest in their children's activities. Some parents stayed and helped as volunteers, thus gaining a sense of worth, and contributing to the event. Parental participation in such On Track events, is highly valuable. Parental participation has the potential to develop in parents a confidence which could lead to them becoming a committee member. Participation is an empowering process which gradually affords parents the opportunity to shape the interventions in their community. Through participation, parents may begin to understand their own children and the reasons for particular behaviour, and may, as a result, be in a stronger position to support them. Through discussions with other parents, they may strengthen their confidence as parents and develop their language skills. Through participation in On Track events, parents have the potential to become shapers of their community, rather than individuals who receive support.

One On Track team sought to use secondary transfer as a means through which children could become particularly empowered. Secondary transfer is the process through which pupils leave primary school in Year 6 as 11 year olds and move on to Year 7 in the secondary school. Parents or guardians are required to apply to the school of their choice. Some schools require pupils to sit
examinations or tests, or to attend an interview accompanied by their parents/ guardians. Pupils are not guaranteed a place at the school of their choice, and the paper work accompanying this process is complex. Secondary transfer is a particularly complicated process and is potentially stressful and confusing for many children and their families. This project worked with pupils in partnership with a video company, the result of which was a video explaining secondary transfer from a variety of aspects. Pupils were engaged at every step of the process, from designing questions, through interviewing, to using the equipment. Made by children, for children and their families, this highly successful video has been widely acclaimed and is currently being updated.

There are also instances of community people being trained to deliver interventions such as parenting courses - though in these instances, it is yet to be shown that the community attendees have applied their training in the role of trainers. The training has built up a capacity within the community but in Area 7 there are more trained people than opportunities to run courses – recruitment to parenting classes remains a problem.

*Hard to Reach Groups*

All of the above interventions have been strategically planned to engage local communities. However, there are ‘hard to reach’ groups within communities and these groups need special consideration. On Track teams approached this work with extreme sensitivity and consideration. Some ‘hard to reach’ groups were faith groups, many of whom had little spoken English. On Track teams found the most valuable way to support these groups, to develop a relationship and gain trust, was through their own leaders. In particular, Somali and Arab groups were supported in this way. Other groups who did not speak English were unaware of services which could support them, or of things going on in their own children’s schools because they could not understand the leaflets sent home. For these groups, On Track teams provided interpreters for parents, at for example, secondary transfer meetings or school placement interviews.

Whilst these are important services, they still place the individual in the position of dependent recipient. This balance was addressed by the way in which after-school activities for pupils were organised. Parents often stayed and joined in the activities. Some projects put on separate activities specifically for them. On Track teams also found that some of these parents stayed for their children's homework clubs. In these ways, parents were able to make friends within the community, hear about services which could support them, develop their English, learn something of the curriculum and possibly be in a position to support their own children's
homework. On Track teams also targeted nursery schools for ‘hard to reach’ groups, as they felt that making contact at a very early stage would be beneficial to parents.

Putting on events for children is a way of making non-threatening contact with new parents. It affords opportunities for developing closer working relationships. There are networks of specialist support for ‘hard to reach’ groups such as refugees and travellers. On Track teams are perfectly positioned to develop an integrated support system where appropriate. There are, of course, cultural issues to consider when working with specific community groups. One project manager stated that while she is keen to involve community groups, she is aware that, for example, there was a Eurocentric ethos underpinning parenting classes that had to be handled with great sensitivity; issues such as the place and value of play will be regarded differently by different cultural groups. The most successful On Track initiatives with these groups, apart from the one-to-one work undertaken, was when festivals were celebrated, such as the Eid party organised in one project. On Track workers and parents contributed food and the event was an overwhelming success.

3.5 Summary
There are a number of key themes which have emerged in relation to community engagement. The amorphous nature of the ‘community’ has led to problems when identifying suitable personnel for roles as community representatives. Appointing or electing community representatives has been problematic due to the diverse nature of the On Track communities. When in post, these representatives can realistically only represent themselves, and there are limited systems in place for these representatives to feedback to the ‘community’. A key problem with low levels of community participation can be understood in terms of the setting up stage of the projects. Community involvement was not part of the strategic thinking that went into bidding for funding. As such, community engagement evolved rather than developed in a strategic fashion and different projects have nurtured this evolution in different ways. The relationship with schools and the role of schools in On Track has similarly evolved, though more quickly and more powerfully, as described in the next chapter.

On track has undoubtedly contributed to the social infrastructure through improved services and facilities. As an ABI, On Track has enriched provision for the people of the neighbourhood. Communication has been managed in diverse and energetic ways and it can be concluded that this
diversity and energy, continuously applied, is important to ensure local people and other services know of the interventions available.

Engaging with the social organisation and networks has also been diverse and energetic. Evidence suggests that more drop-in facilities, more dedicated community development roles and more structured opportunities for people to contribute and participate in decision making are needed. Projects are aware of the need to move forward on issues of participation and empowerment; they have some way to go in this difficult area as yet.
Chapter 4: The Extent of Engagement in Schools

4.1 Introduction

In our calculations, in the eight On Track projects, a total of 48 schools are involved catering for an estimated 10,000 children and employing over 400 teachers and a still larger number of support staff. This provision clearly offers massive opportunities for interventions to support children and a linkage with parents. In the introduction (Figure 5/Table 3), it was noted that projects subscribe to different models of delivery. Our research has identified differing successes in engaging schools, but there is no clear relationship to a particular model of delivery. The key factors occur in each of the models. A dominant feature has been the negotiation over control and location of management. Schools vary greatly in the extent to which they wish to control the quality and presence of On Track workers in school. This resonates interestingly with Nixon’s (2002) ideas of authoritarianism versus democracy. For some head teachers, the relinquishing of ‘responsibility’ for their community that some On Track work necessarily entails, is proving quite a challenge. It could be argued that the schools in which On Track sits most easily, are those where the head teacher is trusting of the professionalism of colleagues from other agencies and is happy to develop an open dialogue with them. However, a successful working relationship can be developed across all variations, as projects have found a need to match the management style of the head teacher in a given school. Undoubtedly, as suggested in the introduction, some head teachers are finding that they have not experienced such management complexity before and so the responsibility that they are being asked to take on brings with it requirements for extra training. In other instances, the responsibility for liaising with On Track and managing interventions and workers has been delegated to another member of staff, such as an assistant head or a non-teaching Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator. This can work well, but again carries a need for training in multi-agency work, as Corrigan (1997) has indicated.

As with community engagement, engagement with schools occurs at multiple levels. For the purposes of this section, it has proved beneficial to categorise engagement in two main ways. The first, macro level, relates to strategic planning and partnership structures. It identifies some key factors that, arising from the experiences of On Track Projects, need to be considered at the delivery planning stage. The second, micro, level concerns the operation and quality of projects and partnership implementation. This identifies factors which project management, providers and schools may need to consider when involved in operating in partnership as part of multi-agency
projects. This categorisation recognises that it is quite possible for a project to have set up myriad structures and policies to facilitate partnership with, and the engagement of, schools, but that in practice this partnership could operate without any real sense of engagement on the part of schools. Schools may indeed sign up to the idea of partnership, but pay lip-service to its operation. The same may be said of projects. Effective and real engagement requires commitment on both sides to working practices which encompass actions, attitudes and values.

Further to the macro/micro distinction, engagement seems to consist of different stages. First, there must be a clear communication strategy on the part of projects, so that schools are kept informed of the potential, the aims and the actuality of On Track. Beyond this, there must be structures, behaviours and dispositions on both sides towards involvement and participation as equals in a partnership. This involvement inevitably increases or decreases in its extent, as tangible benefits or clear disadvantages accrue to schools because of their involvement in On Track. This stage has a great deal, therefore, to do with the quality of personnel involved, of relationships built between project management, intervention providers and school staff, and of the content and progress of interventions. When the school can see and feel that On Track is providing real support in achieving key school targets, commitment to the project should increase.

The overall picture gained from the research interviews is one of satisfaction with, or praise for, the quality of communication and collaboration between schools and projects. There was explicit consultation with schools and obvious delivery of services to or through them. A degree of empowerment is present between professionals. All project managers and intervention providers felt that most schools in their area were supportive of On Track, and that they had good communication with the majority or all of the schools. In some areas, all respondents were very pleased with the quality of communication, whereas in other areas, there was something of a mixed response. It was comparatively rare to find clear dissatisfaction expressed by projects or schools. Where this was the case, clear reasons were given, which will be discussed below. In most areas this level of quality has been achieved despite the absence of sufficient lead-in time to establish clear structures and strategy for communication. The positive responses to questions in this area reflect well on the dedication and commitment of project managers to building positive relationships with schools.
In the eight projects evaluated by the Canterbury LET, there were 90 interventions active at the time of fieldwork. These were put into one of three categories (see Table 5 below): school-managed where the intervention was based in the school and the workers line managed from the school; school-based where the intervention happened on the school premises - a health worker moving from school to school managed by a Primary Care Trust (PCT) and On Track co-ordinator is an example of this; and centre, agency or community based where the intervention is based outside the school and managed from outside the school - family therapy is usually of this kind.

The categorisation is fairly clear-cut and there has been reinforcement of the role of schools in hosting interventions. In some projects, agreements have been clarified about the respective roles of head teachers and On Track management of school-based workers, such that heads have the major role of co-ordination and line management within their school. Here, On Track staff are often in the role of providing supervision and staff development but this would still be categorised as school managed. CAMHS support for families is usually agency based, but can be based in schools as a drop in service, following the Dowling (1994) model of taking the clinic to school. In the other projects, line management still occurs predominantly through On Track management.

There are tensions in the placement of control over interventions: On Track management may judge that they cannot regulate referrals if they do not retain significant control; schools may feel the need to co-ordinate a range of workers to provide coherence within their institutions, especially where they have a range of funding sources for their workers. Table 5 shows the distribution of active interventions across the three categories.

### Table 5: Interventions and their Location of Control

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Active Interventions</th>
<th>School Managed</th>
<th>School-based</th>
<th>Centre, Agency or Community-Based</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area 1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The distinctive picture emerging is of how the school is the pivotal institution. Ninety five percent of interventions are school based or school managed. Of the other 5% (seven interventions) none are fully ‘community based’. The character of On Track is of a school-focused project controlled by professionals. As an aside, it will be interesting to see if the Children’s Fund, with a much more strongly expressed ‘participation’ remit will establish more interventions in the community and outside schools or will engage more community involvement and establish more shared control.

4.2 The Macro-level: Strategic Delivery Planning

The most successful projects present as having a clear communication and consultation strategy, that is accompanied by structures to facilitate this. In many cases, this strategy has developed as projects have progressed. Sometimes this development has had to occur, at later stages of project delivery, counter to a previous history of poor communication with school head teachers at the early stages.

An essential feature of this communication strategy is the establishment of a clear process of consultation prior to, or concurrent with, the drawing up of a delivery plan. Some projects reported that this had occurred: in Area 6, local head teachers had been involved in consultation at an early stage, and one head teacher had taken a lead role in this, retaining a presence at the strategic level through membership of the strategic planning group. In Area 7, consultation had not been extensive, but it was reported that ‘head teachers knew enough of what was planned.’ In other areas (1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 8) the absence of this pre-delivery consultation had caused early difficulties for incoming project co-ordinators, who had then needed to spend an inordinate amount of time repairing relationships and building understanding with head teachers.

Communication Structures: Issues of Membership and Funding

In the most effective projects, structures are in place to facilitate communication with schools and to enable real involvement at a strategic level. Membership of steering or strategic groups enabled head teachers to have some input to discussions at the macro-level. In Areas 6, 5 and 2, a head teacher representative attended such a group and was delegated to report back to fellow head
teachers on an informal basis or through formal routes such as cluster meetings\textsuperscript{11}. In Area 4, the project manager had set up a series of regular meetings with head teachers as a group. In Area 7, involvement in such meetings had enabled head teachers to shape the development of the project by suggesting types of interventions to include. In Area 8, head teachers did not wish to be involved in such groups as they were happy with other arrangements for communication and collaboration. It would seem to be an essential feature of the process of engaging schools, that head teachers, or representatives from school, have some kind of voice at a steering or partnership group level. In Area 1, the multi-agency meetings held in school were felt to help schools deal with issues around social exclusion and disruptive behaviour.

A key issue that has impacted adversely on communication is that of time and funding for school personnel to attend meetings and for project managers to invest in establishing clear lines of communication and the relationships to sustain these. Head teachers in all areas have expressed some concern over the time that is involved in committing to On Track. In Area 1, teachers reported spending their own time on targeting and referral of pupils to interventions and on meeting key personnel. In Area 2, funding has now been made available to support staff in attending key meetings with link workers and intervention providers. In Area 3, a head teacher was concerned about ‘initiative overload’ and the time and complexity of managing so many different initiatives in school. In Area 4, head teachers expressed concern over the fact that ‘On Track tried (initially) to ask too much of schools in too short a time. ‘The project manager was conscious of this and the fact that On Track could seem an additional burden to the requirement of curriculum initiatives.’ In Area 8, the burden in terms of time fell in one school on the shoulders of the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator. The administration of On Track was time consuming, as was ‘liaising with the On Track team, getting dates for On Track intervention visits, arranging rooms and organising pupils timetables, liaising with teachers, consulting with the head teacher, deputy and school management team’. It was felt that this time consuming role required additional funding or support for the school.

Project managers in Areas 4 and 8 commented in particular on the substantial amount of time that had been spent on building relationships with schools. In Area 4, the project manager thought that she had devoted between a third and a half of her time to developing good communication with

\textsuperscript{11} Neighbourhood groupings of schools
schools and the community. In Area 8, the project manager felt that the funding required for this aspect of her work had been substantially under-rated.

**Key Link Personnel: Projects and Schools**

An essential feature of communication and collaboration with schools has proved to be the identification of key link personnel to liaise with On Track. In some schools, this has been the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo), or another designated senior teacher. In most cases the head teacher has taken on this role, but the level of seniority has been less significant than clarity over whom project management and intervention providers should communicate with. In Area 8, a clear appointment of an On Track link teacher had greatly aided communication in one school. In Area 2, communication had improved as a result of the appointment of two new head teachers, who took a great deal of interest in liaising with On Track. But this communication needs to take place on multiple levels. Schools are involved in administrative liaison with intervention providers, as well as strategic and operational liaison with project management. This liaison can involve all members of school staff, from senior management to teaching assistants and midday supervisors.

The selection of interventions in projects has had a clear impact on the nature of communication between schools and projects, and therefore is an issue to be considered at the strategic level. Those projects, whose delivery plan included an intervention which is specifically designed to link home and school, received a good deal of praise from school respondents for the quality of communication. The titles for the personnel who are based in school to lead this type of intervention vary, from ‘Family Link Worker’ to ‘Home-School Assistant’ and ‘Child Development Worker’. As of December 2002, (Implementation Update 1 covering all 24 projects), 132 interventions (the largest total of all categories) could be classed as home-school partnership. In particular, however, head teachers lavished praise on home-school link workers who were based in the school. In Area 5 a head teacher commented that ‘…the Family Worker works very well…and is now bedded in and a much valued member of the community. Having her on-site is excellent.’ In Area 7, an example was given of an asylum-seeker’s child who had been previously involved in daily fights, but who now was unrecognisable, ‘thanks to the child-development worker.’ In Area 6, a head teacher had high praise for the way that the home-school assistant was able to refer problems, issues or queries immediately to the core team. This worker
was attached to more than one school, but was, nonetheless, a visible presence in school at some point each week.

Other projects addressed the need for a visible presence in school in other ways. In Area 1, a decision was taken to divide the original post of multi-intervention co-ordinator into two posts, one with responsibility for schools and one for the community. In Area 2, the original delivery plan led to the appointment of a link worker in each school. In practice these workers had experienced difficulties of isolation from project management and in terms of working as a team. Following a review of the management structure of the project in September 2002, a single post of schools link worker was created, which has resulted in improved communication and co-ordination with schools. In Area 6, in the light of the project manager’s concern over the time needed to co-ordinate liaison with schools, a post of schools team leader was created, which impacted positively on communication and collaboration with schools.

Service Level/Partnership Agreements

A further consideration for project management in this area has been the use of Service Level Agreements. In two areas in particular, these have increasingly been used by projects as a way of ensuring minimum levels of commitment to aspects of partnership. In Area 1, they are used by the project manager to specify the responsibility of intervention providers towards reporting progress and data to both project management and to schools. In Area 2, since the project review of September 2002, they have been used to provide guarantees of minimum levels of communication between schools, project management and interventions. Some projects would eschew this approach for structural reasons. For example, Area 6 does not use Service Level Agreements, as all interventions are delivered from the in-house team. But in projects where confusion has also arisen between project management and schools over lines of communication and the management of intervention providers, SLAs may have a role to play. A second dimension of this that could be addressed through SLAs is clarity over responsibility for and involvement in referral. In some areas school personnel are clearly aware of their responsibilities here, and are actively involved in referring children to single and multiple interventions. In other areas, head teachers and school staff are less involved in this, and leave the management of referrals to the project team and intervention providers. Both scenarios can be effective. Where practice and therefore prior strategy have been less effective, this is often due to confusion over responsibilities and potential in referral. There are other ways in which this clarity could be provided, that do not rely on the existence of SLAs, i.e. effective multi-agency referral meetings.
(Areas 2, 7) and the potential informal contact between school staff and school-based intervention providers (Areas 5, 6 and 7).

4.3 The Micro-level: operating in partnership with schools

As indicated earlier, it is possible for projects to have set up structures to enable partnership to operate and communication to occur. But without quality in implementation, schools may fail to be engaged in On Track. Engagement is about individual and institutional commitment, on the part of both On Track project management and of schools. At this level it is also important for intervention providers and the community to see and contribute to this sense of engagement. The first layer of operational engagement is concerned with the practice and quality of communication.

Attitudes to Communication

In all projects, the commitment of the project manager to communicating effectively with schools is a key factor. All project managers received a great deal of praise from respondents who were asked to rate the quality of their communication:

‘they are always just a phone call away. If the project manager can’t come to a meeting, she’ll send someone to represent her. Minutes of meetings always exchanged’ (Head Teacher, Area 1).

‘always get support from X when we ask for it… queries are always responded to and clarified’.

‘…the feedback we get is very useful….we share things with each other….relationships have been good’ (School staff, Area 3).

‘they have always responded when I have wanted to talk to them….and they do follow through’

‘It is very good in my experience and has always been’. ‘On Track support and train my staff and are always on the end of the phone if need be’ (School staff, Area 4).

In Area 6, school staff regarded the quality of communication very highly and attributed this to the project manager and the whole On Track team. They particularly appreciated the way that the team had clarified at an early stage ‘what they could and could not do for the schools.’ In Area 2, two of the three head teachers were complimentary: communication was ‘enthusiastic’ and there was a ‘high degree of consultation’. The third head teacher felt that there had been improvements since the appointment of a new project management team. In Area 5, head teachers were very
positive and rated communication as very good, saying that they were ‘well consulted’ and could ‘approach On Track whenever necessary’. In Area 7, communication was rated by head teachers as very good or good. In Area 8, head teachers appreciated ‘prompt and efficient organisation of meetings and distribution of minutes’, and in another case the attendance of project management at summer fairs and parents evenings. This willingness of project managers to ‘go the extra mile’, in terms of voluntary attendance at, and support for, school events and informal contacts with schools was praised in five of the eight projects. Another factor is the quality of chairing and minuting of meetings that head teachers are invited to. In all areas, maintaining attendance at key meetings was proving to be something of a challenge, partly because projects were now well established and it was felt that fewer meetings were required. In areas 5, 6 and 8, particular efforts had been made to encourage attendance at these meetings, while in Area 2, improvements in the circulation of agendas and minutes, as well as effective communication about location and timing of meetings, was proving to be an asset to maintaining attendance.

In contrast, there were factors which diminished the quality of project management’s communication. Some school staff in Area 1 and Area 4 talked of difficulties with the project ‘not really understanding how we work in schools’ or ‘expecting too much of schools.’ The appointment of key workers who had previous experience in schools had improved this situation. It is perhaps inevitable that such cultural tensions will occur in multi-agency projects and, to the credit of all concerned, this was only referred to by two or three respondents in total. On the other hand, there was strong criticism in one project of the lack of accessibility of the team and of failure to respond to telephone messages. This was further characterised as a ‘breakdown in communication’ and evidence of a ‘lack of clear co-ordination and management’. Schools reported that where problems have arisen with intervention providers they have tried to resolve them themselves. Two head teachers said they would have liked to involve the project manager but they had difficulties getting hold of her and they did not get any response if they left a message. One said that if the project manager was unavailable at the time then other things took over and the problem was left undealt with. This was a cause of concern particularly where the problem involved intervention providers not turning up.

**Liaison with Interventions**

In three of the eight areas, the quality of communication between intervention providers and schools was rated as mixed. Where communication was weak, this was perceived by schools to be related to a lack of feedback from providers about what they were doing with children. In Area
2, some interventions were praised for their ‘high profile and constant liaison’, while other interventions had been less successful. This weakness was sometimes caused by staffing issues, but it was felt the communication systems were not soundly enough in place to keep schools informed of these issues. In Area 1, there had been a problem with one provider and the head teacher was prepared to give up the intervention unless the provider changed. This head teacher also felt that one of the interventions did not want to accept the lines of communication which had been set up and this resulted in duplication of conversations because one person did not trust another to pass on information. In Area 8, one intervention provider was criticised by school staff for a lack of communication about what was going on. On the other hand, where communication was good, this was related to providers being open and flexible in the ways that they worked with schools. In Area 4, one head teacher commented that what made On Track ‘acceptable to the staff is the fact that the provider shares what she is doing with class teachers and teaching assistants.’ In Area 8, providers were praised who presented themselves as ‘open and as equal professionals’, and who were willing to be flexible in their provision and open to a dialogue with head teachers and class teachers.

Barriers to successful communication on the part of schools came in the shape of head teachers who were unwilling to engage in On Track (Areas, 1, 3, 4, 6 and 8) or, in some cases, at the early stages of implementation, where head teachers had sought to establish a degree of control over the operation of interventions in their schools. In Area 8, this occurred with a particular intervention which head teachers felt was excessively rigid in its design, or even misconceived. In Area 5, this came over the appointment of Learning Support Assistants in school. Head teachers wanted tight control of the employment of these workers. This area of tension was resolved through visits to schools by the project manager with support from a local politician and a head of service. In Area 2, one head teacher was fiercely protective of the children and wanted, understandably, to be able to vet all interventions operating within her school. As the early history of this project was also marred by poor communication, her attitudes became all the more entrenched. It was important in all areas for head teachers and schools to feel that they had some influence over the shaping of interventions, or at least in whether or not to accept interventions in their school. Interventions that presented as inflexible and part of a pre-set model of delivery caused particular problems in Areas 8 and 2.

Direct involvement of schools in referral and targeting was also important. In Area 6, the project manager felt that this helped give head teachers a sense of ownership with the project. In Areas 6
and 7, head teachers felt that they had been able to slow down the pace of implementation and to have some input on quality assurance. In Area 4, two intervention providers felt that teachers were not interested in receiving information about the intervention. In Area 3, a provider felt that the commitment to good communication was very one-sided in favour of On Track. In Area 8, one provider felt that in a particular school, he was being denied access to key personnel. All of these instances relate in various ways to the quality, or perceptions of quality, of the interventions.

In projects of this complexity, involving the employment of workers from a wide variety of professional fields, and who bring different levels of qualification and expertise to their work, there will always be occasions when an honest dialogue about quality needs to take place. Many head teachers see themselves as guardians of the interests of the pupils and families in their care (their community in effect). At times this protectiveness may overspill into misguided judgments about the quality and professionalism of workers in services which they may be unaccustomed to liaising with. At other times, their concern is justified and demonstrates that, as the professionals with the closest knowledge of the educational needs of the pupils, they must have a say in monitoring and managing the quality of interventions. Projects, intervention providers and school management alike must be prepared to negotiate over these issues.

**Physical and Theoretical Support**

At the operational level, schools’ engagement also consists of them providing space, time and facilities to support interventions. In Area 1, the question of space and time on the timetable was referred to as a key factor for schools, in deciding whether or not to take up an intervention. A head teacher respondent stated that ‘Education is the core business of schools rather than emotional support, and that should be where the school’s energy is.’ One intervention provider in this area felt that a particular head teacher did ‘not want to be involved…will pay lip service but won’t have any real involvement and doesn’t want it to impinge on their time.’ The project manager felt that sometimes a lack of understanding of the amount of time needed to be involved in interventions causes problems. In Area 2, one of the three head teachers felt that an ‘enormous amount of head teacher time’ was taken up with On Track issues. In Area 3, it was felt that one school had turned down interventions because the head felt that they did not have the space available and that she could not cope with the ‘quality management’ of any more things in school. In contrast, a head teacher in Area 8 wanted her staff to be more involved and more ‘proactive with On Track about what they want.’ Where schools could see obvious benefits to their
involvement, interventions were being used to complement a busy timetable. In Areas 2, 3 and 7 in particular, much use was made of extra-curricular time to provide clubs and activities for children.

Perhaps one of the most important factors was the extent to which schools and head teachers understood and were in sympathy with the aims of On Track and had embedded the work of On Track within their school development agenda. In all areas, there were head teachers who were enthusiastically supportive of On Track. In Area 5, this enthusiasm extended to being an advocate for On Track. One of the head teachers had recently spoken at a Government East meeting about the benefits of being involved and how this linked to the idea of extended schools. In Area 6, the head teachers who were involved actively tried to recruit others to On Track by speaking of the tangible results it produced. In Area 8, one school had made a particular point of highlighting involvement with On Track at the school’s last OFSTED inspection. It was unfortunate that in this case, OFSTED had chosen not to include this in the school’s report.

In many schools, head teachers spoke of how the aims of On Track were entirely in sympathy with those of the school:

‘It has the same aims as the school’ … ‘If it is supporting children, teachers have no problem with the emphasis being on crime reduction…it is very good to lengthen the school day so children are not on the streets which leads them into the crime cycle. If you get them young then there is hope you can break the cycle’ (Area 3).
‘There was a certain amount of trepidation at the start, but On Track has come to terms with what schools are and how they function. It is far more valuable than I thought it would be’ (Area 5).
‘It is what we are about – the most important part of what we do. We are walking down the same road.’ ‘It is helping the children and the ethos of the school. There is more to life than just the academic.’ ‘It is all about helping families to help themselves, to gain skills so that they can start to help themselves and are not so reliant on other people. It is starting to break that cycle of neglect’ (Area 6).
‘It is what the community needs. We have a significant drug problem in this area and this early work will help keep them out of this and other trouble’. ‘On Track has an impact on every child in the school’ (Area 7).

These and other specific quotations from school staff indicate the extent to which projects are becoming embedded in the development of schools. In Area 1, one head teacher had included a
specific intervention in the induction programme for new teachers and as part of staff In-service Training. In Area 2, one head teacher felt that the work of On Track complemented the skills of his staff: ‘Schools should serve the community…as teachers and educators we don’t have the skills to meet the needs. It is helpful to have an independent body that works with sensitivity and empathy to the workings of a school.’

**Persuading Reluctant Schools**

Tangible and quantifiable results naturally are the most successful persuaders. Those interventions that work most clearly as a bridge or link between children, families and their schools are the most effective here. In Area 7, the ‘turning around’ of particular children was being directly attributed to the work of Child Development Workers. In Area 6, the quantified changes in school attendance figures from a ‘First-day response’ scheme were highlighted by head teachers. The project manager wondered whether this success had persuaded a previously reluctant head teacher to come on board with the project. In Area 5, the work of the Family Worker was widely praised.

Where project managers had acquired influential political allies, this was clearly aiding the persuasion of reluctant schools. In Area 5, a local councillor was the chair of the Steering Committee and took an active part in advocating On Track with the schools in the community. The project manager felt that his support was key in making clear to schools that On Track was vital for the communities that they served. In Area 6, the support of the local MP and cabinet-level councillors was also influential in boosting the profile and perceived importance of On Track. Furthermore, the Education Welfare Officer in the LEA was also an active advocate. In Area 4, one provider suggested that the Education department ought to play a more active role in advocating On Track, and in investigating why certain schools seemed reluctant to engage.

In addition to the factors mentioned above, which were referred to by respondents in more than one area, there were isolated references to other factors. In Area 6, two head teachers spoke about how On Track was relieving them of work in the area of school attendance. In Area 7, heads spoke of the benefits of On Track having given money to parent-teacher associations and schools councils to spend in ways in which they themselves determined. In Area 6, the perception of parents that their children’s schools were supportive of On Track was clearly important to them. This was mentioned in other areas, but not highlighted so clearly. In Area 8, a particular difficulty with ongoing communication was mentioned by the project manager. This was the high turnover...
of staff in the schools in which On Track operated. It was felt to be too time-consuming for project management to provide induction to On Track, but was recognised that schools might not regard this as of the highest priority with new staff.

4.4 Summary

Despite variations in the ways in which projects have engaged schools, it is clear that the quality of relationships between schools and On Track projects strongly influence the quality of project delivery. Where these relationships are positive and open, benefits accrue to the school and its development agenda, as well as to the project and its intervention providers. Schools have been particularly appreciative of the way in which sensitive project managers and intervention providers have recognised the complexity of primary schools and the cultures which operate within them. Project managers in turn welcome the enthusiastic support of school staff in delivering the project. In many cases both schools and project management have welcomed the way in which a high quality partnership brings better access to the community of families that the projects and schools both serve. It is the key factors in developing this three way relationship which are explored in the next chapter.

Schools are a major location and conduit for On Track providers and head teachers are fairly well engaged with the decision-making mechanisms of On Track. The heavy focus on and involvement in schools contrasts with the much slighter role and involvement of community members.
Chapter 5: A Special Relationship

5.1 Introduction

In this section we aim to reflect on engagement in both contexts and to map the particular synergy of the three main players in On Track, the project management, the schools and the community. Table 5 in the previous section has illustrated the way in which schools are the overwhelmingly dominant location of interventions. There are projects where there is more of a balance, such as Area 6, but in this as in other cases, projects are often using schools as the main conduit to the community, rather than taking interventions direct to the community itself. The meaning of community needs constantly refining. It is certainly not a singular homogenous entity and it is not marked out as cohesive in its entirety or in its sub-parts. One way of looking at the community is to see it as the families whose children attend the schools served by On Track – a community of users. In our research, these were the members of the community at large who were most informed about, and involved in, On Track. The relationship between these three players is complex. On Track relies on schools to access the community. Yet there are particular aspects of project work which operate through the school, but do not involve the school. Indeed, it may be vitally important that a parent/carer or child is able to maintain the confidentiality of an intervention. Additionally, once initial contacts have been made through a school-based intervention, the development of the working relationship between project and community may not involve schools, as in Area 6 and the Outreach intervention. However, the relationship between the community and school may be subtly altered by the involvement of families in On Track, to the benefit of schools, the project and the families in the community. There is not an equality of influence here: whilst the communities play an active role in interventions, the evidence is that the schools play a stronger role and, with the On Track team, are the dominant forces in the project as a whole. But, in ways which are sometimes unintended, parents are becoming empowered to take up positions of greater influence in relation to schools.

It is worth at this point returning to the themes identified in Chapter 1, in relation to lessons to be learned from ABIs. Three themes were identified: discretion and control; collaborative advantage; and area and function.

*Discretion and control:* our research has not highlighted any marked tension over the ‘respective power of the centre and the local area’. In some areas there have been negotiations between project management and schools over control over the means and delivery of particular
interventions. But no school or community representative expressed anything other than full support for the overall aims and service objectives of projects. However, we have not found any examples of devolved power, although On Track was not established with such a model in mind.

**Collaborative advantage:** we have already highlighted ways in which collaborative advantage has accrued to schools, statutory services and project management through the development of successful partnerships. Further sections in this chapter will outline how community users have also gained this advantage.

**Area and function:** the way in which On Track has been able to operate outside but with links where appropriate, to mainstream services, has meant that communities are receiving focused attention on risk factors. The relative autonomy of some projects has enabled innovative practice to develop, which has then fed back to statutory agencies. However, the level of attention which On Track can give is perhaps difficult to see being replicated after mainstreaming. It is often the fact that the project has autonomy and freedom to innovate, which has led to local successes that mainstream services were unable to provide.

In seeking to explore further the complexity of the relationship between schools, projects and the community we have addressed three headings in particular:

1. Key Interventions
2. Key Roles
3. Community Making

### 5.2 Key Interventions: taking services to the community

Some interventions serve as go-between, communicating between school staff and parents. Such interventions are ‘in’ the school but not ‘of’ the school. Community residents, parents, find it easier to approach the key workers in the intervention – Home-School Liaison Workers, Family Workers or Child Development Workers. Information flows both ways and sometimes in an easier, less formal and more digestible manner. Parents in a number of different projects have, reportedly, referred to the importance of this link worker being located outside any statutory service. They draw distinctions between the communication and involvement that they have with Social Services, with Health Visitors and with the school, and the communication that they develop with the link worker. The implication that we have gained in several interviews seems
often to be that the link worker is more trustworthy and reliable than other workers. In some schools, the presence of the link worker has provided teachers with another support service, and someone who they can turn to for advice about a child or to help them communicate with families. Immediate action such as ‘first-day response’ for absence from school contributes to social ease between school and community. Family Liaison Workers who telephone as a friend within the school enquiring about the child are a buffer before more formalised Educational Welfare Office attention, indeed, often rendering EWO intervention unnecessary. This buffering allows parents to begin to build relationships with the school of their child, but more on their terms than would normally be the case. For parents who lack confidence, the head teacher represents a daunting figure of authority. Some parents’ response to this authority is to approach the school in a defensive frame of mind, and to respond aggressively to what they may perceive as criticism of their parenting. In many instances, the On Track worker allows them a safe route into the school. This route can then act as a safety valve, allowing the worker to diffuse potential confrontation, helping the parent to begin to have a clearer understanding of what the school is trying to do, and in time helping school staff have a clearer understanding of the child’s home environment.

Through such interventions, a key bridge is formed and parents can be brought in and encouraged onto other programmes and interventions. The workers in such key interventions are a vehicle to bring the community in. In more than one instance, the worker has actually gone on to become involved in enhancing or even organising school events, or school-based events, which involve the wider community.

Interventions in another category, parent support and training can also play an important role. Parents can be seen as partners when drawn into parenting programmes where the intended outcome is better behaviour on the part of their children at home and at school. They need not be seen simply as recipients of a service but are co-workers with others catering for the development and education of the child. What remains uncertain about some of these interventions is the extent to which parents continue to act as co-workers, once the programme has come to an end. Beyond this, however, such interventions can be instrumental in altering the aspirations of parents towards their own education. As a means of ‘breaking the cycle’ of low aspiration and low achievement, this could be extremely powerful. Parents who have written off their own potential in education are less likely to value and support the education of their children. There have been numerous instances highlighted, through impact and case study work across the eight projects, of
parents who have been drawn into parent education or training programmes through drop-ins, home-visiting or outreach work, and who have gone on to seek further formal qualifications. As an initial corollary of the On Track programme, they testify to the way in which they can now help and support their children with homework.

Other residents in the area are stakeholders too. If the children are usefully occupied after school and in school holidays, thus reducing nuisance now, the wider population benefits from the reduction in risk factors that might predispose those children to crime later in life. Large numbers of On Track children are taking part in holiday playschemes or attending after-school and breakfast clubs. Many interventions within On Track are therefore clearly in the community and for the community. They provide activities for children which are supportive of educational development without being curriculum-based, and richly inclusive and pro-social without being explicitly about anti-social behaviour.

5.3 Key Roles

The school role: ‘cherry picking’ or wise selection and coordination?
The role of head teachers, or deputy head teachers with an On Track remit, has been vital in developing the working relationships between On Track and the schools. Heads are gatekeepers and feel the need at points to defend. Mutual adaptation has long been seen as a consequence of innovation where the intended intervention changes things in the site of implementation but is itself adjusted to meet local circumstances and need. Within and across projects, there have been considerable variations in the ways that head teachers have developed their relationship with projects.

At the positive end are head teachers who have shown an open and flexible approach to full engagement with On Track since the start, especially where they have been part of a continuous process of consultation. They have recognised the benefits of being involved in On Track for their school and for the wider community. On Track workers have been welcomed into their schools and the aims of On Track have been aligned with the school development agenda. Other head teachers have moved from a position of caution at first, to a more welcoming approach, once they have seen the tangible benefits of involvement. They have felt reassured by the quality of the intervention work and workers and are beginning to see improvements in key aspects of school life, such as pupil attendance and behaviour. In one project, a group of head teachers, who were
initially quite hostile to On Track, were persuaded by, among others, the local councillor of the benefits to the community of becoming involved. Since then, this group have become powerful advocates of the project and have built the management of On Track into their remit. As the project manager stated: ‘Co-operation and collaboration with schools has been very good. The people managing On Track are the schools.’ In such circumstances, all staff feel that the school is a multi-professional centre and that a wide skill mix and numerous roles help in the essential care and development of children, particularly at risk children. This links clearly to the notion of the extended school, discussed in Chapter 1 (p24), although we are clearly not yet talking about the full ideal of ‘a focal point in the community to which children and their parents could turn for education as well as a vast range of other supportive services’ (Children’s Aid Society, 1997, p5).

Somewhere in the middle of the continuum lie the head teachers who have stood back from On Track in the early stages and been reluctant to get involved. In some instances, such head teachers have looked at the interventions that are available and picked those that they see bringing most benefit to the school. This ‘cherry-picking’ is understandable, given the head teachers’ desire to act as protector of the school community and has occurred to some extent in most of the eight projects. But it does mean that their school may not be reaping the benefits of the multi-agency approach that is central to On Track. Interventions in this case are being seen as an ‘add-on’ to the work of the school. In projects where other local schools have clearly benefited from their involvement and where these benefits are widely broadcast, reluctant schools are beginning to become more involved.

Some head teachers clearly see that they should filter what comes in to the school on the basis of available time and space, as well as in relation to perceptions of relevance. Head teachers in several areas mentioned ‘initiative overload’ as a reason for rejecting interventions. The complexity of managing the work of extra professionals in school was seen as a burden. In a way, such a view could be seen as entirely legitimate. If a head teacher has judged that a project makes additional demands on the staff which will obstruct the school’s development agenda, before proof of the tangible benefits of involvement can be produced, then this judgement has to be respected. However, as a result, projects have been faced with difficult decisions about resource allocation when faced by such reluctance to engage. The question becomes whether to devote time, energy and resources to wooing these schools, or to divert these resources into the schools that are more fully engaged. Such schools and their staff would be reluctant to take on board the extra training that Corrigan (1997) says is essential for the broader remit of the extended school.
In the section on community engagement, the role of the community representative was discussed, in particular in relation to their membership on steering or management groups. The potential exists for such representatives to be a funnel for communication from and to the community. However, projects that have attempted to include representatives from the community on these groups have experienced difficulties around recruitment, retention and defining their roles. Our research did not explicitly seek evidence on the processes involved in recruitment, but comment arose through discussion with project managers on community engagement. The first difficulty relates to the earlier discussion in sections 1.4 and 5.2 on the nature of community. Where representatives have been easily recruited, On Track areas have had a clear geographical, ethnic or faith identity but the individuals drawn from these groups may have a very limited, even partisan, representative role. In many of the On Track areas, no such identity exists. Identifying groups, from which community representatives might emerge, has been very challenging. Once recruited, there are various reasons why attendance has been poor: community representatives have found the meetings that they attend to be dominated (numerically at least) by professionals from the upper levels of statutory service management. The challenge then is for project management to identify ways in which meetings may be more accessible to community representatives, or ways in which they can be encouraged to contribute. The final challenge is to have clear ways in which community representatives can feedback from strategic or management discussions to ‘the community’. It is perhaps unrealistic to expect that in such a short space of time these complex channels of communication and involvement could be developed in On Track projects.

While the presence of ‘ordinary people’ on On Track boards and committees is seen as desirable, their impact currently is very limited and personal. Thought needs to be given to how they could have a more active role and how they could be helped to ‘represent’. We should not forget that in many, many undertakings, community representation is token and individualistic. Attempts at democratic recruitment that had been planned in Area 5 came to nothing because they could not get sufficient candidates from the different groups to be represented. This is an issue for longer term development work.
Project Managers

As has been done throughout this report, it is impossible to discuss On Track without reference to the role of the project manager. In the context of the special relationship, the manager has to display sensitivity to a wide range of cultures and to actively encourage and enable the voices of a wide range of stakeholders. In the first instance, project managers have had to tread very carefully through a minefield of sensitivity, in exploring the nature of schools’ existing relationships with community. The thematic research has also highlighted significant differences in project managers’ understanding of notions such as ‘community’ and ‘hard-to-reach’. ‘Community’ interpretations varied between the notion of the community of users, encompassing all families involved in On Track, and the idea of the diverse ethnic, cultural, faith and linguistic groups within the community of users. In the majority of cases, ‘hard-to-reach’ was clearly being interpreted as ethnic, cultural or linguistic minority communities. However, in others project managers were clear that this categorisation included majority ethnic but socially isolated communities. In Area 3, this was particularly significant, as the project area included urban and rural communities. In Area 6, the presenting needs of the community were based strongly in the white British community. This has affected their attitudes towards community engagement – in some areas, effective community engagement might rest on strategies such as inclusive recruitment of faith or ethnic group representatives to steering groups, or on translation and interpretation of materials into community first languages. In other areas, it may rest on effective delivery of services to rural communities spread over a wide geographical area.

The relationship between schools and projects has also led to disagreements with head teachers and in some cases providers. Schools in particular can be sensitive to the notion that their community relationships need ‘improving’ or even ‘developing’. Cases have arisen where head teachers have taken this to imply that these relationships are currently deficient. Careful thought may need to be given to the language, at the first stage, in which project aims or intervention objectives are couched.

The second stage involves project managers in maintaining a diplomatic bridge between school, providers and the community. They need to accommodate the multiple understandings of professional cultures that exist among these groups. The appointment and careful management of a schools team leader or liaison worker may facilitate this bridging.
The third stage involves flexible operation of the full range of interventions in schools. A balance needs to be retained between targeted, self-referral and universal interventions, but at the same time projects need to be sensitive to the individual needs of schools and to recognise when a particular intervention may not be serving the best interests of school and/or community. Rigid imposition of a particular delivery plan may do more harm to school and community than good.

5.4 Community Making: the school as a local community hub and link to wider community and services

To an extent, in disadvantaged areas, projects such as On Track can be engaged in ‘community making’, in bringing people together whether through specific courses or through outings or large celebratory gatherings. These offer local people access to each other, as well as to school and to On Track facilities and possibilities. There is network building and a contribution to the social capital of the area. Instances of this are: parenting programmes, where isolated, often single, mothers begin to form an extended network; mothers developing stronger links with other members of their ethnic community after attending a parenting course; and a secondary transfer programme, where a parent spoke of how she had been able to use her experiences on the programme to help her sister, whose children did not fall within the On Track area. These are often unexpected or unintended outcomes of interventions, but outcomes which in the end may be as important as those intended.

On Track is therefore beginning to provide small pockets of social support that may not otherwise be available, or at least that parents may otherwise be unaware of. The lack of an extended family, or of membership of a faith community, leaves many parents isolated. On Track cannot address the primary economic and resource (housing) factors that contribute to this isolation, but can provide some ways into community and support networks for these parents. The community of users that the school represents is sometimes the biggest community network to which isolated families have access.
6 Conclusions

6.1 Early Multiple Intervention Projects and their Engagement with School and Communities

Reviewing the hypotheses set out on page 26, it appears to be the case that the proportion of targeted interventions does not impact on the relationship with the community (hypothesis a). Many projects now present some targeted interventions as universal but encourage known ‘at risk’ children and families to attend. This applies to interventions as diverse as after-school clubs and parenting classes. Communication is much aided by intermediary roles such as home link workers and such roles do develop the social organisation of the community and make schools more accessible and comprehensible (b). The extent of centralisation appears to be less influential than the staffing levels of the central team (c). Whether the interventions are sub-contracted or run in-house can work equally well but under-staffed central teams cannot consult, monitor and ‘relate’ whatever model of management they operate. The number of interventions relates indirectly to the diffuseness of the project (d). Some projects appear to have many interventions because each after school club in a school is counted separately (eg Area 3) and there is less coordination, common training and sharing when this is the case.

The model of management appears less important than the staffing and the quality of management of the central team (e). In-house management with central team can work well as can the sub-contracted project management and the sub-contracted interventions. Any will (and did) work badly when not properly staffed.

In terms of control, empowerment and democracy in the community (f, g, h) it has proved difficult to recruit people to committees who are properly representative of the local area and it has been equally difficult to harness local involvement, beyond being clients, in less formal ways. The result has been that On Track is massively a professional enterprise with local people having limited influence.

In terms of school engagement, there have been tussles over control (i) but these have been largely worked through. Multi-agency work does tax schools (j) but the schools are the main conduit to the community (k). Finally, it is notable, even if unsurprising, that some of the lower paid roles, boasting less ‘expertise’ are revealed as the points of access to schools, On Track
interventions and other services (I). They are approachable and are trusted thus giving a valuable point of access to the community and from the community to a network of support.

Early multiple intervention projects working with young school-age children in a defined geographical area have many merits theoretically and practically. This chapter sums up the position with one ABI in relation to key processes and structures necessary to be successful in crime reduction and preventative work. The productive way forward with projects, like On Track, which seek to reach out in various supportive ways into the community and to move from project to mainstreamed status, is for schools to be more extensively utilised as a hub. They are currently major partners in On Track and host most of the interventions. There are some interventions run from a project base, a few interventions located in other agency bases and none based in the community. The balance needs to be adjusted, but the reality is that the school is in many respects the community access point for children and their parents.

Figure 1 (p. 10) sets out a model of On Track engagement but it may be better expressed as an aspiration. Below, in Figure 6, is a diagrammatic representation of something nearer to what was found through our enquiries.

**Figure 6: Project, school and community engagement**
Arguably the relationships are more complex than depicted earlier. Figure 6 suggests that schools are within the community. On Track is seen as partly in one of the schools and is also inside the community. In a similar way, voluntary agencies and statutory agencies are at least partly within the community. The community is still seen largely as a territorial matter with a population living within it but also acknowledged are the community groups that exist within the territorially defined community. On Track, partly within the school, serves the school and performs its wider social care remit in the community, but often through the schools, in so doing, making the school a more accessible part of the community. The map is made up also of other ABIs and of the local coordinating agency of the local authority, its elected membership and the Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs), though LSPs have yet to function powerfully in a coordination role with local services, projects and ABIs. Additionally, there are the areas with not many arrows reaching them which may represent the ‘hard-to-reach’.

The effect of seeing the map in this complexity is two-fold: firstly it represents what in many cases is fact. The schools are de facto community centres and projects must work through the schools to reach children and families efficiently and in large numbers. Table 5 shows that over 90% of interventions are school based or school managed. The second effect is to acknowledge that people living in the area are the community, and the involvement of local individuals with On Track operations, not just as clients, has been important. Many intervention workers are from the area and will have local knowledge, the community languages and a familiarity with the local people. Arguably, they can provide a stronger representation of the community within the On Track projects.

The black arrows represent the consultations that take place. These are many, mostly emanating from the On Track project, some reciprocal and some initiated by the school. There are also the two-way links between statutory services, voluntary agencies, the local authority or LSP and the On Track project. The rich mesh of consultation represented here derives from our data where the consultations were amongst the statutory and voluntary agencies or institutions. The involvement of the community was much less marked.

Delivery, represented by the green arrows, is mostly from the On Track project and mostly into schools. In turn, it is evident that On Track interventions have operated out of the schools into the communities. Family link workers and child development workers are based in schools and deliver out into the community. Consonant with the fact that over 90% of interventions are
school-based or school managed, few interventions deliver directly from the On Track team directly to the local people. Some delivery is from voluntary agencies which deliver in schools or into the community.

Empowerment is again mainly a matter between agencies. The red arrows that go into the community are relatively few. The participation agenda is a most challenging one and probably needs several years to build up. At present, local people are involved in On Track as beneficiaries. To a lesser extent they are employees of the project. Still less they are represented on decision-making forums. The basis has been created for movement forward on local participation which may, in time, represent something one would recognise as empowerment. That will need the allocation of funding and roles to community development work to excite engagement, to support local people and provide the confidence and validation for their involvement.

Findings suggest that a number of challenges remain. These resonate with those reported in earlier researches undertaken by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (2002) and Nixon et al. (2002). Firstly, though inter-agency and multi-professional work is stably underway in most projects, with innovative roles established that cross normal professional boundaries it is not clear how there will be a translation into the mainstream; secondly, the difficulty that Nixon and colleagues, and Young (2000) identify is about the sharing of control and the democratisation of the processes. The initiatives are at least partly rooted in a ‘control’ paradigm, where direction, focus and motive force comes from central or local government rather than the local community, with the aim of reducing crime, increasing social cohesion and economic utility. Such initiatives combine such thinking with the goals of increasing people’s life chances, satisfaction – even happiness. This suggests an interesting third way strategy (Parsons, 2001) which combines addressing the broad social ill of crime and building social capital and meeting individual needs within a limited budget. Participation, fully and meaningfully, by the community appears very difficult, but feasible, and the role of the schools as sites for engaging the community and providing routes into community influence appears most promising. The training and cultural change requirements, if schools are to take on the broader community school remit, are substantial. The willingness and ability to work in a multi-agency way are in evidence but have needed some development effort and continuously need support.
The next two sections consider the factors which facilitate and inhibit the engagement of the community and the schools in the implementation of the preventative work that a project such as On Track proposes.

6.2 Facilitating and inhibiting factors in relation to engagement of communities

This section of the report identifies a number of facilitating and inhibiting factors relating to the effective engagement of communities (see Table 6 below). It is possible, drawing on the evidence of the research as reported in Section 3 and the cameo evidence provided by NFER, to construct a rough chronology by which community engagement issues could be addressed.

The evidence suggests that prior to detailed delivery planning, projects should consult widely on the needs of the community which they will serve. On Track used school surveys and community profile data to do this nationally. At a local level, one project commissioned an independent consultant at an early stage in the project’s life to report on community engagement. This report comprised data drawn from parent groups, children and young people, hard-to-reach groups and reviews of current local service provision. This report helped project management clearly to identify the linguistic, cultural and ethnic make-up of the On Track area and thus to assist in designing a package of interventions to meet some of these needs.

It is evident that, at an early stage of project design, membership of committees needs to be considered, identifying community representatives at a voluntary, faith or political level. It is not always easy to identify the extent to which ‘community representatives’ may actually represent the community of users that a project is serving. Consideration also needs to be given to the role that such representatives will have the opportunity to play, so as to maximise their expertise and contributions. In an area with large numbers of other Area Based Initiatives (ABIs), reciprocal membership of committees or streamlining of committee membership has been seen as beneficial, and operated without detriment to the strategic control of, and a clear identity for, the individual project. Most notably, Children’s Fund and On Track have come closer together.

The location of project offices is an issue effecting communication with providers, schools and the community. In some instances it was deemed beneficial to locate the project centrally within the project area; in others, clear lines of communication between all involved with the project
were established to overcome difficulties of location and the offices were never intended as drop-in sites.

Once the delivery plan was beginning to be implemented, project managements considered various options for developing an effective identity in the community and establishing clear lines of communication with the community. A budget for media management is an important element to be carefully calculated to allow for effective multi-lingual publicity materials to be produced and for controlled use of the local press to update the community on the progress of the project or help to attract new participants. All projects engaged in publicity in various ways even if it was not a carefully budgeted strategic element. The need for initial and ongoing publicity material was recognised, particularly once hard-to-reach groups are being identified through their inability to access services. Projects had to consider what kind of visual identity they wished to create and what media to present this in. This established a clear identity for the project amongst the team of service providers and other related agencies, so that clear messages were communicated by workers or team members when operating in the community. There was a commitment to building good relationships with schools and identified community organisations, through formal and informal contacts and through open and honest dialogue. The role of informal drop-in centres or interventions will need to be considered, as well as the balance across the interventions of targeted, universal or self-referral interventions. This is partly to allow for a variety of possible types of engagement by parents, which can minimise the risk of stigmatisation.

Once parents and the community have initially engaged with the project, partnerships can be developed to lead to community empowerment and projects can be seen as having started this process. Most influential here is the vision and strategic leadership of the project manager, displaying a commitment to community engagement. The further engagement of the community involves adjustment of the patterns of delivery of interventions to match community needs, reconceptualisation of the functioning of committees to allow community voices to be heard more clearly, or further evaluation and surveying of community need and a willingness to listen to any difficult messages that this may convey. It may necessitate more employment of local people and engagement of the voluntary sector in project delivery than was initially conceived. It certainly involves careful managing and line monitoring of service providers so that services are empathetic towards the cultural and linguistic needs of the community. Interventions themselves need to be designed and operated to empower users, and to be sensitive to the changing needs of users. This includes the location of interventions, the duration of delivery, the language used in
the delivery and the targeting of particular age-groups or gender groups. A difficult balance needs to be struck between providing interventions which respond to need and empower users at the same time, rather than creating a culture of service-dependency.

Groups or individuals will remain, despite the best intentions of policy-makers and practitioners, who are resistant and hostile to engaging with services. However, projects need to be confident that they design and operate projects to maximise community engagement. The factors outlined below may assist in that process.

**Table 6: Engaging the Community**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Success factors</th>
<th>Inhibiting factors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structural engagement – building capacity</td>
<td>Project management lacking detailed knowledge of community identity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consultation with the community prior to delivery planning</td>
<td>Lack of response from community/ difficulty in identifying suitable representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning for management structure or interventions to include community link workers</td>
<td>Excessive political and strategic overlap with other ABIs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Careful selection of Community representatives (political/voluntary sector/faith group) on steering/management/partnership committees</td>
<td>Disparate nature of community and project’s geographical location</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reciprocal membership of other ABI committees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Careful planning of project office location within the community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developing a presence in the community – sharing information and identity formation</td>
<td>Lack of project management’s commitment to team-building and training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular meetings of project team</td>
<td>Lack of team identity and commitment to multi-agency work/interventions operating in isolation from wider project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media-management budget to enable:</td>
<td>Poor relations between schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• advertising</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• strategic use of local media networks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• maximisation of publicity opportunities</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• visual identity for the project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Key workers using language of project and reiterating project aims and their commitment to multi-agency work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Building good relationships with schools</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Engaging fully with the community – <em>operating partnerships</em></td>
<td>Vision and commitment of project manager to co-ordinated and non-stigmatising delivery and community partnership</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of personnel in community link roles – showing empathy for the community/having first-hand knowledge of the community</td>
<td>Service providers insensitive to needs and concerns of community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment of local people in intervention delivery</td>
<td>Community concerned with ethnic/cultural backgrounds or attitudes of service provider</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Empowering interventions which:  
  ▪ help to create new social networks in the community  
  ▪ provide a variety of opportunities for hard-to-reach groups to engage  
  ▪ allow users to gradually build up their confidence to make decisions and influence the shape of delivery  
  ▪ are needs-led  
  ▪ provide access at earliest point of entry to the education system, meeting language and cultural needs of hard-to-reach groups  
  ▪ allow for negotiation over pace, content, location and direction of intervention | Stigma of engagement with any service providers cannot be overcome |
|  | Pace of intended empowerment is too rapid and raises false expectations |
|  | Community or individual needs not being clearly articulated |
|  | Cultural bias within delivery of interventions not being addressed/budgets not allowing for translators or interpreters to work alongside service providers |
|  | Individual or group hostility to service providers |
|  | Physical location of intervention restricts access |
6.3 Facilitating and Inhibiting Factors in Relation to Engagement of Schools

This section of the report identifies a number of facilitating and inhibiting factors to the effective engagement of schools (see Table 7 below). In order to place these within a clear time frame, this summary identifies an order in which such factors may need to be considered. As the main locus of delivery and referral to services, schools in our eight projects clearly play a vital part in ensuring the success of On Track as a multi-agency project. It is clear from the differing successes of the projects, that there is no one model of delivery that suits all schools, or all projects. There are varying degrees of involvement and control that suit different head teachers. What is clear from all areas, is that those schools that are involved with On Track see tangible benefits from this and very much want it to continue. All school respondents in the research in all areas were clear that, although they felt empowered in some ways by On Track, they would not be able to fund independent continuation of such multi-agency work.

The keys to identifying variations in the involvement of schools would seem to be effective prior consultation and a sufficient lead-in time to projects. Subsequent to this, structures need to be in place to ensure that head teacher and education authority representatives are kept informed of, and involved with taking decisions on, the strategic direction of projects. Formal and informal networks of communication at the operational level are also required, so that the necessary ongoing adjustments can be made to suit the needs of schools and intervention providers. These arrangements will require funding for schools and interventions, to ensure that key personnel are available to attend meetings. It will be incumbent on schools to have identified these personnel in advance. These requirements could be established by the use of partnership or service level agreements, especially where projects are using contracted-out interventions. Such agreements could be adjusted to take account of individual schools’ needs and facilities and could further require levels of consultation and flexible negotiation between schools and providers where this is appropriate. They could also clarify roles and responsibilities in terms of targeting and referral.

Once such structural arrangements are in place, projects will be in a position to nurture relationships with schools which lead to a shared sense of purpose and to tangible benefits of involvement. Here, the interpersonal skills of head teachers, key senior staff, project managers, team leaders and intervention workers are important. Working relationships need to involve trust and openness and to be built on shared understandings of different professional cultures. Once such relationships have been developed, schools will be more strongly inclined to welcome the
additional burdens of time and responsibility that their involvement in multi-agency work will entail and, in time, to become powerful advocates of such work to other schools and the communities that they serve. This bridging relationship between projects, schools and the community is complex and yet crucial to the success of school-based multi-agency work.

Table 7: Engaging Schools

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Facilitating Factors</th>
<th>Inhibiting Factors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pilot stage</td>
<td>Prior consultation with schools</td>
<td>Head teachers having no say in design of project delivery plan</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Time for communication with schools built into lead-in stage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategic (macro)</td>
<td>School representation on steering/management/partnership groups</td>
<td>Schools unwilling to be a part of groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>level: Delivery planning</td>
<td>Budgeting for formal/informal communication between schools and projects – time release for school staff/project managers</td>
<td>Lack of recognition of scale of school commitment that is required</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Service Level/Partnership Agreements:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Identifying key link personnel and lines of communication</td>
<td>Spreading interventions too thinly – schools not working frequently enough with providers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Clarifying roles and responsibilities – referral/targeting</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Setting out line management structures</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Intervention selection – school-based family link workers, to bring tangible benefits to schools in early stages of projects</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Staffing of project team to enable reliable quick response to school, project and community queries</td>
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<tr>
<td>Operational</td>
<td>Quality of personnel – commitment of project managers to open communication</td>
<td>High staff turnover/late appointments to project management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(micro) level:</td>
<td>Efficient project management of meetings: chairing/minuting and distribution of minutes/preparing agendas/communicating time and location of meetings</td>
<td>Poor management of meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality partnership</td>
<td>Early liaison with schools to identify scope of project</td>
<td>Poor response times to school queries</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Project management and workers operating</td>
<td>Providers and project management operating in</td>
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as a team, using consistent language about the project in schools

**Interventions** providing:
- Open and flexible communication
- Opportunities to negotiate intervention delivery and content
- Professional approach to delivery

**Schools** having:
- Involvement in targeting and referral
- Say over types of and delivery of interventions in schools
- Open attitudes to working as part of a multi-agency project
- Project aims integrated with school development agenda/OFSTED inspection evidence
- Physical space to host interventions
- Including project in induction for new staff

-isolation

Rigid delivery of interventions/lack of transparency (where appropriate) over content of interventions

- Excessive paperwork/collection of data
- Reluctance to share quality control with project management
- Cherry-picking of interventions where this impedes multi-intervention provision
- Initiative overload – lack of training for HTs
- High staff turnover

## 6.4 Summary

The engagement of schools and the engagement of communities are not two separate processes but a synergetic experience evolving and being shaped in each neighbourhood according to local history, service provision and conditions. The On Track project is an addition to what is already a rich mix of activity and provision. The engagement of schools operates in a fairly straightforward formal fashion. There are tensions which can be resolved and there are demands made on head teachers and teachers which go beyond their training and conventional expectations. Multi-agency work brings a new set of care workers into the school and needs to liaise and tackle problems in a shared way. It extends the school’s work into preventative spheres beyond curriculum provision and the management of learning (though learning is a key goal and a strong protective factor). The school is ascribed a community role and resourced to fulfil it. The school, situated within the community and a major service provider known to all, is a key link for other services into the community.

The ‘special relationship’ referred to in chapter 5 is between On Track, the schools and the community. On Track works predominantly in and through schools and accesses the community mainly through the school based workers. This is the solid core of the projects’ work after two
years of operating and the outreach into the community can now be viewed to consider if the special relationship needs adjustment as On Track projects move to mature implementation. It is recognised that the community is not strongly represented and that the sense of empowerment is present only for a few. Drop-in and community-based opportunities to engage with On Track are very few and may not be effective or efficient. Schools are where all children (should) go and they offer viable, sustainable access to the community. This could be built upon in the move to community schools and greater training of teachers as members of multi-professional teams.

Undoubtedly, On Track has contributed to the social infrastructure through new and enhanced services and developed social capital. To influence further the social organisation of the community there will need to be dedicated community development and outreach work and involvement of community members in real decision-making and resource allocation tasks. On Track has established a sound basis for moving forward on this.
References


## INSTRUMENT PACK

Theme Study: extent of community engagement, empowerment and partnership and the extent of engagement in schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Community Representatives</td>
<td>83</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Intervention Leaders</td>
<td>86</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Parents of child participating</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Parents participating</td>
<td>92</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Project Manager</td>
<td>94</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Senior member of school staff/Head teacher</td>
<td>98</td>
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</table>
Children participating:

ON TRACK PROJECT:

Interviewer:
Children:
Date:

The questions for this schedule can be adapted to meet the needs of the intervention, as long as the focus remains the same.

1. Can you tell me what happens at (intervention)?

2. What do you like about it/ what are your favourite bits?

3. What don’t you like about it?

4. Can you talk to the teachers/helpers about the things you don’t like, or things you would like to change?

5. What are you learning about?

6. Do you think this helps you? How does it help you?

7. What do you think of (intervention)?
(draw three faces for children under 7 – one smiley, one neutral and one sad, or ask for marks out of 5 from children over 7)

8. Is there anything that could make it better? If so, what sorts of things?

9. Do you talk to anyone else (i.e. parents/carers/friends) about what you do at (intervention)?

10. If so, what do you talk to them about/tell them?

11. Do you think they think it is a good idea? How do you know this?
12. Do you think the teachers like (intervention)? How do you know this?

13. Do you think other children would enjoy this/should do this? Why?

14. Do you want to carry on doing (intervention)? If so, why? If not, why not?

15. Are there any other things happening in school which you think would help you, that you would like to do? If so, what are they?
2 Community Representatives

ON TRACK PROJECT:

Community Representatives:

Interviewer:

Date:

1. Can you tell us how you first heard about On Track

2. How did you get involved? (selection - if so by whom/self-selection)

3. Can you describe your involvement with On Track?

4. Would you like to be more involved in the project, and if so how?

5. Are you a member of any steering or partnership groups? (Name them) If so, how useful is this in letting you know what is going on? Are you able to voice your point of view? (Ask for example).

6. What kind of consultation has taken place with community representatives about On Track since the beginning of the project?

7. What sort of help and support do you think the project is designed to give the community?

8. How have you learned about this? What sort of information has been given to you and how?

9. Do you think that the On Track project is helping the community? If so, how?
10. Do you think that the On Track interventions and project as a whole give the right kind of help and support to the community?

11. If you were unhappy with any aspect of the On Track project, would you feel able to approach someone about this? If so, who would this be? If not, why not?

12. Do you think that the schools are in support of On Track? How do you know this?

13. What do you think the overall aim of On Track is?

14. Do you think this is appropriate for this area?

15. Are there other things which On Track could do to support the community? If so, what are these?

16. Are there some groups in the community who are not currently involved in On Track, who would benefit from involvement? If so, which groups? How would they benefit?

17. How could these people be more involved?

18. Are there ways in which On Track could give clearer information about the project? If so, what are these?

19. How would you rate the quality of communication and collaboration between On Track and the community? (Tick relevant box)

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<tr>
<th>Very good</th>
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<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Weak</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
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Probe: Why do you say that? What makes it good/weak etc?

20. How could this be improved?
21. What do you think of the work that On Track is doing in the area?

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<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
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</table>

Probe: Why do you say that? What makes it good/weak etc?

22. In which ways could the work be improved?

23. Would you like On Track work to continue in the area?

24. Are there any aspects of On Track work which you feel the community could now take forward on its own?
3 Intervention Leader

ON TRACK PROJECT:
Intervention Leader:

Interviewer: 
Date:

1. How would you rate the quality of collaboration and communication between the On Track project in your area and the particular intervention you are involved in? (please comment in the relevant box if wished)

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<th>Un satisfactory</th>
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*Probe: Why do you say that? What makes it good/weak etc?*

2. How has this developed since the start of the intervention?

3. To what extent do you use Service Level Agreements? How effective are these?

4. How would you describe the quality of collaboration and communication between the schools and the particular interventions you are involved in?

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*Probe: Why do you say that? What makes it good/weak etc?*

5. To what extent have the schools been consulted about your intervention?

6. How do the schools aid you in targeting and managing your intervention, and in referral to other interventions?

7. How has this developed since the start of the intervention?

8. When, or if, difficulties arise, how do you resolve these?  
   *Probe: Can you give examples.*

9. How has the On Track project management supported you in this?
10. In what ways, if any, could your collaboration and communication with schools be improved?

11. To what extent are representatives of the community/user groups involved in shaping your intervention?

12. How has this involvement developed since the start of the intervention? What consultation has taken place?

13. How has the On Track project management supported you in this?

14. In which ways could your partnership with community representatives/users be improved?

15. To what extent, if any, is your intervention designed to empower users? Probe: How is this planned for etc?

16. How would you describe the diversity of users that you are working with?

17. What successes have you had in terms of reaching diverse groups within the community?

18. Which groups, if any, within the community are not accessing/able to access your intervention? How do you measure this?

19. If applicable, why do you think some groups are not accessing your intervention?

20. How do you plan, if necessary, to widen access to and participation in your intervention?

21. How would you rate the extent to which the following different groups share your understanding of the aims and objectives of the intervention?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a) Schools</th>
<th>5 (high)</th>
<th>4</th>
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Comment: Why do you say that?
b) The community

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Comment: Why do you say that?

c) On Track project management

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Comment: Why do you say that?

22. What would you see as the overall aims of On Track?

23. How supportive of these aims are you?

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Comment: Why do you say that?

24. How would you like to see On Track continue in the future?
4 Parents of child participating

ON TRACK PROJECT:

Parents of child participating:

Interviewer: 
Date: 

1. Can you tell us how you first heard about On Track, and which projects or services your child/children has/have been involved with since then?

2. How did she/he/they get involved in the (named intervention(s))?
   (selection – if so by whom/self-selection)

3. Are you consulted over what takes place, or where and when the (named intervention(s) take place?
   Probe: If so, how does that happen?

4. Would you like to be consulted more, and if so how?

5. Are you consulted about any changes to the (named intervention)?
   Probe: If so, how is this done?

6. What sort of help and support do you think the (named intervention(s) is/are designed to give your child/children?

7. How have you learned about this? What sort of information has been given to you and how?

8. How good is the communication from On Track about the On Track project and the services you have been involved in? (Tick the relevant box)
   Prompt: asking you what you want? Letting you know where things are taking place?

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89
Comment: Why do you say this?

9. Have you been given clear information about the intervention(s)? If necessary, have your questions been answered clearly?

10. Do you think the intervention(s) is helping you or your child/children? If so, how is this?

11. What does your child/do your children think or say about the intervention(s)?

12. If you were unhappy with any aspect of the intervention, would you feel able to approach someone about this? Who would this be? If not, why not?

13. Do you think that the On Track interventions and project give the right kind of help and support to you, your children and the school?

14. Do you think that the school is in support of On Track? How do you know this?

15. What do you think the overall aim of On Track is?

16. Do you think this is appropriate for this area?

17. Are there other things which On Track could do to support you and your children? If so, what are these?

18. Do you think there are some parents of children at this school who might benefit from (named intervention) who do not know about On Track? Probe: If so, why do you think they don’t know about it?

19. How could these people be more involved?

20. What do you think of the work that On Track is doing in the area?

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</table>
Comment: Why do you say that?

21. In which ways could the work be improved?

22. Would you like On Track work to continue in the area?
5 Parents Participating

ON TRACK PROJECT:
Parents participating:

Interviewer:
Date:

1. Can you tell us how you first heard about On Track, and which projects or services you have been involved with since then?

2. How did you get involved in the (named intervention(s))? (selection – if so by whom/self-selection)

3. Are you involved in deciding what takes place, or where and when the (named intervention(s)) take place? If so, how does that happen?

4. Would you like to be more involved in deciding these things, and if so how?

5. Are you consulted about any changes to the (named intervention)? If so, how is this done?

6. What sort of help and support do you think the (named intervention(s)) is/are designed to give you?

7. How have you learned about this? What sort of information has been given to you and how?

8. Do you think that the (named intervention(s)) is helping you? If so, how?

9. If you were unhappy with any aspect of the (named intervention), would you feel able to approach someone about this? Who would this be? If not, why not?

10. Do you think that the On Track interventions and project as a whole give the right kind of help and support to you, your children and the school?
11. Do you think that the school is in support of On Track? How do you know this?

12. What do you think the overall aim of On Track is?

13. Do you think this is appropriate for this area?

14. Are there other things which On Track could do to support you and your children?

Probe: If so, what are these?

15. Do you think there are some parents of children at this school who might benefit from (named intervention) who do not know about On Track?

Probe: If so, why do you think they don’t know about it?

16. How good is the communication from On Track about the project and the intervention(s)? (Tick in the relevant box)

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Comment: Why do you say this?

17. How could these people be more involved?

18. Are there ways in which On Track could give clearer information about the project? If so, what are these?

19. What do you think of the work that On Track is doing in the area?

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20. In which ways could the work be improved?

21. Would you like On Track work to continue in the area?
6 Project Manager

ON TRACK PROJECT:

Project Manager:
Interviewer:
Date:

1. Could you talk a little about the various partnerships that you have with schools, intervention providers, and the community?

   Probe: How do you feel about each of these partnerships?
   Probe: What particular successes have you had in forging these partnerships?
   Probe: Are there attempts that have been less successful?

2. How would you rate the quality of collaboration and communication within the On Track project as a whole? (Tick in the relevant box)

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   Comment: Why do you say this?

3. How has this developed since the start of the project?

4. To what extent do you use Service Level Agreements, and if so, with whom?
   How effective are these in ensuring a quality service?

5. How would you describe the quality of your collaboration and communication with the schools that you work in?

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</table>

   Comment: Why do you say this?
6. How do the schools aid you in targeting and managing On Track, and in referral to other interventions?

7. To what extent have the schools been consulted about the project as a whole?

8. What forms of consultation have taken place?

9. How has this developed since the start of the intervention?

10. When, or if, difficulties arise, how do you collaborate with schools over these?

11. In which ways could your collaboration and communication with schools be improved?

12. To what extent are representatives of the community/user groups involved in shaping the project as a whole?

13. How has this involvement developed since the start of the project?

14. What consultation has taken place?

15. How would you describe the quality of your collaboration and communication with the community that you work in?

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Comment: Why do you say this?
16. When, or if, difficulties arise, how do you resolve these with the community?

Probe: Can you give examples?

17. In which ways could your partnership with community representatives/users be improved?

18. To what extent is your project designed to empower users (schools/the community)? How is this planned for?

19. How would you describe the diversity of users that you are working with?

20. What successes have you had in terms of reaching diverse groups within the community?

21. Which groups, if any, within the community are not accessing/able to access On Track? How do you measure this?

22. If applicable, why do you think some groups are not accessing On Track?

23. Do you plan to widen access to, and participation, in On Track?

24. How would you rate the extent to which the following different groups share your understanding of the aims and objectives of the project?

a) Schools

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Comment: Why do you say that?

b) The community

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Comment: Why do you say that?
c) Intervention providers

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Comment: Why do you say that?

25. How supportive do you feel that the following are of the project as a whole?

a) Schools

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Comment: Why do you say that?

b) The community

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Comment: Why do you say that?

c) Intervention providers

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</table>

Comment: Why do you say that?
7  Senior Member Of School Staff/Head teacher

ON TRACK PROJECT:

Staff member/Head teacher:
Interviewer:
Date:

1. How were you first approached about having On Track in your school? List interventions IN the school or REFERRED TO from the school.

2. How, if applicable, were you consulted about which interventions might take place in your school?

3. How would you rate the quality of your collaboration and communication with the On Track management as a whole? (please comment in the relevant box if wished)

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</table>

Comment: Why do you say that?

4. How has this developed since the start of the intervention?

5. How would you describe the quality of your collaboration and communication with the interventions that operate within your school? (please comment on more than one if appropriate)

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Comment: Why do you say that?

6. To what extent have you been consulted about these interventions as they are operating? (please comment on more than one if appropriate)

7. How has this developed since the start of the intervention(s)?
8. How do you help the intervention(s) with targeting and management and with referral of children and parents to other intervention(s)?

9. When, or if, difficulties arise, how do you collaborate with On Track over these?

10. Have you ceased working with, or turned down the offer of, any interventions, and if so why?

11. Does your school have a member on any partnership/steering group? If so, do you feel that it is beneficial to do so? In what ways?

12. Which other representatives of the community/user groups are involved in shaping the On Track interventions or the project as a whole?

Probe: Which interventions?

13. How has this involvement developed since the start of the intervention? What consultation has taken place?

14. Do On Track interventions reach a wide range of children in your school? In which ways are you able to help with targeting and management of this?

15. If applicable, why do you think some groups are not accessing your intervention?

16. Is there any other comment you would like to make about how much you have been consulted during the project?

17. What would you see as being the key aims of On Track?

18. How appropriate are these for your school and the wider community that you serve?

19. Please rate the extent to which you support these aims
Comment: Why do you say that?

20. What do you feel that the school has learned in a positive sense from its involvement with On Track? Are there any aspects of On Track work which the school could take forward on its own?

21. Which interventions are you receiving which you would like to see continued in the future?

22. In which ways could collaboration and consultation with On Track be improved in the future?