



# PEER ADVISORS PROGRAMME IN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE PROCESS : AN EVALUATION OF ITS IMPACT ON THE FOURTH GROUP OF PARTICIPANTS

## INTRODUCTION

The peer advisors programme is one of the many initiatives of the Juvenile Court to actively involve the community in the restorative justice process. Implemented since November 1996, a total of 4 groups<sup>1</sup> of secondary school students and teacher advisors have gone through the programme.

In the earlier issues of the Subordinate Courts research bulletin, feedback from the first three groups of participants showed that the Peer Advisors programme has had a positive impact on the student and teacher advisors. The programme had worked well in achieving the twofold objectives of providing the Court with a contemporary peer group perspective of the juvenile's offending behaviour and also educating and exposing the participants to the juvenile justice process.

This bulletin aims to report on the feedback obtained from the fourth group of participants in the Peer Advisors programme and to assess the impact of the programme on these participants. Their valuable feedback will also be used to further enhance the current programme.

<sup>1</sup>Group 1 : 45 students, 9 teachers from 8 schools participated in the programme from Nov 1996-Feb 1997.  
Group 2 : 50 students, 14 teachers from 9 schools participated in the programme from Jun-Oct 1997.  
Group 3 : 46 students, 10 teachers from 8 schools participated in the programme from Jun-Sep 1998.  
Group 4 : 47 students, 16 teachers from 8 schools participated in the programme from Jun-Sep 1999.

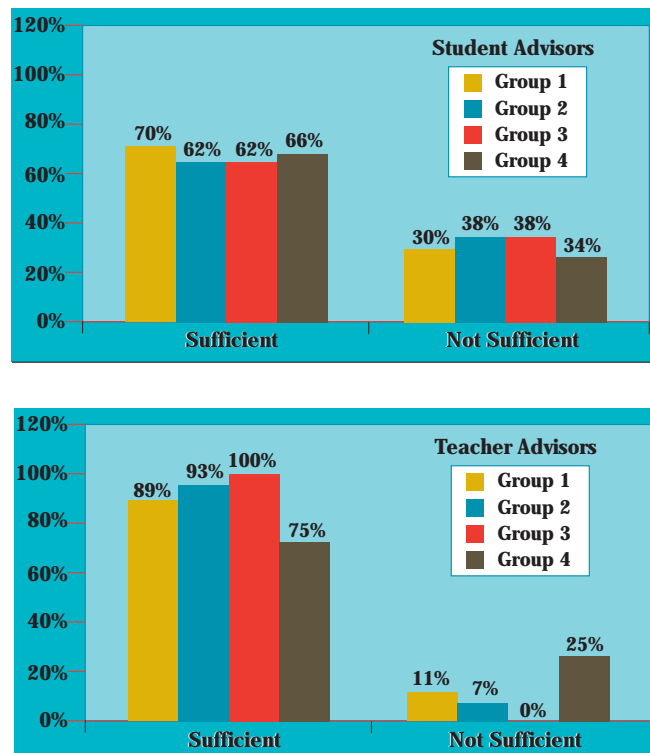
## PARTICIPANTS FEEDBACK ON THE PROGRAMME

A total of 44 secondary school students and 8 teachers provided their feedback. All of them found the pre-duty briefing and training useful and that the reference materials provided were clear and concise. This feedback was similar to that of the previous three groups of participants.

Following the pre-duty briefing and training, the participants attended a half-day mentions session at the Juvenile Court to get acquainted with the Court procedures and processes. Most opined that the half day attachment on the mentions day was sufficient - 66% for student advisors and 75% for teacher advisors. Among those who felt that the half day attachment at the Juvenile Courts' mentions session was insufficient, half preferred a one-day attachment (53% for students, 50% for teachers) and those who preferred a two-day attachment ranked next (27% for students and 50% for teachers).

When compared with the feedback obtained from the previous three groups of participants, the proportion of teachers who felt that the half-day session was insufficient rose from 11% for the 1st group to 25% for the 4th group (Figure 1). The proportion of students who preferred a one-day attachment has also risen from 37% for the 2nd group to 53% for the 4th group.

Figure 1  
Feedback on Period of Attachment  
at Juvenile Court Mentions Sessions

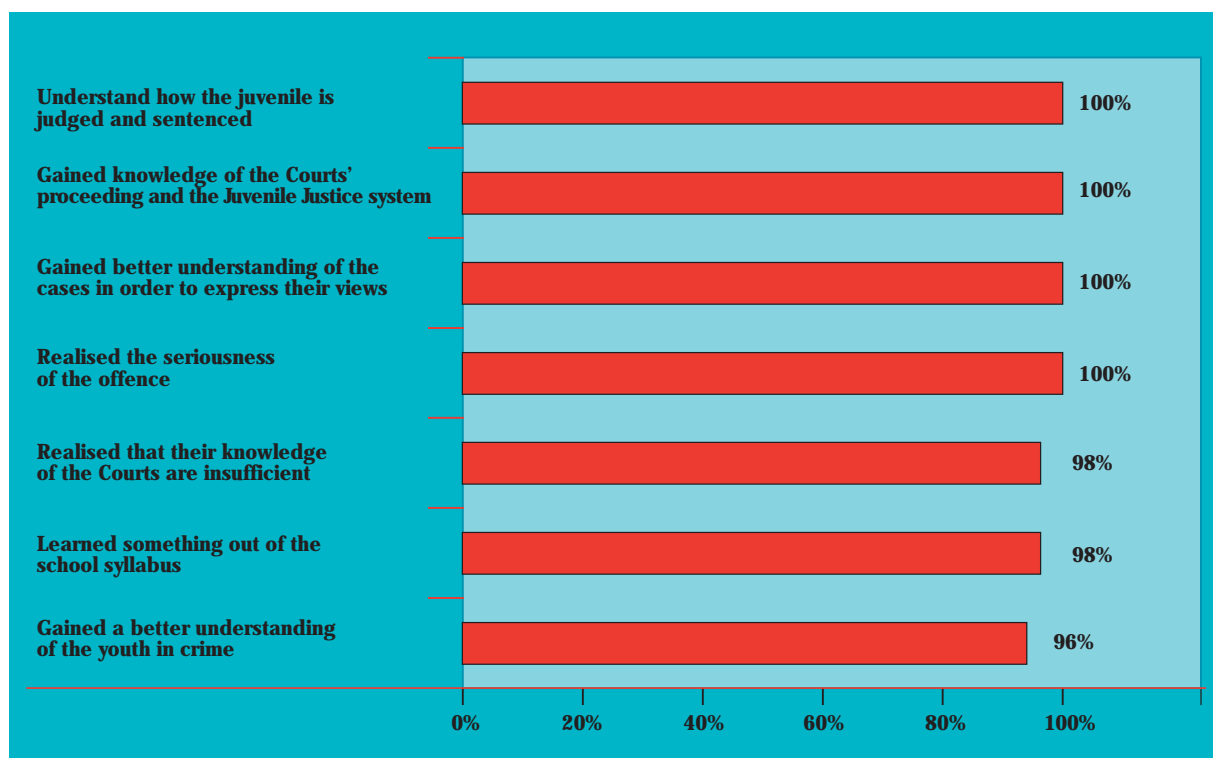


## IMPACT OF PROGRAMME ON PEER ADVISORS

On the duty day, the Magistrate would discuss, in chambers, selected cases, where the juvenile offenders had pleaded guilty and the pre-sentence report has been called for, with the peer advisors. At the dialogue session there were an exchange of views between the Magistrate and peer advisors. All peer advisors who responded to the survey indicated that they had benefitted from the chamber session with the Magistrate.

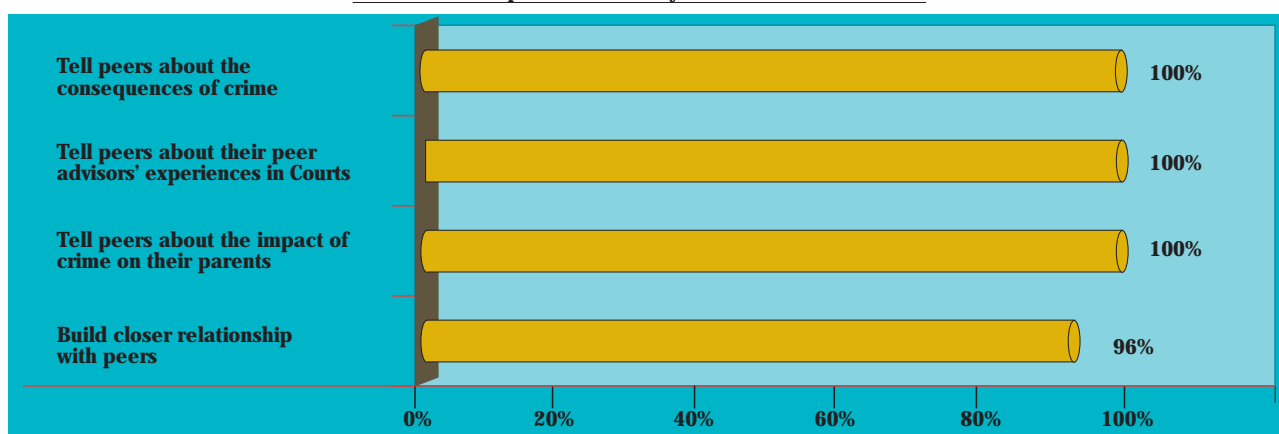
All peer advisors have gained an understanding of how the juvenile offender is dealt with. They have also obtained a better understanding of the court proceedings and the Juvenile Justice system and gained a better understanding of the cases in order to express their views. All of them have also realised the seriousness of the offence committed and the consequences of the criminal behaviour. Some 96% have had a better understanding of juveniles in crime and 98% realised that their knowledge of the court is insufficient. They have learned enriching lessons from the discussion, something which the school syllabus do not provide for (Figure 2).

**Figure 2**  
**Ways in Which Peer Advisors Benefitted**  
**from the Discussion with the Magistrate**



Apart from the benefits derived from the programme, all peer advisors have also indicated that the programme had motivated them to stay out of crime and spurred them to help their peers stay out of trouble. When asked how they will help their peers stay out of trouble, all student advisors indicated that they will inform their peers of the serious consequences of criminal behaviour, share with their friends their peer advisors' experiences at the Juvenile Court and tell their peers of the impact of crime on their parents. In order to provide moral support and positively influence their peers, 96% wanted to build closer relationships with their peers (Figure 3).

**Figure 3**  
**Ways in Which Peer Advisors Would Help their Peers Stay out of Crime**



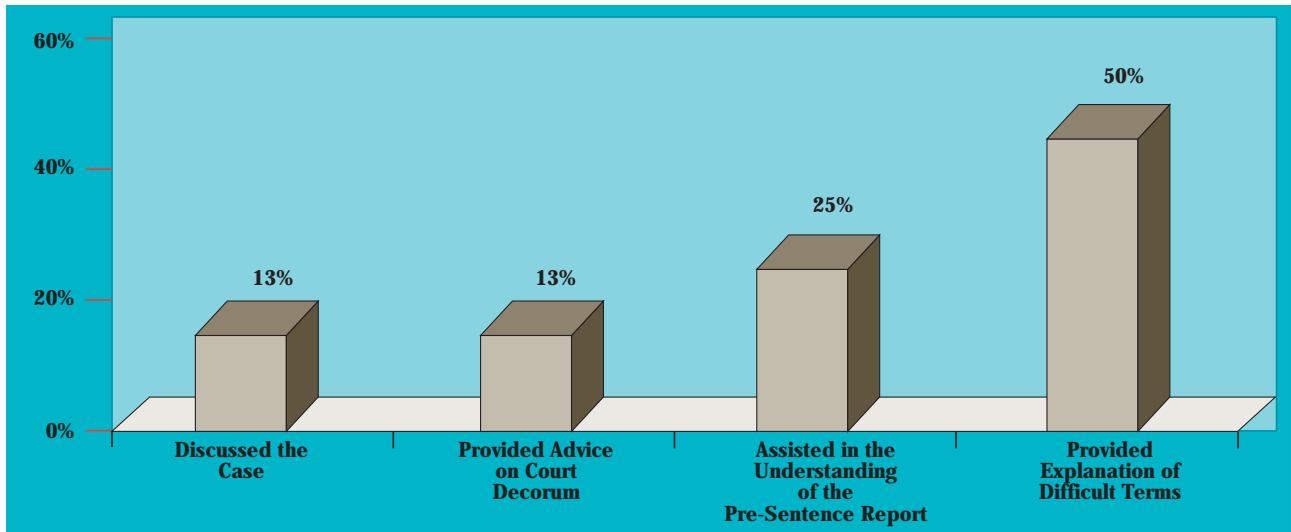
## IMPACT OF PROGRAMME ON TEACHER ADVISORS

The teachers played a vital role in the Peer Advisors programme by giving guidance and assistance to the students. 63% of the teachers were approached once by their students for assistance while the remaining 37% of the teachers were approached twice. Half of the teachers assisted the student advisors by explaining difficult terms to them. This is followed by 25% who helped their students in understanding the pre-sentence report for the case. 13% provided advice on court decorum and another 13% discussed the cases with the student advisors (Figure 4).

All teacher advisors who responded to the survey indicated that they have benefitted from the programme. All have gained a better understanding of the Juvenile Justice Process, juvenile delinquency, and the consequences of crime and hence were in a better position to educate and assist their students. All were further motivated to help their students stay out of crime.

Following the programme, the teachers were inspired to follow-up by identifying potential trouble makers and counsel them. They will also explain to their students the consequences of crime and educate them on the Juvenile Justice system in Singapore. Some teachers were motivated to organise forums, dialogue sessions or visits to the Courts for their students. The knowledge gained from the programme will also be incorporated into the school curriculum. Some teachers plan to form peer counselling groups in the schools and use positive peer pressure to check on truancy. They have also decided to take a pro-active approach in handling disciplinary matters and to get the parents involved in the counselling and disciplinary process.

**Figure 4**  
**Type of Assistance Rendered by the Teacher Advisors**



## SUGGESTIONS PROVIDED BY THE PARTICIPANTS

The teachers felt that the programme is good and should be extended to students in the upper primary and all the other schools as well. They have also suggested that more teachers, who are involved in handling school discipline to participate in the programme as well, as it will further enhance their role in educating and disciplining the students. As for the student advisors, they are also of the opinion that the programme should be extended to students at the other educational levels so that they too will benefit from it. Majority found the programme to be an unforgettable experience and were enthusiastic to have more duties assigned and discussion sessions with the Magistrate. Some suggested that the peer advisors' comments be recorded as part of the judgment of the case.

## CONCLUSION

The 4th group of student and teacher advisors have further affirmed that the Peer Advisors programme have worked well in providing the Courts with a peer perspective of the juvenile offending behaviour as well as in educating and exposing the participants to the juvenile justice process. The programme had had a positive impact on the participants and had created a ripple effect as the teachers and students set in place awareness and educational programmes to keep those at risk away from crimes. The feedback obtained from the participants will serve as valuable inputs for further improvement and enhancement to the programme for future groups of participants.

Prepared by  
Research & Statistics Unit  
October 1999

## PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS OF THE PEER ADVISORS PROGRAMME

Percentage	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
<b>Peer Advisors</b>	<b>(N=45)</b>	<b>(N=50)</b>	<b>(N=46)</b>	<b>(N=44)</b>
Gender				
• Male	60.0	50.0	41.3	56.8
• Female	40.0	50.0	58.7	43.2
<b>Age Distribution</b>				
• 14	0.0	2.0	12.0	15.9
• 15	35.6	96.0	84.8	75.0
• 16	37.8	2.0	2.2	4.5
• 17	22.2	0.0	0.0	4.5
• 18	4.4	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Mean Age</b>	<b>16.0</b>	<b>15.0</b>	<b>15.0</b>	<b>15.0</b>
<b>Ethnic Group</b>				
• Chinese	71.1	74.0	78.3	61.4
• Malays	8.9	20.0	8.7	15.9
• Indians	15.6	6.0	6.5	13.6
• Others	4.4	0.0	6.5	9.1
<b>Education Level</b>				
• Sec 2	0.0	0.0	2.2	4.5
• Sec 3	6.7	100.0	97.8	95.5
• Sec 4	86.7	0.0	0.0	0.0
• Sec 5	6.7	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Teacher Advisors</b>	<b>(N=9)</b>	<b>(N=14)</b>	<b>(N=10)</b>	<b>(N=8)</b>
Gender				
• Male	33.3	21.4	10.0	37.5
• Female	66.7	78.6	90.0	62.5
<b>Ethnic Group</b>				
• Chinese	88.9	57.1	50.0	75.0
• Malays	0.0	14.3	0.0	0.0
• Indians	11.1	28.6	10.0	25.0
• Others	0.0	0.0	20.0	0.0
• Unknown	0.0	0.0	20.0	0.0

### Participating Schools

1. Bedok North Sec	1. Bowen Sec	1. Assumption English Sec	1. Chung Cheng High (Branch)
2. Jin Tai Sec	2. Chai Chee Sec	2. Beatty Sec	2. Ghim Moh Sec
3. New Town Sec	3. Chua Chu Kang Sec	3. CHIJ Katong Convent	3. Kranji Sec
4. Pei Dao Sec	4. East View Sec	4. Loyang Sec	4. Northland Sec
5. Presbyterian High Sec	5. Guan Yang Sec	5. Mei Chan Sec	5. Pei Cai Sec
6. Queensway Sec	6. Springfield Sec	6. Naval Base Sec	6. Pierce Sec
7. Siglap Sec	7. Tanglin Sec	7. Outram Sec	7. Whitley Sec
8. Yuhua Sec	8. Thomson Sec	8. Serangoon Garden Sec	8. Woodsville Sec
	9. Yio Chu Kang Sec		