

What role can youth workers play in reducing anti social behaviour?

[Life, Adolescence](#)



Abstract

This paper is a research proposal which seeks to address the potential that youth workers have in reducing anti-social behaviour. This proposal seeks to take a case study approach to anti-social behaviour whilst utilising a number of governmental policies and practices which exist across a wealth of social work areas and youth work practice areas.

Introduction

The practice of youth work takes place within a trusted part of the spectrum of social work provision (Dept. for Education and Skills, 2005). The history of youth work can be traced back to the late 1880s and can be found within an informal voluntary religious setting (Infed, 2014). It was, however, the Albemarle Report (Ministry of Education, 1960) which concretised the service within societal dynamics and within youth cultures. Within this approach a defined route to what youth work should incorporate, as well as highlight its role, was highlighted. Recent years, however, has seen the service being impacted by changes brought about through altered central government policies (Courree, 2012). During this time, youth work services has been subject to reform and has been incorporated into the auspices of the Integrated Youth Support Services (Infed, 2014), and utilised as a tool for reducing anti-social behaviour. Recent years have seen anti-social behaviour become a dominant issue in community relations. Within their detached roles, it can be considered that youth workers have the potential to improve

social dynamics and to reduce instances of anti-social behaviour. However the extent to which youth workers can effect change needs to be addressed.

Background and Rationale for the study

Youth work is a contested area of social work provision and its professional definition has been affected by a series of wider ranging work practices (Infed, 2014). Sercome (2010) also agrees that what constitutes as youth work is not an easy task but he produces a list of roles that are akin to that of both Infed (2014) and the National Youth Agency (2014). These roles serve to define youth work as a process which ' helps young people learn about themselves, others and society, through informal educational activities which combine enjoyment, challenge and learning' (National Youth Agency, 2014: n. p.). However, it is also evident that youth work also takes place within the modern social work context of multi agency practices. This outcome places youth workers at the centre of the plethora of criminal and social policies that are designed to counter anti-social behaviour.

Detached youth work is a distinctive form of social work which interacts with young people using constructive dialogue and within the spectrum of personal and social development (Federation for Detached Youth Work, 2013). This form of youth work utilises principles of informal education in order that young people can be engaged in order to address a number of issues that exist in their lives. As a result youth workers now operate in a more robust legal framework which incorporates a multitude of legislative criteria and partner agencies, this can include but is not limited to, law

enforcement agencies, education services, housing trusts, social services and medical services. This perspective is particularly applicable where knife crime as well as other forms of anti-social behaviour, are considered.

Anti-social behaviour became an issue for the incumbent Blair administration in 1997. The Labour party manifesto for that election claimed that Labour wanted to see 'communities that are safe... (and)... where mutual respect and tolerance are the order of the day', adding, 'these are things we must achieve together as a country' (Labour Party, 1997: n. p.). As a result the Labour Government drafted the Anti-Social Behaviour system and incorporated programmes such as the Respect Agenda, which included a task force and related action plans (Millie, 2009). Youth workers play a central role in reducing anti-social behaviour. In the Tower Hamlets areas of London, anti-social behaviour continues to dominate local service provision and underpinning policies. The administrative wings of the area have been criticised for not resolving cases quickly (Tower Hamlets Homes, 2012). Similarly it is noted that the area is one of the most prevalent in London for instances of knife crime (Citizen Report UK, 2013). Knife crime has long been associated as being a criminal activity which is predominately carried out by young people (11 Million, 2009), and as such, falls within the remit of youth work. It is to be noted that youth workers may come into contact with service users who are engaged in anti-social behaviour on a regular basis whose behaviour is being dictated by a social, emotional or behavioural disorder. Cefai and Cooper (2006) argue that such a premise is not uncommon and argue that these conditions are a persistent factor in anti-social behaviour.

They argue that these conditions are ' characterised by their effect of being socially disruptive or disruptive to the development course of the individual (Cefai and Cooper, 2006: 18).

McVie (2010) highlighted that there was a correlation between instances of, and the prevalence of poverty, low self esteem, knife crime, and gang membership. Within this narrative a number of associative links between what constitutes as being delinquent or anti social behaviour and knife crime. An earlier report by 11 Million identified a similar number of sociological factors which will aid a young person to turn to anti-social behaviour, and in particular knife crime. However McVie (2010) noted that those young people who can be classed as being persistent knife carriers consisted of only a small percentage of the overall knife carrying population. AS such it can be argued that knife crime occurs within two very distinct groups; persistent offenders and occasional offenders (McVie, 2010). Within this the aforementioned sociological and behavioural incorporation of low educational levels, behavioural issues and deprivation can be considered to be a factor. At this point it is worth remembering that Tower Hamlets is one of the poorest areas of London. As such there is a correlation between academic theory, statistics and environmental reality. Indeed this is a factor which 11 Million (2009) detected. Further to this a subsequent report, the Kinsella Report (2011), highlighted poverty as being a contributory factor in the perpetuation of this particular anti-social behavioural act.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to investigate and examine the roles of youth workers and assist the reduction of anti-social behaviour in the Tower Hamlets borough of London. To do so the proposed study has three main aims;

Define anti-social behaviour in context with social exclusion and social work practice

Identify and explain the current roles of youth workers in assisting authorities in combating anti-social behaviour.

Assess the efficacy of contributory elements of knife crime in order to assist the wider youth work sector in helping reduce anti-social behaviour

In responding to these three aims, it is proposed that the question of what role can Youth Workers play in Reducing Anti Social Behaviour will be addressed.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature review will primarily involve the collection, collation and analysis of previous primary and secondary data sources and studies. These studies will be sourced from a number of online academic databases and will include statutory reports, academic research studies, state policy documentation and other regulatory statements as well as responses from professional bodies. In addition to this, the incorporation of secondary data such as academic perspectives and media sources will provide for a review of the discourse that resides within this area of debate. In effect, data

sources of this type can be classified as multiple data sources. Here it is to be noted that multiple source datasets are capable of being interrogated, broken down and reclassified into specific policy and practice areas as well as time based datasets (Cohen, Mannion and Morrison, 2013). In essence, it is proposed that the approach being utilised for this research is based upon desk based research. Studies of this type can also known as descriptive research studies and involve a number of research areas that are related to the issues surrounding this particular study area (Cohen, Mannion and Morrison, 2013).

Ethics and anti-oppressive practice considerations

Since this paper is based upon a methodology which utilises descriptive research it will not require the involvement of participants within any subsequent research. As such, there are no ethical guidelines relating to the management or safety of participants. However it isto be rememberedthat descriptive research studies are subjective and it is possible that the inclusion of a number of case studies, or examples, can be influenced by personal perspectives and biases (Cohen, Mannion and Morrison, 2013). It is to be noted however, that every step will be taken to ensure that this issue does not impinge upon the study; this includes conscious or unconscious bias.

Project outline

Chapter one will consist of the introduction; this will include relevant background information, rationale, methodology, scope and constraints as

well as overviews of the literature review. Additionally it will include an abridged findings section. Chapter two, the literature review, will consist of a review of primary and secondary resources. This will include, but not limited to, regulatory frameworks, state policies, professional literature and previous academic research studies. The third chapter will focus upon the Tower Hamlets area of London from a case study perspective. Within this Chapter, the level of anti-social behaviour, youth work initiatives, responses and results will be considered. This case study will be compared against information raised within the literature review in order to inform best practice in this area. The analysis section, will counteract the initial findings from the literature review and assess these against further data in order to assess how youth workers can help reduce anti-social behaviour. The final chapter, the findings of the study, will highlight where and how, if any, youth workers can help reduce anti-social behaviour. This chapter will also provide a series of recommendations for further research.

Project timetable

Weeks 1 - 4: Identification, collection and collation of primary and secondary sources in order to inform the literature review.

Weeks 4 - 8: Literature review, first and second draft.

Weeks 9 - 10: Finalise literature review and investigate areas for service provision in relation to reducing anti-social behaviour.

Weeks 10 - 12: Findings section, first and second draft

Weeks 12 - 14: Finalise the analysis chapter in order to highlight areas for recommendations for youth work service changes in order to address issues

related to anti-social behaviour.

Weeks 14 - 15: Complete findings and recommendations chapter.

Weeks 15 - 16: Complete the first, introductory chapter.

Week 17: Publish the final research study.

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