

OUTREACH WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

REPORT OF THE SEMINAR ON
11TH OCTOBER 1988

Preamble

The principles and practice of outreach work is gaining in interest among those who work with and serve the needs of young people. It is now recognised that many young people who may be in need of support do not meet with, or even know of those who could assist them. This may be because access is not available, or that services do not exist to meet their needs. Outreach - working with young people on their own territory and on their own terms - is one way of improving access and identifying needs on which to base future services.

In addition, health promoters and educators, particularly those concerned with drugs, alcohol and AIDS, are anxious to improve and explore new channels of communication with young people, in an effort to make primary prevention more effective. Those who work directly with drug users want to extend their services outside of the agency premises. The impending spread of the HIV virus has resulted in an increased sense of urgency by all such workers. Those who work with people with alcohol problems are also being asked to look at outreach work as a method of primary and secondary prevention.

Currently in Wales, which appears to have only one detached youth worker (independent of the youth service), there is a growing interest in outreach work by youth workers and by the drugs workers.

It was in this context that a seminar on outreach work was organised in South Wales. The idea first sprang from the South Wales Drugs Workers Forum and the Young People in the Prevention of Substance Misuse Project in the Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services. A small group of drugs workers and youth workers was drawn from four of the South Wales Counties to form a working party to organise the conference.

Four aims of the seminar were identified -

1. To debate the methods and benefits of outreach youth work in Wales.
2. To explore how contact can be made with young people who do not readily come forward to situations where resources are currently invested, and who are in need of support and assistance.
3. To discuss the implications for those who work to prevent substance misuse and associated problems in Wales.
4. To provide opportunities for youth workers, drugs workers and others to meet to share ideas and methods of practice.

The seminar therefore was to be firmly based upon practice - looking at and identifying practice methods that could be within the reach of workers in South Wales.

Peter Blackley, team leader of the Wirral LSA Alternative Youth Service, was asked to be the main speaker.

The conference was attended by over 50 people, including 25 youth workers, 10 drugs workers, 2 AIDS workers, 2 voluntary youth workers, 3 Health Education Officers, 1 Specialist Advisory Teacher, a teacher, a student counsellor, a member of Youthlink Wales, and the only detached youth worker in Wales. Peter Blackley gave four half hour inputs with three sessions of group discussions between (see attached programme). One of the workers, Joan Williamson, Principal Womens Worker in the Alternative Youth Work team was available for the group discussion.

The Speaker

Peter Blackley outlined the history, development and principles of the alternative youth work- service. He described how it worked and how it was developing in the future. He drew attention to the needs of the young people in the Wirral, and the bridging that his workers often undertook to assist young people with longer terms problems that need specialist support. Their involvement in the prevention of the spread of the HIV virus and other infections was outlined, and the form of short term support to young people in acute need such as homelessness and court appearances was described. Peter Blackley also talked about staff supervision and the need for support at all levels. Although he outlined his own particular scheme, he said that similar but different initiatives could be developed in other areas. He also voiced his concern about recent legislation taking away the right of young people to live independently and be recognised as individuals.

The agency which contains street workers, a court worker, womens workers, administrative and service staff, defines its work with young people as, first to make contact, second to befriend, next to define the issues, and lastly to bridge to other relevant agencies. The staff are there only to intervene and not to take over the lives of the young people they meet. Their role with young people using drugs is to enable them to come through the rough patches in their lives in a less chaotic way.

The Groups

To enable networking between drugs workers and youth workers, groups were formed on a county basis. Although group facilitators were given guidelines for the sessions, it was anticipated that each group would develop according to the needs and agendas of its members.

Three of the groups indicated their intentions to promote outreach work in their counties, either by taking what they had learned from the speaker to their own professional forums, or by re-establishing contact with those who they had met at the Seminar. As youth workers were in the majority, the discussions inevitably centred more on their concerns than with the drugs issues. Some youth workers identified alcohol as the major problem they see. It was agreed that there was a need to develop better networks between agencies, the youth service and the Welsh Office, and for youth services to assist each other across county boundaries to enable the development of services for young people.

Conclusion

This was the first time that many youth workers and drugs workers had met. Feedback indicates that the opportunity to hear about the work of the Wirral LEA Alternative Youth Work was appreciated by everyone who attended. Drugs workers identified practice methods of schemes that are currently awaiting the

results of funding applications. For youth workers, inter county contact and support for the idea of outreach work appeared in the most part to result in a commitment to future action.

Veronica Wilson
20.10.88

Acknowledgements

The seminar owes its success to Peter Blackley and Joan Wilkinson who took time away from the Wirral to make such an excellent input and contribution to the day. In addition grateful thanks are extended to the youth workers and drugs workers who formed the working party (see attached).

ONE DAY SEMINAR ON OUTREACH WORK WITH YOUNG PSOPLS

BARRY HOTEL, BARRY, 11TH OCTOBER 1988

Cindy Barry

Mike Blank

Lesley Boakes

Chris Charlton

Sarah Cox

Jane Davidson

Graham Davies

Linda Davies

Simone Davies

Roger Duncan

John Edwards

E. Gwyn Evans

Seamus Gallagher

Shelagh Greenland

Pauline Heslop

Lucy Hislop

Corner Hughes

Mary Hughes

Nigel James

Gareth Jones

Ron Jones

Pene Keenan

Deiter Kessel

Margaret Kouba

Sian Lucas

Linda Lewis

Cilia McKenna

Anne Mitchell

Rick Newham

Gareth Newton

Paul O'Neill

Kevin Perkins

James E. Price

Dave Prosser

Andy Pudduck

Linda Quinn

Debbie Reid

S. Ricketts

Martin Riley

H.G. Roberts

Annette Sheldon

Robert Sheldon

Sue Smith

Mandy Squires

Gary Tatarczuk

C. Taylor

Marion Warne

Martyn Waters

Jacqui Watt

Christopher Whitcombe

Brian Williams

Christine Williams

Llynwen Williams

Conference Speakers

Peter Blackley

Joan Wilkinson

Conference Co-ordinator

Veronica Wilson

ONE DAY SEMINAR ON OUTREACH WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE
11TH OCTOBER 1988

WORKING GROUP

Ms. Jane Davidson

Ms. Cilia McKenna

Ms. Anne Mitchell

Mrs. Llynwen Williams

Ms. Suzanne Chappie

Ms. Veronica Wilson

Mr. E. Gwyn Evans

Mr. Roger Duncan

Mr. Chris Whitcombe

OUTREACH WORK CONFERENCE

11TH OCTOBER 1988

BARRY HOTEL, BARRY

A G E N D A

- 9.30 Welcome Veronica Wilson - CWVYS
- 9.45 Outreach Work - A Working Model
Peter Blackley
- 10.15 Can/How does this model fit Wales
Groups
- 10.45 Coffee
- 11.00 Getting Started :
Staff
Working a "patch" Networking and
Support Structures
- 11.30 Developing a Working Plan
Peter Blackley
Groups
- 12.30 Lunch
- 13.45 Dealing with Issues
Drugs/Alcohol
Homelessness
Police
Poverty and debt
AIDS
Peter Blackley
- 14.15 Issues in Wales and Future Developments
Groups
- 15.15 Managing a Project Staff Staffing Issues :
administration, evaluation
Peter Blackley
- 15.45 Final Plenary
- 16.30 Tea and depart
