Overview

The Tower Programme

Quality level

Quality level : 1

Executive summary

Reduces the incidence of criminal behaviour and accentuates the personal development of marginalized young people from the North Clondalkin Area who have come into contact with the law.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of intervention</th>
<th>interventions in the criminal justice system</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub-area</td>
<td>alternatives to prison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of approach</td>
<td>offenders (criminal justice system)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target group (universal)</td>
<td>children/young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age group</td>
<td>16-28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target group (specific)</td>
<td>children/young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual coverage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substances addressed</td>
<td>cannabis, opiates, alcohol, cocaine and derivatives</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Evaluation type

| Evaluation type achieved   | outcome evaluation (how far are the specific objectives achieved), process evaluation (how far are the operational objectives achieved) |

Country: Ireland
Start date: 01/01/1994
End date: 
Overall objective

The overall purpose of the Tower Project is to deliver a programme that reduces the incidence of criminal behaviour and accentuates the personal development of marginalised young people from the North Clondalkin Area who have come into contact with the law and who need to address their attitudes and behaviour if they are to avail of opportunities for vocational training and employment. In addition, the project views its role as part of the development of innovative community sanctions for 'young offenders' and endeavours to work with the Probation and Welfare Service and the local community in pursuit of establishing, maintaining and evaluating a community based programme to service the needs to the target group.

Abstract

The Tower Project as a community based sanction for juvenile offenders was set up in North Clondalkin, a large suburb of Dublin. This area of Clondalkin has long been identified with drug misuse and drug dealing, poverty and social disadvantage and crime. In particular, these 'social problems' were identified as having a major impact on the lives of an increasing young population. The 1996 Irish Census recorded the population of North Clondalkin as just over 29,000, with the number of persons resident in North Clondalkin in the 15-24 age category increasing during the 1991-1996 period. The overall purpose of the Tower Project is to deliver a programme that reduces the incidence of criminal behaviour and accentuates the personal development of marginalised young people from the North Clondalkin Area who have come into contact with the law and who need to address their attitudes and behaviour if they are to avail of opportunities for vocational training and employment. However, as the programme developed the definition of the target group was expanded to include those 'at risk' of becoming involved with the Criminal Justice system, through drug misuse and anti-social behaviour. The specific objectives of the programme are to (a) develop and implement a programme that challenges offending behavioral aspects of the lifestyle of participants (b) target the programme primarily at young people from the North Clondalkin area who are not engaged in education or training, or gainfully employed; and who may be alienated from mainstream youth services. And (c) develop links with other facilities, services and voluntary community groups, to encourage contributions from these groups and services. Activities offered by the project include a specific offending behaviour module, art, literacy, woodwork, metalwork, photography, lifeskills, computer training, counselling, outdoor pursuits, sports, catering, visits, trips, and job-seeking skills.

Context and theory

Initial situation

The Tower Project emerged from a policy commitment on behalf of the
Department of Justice in 1994 to develop community based sanctions for young offenders that would have equal importance to the use of penal institutions. Such plans were set out in the Justice Department's 'Management of Offenders-A Five Year Plan (1994)'. This policy commitment occurred against a background in Ireland which had seen large numbers of juvenile offenders being given custodial sanctions. The Tower Project as a community based sanction for juvenile offenders was set up in North Clondalkin, a large suburb of Dublin. This area of Clondalkin has long been identified with drug misuse and drug dealing, poverty and social disadvantage and crime. In particular, these 'social problems' were identified as having a major impact on the lives of an increasing young population. The 1996 Irish Census recorded the population of North Clondalkin as just over 29,000 with the number of persons resident in North Clondalkin in the 15-24 age category increasing during the 1991-1996 period. An analysis of data from the National Drug Treatment Reporting System (NDTRS) shows there was a 28% increase for individuals presenting for treatment from the Clondalkin area between 1996 and 1998 (Clondalkin Drug Task Force Area Action Plan 2001: Making Progress. Dublin; Clondalkin Drug Task Force) In addition, Dublin 22, the postcode for the Clondalkin area was identified as having the third highest estimated level of opiate use among male drug users in Dublin in the 15-24 age group (Comiskey, (1997) Estimating the Prevalence of Opiate Drug Misuse in Dublin, Ireland. The Department of Health and Children). Also, housing developments in North Clondalkin mainly comprise of local authority housing built between the late 1970s and mid-1980s. In addition, many of the neighbourhoods in North Clondalkin had been documented as experiencing high levels of social disadvantage (1993, Co. Dublin Areas of Need CODAN Report). The main target group for the Tower Project was young people from the North Clondalkin area who were subject of the Criminal Justice System or were at risk of being subject to this particular system. The project was aware from the beginning of the role that drug misuse played in the lives of the target group. Subsequently, this view was confirmed with the majority of young people coming in contact with the programme reporting problems with drug misuse. The links between social disadvantage, crime and drug misuse has been documented by O'Mahony (1997) who found a high level of prison inmates in Mountjoy, Ireland came from areas with a high concentration of local authority housing, high levels of drug abuse and unemployment (See O'Mahony, 1997, Mountjoy Prisoners-A Sociological and Criminological Profile, Dublin).

**Basic assumptions/theory**

In seeking to develop and implement a programme that challenges offending behavioural aspects of participants lives, the Tower project relies to a large extent on techniques/methods from the Cognitive School of Psychological thought. This Cognitive school of thought is based on the premise that the majority of offenders have a deficit of reasoning skills, are unable to perceive the situation from the perspective of the victim, fail to consider the consequences of behaviour and have difficulty identifying and evaluating alternative courses of action. The project believes that by encouraging an examination by offenders of the sequence of events surrounding their offences, of their thoughts, feelings and actions at all stages of the offence that
participants can engage with a detailed exploration of how they can modify their behaviour in future. It is believed that this process can lead to a reduction and eventual elimination of offending behaviour. The project believes that it is primarily young people who experience alienation that are more likely to develop offending behaviour, including substance misuse. The term 'alienation' in this regard refers to those young people who are unemployed, out of school and not in touch with mainstream youth services. The project believes that by encouraging these young people to link in with the project activities, that this can alleviate the feelings/experience of social isolation and alienation among young people and enable to feel part of the local community. The project hopes that this may contribute to the modification of anti-social behaviour such as crime and substance misuse. The project believes that it is important not to work in isolation but to engage with other services in the local area, particularly services that work with the target groups and their families. This approach facilitates the exchange of information and ideas regarding the needs of service users and enhances the referral aspect of the project by being informed of the availability of such services and the nature of their service provision.

Objectives and indicators

Process evaluation

Operational objectives

To target the programme primarily at young people from the North Clondalkin area who are not engaged in education or training, or gainfully employed and who may be alienated from mainstream youth services. To develop links with other facilities, services and voluntary community groups, to encourage contributions from these groups and services.

Process indicators

Pre-entry expectations and goals. Extent to which goals were realised on the programme. Participants and ex-participants perception of programme and to what extent would they recommend programme to friends.

Perceptions of local community and other organisations on programme objectives, effectiveness and programmes strengths and weaknesses.

Instruments used

Type of quantitative instrument

Type of evaluation carried out

Evaluation design
outcome evaluation (how far are the specific objectives achieved), process evaluation (how far are the operational objectives achieved)

**Specific objectives and outcome indicators**

**Specific objective 1**

To develop and implement a programme that challenges offending behavioral aspects of the lifestyle of participants.

**Outcome indicator 1**

Perception of project's impact on ex-participants offending behaviour. Looking at before/after the participation on the programme ex-participants were asked to report on whether they were (a) arrested, (b) appeared in court, (c) spent time in prison, Participants views on the programme's module that dealt with offending behaviour.

**Specific objective 2**

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**Outcome indicator 2**

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**Specific objective 3**

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**Outcome indicator 3**

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**Instruments used**

**Type of quantitative instrument**

**Type of qualitative instrument**

**Action**

offending behaviour programme, advice and support, advocacy, alternatives to drug use, art, counselling, education (skills, abilities, etc.), information, medical treatment, other, referral point, rehabilitation, reinsertion/social
Results

Process evaluation

Results

A profile of the 31 ex-participants that responded to the survey questionnaire revealed 24 were male, 7 female, age range 17-27, and all resident in North Clondalkin. Of the this group, 6 (19.4%) had completed the course, 8 (25.8%) left the course before completion, 16 (51%) were dismissed and no information was volunteered by one (3.2%). This would indicate that the programme is reaching its target group but appears to have difficulty in retaining participants. Ex-participants were surveyed on pre-entry expectations and goals. The most common goals expressed by participants was to 'get a job' and 'stay out of trouble'. Of the 31 respondents, 11 (35%) felt they had achieved the goals they set themselves on coming to the programme. Overall, 14 participants (45%) thought that the programme had improved their employment prospects. Views on programme modules revealed that Literacy, Woodwork and Photography were most popular modules among ex-participants. In addition, 15 individuals were interviewed as part of the evaluation. This group comprised of 5 who were starting the programme, 4 nearing completion and 6 who had left the programme a year prior. 10 of the 15 interviewees on their own accounts, reported having a current or past heroin addiction. The interviews revealed that in the main participants were motivated to join the programme so that they could stay out of trouble and learn new skills. The fact that most of the interviewees approached the programme of their own accord seems to suggest the programme was responding to needs that had been missed by mainstream youth services in the area. Some respondents reported difficulty in settling into the demands of the programme, in particular adapting to a group setting. This was particularly problematic for male respondents. This may explain why there could have been difficulty among the group engaging with mainstream youth services and further supports the specific objective of the Tower project in targeting this group.

References

Brochures; newsletters

Contact

Responsible organisation
Probation and Welfare

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Additional information

Number of staff involved
Status/profession of staff involved: Probation officers; Clerks
Type of evaluator: External evaluator
Name of external institution(s): Nexus Research Co-operative
Full reference to evaluation report

Budget

Annual budget: Over 100 000 to 500 000
Sources of funding: National government
Percentage from each source: National government = 100%

Additional remarks

The core training programme is complimented by a family programme which works with the extended families of trainees as well as targeting young people 'at risk' in the wider community. There are close working relationships with community based Addiction Treatment programmes. The Tower Project is also represented on the Management boards of a number of local projects, such as Area Development Programmes and the Local Drugs Task Force and Clondalkin Partnership. These local/community networks allow the project to contribute to the development of policy.