

The You Decide Programme

Evaluating a Group-Based Violence Prevention Programme for Young People in Scotland

The You Decide Programme (YDP) is a community-based violence prevention programme in a local area within Glasgow. It is co-created and co-facilitated by individuals with lived experience of navigating the criminal justice system and aims to divert young people aged 12-16 by engaging, educating and empowering those who are “at the edge” of criminal activity or are still involved in/experiencing violence. The programme is “young person led” and is delivered to 8-10 young people in a group-work format across an eight-week period. It is strength-based, solution focused, and psychoeducates them about issues they face (e.g. violence, drugs and alcohol, adverse childhood experiences) while providing information on how to overcome these challenges.

Approach to

evaluation

The evaluation findings are based on evidence gathered using:

Group work observations

Semi-structured interviews with the young people attending

Records of meetings between agencies involved in delivering the programme

Goals of evaluation

All the young people were disengaged with school and the majority had been involved in violent or criminal activity within school/community settings. The goal of the evaluation was to capture the process of implementing the first YDP pilot as well as any impact of participation on the young people.

We aimed to answer:

- OBJ:** Do “at the edge” young people engage with the programme? What are the successful parts of the programme from the young person’s perspective and what could be improved?
- OBJ:** Does engaging with YDP improve young peoples’ understanding of the topics? Does this translate into changes in their violence-related thinking and behaviour?

In conclusion

The YDP pilot engaged young people “at the edge” of criminal activity and/or violence and appeared to have a positive impact on the majority by educating them about the current issues they were facing in the community and highlighting the consequences of violent activity. The role of individuals with lived experience in the delivery of the sessions was seen by the boys to give these lessons credibility. This evaluation provides evidence of what worked well and what could be improved to maximise the programme’s impact.

Main Findings

Level of engagement

Attendance remained high throughout the programme and the boys engaged with and actively contributed to discussions and activities.

What worked well?

The young people indicated that they engaged with the programme as **(1) they felt empowered** and as though they were being listened to, **(2) It gave them something to do** on a Friday which “kept them out of trouble”, and **(3) they benefited from hearing stories and learning lessons** from those with lived experience

Young peoples’ perceptions of impact

The majority report a change in the way they now think about topics covered in the sessions (e.g. thinking more about the consequences of their actions and the long lasting repercussions of violence and criminal activity). Impact on behaviour less clear in that 67% perceived it to have had an impact on behaviour in school and community and 33% did not).

Lessons learned?

The only improvement suggested by the young people was a desire for the programme to continue beyond eight weeks. The key insights captured from those involved in implementing YDP were: (1) Multi-agency collaboration was key to the success and should be central to future delivery (2) The programme could be improved by establishing a clear aftercare protocol and managing the young people’s expectations of mentor’s roles and responsibilities once they had completed the programme

Next Steps?

We were interested in young people’s *perceptions* of their actions, so did not assess actual behaviour. Future research should aim to do this.