

Youth Homelessness: An Investigation into the Emotional Effects on Social Care Workers

Annette Bermingham (1591106), Supervisor Name: Orna Farrell

Abstract

This research aims to investigate if social care workers are emotionally affected when working with young people aged between 12-17 years accessing emergency services. A thematic analysis was conducted and the data identified four as follows: Emergency settings compared to residential Settings, Behaviours and characteristics of Young People accessing emergency accommodation, Social Care Workers emotions and professionalism and Reflective Practices.

Introduction

Adolescence is a time when young people need a strong support system, to help face the difficulties and often challenging tasks of becoming an independent adult. Yet, an increasing number of young people find themselves in an unfamiliar territory: Homelessness.

This research project gives an overview into Ireland's legislation framework of youth homelessness and focuses on defining and measuring this heterogeneous population. The Literature reviewed would indicate that professionals working within child and youth services are particular vulnerable to physical assaults and threatening behaviour. Social care workers working within these services can be emotionally challenging and may go beyond ordinary work related stress .



Research Question: How are Social Care Workers emotionally affected when working with young people while accessing Emergency Accommodation?

Method

The researcher chose to perform a qualitative in order to answer the research question and achieve the aims and objectives of the study. The researcher purposely selected five social care workers who work directly with young people aged between 12-17 years within three of the residential/hostel centers within Dublin who provide young people with emergency accommodation, basic needs and support.

The researcher conducted the study through the use of semi-structured in-depth interviews, which claim to be one of the main methods of data collection used in qualitative research. The researcher used a thematically analysis approach with the use of computer software program Nvivo to successfully transcribe and analysis the data. This enabled the researcher to code the data and identify key themes that emerged from the interviews to effectively uncover the findings as accurately as possible.

Results

Results show that social care workers were emotionally affected while providing young people out-of-home with emergency accommodation, basic needs and support. Findings revealed there was a clear difference between social care workers working with young people in emergency settings compared to residential setting. This study has contributed to the large gap in the existing literature of emergency placements and how young people accessing emergency accommodation are vulnerable to the detrimental effects of trauma exposure, psychosis and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Discussion

The world of Social Care is extremely emotionally and demanding work and that professionals working within the emergency sector needs more of an open discussion, acknowledgement and support as they work closely with some of the most vulnerable young people in our society. Each SCW interviewed shared similar responses, feelings and emotions when working with young people accessing emergency accommodation. The findings from this research study suggest that SCW working within the emergency services have very few supports available to them.

References

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