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Overview

Copping On - National Crime Awareness Initiative.

Quality level

Quality level : 1

Executive summary

The purpose of the copping on programme is to reduce the risk of offending behaviour in young people and to improve the relations between young people and the police.

Type of intervention	prevention
Sub-area	selective
Setting	school
Type of approach	community involvement (bottom up)
Target group (universal)	adults,children/young people
Age group	12-16
Target group (specific)	adults,children/young people
Annual coverage	
Substances addressed	tobacco,cannabis,opiates,alcohol,ecstasy,cocaine and derivatives,amphetamines,methamphetamines,inhaleds/solvents
Evaluation type	outcome evaluation (how far are the specific objectives achieved),process evaluation (how far are the operational objectives achieved)
Country	Ireland

Start date 01/09/1996

End date

Overall objective

The overall purpose of the programme is to challenge offending behaviour amongst young people and promote an inter-agency approach to the development of crime prevention.

Abstract

The Copping On Programme was established in 1996 as a national crime awareness programme targeting young people 'at risk' e.g. early school-leavers outside the school setting. The programme also targets professionals working with young people 'at risk' for the purpose of training them to challenge offending behaviour and deviant attitudes in the young people. The idea for the programme was born during 1995-96, when project workers with the Youthreach Programme became concerned about the levels of anti-social behaviour and substance misuse among early school leavers participating in the programme. This concern was heightened by what appeared to be an antipathy towards authority, in particular towards the Gardai, on the part of young participants on the programme. In response to such observations Marian Quinn, a facilitator with the Youthreach programme, identified a need to develop a programme that would challenge the offending behaviour and underlying attitudes of Youthreach participants and other 'at risk' groups of young people. In response, the Copping-On programme was developed to train professionals working with young people 'at risk'; to make informed decisions about what constitutes appropriate behaviour in society. Although the Copping On Initiative developed within a Youthreach setting, it since expanded into a national programme administered by the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee with the advice of an inter-departmental steering committee. The Copping On programme belongs to the family of 'life skills programmes' that have been designed to equip 'at risk' groups with a set of social skills to enable them to transcend deviant behavioural traits. The basic assumption underpinning the life skills approach is that the target group of young people are deficient in their capacity to make choices. In addition, The programme aims to reduce the risk and incidence of offending behaviour among young people and to decrease harmful and damaging behaviour such as bullying, alcohol and drug use. The programme is also designed to improve relations between young people and the police and to provide young people with a framework within which to understand and critique the justice system. Finally the programme endeavours to develop and support a multi-agency approach to juvenile offending. An evaluation of the programme (Bowden, 1998) found that Youthreach participants reported positively on their experience of the programme. The young people reported that the programme provided them with an opportunity for discussion and reflection on their behaviour and attitudes. It was indicated by the young people that this often resulted in a raised awareness of the consequences of individual actions, particularly in relation to offending behaviour such as substance misuse and

joyriding. The evaluator reported the programme to be "...consistent with the objectives of Youthreach in that it encourages an exploration of offending by young people and helps them to understand the complex and often competing discourses in relation to crime" (IBID: 6). In addition, Juvenile Liaison Officers (JLO's) who participated in the training programme reported positive feedback on their experiences with the resource pack and the training manual. The programme heightened their enthusiasm for working with young people in a different way. A growing understanding between the young offenders and the police was reported. The evaluation concluded that the inter-agency approach was a key element in the effectiveness of the Copping On Programme and that the programme offered a new way of working for the agencies involved. The report recommended that the inter-agency dimension should be developed at a local and regional level and expanded to include agencies in the health and training sectors. (See Section 5.2: Other results for updated information on the project).

Context and theory

Initial situation

During 1995-96, project workers with the Youthreach Programme became concerned about the levels of anti-social behaviour and substance misuse among early school leavers participating in the programme. This concern was heightened by what appeared to be an antipathy towards authority, in particular towards the Gardai, on the part of young participants on the programme. In response to such observations Marian Quinn, a facilitator with the Youthreach programme, identified a need to develop a programme that would challenge the offending behaviour and underlying attitudes of Youthreach participants and other 'at risk' groups of young people. In response, the Copping-On programme was developed to train professionals working with young people 'at risk'; to make informed decisions about what constitutes appropriate behaviour in society.

Basic assumptions/theory

The Copping On programme believes that there is a demonstrable correlation between early school leaving and offending behaviour. This assumption primarily relates to the development of Copping On, which took place in a Youthreach setting where offending behaviour was exhibited on the part of some participants. Youthreach primarily caters for early school-leavers aged 15-18. In addition, a number of participants on the Youthreach would have had some involvement with the Criminal Justice system. However, the programme believes that the level of risk for early school-leavers developing offending behaviour can be reduced by enabling the young people to reflect upon their experiences, develop the cognitive skills required to identify those areas in which they can make change and support them in doing so. Young people's experience of authority and in particular the police may often be negative and as a result they may be likely to disregard the criminal justice system. The

programme aims to challenge young people's attitudes towards offending behaviour and allow them to develop allegiances towards the justice processes and institutions. It is acknowledged that this is a two-way process and that the police must also address their attitudes towards young people and participate in discussions with young people. Following the pilot year, it became apparent that supporting an inter-agency approach, involving a range of agencies, enabled the most effective means of intervention with young people 'at risk'.

Objectives and indicators

Process evaluation

Operational objectives

To develop and support a multi-agency approach to juvenile offending by increasing co-operation among various agencies working with this target group, including youth workers, police, training centres, teachers, drug education officers and social workers.

Process indicators

An assessment of the effectiveness of the inter-agency framework that underpinned the programme

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 reduce the risk and incidence of offending behaviour in young people 'at risk' e.g. early-school leavers. In particular, targeting damaging behaviours such as bullying, alcohol and substance misuse among these young people.

Outcome indicator 1

An assessment on how the programme was being received by young people 'at risk' and professionals working with the youth

Specific objective 2

To improve relations between young people 'at risk' and the police and provide the young people with a framework within which to understand and critique the justice system and to make informed choices about their risk of involvement in criminal activity.

Outcome indicator 2

The evaluation examined changes in participants' understanding of the criminal justice system and also changes in the police's attitude towards young offenders. Also an investigation into changes in the awareness and attitudes of the young people regarding the consequences of offending behaviour .

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

group work, advice and support, alternatives to drug use, community work, conference, education (skills, abilities, etc.), information, newsletter, teaching packages, teaching/training, theme days/weeks, workshops

Results

Process evaluation

Results

The evaluation concluded that the inter-agency approach was a key element in

the effectiveness of the Copping On Programme and that the programme offered a new way of working for the agencies involved. The report recommended that the inter-agency dimension should be developed at a local and regional level and expanded to include agencies in the health and training sectors.

References

Conferences; Seminars; Workshops; brochures; newsletters

Contact

Responsible organisation	City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee
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Partner organisation(s)	Garda National Juvenile Office Department of Education and Science Youthreach
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Additional information

Number of staff involved	
Status/profession of staff involved	Trainers; Clerks
Type of evaluator	External evaluator
Name of external institution(s)	Children's Research Centre, Trinity College
Full reference to evaluation report	

Budget

Annual budget	Over 100 000 to 500 000
Sources of funding	Non-governmental organisation, National government
Percentage from each source	Non-governmental organisation=22%, National government=78%

Additional remarks

The underlying ethos of the training programme is that each young person and group is unique and that young people learn most effectively through their own discovery. The course content focuses on similar topics as the training for the professionals, including communications, relationships, drugs and alcohol, moral education and understanding the criminal justice system. At the end of the programme individuals are invited to provide feedback through specially designed feedback sheets. Final target group 'at risk' young people, it is not known how many have been reached by the programme.