

Achieving Through Activity

*The impacts of applying a recreational approach to
youth work practice with regard to addiction
treatment: A Case Study*



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I would like to take this opportunity to thank my family and friends who have supported me and been patient during this process. A special thanks to my supervisor Mr. Pat Leahy for his guidance and support. To all at the DAYS project, Andrew and the young people, especially those who agreed to participate in interviews for this study.

This research project is a case study of the Douglas Area Youth Services (DAYS) project. The co-ordinator and sole project worker in the DAYS project is Andrew Fiddow. This is a Drugs Task Force Project which is managed by Foróige. Please note that any names of young people given in this research are fictional in order to keep the identity of the young people confidential.

Abstract

This study looks at how organised recreational activities can contribute to making the lives of vulnerable young people who have a background of drug and alcohol use more meaningful. Recreational activities are not typically viewed as a strategy to addiction treatment. Water sports, in this case powerboating and sailing take young people out of their comfort zone and challenge them to test their limits and boundaries. For a young person whose life is in turmoil recreational activities can be used as an alternative treatment therapy. By implementing a powerboating and sailing programme along with continued support a change can appear evident in the lives of young people. Emphasis on recovery rather than addiction has been a major influence on the success of this course. Using recreational activities to support young people gives them the opportunity to have an outlet in which they can achieve.

List of Acronyms

DAYS – Douglas Area Youth Service

NYCI – National Youth Council of Ireland

DTF – Drugs Task Force

LDTF – Local Drugs Task Force

CDTF – Cork Drugs Task Force

RDTF – Regional Drugs Task Force

ISA – Irish Sailing Authority

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Introduction

This research project will use the Douglas Area Youth Services (DAYS) project in Cork as a case study in order to determine if achievement can occur through activities. This project will be illustrated more specifically in chapter 3. The purpose of this study is to investigate the impacts of applying a recreational approach to youth work practice with regard to addiction treatment in this project.

Recreational activities may not typically be viewed as a strategy to assist young people in their recovery from drugs and alcohol which makes this piece of research individual. The purpose of the boating programme is to apply a recreational approach to treatment and recovery rather than the typical psychotherapy or residential approach. By taking the young people out of their comfort zone they are challenged in ways which may have never occurred previously. On top of this personal growth and skills development play a primary role in this recreational activity.

There is currently research in the field of sports as a therapy and a significant amount of research on the benefits of sports to mental health. However as this research is specific to boating and the effects it has on young people who suffer from substance abuse it is exploring the benefits of sports and organised youth activities from a very different perspective. This is not to say that the research has occurred in a complete vacuum, however, it is quite specific.

Aims

The aim of this research is to investigate the effects of participation in organised activities on service users in a targeted drugs and alcohol youth project.

To determine if young people develop both personally and skills based as a result of their participation in recreational activities.

To establish if the young people recognise the outcomes of their engagement in a certified course.

Objectives

Literature on young people's development and participation will be reviewed in order to provide a context for this research in relation to the field of study to which it exists.

Data will be collected from young people who participated in the boating course provided by the DAYS project by means of one to one semi-structured interviews.

The research was involved in the boating course so elements of ethnographic research will be evident.

Data will be formulated through an in-depth interview with Andrew, the DAYS project co-ordinator and primary facilitator of the programme.

The data collected from these mixed methods will be explored and discussed by the researcher to determine the relevance of running organised activity programmes in youth projects.

Chapter Overview

The literature review will look at the running of organised activities in youth projects, the effects participation in activities has on young people, skills development, drugs and alcohol use and the impact of a young person's decision to overcome their issues with drugs and/or alcohol. Finally a review on the effects relationships have on young people, both relationships prior to participation and the development of relationships as a result of participation in structured activity programmes.

In the methodology chapter an analysis of the structure of the research design will be explored. This will explore the mixed methods approach which has been applied in order to obtain the findings of this study. An outline of each method which was used will be rationalised and explained. The findings, discussion and analysis of the data collected will be found in one chapter as the research feels that this was the most appropriate way to present the findings to the reader. In this chapter quotes from interviews will be used in order to allow the reader a comprehensive understanding of the feelings of the young people and Andrew in relation to the boating course. Within there will also be associations made to theory and literature which support the findings. This will provide a broad explanation of the relevance of this research to the field of youth work practice. Practice literature will be particularly used for this to be achieved while policies will be included to highlight its significance in the field.

Theoretical Focus and Policy Review

When carrying out a research project through applied social studies it would be impossible to ignore theory and policy. Both theory and policy will be referred to throughout this study however it is important to note that they will not be of primacy as this

study is based predominantly on practice. That is not to say that the researcher has overlooked theory and policy as they are crucial elements of the context of any practice and for this reason are the backdrop to which practice occurs. Youth work is structured upon the policies for children and young people and could not take place successfully in our society without such policies as the Youth Work Act 2001 especially. As this case study takes place in a drugs and alcohol project the National Drugs Strategies play an important role also. When it comes to theory there are unanimous theorists who are relevant to our work with young people, especially when it comes to personal growth and skills development.

Conclusion

This study will determine why young people engage in structured youth activities and will also examine the effects of this participation on their lives. As this research is based within the context of a drugs and alcohol project a significant portion of research will explore substance abuse and the road to recovery. The next section will provide the reader with a review of the relevant literature which exists in the broad context of young people and sports development. Along with this, running organised activities in youth projects will be discussed, and a synopsis of the effects of drugs will also be examined. The study will then focus specifically on the methods of research and the case study at hand and will present the data and findings which were collected from the interviews with a selection of those who were involved in this specific recreational activity.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter will explore the literature available on the subject matter at hand. It will discuss themes which will be further developed and examined in more detail with specific reference to this study in the findings and discussion chapter. There will be evidence of other studies in similar fields and also specific reference will be highlighted with regard to where there appears to be a lack of research in the area. This chapter will introduce the topics of running organised activities in youth projects, the effects participation in these organised activities can have on the young people, the issue of drug and alcohol use by young people and how involvement in structured recreational programmes can affect drug and alcohol use. The reasons why young people participate in activities and programmes and the development of relationships will conclude the review of literature in this section of our study.

Organised Youth Activities

Activity programmes are used by youth workers for many different reasons. Regardless of the specific reasons a youth worker may have for using activities in their practice one thing is certain as Harte (2010) outlines “activities are tools” (p.90). In this sense the word ‘tool’ suggests that we would use activities in our work with young people as a method which coincides with our work. Running activities may not be our primary means of work with young people however when used they can have great effects. This is reinforced by Sandford et al. (2004) when they state that involvement in activities “has the potential to offer young people a range of physical, psychological and social benefits”

(p.251). Activities not only have these effects on young people but for youth workers they can be used as a platform which allows for “the educational processes of youth work to take place” (Harte, 2010, p.90). Aside from practical and social skills, it can be through activities that youth workers can provide the space for young people to have the “time and opportunity to talk and discuss” (Harte, 2010, p.91). These are invaluable experiences as for a young person it can be difficult to engage with a youth worker in a formal youth work setting, however, during activities a more natural environment is created and this can influence a young person to engage. As outlined by the National Youth Federation (2003) “with appropriate advice and guidance young people can develop the knowledge, skills and experience to make an important contribution to family and community life” (p.11).

Activities also play other indirect roles in a young person’s life as highlighted by Zarrett et al. in Holt (2008) “the more time an adolescent spends in one activity, the less time s/he has to devote to other types of activities” (p.10). This is significant for projects which work with young people who engage in risky behaviour e.g. using alcohol and drugs. For a youth worker, organising activities within a project it is important to take note of a point highlighted by Côte et al. in Holt (2008) in which they explore Mahoney and Stattin’s (2000) finding that it is “the structure and context of the activities rather than the activity itself that determined whether the outcomes were positive or negative in terms of adolescence development” (p.38). This outlines the importance of organising any activities which may be run within a youth project strategically and cohesively so that they can run smoothly and efficiently to allow the young people to gain the highest benefit from participating in the activity. This argument is re-enforced by Wenger in Illeris (2009) when he discusses that “activity theories focus on the structure of activities as historically constituted entities. Their pedagogical focus is on bridging the gap between the historical state of an activity and the developmental stage of a person with respect to that activity” (p.217). This idea proposes that a young person’s developmental stage should also be considered when participating in an activity. The purpose of taking this life stage into consideration is to allow us to acknowledge the way in which an activity effects a young person’s development and growth.

According to Edginton and Randall (2005) “one of the major challenges facing youth workers today is the development of programmes and services that are meaningful and relevant and that promote in young people a sense of responsibility for their learning and personal growth” (p.19). This statement highlights the significance of a lack of suitable activities in youth projects which allow for skills development and learning for young people. The notion that there is such a gap in the sector for beneficial programmes is a worry and it is important as youth workers we work towards developing and implementing activity based programmes for the young people we work with in order to provide them with better experiences of youth projects and of their young lives.

As youth workers it is imperative that we apply the components of the Youth Work Act 2001 to our practice. The act states that “youth work means a planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young persons through voluntary participation” (Government of Ireland, 2001, p.7). Bartko and Eccles (2003) highlight that there is substance in the running of organised regulated programmes rather than un-defined activities in youth projects, “participation in structured, prosocial activities was associated with positive functioning for these youths while the poorest functioning was noted for adolescents who engaged in few constructive activities” (p.238). This is relevant to this particular study as it is a certified course which according to the Youth Work Act 2001 falls under the definition of what youth work is, and conversely for Bartko and Eccles it allows young people to gain additional benefits that they would if it was merely a one off boating trip. For many young people their time is spent on unstructured activities which do not directly have effects on their personal growth and their transitional development. This is outlined by Mahoney and Stattin (2000) who note that “a variety of youth leisure activities are relatively spontaneous, take place without formal rules or direction from adult leaders, and feature few goals related to skill development” (p.115). This statement stresses the important of participation in planned and co-ordinated activities on positive youth development.

As stated by McLaughlin “young people with nothing to do during out-of-school hours miss valuable chances for growth and development” (p.2). In this the impacts of what is also referred to as ‘leisure time’ can be used negatively by young people who may feel as though they have nothing else to do with their time other than spend it unconstructively. This can have a direct effect on their impact as active citizens as “society loses out when youth fall through the cracks in institutions that could prepare them for a productive future” (p.2). It is in such cases according to McLaughlin that community projects need to take on the role of providing facilities for young people to allow them to grow and develop constructively and for the good of our society. In turn as outlined by Sutton (2007) by running activities for vulnerable young people we providing “a more socially just world” (p.618) for them.

Effects of Participation

There is no possible way we could identify with all the effects both positive and negative which participation has on young people who engage. This section will however focus on the benefits participation has on young people in the context of a youth project with specific focus on the following: skills acquirement, learning development and personal and social development. The NYCI (200) identify the role of youth work in “creating in young people a sense of belonging, a sense of achievement and the fostering of positive self-esteem and empowerment” (p.12). These are just some of the effects participation has on young people. As Waller and Rumball (2004) outline specific interventions can be used when working with young people as “a problem-solving approach and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, involving social skills training and coping skills training” (p.65). While Holt and Sehn in Holt (2008) look at young people’s participation from a developmental systems approach in which they discuss development “as a process of systematic and successive change arising from dynamic relations between the developing person and the contexts s/he engages (Lerner et al. 2005a)” (p.26). This overlaps with systems theory which will be examined when we look at relationships at a later stage. However it is important to note in

this section also that the way in which a young person interacts with their environment and the social settings they find themselves in is very relevant to how they interact with activities and in turn the effects this participation has on the development of young people. As Edginton and Randall (2005) outline the use of “positive factors and experiences in order to benefit young people in a variety of ways, by improving their physical, emotional, social, cognitive and vocational competence” (p.21).

As mentioned by Sutton (2007) “participation as a combination or empowering social processes that help individuals and communities acquire the potential to minimize social exclusion and maximise self-determination” (p.617). This point highlights the significance of recreational activities being an aspect within a process of development for young people. It is important for young people to recognise that “by participating in their own development, young people acquire a variety of competencies that prepare them for transitioning into adult life, while also strengthening their interpersonal relationships and sense of self” (Sutton, 2007, p.629).

While theoretically we may assume that young people experience these effects as a result of their participation in activity programmes we cannot merely assume. To determine whether or not participants are actually affected as a direct result of their participation it is important that as youth workers we use the necessary tools to identify how the young people feel following their involvement. One of the most important tools we can use is programme evaluation, as outlined by Krenichyn et al. (2007) “the goals of the evaluation are to measure whether you benefit from the program and to establish how the program can be replicated in other locations” (p.595). Thus, we cannot merely assume that the young people who participate in programmes we run recognise the benefits; we must develop ways to determine that they actually experience these positive outcomes.

Skills Development

Murphy (1995) highlights the benefits of sports activities on skills development, “many skills they have acquired to excel in sport are transferable to other life areas” (p.28). This is re-enforced by Sandford et al. (2004) who state that “the real benefits for young people, therefore, lie in the accumulation of skills that will provide them with the social currency in a much wider range of situations” (p.260). These academic accounts allow us to identify with the positive effects of skills acquirement which young people gain from their participation in sports activities. As Sandford et al. (2004) continue to discuss it is this acquirement of such life skills which can be applied to such a variety of life situations which “ultimately allow young people to function more acceptable and hence successfully, within society” (p.261). This can be linked to citizenship and young people’s participation in a different sense than is of primacy in this study, that is, participation in society.

When we mention life skills what we mean are “those skills that enable individuals to succeed in the different environments in which they live” (Côte et al. in Holt, 2008, p.72). That is to say they are skills which can transfer through different aspects of life. For Côte et al. “the ability to transfer skills learned in sports to other domains is perhaps the most crucial step in achieving the maximum outcome from participation in sports” (p.72). The capability to apply skills learned in one aspect of one’s life to another phase of their lives is a characteristic which highlights transferable skills and the promise of life-long learning.

Corresponding to this opinion is Alheit in Illeris (2009) who signifies that “lifelong learning relates to all meaningful learning activities” (p.117). Wenger (in Illeris, 2009) however notes that “situations that bring learning into focus are not necessarily those in which we learn most, or most deeply” (p.214). That is to say that learning is not always specifically about the hard skills which we develop from learning a new skill, we learn much more than that when we participate in sporting activities. This is where social learning theories come to the fore as the “place emphasis on interpersonal relations involving

imitation and modelling, and thus focus on the study of cognitive processes by which observation can become a source of learning” (p.217). While activity theories are more specifically related to “the structure of activities as historically constituted entities” (Wenger in Illeris, 2009, p.217).

Another learning theory which cannot be overlooked in this discussion is transitional learning which according to Weldemeersch and Stroobants in Illeris (2009) “emerges when individuals are faced with unpredictable changes in the dynamics between their life course and the transforming context, and when they are confronted with the need to (learn to) anticipate, handle and reorganise these changing conditions” (p.222). This refers to personal development and how a young person engages with their environment and in turn chooses, whether consciously or unconsciously, the development that takes place in a specific context.

Drug Use

Henderson et al. (2007) stress that a lack of research has been compiled on drugs and the effect it has on the lives of young people with a specific focus on the development from adolescent to adulthood. “Very few studies have focused on the complex process shaping the changing place and social meaning of drugs in young lives and into young adulthood” (p.75). Dworkin et al. (2003) also makes reference to the gap in research in relation to “the developmental processes that occur during adolescents’ participation in extracurricular and community based-activities” (p.17). While this study does not primarily examine the young people’s developmental processes at this life stage it is significant to mention it here. It could be assumed that this may be a phenomena which is considerably too complex to study as it would be very problematic to determine.

It is of relevance to highlight at this stage that drugs and alcohol come under the same framework with regards our work with young people. This relationship is highlighted by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (2009) as they suggest for the “inclusion of alcohol into a National Substance Misuse Strategy” (p.14).

According to Mahoney and Stattin (2000) “other studies investigating drug use and delinquency have found little evidence for positive benefits related to youth activity involvement” (p.114). One must question the research which is being referred to in this case, has research been done on target groups who use drugs and are involved in what is referred to in this statement as ‘delinquency’. Edington and Randall (2005) highlight the significance of running activities as a method of prevention in the sense that they will control “youth behavior by preventing young people from participating in activities known to be harmful” (p.21). Do both Mahoney and Stattin and Edington and Randall mean drug and alcohol use as delinquent and harmful activities?

Henderson et al. (2007) mention the significance of drugs on young people as they transition through life. This is with particular reference to how drugs have previously shaped the lives of these young people and how “their instrumental approach to constructing their future” (p.77). It is for these reasons that this research aims to highlight the significance participation in sports activities run through a youth project has on the lives of young people who have struggled with drug and/or alcohol issues and how their lives can be affected for the better as a result of such participation. By providing these young people with alternative ways to spend their time we hope that we are encouraging a movement away from drug and alcohol use.

One of the most momentous aspects of overcoming drug/alcohol use is that “the person must make the choice to want to stop” (Howatt, 2003, p.12). This is relevant to participation in activities as the first step for the young person is to make the decision that

they want to improve their lives by moving away from drugs and/or alcohol and then follow it through with deciding what aspects of society they wish to become involved in having made this major life decision. The aim to change or re-adjust attitudes and behaviours of the young people we work with in drugs and alcohol projects is the primary goal when we organise activities and programmes for them to participate in. DiClemente (1999) outlines the historical conduct of the young people in such projects, "it is well established that maintenance of behavior change is problematic for all the addictive behaviors" (p.209). This is where introducing new activities comes to the fore, these new activities now take up more time in the lives of these young people which means that they are removed "from the types of settings and associates that had constituted one's practical contexts of drug use" (Weinberg, 1997, p.159). By moving away from the social situations which formerly acted as triggers for drug and/or alcohol use these young people are getting the opportunity to create new social meanings and identities for themselves.

McIntosh and McKeaganey (2002) highlight the significance of "a desire for a new identity and a different style of life" (p.57) for a person who has made a decision to stop using drugs. This statement reflects rationale for why a young person might engage in activities, as they move away from their life of drug and/or alcohol use and try to move onto something better in their lives. By engaging in activities a young person is able to "replace his or her former life with a new set of non-drug related activities and relationships" (McIntosh and McKeaganey, 2002, p.111). When a person gives up drugs and/or alcohol there can become a vacuum in their lives where drugs and/or alcohol once were, for this reason it is important for them "to keep themselves as fully occupied as possible" (p.111). Therefore participation in activities is a way of "infusing their life with a sense of purpose...giving it meaning" (p.112). It is also significant to take note that according to Government bodies "the level of motivation of clients is critical to the degree of likelihood of achieving a successful outcome" (Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, 2009, p.50).

For many young people, especially those who are vulnerable as a result of their background with drug/alcohol use there is a pre-conceived perception that they will continue to fall back into their addiction. However, we must recognise that for many of these young people there comes a point in their lives when they want to make a change in their lives. As stated by DiClemente (1999) “psychologists do not believe that human behaviors occur randomly” (p.209). It is for this reason that part of this research will explore the reasons why young people say they participate in activities as “most human behaviors are considered motivated” (DiClemente, 1999, p.209). Our exploration aims to determine what the rationale behind this motivation for participation and engagement is and if it occurs as a process.

Relationships

Although activities can be participated in on an individual basis this section will focus on activities in group settings and the effect this can have. While this section will focus primarily on personal relationships it is important to note that the relationship between the young people and their environment is also prevalent in this discussion. This aspect of relationships is highlighted by Holt and Sehn in Holt (2008) “the bases for systemic change lie in relations that exist between multiple levels of human interactions and functioning” (p.26). This systems theory approach allows us to identify that there are many factors which influence an individual and it is these factors working together which when they act as one considerable system have an effect on the individual. “The creation of productive relations between young people and various aspects of their society can encourage positive and healthy development change” (Holt and Sehn, in Holt, 2008, p.27). Following on from this is ecological systems theory which highlights the significance of “person-context interactions (Bronfenbrenner 1995)” (Côte et al. in Holt, 2008, p.37). This stresses the relevance of the impact of developments between young people and their environment and/or other young people and individuals has on them.

Peer Relationships

Informal learning can occur as the young people in a group learn from each other during activities and spending time together, “peers teach each other” (McLaughlin, 2000, p.12). This concept suggests that there are ways in which individuals and groups learn from just being in a group or from working in close proximity to others. McLaughlin (2000) states that “peers are particularly powerful teachers” (p.12) this statement highlights the importance of running group activities within a project. It is also relevant for young people to develop “a sense of belonging with particular peer groups and recognition from others” (Bartko and Eccles, 2003, p.233). In developing peer relationships through progressive interactions directly related to positive participation in a programme which is a movement away from the social relations these young people have previous experience of it allows them to create new social settings which they may have little or no experience of. This is supported by Boys et al. (2001) “drugs are used to enhance social interactions” (p.467) this finding from their research allows us to acknowledge that for many young people who use drugs they do so in order to make their interactions with others more enjoyable. However, by engaging in group activities we are allowing them to have the chance to participate in social settings without using drugs and/or alcohol. This is significant as by being a part of activities in this way the hope is that they will recognise that they can be involved with their peers in social settings without the use of drugs and/or alcohol.

While some authors point out the significance of peer relationships, Subramaniam and Moncloa (2010) note in their research that “less has been said about the importance of peer relationships” (p.29). This is interesting as in this research each participant made reference to their peers however they did state that their peers did not directly effect their participation. As stated by Johansen et al. (2013) it is important that while in recovery individuals receive “help from supportive people” (p.1). in this case study all of the young people are recovering from their historical use of drugs and/or alcohol. In this sense they are all working with their own situations individually, that is not to say that they do not support each other. As Johansen et al. stress, these young people require support from

others who are understanding, who else could be more understanding than their peers who are also going through a similar process of change and development?

Relationship between Youth Worker and Young People

There appears to be a dramatic importance of the effect that participation in activities has on the development and continued relationship between a young person and a youth worker. As mentioned earlier activities provide a space outside of the direct provision of a youth project which in turn acts as a more natural setting for the relationship to develop. When working with young people “the relationship of trust between the youth workers and young people is fundamental to the service” (National Youth Federation, 2004, p.21). Participation in activities outside the normal youth work setting allow the young person to engage with the youth worker in a different way than they would on a day to day or a weekly basis within the project.

Edginton and Randall (2005) stress the relevance of activities and programmes on relationships for young people and workers alike. Through running such programmes a youth worker is able to create an environment “where young people and adults can establish supportive relationships, exchange views and beliefs in dialogue, and support each other’s personal transformation” (p.22). They follow by stating that “youth workers do not serve as role models, but rather as people to whom youths can reveal themselves as part of the process of continuous personal change” (p.22). this is a diverse way to view the trusting relationship which can develop in such social interactions. “Each interaction between youths and youth workers has the opportunity to affect the life of a young person in a deep and meaningful way” (p.24). It is of importance that youth workers are aware of the significance of their role and that they act in a way which is desirable to the young people but also to society.

According to McLaughlin (2000) the majority of young people involved in his research “talk about the sense of unconditional support they find in the organization and how this sense of belonging fostered the trust and confidence they needed to accept new challenges” (p.15). It is in this class of relationship in which young people feel most comfortable and this feeling in turn allows young people to develop securely and contentedly. As stated by Subramaniam and Moncloa (2010) “adults play more than one role, switching from mentor, to friend, to advisor” (p.28). This highlights the significance of having a youth worker facilitating the activity who is adaptable and willing to play a different role depending on the young person they are dealing with and the situation they may find themselves in at a particular time.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided the reader with an in-depth knowledge of the relevant literature which has been published in relation to the field of study of this particular study. There is no doubt that youth organisations need to explore the prospect of organising and running structured activities for the young people they work with in order to engage them more constructively in their own lives and indeed in society as a whole. The issue of unconstructive behaviour such as drug and alcohol use and abuse could not be left out of this discussion. It appears in theory at least that when young people engage in physical activities and programmes they develop personally and mentally. While this chapter has looked at this theme theoretical, the findings and discussion chapter will provide examples of this from a practice point of view both from a practitioner and young people also.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

Introduction

As this research is case study based it has looked specifically at the reasons why service users in the DAYS project choose to participate in the boating programme which has become a fundamental element of their recovery from drug/alcohol issues for these young people and the effects this engagement has had on them. In order to gain an insight into this research a qualitative approach has been applied by the researcher. This approach was selected as this particular piece of research aimed to focus on individuals within this specific group of young people and to gain individual insights into their experience rather than to gain generalised data. As Creswell (2014) highlights “qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning of individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p.4). this inductive approach to the phenomena allows for data to be gathered prior to developing an analytical theoretical framework.

Case Study

A case study occurs within specific boundaries, that is, as Creswell (1998) states “situating the case within its setting” (p.61). While case studies can examine a number of cases for comparison some can, as this specific case study has, looked at one specific case “in considerable depth” (Gomm et al., 2000, p.3). The rationale for using a case study can be for so many reasons as outlined by Yin (2003) which include “a unique case...may be so rare that any single case is worth documenting and analysing” (p.40-41). This is certainly true in the case of the Douglas Area Youth Service (DAYS) project. While most youth projects have elements of activities to engage young people it appears to be rare that many

projects would provide something as unique as powerboating and sailing, not to mention it being a certified course accredited by the Irish Sailing Association (ISA).

Yin (2003) also points out that case studies can occur “when an investigator has an opportunity to observe and analyse a phenomenon previously inaccessible to scientific investigation” (p.42). The circumstance that the researcher in this case has a previously established relationship with the DAYS project as a result of a three month student placement and continued engagement on a voluntary basis. This will be further explored and will highlight the suitable advantage the researcher possessed when it came to accessing such a diverse case study.

The DAYS Project

The DAYS project was established in conjunction with the Cork Local Drugs Task Force (CLDTF) which was formed to develop a strategic, locally based response to the drug problem in Cork. The DAYS project is a community youth service, meaning it works primarily with young people aged 16-30. By its nature a community service does not work with a young person in isolation, it works with other influencing links in order to provide each young person with the best possible support and care plan. This includes working directly with other services and organisations.

Local and Regional Drugs Task Forces (LDTF and RDTF) were implemented in the “late 1990s following the Ministerial Task Force on Measures to Reduce the Demand for Drugs reports in 1996 and 1997” (Leahy, 2011, p.17). According to Ruddle et al. (2001) “the Ministerial Task Force...concluded that there was a need for more effective co-ordination between the statutory sector and the community/voluntary sector in the delivery of local

drugs programmes” (p.11). The rationale behind the workings of these LDTFs was to target individual communities where drugs were deemed to be an issue. The NDTF funds the CLDTF who then allocate funding to the LDTF projects in Cork, including the DAYS project. Foróige is the organisation responsible for managing the DAYS project as it is the project promoter. A management advisory committee which includes members of local residents, statutory and voluntary agencies including school representatives, a member of the Gardaí and youth club volunteers, and this researcher at one point monitor the day to day running of the DAYS project. While Foróige is the primary administrator and manager who are responsible for employing project workers, while funding for the project comes from the DTF.

When the DAYS project was originally established its purpose was education and intervention for young people between the ages 11-17. The key objectives were to reduce the numbers of young people turning to drugs in the first place by providing comprehensive education and prevention programmes and to provide appropriate treatment and aftercare for those who have become dependent of drugs and alcohol. In more recent years however the nature of the project has altered slightly. This is primarily due to the existing adolescence services provided by the Matt Talbot services and the emergence of increased number of class A referrals and crisis intervention. It is now aimed more specifically at intervention for young adults rather than older teenagers. The project no longer focuses as much on the education and prevention side of drugs use as its primary aim is to support those who have become dependent and drugs and alcohol. By running activity based programmes young people who have issues with drugs and alcohol are given alternative ways to spend their leisure time. A significant emphasis is placed on lifestyle and programmes are run in group form and also individually in order to cater for each individual’s needs.

The clients of the DAYS project are of more recent years an older age group of young people in comparison t when the project was first founded. The age range of service users

in the project are now mainly 17-35. This has been a natural progression over time as these are the young people who are most in need of the services provided by the project. The number of males is larger than females engaging with the project also.

Powerboating and Sailing

The DAYS project worker has a particular personal interest in boating and is a certified Irish Sailing Association (ISA) powerboat instructor. As a result of this interest and qualification a certified course has been provided to the young people in the project in order to give them an opportunity to do something out of their comfort zone. This programme is certified by the ISA and has been completed by a number of young people who engage in the project. This research aims to examine the results participation in this activity has on the lives of the service users. Does involvement in activities run by projects have a direct and/or indirect effect on the lives of the young people? Are there specific reasons why these young people participate in such activities?

Researcher's relationship with participants

The researcher has a well-established professional working relationship within the DAYS project following a three month student placement in 2014 which was followed by further work with the project with particular involvement on the powerboating and sailing course. This has been advantageous for the research of this project as the young people and the researcher have established relationships which have grown and developed over more than a twelve month period prior to data collection. Having a prior relationship with the young people is one element but the professional relationship between the researcher and the project co-ordinator has proved to be invaluable during this research. The trust

which has been built upon since the beginning of my student placement has allowed for the project worker to allow me access as a researcher to the project and the powerboating and sailing programme.

In youth work building relationships is a key factor and as a researcher gathering data from young people is no different. "Identifying and establishing trust with key informants is the most important factor" (Gillham, 2008, p.425). Working with any group of young people involves interpersonal skills, i.e. generating conversation, body language, active listening etc. When it comes to a marginalised group this becomes even more predominant, especially for a researcher as trust becomes an issue. As the method of gathering data for this research project was through semi-structured interviews, conversation was of vital primacy. "Qualitative interviews are intended to encourage people to speak. They are guided conversations..." (Arksey and Knight, 1999, p. 98). Building trust and gaining a rapport with vulnerable young people can be challenging as the young people may not want to engage with someone they do not know. For a researcher this can be difficult as it may mean that engaging subjects for research and data collection may be difficult. A researcher wants to gain the best possible insight and generate a conversation with interviewees which will provide genuine data for analysis. While a researcher may have difficulties engaging participants in conversation during an interview, this researcher has major benefits when it comes to this particular group of young people as they are previously familiar with me. The importance of this familiarity is outlined by Arksey and Knight (1999) as they highlight that "having some prior understanding with regard to individual interviewees and their own set of circumstances, is also important" (p.104). There is no doubt that this was of benefit while conducting interviews.

Elements of Ethnographic Research

As Gillham (2008) states ethnographic research is “by its very nature not pre-determined even as to broad direction” (p.44). This research project was no different. Observational methods were applied as a method of data collection as a result of the researcher being involved in the powerboating and sailing programme as a student on placement but also as a participant who received a certificate also. For ethical reasons, as the participants were not aware they were under investigation as subjects in a research project during the programme no direct data has come from this experience. That said however, observations as to growth and personal development which have been noted by the researcher both in individual participants and as a group of young people during their participation in the powerboating and sailing programme have been drawn upon.

Semi-structured Interviews

Arksey and Knight (1999) stress that although interviews may appear to be basic conversational approaches to gathering data, they are nonetheless “approaches that demand method more than common sense” (p.1). This point highlights the need for a researcher to organise their interviews in some way, even if it is in a natural sense it must follow a method. For the purpose of this research project semi-structured interviews were used as the researcher wanted the information to be collected from the subjects in a natural way. Semi-structured interviews aided this approach as they were “*far less formal*” (Arksey and Knight, 1999, p.7) which suited the vulnerable participants appropriately. As mentioned earlier the researcher has previously established relationships with the service users in the DAYS project, for this reason it was easier for the participants to have a less formal conversation about their experiences with the researcher. The aim of this research was to gain an insight into the way in which participation in the powerboating and sailing programme has impacted on the lives of these young people, in order to gain this

information a conversation with the participants in the programme generated more data. The use of semi-structured interviews allows the interviewer to “follow up ideas, probe responses and ask for clarification or further elaboration” (Arksey and Knight, 1999, p.7). This allowed for more natural responses and to give a better understanding of each participant’s individual responses.

Visual methods / Photo-elicitation

While semi-structured interviews were the main method of generating data for this research, an alternative method was used to compliment the interviews. This was the use of “photographs to prompt memories or comments from informants in the course of an interview” (Banks, 2001, p.79). This method is known as photo-elicitation, it “involves using photographs to invoke comments, memory and discussion in the course of a semi-structured interview” (Banks, 2001, p.87). Applying this method within interviews was this researcher’s primary method for data collection. During the course of the powerboating and sailing courses photographs were taken by the project co-ordinator and these photographs were used to engage the subjects in conversations while being interviewed. Banks describes this method as a “social act” (p.115) as it provides a focus for the conversation while preventing any awkwardness that may occur for these vulnerable young people if they were to be formally interviewed. Along with this is the impact that a photograph of themselves on the water had on their memory and it allowed the young people to speak about what the photograph may represent for them. This is supported by Gillham (2008) when he states that a photograph “represents something” which tends to be “a matter of subjective interpretation and that differs from person to person” (p.66). For the purpose of this research, photo-elicitation was used to re-evoked the memory of taking part on the course and also gave the participants the opportunity to discuss what the photographs represent for them.

Stanczak (2007) highlights the role of using photographs in gathering data as it is “based on assumptions about the role and utility of photographs in prompting reflections that words alone cannot” (p.171). This re-enforces the use of this method by this researcher, as previous knowledge of the interviewees allows the researcher to identify that they would respond more substantially to the photographs of themselves participating in the course than they may to rigid questions in a structured interview. An aspect of photo-elicitation which was not formally addressed by the researcher prior to the interviews was the observations which would be taken when the subjects saw the photographs.

This method allowed for a more natural flow to the interview as it became more conversational and this in turn produced a greater depth of information from the participants. Collier and Collier (1986) re-enforce this as they highlight that “normally, interviews can become stilted when probing for explicit information, but the photographs invited open expression while maintaining concrete and explicit reference points” (p.105). Using photographs to encourage conversation with participants allowed the researcher to “reposition the questions” (Pope, 2010, p.205) to make them more applicable to each individual participant and their specific experiences. Tinkler (2013) re-irritates this as she states that the use of photographs within interviews allowed for “interviewees to engage in a more dynamic process of remembering” (p.186). As suggested earlier, this allowed for deeper exploration and examination into the effects that participation in the programme has had on the lives of these young people.

Triangulation

Triangulation refers to the use of multiple methods and/or sources when deciding upon research methods to use in order to achieve the best possible outcome of data to promote the research question at hand. It is the process of designing “a study that

combines different techniques to explore one set of research questions” (Webb et al., 1996, in Arksey and Knight, 1999, p.21). This research project has applied triangulation through the use of mixed methods, that is, the use of, a case study, semi-structured interviews and photo-elicitation. The application of multiple methods by this researcher has allowed for more specific information to be attained which has ultimately provided an in-depth exploration and examination into the effects of participation in a structured programme within a youth work setting on the lives of the young people. Collier and Collier (1986) suggest that merely using photo-elicitation as a research method sanctions a “triangular relationship in which all questions were directed at the photographic content, not at the informants” (p.106). This researcher decided to apply more forms of triangulation in order to allow for a broader sense of the young people involved in the programme and their individual lives. Use of phot-elicitation within semi-structured interviews allowed for this to occur. This study “blend(ed) and intergrate(d) the different methods” and did not aim “simply to design a study that comprises distinct, mutually exclusive approaches” (Arksey and Knight, 1999, p.21).

While triangulation was clearly used in the multiple methods approach used by this researcher to generate data, triangulation is also evident in the sample who were interviewed. A variety of views were explored as the participants in the study are from different perspectives on the research topic at hand. A number of young people were interviewed in order to gain an understanding of their learning and development through the programme. The co-ordinator of the project who is also the ISA approved instructor was interviewed. Ensuring that different perspectives were obtained gives this research a more substantial examination of the effects and uses of running activities within youth work projects. Generating data from the co-ordinator or the DAYS project, who is also the instructor of the powerboating and sailing course provided a different insight into the programme which could not have been attained from the participants. The co-ordinator was able to provide information on the course in general terms in relation to running it and developing it with the needs of the young people in mind, but he also gave a different

perspective as to how he feels participation in this programme has affected the young people.

Conclusion

In order to achieve the aims of this research project a mixed method approach has been applied in order to gain a comprehensive and triangular understanding. These methods which include, the use of a case study, having a pre-established professional relationship with the subjects and personal experience of the phenomena at hand which incorporates elements of ethnographic research, in conjunction with semi-structured interviews and photo-elicitation has given the researcher the opportunity to carry out a full examination of the study. The findings and discussion will explore the results which were obtained from the application of this mixed methods approach.

Chapter 4 – Findings and Discussion

Introduction

Following interviews with subjects in the DAYS project this chapter will give the reader a more comprehensive understanding of the effects of the boating course on the young people. This discussion will provide an exploration of the data which was generated for this study and combine it with academic references in for an inclusive analysis. It is interesting to look at what the young people who were involved in the boating activity and hear what they had to say about their experience having already explored what academics and youth organisations suggest should be a result of participation in activities.

Personal Development

According to Hurley and Treacy (1993) personal development can be introduced to young people through “recreational provision as a means through which young people can learn to mix socially with others and learn more about themselves” (p.31). This was a consistent finding in the interviews with the young people and co-ordinator of the DAYS project. This said however it is important to note that the young people may not have recognised these developments at the time while they were engaging in the programme. In this particular case study when we discuss personal development we are referring to: skills, confidence, independence, motivation, willingness to try, self-esteem, pride and identity building. These are the primary developments which the young people recognised and associated as a direct result to their participation on this course.

John stated “It’s brought up my confidence”. While Joe recognised his ability to motivate himself now “even though it was raining and sleet this morning I still got up”. Motivation to start the day was something which Joe would have had difficulty with prior to engaging in the activity side of the project as he would have found staying in bed more appealing. For many of the young people who engage in the DAYS project getting up in the mornings is a challenge. Jess agreed with this as she mentioned that while she was involved in the course she found that “it was something to get out of bed for”.

Motivation is an aspect of participation which can be looked in a variety of ways, in this instance we have just heard the impact of participation in an activity can be a motivation to get up in the morning. Why we are motivated is dependent on many factors, according to Blum and McHugh (1971) to have a motive to interact with a social action is “to formulate a situation in such a way as to ascribe a motive to an actor as part of his common sense knowledge, a motive to which he was oriented in producing an action” (p.100). In this we must recognise the influence of symbolic interaction , that is to say, the way in which a young person places value and/or meaning on a specific activity and this will determine their level of participation. It refers to the meaning we place on social interactions and events and how we internalise the effect participation will have on us as individuals. If we decide that the effects are beneficial to us then we will be motivated to engage in the activity and consequently we will want to get out of bed in the mornings. Thus, it is not just about symbolic interactionism, it is also subjective, this is because we look for the individualistic “symbols and meanings” of the activity (Blum and McHugh, 1971, p.101).

When Jess was asked if she would be able to put up a sail she replied “Oh we would...we know what to do sure”. This point highlights that Jess recognises the learning she has achieved and retained even months after the course has ended. She is confident that she has developed these skills and will still be able to apply them.

While the subjects may have only mentioned a number of personal developments, Andrew has recognised many changes in individuals and in the group since the course began. His aim when deciding to run the programme was as he stated “to build self-esteem, motivate young people and give a sense of achievement”. While Andrew can see such changes in his clients he acknowledges that while they may not yet have realised such developments during the course they do now. “It probably is something they realise after the programme more so than they might while it is being run and they are actively participating in it”.

When we discuss learning in the context of sports we must turn our attention to situated learning and the theories which surround it. As examined by Engeström in Illeris (2009) learning theories are based on “processes where a subject...acquires some identifiable knowledge or skills in such a way that a corresponding, relatively lasting change in the behaviour of the subject may be observed” (p.58). This suggests that it is clear to witness a significant change in some form in the young person who participated in the activity. By making skills an essential and natural part of activities it allows the young people who are participating the opportunity to learn more inherently. “Just as important to the development, competence, and confidence of the youth, however, are the life skills woven into their activities” (McLaughlin, 2000, p.12).

Running a programme in a drug and alcohol project

Due to the nature of the DAYS project there are ultimately many factors to be taken into account when working with the service users. It also means that when considering to run a programme with these young people there are many who may be reluctant to taking this group of young people out on the water. The distinctive element of the powerboating and sailing course is that it isn't distinctively run as an obvious element of the young

people's recovery. For this reason it purposely focuses on the activity rather than on the young person's addiction.

Andrew stressed in his interview that "one of the key features of it is that it takes them away from the whole addiction treatment sort of support, it's not exactly the norm of treatment support. For this course the main emphasis is on achievement as opposed to looking at their addiction". While this may be the case that is not to say that each young person's recovery and addiction is forgotten. Each individual who participates in the programme is required to continue their weekly one to one sessions with Andrew and to continue to link in with him with regards their recovery. Along with that it was pre requested of each participant that they would not be using drugs and/or alcohol while engaging in the course, especially when the group were going out on the water.

According to the National Youth Federation (2004) "workers should not condone the use of drugs but equally should not condemn young people who use drugs" (p.9), this is definitely prevalent in the DAYS project. More often than not the reason the young people have for engaging with the project is to improve their lives and to receive support around their drug/alcohol use. When it comes to moving away from drug/alcohol use the young people "must learn to make their own choices in a drug free life" (O'Donohue and Richardson, 1984, p.48). This statement highlights the significance of young people's decision to make a better life for themselves that allows them to have control over their own lives. By engaging in drug free activities these youths are giving themselves the opportunity to do something constructive with their time.

While the young people are aware of the pre-request of the programme they do not link their participation directly with their addictions as it is part of the project and they recognise that the sole purpose of the project is to aid their recovery and the provide them with support around their addictions. It was interesting when asked in their interviews that

both Joe and Jess noted that knowing that they would be involved in boating activities on a particular day would prevent them from using drugs/alcohol either the night prior to the programme and even the night following being out on the water. Joe said the course was “on a Saturday, so if your buddies are going drinking on a Friday night I’d say no cause I knew I had the course the next morning and then if they were going Saturday night I’d be too tired after being out on the water that I would stay in and take it easy”. This appeared to be a very reasonable response to the question for this young person, and one which ultimately could not have been directly planned for Andrew when he was making the decision to introduce the programme to the project. While Jess stated that “if it wasn’t for coming down here, ever though I have had relapse after relapse, I reckon I’d be dead by now”. This was a particularly strong statement for a participant to make; however, it highlights the emphasis she places on the project and the impact it has had on her life and well-being.

According to Blackman (in Furlong, 2009) “the interpretative paradigm focused on the normalisation, which examines the social and cultural practices of youth intoxication from the position of ordinary and everyday life (South 1999)” (p.272). the significance of this argument is that drug use has become ‘normal’ in the lives of young people who use drugs and/or alcohol regularly and it is for this reason that as youth workers we must ensure we work with these young people in such ways that we can provided them with situations where drug and alcohol use is not ‘normal’. As outlined by the National Research Council Institute of Medicine (NRCIM 2002, 2004) activity programmes in community settings should feature “positive social norms...the development of values and morals rather than antisocial and reckless behaviours” (Côte et al. in Holt, 2008, p.40). The realisation of how drugs and alcohol use have become a feature of young people’s daily lives is re-enforced by Coles (1995) “the early involvement of young people in a drug subculture in which drug taking is seen as being just part of, and enhancing, a good night out and is certainly distanced in their minds from the ‘dangerous drug-taking behaviour’ of others” (p.186). These academic statements in conjunction with the responses from the subjects in this study suggest that by running sufficient activities for young people, youth workers are

instilling a movement away from risky actions such as drug and alcohol use and promoting more positive activities.

Outcomes of doing a certified course

While activities based programmes are without a doubt beneficial in any youth project their value cannot always be measured, this course however is unique in this sense as it is a certified Irish Sailing Authority (ISA) accredited course. Participants were involved in two aspects, powerboating and sailing, for which they received a level one certificate in each. While the young people and Andrew both acknowledge the positive benefits as to completing a certified course they are all in agreement that engagement would have occurred had it not been a certified programme.

John acknowledged that getting a certificate “gives a sense of achievement at the end of it. For me, I wouldn’t have finished many things in my life so now this is something I have to show for it”. John stressed that while certification made the course more appealing to him, he saw it merely as “an added bonus”. Jess was of the same opinion, that “it just makes it better”. While for Joe it will now allow him to “prove you are able”. This highlights the power of the course in providing the young people with personal development and skills which allow them to recognise their ability to achieve in life in ways which they never would have had an opportunity to prove without such a programme.

As outlined by McLaughlin (2000) so many young people tend to feel as though “failure is perceived as insurmountable and young people feel paralyzed by their lack of belief in themselves” (p.17). It is feelings such as these that we hope to give the young people we work with the opportunity to move away from and this has been achieved through running effective programmes such as this one and encouraging the young people

to enjoy their experience and develop individually and as a group in the process. For many of these young people they made reference to this being the first time in their lives that they have achieved something. This point is re-enforced by Howatt (2003) who highlights that for many people in recovery “they are often not fully aware or believe that they have the potential to take charge of their life” (p.12). This is relevant here as following their successful participation in the programme and an official exam in for which they received a certificate which acknowledges their achievements these young people are now able to identify that they have the power to make changes in their lives and to accomplish something once they set their minds to it.

While none of the young people acknowledged it they successfully received these certificates based on their academic ability as well as their participation. As Andrew highlighted in his interview “for those who are involved in the boating course I run they get a certificate at the end so they are getting something physical and practical at the end not to mention academic”. While the young people appear to only have focused on the part of the course where they were physically out on the water they appear to have left behind the memory that for four months prior to their first day on the water they spent two hours a week in the project where the sole focus was on the theoretical side of the course. This is not surprising to Andrew however, that they do not place as much emphasis on being in the classroom as he facilitated the course in a way which allowed the group to apply the theory to the practical side of boating in such a natural way that they appear to have almost forgotten that they had learned it, they see some of the content as what appears to come to them naturally. While Andrew acknowledges this he points out that as the group further develop their boating skills they will recognise this learning. “When we start the level two theory they will realise how much they actually learned from the level one”.

McLaughlin (2000) reaffirms this point that “their achievements and triumphs are of many kinds – formal and informal, social and academic” (p.4). This outlines that participation in activities has abundant effects on young people. By participating in

activities facilitated by youth projects and run by youth workers we allow the young people we work with the opportunity to develop themselves in so many ways which are of the essence of their growth and journey through development.

Andrew also mentioned the achievement aspect of the course in this sense also as he spoke about two of the participants who took their own families out on day trips on the water as a direct result of their engagement in the course. These subjects were confident that they had the knowledge and skills to do so, not to mention that they wanted to give their families an opportunity to see how far they have come and to be proud of what they have achieved. "It's been amazing really especially for their families to see considering the levels of addiction they had been at".

Impact of group work

This programme was run as a group activity and this is one aspect of the course which impacted some participants more than others. While the primary focus was on team work and the importance of working with others and being a team player there was also an individual element due to it being a certified course. When working with any group of young people there are ultimately positive and negative impacts on the group and individuals alike. Team work and group development was a primary part of the programme as identified by Andrew. This may not necessarily have been something which all of the participants picked up on but they did all however acknowledge in some form the impact and effect of having others participate on the programme with them. Group identity and an awareness that everyone was there for the same reason, to help with their recovery, was an essential part of the group. Peer support was something which as an observer of the group could not have gone unmissed, the young people would give each other advice and support if one individual was having a bad day or week, whether it was related to their alcohol or

drug use. A sense of belonging thus came to the fore and this was as a result of group identity forming and this in turn was a boost for morale within the project.

As Sutton (2007) highlights there is a “social integration process of participation” (p.638). Participation in recreational activities allows for young people to develop new relationships or to build on existing ones. Sandford et al. (2004) states that “it has been argued that the social relationships experienced during involvement in physical activity programmes are the most significant factor in effecting behavioural change” (p.262).

For Joe two “big groups made it harder to learn, it was easier in smaller groups”. Joe stated that he was content to just be participating himself, the group element of the programme did not directly affect him. While for Jess “it was much better with a group...I made some great friends, I used only see them in the project but it made it easier coming down knowing they would be here”. This comment suggests that for some subjects the programme had a social element which allowed them to engage with their peers in a way they might never have gotten an opportunity to do without this group activity.

While benefits were a common factor for the participants in the group, Andrew, as the primary facilitator and project worker was able to identify other outcomes of group work. He spoke in his interview about the formation of cliques within the group which meant that some individuals become isolated or even how smaller cliques would isolate themselves from the larger group. Intimate relationships was another issue which Andrew referred to and this he acknowledged is always to be expected when working with a mixed group of male and female young people. This is an issue which Andrew admits “is a very difficult thing to control”. It is an aspect which he is pursuing to address prior to commencement of the course this coming year. One of the most unfortunate effects of some members of the group forming new relationships and cliques was that “a few of the

group started to use alcohol and drugs together then and causing grief to others in the group”.

This element of running group activities brings us to the element of structuring and organising programmes in such a way that they are governed by rules. This would mean that we are subjecting the young people we work with to conforming to norms. “Rules make actors’ methodicity and concert possible by transforming what would otherwise be nonsense into intelligible social behavior” (Blum and McHugh, 1971, p.104).

Andrew does not however reject the positive effects of group work activities in a youth project. He spoke about the benefits of using his initiative as a facilitator to ensure that more academically able participants would assist those who may find the course content difficult. This would be done subtly so as not to highlight that someone may be struggling with a particular aspect of the course. “I make sure to pair up someone who might be quite strong with someone who may be finding the theory side of it difficult, or if you utilise your students and volunteers properly and you have them work informally with someone who may be struggling with essentially the academic side of it then in that way you can apply a buddy system approach to it really”.

What makes the activity appealing?

There is no doubt that this boating course is a recreational programme which is exceptionally unique for a youth project. It is something which would be different for many people to participate in but even more so for the service users and young people who engage with the DAYS project. These young people are a vulnerable group who are more often than not ignored and viewed by outsiders in our society. Andrew however does not see them in this way, he sees them as individuals who are trying to make their lives better and will do anything to help them with their recovery. In all four interviews the reaction

was unanimous as to why these young people participate in the activity, it ultimately comes down to fun!

As with any element of youth work we aim to make it an enjoyable experience as well as one in which personal development and skills acquirement can be attained. According to the participants this course has definitely been something different and exciting. Mahoney et al. (2006) highlight “enjoyment and excitement” (p.5) as reasons why young people participate in activities. This study also explores the concept of expectancy-value theory which suggests that individuals participate in activities based on “how important and relevant the activity tasks are to the individual, perceived expectations for success or failure at the activity, and whether participation is considered interesting and enjoyable” (Mahoney et al., 2006, p.6). It is these qualities which made the programme initially appealing and ultimately retained participation throughout and has in turn left the group wanting to continue on achieve their level two certification.

John spoke about the enjoyment he had while doing the course “we had a good laugh, it was great fun doing it. The fun aspect of it really was brilliant”. When asked if the fun element had been missing from the course would he still have participated John stated, “I probably would have but I wouldn’t have been looking forward to it much”. This is interesting, for John, while fun and having ‘craic’ may not have been his primary reason for participation it certainly made the activity much more attractive and interesting to be a part of. Joe made reference to the element of the activity becoming a hobby for him as a result of how much he liked being involved in it. “It was a hobby really and something I enjoyed doing”. While Jess specifically noted that she was happy for the first time in a long time as a direct result of her involvement. “I was actually doing something that I was happy with for the first time in my life”. Jess appeared slightly surprised at the fact that she found herself to be finally experiencing happiness in her life. It is reasons such as this that activity programmes are run in youth projects in her and this reaction highlights that positive outcomes are being achieved.

Running recreational activities which provide young people with new ways to spend their time is one of the most sufficient ways to assist these young people on their new track of development and change in their recovery. Therefore by offering programmes for them to participate in we are “providing people with social opportunities (which) should help facilitate recovery” (Johansen, 2013, p.2).

Andrew highlighted the significance of this being one of the first times some of his clients have ever been given an opportunity to get involved in any type of activity as many of the young people he works with are early school leavers and as a result of this in conjunction with their alcohol and drug use they would never have gotten such opportunities. “For a lot of the young people I work with it means giving them the chance to do something like this for the first time outside their normal day to day living”. As this course is essentially ‘an extreme sport’ it takes this group of young people completely out of their comfort zone and this is something which they find interesting and almost daring. “I think they find it exciting, exhilarating, and even mind-blowing to consider ever having such an opportunity”.

By finding new activities and ways to spend their time constructively Andrew is allowing the young people the prospect of positive growth as outlined by Mahoney et al. (2006) “how young people use this time has consequences for their development” (p.3). Mahoney et al. (2006) carried out research which focused on young people having too many extra-curricular activities and the negative effects this can have. However the effort of this particular study is to determine that having any involvement in sporting activities allows young people who have drug and/or alcohol issues to become involved in their own growth and positive development. There is no doubt following the interviews with the subjects on this phenomena that the participation of these young people in certified boating courses has have positive impacts on their lives.

Youth Worker as Instructor

When we consider outdoor education programmes many of us almost always automatically consider outdoor education centres and taking young people on a day trip where they are given a day of adventure with instructors who do not know them and are not fully aware of their backgrounds and needs. This is one of the reasons that the DAYS project is so unique, Andrew is not only the project co-ordinator and project youth worker, he is also the primary instructor and facilitator of the programme. It was interesting to discuss in interviews whether or not the young people and Andrew believed that if having Andrew as the primary instructor impacted on their participation in the programme, and to see if they think they would still have engaged had he only organised for an outside instructor to facilitate the programme.

For Andrew being the primary instructor is an aspect of his work which he believes "in very strongly". He acknowledges that for the sailing part of the programme he was not the instructor as he does not have relevant qualifications in this area however as the two activities were strongly connected he believes that for many of the young people they still knew that he was highly involved in it. Andrew sees the value in him being the instructor as he uses it to build relationships and trust with his service users. This gives me an opportunity to see a different side of people, both for me and for them, both good and bad. But I think it's important, it's important that you can develop a good sense of trust with them in this way, because really it's all about trust". These are elements which are invaluable for Andrew in his professional role as a support for these young people in their recovery. Having the ability to witness the participants out of their comfort zone allows him to see them in a way which he would never be able to gain understanding of in one to one sessions in the office. He states the realistic side of it also, "I think if they young people I work with are likely to see me putting in an effort they are more likely to then put in an effort themselves. I am a firm believer in leading by example".

When considering working with young people who have developed issues around drugs and/or alcohol it is important to have a comprehensive understanding of their backgrounds and habits. “If strategies to reduce the use of drugs and associated harms amongst the younger population are to be developed...it is vital that we improve our understanding of the roles that both licit and illicit substances play in the lives of young people” (Boys et al., 2001, p.457). It is for this reason that the research at hand is relevant as Andrew, as the project worker has been working with these young people on a weekly basis in relation to their use and knows about their habits and issues surrounding their addictions and recovery.

There was a definitive consensus on this aspect of the programme, it is clear to see that there has been a development in trust and relationships between Andrew and the service users. Much of this was in place as far as the young people were concerned as they all said that they were only involved because of the trust they had with Andrew. John brought up the subject of support in the sense that “if I had anything on my mind knowing I could say it was good. I don’t like going to meetings, I’ve tried them before and they didn’t work, so this was much better”. This highlights the importance of the benefits of informality and how it impacts on the young people. Support was an aspect which was re-enforced by Joe who noted that he probably would have participated had Andrew not been the primary instructor however he emphasised the significance of having Andrew present. “When you’re doing it with Andrew he gives you the feeling that you can do it, whereas other people mightn’t be so positive. He knows me”. This is a clear example of the influence of having a stable relationship with the youth worker for these young people. Again this was resounded by Jess who outlined that she knows that Andrew “wouldn’t ask me to do something that would be bad for me...It’s down to the trust thing really I suppose. I’m coming down here for God knows how long now. I don’t know, I think it would have been different if it was somebody else”.

These comments identify that there is no doubt that there is a great deal of significance in having youth workers as primary facilitators when delivering programmes and activities. The effects of participation on relationships is re-affirmed by Bartko and Eccles (2003) in which they state that young people who are involved in such activities experience “positive peer interactions and the development of friendships, and for exposure to positive adult role models” (p.239). According to Subramaniam and Moncloa (2010) “young people emphasize positive relationships as key to their participation” (p.28). This suggests that young people will directly relate their relationship they have with the project, youth worker, and other young people to the experiences they have.

Prospects

The future is something which we all think about more often than we would like to admit, however for so many of the young people who live a life ruled by alcohol and/or drugs the future is something which they may not look forward to. For the young people who engage with the DAYS project and have been given the opportunity to engage in the boating course the future is now something which they are thinking about. For many of those who have a level one certificate as a result of this course there are prospects which they never dreamed of. This is not to say that they are going to live the rest of their lives on the water, but they are able to think ahead in ways that they never would have imagined now that they finally have completed something and achieved a certificate. This is down to their participation in a long term course which they not only enjoyed but one which allowed them to develop skills and a sense of accomplishment and success.

When John was asked if he would ever think about how having these certs would affect his job prospects he was amazed that he would even be considered for a job as a result of his history of drug use. When he thought about it he said “I don’t know about a job

but doing courses maybe. As I was saying just having the confidence to get involved to get involved with different people. It would have been a problem for me before but now hopefully it's something that I would be more comfortable with". While Joe, on the other hand, sees a direct link with having these qualifications and his job potential. "Well there's meant to be work starting in the port of Cork so I was thinking maybe I could try get some work down there when I get my level two cert". It is important to highlight that since his completion of the powerboat course, Joe has begun work with TÚS in his local area, a job which he stated he was influenced to do as a direct result of his participation in the course. "If I didn't do the boating course I would never have even thought of doing stuff really. I'd never have gotten up off my ass and decided to do something and give it a go". Jess, conversely sees her hope to complete the next level of the course as a significant life goal and future hope for recovery.

These contrasting opinions of future goals outline that each of these subjects is at a different stage of their recovery. This is where Prochaska and DiClemente's stages of change model comes into play. This model "represent(s) the temporal and motivational aspect of the process" (DiClemente, 1999, p.210). The most relevant point to recognise here is that while these three participants may be at different stages in their recovery they all have found some form of motivation for their lives from their engagement in the course. When a young person is working to improve their lives it is important that they set out goals for themselves. This is a process which would usually be done in conjunction with youth workers and other service providers. Waller and Rumball (2004) stress the importance of "working in partnership with the client to prioritise goals" (p.59). This relates also the relevance of the youth worker as the facilitator of the programme as it is a systematic process which the youth worker and young person can work through together.

Like the three young people who were interviewed, Andrew is also hopeful that for many of his service users having completed these courses with him and having such qualifications should definitely assist them with gaining employment in the future. "There is

currently an increase in off-shore developments like wind-farms and the likes so they will be looking for deck hands and all sorts coming up in the near future...I can think of a few of the participants off the top of my head who would be very good working on a commercial boat or something like that so it would be great for them”.

Conclusion

This investigation has given the reader an insight into the young people’s personal experiences of their participation in the boating programme run by the DAYS project. By using direct responses given in interviews with the subjects gives a more realistic exploration of the topics explored. By linking the responses of the young people and Andrew with theory and academia it has given this discussion more depth while also allowing the researcher the opportunity to link this study to existing research in order to identify that more research of this manner is essential to the future development of youth work as a profession, young people’s experiences and society.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion

This research project has examined the effects of participation in organised recreational activities in a youth project. It has given the reader an overview of the available literature in order to provide a context for the place of this study in the field of youth work and indeed sports development. While it is a case study which was specific to powerboating and sailing, the hope is that youth organisations and youth workers will be able to recognise the impact that participation in structured activities has on young people, with particular reference to their sense of achievement.

Summary of Findings

Following extensive research on this case study in the DAYS project it is clear that participation in organised youth activities has beneficial impacts on the lives of young people. There is clear evidence of this as personal development has come mainly in the form of confidence and a sense of achievement which is felt by all of the young people who were interviewed. This highlights that the young people are aware of these benefits also, which suggests that the effects are obvious to their daily lives. Acquisition of skills is also something which comes through from the subjects in this study, they have all been able to distinguish clearly new skills which they attained as a result of their engagement in this programme.

A distinction between the connections between the activities being run directly by the project is evident from all subjects. All of the young people identified that their prior connection to the DAYS project was the primary reason they choose to participate in the boating activities, some stated that they never would have done something so extreme if it

was being run by anyone else. This brings us onto the impact that the youth worker being the primary facilitator has on participation. The levels of trust the young people have in the youth worker were of primary concern for most of the young people. While Andrew notes that his for him being involved with the young people in a different environment than they usually would meet allows for new types of trusting relationships to occur.

Interestingly, for the young people the fact that this was a certified course accredited by the ISA was merely an added bonus to their participation. Each young person stated in their interview that they would have participated had it not been certified, however they are aware of the additional benefits of now having this certificate. For some, having the certificate signifies their achievement and allows them to finally have something to show for their lives and to prove that they are able to succeed if they put their minds to it.

The group work element of the programme was something which received a mixed reaction from the subjects. While the young people recognise the enjoyment which comes from working in larger groups for the majority, they would have participated regardless of the other participants. Following on from this however, each young person identified that fun and enjoyment were features of the activity which they found to be most appealing. Some of those interviewed related this fun to the other young people who they were in groups with.

Looking to their futures the young people are hopeful that their participation in this organised activity has given them the head start which they needed to continue on the road to recovery in relation to their drug and/or alcohol issues. Andrew and one of the young people each made specific reference to the job prospects which can be made available to the young people now that they have this certificate, with further training of course, but this is the first step in that direction. While not all of the young people may wish to pursue a

career directly related to boating they nevertheless recognise the impacts it has on their pursuit of other long-term goals which they have for their own lives.

Recommendations

There is no doubt in the mind of this researcher that all youth projects and organisations should implement organised activities and programmes. Allowing young people the opportunity to engage in new and fun activities provides them with the chance to explore their identities and to gain recognition along with new skills and personal development. So many of the young people we work with have little or no opportunities for such activities in their lives on a daily basis and it is for this reason that it is up to us as a sector to provide these services so that young people can be given the best opportunities available to them.

Running programmes of any sort is definitely beneficial for young people but there is significance in the use of physical activities in terms of physical and mental health. These are two areas which are under constant scrutiny in society today yet they can be easily overlooked as a role in which youth workers can play a vital part. However, by implementing physical activity programmes in our work with youths we can subtly instill good physical and mental health to the young people we work with.

It is resounding from the data collected in this study that there is great significance that the youth worker is directly connected to the programmes which are run for young people. In this case study we saw Andrew use his personal interest and skills in relation to boating and developed a programme to be implemented in the DAYS project. This is only one example, there are potentially other projects around the country in which other youth

workers are doing the same. It is of vital importance that we work together to continue such work to occur. With further development a forum of sorts could be developed in the future which would allow youth workers to be connected in ways that would allow them to give the young people they work with the opportunity to broaden their horizons and connect with other projects which run activities which individuals may have particular interest in rather than the activity which may be run by the project they are connected with.

As has previously been mentioned in the findings and discussion chapter feedback and evaluating the programme in consultation with the young people is something which needs to become a natural part of the process. This can be done informally throughout by checking in with the young people in conversation to see how they are finding the activity and again at the closing of the programme more formally.

Final Conclusion

This research project has investigated and explored the impacts of applying a recreational approach to youth work practice with regard to addiction treatment. By using innovative and creative approaches to our work, youth workers can draw on their own skills and interests and motivate young people to achieve in ways which they may have never experienced before. It is through participation in activities that young people can be introduced informally to new ways of life which can act as diversions from undesirable activities, in this case, drugs and alcohol. While one-off events and activities may be fun and enjoyable for young people for recreational purposes, this study has identified that when activities are structured and organised they have unquestionable impacts on the achievements along with growth and development of groups and individuals alike. It appears from the findings that it is particularly activities which are enjoyable that allow the young people to become motivated and influenced to achieve and develop their passion

along with a sense of pride in themselves. This highlights impact of using the power of achievement to aid recovery and to inspire young people to achieve their full potential.

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Appendix

Appendix 1 – Interview Informed Consent Form



Informed Consent Form

I _____ consent to participate in an interview, facilitated by a Masters in Youth Work, with Community Arts and Sports Studies students in UCC as part of a research project.

I understand that the purpose of this research is to examine the impacts of activities in a youth project on service users, in particular the powerboating/sailing programme which I participated in.

I understand that my identity will be anonymised and my name will not be used in any documents. I give consent for this interview to be recorded using appropriate audio equipment which will later be destroyed.

I understand that the questions in this interview have been developed in a way that is respectful and I also understand that voluntary withdrawal is accepted at any stage of the interview. I give my consent for the researcher to use photographs for the interview and that these photographs will not be published in order to protect my identity.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 2 – Interview Schedule Andrew

- Why do you run activity programmes in the DAYS project?
- What made you choose to run a powerboating/sailing programme?
- Why do you think the young people participate in the course?
- Do you think they would participate regardless of what the activity you were running was?
- Do you think it matters to the young people that you as the project worker are the primary instructor?
- Do you think the course has a direct effect on the lives and drug/alcohol use of the young people?
- Do you think that it being a group process has an effect on the young people? Do peer relationships form as a result of participation?
- Does the fact that it is a certified course benefit the programme overall?
- Will you run the programme again?

Photo-Elicitation

- What do these photographs represent for you? ... for the project?
- Is having these photographs of benefit for your work in the project?

Appendix 3 – Andrew’s Interview

Why is it important to run activity programmes in a youth project?

That’s a very good question, the list is endless. To build self-esteem, motivate young people; give a sense of identity and belonging within a group, a sense of achievement. For those who are involved in the boating course I run they get a certificate at the end so they are getting something physical and practical at the end not to mention academic.

Do you think the young people recognise these benefits?

I think they probably realise it. It probably is something they realise after the programme more so than they might while its being run and they are actively participating in it. Do I tease this aspect out at the end of the programme with them? No I don’t, perhaps it’s something which I need to start doing more often. I should do an evaluation with them at the end of it to get their input. I should do an outcome evaluation with the group both individually and as a group.

Why do you think it is important to run outdoor education activities in a youth project?

Well, I think it’s important because a lot of the service user’s commit through the project wouldn’t have had an opportunity to participate in such activities either in school or at a personal level because of their drinking or drug use. For a lot of the young people I work with it means giving them the chance to do something like this for the first time outside of their normal day to day living. There’s the whole participation aspect that gives a sense of identity and generally help around their mental health and using the activities as a diversion away from drug and alcohol use. And also as I already said to build their self-esteem and confidence and identity I suppose really within the group. And even the fact that a lot of it

is outdoors, you're out in the fresh air and you're part of the environment and in the sunshine.

Do you think the young people you work with recognise the benefits of being outdoors?

Defiantly, I think the feedback I have had from them shows this, they are very upbeat and very positive after the activity. Not to mention it improves their general fitness, health and well-being and this seems to last for an extended period of time. I think that just this sense of achievement too, a lot of them have actually carried on the activities after we finish the programmes and that speaks volumes.

Do you think running the programme as a group activity had an effect of the participants?

Well the good thing about the course is that there are two aspects of it. There's the group side of it, which is the theory and the things we do here in the classroom setting so there is all the benefits of group work in this. And then there is working in smaller numbers, in pairs mainly, so there are both aspects of group work, both with smaller and larger groups. I think this does benefit the young people. When they are in the large group they can build their confidence and learn broadly about the theory and then when I break them up into pairs it shows competence. I think if you were to go from working with a service user to working in pairs or on an individual basis you wouldn't get that same competence, because a lot of them probably wouldn't be able to cope with working in a pair because it is a small intense coupling and the work load might seem to daunting and difficult and they may not be able to complete the task that's required of them in an individual basis. So for that reason I make sure to pair up someone who might be quite strong with someone who may be finding the difficult theory side of it, or if you utilise your students and volunteers properly and you have them work informally with someone who may be struggling with the essentially academic side of it then in that way you can apply a buddy system approach to it really.

Why do you think the young people participated in the course?

Well I think they see the value in it and I suppose the fact that I suppose it's quite an extreme sport makes it appealing. It's something different and it's totally outside of their comfort zone so I think they find it exciting, exhilarating, and even mind-blowing to consider ever having such an opportunity. It's just seen as an awesome thing to do.

Do you think the young people make the connection between the programme and their drug/alcohol use?

Ya I think that one of the key features of it is that it takes them away from the whole addiction and treatment sort of support, it's not exactly 'the norm' of treatment support. For this course the main emphasis is on achievement as opposed to looking at their addiction. We have a pre-requisite that they are not using while they are taking part especially when we are out on the boats. So I think it's a good way of coming through the back door essentially. I think ultimately using the power of achievement to aid recovery is a vital part of their work with me. What I mean by achievement is the whole self-esteem and confidence building side of things that has come with their participation on the course.

Do you think that now even months after the programme has ended the young people recognise this?

Yeah I think they do, they are proud of their achievements. I think now too taking them onto the next part of the course they will be able to see this even more. When we start the level two theory they will realise how much they actually learned from the level one. The next course is predominately one on one or maybe one on two depending on the section we are covering so there's a big emphasis on personal development and responsibility in that sense because they will not have the group to fall back on as they would have previously.

Do you think it matters to the young people that you as the project worker were the primary instructor for the course?

Well hopefully, because I think it's vital, it's something that I personally believe in very strongly actually. I could take them down and have an instructor take them out, even though we do have other instructors down there as well as myself for the sailing side of it because I am not qualified to facilitate that. But that aside, the fact that I was the instructor for the powerboating, it allows for us to build a professional working relationship between myself and the young people outside of the office between the clients and me as a worker. This gives you the opportunity to see a different side of people, both for me and for them., both good and bad. But I think this is important, it's important that you can develop a good sense of trust with them in this way, because really it's all about trust. It gives us a chance to develop a mutual level of trust. A lot of other projects seem to sub-out for doing activities, for example, tutors and artists and this can mean that the workers take a back seat in the programme. I think if the young people I work with are likely to see me putting in an effort they are more likely to then put in an effort themselves. I am a firm believer in leading by example.

I think they probably have a pre-conceived idea of me before we run the programme but I think it then allows for us to develop a good professional worker-client relationship and I think it gives them confidence to trust me as a worker and my fellow students who are coming in for training. And it gives me a different perspective on them as well because I get to see them in a different light which will help with their recovery because it helps me planning their supports because it helps me to get to know each young person in a way I couldn't in an office type environment.

Do you think peer relationships and group dynamics have an effect on the overall programme?

Well with any group work there is obviously many positives, but there was also some negative aspects which I am currently trying to address before starting the course again. Well in the group there were always going to be some issues as it was a mixed group with

both males and females so this brought its own obvious issues with it. This kind of relationships developing had a negative effective because it brought with it its own issues into the group and this is a very difficult thing to control. This can affect the wider group then because they form their own little cliques and the programme is designed based on team work and a group effort. So I think the next time when I run it I will have to ensure that everyone who is participating knows that this is a team activity and no one is going to splinter off. Particularly a few of the group started to use alcohol and drugs together then and causing grief to others in the group. This is something that I definitely have to think about bringing the course forward because it did cause a bit of a problem at times.

Will you run the programme again?

God willing. If funding is available. I am waiting at the moment to hear if funding has been granted for me to run the course this year. If I don't get funding I won't be able to run it and that will be very disappoint especially as so many of the group who received their certificates last year are very much interested in participating in the step up level two course.

If you don't get funding will you be able to run other activities instead?

I have already started doing some boxercise and 'jump-around-acise' as we like to call it to motivate physical and mental well-being and to get the group active. We are running this in the project twice a week but numbers are low at the moment. If I don't get hr funding that will be the only kind of thing I will be doing because we can do that here with very limited resources. I might be able to introduce some walking or use anything really but it will have to be a free facility. There's a new basketball and soccer area in the local park that we will be able to use. So instead of doing a certified powerboating and sailing course we will be doing non-certified basketball.

Do you think for the young people having received the certificates following their participation and achievements in the course has had or will have an effect on their job prospects?

Yeah, I think so. I was actually talking to the senior instructor who has said that there is currently an increase in off-shore development like wind-farms and the likes so they will be looking for deck hands and all sorts coming up in the near future. So if I could get some of the guys through the level two course then they will be able to go on further and do first aid and sea survival course which could be all done in a month essentially if they could raise the funds which would realistically only be a couple of hundred euro and then they would have the necessary skills and qualifications to do such jobs. So by having their level one course already completed and hopefully funding dependant this year their level two they will be already almost half way there. It's definitely do-able and realistic. I can think of a few of the participants off the top of my head who would be very good working on a commercial boat or something like that so it would be great for them.

In my interviews with the young people who participated in the programme I showed them some of the photos you took of them while they were out on the water, do you see the benefit of having these photos?

Absolutely, well its great PR for the project and for fundraising. But it's really great for the group to see these to remind themselves of what they have done.

How do you think the participant's families perceived the course?

Well there have been two service users who have already taken their own families out on the water with the skills they used and the connections they have made. They spoke to the guys in Kinsale and organised renting the boats for a day and heading out with their families and they had fantastic days they've told me. It's amazing really especially for their families to see considering the levels of addiction they had been at. Apart from that even just the feedback I have been getting from their families is fantastic. They have definitely seen a

huge change in their loved ones and that's great. Even sponsorship from parents shows that they have seen the value of it and are appreciative of the effects it has had.

Appendix 4 – Participant’s Interview Schedule

- Did you enjoy the powerboating/sailing course?
- What did you get out of it?
- Would you do it again? Why?
- Did anything about it annoy you?
- Do you think the programme had an effect on your life?
- Do you think that you were able to build relationships with other participants because of yer involvement in the programme? ... Were there social benefits?
- Do you think it had an effect on your drug use?
- Do you see the course as an opportunity for you to find employment?
- Did you tell people you were doing the course?
- Now that you have finished it and received your certificated have you told people about it?
- Did it being a certified programme make it more appealing to you? ... Do you think it matters that it is a certified course?
- Do you think it mattered what the activity was? Would you have participated if it wasn’t powerboating/sailing? ... Did you participate because it was so different?
- If Andrew organised the programme but wasn’t the main instructor would you still have participated?

Photo-Elicitation

- What does this picture/pictures represent for you?
- Do you remember it being taken?
- Do you remember how you felt here?
- How does it feel looking back at this picture now?
- What do you think your family/friends would think of this photo?

Appendix 5 – John’s Interview

Were you involved in both the powerboating and the sailing courses?

Ya, I was, I got the two certificates

I’m going to show you some photos of yourself, you’ve probably seen them already.

Yeah (laughs) I have that one (points to picture that shows a close up of himself on the water)

Do these photos mean anything for you?

Ya definitely, this is something I never would have done if I was using (drugs).

Looking back do the photos remind you of anything?

The people I did it with. We had a good laugh, it was great fun doing it. The fun aspect of it really was brilliant. It’s something I never would have thought of doing, I really enjoyed it. The fact that you get a certificate for doing it makes it better.

Do you think the certificates made the programme more appealing?

Ya it gives a sense of achievement at the end of it. For me, I wouldn’t have finished many things in my life so now this is something I have to show for it.

Do you think you would have done the course if there was no cert at the end?

Ya I definitely would have done it anyway. It’s just an added bonus.

What do you think your family and friends would think of those photos?

They are quite surprised at it, they’re happy as well.

Have they seen some of the photos?

Ya I have that one (points to picture of himself driving powerboat) that's hanging up at home. A lot of 'mickey taking' but at the end of the day they are quite happy to see the way I am now, that I am finishing things at long last.

Did they know you were doing the course at the time?

They did, they knew everything.

Were they surprised that you finished the course and got the certificate?

No, not really, they are just delighted for me.

You spoke about the achievements, do you think participating in the programme had an impact on any other aspects of your life?

Eh...Well I'm more outgoing now. Andrew asked me earlier if I would be willing to talk about my experience in the project at a task force event and I said yes, if that had been before there would be no way I would have said yes. I would never have done anything like that. It's brought up my confidence in regards things like that.

What about the social aspect of the course, meeting and working with the others involved in the course?

For me, I only knew one or two, but they were all easy to get on with so it was good. I'm a quiet fella anyway so it brought abit of confidence out in me, to talk to more people. It was good in that aspect.

Would you do it again?

Ya, I'm going to do the level two course now as soon as that starts up.

Did your involvement in the programme have a direct effect on your drug use?

I'm on a methodone programme and was before it started.

If Andrew organised the programme but wasn't the main instructor would you still have participated?

I probably would have, because it was part of the project anyway. I trust that he knows what he's talking about and he would have only organised it if he felt it would be good for me.

Did you only participate because it was boating? If it had been a different activity would you still have gotten involved?

Yes, definitely, as long as it was part of the project. I'm willing to listen and take on board most things, and try anything if it's going to help me, before now I wouldn't have though. But I'm in a different place now than I was a few years ago so I'm willing to take on board a lot more things now.

Do you think that having this certificate, and having this course done, even just the sense of achievement you spoke about impacts on your ability to find a job?

I don't know about a job but doing courses maybe. As I was saying just having the confidence to get involved with different people. It would have been a problem for me before but now hopefully it's something that I would be more comfortable with.

Did anything about the course annoy you? Is there anything you might change?

Not really no. The worst part was going out on the boat first, it's scary, but I suppose everyone felt the same then really. I had a great laugh doing it so I wouldn't change it, no.

Do you think having the craic made a difference to your participation? Would you have kept coming every week if the fun element wasn't there?

I probably would have but I wouldn't have been looking forward to it much. It got me out of the house and gave me something to do. Knowing that I was going down to the project every week was good, if I had anything on my mind knowing I could say it was good. I don't like going to meetings, I've tried them before and they didn't work, so this was much better.

Anything else you want to add?

Not really, only that I'm really looking forward to starting the next part of it.

How did applying the theory, the stuff that was being done in the classroom to then being on the boat go for you?

I suppose confidence wise, taking direction and needing to listen. I would never have been good at that before.

Appendix 6 – Joek’s Interview

So I know you’ve seen these photos already because they are hanging in Andrew’s office...

I never saw that one

Do you know when it was taken?

I remember that day alright

What do these photos mean to you?

They show everything we did, like reading the charts and out on the boat then looking at the charts again to see where you are. Ya it was brilliant.

What do you think your family and friends would think of these photos?

They just think it was a course, they don’t think I’ll go any further with it.

Do you think you will go further?

Ya I think I will definitely.

In what way do you think you’ll go further?

Well there’s meant to be work starting in the port of Cork so I was thinking maybe I could try get some work down there when I get my level two cert. Just having the level one isn’t much good for that, I’d have to have more courses done so that you actually know what you’re doing on a boat.

Do you think that it being a certified course makes it more appealing?

Ya definitely, because if I went to another country, even just to rent out a boat for a day trip they need to see that you know what you’re doing and having this course done means you can prove that you are able.

Did you enjoy the course?

Oh I did, because it was on Saturday's and usually that's when if I'm not doing anything I'd go other ways and end up doing bad things. So it was a distraction from that. We used be out all day and then go for something to eat and by the time you're home in the evening you're just wrecked so you wouldn't feel like doing anything, just relaxing at home and taking it easy.

Do you think doing it in a group mattered?

For me personally, it was grand if there was only two or three people there it was grand, but if there was more than that it would be harder to learn cause there'd be too many and it'd get distracting or there would be someone messing and then you might miss something important. Big groups made it harder to learn, it was easier in smaller groups. Like the three of us there (points to a photo of himself and two others on a day out on the water) that was a grand group like we were able to learn a lot then.

Did you build a relationship with these guys then from that or did it matter who was with you?

It didn't matter really as long as I was there doing it myself that was all that mattered for me.

Did anything about the course annoy you or would you change anything about it?

It's annoying you can't smoke when you're out on the boat alright, but that's for safety reasons because there's petrol on board. I wouldn't change anything though.

What about the theory side of it, did you mind having to spend time in the classroom first?

I thought we were just going to be going straight into being out on the water, I thought it would be all practical stuff I didn't think about the theory. The theory was kind of boring alright but then you need the theory in order to learn it and to know what to do when you're out on the water.

By the time you had gotten out on the water did you see the benefit of having the theory done?

Oh definitely, because you have to learn how to tie certain knots, check all the things on board and make sure everything is in order before you go out, make sure you have rope, anchors, buoys, charts, petrol, make sure everyone has a lifejacket, make sure everything is safe. You learn how to read the winds, what way it's going, speed of the water and tides and loads of stuff. If you haven't learned that stuff in the class first you wouldn't know it then when you're out on the water and then you wouldn't know what to do when you're out on the boat.

Did participating in the course affect your drug use?

Ya, because if I hadn't have been on the course I would have still been using no problem, without a shadow of a doubt. But with the course then it was on a Saturday, so if your buddies are going drinking on a Friday night I'd say no cause I knew I had the course the next morning and then if they were going Saturday night I'd be too tired after being out on the water that I would stay in and take it easy.

So do you think the course being on the weekend was better than if it had been on during the week?

Ya because I wouldn't do much during the week anyway, it's more the weekends I'd be using drugs if I was so then it meant I wasn't cause my weekend was busy. Being bored on the weekends is what would trigger me to use drugs so this way I was distracted. In my part it was ideal for me that it was on at the weekend anyway. I would suspect that for most of the other lads it would be the same.

Had you told your family and friends you were doing the course?

They knew I was doing it but they didn't think much of it really. I told them I'd be doing the level two next year and they didn't think I would. I told them I had an interest in it though and that I enjoy it. They'd ask me what I know about it and I told them we had to learn how to tie knots and what to do if someone fell overboard while you're out on the water and stuff and I'd tell them maybe you're not interested in it but I am.

Do you think people were surprised then when you told them these things and they realised that you had learned these procedures and the other stuff?

I don't know because they are not really into it so I don't think it really mattered to them, but if I met someone who was into it I'd be able to tell them and then they'd know I know what I'm on about then.

How did your family and friends react when you came home with your cert?

They just didn't really care; some of them said they just felt sorry for me. I just ignored it because it's something I'm interested in.

Would you have done the course if it hadn't been certified?

I still would have done it ya. It was a hobby really and something I enjoyed doing. Now I have had to find a new hobby at the moment. I'm after starting mi thai kickboxing now. I'm doing that now, I only started last week and I'm meant to be doing fitness here with Andrew too.

How did you get into that?

I know the guy who runs it and we were chatting one day so he said I could get involved so I said I'd give it a try. It's training two to three times a week and then you have to do stuff at home too to build strength and fitness, like push-ups and sit-ups.

Do you think that your involvement and getting into the routine of participating in a course got you into this?

Ya because it got me into doing other things, things I wouldn't have done before. I tried a few things since but nothing I really liked but I like this. If I didn't do the boating course I would never have even thought of doing other stuff really. I'd never have gotten up off my ass and decided to do something and give it a go.

Do you think it mattered what the course was? Was it more appealing to you because it was boating or would you have participated anyway? For example, were you involved in the soccer when Andrew used run it?

I was involved in the soccer at the start alright but soccer isn't really my thing, but the boating course was way better because I grew up by the water so I was around it all my life. So it was better for me because it was something I kind of knew about anyway.

If Andrew organised the programme but wasn't the main instructor would you still have participated?

Ya I probably still would have done it alright because it was something I was interested in anyway. But then again, when you're doing it with Andrew he gives you the feeling that you can do it, whereas other people mightn't be so positive. He knows me and he know some of the lads I know so he got onto them to see if I'd be able to go out fishing with them during the summer as well so we were able to arrange fishing trips.

You're working now, how's that going?

Ya, well it's kind of a course really, it's three days a week. It's grand it gets me up in the mornings, gets me out and about, even though it was raining and sleet this morning I still got up.

What does it involve?

I'm working with tidy towns in my village. I started in September, so we sweep the side of the roads and stuff, sweeping the much and dirt and litter and stuff. It can be tough some days but its good most days I like it. And I'm after doing a strimming course and a ride on lawnmower course too so if there's any of that to be done I'm certified to do it. It's done through TÚS. I might be doing my Safe pass course soon too so that will be another achievement to have.

That's great; you're gathering loads of certs so.

Ya I know it's great, I'll have to frame them all (laughs).

Appendix 7 – Jess’ Interview

I love this photo (pointing to picture)

I was afraid of my shit there.

Was that your first day on the water?

I’d say so ya.

How do you feel now looking at the photos?

Oh, well I don’t know how I actually did it really. In the midst of all that was going on.

Did your family see these photos?

No

What about your friends?

Ya, I put them on Facebook. They thought I was gone loop de loop! They couldn’t believe it, especially because I dread water.

Well that shows it was an achievement for you then

Oh yes definitely

(Pointing to a group photo) That was a great day. We were wrecked after but we had a great day though.

They're brilliant (the photos)

Yeah they're gorgeous. Even if I'm not photogenic (laughs) ... (pointing to another photo) that's a nice one too (laughs).

Look at this one of us setting up the sail; do you think we would be able to do that now if we were to go back down?

Oh we would, we would of course. We'd figure it out alright we know what to do sure.

Overall, did you enjoy the boating?

Oh God yeah.

Would you do it again?

Definitely. I'm hoping to do it again when it starts this year.

Was there anything about it you didn't like?

No, not really, no, I enjoyed every bit of it

Do you think being part of the programme affected your life?

It did, in a positive way. It was something to look forward to. It was different. It was something to get out of bed for.

What about the group work side of it? Do you think working with the others on the course affected it?

Emm....

Well do you think you would have been as happy to have done it on your own?

Oh it was much better with a group. Sure we had a great laugh and that made it so great.

Do you think you built a relationship with the other doing it?

Oh God yeah. I made some great friends, I used only see them in the project but it made it easier coming down knowing they would be here. Actually I miss the people who aren't still coming anymore.

Do you think being involved in the course affected your drinking at the time?

Well I was still drinking on and off, but, I suppose what happened to me was I was happy and I couldn't accept that I was happy and that I was finally doing something I was happy about. How can I explain it...I was actually doing something that I was happy with for the first time in my life and then there would be days that I would drink on that, because at the time I couldn't accept happiness in my life.

Do you think that now after the course you are learning to deal with being happy?

Yeah, I can't explain it though.

Do you think knowing that you would be coming down to the project for the course would have stopped you having a drink the day before?

Yeah, yeah. If I wasn't coming down here, even though I had relapse after relapse, I reckon I'd be dead by now.

Did your family and friends know you were doing it at the time?

Ya, they couldn't believe it. 'You're what...you?' and I'd say "Yeah, me". I was getting loads of feedback on Facebook. In a good way though.

Did this make you feel good about doing the programme?

Ya, it made me feel proud

What about getting your cert? Do you think that mattered?

Oh yeah it did.

Would you have participated even if you didn't think you'd get the cert in the end?

Oh I would have. It just makes it better.

Do you think it mattered what the activity was? Would you have participated if it was something other than powerboating/sailing?

Ya, because it was part of the project. Because I know he (Andrew) wouldn't ask me to do something that would be bad for me.

So is that down to trust and your relationship with Andrew?

Yeah without a doubt

If Andrew organised the course but wasn't the main instructor would you still have participated?

No.

Why is that?

It's down to the trust thing really I suppose. I'm coming down here for God knows how long now. I don't know I think it would have been different if it was somebody else

What about when we were out sailing? Andrew wasn't with us then

Ah sure they were lovely. But we always knew Andrew was around like.