

Report of Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowship

VIOLENCE PREVENTION WORK IN THE UK

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Introduction

The aim of my Fellowship was to visit the Children and Violence Team in Cape Town, South Africa with a view to establishing similar culturally specific Violence Prevention work in the UK.

For the past 8 years I have been working or involved in youth and community work on the Ferrier Estate, Kidbrooke, London, for Praxis a project of Greenwich Youth For Christ. The Ferrier Estate has long been recognised as an area of economic and social disadvantage. There are many indicators of poverty. Juvenile crime is an ongoing concern. We are currently working with a gang of 12-15 young people aged between 12-17 years old. They are engaged in criminal and antisocial behaviour which is causing a great deal of disruption to the life of the estate. The majority of the gang are excluded from school and are educated at a Pupil Referral Unit. To continue to work safely on the Estate we have had to adopt new ways of working to ensure staff safety.

It is out of this experience that we recognised the need for preventative rather than reactive work. We need to be working with young children and their parents and the local schools if we are to tackle some of the issues at a deeper level, this realisation led towards my Fellowship. Research led us to travel further a field to find people and projects who are engaged in Violence Prevention Work. On reading about the Children and Violence Team we knew their community based initiative had many elements we could learn from and contextualise. So began the process of my application to be a Winston Churchill Fellow.

What is the Trauma Centre for Survivors of Violence and Torture and where does the Children and Violence Team fit?

The Children and Violence Team is one project of the Trauma Centre for Survivors of Violence and Torture. The Trauma Centre was established in 1994 by psychologists and therapists from the psychiatric department of Cape Town hospital. When the ex political prisoners were freed from Robben Island it was found they needed support and counselling to cope with post traumatic stress. The organisation has since evolved from supporting just political prisoners to supporting a wider base of service users. They currently work with victims of domestic violence, survivors of torture and still work with political prisoners. There are four main project of the Trauma Centre, I will outline the first three and then give a more details description of the forth, the Children and Violence Team.

1 Trauma Response Team

The Trauma Response Team (TRT) are the gateway service to the organisation, they provide a walk-in service, and counsel for up to four initial meetings, they then refer the client on to the appropriate project or other service. The Trauma Response Team now has a full time satellite provision on Klipfontaine road (Cape Flats) so that the service is more accessible to the marginalised groups and areas of Cape Town.

2 Political Violence Programme

This programme has grown from a response team to prisoners who have been abused by other prisoners or wardens and now supports legal refugees, mainly from African countries. The programme is well connected with the Mental Health Services, Housing Services and gets referrals from refugee centres and Home Affairs. It is involved in a lot of international networking.

3 Training Department

The training department have developed two programmes, the trauma skills programme and the children and violence programme. They lead many courses for NGO's around trauma, counselling, post-traumatic stress, care for care givers, HIV as trauma, victim empowerment. They also provide training for corporate organisations, schools, universities, churches, social workers. Their services are free to the public and NGOs .

The Trauma Centre as a whole was initially funded internationally and now has contracted funding; each project is funded by a different organisation or a combination of organisations. There are currently 21 staff; there have been up to 30 employees in the past. All of the staff have excellent supervision, at least once a month and also co-supervise within the various projects. There is also a massage therapist who provides a free service for the staff.

The Children and Violence Team who are they and what do they do?

The Children and Violence Team consist of three full time field workers and 5 part-time field workers. They self manage, one is a social worker all the others are psychologists. The team currently work at the Saartjie Baartman Centre, which is a Centre for abused women and children. The services the team offer have evolved over time. Currently they will see some walk in clients at the centre and will offer them counselling or refer them if appropriate. The team are community based and have extensive links with a large number of schools both primary and secondary. The main part of their work is around supporting the school – both its staff and its pupils.

The Children and Violence Team currently deliver a Violence Prevention Programme in 4 schools. Each programme is specific to the school and its wider context and all work is negotiated with the individual school.

When the team seek to establish work in a new school they first contact the Head and give a PowerPoint presentation about their work and the service they offer. If the Head is interested the team then approach the staff and again present their work, if both the Head and the staff are then happy to progress an extensive organisational needs analysis is carried out. This document is confidential to the team and to the school and its management team, not the DFED. A number of recommendations will be made within this report and if the school are willing to accept these recommendations and the team feel able to work in the school then the partnership will develop and work will commence.

The Children and Violence Team offer significant support to the school, their programmes and workers are very flexible. As well as delivering a care for carers programme to the teaching staff, the team will offer to co-teach classes and offer therapy and counselling for those children who need it.

Details of the programme

Care for Carers

A significant understanding at the Trauma Centre is the recognition that working with victims and survivors of trauma is hard work. There is a lot of support available to their employees and this understanding impacts the delivery of school based work. The Care for Carers Course is delivered to teachers after school and is about 'taking care of yourself'. There are sessions around stress management, relaxation techniques, and physical reactions to stress. During these sessions massage is offered, food is shared and the environment is relaxed and open.

Co-teaching

The Children and Violence Team have developed an extensive work book of lessons that can be used in primary schools. The work book is called 'Sharing, playing and learning together'. There are 4 themes within the work book:

- 1 Our classroom rules (includes lesson plans for 4 lessons and follow up notes for educators)
- 2 Working Together (includes lesson plans for 5 lessons and follow up notes.)
- 3 Feelings (includes lesson plans for 7 lessons and follow up notes)
- 4 Problems (includes lesson plans for 6 lessons and follow up notes).

As well as delivering these lessons the team now develop lessons with teachers working with them in both the planning and delivery of work.

Teacher Training

The Children and Violence Team also work at offering professional support to teachers. They lead workshops on behaviour management, team building, classroom management and communication. The team try to reinforce what the teachers learnt at university in a safe environment. There is plenty of opportunity for the teachers to share experiences and learn from each other. The team have found that teachers look forward to the workshops and value the practical content of the workshop.

Individual counselling and therapy

The Children and Violence Team also spend a lot of their time working with individual young people. All of the young people they work with individually have experienced trauma and need support. Work can be on going or can be a short course of meetings depending on individual needs. The team are often phoned or contacted by local schools as young people experience crisis. Almost daily the team will be phoned by a school regarding a specific pupil who needs intervention.

Supporting Parents

When the Children and Violence Team was set up supporting parents was a key objective. This area of work has however proved hard to sustain. The team have tried different approaches but have found parenting groups difficult to establish and uptake has been minimal. The project leader identified the importance of indigenous leadership within this context. When parents feel they might be judged in

how they bring up their children they feel threatened. It's recognised by the team that when working with parents the team must reserve judgment and their own social values.

Lessons Learned

As well as learning about how the project works, materials developed and how the project relates to the wider social context I also learnt some practical things which will impact how my future work develops.

Research based

The work of COPEs and subsequently the Children and Violence Team has always had a strong research base. All of the team are encouraged and involved in pieces of research and this work is documented and some published. This strong link of theory to practice is one that has always interested me but one which I haven't fully explored. As we establish a Violence Prevention Project in our local context the new work will have a research base. We are in an ideal situation to do some ethnographic studies and to record our work. Personally, I hope to complete a PhD related to this work and I hope that the team of workers will be able to develop their own research skills. This will be a great strength of the new project.

Community Roots

I have also learnt from visiting the Children and Violence Team that we are in a strong position to grow a violence prevention project from the grass roots. We have strong links with the local community we are known and trusted and are in a good position to encourage local parents to led the parenting groups. We have been working on the Ferrier Estate for the past 8 years and a lot of the foundational work of building trust and being known has been done.

Church Links

During a conversation with the team leader I learnt that the Children and Violence Team are developing strong links with local churches, recognising that these groups are rooted in the local communities. Church leaders in Lavender Hill are often strong community leaders and are connected with many local people. The Children and Violence Team are not a faith based project. GYFC is a faith based project and so the link with local churches is already very strong. This was encouraging to me. Often in Britain faith based projects are viewed suspiciously and so it was positive to consider our local links with churches as an advantage.

Multi disciplinary team

The Children and Violence Team comes from a different academic background to the background of Praxis and GYFC. Initially, during my visit I found myself asking whether we would realistically be able to develop a context specific violence prevention project when we are not all psychologists. However, after discussion with the team leader I recognised the strength we have if we develop a multi-disciplinary team, with people from a range of backgrounds and fields.

Relationships with schools

During my fellowship I learnt just how crucial the relationship with the local school is. Each school has its own programme to suit its context, as well as its own key worker from the team who is their point of contact. The team work hard to develop strong relationships with the school, the school gain a lot from the work of the team.

I also learnt something about how the schooling system in South Africa works and about the differences between the UK and South Africa. These differences will have an affect on how differently the projects will look and how our work will develop its own distinctive nature.

Who is on the team?

I also learnt from visiting the team about how important it is to employ good quality people, not to hold onto them too tightly and to offer them professional supervision, support and recognition.

Itinerary

During my stay in Cape Town I was based with the Children and Violence Team, Saartjie Baartman Centre. During the trip I visited a wide range of local schools, a college, and an orphanage. I also visited other community centres and projects across the Cape Flats region. When I wasn't visiting I was based at the office of the Children and Violence team. My fellowship started during the last week of May 2005 and concluded during the last week of June. It was long enough to establish the intended outcomes and an experience I will always value.

Final thoughts

Cape Town is an amazing place, a city of such contrast it is shocking. It seems to me the history of the country is one of violent struggle and this is still the case today. There are such differences between people groups that make integration and understanding difficult. Most of the people I met had at some time been a victim of crime. The work of the Children and Violence Team is remarkable, on a daily basis they deal with trauma that would shock most of us who live in the UK. However, the people I met were hopeful, and recognised that change is a process, a process that takes time. There are many shocking stories of South Africa but equally there are many remarkable stories. Forgiveness is practiced, and this brings hope.

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