

## Impact case study (REF3)

<b>Institution:</b> Newman University		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> Social Policy and Social Work		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Project Touch: Responding to Youth Violence through Youth Work		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2010-2016		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b> Mike Seal and Pete Harris	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b> Senior Lecturers	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b> 2010-2021
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 1/8/2013-31/7/2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> No		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>The aim of the Touch project was to examine, and thereby improve, how youth work can respond to violence both between, and directed at, young people in the EU. As well as a direct and transformative impact on all the project participants and partners, the transnational and innovative nature of the project meant we could create, through an expansive dissemination strategy, profound impact on the social 'problem' of youth violence beyond national boundaries, and raise public awareness of how youth workers might meaningfully respond to it. Learning from the project has been directly incorporated into the educational and training regimes of youth workers and other professional communities. Findings reached policy-makers, academic institutions, NGO's, youth workers and young people across Europe, through a research monograph, guidelines for youth work practice, international academic and practitioner conferences, a round table discussion with European policy makers in Brussels, and a documentary film.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>Led by Mike Seal and Pete Harris, and overseen by a steering management group made up of government policy advisors and academics, the Touch project was funded (£442,000) via the EU Daphne III program. It involved building partnerships with Islington Borough Council, London; West Bowling Youth Initiative, Bradford; Jugendstreetwork, Caritas Der Graz-Seckau, Austria; Rheinflanke gGmbH, Cologne, Germany; The Federation For Detached Youth Work, UK and Dynamo International, Belgium. Two British young people, both of whom had direct experience of violence, were recruited as peer researchers. The research team made a series of visits to the 4 locations. 50 youth workers and 170 young people from a range of ethnic backgrounds participated, all of whom had some experience or involvement in violence either as perpetrators, witnesses, or victims.</p> <p>Research activity incorporated workshops based on community philosophy, focus groups, case studies, semi-structured interviews, seminars and conferences, and a range of audio-visual techniques including music composition and recording, photography, visualisation, diagramming and role play. Much of this robust research activity was incorporated into youth work activities including group work, sports-based work, and residential experiences in youth hostels. As part of our commitment to participatory methods, a film company not only documented the research process and produced an hour-long documentary, but also supported young people in creating films of their own. These centred on <i>their</i> perceptions of the area where they lived and what part violence played in their lives. The whole project design meant therefore that all empirical data was co-produced and disseminated with youth workers and young people as full partners.</p>		

**3. References to the research** (indicative maximum of six references)

1. Harris, P. and Seal, M. (2016) *Responding to Youth Violence Through Youth Work*, Bristol: Policy Press. (Book/Research Monograph) Listed in REF2

**4. Details of the impact** (indicative maximum 750 words)

The project research monograph “Responding to Youth Violence Through Youth Work” (published 2016) is now regularly used as a teaching resource (on module reading lists) for Youth and Community Work training courses in the UK and Europe. It will form part of new plans to introduce youth violence training for youth workers currently being considered by the National Youth Agency in the UK (See ref. Workforce Development Officer National Youth Agency below). Over 2000 copies of the “Guidelines For Youth Workers” publication were distributed at European conferences and these have been formally adopted by the leading practitioner network in the UK (The Federation for Detached Youth Work, see Sources to corroborate the Impact below) and Europe (Dynamo international). The documentary film has also been incorporated into youth work educational and training programmes and courses for workers in related fields. For example, the sport education provider Street Games were commissioned to engage their national network of sports providers as part of the Home Office ‘Building Stronger Britain Together’ (BSBT) programme. A Touch partner and facilitator (from The Federation for Detached Youth Work, see Sources to corroborate the Impact below) was able to use the film as an evidence base and stimulus for philosophical enquiry, particularly about questions of professional identity.

Following our presentation of the findings to the European Parliament (11/12/12) the Styrian Regional Government in Austria passed a motion in their parliament about the right of young people to be in public space, citing the research as an influence. The Public Health Intelligence Team (PHIT) at Birmingham City Council also cited the Touch Research in a report which led to the development of violence related services for young people. We also provided evidence to the ‘call for evidence’ for the ‘Youth Violence: Community and Youth Services Parliamentary Commission’. We have testimonials about the impact of the Touch project and research on individual young people, from the young people themselves and the youth workers. Both peer researchers went on to full time employment and further study; one has set up a community organisation, completed a Masters degree and contributed a book chapter. Pete Harris has given key note talks conferences based on the Touch research in the UK, Denmark and Malta; the latter was attended by the Minister for Youth on the island. The team continues to be asked to comment on media stories relating to youth violence. For example, the editor of *Children and Young People Now* interviewed Pete Harris following a recent spate of knife attacks in London and commissioned an opinion piece on the relationship between social media and youth violence. (see Project Partners in Sources to corroborate the Impact below)

The original, service-user informed insights generated via the Project have led to the setting of new agendas within youth workforce development and contributed to debates around intervention methodologies, professional identities of youth workers, managerial and evaluation regimes and the ‘problem’ of youth violence, an area that presents considerable conceptual and logistical challenges, especially in terms of user engagement and inter-agency collaboration. Project findings were disseminated in 2 broad categories: practice and policy. Practice recommendations included calls for a re-framing of youth work within this practice context and a re-examination of youth worker-young people relationships. We made specific suggestions designed to maximise the desistance promoting potential of youth work, including detailed guidance on how to build trust within relationships and how to engage with young men and women who are not accessing existing services. We also called for, and provided illustrative case studies of, a number of themed practical initiatives in music, drama and sport and made specific recommendations for improving the training and CPD regimes of youth workers, especially in relation to building the skills of ‘home-grown’ workers from within communities affected by violence. Our report also gave practical advice to managers on how to reduce bureaucracy, allow workers to opt out from corporate identification, conduct

meaningful risk assessments and make changes to worker job descriptions. (See Sources to corroborate the Impact below)

Policy recommendations included calling for regular policy round-tables, reducing emphasis on 'disabling' policies such as targeted approaches in favour of 'targeting through universalism', ensuring adequate space for worker reflection, a call for long term funding and a reduction in commissioning and contracting regimes. These recommendations have catalysed calls for an end to moves towards de-professionalisation within youth work, and provided impetus for a number of new initiatives including the development of a Masters degree in street-based youth work. We also called for an end to social policy narratives that demonise young people who gather in public space by simplistically identifying them as a threat to others and for formal recognition of the positive value of young people's social mixing in public space. We were able to make significant contributions to theory building in a number of related areas, introducing new theoretical concepts such as the value of 'proxy trust' and 'near-peer' experiences, and the shortcomings of 'chasing violence'. The project was externally evaluated and the evaluation concluded that our findings will remain an important point of reference for the field, continuing to influence practice and policy in youth work and criminal justice. (see Sources to corroborate the Impact below)

#### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. Project toolkit: [Touch: European Street Violence Project | Daphne Toolkit \(europa.eu\)](https://www.europa.eu/eu-external-communication/en/press-material/2014/04/20140423-01)

2. The Federation for Detached Youth Work says:

*"As part of the Home Office 'Building Stronger Britain Together' (BSBT) programme Street Games I was commissioned to engage their national network of sports providers in BSBT. There was an emphasis on supporting their practitioners (mostly sports coaches) to develop critical thinking skills. I put together a programme based on Community Philosophy methodology, using the Touch project as an evidence-base. In this, I used video clips from the Touch documentary as a stimulus for thinking about youth work identities, and how they can be promoted to wider, diverse, audiences and stakeholders. Practitioners have confirmed that when they are in a multi-agency partnership, where, as a youth worker, they are getting bullied into some corrupted version of 'youth work', they have been able to push the book forward, and say: "see this, this says ...". I envisage Touch being really useful as the state tries to incorporate youth workers in to the Serious Youth Violence agenda".*

3. Workforce Development Officer National Youth Agency can be contacted directly to verify how the Touch project can form part of the NYA's plans for youth workforce development.

4. Project Partners (all can be contacted to corroborate impact)

a. Jugendstreetwork, Graz, Austria

<https://www.caritas-steiermark.at/hilfe-angebote/kinder-jugendliche/beratung-str...>

b. West Bowling Youth Initiative, Bradford, <http://www.wbyi.co.uk/>

c. Islington Borough Targeted Youth Support Team, London, UK

<http://www.islington.gov.uk/services/children-families/cs-about-childrens-servic...>

d. Rheinflanke, gGmbH, Cologne, Germany

e. Dynamo International

[dynamo-int@travail-de-rue.net](mailto:dynamo-int@travail-de-rue.net) <http://www.travail-de-rue.net>

f. Chocolate Films, London, UK

<http://www.chocolatevideoproduction.co.uk/>

g. West Midlands European Centre, Brussels

<https://wmie.wordpress.com/west-midlands-european-centre/>

5. Harris, P. Seal, M and Tiffany, G. (2014) *Responding to Street Violence: Guidelines for Street Based Youth Workers*. (Training Materials)

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6. "Responding Meaningfully to Youth Violence through Youth Work" *International Conference for Outreach Workers, Oslo*, April 2015. (Conference Presentation)

7. "Project 'Touch' – Street Based Youth Work and Street Violence", *University of Ireland, Maynooth*, 2012 (Conference Presentation)

8. Project Touch – Documentary film available at  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CypHrEbPEQ&feature=youtu.be>

9. Young people's films Islington and Bradford available at  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qvu0M4zJUMA>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Nx1ndTHqTE>