

'YOUTH JUSTICE PRACTICE IS JUST MESSY' YOUTH OFFENDING TEAM PRACTITIONERS: CULTURE AND IDENTITY

Dr Rachel Morris, Lecturer in Social Policy and Crime, University of York

Abstract

At a time when the Ministry of Justice has announced a 'stock take' (Puffett, 2014) of youth justice it is now more crucial than ever that attention is paid to the organisational culture of youth offending teams (YOTs) and the occupational identity of the practitioners that work within them. The organisational culture of a YOT can have a significant impact on the treatment that young people receive as interpretations on national policy are made on a local and individual level yet it has been a largely under-researched area in comparison to other key criminal justice agencies. This paper seeks to contribute to the limited literature on YOT practice cultures using empirical evidence from ethnographic based doctoral research. It will explore the reasons why practitioners do the job that they do and suggest that this can impact on key elements of YOT practice such as assessment. It is important that a coherent unified YOT practice culture exists within a YOT so that best outcomes for young people can be attained but this paper will present evidence to show that this can be difficult to achieve.

Keywords

Youth offending team practice; occupational identity; organisational culture; practice cultures.