

ARCH Mediation's HowzTalk Service

BEHIND NO
DOORS
Youth
Homelessness
Pilot Sessions
Evaluation Report

Judy Field
HowzTalk Coordinator
July 2009

Acknowledgements

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide a qualitative evaluation of pilot sessions on youth homelessness, held in secondary schools and youth related services in Harrogate, North Yorkshire, which was instigated by the 'Behind No Doors Steering Group' in December 2008.

This report is based on pre- and post-evaluation questionnaires with 292 young people, 132 Girls, 142 Boys and 18 unknown, between the ages of 12 to 18 years.

The purpose of the Pilot was:

- To understand what impact sessions would have on young people's awareness of homelessness thus determining if there is a need for workers to deliver these sessions in schools in the 2009/2010 academic year and beyond.

2. Background

HowzTalk is a service that provides information and support to young people in priority need who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

As part of Harrogate Borough Council's objective on tackling youth homelessness, the HowzTalk service, since January 2008, has been leading on a youth homelessness awareness campaign. The aim of this project was to specifically raise awareness about homelessness in schools and youth related agencies in the Harrogate district and signpost young people to local services.

HowzTalk worked with a group of five young people, *Inspired Youth*¹, and other local agencies to produce a film under the title of 'Behind No Doors'. This includes session plans for schools to use independently and a variety of images to create debate in the classroom. Other resources produced as part of this campaign include a series of five posters, a youth homelessness resource guide for workers and parents / carers, and contact cards for young people, which signpost them to relevant services.

3. The Sessions

The delivery and format of the sessions

¹ Inspired Youth is a not-for-profit social enterprise that works creatively with young people through inclusive projects using digital video production, arts, media and participative techniques to inform, challenge, educate and inspire.

Five sessions were delivered during April – May 2009.

The sessions were delivered by the 'Behind No Doors'' team. This included three young people who had been involved in the production of the 'Behind No Doors' film (Amy Dawes, Emily Hesketh and Natalie Robinson), a Harrogate Borough Council housing officer, the directors of Inspired Youth² and the HowzTalk Coordinator.

The sample: finding schools to participate in the Pilot

Five schools, who had expressed an interest in hosting sessions with their students, were invited to participate in the Pilot. Two of those five schools: Harrogate Pupil Referral Unit and Rossett High School were involved in the Pilot; including the TRAX by Night service and Youth Services (4Youth).

In order to meet the needs of the schools and other services involved in the Pilot, the HowzTalk Coordinator discussed with each school/agency what approach was most suitable. The sessions invariably took the format of young people viewing the film, followed by a question and answer session, with the Behind No Doors' team. The session at the Pupil Referral Unit included the viewing of the film, a question and answer session with students, followed by students participating in a workshop delivered by teaching staff and attended by the Behind No Doors' team.

The young people who participated in the Pilot

This report is based on pre and post evaluation questionnaires with 292 young people, 132 Girls, 142 Boys and 18 unknown, between the ages of 12 to 18 years³.

To obtain an idea of the impact that these sessions would have on young people's awareness of homelessness, young people were asked to complete a short questionnaire, asking them what they know about homelessness, before the session and then doing another questionnaire at the end of the session. Not all young people completed the pre and post questionnaires. From the **292** young people who participated, **269** young people completed *pre questionnaires* and **214** young people completed *post questionnaires*.

What questions did we ask young people?

The young people were asked what they knew about homelessness, their knowledge of agencies / services that could help them and their feelings about watching the film.

² Inspired Youth were on hand to support the Behind No Doors team at two of the sessions, providing practical support and technological expertise.

³ Please see *Appendix A* for Sample Breakdown

Before each session young people were asked to complete a short *pre evaluation questionnaire*.

Pre questionnaires

What does homelessness mean to you?

Do you know what agencies can help you with housing and homelessness issues?

Do you know what type of people become homeless?

Why do you think people become homeless?

After each session young people were asked to complete a short *post evaluation questionnaire*.

Post questionnaire

How did the film make you feel?

Do you feel you have a better understanding of homelessness?

Do you know more about the agencies that can help you with housing and homelessness issues?

After watching the film do you now have a different view of homeless people?

4. Feedback

What did agencies tell us?

The agencies involved in the Pilot were asked to provide general feedback on how they felt the sessions had gone. Respondents found that taking part was a real benefit to the young people and also to the agencies themselves, as it enabled them to work more effectively and knowledge of resources to be shared. Comments included:

'...the young people involved in the film at the sessions is key to having long term impact' (Harrogate Pupil Referral Unit)

'...the resources are excellent – well made and informative' (Harrogate Pupil Referral Unit)

'To raise the profile of the issue 'Homelessness', consider having a 'Homelessness' day i.e. similar to red Nose – this would give schools a key date and therefore a focus for an event...' (Harrogate Pupil Referral Unit)

'That the continuation of the post of HowzTalk Coordinator and/or team is imperative to the long term success of the project' (Harrogate Pupil Referral Unit)

'All youth workers got something from the presentation learning more about the effects of homelessness' (4Youth)

'We would very much like to repeat this at all youth clubs...' (4Youth)

'...to have up-to-date facts and figures are especially useful to paint the current picture locally...Also Behind No Doors young people really useful for them (young people) to see somebody like themselves, having come through the other side positively'
(TRAX by Night Service)

What did young people's responses tell us?

Research shows that young people becoming homeless often do so as a result of family breakdown, they are hence vulnerable, without family support. Support is therefore crucial for these young people. We wanted to gain some understanding on what awareness young people themselves have about homelessness and the services that are available if they or someone they knew became homeless or potentially homeless as a result of experiencing conflict or violence in the family home.

Pre-Questionnaire Feedback

What does homelessness mean to young people?

Generally young people had an understanding of homelessness as being associated with having no home or no shelter.

Some young people's descriptions of what homelessness meant to them also included:

'Having no home to live in and nobody to care for them.' (Girl, aged 17)

'It's usually people who have runaway or been thrown out; living on the streets or friend's homes.' (Girl, aged 17)

'No house, no roof, no shelter; not enough resources to keep going - skint...' (Girl, aged 16)

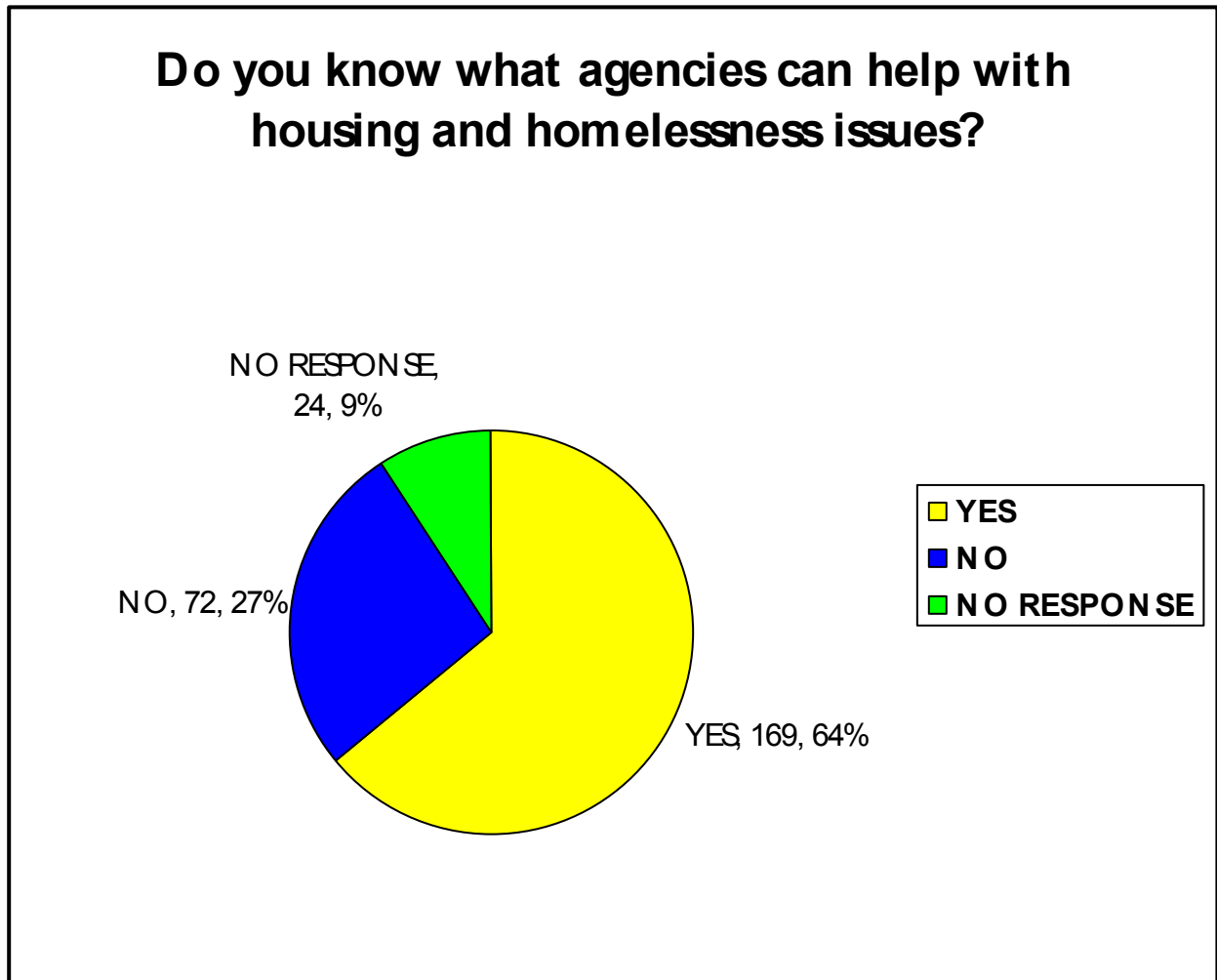
'No constant place to stay, having to stay in hostels or shelter places.'
(Girl, aged 17)

'People who have no home and smell and are lonely...they have a hat for people to put coins in, normally coppers...people throw things at them...' (Boy, aged 16)

'Where you don't have a lot of money and you don't have a house. Maybe you have a friend who is your dog.' (Boy, aged 14)

Do young people have an awareness of the agencies that can help people with housing and homelessness issues?

Of the 269 young people who completed questionnaires before the session 64% (169) said they were aware of agencies that could help, with 27% (72) who answered 'no' and 9% (24) who did not answer the question.



There were many different agencies young people felt could help people with housing and homelessness issues. For clarity, we have grouped them into four categories, although there was some overlap between them. Table 1 shows these four categories and the named agencies (services) or methods of help.

Table 1: What agencies can help with housing and homelessness issues?

<i>Charities</i>	<i>Businesses / Companies</i>
Barnardo's CAFOD Childline Children in Need Comic Relief (Red Nose Day) Crashpad (Barnardo's) Foundation Housing Help the Aged Help the Homeless Housing Associations Leeds Federated Housing Association NSPCC Oxfam Red Cross, The Salvation Army Samaritans Shelter The Big Issue TRAX YMCA	Banks Building companies Estate Agents
	<i>Public Sector Organisations</i>
	Councils (local) Government National Health Service Police Schools Social Care
	<i>Other</i>
	Care workers Churches Foster care Hostels People who used to be homeless Religion Soup kitchens <i>Use your initiative</i>

What type of people become homeless?

We wanted to have an understanding on whether young people viewed homelessness as something that could happen to anyone, or whether young people held a stereotypical idea of a homeless person based on their individual experiences. Many young people had a specific idea of a 'homeless' person. Some young people held the belief that homelessness could happen to anyone, including:

- Rich people
- Poor people
- Unemployed
- Single parents
- Teenagers
- Older people
- Refugees & asylum seekers
- Criminals
- Drug addicts
- Alcoholics

Young people generally believed that people's circumstances had resulted in them becoming homeless. Some young people also held the belief that people's attitudes and/or behaviour had resulted in them becoming homeless.

Why do young people become homeless?

Young people identified a wide range of reasons why people become homeless. For clarity, we have grouped them into six broad categories, although there was some overlap between them. Table 2 shows these four categories and the reasons identified by some of the young people.

Table 2: Why do people become homeless?	
<p><i>Financial & Housing related</i></p> <p>Inability to pay rent and bills Inability to manage budgeting Reckless spending Unemployed Low income Bankruptcy House repossession Natural disasters</p>	<p><i>Relationships</i></p> <p>No family Kicked out of family home Runaway from home Escaping violent / abusive relationships No happy and stable home and loving parents</p>
<p><i>Education & Employment</i></p> <p>Difficulties at school Poor attendance</p>	<p><i>Health, Attitudes & Behaviours</i></p> <p>Mental health problems Physical health conditions Substance misuse (drugs and alcohol) Gambling Offending history Laziness Individual's choice to be homeless</p>

Post-Questionnaire Feedback

How did the Behind No Doors film leave young people feeling?

We were clear from the start that if sessions were to have any meaningful impact and engage students we would need to be very creative. We felt the Behind No Doors film and the involvement of young people who have experienced homelessness either in the film and/or sessions would be the preferred method to communicate the realities of homelessness issues to young people.

Feelings felt amongst young people having watched the film were wide-ranging. Here is a list of words used by young people to describe their feelings: **sad, upset, sorry, intrigued, shocked, respectful, lucky, empathetic, sympathetic, angry, annoyed, grateful, bored, surprised, privileged, appalled, depressed, terrible, more aware.**

Young people responded with very poignant descriptions of how they felt after watching the film, including:

'It made me feel quite sad because I never knew there were so many homeless people in Harrogate and especially at my school.' (Girl, aged 14)

'Really sad and it felt personal because all the places where it was filmed are familiar, and I didn't think anyone from my school was homeless.' (Girl, aged 15)

'It made me feel kind of annoyed that people would let their child live outside. It also made me feel upset because nobody seems to care other than the actual organisations.' (Girl, aged 15)

'It has broadened my horizons in the way that I can be less prejudiced...due to increased knowledge' (Boy, 15)

'It made me actually think about homeless people...before I never really bothered...' (Girl, aged 15)

'This film made me feel aware of what is happening around me and to stay strong because some things that happen I ain't going to like, but I still have to get on with my life.' (Boy, aged 15)

'The film was very interesting and made me more aware of what's really happening.' (Girl, aged 14)

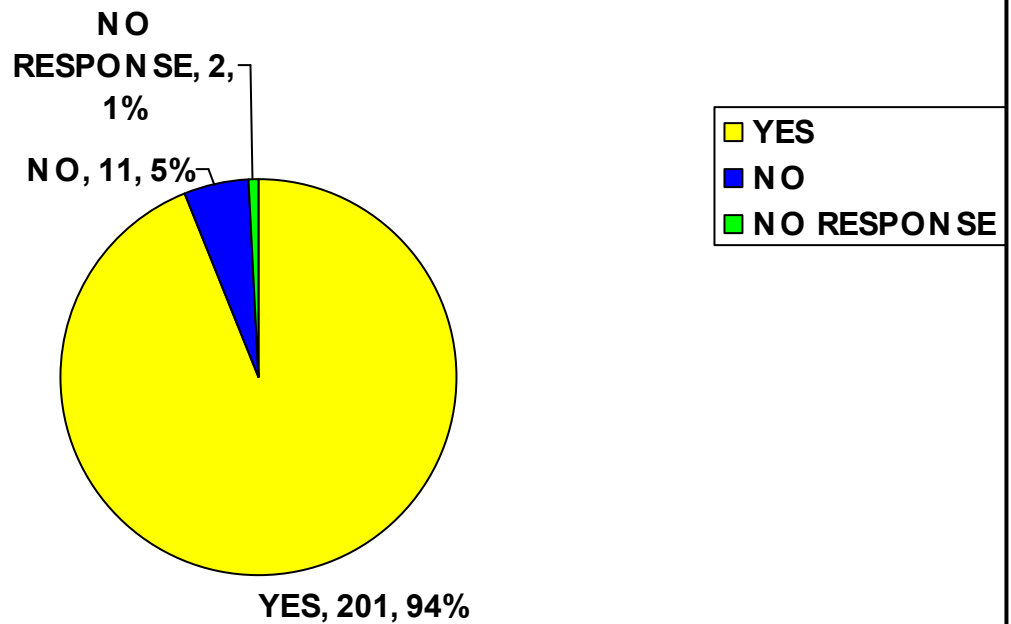
'The film was a great idea it made me realise this is happening' (Girl, aged 18)

'...made me feel people in need are making a difference to change and help others in need.' (Boy, aged 17)

Do young people have a better understanding of homelessness?

Of the 214 young people who completed questionnaires after the session 94% (201) said they had a better understanding of homelessness, with 5% (11) who answered 'no' and 2% (1) who did not answer the question.

Having watched the Behind No Doors film do you feel you have a better understanding of youth homelessness?

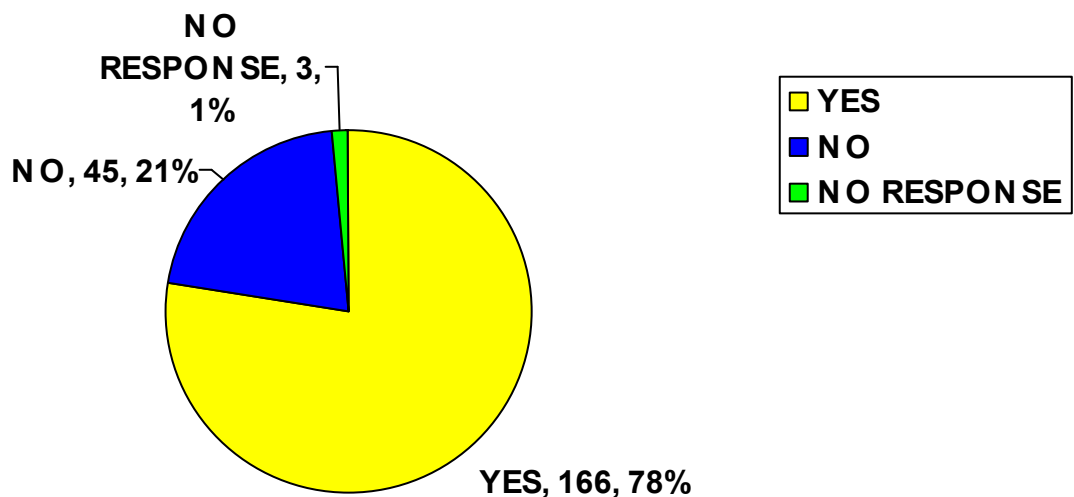


Most young people consider themselves to have a better understanding of homelessness. However, due to the disparity between those young people who completed pre and post questionnaires it has proved difficult to measure the impact accurately.

Do young people know more about the agencies that can help with housing and homelessness?

Of the 214 young people who completed questionnaires after the session, 78% (166) felt they know more about the agencies that can help with housing and homelessness, with 21% (45) who either answered 'no' or felt they already had knowledge of the help available and 1% (3) who did not answer the question.

Do you know more about the agencies that can help you with housing and homelessness?



Again, due to the disproportion of completed pre and post questionnaires it has proved difficult to measure this aspect accurately.

One student said:

'The film helped me realise that if I was in that situation there are people who can help me...' (Girl, aged 15)

This view was represented by many young people.

After watching the film did young people have a different view of homeless people?

Many young people considered themselves to have a different view about homelessness and homeless people. Responses indicate that young people have an increased knowledge of some the reasons why people can become homeless, particularly young people. One of the causes of homelessness that was consistently expressed by young people was the impact that family breakdown can have on a young person. One young person described how watching the film had an impact on how she viewed homeless people:

'It changed my views on homeless people. This film was well made and everyone involved should be extremely proud' (Girl, aged 18)

5. Issues Identified

On three occasions young people were emotionally affected by the impact of the sessions and needed support from workers, either within their own service (TRAX) or from the BND team.

6. Conclusion

The evaluation shows that the sessions have had a positive impact on young people's awareness of youth homelessness. This can be best evidenced and demonstrated by comparing qualitative data collected in the pre- and post-questionnaires.

The data is available for anyone wishing to refer to, however to bring this evaluation to a conclusion it would be appropriate to highlight the following quotes:

In answer to the question, '*Why do you think people become homeless?*' responses included:

- Pre-questionnaire – 'lazy, expects everything to be done for them, don't get a job, are smack heads'.
- Post-questionnaire – 'I didn't know why – [it's] because of family problems'.

Boy, aged 14

- Pre-questionnaire – 'people, kicked out – bad/criminals'
- Post-questionnaire – 'it made me realise not just 'bad' people become homeless, also people from broken homes, [for whom there is] no other way'.

Girl, aged 15

Therefore, in conclusion, it is possible to say that the Pilot met its aim in identifying that young people's awareness was heightened as a direct result of the sessions.

Other benefits of the sessions included improved communication with schools and other agencies.

Feedback from the young people would suggest that there is a need for these sessions to continue. Feedback from the schools who participated in the Pilot is very positive. They found that both the sessions, which involved

young people who had experienced homelessness themselves, and the resources were very informative and would be of benefit to young people.

The recommendation is that awareness sessions be rolled out to all secondary schools in the Harrogate district in the 2009/2010 academic year with support from relevant agencies immediately available after the sessions to support those young people who may be affected by the content.

Judy Field
HowzTalk Coordinator

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APPENDIX A

Sample Breakdown

Characteristics of young people who completed questionnaires

Table 1 Rossett High School, Harrogate

Young People	Number
	<i>Year 10</i>
Total young people	192
Girl	90
Boy	89
Unknown	13
	<i>Year 12 / 13</i>
Total young people	87
Girl	38
Boy	45
Unknown	4
Total	279

Table 2 Pupil Referral Unit, Harrogate

Young people	Number
Total young people	7
Girl	1
Boy	6
Age	

Table 3 Jennyfield Youth Centre

Young People	Number
Total young people	6
Girl	3
Boy	2
Unknown	1

TRAX by Night Service

At the time of writing this report it has not been possible to obtain feedback from the young people present at the session. However, the

youth worker involved in hosting the session gave positive feedback.
Please see page 6.