



UNIVERSITY
of
GLASGOW

Conference: Housing and Social Justice

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Social Justice and Anti-Social Behaviour



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Scottish Centre for Research on
SOCIAL JUSTICE

Social Justice and Anti-Social Behaviour

Goals of Social Justice

- Every child, regardless of his or her family background, has the best possible start in life
- Every young person has the opportunities, skills and support to make a successful transition to working life and active citizenship
- Every family is able to support itself –with work for those who can and security for those who can't
- Every person beyond working age has a decent quality of life
- Every person both contributes to and benefits from the community in which they live
- *Social Justice... a Scotland where everyone matters* (Scottish Executive, 1999)

Principles of Social Justice

- *integration* of responses and policies from different agencies and organisations;
 - *prevention* of social exclusion by focusing on its causes and on early intervention;
 - *understanding* of good practice, through sound evaluation and dissemination, and support for innovative approaches;
 - *inclusiveness* in policy development, involving a wide range of stakeholders; and
 - *empowerment* of individuals and communities to enable them to take up new opportunities and gain more control over their lives.
- *Social inclusion: opening the door to a better Scotland* (Scottish Office, 1999).

Balancing rights

- Needs to be a balance between the rights of individuals - both perpetrators and victims
- Concern with the welfare of the community - 'the common good'
- Increasing legislation on anti-social behaviour seen as addressing an imbalance - perpetrators not being tackled
- Plethora of initiatives – CCTV, neighbourhood wardens, ASBOs,
- Increasing role of housing organisations in policing disorder

Legal action v support

- Concern that legal action just moves the problem on – displacement effect
- Does not tackle underlying problems
- Would rehabilitative approach be more effective?

Rehabilitation

– Dundee Families Project

- Set up in 1996 to provide a service for families with ‘anti-social behaviour’
- Works with a small number of families (138 between 1996-2001)
- Core partners
 - Housing and Social Work Departments of Dundee City Council and NCH Action for Children
- Other agencies involved:
 - Police, health service, education, Benefits agency and other voluntary and charitable organisations

Key Elements of the Service

- Service takes 3 main forms:
 - core
 - dispersed
 - outreach.
- Intensive support and counselling provided to:
 - individual adults and children
 - couples
 - families as a whole
 - Groups
- Involvement of other agencies

ASB issues

- Many of the families had a long history of serious anti-social behaviour
- Half the adults had criminal convictions for offences such as assault, theft, car offences, shop-lifting, housebreaking and drug-related offences
- Main types of ASB were noise complaints, violence, damage to property, drug-dealing, fire-raising
- Complaints about both adults and children

Family characteristics

- Virtually all families were poor - many headed by a lone parent
- 70% had drug or alcohol problems
- Mental health problems common – many women suffered from depression
- A number of the families had serious health problems: including heart problems, kidney problems, cancer and epilepsy
- Evidence of parenting problems, abuse and domestic violence
- Children – truanting, exclusion from school, attention disorders, autism

Outcomes

- 60% of cases had 'successful' outcomes
- Both housing and social work reported that the majority of closed cases were 'at least satisfactory'
- 18% were 'unsuccessful', in that major goals had not been met.
- Some still had serious difficulties and in 2 instances the children had been since taken into care.
- The rest of the cases had either moved away or not completed the programme

Impact of the project

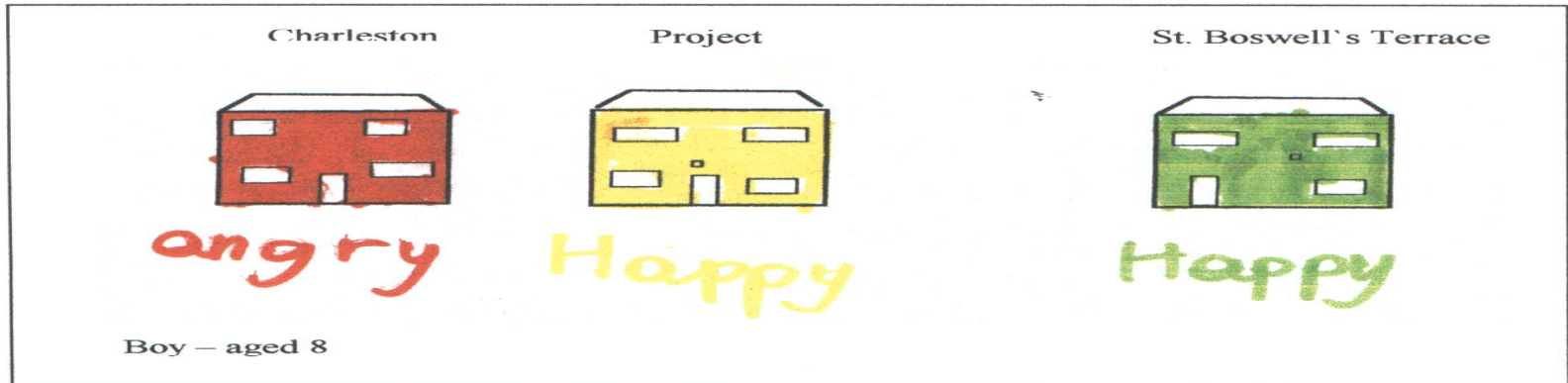


Figure 1

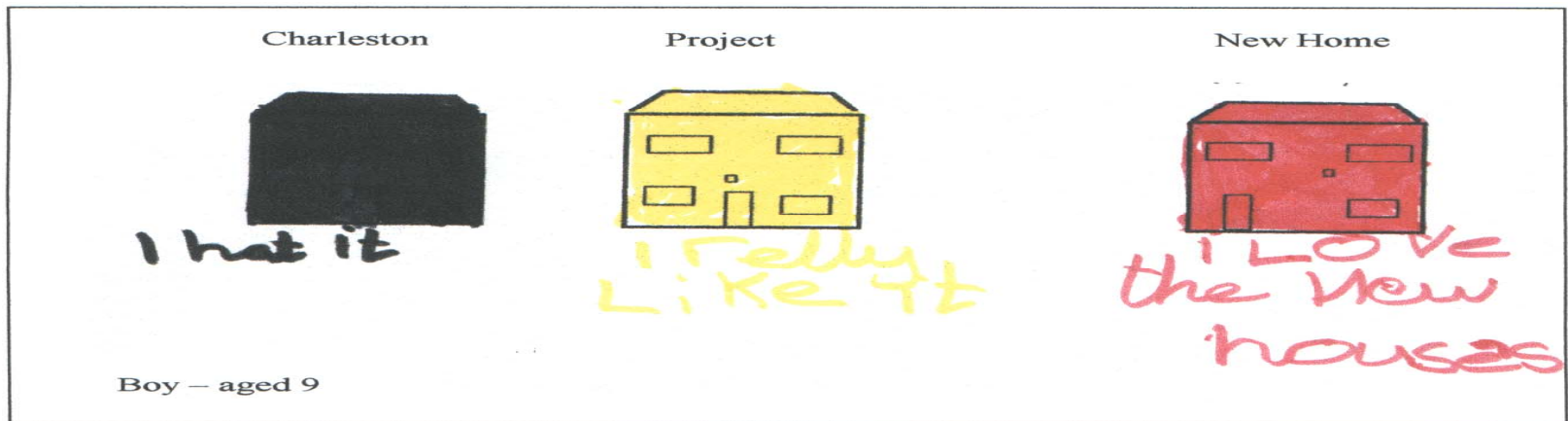


Figure 2

Conclusion

- *It is a worthwhile project, it is worth investing that level of resources to try and protect innocent children and to try and integrate people back in to society. It is expensive but it is probably value for money*

Questions

- How do you ensure Social Justice for both victims and perpetrators ?
- Is the current balance right?
- Should perpetrators have benefits withdrawn or refused improvements to their homes?
- Would rehabilitative projects save money in the long-term?