

Understanding Keyworker Responses to Young Homeless Women Who Drink while in Supported Accommodation

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Presentation Overview...

- Inspiration for my PhD project – working in the sector
- Research Questions
- The context the project sits within
- The conceptual framework including the use of Street-Level Bureaucracy
- Planned project research design and methods
- Questions and thoughts!

Project

Background

Scottish Youth Homelessness

- 16-25 year old evictions in Scotland due to family breakdown
- Increase of homeless 16-25 year olds presenting with complex needs (including mental health and substance issues)
- Greater strain on temporary accommodation as people stay for longer

Professionalization of the Homeless Sector

- A variety of different service designs within the sector
- Varying levels of training and professional experience
- Increase in former “consumer staff members” and staff members with direct personal experience

Project

Background

Alcohol Use and Policy

- UK 16-25 year olds drinking less, but still more than European counterparts
- Scotland consumes more than England & Wales
- Gender can have a huge impact on perceptions of alcohol use

Women in Society

- Current trends in the media and the rise of misogyny
- The backlash against feminism
- The breaking of traditional gender roles and behaviours
- Often affected by additional forms of disadvantage due to being the main caregivers to children

My approach -
taking SLB
downstream
....to the
“service-level
bureaucrat”

Street-Level Bureaucrat

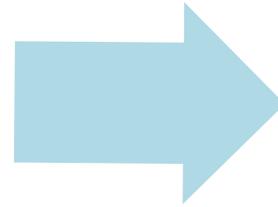
- Can use their discretion to withhold or provide services
- First point of entry into the system
- Makes decisions on complex and unique cases/applications
- Working within regulation and resource constraints

“Service-Level Bureaucrat”

- Can use their discretion to adhere to or contravene service rules and withdraw services
- Main point of engagement for continued service placement/support – (*Keyworkers in Supported Accommodation*)
- Makes decisions based on individuals specific needs/circumstances
- Working within funding and resource constraints
- **Hidden in a often closed off setting**

Street-Level Bureaucrat

Lipsky looks at **front line staff** who make decisions using their **discretion** regarding **access to services**, where the individual is a **captive audience** and has little choice. The work within **resource constraint** necessitating access rationing or **“gatekeeping”**.



“Service-Level Bureaucrat”

Downstream, already in services, **“second-line staff”** use their **discretion** to decide on an individual's **continued access to services** they are receiving – or referral to additional services – with they have **finite resources**. Their service users are a reliant on the service as a **captive audience**. Staff members enact **“gatekeeping”** to continued service provision.

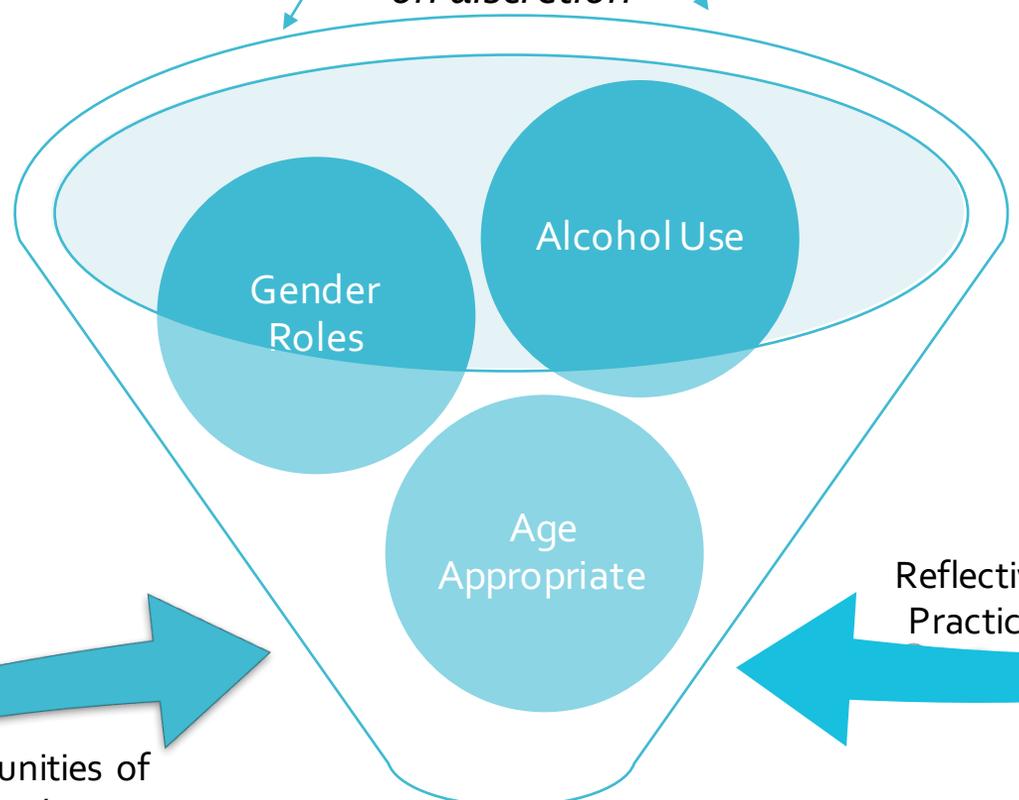
What I want to find out...

I want to examine through case studies if supported accommodation **keyworkers do act as “service-level bureaucrats”** and if they do, **what influences their decisions** when they use their discretion, and how does this ultimately affect **service users outcomes**.

I am focusing on young women who use alcohol because of where culturally molded **expectations** or stigmas associated with **alcohol misuse, gender based behaviour** and **youth behaviour** intersect.

To do this I need to look at what these expectations might be, where they come from (society or personally) and if they do have an impact, or if keyworkers are able to negate them through **reflective practices**

*Culturally informed influences
on discretion*



Gender
Roles

Alcohol Use

Age
Appropriate

Reflective
Practice

Organisational
Ethos

Personal
Experiences

Communities of
Practice

Professional
Experience

Resource
Constraints

Keyworker
Discretion

Personally informed influences on discretion

Research Aim and Questions

Aim: To assess the responses of supported accommodation projects and their staff members to young female residents who drink alcohol.

RQ1: What impact does drinking have on young women's behaviour and relationships within the supported accommodation setting?

RQ2: How do keyworkers interpret the young female residents' alcohol use within the context of current drinking cultures?

RQ3: How do keyworker perceptions, values and experiences affect how they respond to young female residents who drink?

RQ4: How does organisational policy and ethos affect the service response to young female residents' drinking?

My Methods...

- Study Design: Multiple-case study & comparative case study elements –
 - 4 supported accommodation projects
 - 1 large youth specific service, 1 smaller youth specific service, 1 general needs mixed service
- Non-participant observation: On a scale between non-participant and partial-participant observation.
 - Field notes
 - Informal interviews
 - Reflectivity journal
- Document analysis: Organizational policy and guidance documents
- Focus groups:
 - With residents, aiming for 6 participants, 1 per case study
- Interviews:
 - With staff members: Aiming for 6 or more per project, use vignettes, audio recorded and transcribed, approximately an hour each. Include both keyworkers, night staff and managers where possible.