

IMPORTANT AMENDMENT

UPDATE to pages 37 – 39 on **Detached Youth Work and Legal Issues**, in *The Detached Youth Work Guidelines 2007*, specifically the duty to report crime.

The primary function of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 is the prevention of crime.

Sec. 115 states that individuals and agencies (including youth services) have a DUTY to share information for the prevention of crime.

The duty to prevent a crime could mean informing the police that someone has left your youth club carrying a gun and saying they are going to shoot Mr Jones, for example. To share this information would be to prevent a specific crime against a specific victim.

However, given the purpose of the Act is to prevent crime in general, having someone arrested for a crime that has already been committed would be in keeping with the function of the Act because that person has a proven propensity to commit crime and so possibly has an increased likelihood of doing so again - particularly if getting away with committing the offence makes them feel they are untouchable. So sharing information in this sense would be to prevent crime in a more general, unspecific sense. Some officials in the criminal justice system hold this position.

Given that youth work, and especially detached youth work, is based on the development of trusting relationships with young people, and that detached youth workers will often witness crimes being committed (drug use being a common example), or receive information about criminal activity, the duty to report crime could be seen to be reducing the capacity of workers to develop trusting relationships with some young people. However, given that solid youth work interventions could also be seen as measures which in themselves prevent crime, and the young people most likely to commit crimes are often also the ones Detached Youth Workers are likely to be working with, there is a clear conflict of interest.

The Federation for Detached Youth Work recommends that these issues are discussed with the workers employers / Authority, and a policy for youth workers on the prevention and reporting of crime, in line with the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act, drawn up by the employing body. Workers should adhere to this policy.