



UEL Research & Knowledge Exchange Conference 2013

Call for Abstracts

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Title of Abstract:	"Dost Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: an evaluation of a 360° relationship-based model of practice with young refugees and migrants"
Key Theme/ Key words:	Relationship-based, refugees, migrants, social value, guardianship, mental health, emotional well-being, positive minds

Abstract (No more than 400 words):

This presentation reviews a qualitative research project undertaken with Dost Centre for Young Refugees and Migrants. Dost means *friend* in several languages. The Centre was founded in 2000. It works with children who arrive in the UK alone seeking protection and asylum, and with young migrants who have arrived in this country with their families. Dost provides a range of services for them, including advice, advocacy and therapeutic support, and education, play and youth activities. Dost is committed to sharing knowledge and influencing policy and practice, and provides consultancy services and workshops to professionals working with this service user group.

In the summer of 2012 three researchers from UEL conducted 20 self-selected

face-to-face semi-structured interviews with male and female Dost service users aged between 12 and 26 years. Some of the interviewees had been involved with the project since its inception; others were very recent recruits to the youth sessions. Interviewees spoke for between 20 and 120 minutes. Interviews were subsequently transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis using NVivo as a research tool.

The young people helped by Dost were overwhelmingly grateful for a child-facing organisation that aimed to 'join up' the fragmented pieces of their lives. They spoke about Dost as a lifeline, a safety net, a place containing real friends, and a desperately needed 'home' in a context where parents, wider family and community had often been lost. We were told with some urgency by almost all of the young people that Dost's services needed to be able to continue and develop. The young migrants also frequently stressed the opportunities Britain offered them and their desire to make something of themselves here.

The 360° relationship-based model at Dost, focussed on 'developing positive minds', does seem to deliver something qualitatively different from other more process-driven services for vulnerable children and young people. From the point of view of the young people, we found Dost to be a highly effective organisation providing what is in effect 'guardianship' for vulnerable service users. An evaluation of the Scottish Guardianship Service Pilot (Crawley and Kohli, 2011) obtained similar very positive views about 'guardians' from young asylum seekers.

Presentations have been or will be given at the Trinity Centre, East Ham, to Dost staff and trustees; and at the Dost Away Day at UEL in March 2013; and to the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust's Policy Seminar Series. A research report will shortly be available on the charity's website at www.dostcentre.org.