

PRACTICAL SOCIAL WORK

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Working with Young Offenders

Second Edition

John Pitts





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Preface to the Second Edition

When I wrote the first edition of this book, in the late 1980s, young offenders were still the responsibility of local authority field social workers. Because of this, the first edition of *Working with Young Offenders* was aimed, largely, at field social workers who might, from time to time, work with children and young people in trouble with the law, and local authority youth justice workers.

Today, workers with young offenders are specialists not generalists, even though they may be drawn from education, the health service, the police, the education service, the local authority social services department or specialist voluntary sector programmes. With the implementation of the Crime and Disorder Act (1998), they also have a great deal more power and responsibility. And so in this new edition of *Working with Young Offenders* I have tried to address these changes in the administration of youth justice, the role of youth justice workers and the substantial changes in the law which have occurred since the first edition was published.

I have been helped enormously in this task by the youth justice workers, youth workers, police officers, social workers and the magistrate who attended my youth justice and community safety seminars at the University of Luton's Vauxhall Centre for the Study of Crime. At the Centre Alan Marlow and David Porteous have given me many valuable ideas about community safety and youth victimisation, which I have gratefully integrated into this book. Charley Burr, the co-ordinator of the Camden Investing in Young People Initiative, has revealed to me how the youth justice and community safety provision of the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) can be made to work in unison to benefit children and young people in trouble. The chapters on preventive work have benefited enormously from Charley's wise counsel.

I began to write the second edition of *Working With Young Offenders* just before the 1997 election. This was the worst possible time to start, since government policy and the law were both in a state of flux. That I stuck with the task is a testimony to the

encouragement, the sound advice, the wealth of material supplied by, and my discussions with, Mike Thomas, Chair of the National Association for Youth Justice and Head of Luton's Youth Offending Team. He kept telling me that youth justice workers needed a book like this. I hope he was right.

JOHN PITTS