

Presentation title:

Within 48 hours - Professionals' perspective on serious talks with young crime suspects in the city of Stockholm

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Young people are the most crime-active group in society, and in the recent decade juvenile delinquency has emerged as one of the central problem areas in Swedish public debate. How the work of preventing crime among children and youths should be designed is therefore a highly relevant question. In the city of Stockholm, so-called "serious talks" with young people who are suspected of crime for the first time, are used as a method to reduce recidivism. However, such initiatives have no clear scientific support based on previous studies. The overall purpose of this study was to examine professionals' perspectives on the work with serious talks in the city of Stockholm. To interpret and conceptualize the results, Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracies has mainly been used as a theoretical perspective. Key informant interviews were conducted with professionals in 12 of Stockholm City's 13 district administrations. The overall results show that discretion does not necessarily become or is perceived as desirable due to two main reasons. The first is about the practical, that is, vague guidelines and definitions as well as ambiguities regarding implementation and cooperation with the police. The second is about the value of the intervention, ie that the professionals do not really see any concrete meaning with serious talks due to the lack of knowledge support and that there is a low risk of continued criminal behavior among the majority of young people who are called for serious talks. The discretion given to the professionals is thus not perceived as fulfilling, facilitating or meaningful, but as aggravating and something that creates confusion and undermines work motivation. Finally, the results are also discussed in relation to what can be interpreted as the underlying assumptions that justify serious talks among political decision-makers in the city of Stockholm.