'Young People & Violent Extremism'
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In 2016 I was contracted by British Council/SALTO Cultural Diversity to write a resource for youth workers on Young People & Violent Extremism[1] (the resource was published earlier this year and is available by clicking on the title picture with this article). Writing it gave me the opportunity to take a current hot topic – radicalisation – and apply some of the learning I've gained in recent years around active citizenship approaches with young people that might help youth workers across Europe consider ways to respond.

This summer I've had opportunities to share some of the core ideas and approaches from the resource with colleagues and organisations both here at home and abroad including presenting a Seminar as part of the Critical Hub (the paper presented at the Seminar is available from YouthAction NI .

Bringing together our experiences and wisdom creates space for critical reflection in an attempt to get beneath the surface of headlines and public discourse regarding young people and violence and as we work towards meaningful responses in the various contexts in which we find ourselves. For some the challenge is young people involved in street violence, for some it's about young people travelling overseas to fight with militant organisations, and others are concerned about young people seeking to defend or protect their community from external threats by joining militant groups.

Vital questions face us: When does violence become legitimate? How do we stand against violence and the various ways in which young people are problematized or exploited? How do we stand against dominant forces in our communities that want to exert social control or maintain the status quo? What opportunities exist to subvert dominant narratives about young people and violence? How do we ensure young people's voices are heard?

None of these questions have straightforward answers and are deserving of time and dialogue. There is much to learn but I know that youth work works, it has a very valuable contribution to make to young people, and supports them to be partners in making change happen shaping society for the better for all of us.

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1 https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/cultural-diversity/publications/youngpeopleandextremismpack/