

Speaking of Research

South Coast Doctoral Training Partnership Podcast

Series 1 – Episode 6 – Charlotte Booker

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Deliberate fire settings, arson, critical realism, fire safety, impact, policy and practice, qualitative research, fire rescue services, fire safety education, open access journals, fire re-offenses, societal impact, PhD methodology, research insights, fire and rescue services.

SPEAKERS

Catherine McDonald, Charlotte Booker

Catherine McDonald 00:03

Hello and welcome to Speaking of Research, a podcast from the South Coast Doctoral Training Partnership. I'm Catherine McDonald, and in this first series of our podcast, we're talking about impact and how researchers can achieve it. We're recording at the amazing Cumberland Lodge, and we're speaking to doctoral researchers about their research, who might benefit from it, and how they hope it will make a difference. In this episode, I'm joined by Charlotte Booker from the University of Portsmouth. Could you tell me a little bit more about your research?

Charlotte Booker 00:37

Yeah, so I'm looking at deliberate fire settings. So basically, what this means is, I'm looking at people who have intentionally started a misuse fire. And yeah, it's quite a big problem out there. So, about half of all fires in England that are attended by fire rescue services are deliberate fires, and there's really horrible consequences to this offense. So just as an example, the annual cost is about £1.3 billion to the UK economy. And of course, you have some really horrible consequences, like fatalities and injuries.

Catherine McDonald 01:17

Obviously, I think what people listening to this will be thinking is or we're not using the term arson. Are you able to explain why we're not doing that? Okay, understood. And so, tell us, Charlotte, how are you actually conducting your PhD? What methodology are you using?

Charlotte Booker 01:25

Yeah, so arson is a legal term, so this just refers to officially recorded incidents. But there's a few issues surrounded the reporting of officially recorded incidents, so yeah, we use the term deliberate fire setting as more of an umbrella term, so it includes things like arson, but also when someone has self reported a history of deliberate fire setting. So, a little bit more inclusive. So, my PhD is quite

qualitative. I'm coming from the perspective of critical realism. So, the sort of take home point with critical realism is, what we can't see causes what we can see, which is really good when I'm looking to have impact with policy and practice. Yeah, so my first study is a critical read list review.

Catherine McDonald 02:27

And do you find that the methods you're using, are they delivering for you? Are you enjoying using those methods?

Charlotte Booker 02:33

Yeah, it's a complete, completely new methodology for me. So, it's been quite fun to teach myself something new. And yeah, get into it.

Catherine McDonald 02:43

So, let's talk a little bit about, you know, impact and what you hope your PhD will achieve. So, what new insights do you think your PhD will provide? And then how do you hope those insights will go on to benefit people?

Charlotte Booker 02:55

Yeah, so the consequences of deliberate fire setting are obviously quite devastating. So, if we can improve the fire safety education interventions that are already out there and hopefully make them more effective, then the hope is that we can reduce the number of fire re-offenses and have a positive impact on society.

Catherine McDonald 03:20

Absolutely. And so how do you intend to ensure that you do have impact with this research, that it sort of gets in the hands of the right people and can inform the change that you'd like it to?

Charlotte Booker 03:33

Yeah, so at the time of us recording this, I have a conference next week with iFire, so that is solely focused on deliberate fire setting. So that's a good opportunity for me to present what I'm doing with the review. And yeah, we plan to try and publish our studies in open access journals as much as possible. And yeah, just talking with fire and rescue services as they're primarily the main organisation that deliver fire safety education interventions.

Catherine McDonald 04:09

Sure, and are at the front line of these things. Well, Charlotte, we wish you all the best with that. Thank you for talking to us today, and thanks to you for listening to this episode of Speaking of Research from the South Coast Doctoral Training Partnership. To find out more, please visit southcoastdtp.ac.uk. Don't forget to subscribe wherever you get your podcasts to access earlier and forthcoming episodes. This was a Research Podcast production.