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supports those involved in young people's personal and social development and works to enable all young people to fulfil their potential as individuals and citizens within a socially just society.

We achieve this by:
- informing, advising and helping those who work with young people in a variety of settings;
- influencing and shaping youth policy and improving youth services nationally and locally; and
- promoting young people's participation, influence and place in society.

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Contents

Youth & Policy
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Editorial 5
Ruth Gilchrist, Tony Jeffs and Jean Spence

Youth Policy 1995–2005: From 'the best start' to 'youth smatters' 7
Bob Coles

If youth matters, where is the youth work? 21
Bernard Davies

Whose Green Paper is it anyway? 27
Tim Eyres

Youth Matters 32
Bryan Merton

Youth Matters: Money Matters. The role of the community and voluntary sector 37
Billie Oliver

Review of Government Green Paper – *Youth Matters* 43
Kim Peake

Why Does Youth Matter? 49
Patrick Turner

***Youth Matters* – options for improvement** 54
Kevin Williams

***Youth Matters* – a plan for development?** 59
Mary Wolfe

Testing a Green Paper 64
Tom Wylie

The impact of *Youth Matters* on youth participation 70
Blossom Young

Classic Text: *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration* (1904) 75
Tony Jeffs

The Year of the Volunteer: Formalising the Goodwill Mountain 84
Heather Smith

What does Paulo Freire have to say about youth work? 94
Dod Forrest

Remembering Joan Tash: 1920–2005 105
David Collander-Brown

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Editorial

Ruth Gilchrist, Tony Jeffs and Jean Spence

This is a rather different edition of *Youth and Policy* from anything we have produced in the past. Our reason for breaking with tradition is that the Editorial Group felt that the Green Paper, *Youth Matters* published over the summer required more than passing consideration. Therefore over a year ago, when we initially believed it would be released, we approached a variety of individuals engaged in youth work or training to write a short article on what they felt were the strengths and weaknesses of the Green Paper. Despite having only a matter of weeks at their disposal to respond, the majority of those asked managed to find the time and energy to submit an article. It is these responses that form the bulk of this issue.

The articles are complemented by a Classic Text referring to a report of 1904 which readers are invited to compare with the substance of the current Green Paper. The set is concluded by a response to the Russell Commission's report on young people and volunteering, published in March this year in the lead-up to the Green Paper. Russell's recommendations have been largely incorporated uncritically into *Youth Matters* but Smith's paper suggests that this is not unproblematic.

To conclude this issue of the journal, Dod Forrest applies the thought of one of the most significant educationalists of the twentieth century, Paulo Friere, to the general question of youth work. Finally, Joan Tash, who died this summer, is remembered in an obituary written by one of her students.

If any readers wish to submit an article or letter relating to the issues raised either by the Green Paper or the contributors to this issue we would be delighted to hear from you. However, please note we will be compiling the next issue (number 90) within a month of you receiving this edition. Therefore please do not delay in getting in touch with the editors.

Youth Policy 1995–2005: From 'the best start' to 'youth smatters'

Bob Coles

This article is based on a presentation given to the Michael Sieff Foundation conference in September 2005. It seeks to draw on research conducted for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation which examined the initial challenges faced by the Connexions Strategy in its early years (Britton et al, 2002) and the experiences of three, carefully chosen, Connexions partnerships in designing and delivering multi-agency intervention and support for vulnerable young people (Coles et al, 2004). A more detailed reporting of this research will follow in subsequent articles. The aim of this review is to contrast the early days of the 1997 Labour Government when the development of youth policy looked so promising (Coles, 2000; 2004b) with the disappointing proposals contained in the 2005 Green Paper *Youth Matters* (HM Government, 2005). Although general comment will be made on the research and evidence base used within the Green Paper, the concentration of this critique will be on the threat made through the Green Paper to services and support for vulnerable young people.

The year 1995 was chosen as the start point for this review for quite personal reasons. In 1995 I published a book on *Youth and Social Policy* which at the time I thought was a daring thing to do – both for me and for the publishers. It was daring because 'youth policy' was not really an academic sub-discipline in the UK and was rarely taught as an academic course. It was also daring because the importance of youth policy was denied by the UK government. When youth policy was discussed in Europe, the Department for Education used to send along a spokesperson who declared proudly that the UK didn't have a youth policy, nor did it need or want one. Government at the time claimed that such things were much more properly dealt with by the great departments of state which dealt separately with the institutions of education, crime, law and order, social security, health and the like. The book argued that this was a huge mistake, encouraging different departments that were not just, by default, unco-ordinated, but sometimes pulling in completely opposite directions. The Home Office may wish to reduce levels of youth crime, but the DFES had presided over educational reform which had increased permanent school exclusions by 450% in just seven short years (Parsons, 1999) – and school exclusion was known as a key correlate of youth crime (Graham and Bowling, 1995). This lack of co-ordination was wasteful of public expenditure and wasteful of young people's lives. *Youth and Social Policy* called for a Minster for Youth. It also developed a paradigm of young people's rights through which youth citizenship could be enhanced and judged. Since 1997 we have had two ministers of youth. We now have a Minister for Children, Young People and Families, although most refer to her as the Minister for Children. We also now have those five *Every Child Matters* criteria against which we can judge the welfare of children and young people.

This summer I have been (jointly) writing another book *Snakes and Ladders*, reviewing a

nine year research programme, covering around 50 independent research projects about young people, undertaken by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF). All of these have been systematically ignored by the Green Paper. Two of these, that I was personally involved in, examined the Connexions Strategy, with the most recent specifically addressing how Connexions might be re-configured in the light of developments such as the *Every Child Matters* agenda and children's trusts (Britton et al, 2002; Coles et al, 2004). I want to use this latter research to examine some of the achievements and difficulties Connexions has faced in its short life, and what will be missed when it is eclipsed.

'The Best Start . . .'

The 1997 Labour government came in with a commitment to prioritising 'Education, education, education' and to being 'tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime', although few of us expected that this would translate into a radical development of coherent youth policy. Yet that is what we got, although Government chose to keep quiet about it. Under the mid-wifery of a new Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) it started with a number of reports on youth issues (Coles, 2000). The first three reports of the SEU were dominated by youth policy issues with reports on:

- Truancy and School Exclusion (SEU, 1998a);
- Homelessness (including youth homelessness) (SEU, 1998b);
- *Bringing Britain Together* – on Britain's most deprived communities – including the plight of young people within these (SEU, 1998c).

This third report spawned 18 different Policy Action Teams (PATs), including one (PAT 12) on Young People (chaired by the head of the SEU itself). This was refreshingly honest in identifying the failures of the past and in helping to define the guiding principles of national youth policy at the turn of the century (National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (2000). It even contained (what I took to be) a joke on page 32 – a map of the proliferation of youth initiatives in a single London borough – a tapestry of over-lapping confusion and muddle emanating from eight government departments, six units and at least another ten other agencies. The report pointed out that Britain was alone in Western Europe in having no minister, no ministry, and no cross-ministerial group to provide such co-ordination. As a result of PAT 12, we did get a minister; a unit, the *Children and Young People's Unit*, and a cross-departmental group, the chair of which alternated between the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for Education.

The fourth and fifth reports of the SEU in 1999 were also on youth policy issues, on:

- Teenage Pregnancy (on the 90,000 conceptions to teenagers in 1997, with 8,000 under the age of 16) making Britain the teenage pregnancy capital of Western Europe – with a rate twice that of Germany, three times that of France and six times that of Holland (SEU, 1999a);
- NEET (*Bridging the Gap*) and the estimated 160,000 young 16 to 18-year-olds (around 8 per cent of the age group), not in any form of education, employment or training (SEU, 1999b).

There were similarities of approach in all five of these SEU reports:

- A recognition that many of the social problems associated with young people were related together ('joined up problems') associated with 'social exclusion';
- That 'social exclusion' could often not be blamed on the victims, but was often the direct or indirect result of the policies and practices of the powerful rather than the powerless. Often 'social exclusion' was the inadvertent consequence of national or local social policy for which the government was responsible. Head teachers were permanently excluding 12,000 young people (often for trivial reasons) who as a consequence were denied any education at all in contravention of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Health professionals and others were delivering poor sex education and/or user-unfriendly contraception services. Careers education and guidance were delivered too little and too late to those who most needed it, and without due recognition of the other social, community and family factors which blighted a young person's opportunity to succeed.

What government set about doing in all the areas was to demand action across departments, co-ordination of effort between them and, where necessary, the development of new structures and services to deliver policy initiatives across departments, and to try to achieve brave new targets to reduce truancy, school exclusion, homelessness, teenage pregnancy and NEET.

In all these areas there was also a recognition with PAT 12 of the inter-connectedness of the issues, but the dis-connectedness of the policy response. To take one example – NEET was certainly not neat. It was associated with previous failures and under achievement in school and was a predictor of later unemployment. Some groups and categories were much more likely to disengage than others: those with mental health problems, young carers, young people 'looked after', and those involved in youth crime or in drug misuse. But when we examine the departmental responsibility for these issues, we see that this was spread across numerous, unco-ordinated, government departments and agencies.

Outside of the jurisdiction of the SEU other radical and far reaching reforms were afoot. These were to deal with the scandalous mismanagement of youth crime and youth justice (Audit Commission, 1996), and the care, and care leaving, systems (Utting, 1997). These reforms, however, were largely left to the Home Office (including a newly formed Youth Justice Board) and the Department of Health, responsible for children and young people in, and leaving, care. These led to changes in the law (The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and the Children (Leaving Care) Act, 2000) both of which, when implemented, profoundly changed the policy landscape of youth support and intervention. There were similarities of approach, one of which was to develop multi-disciplinary, or multi-agency teams, a strategy which was also adopted in Government's approach to NEET.

The origins of Connexions

Bridging the Gap, together with a parallel White Paper *Learning to Succeed*, brought a new strategy on youth policy – the Connexions Strategy announced by the Prime Minister in

December 1999. This, Tony Blair said, signalled the development of 'the youth support service' – our 'front line policy' to give 'the best start in life for every young person'. His introduction to the Connexions prospectus is worth quoting a little more – not to be tiresome – but because it quite easily could have been the foreword to *Youth Matters* four and a half years later.

> *As a Government, we have already taken steps to improve the way public services support young people, especially those who are disadvantaged. We are determined to make schools work better to equip their pupils for personal life, citizenship and the world of work. We have overhauled the youth justice system to help prevent young people sliding into a life of crime. Our Quality Protects programme is making social services more responsive to the needs of vulnerable children, young adults and their families and putting in place new arrangements for those in, and leaving care.*
>
> *But we know we must do more – not in isolated Government Departments, but jointly between our Departments and in partnership with external groups such as the police, social services, health services, schools, local communities, employers, and young people themselves.*
> *This is why last summer, in our* Learning to Succeed *White Paper, we committed ourselves to setting up a single, coherent strategy aimed at all young people – the Connexions Strategy – with the Connexions Service, a support service for all young people, as its centrepiece.*
>
> *The Connexions Service will be a modern, public service which works in a completely new way . . . Statutory agencies, the voluntary sector and specialist private sector businesses will work together to provide every young person with access to a Personal Adviser. The adviser will provide a wide range of support to meet the young person's needs and help them reach their full potential.*

It is worth reminding ourselves about some of the main principles which lay behind the Connexions Strategy so that we can be clear what is potentially under threat under the *Youth Matters* agenda and what is simply being re-launched. (These principles are based on research rather than those contained in the initial prospectus – though I doubt Connexions personnel would disagree with this summary (Coles et al, 2004).) The Connexions Strategy was designed to support young people between the ages of 13 and 19 years:

- For all young people in that age group but with targeted support for those most in need;
- Espousing the 'youth participation agenda', that to be most effective, the Strategy should involve and include young people in the design, management, evaluation, and revision of the Strategy (including being, involved in the appointment of Connexions staff and the development of a young person's charter);
- With intervention (more particularly targeted intervention) based on a comprehensive and holistic assessment of need;
- That the co-ordination of the intervention should be through a lead professional (the Personal Adviser (PA)) who would provide a focus point for 'wrap-around support';
- That support should be young person-centred with the Personal Adviser, where necessary, responsible for the 'brokerage' of specialist support from other partner agencies, and

acting as 'advocate' on behalf of the young person where such agencies were remiss in their delivery of services;

- That to support such a sea-change in professional support for young people there should be an extensive and explicit nation-wide training programme to train Personal Advisers in their new work and the new approach and to familiarise adjacent professions about the Strategy and the work of PAs.

Connexions was organisationally complex from the outset. It initially had a Connexions Service National Unit (CSNU) responsible for issuing advice and guidance on the development of structures and practices. The next layer was a series of 47 sub-regional partnership boards matched in their geographical coverage by the 47 Learning and Skills Councils set up following *Learning to Succeed*. The partnership boards were designed to draw in key stakeholders from careers companies, constituent local authorities, education, schools and colleges, training, the police, health etc., and many boards were large. The sub-regional partnerships often covered a number of different local authority areas (as many as nine) some of which had little experience of working together sub-regionally. The development of Connexions operations at a local authority level was aided by separate Local Management Committees for each local authority area. These also typically had representation on the Partnership Board.

Most Connexions partnerships subcontracted the delivery of services to a number of agencies with front-line staff being re-designated as 'Personal Advisers' no matter what their previous professional training. What many called the 'universal service' was delivered by previously existing careers companies trained and experienced in careers education and guidance. Other, more targeted support was offered by teams of Personal Advisers (often multi-disciplinary) from a variety of backgrounds, including youth work, social work, educational welfare and work in the voluntary sector. These were often given the task of tracking and working with young people who were, or were at risk of becoming, NEET. Other Personal Advisers worked in multi-disciplinary teams in other agency settings such as leaving care teams, Youth Offending Teams, Drug Action teams, teams working on youth homelessness and housing provision.

The *Building Better Connexions* JRF research

How did all this work out in practice? The research conducted for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation was based on around 300 hours of in depth interviews which examined a vertical slice through Connexions from strategic planning to operational delivery. During the first phase the research team interviewed members of partnership boards and local management committees about how they perceived their strategic aims and objectives for Connexions. This phase of the research examined the 'policy intent' of key stakeholders. The second phase of the research involved a series of case studies of work being conducted by Personal Advisers with vulnerable young people. The case studies were matched across the research sites so we could see how the different partnerships deployed PAs in different ways and how they worked with others in addressing problems. The matched groups included young offenders, care leavers, teenage parents, young asylum seekers and others who were, or were at risk of becoming, NEET. For each case study we interviewed the young person, their PA, and a number of other professional workers with whom they were engaged. The aim was to explore

the problems confronted by, and barriers to, effective inter-agency working with vulnerable young people. To illustrate this, one case will be summarised here.

Sal's story

Sal was an intelligent and bright young person who had a history of intermittent attendance at school. She was referred to a Connexions PA following a disclosure to a member of staff at a youth centre about potential physical abuse by the boyfriend of Sal's mother. Sal's attendance at school had also been patchy since the age of 14 years, for varying reasons. Latterly she had been experiencing panic attacks. At some point, Sal's school had referred her to the local Social Services Department, owing to concerns they had about her lack of attendance, and what was potentially happening at home. Despite this, it appeared that Social Services were not expressing concern about what was taking place.

The PA took up the case when Sal was in Year Nine, i.e. 14 years old. The PA worked in partnership with the school Educational Social Worker to try to get her to attend. This involved an agreement that she could skip some non-examination lessons. In year 10, and with the initial agreement of the Head of Year, a work experience placement was arranged for Sal at a local hairdressing salon for two days a week on condition that Sal attended school on the other three days. However, following a change in school personnel the PA received a letter from a school management group questioning the PA's involvement with Sal, and overturning the decision to allow her to go on work experience. If Sal was allowed to do this, it said, then others might try and 'get away with it' as well. Following this, her attendance at school again dropped and, in association with Sal's GP, she was referred to a psychologist who diagnosed agoraphobia. The school promised to send work home but her mother reported that none ever arrived.

During the school holidays Sal's health improved and she did manage to get out of the house more and she had a boyfriend, although this was of some concern to her PA who said he was much older and quite controlling. The PA and Educational Social Worker, however, tried to develop another package of educational opportunities for her. This involved a local college which was experienced in working with year 11 pupils. The school initially agreed that this could be explored and Sal became excited about finally having a fresh start. However, the day before the summer holidays, the PA received a FAX from the school saying the school would not fund the college course; that if she was fit enough to attend college then she should be able to attend school. The PA tried to negotiate about this but the school simply refused.

Meanwhile things were beginning to go wrong at home. Sal's mother contacted the PA to say that, under the influence of her boyfriend, Sal had started to use drugs. Events spiralled, and Sal, then aged fifteen, went missing for six days, during which time neighbours saw her 'squealing around the village' in her boyfriend's car. Sal's mother 'phoned the Social Services department, who told her to call the Police. The mother's house was 'ransacked' and she was increasingly frightened. When Sal and her boyfriend eventually turned up at the mother's house, Sal was bruised, in a drugged state, and 'hysterical'. The boyfriend assaulted the mother, who was afraid to call the Police at first, but later was persuaded to do so, by the PA. A neighbour intervened and was threatened with a knife by the boyfriend. Sal and the

boyfriend disappeared again, and Sal's mother was very fearful, and felt that she would not be able to control Sal should she return. At this point the PA contacted Social Services, who said that they did not think there was anything they could do. When pressed by the PA, who put in writing her concerns for Sal's safety, Social Services responded with a letter of their own:

> *Dear Maureen, I'm writing to let you know that following a consultation with my manager, it's been decided that Social Services will not continue with involvement. Sal turns sixteen next week and is already involved with a large number of agencies, it's not felt there is anything which Social Services could usefully add, I will therefore be closing Sal's file at this office.*

Sal, herself, was left frustrated by all these efforts. She told us:

> *It gets me angry that they tell me something, tell me one thing and they don't do it, you know. So each different person's come out and told me they're going to do something for me and they haven't and then it makes me lose interest. I think, 'Well why should I do it? If you can't be bothered why should I bother?*

One of the key ways in which PAs build trust and rapport with young people is being able to promise and deliver services others have failed to give. If other partners delay, deny or obstruct these services being made available, then that not only affects access to the services themselves, it undermines a relationship of reliability and trust. Part of the skill involved in partnership working is to be able to effectively negotiate and 'broker' services. Where services and obligations are not being provided or fulfilled, part of the PA's task is to act as 'advocate' for the young person in ensuring that partners deliver such services. Some of this 'brokerage' and 'advocacy' can be ensured by senior stakeholders at Board or Local Management Committee level, or through agreements of senior managers of partner agencies. Yet some has to be carried out by PAs in their daily dealings with schools, school managers and others.

In the face of opposition, what was the PA to do? Sal's PA was frustrated by both the school – in attempting to 'broker' services to benefit her education -, and social services – who refused to take the child protection issue seriously. It should immediately be made clear that the research contains many other examples in which PAs proved successful in brokering support and in acting as advocate – being what one young person described as a 'powerful friend' – ensuring other agencies complied and needs were met. Yet this case study also raises some serious *structural* and *systemic* issues about the capacity of the Connexions Strategy in the face of opposition from other agencies: can it fulfil its aims without the co-operation of key partners? And what can be done with them to secure a more effective partnership? Our research drew attention to all of these issues and made recommendations about how they could be redressed. But this leaves open whether the new arrangements being proposed under *Youth Matters* would resolve Sal's case in any different, or more constructive, manner. We think the same *structural* and *systematic* issues would remain and be compounded by others just as fundamental and which the proposals within the Green Paper would simply exacerbate.

Youth Matters or Youth Smatters?

The Green Paper *Youth Matters* does, of course, contain some proposals which are to be welcomed. Firstly, many of the underpinning principles are sound, although familiar. 'Making services for young people more integrated, efficient and effective', 'involving a wide range of organisations', 'improving outcomes', 'narrowing the gap between those who do well and those who do not' could have easily felt at home in the Connexions Strategy in 2000. But 'building on the best of what is currently available', apparently could not embrace the Connexions Service in 2005.

Secondly, as we recognised in *Building Better Connexions*, the time had come for a re-positioning of the strategic planning of services for young people, back with local authorities and integrated with the planning of children's trusts. The DfES five year plan signalled this, and suggested that trusts should act as Connexions LMCs and that powers should shift away from sub-regional partnerships (DfES, 2004). But none of this could or should have meant the wholesale destruction of Connexions. Also to be welcomed are some of the proposals in chapters four and five of the Green Paper: clarification of the 'duties' of local authorities on youth service provision; the specification of exemplars of 'youth entitlements' (although not put in those terms); widening 'information, advice and guidance' beyond the narrow confines of careers education and guidance. But these may be small gains compared to the losses contained in chapters six and seven.

The choice of the word 'matters' in the title of the Green Paper I assume is intended to imply that "youth" is something of importance. But 'smatters' is also appropriate for the gravitas of the document. The noun relates to 'smattering – a slight and superficial knowledge' and its use as a verb has a connotation of 'dabble ... in the sense of to prattle – to talk in a childish or foolish way'. And this is certainly what the Green Paper does.

One of the hallmarks of this Green Paper is its mysterious avoidance or mis-use of evidence. Given this government often insists upon policy being grounded in research and evidence, this Green Paper is almost entirely an evidence-free zone. The cabinet office requested, and was sent, a copy of our draft report on the JRF research prior to publication. They did not reference it at all – which is their prerogative. There was a parallel piece of research funded by the DfES (Hoggarth et al., 2004) which was published virtually at the same time. It reached very similar conclusions about both the benefits and weaknesses of Connexions. This is referenced once in support of a point of marginal significance. The main findings of this report were also systematically ignored. JRF held a one-day conference to disseminate both the JRF and DfES reports in April 2005 with delegates from a wide range of different agencies and institutions. At this time there had been numerous leaks about the content of the long delayed Green Paper – that Connexions would be scrapped, and that the spoils would be divided between schools and colleges and children's trusts. There was unanimous agreement amongst delegates to the conference that allowing schools and colleges to independently commission information, advice and guidance would jeopardize the impartiality and independence of it. Unanimity at conferences is a rare thing, however, and the conference agreed a communiqué which was sent to the Minister for Children, Young People and Families indicating the main conclusions of the conference. This was acknowledged but its recommendations ignored. The Green Paper also chose to ignore the largely positive evaluation of Connexions made by the

National Audit Office in 2003 and many of the OfSTED reports since then. Connexions is not without its critics, and I in my time have been numbered amongst them. The huge ambitions for Connexions meant that it inevitably faced huge challenges and not all of these were solved within the short time it was allowed to exist. Yet the wise council of those discussing the JRF and DFES evaluations were convinced that services could be reconfigured on the basis of what research told us worked and what evidence suggested could, and should, be reformed and refined. Instead the Green Paper suggests we start again with an evidence-free, blank piece of paper.

Ignoring overwhelming evidence is not confined to ignoring Connexions research. In assertively telling the readers what 'we know' and in leaping at 'blue sky' policy suggestions, the authors of the Green Paper are equally adept at the practice of 'smatter'. The DfES commissioned a wide-ranging evaluation of the impact of youth work in England resulting in a 175 page report (Merton et al, 2004). JRF also reported in 2004 on its own research on the impact of detached and outreach youth work on practice with socially excluded young people (Crimmens et al, 2004). None of this is used or even referred to in the Green Paper. Instead, bizarrely, we find a brief and hurried research report based on the British Birth Cohort – children born in 1970 (Feinstein et al, 2005). Not only are the questions used in this research not designed for, nor appropriate, to the task asked of them, but the generational effect is also ignored. The 1970 birth cohort is the generation who, at the age of sixteen found more than a quarter (27%) conscripted on to the old youth training scheme. Might this bleak economic context have impacted upon youth transitions in a different way to that of current teenagers?

But it is not just the sloppy, un-scholastic, immature coverage of research evidence in which the Green Paper 'smatters'. Some of the Green Paper policy solutions also seem naïvely unaware of evidence that seems to suggest fresh disasters may loom. Because the young are deemed to live in a brave new world of new technologies they are assumed to be gullible to the enticements of plastic cards – in this case Opportunity Cards. Yet in this evidence-free dream world, did no-one stop to think about what research could tell us about similar ventures? Had everyone forgotten about those wonderful Connexions Cards and how successful they were? Let me summarise some of the headline findings from the final report of the national evaluation published this year (Rodger and Cowen, 2005).

- Less than 4 per cent of 16-19 year olds redeemed any points at all from their cards;
- 0.8 per cent redeemed 5 or more rewards;
- Less than half of those who had used their card could find anything positive to say about the scheme.

Given this track record of Government plastic cards tried with young people, wherein lies the optimism of the Green Paper that Opportunity Cards will not be another unmitigated disaster?

This article cannot deal with all aspects of the Green Paper but has chosen to mainly focus on intensive support for vulnerable groups of young people. We have already alluded to the fact that Chapter Six of the Green Paper sounds remarkably similar to the 1999 launch of the Connexions Strategy. But how will these be changed under the new arrangements?

First, responsibilities for the organisation of targeted services will be delegated to local authorities working through children's trusts. Youth offending, drug action teams and teenage pregnancy strategies are organised at a local authority level and it thus makes co-ordination between these and action on NEET more feasible. Children's trusts are expected to allow 'high performing Connexions services' to be 'preserved' (in what it does not say). Yet Chapter Five also tells us that where schools and colleges believe that existing Information, Advice and Guidance is poor (and wouldn't Sal's school be likely to rate its service as poor?) then they would be given the right to opt out of any arrangement made by children's trusts and to commission services directly.

Second, integration and support for individual young people at risk of social exclusion is to be accomplished through the nomination of 'a lead professional'. That sounds very much like the Personal Adviser as being at the hub of brokered services. However the guidance for *Lead Professional Good Practice* issued simultaneously with the Green Paper (DfES, 2005) reads as if all reference to Connexions (and more specifically the Personal Adviser), has been struck from the vocabulary of the DfES. The main 'lead professional' being mentioned in this latter document are social workers, family workers and, because this multi-agency planning involved children as well as young people, health visitors. Where there is occasional mention of personal advisers in such multi-agency work, the capital letters of the Connexions Personal Adviser have been carefully stripped away. The message to the Green Paper re-drafting group, "Include some weasel words: stroke Connexions carefully on their way to oblivion" obviously did not reach the group writing the document on 'lead professionals'.

Thirdly, to improve the efficiency of multi-agency working, the Green Paper proposes to merge a number of existing government programmes and their funding streams – including funding for Connexions – and for all this to be delegated to children's trusts. Only Youth Offending Teams are to be exempt from this. This is because they "(YOTs) have had considerable success in delivering targeted crime prevention programmes with a strong performance management culture". With only YOTs 'ring-fenced' funding exempt from a pooling process, the budget previously spent by Connexions partnerships is open to 'budget raids' from a number of sources. Given the added emphasis within the Green Paper on preventative work rather than fire fighting, this offers further justification for children's trusts to slant budgets towards services for children rather than services for young people.

Fourthly, like Connexions, interventions by a joint 'youth support team', will be based upon comprehensive and holistic assessment of need – through a new Common Assessment Framework (CAF) (DfES, 2005c). Other assessments (such as ASSET used by YOTs) are recognised as important to supplement this, but there is no mention made of the APIR framework for which Connexions PAs spent years devising, refining and training. CAF is not only devised for children and young people as if their needs were the same, but CAF is applicable to babies and families as well. It is this combined assault on Connexions' organisation, funding and assessment that suggests that, despite the weasel words in the Green Paper about valuing Connexions' achievements (and especially its valued and recognised brand), there have been no second thoughts about what should stay and what should go.

Finally, why is Connexions being abandoned rather than re-aligned and reformed? What will be missing from the reconfiguration of services and support for young people? And what

does the whole package mean in terms of what will be missed when Connexions is finally gone?

Firstly, Connexions is being abandoned because other snouts wanted to feed in the same trough and gained the support of someone in power. These Green Paper reforms are not about improving services but the allocation of power and resources between them.

Second, what seems to be missing from the proposed new arrangements is more complicated. But the list is quite daunting. It includes:

- any role for a Personal Adviser to 'broker' and 'advocate' on behalf of vulnerable young people
- protocols on joint working with any clearly identifiable responsibility for an "advocacy role";
- mechanisms and protocols to resolve inter-agency disputes;
- adequate management support for front-line workers; and
- a wide-ranging, comprehensive, training programme for ALL professional workers working with children and young people.

Thirdly, what will we miss about Connexions when its fall finally comes about? The list is saddening: firstly, its distinctive 'youth' focus:

- An emphasis on the needs of the young person rather than the vested interests of institutions and agencies ostensibly committed to meeting their needs;

Secondly, the voice of young people:

- Submerged beneath the voices of children, babies and families;

And thirdly, and most importantly, the 'advocate' – the 'powerful friend' for a young person in need:

- Brokering for young people's rights
- Challenging non-compliance by agencies which have never embraced a young-person centred approach to meeting need (especially schools, benefits agencies and other local authority services such as housing and social services).

In summary what the Green Paper represents is a dis-empowering of young people and what is threatened are the important means to empower young people, to advocate for them, and deliver the few rights they have.

And what is left of the Connexions vision after it has been allowed to 'accidentally fall' between the slippery, weasel words of appreciation? Little more than 'a valued and trusted brand'.

It all sounds like the last verse of 'Ten Green Bottles'.

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If youth matters, where is the youth work?

Bernard Davies

If New Labour were a teenager, its behaviour as a youth policy-maker would surely by now have attracted some of that 'intensive support' so strongly advocated by *Youth Matters* (p.6). One diagnosis of its condition might be obsessive-compulsion, even perhaps of paranoia – as evidenced for example by its preoccupation with young people 'committing crime or behaving anti-socially' (p.1) – with youth as the dangerous Other. Or are we witnessing a form of bi-polar syndrome with young people being seen as an 'either-or' phenomenon: as either good and deserving – with 'great commitment (and) caring passionately about the issues of the day' (p.3); or as bad, undeserving and behaving so 'unacceptably' that they have to be excluded from *Youth Matters'* brave new world (p.30)?

Another possibility is that New Labour is suffering from collective post-traumatic stress disorder triggered by terrifying (if largely imagined) encounters with 'feral youth'. And what about all the zooming between manic 'ups' – when no youth policy could possibly be legitimate until it has been approved by every young person in the land; and depressed 'downs' out of which emerge protocols subjecting these same young people's personal or sexual relationship, and those of their 'partners', to tough vetting by powerful professionals (see for example London Child Protection Committee, 2005)?

However such behaviour is explained, the consequence is a pathological excitability in youth policy-making which threatens to become a national epidemic. To test this proposition, consider this (trick) question.

What are the sources and dates of the following quotations?

- '... we must tackle the fragmented nature and variable quality of advice, guidance and support available to young people... '
- '... teenagers ... are still too often let down by a system which tends to treat the problems and challenges that young people face in isolation, and to deliver a piecemeal response....'
- '... we (are) committed to setting up a single, coherent strategy aimed at all young people ... (with) a support service for all young people as its centrepiece...'
- 'There is considerable scope for moving towards a more coherent service ...'
- 'We will give Local Authorities the necessary responsibility, resources, authority and incentives to lead the way towards a more responsive and integrated service for teenagers ...'
- 'This (policy) will lead to an integrated youth support service...'

The catch? Only the last three are from the Green Paper (pp.16, 9, 10). The others, dating from July and December 1999 (DfEE 1999a, para 6.6; DfEE, 1999b, p4), were all part of the high energy hype around the establishment of the Connexions Service.

Youth work commentators – desperate to detect some sanity in all this activity – have (understandably) seized on the positives of what is, after all, the only government statement on their area of practice they're likely to get for the foreseeable future. One of these is the commitment to increasing young people's leverage on provision, including creating an 'opportunities fund' giving young people some genuine control over resources. Another is the £40m over two years for a wider range of meeting places and leisure facilities.

Even these proposals however prompt feelings of déjà vu. Take the 'participation' agenda, for example. As long ago as 1959, the Albemarle Report talked of young people as the Youth Service's 'fourth partner', alongside central and local government and the voluntary sector. It also reached the conclusion that too often it must appear to the young that by joining a club or group they forfeit the opportunity of doing things in the way *they* like' (emphasis in the original). Starting from this focus on the *how* and not just the what of young people's leisure priorities, it therefore encouraged self-programming groups 'which they (young people) would bring into existence themselves. (para.188)

Nor, allowing for nearly 50 years of inflation, does the Green Paper's capital investment proposal look all that generous. Albemarle recommended (para.224) an annual Youth Service building programme which by 1967 had generated some £23 million of capital investment and nearly 3000 new building projects (Davies, 1999: 61). It also called not just for more 'residential opportunities' as the Green Paper does but for more permanent residential centres and 'simpler hostel or base-camp' facilities to be used by young people for short periods (Para 232).

Such historical comparisons are not mere nostalgic indulgences. For one thing they expose the difference between a state paper written by members of an independent group drawing on a range of analytical skills and field-based experience, and one produced by civil servants remote from the action they are recommending and closely vetted by ministers for how well it serves often short-term political imperatives. More fundamentally, history also reminds us that responses to *Youth Matters* need to go beyond the pragmatics. The operational questions which have grabbed the commentators' immediate attention are of course important: will the Green Paper proposals be backed by sufficient resources; will local authorities at last have an unambiguous legal duty to provide for young people in their leisure time; what will commissioning of services do to the youth service's role? This latest government pronouncement on 'youth', however, also demands a principled critique, particularly in the context of the seismic shifts set in motion by the *Every Child Matters* agenda.

What such a critique reveals is that, ultimately, *Youth Matters* isn't much (if at all) about youth work. Gestures to its importance are made – verbal concessions, perhaps, to lobbying by youth service interests. A bland listing is offered of local authority and voluntary sector venues in which youth work takes place (pp.15-16). A vague proposal is made 'to ... re-invigorate youth work by building on the ideas set out in *Transforming Youth Work* and

recognising its vital role in engaging young people' (p.26). The importance to young people of 'enjoyable places in which to spend time ... somewhere safe to hang out with friends' (32) also gets a passing nod.

All this however strikes as mere tokenism when seen in the context of other related DfES's choices. One is to draw on the study used by a former minister to headline claims about youth clubs' negative effects (Feinstein et al, 2005) while ignoring recent (and substantial) studies of youth work and its impact. (Merton et al, 2004; Crimmens et al, 2004). A second is to sideline the findings from the (DfEE-funded) Neighbourhood Support Fund projects which not only demonstrated youth work's effectiveness but also brought this 'closer to teenagers' communities and in everyday surroundings' (p.60) by making real the government's endlessly repeated platitudes about the value of voluntary organisations (see Davies and Docking, 2004).

Perhaps as a result, many of the perspectives underpinning *Youth Matters* are deeply at odds with youth work as a distinctive practice. (See Davies, 2005 for an extended definition of this distinctiveness). Repeatedly the document, adopting a deficiency model of young people, identifies them as a threat. But even more influentially, it relies on predominantly individualistic perspectives of them and their needs as the basis for its proposals.

Without being starry-eyed about previous youth service reports, the contrast with them is striking. As a core principle, *Albemarle*, like the *Thompson Report* after it (Department for Education and Skills, 1982), asserted that 'the (Youth) Service should seek first to provide places for association in which young people may maintain and develop ... their sense of fellowship, of mutual respect [resonant word!] and tolerance' (para. 35 – emphasis added). When considering those 'too wary or too deeply estranged', the Report also concluded that, 'to gain their confidence, to meet their needs and to make them aware of more genuinely rewarding pursuits', the youth service needed to recognise that 'gang loyalties are intense' (para.186).

Youth Matters, on the other hand, seems from the start distracted by its 'cool' (and questionable) assumption that 'the internet, mobile phones, digital TV and games consoles have transformed the way (young people) use their leisure time' (p.12 – emphasis added). It also has the task – a much higher priority than re-energising the youth service – of sorting out 'individually-tailored' IAG (information, advice and guidance – that is Connexions) in ways which assuage the schools' anger over the alleged neglect of careers guidance (p.45).

As a result, underpinned by a future-orientation which assumes that nothing is worth doing unless it has a concrete (and measurable) outcome in later life – and notwithstanding a passing reference to the 'strong ... influence other young people can be' (p.16) – its starting proposition is that 'today's system of support for teenagers is not sufficiently focused around the needs of the individual' (p.11). Personal outcomes are crucial, of course, as valued both by the individuals themselves and by others. However, for pursuing these outcomes, *Youth Matters* lacks the intrinsic grasp of the centrality of sociability in its own right to the teenage world which so shaped the thinking of both *Albemarle* and *Thompson*. Moreover, when it does get round to considering young people's involvement with each other, it conceives of this primarily in terms of 'activities' – valuable in their own

right regardless of the cement provided by their social content, and, it seems, taken up by all young people via a mysterious kind of spontaneous combustion. These appear not only as 'constructive activities' and as 'a wide range of other recreational ... experiences'. Throughout they figure too as 'sporting activities', to be advanced in future though a network of 'development managers' clearly not seen as necessary for supporting music or IT or other key areas of young people's interests (p.36).

In one significant way only is the image of the young person functioning largely outside significant social contexts blurred: when, with even older teenagers apparently being treated as largely the children of their families, this policy statement on youth gives (detailed) attention to adults as parents. Beyond this its individualistic perspective shows up in all its most important proposals:

- Even when the paper argues for young people to make 'a positive contribution to their communities' (p.32), this is invariably defined – as in the quote above – as 'through volunteering'. This, it is true, gets a welcome expansion to include peer mentoring. Nonetheless, most of the strategies proposed ultimately rely heavily on individual choices and individual routes into community involvement – a view which is further reinforced by its link into qualifications and other forms of individual accreditation. Much less obvious is any endorsement of the collective activism around often contentious 'single issues' or (often cross-generationally) for local improvements through which most young people are now most likely to connect with 'politics'.
- Similar reservations emerge when the paper's proposals for young people's participation' are unpicked. Even allowing for the proposed exclusion of naughty boys and girls, a phrase such as 'what young people say they need' (p.34) encapsulates an approach substantially based, it seems, on: 'just ask and you will get'. This seems to rest on two very doubtful assumptions: one, that for the enquirer usable answers will inevitably follow; and two, that for the young person whatever is on their 'wish-list' they will get. It also risks denying a legitimate place for professional knowledge and expertise as well as the inescapable reality of providers' power and responsibilities. What in fact the paper lacks – here as elsewhere – is, first, any sense of the (especially shared) processes which authentic and realisable consultation demands; and, second, who, drawing on what skills, will prompt and prod and support young people through the debates and explorations at the heart of these processes. Without these, what we are most likely to end up with are more and more individual choices made in isolation by one young person after another – and more and more raised, and then disappointed, expectations.
- This focus on the individual as public services' user – indeed as consumer whose 'buying power' (p.25) will be decisive – shows up most clearly in the Green Paper's proposal for a young person's Opportunity Card. At first glance, this has much to recommend it. It suggests for example a real shift of power and control of resources to young people and away from all those patronising and ineffective professionals who are always getting in the way of the young's genuine preferences. Yet – even if we discount the civil liberties' worries over its possible use as a stalking horse for identity cards – young people's exercise of 'choice' conceived in this way could have some unintended, and potentially negative, consequences. By prioritising what each young person wants on their own behalf, it could further privatise their leisure activities and so fragment the

peer group relationships though which so many clarify their identities – and, yes, learn a great deal. It could also undermine further that sense of fellowship, mutuality and tolerance of others which *Albemarle* prioritised – and which, in the name of 'community involvement' and 'community cohesion' the Green Paper also says it values.

None of this is of course to say that youth work could not make a valuable contribution to what *Youth Matters* is proposing. This after all is a practice with the potential for doing this whether young people are 'making the transition to independent adulthood successfully' or are part of that minority 'who face serious or multiple problems and ... become involved in anti-social behaviour' (p.11).

It is to say, however, that within the Green Paper youth work as such figures only marginally. The most it is offered is 'a vital role ... in identifying and engaging young people with additional needs' (p.34). In the table setting out the role of children's trusts in 'integrated planning and commissioning' (p.63) 'youth clubs and detached and outreach workers' appear, not in the 'positive activities' column, but under 'targeted support'. Nor does the youth service or the youth work practice which it alone has an explicit mandate to sustain within public provision get specific mention in the key passages on legislating 'to clarify Local Authorities' duty to secure positive activities for young people' (p.31); or on 'the Local Authority, working through children's trusts, (taking) lead responsibility for youth policy' (p.63).

Whatever its merits on other grounds, the consequence of all this is likely to be that youth workers will end up asking about *Youth Matters*: Where is the youth work? Where will our distinctive skills be used – and validated? What place *and time* will there be first to negotiate access to and develop trusting relationships with young people within their peer group relationships; and then to use these to support and validate their here-and-now adolescent experience as well as to motivate them to consider new interests and take on new challenges with purported long-term pay-offs?

A long and concerted struggle by youth work is certainly going to be needed if it is to have any substantial impact on the youth matters which this Green Paper is so keen to prioritise.

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Whose Green Paper is it anyway?

Tim Eyres

Youth workers might be forgiven for feeling a little protective of the Government's long awaited Green Paper, *Youth Matters*. Every generation of youth workers over the last 40 years has awaited their own adjunct of legislative social policy focused on the youth service and young people. All as eagerly anticipated as the previous, each set out by its authors to be ground breaking in its content and direction for youth work and services for young people. In the absence of a statutory basis for the youth service and with public sector services under seemingly ongoing cost cutting review, the arrival, or indeed the failure to arrive, of each youth policy document of the day has initiated fresh introspection by those in the youth service and analysis of whether there is cause for celebration or the rationale for a wake. *Youth Matters* is the latest in this youth service legacy.

A legacy, well chronicled by a number of commentators such as Bernard Davies, that has provided those working in the youth service with a sense of 'professional inheritance' and past, stretching back to the voluntaryism and paternalism of youth work in Victorian England, through to the emergence of a 'youth service' in the second half of the 20th Century. It is a legacy and sense of professional past not shared by other, more modern architecture, such as Connexions or youth offending teams, no doubt also examining their 'ownership' of the themes set out within *Youth Matters*.

But does this legacy for the youth service matter? For those involved in it, the heartfelt answer is likely to be 'yes' given that it suggests longevity and permanence. The dichotomy here though is that in truth the youth service has survived through its ability to adapt and change; a willingness on the part of those involved to respond with flexibility to the demands of the day.

The sense of permanency has perhaps come therefore from the continuation of youth service values and principles underpinning our work with young people rather than any organisational structure or methodology. *Youth Matters*, like each previous chapter of our policy legacy, will no doubt give rise to concerns about whether this is the turning point, the moment at which this permanency of youth service values and principles is to be finally broken. Such pessimism is not new, as Jim Leighton (quoted in Bunt and Gargrave, 1980) comments on *Albemarle*: 'there was widespread suspicion that the committee would give the Minister grounds for 'killing off' the Service.' Ironic in hindsight, given that the *Albemarle Report* published in 1960 was the seminal policy moment for the youth service in recent history.

There is too a certain familiarity for youth workers about the emphatic nature of policy

makers at times of moral panic about young people. Indeed the modern concept of a 'youth service', born out of Circular 1486, *In the Service of Youth*, was built on just such concerns about the social and moral behaviour of young people of the then wartime Britain. It would take the social upheaval of the 1950s to bring young people once again back to the minds of legislators, as indicated by *Albemarle*'s references to 'a new climate of crime and delinquency'; a context not dissimilar to the current moral panic about anti social behaviour, 'hoodies' and talk of 'young people living in a feral society'.

Whatever the driving factors behind youth related social policy over the last 60 years, the youth service has displayed an ability to take ownership of the themes set out. The 1944 Education Act's alluding to but not quite setting out the specific functions for the youth service has not deterred subsequent generations of youth workers from adopting its broad references to 'education needing to contribute towards the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the community...' and a requirement to provide 'facilities for recreation and social and physical training' as the *raison d'être* for their existence. Subsequent education acts and reforms have done little else to further clarify the rather ambiguous requirements upon local authorities in relation to the youth service.

After the hopes of the youth service for *Transforming Youth Work* (2001) and the subsequent *Resourcing Excellent Youth services* (2002) to offer clearer definitions of adequacy, there is disappointment, but probably no surprise, that *Youth Matters* has stopped short of, once and for all, setting out a statutory basis for a youth service, in whatever form, choosing instead to purely propose a new duty on local authorities to provide activities for young people.

The continued reluctance to give youth work and the youth service a statutory footing does not encourage a sense of permanency and perhaps herein lies the reason why such a move has been resisted. New Labour's commitment to radicalism and modernisation does not sit easily with such permanency given their predilection for reform and creating new organisational structures.

Despite this, the youth service should feel a strong sense of ownership of much of the detail set out in *Youth Matters* given that the issues and challenges upon which the proposals are set out have enormous resonance with the themes of past youth related social policy, whether *Albemarle*, *Fairburn – Milson* or the *Thompson Report*.

Reflections of *Albemarle*'s themes of Association, Challenge and Training can be seen within the focus in *Youth Matters* on engaging young people in positive activities, in providing 'somewhere to go and something to do'. *Youth Matters* is perhaps most resonant with the *Thompson Report* published 20 years on from *Albemarle*, picking up the theme of empowerment alongside engagement. Indeed the Thompson Report's '5 As' of Association, Activities, Advice, Action and Access to life and vocational skills could be viewed as an obvious blueprint for *Youth Matters*; even down to *Thompson*'s reference to the 'Offerings', the recommendation that the youth service, on the basis of assessed need, provide a local mix of these five elements.

It is this concept of *association*, evident in *Youth Matters* and both *Albemarle* and *Thompson*,

that recent social policy has perhaps ignored most, with its focus on the individual underpinned by a Thatcherite and now Blairite emphasis on national and vocational targets. This is a conceptual omission perhaps accommodated by the recognition that the somewhat dated methodology of an *Albemarle* style youth club cannot cater for the sophisticated social, educational and leisure needs of young people in the global, computerised and instantaneous world of the 21st Century. Whilst the style of engagement might need updating, young people still seek and value opportunities for association with their peers.

The inclusion in *Youth Matters* of providing 'somewhere to go and something to do' will no doubt reopen a continuing debate about the correct balance between how much the youth service should provide universal provision versus targeted services for those individuals with the greatest need, especially in a context of limited resources.

Whether the proposals set out in the Green Paper constitute new ground in relation to young people's participation and ownership in decision-making and the shaping of services is equivocal. The concept of providing young people with opportunities to take and follow through collective decisions with their peers was a particular theme of the *Thompson Report* and has been at the heart of youth work ever since, together with recognition for the right of the individual to choose whether or not to participate. Putting the 'buying power' into the hands of young people via an Opportunity Card appears to be little more than a post-Thatcherite construct on this established youth service theme.

The call within *Youth Matters* for all young people to engage in voluntary action and to contribute positively to their community is another familiar message for the youth service; 25 years ago the Thompson Review Group argued that 'community involvement in its full form embracing both 'service' and 'action' seems to us part of the mainstream of youth provision'. *Albemarle* had equally supported the premise for needing youth work projects aimed at promoting young people's positive contribution to society and proposed the formation of a national council for service by young people.

This focus on young people contributing to the community through voluntary action has been a long running theme and one that, as Davies (1999) argues has seen a shift from being purely a youth service issue to a wider political priority to respond to the 'youth problem' of the day.

Not only this, but youth related social policy has consistently been constructed around the importance of filling young people's leisure time with purposeful activities including such opportunities to make a positive contribution. The parallels between recent past ministerial statements related to the ideas of summer camps, which led to initiatives such as the NOF funded U Project and Positive Activities for Young People programme and now the intention, set out in *Youth Matters*, to 'explore the scope for giving more young people the opportunity to take part in summer residential events...to enable young people to learn through active adventure' and a past proposal in 1982 to run a summer adventure training camp, clearly show that sometimes little changes.

The modern mantra of 'joined up' and integrated services for young people is, in actuality, another enduring youth service theme. As long ago as 1969, the Fairburn committee were

calling for better integration between the youth service and schools whilst Milson was arguing for stronger links within communities. This theme was picked up by the Thompson Review Group, recommending that 'The Youth service and other services dealing with young people should develop the means of working together... collaborative arrangements... whilst respecting the independence and proper role of each'. One such expression of this approach to collaborative working was in the provision of information and advice and counselling where the Review Group argued it should be given an "assured place within local planning of youth provision as part of a comprehensive policy". A stance entirely consistent with the approach set out in *Youth Matters* for providing young people with better information, advice and guidance.

The youth service, whether in seeking to work with and offer information, advice and guidance to the 'unattached' post *Albemarle*, the 'unemployed' in the 1970s and '80s, or more contemporarily, the 'socially excluded', has consistently come under considerable pressure to contribute to schemes aimed at addressing vocational issues and the transition from school to work; from the flawed MSC Youth Opportunities Programme of the late 1970s and early 1980s to the more recent developments of Connexions. Generally, the New Labour phenomenon of the Connexions Service has enhanced rather than detracted from the youth service's focus on providing young people with access to wide-ranging information and advice services; a focus and principle rooted in the bedrock of youth service practice.

Youth Matters, consistent with much of recent youth related social policy has however, shifted emphasis away from the youth service to young people, increasingly concerned with prevailing social issues, such as low qualification levels, education and employment status, their engagement in crime and anti social behaviour and so on. But the issues, concerns and arguments remain broadly the same, such as a moral and social concern for young people and the need to focus upon the minority of young people who present a 'serious problem for the wider community, including anti social behaviour and crime' alongside the need to balance opportunity with challenge, to 'strike the right balance between rights and responsibilities'.

The proposal in Youth Matters to remove entitlement to provision via an Opportunity Card for those 'engaging in unacceptable behaviour, especially any form of anti-social or criminal behaviour, or abusing the opportunities and services provided' is perhaps at odds with the commitment elsewhere in the Green Paper to better address the needs of young people at risk.

Such tensions about how best to address issues of 'alienation' are familiar territory for the youth service. Twenty-five years ago, the Thompson Review Group struggled with the same issue of balancing a desire 'to react positively towards young people and address the issues they face' yet at the same time 'challenging and developing individuals to play a more positive role within their local community'. Then as now, the youth service's established position as a preventative service is clear and it seems certain that youth work will continue to play a significant role in any future preventative strategies for young people. The Green Paper's focus on an integrated youth support service and the development of youth support teams to work with the most challenging are likely to be where this contribution is most obviously made.

The last decade must surely have been felt by many in the youth service as one where there has rarely been a moment when young people have not been in the cross-wires of policy makers, with a constant flow and sometimes heady mix of youth related social policies. Whilst directly relevant to the work of the youth service, such policies have often done little more than allude to the youth service.

Such mere allusion and an overdue specific policy 'fix' for youth service, has built an appetite for the Green Paper. An appetite further fuelled by the year's delay in publication. In itself, the keen anticipation of many youth workers, service managers and policy makers in relation to *Youth Matters* does not necessarily mean that the youth service can rightfully claim ownership of *Youth Matters*; however the clear resonance with past social policy and the opportunity it presents to maintain the values and principles of the youth service should give us the confidence to claim it as ours, as much as anyone else. *Youth Matters* is not radical in its thinking, but it is nonetheless a welcome revisit to, and a reminder of, some recurring youth service themes and issues. The radical part may come in its implementation!

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Youth Matters

Bryan Merton

The Green Paper is a well crafted, well argued set of proposals driven by a strong commitment to safeguard young people's welfare and extend their choices and opportunities. The government clearly believes that youth matters. The co-ordinated output of one team but informed by working groups and processes from within Whitehall and beyond, it has probably delivered what the Strategy Unit at Number 10 (aka Tony Zoffis) wants. At the same time it addresses the concerns of a number of departments of state that have an interest in young people, diverse though those interests may be. The much heralded integrated youth offer comprises more places to go and constructive things to do including volunteering, an influential voice for young people in shaping and reviewing provision, information, advice and guidance at key transition points, intensive support for those at risk or in trouble, a quality assurance framework of standards and inspection procedures, and the creation of trusts to plan strategically and commission services. These proposals represent opportunities and challenges for youth work.

While welcoming much of what is in *Youth Matters*, I have four major concerns:

- the view it presents of young people;
- the place of youth work;
- the roles and relationships of key stakeholders, in particular the local authorities and children's trusts; and
- the drivers of change.

Young people

I have trouble with the behaviourist view of young people, the idea that they will respond predictably to a series of reasonably presented sanctions and rewards. People fortunately have more complex motivations than Pavolv's dogs or Skinner's rats. The view of young people contained within the Green Paper is also polarised. At one end of the spectrum, young people are presented in a warm light, taking part in healthy, positive activities. They are regarded as discerning customers of services and encouraged to shape and bend them to reflect their interests and respond to their needs. They are to be given Opportunity Cards (a Blairite notion if ever there was one) that will entitle them to discounts on services and opportunity funds (there's another one) so they can decide on how to spend resources on local projects. They are considered to be discriminating and informed judges of the relevance, range and quality of activities provided for them. They are seen as a resource to be developed and who would argue with that?

At the other end, they are seen as a problem to be managed: vulnerable, at risk, in trouble, both in need of safety and at times a threat to the safety of others. These young people are seen to require intensive support, even supervision, to ensure they make informed choices about their behaviour and take responsibility for its consequences. If they do not live up to their responsibilities or impinge on the rights of others, they will forfeit some of their own rights, including points on their Opportunity Cards!

Another fault with this analysis is that young people may be neither social activists and entrepreneurs on the one hand nor troubled and troublesome on the other. Indeed, it is the very nature of being young to move in and out of different states and conditions, according to choices, decisions, circumstances and events. What is important is that services are needed to provide for support and development opportunities wherever young people happen to be located at any particular time.

The Green Paper attends to the Miliband mantra of choice and voice, encouraging young people to exercise their influence, to report critically on the standards of service provided, and help reconfigure them to meet requirements more closely. It implies the evolution of a market in positive activities for young people. It expects young people to recognise their responsibilities as much as their rights and leans heavily towards the control and conditionality side of the entitlement equation. It invokes more proactive parenting to keep potentially wayward young people on the straight and narrow, rather missing the point so eloquently made by the resourceful and resilient Gallagher family in *Shameless* that it may well be the children who have to keep the parents on track.

The Green Paper does not portray young people as constructive critics of the state and society when, for example, government at national or local levels is thought to offend against the social contract (boundaries and ground rules) implicitly established with young people by clumsily adopting measures (anti-social behaviour and curfew orders) that are thought to be inconsistent with their interests and rights. Nor does it picture them as caught up in some of the enduring paradoxes, ambivalence and conflicts associated with identity, diversity and community.

Youth work

A more extended analysis of the complex relationship between young people and their fast-changing social world might have led to greater prominence given to the contribution that youth work has to make. The limited number of references to youth work fail to recognise how youth work at its best provides reflective space to explore some of these complexities and develops in young people the skills and confidence to envisage and demand better futures and improving services from local authority departments and voluntary organisations.

In the evaluation of the *Impact of Youth Work* undertaken by the Youth Affairs Unit at De Montfort University (on behalf of the DfES) in 2003-4, there was evidence, argument and analysis that supported the view of youth work and community-based informal learning as creators of social capital. The same study demonstrated how effective youth work,

especially in its more progressive forms, has impact on young people, their communities, other services and social policy. Yet this has either been ignored by writers of the Green Paper or not brought to their attention. There may be a lack of confidence in youth work's ability to achieve the outcomes being sought when its practitioners continue to find it hard to demonstrate their effectiveness and impact; and when 25 per cent of local services inspected in 2004 were judged unsatisfactory.

This does not bode well for youth work, by which I mean a particular combination of methods or interventions, marked out by distinctive characteristics and underpinned by a shared set of values (as outlined in *Resourcing Excellent Youth Services*); the kind of youth work that serves as a springboard for social learning – in its broadest sense – that young people can use to express and achieve their aspirations.

There are many agencies working with young people in the social policy field: in the local authority and voluntary youth service; in other services for young people (such as Connexions and schools); and in services that are provided for everyone including young people (such as arts and leisure). All these services work with young people, but only some do youth work, in its more radical *reflexive* and *redistributive* forms. When it is *reflexive*, youth work recognises that social structures and systems may serve to exclude and disadvantage certain groups and individuals, and that one of its purposes is to ensure that the perspectives of young people are better accommodated within these institutions so they begin to influence the services provided, and so reduce disadvantage, exclusion or discrimination. Well conducted, youth work can lead to local, incremental and small (although for the young people directly concerned highly significant) instances of change not only in young people but in their communities and in the services provided for them. To some extent this function is recognised within *Youth Matters* with regard to its encouragement of young people to influence and evaluate the provision of services.

Youth work can also be seen as *redistributive*, in the sense that it counters disadvantage by raising the sights of young people and directs resources to those least likely to receive them. It can introduce young people into new experiences and opportunities and link them into a wider network of contacts and facilities. It can extend their repertoire of skills, achievements and relationships. It can also enable young people to gain the confidence to challenge discrimination when it occurs. In this sense, youth work is concerned with *social justice* and also the creation of *social capital*, about which *Youth Matters* is reticent apart from its frequent references to volunteering.

Stakeholders

The Green Paper has recalled the local authority to be the holder of the ring and the lead stakeholder in services for young people. Successive New Labour governments have shown that they find it hard to work with local authorities and hard to work without them. Consequently we have a template for securing public services through the creation of trusts responsible for strategic direction and planning and the commissioning of services. There are two difficulties with the model outlined in *Youth Matters*. The first is possible conflicts of interests if services are to be commissioned by representatives of organisations that

will be providing them; roles and relationships are unclear and ambiguous. The second is the persistence in referring to these bodies as *Children*'s Trusts when they are securing services for 0-19 year-olds. It is likely that the Trusts' interests will be skewed towards child protection, social care and formal schooling, leaving those at the top end of the age-range vulnerable; unless youth services can find their voice and act on their behalf – a challenge and an opportunity!

It makes sense for decisions about structures and priorities to be determined locally and subject to scrutiny for the range, reach, relevance and standard of the services they provide. What is not clear is how this dimension sits alongside the provision of services by extended schools which are not governed by local authorities, and are responsible for managing their own resources and determining programmes and projects beyond the school curriculum that also impact on young people. As we have learned from the roller-coaster evolution of Connexions services, the devil of policy implementation lies in the detail. Often the needs and interests of young people become secondary to the claims and concerns of those tasked with providing services for them. Surely we want to avoid yet another phase of doubt and uncertainty, of professional jockeying for position, in which beleaguered services staffed by over stretched workers are left to sort out how to apply a policy that is long on ambition but short on the wherewithal to achieve it.

Drivers for change

There are two drivers for change that I briefly want to consider. The first is *resources*. Policy implementation requires sufficient and stable funding. We know that local youth services have been subject to fluctuations and in some cases severe privation for several years, although recently there have been improvements in some. This has led to serious problems of capacity, with regard to both human resources and plant. The additional £40 million promised in the Green Paper for capital investment is welcome, although spread over 150 local authorities that amounts to just about £250,000 each over two years. For services that have been starved of such investment, this will make a difference but not as big a difference as is probably needed to make a significant impact in improving the quality of service provision.

It is not just the amount of resources that determine change but also the ways in which resources are disbursed. The proposal to move existing government ring-fenced grants for youth support into an unhypothecated grant should allow local authorities to use funding more flexibly and plan more creatively to meet needs, especially if it means more attention paid to prevention. Moreover plans to devolve some funding to young people themselves to manage projects of their choice through an opportunity fund should also lead to beneficial changes. Devolution is very much the watchword with regard to public service funding, borne of the belief that services are more likely to be effective if the people closest to the point of delivery have a say in how the resources are to be used.

There is a danger here for the kind of progressive youth work mentioned earlier. A children's trust could easily decide to allocate unhypothecated resources to sports activities, the outcomes of which are probably easier to identify than those from redistributive forms of youth work.

The second main driver for change is investment in the development of the workforce. The Green Paper proposes there will be changes to both roles and practice through the development of an integrated youth support service, whether people are currently employed by Connexions, the local authority or organisations in the voluntary and community sector. Having agreed 'the right balance' between targeted and universal support services (no easy task) and clarified the 'distinctive roles' for each of the professions and services working with young people (even harder), the focus should move on to the skills needed for the services to be provided. The paper goes on to envisage a substantial remodelling of the workforce and a new and reinvigorated role for youth workers.

However, while a new landscape for youth workers is suggested no map is offered. Towards the end of the paper it is proposed that there should be a common core of skills and knowledge for those working with young people based on a new single qualification framework. The six areas identified in the common core prospectus for those working with children and from which the skills set for those working with young people can be expected to derive are perfectly unexceptionable and everyone will probably sign up to them. But there is no sign of the educational purpose and methods which lie at the heart of the most effective youth work interventions.

Earlier in the Green Paper there is mention of the development of a new cadre of sports leaders to encourage young people to take part in healthy activities (and no doubt heighten their preparedness and enthusiasm for the 2012 Olympics). There seems to be no recognition that there is already an experienced, street-wise and youthful force of (community) sports development officers deployed across the country. The core competencies suggest the workforce will be well equipped to provide information, advice and guidance for all and casework approaches to those at risk or in trouble. Does a place remain for developmental group work or the pedagogy associated with informal education professed and practised by the best youth workers? There is a danger that unless youth workers can demonstrate the impact of these and other particular skills and strengthen their professional identity around them, the workforce may end up as homogenised, undifferentiated by service, skill set or purpose.

Conclusion

In several respects, *Youth Matters* does hold out the prospect of a better deal for young people. It has brought the local authorities back into centre stage, although perhaps lacking sufficient props and direction to perform well. It has won more, though modest, resources for young people and given them the chance to shape services so they better meet their needs. Its support for youth work as a professional practice is muted. However its thumbprint can be seen in some of the proposals even though they are not expressed in a language that youth workers would recognise. In responses to the consultation it will be important to show convincingly how youth work has done much to lift the confidence and achievements of young people and to point the way to better futures for all.

Youth Matters: Money Matters. The role of the community and voluntary sector

Billie Oliver

The same day *Youth Matters* (DfES, 2005a) was published, an article in the *Guardian* declared: 'there is no such thing as community' (Preston, 2005). Although such a claim is overly simplistic, the article does highlight some key issues surrounding the concept, and in particular the tendency to use the term as 'verbal sticking plaster' with an assumption that 'harmony' could be restored if we were to press some mythical 'community button'. Such a discussion has considerable relevance to an analysis of the drivers behind the continuing proliferation of 'modernisation' documents – of which *Youth Matters* is one of the latest.

On the face of it the proposals set out in the Green Paper are to be welcomed, grounded apparently in the core principles of empowerment and participation that have been informing the work of informal educators and community development workers for many years. The rhetoric behind the vision statements demonstrates an awareness by policy makers of the principles of involving young people in decision making, of the social capital that can be gained through becoming involved in community activity and of the important and creative contribution to such principles that can be made by a vigorous and well supported community and voluntary sector. Unfortunately, rhetorical support does not often translate into changes in practice, and one of the hurdles that often gets in the way of apparently good ideas is the competing political agendas that play out between different departments of government. *Youth Matters* (DfES, 2005a) is, I fear an example of such contradictions. In this article I will outline some of the tensions and contradictions, as I perceive them, from the perspective of the community and voluntary sector.

Whose community?

Youth Matters is full of the commendable aim to 'encourage', 'engage' 'enable' and 'empower' young people to become more 'involved' in 'their communities'; promising to 'listen' to them and to 'shape the services they receive' around what young people say they want. And yet, in the same document there are underlying assumptions about the sorts of 'positive' activities that young people should want and what being 'part of a community' and an 'active citizen' should be. This tends to suggest that the 'activities' that will be 'encouraged' with funding will not necessarily grow out of young people's community involvement, but will be 'orchestrated' by the local authority children's trusts who have been given the role of commissioner of services. As Chanan (2000:213) reminds us, the success of the sector is that it 'grows from within' and 'any attempt to coerce or systematise this process would undoubtedly destroy it'.

Those of us 'involved' in the community and voluntary sector have long been frustrated by the apparent differing interpretations of the language of participation that is demonstrated by funding bodies. Too often the words are used with an assumption that there is agreement over their meaning, whereas, when examined more closely, one uncovers more support for the rhetorical principles than for examining the reality of how to make it work in practice. One of the tensions in *Youth Matters* is in the interpretation of the concept of 'community'. As Preston (2005) suggests, the idea of 'community' can be over romanticised, and the current political interest in 'community', 'civil society' and 'social capital' does tend to adopt this rather nostalgic view. In trying to explore how the thinking behind these ideas can be made to work in practice, and in particular how we can ever achieve 'participation' in 'communities' we need to dig below the surface and understand some of the complexities involved. Taylor et al (2000) point out, that just because people have characteristics in common does not mean that they identify with each other as a community. They also point out that membership of communities can be both long or short term – especially for young people – and that individuals may belong to many different communities at the same time. Furthermore, despite the sense of togetherness and stability that the term 'community' tends to convey, communities can also often define themselves by excluding people, and be sources of conflict and unhappiness. The complexity of interests in any community, therefore mean that it is difficult to talk of 'the community', or 'their community'. We cannot dictate to young people the community they should be involving themselves in. If young people are to be encouraged to become active and involved in 'their communities' they need to be enabled and empowered to define what and where these are.

Youth Matters recommends that 'joint services should increasingly be available closer to teenagers' communities and in everyday surroundings' (p.60) and yet in the next sentence says that government 'will encourage co-location of services within schools, health centres and advice shops'. Such a move does not recognise the 'bottom-up' role of the community sector; it leads to the community led agenda and voice of local people becoming marginalised and increases the power of central and local government. One of the main strengths of the voluntary and community sector is that it is independent of other agencies, and this is what makes its provision attractive to young people and others. As Simpkin (2000:10) reports, community ownership of a project is crucial in developing confidence and gaining trust 'especially of people who have rejected other agencies'. As the interpretation of *Youth Matters* begins to emerge locally we need to keep a watchful eye on whether young people are to be empowered to develop their own communities or whether in fact, those commissioning services would prefer to see them joining 'our' communities. Will this be a model of social action, an approach to inclusion and participation that focuses on young people's 'aspirations and capacities rather than on deficits and negative stereotypes' (Ward, 2000:54)? Or will it be one of social control? Some clues can be found in the fine print.

What model of participation?

The document 'expects' young people to 'appreciate and respect the opportunities available to them'. It wants to see young people empowered to shape the services 'they receive'; to

encourage them to 'become involved in their communities'; to achieve a 'step change in the level of volunteering by young people' and to achieve all this by putting the 'spending power in their hands' and focus more strongly on the 'needs of the individual'. Such an approach, focusing on themes such as consumerism, citizen's rights and the role of the service user in the planning and delivery of services, has been described as the 'consumerist' approach to participation, a perspective that is about 'influencing individual consumption of service' and in which individuals can influence 'both price and quality through their purchasing power' (Braye, 2000). Such an approach is usually restricted to the micro-level of user influence on the activities of front-line workers, with little effect on policy making or agency decision making at senior management level (Kemshall and Littlechild, 2000). This individualistic, consumerist approach does not encourage empowerment through collective association and it does not encourage community development. The 'democratic' model (Beresford and Croft, 1993) by contrast, is a model of participation emphasising the importance of achieving greater influence and control and is about changing the experience for users collectively rather than individually. While it is generally agreed that this level of participation is difficult to achieve we need to remain alert for where the rhetorical principles of empowerment and democracy are being used to mask other agendas. As Braye (2000:19) warns, the 'consumerist model often has a stronger presence – it is more tangible and may appear easier to achieve – thus giving the illusion of participation without the substance'.

Funder led provision

The Green Paper recognises that the voluntary and community sector play an important role, providing innovative ways of reaching some of the most vulnerable young people. However, by and large they achieve this on a shoe-string budget with dedicated and over-stretched staff employed on less favourable contracts than their local authority or private sector counterparts. Too often community projects are required to go through onerous application, monitoring and evaluation procedures to fund their work from a variety of short term sources. While the principle of supporting the stability and strategic coherence of the voluntary and community sector is stated, together with the necessity for reducing bureaucracy, there is confusion and contradiction in relation to monitoring and evaluation. For example, whilst children's trusts are 'expected' to minimise monitoring and reporting requirements of the voluntary sector, the document also insists that local authorities should 'monitor and make transparent the proportion of publicly funded services which are delivered by the voluntary and community sector' – information that will be 'tracked and collated' by government. Furthermore, a warning light went on for me when I read that 'the proposals in this document will be financed within available resources', that local authorities are to be required to 'cut duplication and merge funding streams' and to 'use funding flexibly and imaginatively to free up resources'. This sounds like belt tightening to me, and as the voluntary sector know from experience, when the local authorities tighten their belts community projects are the first to feel the squeeze.

At the same time as these changes to local funding are being proposed, central government is consulting on the rationalisation of its grant funding to voluntary organisations (DfES, 2005b). This period of uncertainty around funding will make it very difficult for community

and voluntary organisations to strategically forward plan. Few local community projects have the luxury of 'cushion' funding to tide them over an uncertain period and it is inevitable that some jobs will be threatened and provision weakened. The Green Paper recognises that 'transition to the new system may create uncertainty for voluntary and community organisations at local level' and exhorts the children's trusts to 'ensure that high quality services and approaches are not damaged by the transition process' (p.69). This, however, places a heavy responsibility on the emergent children's trusts, most of which are yet to be established and who also face uncertain times with workforce reforms (DfES, 2005c) and internal organisational re-structuring.

The proposal to introduce an Opportunity Card is couched in terms of 'putting purchasing power' and thereby influence in the hands of young people. And yet the document also indicates that they will only be able to use their Opportunity Card at 'accredited providers'. There are a number of concerns in this proposal in relation to promoting the role of young people as consumers rather than citizens and to the role of the card in the surveillance and tracking of young people (Smith, 2005) which need to be examined. From the perspective of this article, however, it also raises concerns about the role of the voluntary sector. A constant tension for the sector, especially when trying to raise sustainable funding, is the difficulty in managing the boundary between internal values or aims and the external policy environment. As Taylor (2003) has observed, trying to maintain their distinctive contribution in the face of government agendas can lead voluntary sector groups into playing 'a game they did not really want to play'. By introducing an Opportunity Card with which young people will be able to pay for activities at 'accredited providers' the Green Paper proposes a method of direct funding of provision. This approach will make it very difficult for community led organisations to develop provision in a responsive, strategic and participatory way and turns young people into 'purchasers' rather than 'members' of project activities. It also raises concerns as to how one becomes an 'accredited provider' and whose agenda will determine this. Community organisations have been faced with this dilemma before and many have found that the bureaucracy involved in 'accreditation' is both not worth the financial rewards gained and distracts them from their core aims and ethos (Simpkin, 2000).

A further contradiction surrounds the interpretation of 'partnership'. The Green Paper 'expects' children's trusts to 'draw on the experience and expertise of voluntary and community youth organisations as strategic partners in all aspects of planning, developing and delivering services for young people'(p.69). However, it also wants to see children's trusts 'orchestrating a mixed economy of services' (p.23). Experience of many other government 'partnership' initiatives has shown how difficult it is for representatives from the voluntary sector to participate as equal partners. Representatives are often over-worked and part time project staff, or volunteers who are expected to give as much time to attending lengthy meetings as salaried public sector managerial staff. In addition, the power imbalance caused by being dependent for funding on some of your partners does not make equality a straightforward process. In line with other research Chouhan and Lusane (2004) found a perception that many voluntary and community organisations felt that local authorities only really wanted partnerships at a superficial level 'that did not involve a place at the decision-making table'. Taylor (2003) also points out how sophisticated community groups need to become in learning how to 'manipulate the rules of the game' if they are to

stand a chance of engaging with funding partners on equal terms and also maintain their distinctive contribution. Mostly, she continues, they simply lack the information, staffing and financial resources to make an impact in partnerships. And furthermore 'partners are rarely sensitive to the demands they are making on community groups or the huge costs of participation, both personal and organisational' (p.134).

David Blunkett, a vociferous advocate for 'civil society', has said that 'the development of a just society must grow from the bottom up, rather than being imposed from above'. 'Active citizenship' he maintains is about 'creating the conditions for people to take control of their own lives, with the state acting as an enabler, a supporter and a facilitator' (Blunkett, 2003). Those of us supporting and working in the community and voluntary sector would agree with this premise and there is much in *Youth Matters* that on the face of it supports such principles. The voluntary sector has an enormously important contribution to make in realising that vision. Unfortunately, building up community involvement requires substantial and highly skilled resources and while welcoming some signs of commitment to a community development approach in the Green Paper, I have to agree that it 'needs to be backed with substantial investment to ensure its vision becomes a reality' (Wylie, 2005).

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Review of Government Green Paper – *Youth Matters*

Kim Peake

It is unsurprising that the long awaited Green Paper has been received with mixed feelings in youth work circles. The positive aspect in proposing to introduce legislation to 'clarify Local Authorities' duty to secure positive activities for all young people' (para.6) is supportive of the universal nature of youth work and the rights of young people to engage in informal activity. However, much is made of the extended schools agenda and the diversionary nature of activities, with concerns raised regarding anti-social behaviours – making one wonder where the balance of provision will actually rest.

There is nothing particularly controversial in the paper or anything to the detriment of advancing the cause of young people – indeed the remarkable thing about this paper is that it is decidedly unremarkable. The thrust of it is to request agencies to carry on in the same manner but to strive to provide an improved, more localised service and to increase cohesion in service delivery to young people. It is my belief that those involved with youth work will be dismayed that there is very little new or innovative in the Green Paper and the attitude will be that most has been attempted before in different guises. Therefore, the main task of this review will be to discuss those few new initiatives on offer.

An interesting theoretical development is the apparent spread of 'governmentality', one of Foucault's parting shots before his death in 1984. He examined the role of government and particularly two aspects, how government itself exerts authority in order to govern populations and how individuals shape their own identities to find their place within society. Government is not merely a medium to exercise power, but it shapes individuals, making them become 'active subjects' (Garland, 1997:173). Although Garland was looking particularly at the area of crime reduction, in *Youth Matters*, we see a definite continuation of the 'responsibilisation' of young people.

Young people are being encouraged to become model citizens, to take control of their own destiny by making informed choices and to make a positive contribution to their local communities. It sees young people being empowered into making positive decisions and backs this idea up with tangible incentives. It correlates the idea of good decision-making and good behaviour with success. It promotes good behaviour and encourages young people to become involved in volunteering. It further correlates the idea that disengagement and poor behaviour, unless checked, will undoubtedly lead to failure. This fits nicely with New Labour's idea of 'rights and responsibilities', which is now further extended to young people.

Part of the decentralising process will see local authorities given more power and

flexibility in tailoring the needs of young people within their locality, thereby making services appear more local. The government is apparently decentralising its authority and is also inviting other agencies and actors on board, making them 'part of the team'. Apart from young people themselves, this diffusion of responsibility sees parents being even more involved, meaning that the idea of developing young people is moving towards a more shared responsibility, away from the idea of the government as the sole provider of services.

Parental involvement remains mostly in the previously charted waters of information, advice and counselling with a particular emphasis on preventative classes for parents at transition from primary to secondary school, and at the onset of unspecified difficulties. The government's hope is that the voluntary sector will deliver much of this additional provision, perhaps hoping for parental engagement, but if this carrot proves unappealing then the stick of statutory parenting classes remains an option. On a more empowering note for parents, government encouragement to share their own knowledge and experiences with young people through structured processes in school and workplace settings is perhaps a small move away from the idea that 'the state knows best'.

Of the few new initiatives on offer, the introduction of reward cards is probably the most innovative, although the fundamental idea of reward cards for young people is not completely new. A Connexions Reward Card scheme, sponsored by local businesses and Hull City Council has already been successfully piloted by 16-19 year olds in 2004 by the Preston Road Neighbourhood Development Company (PRNDC) during 'Operation Cleansweep', a summer long crime reduction initiative in an area of inner city regeneration in Hull. The initiative was successful, although the scheme worked on a discount basis and no money was 'topped-up', neither was the card withdrawn for poor or anti-social behaviour. However, it did instil a degree of responsibility and was a useful proof of identity when purchasing alcohol or cigarettes.

The new reward card outlined in the Green Paper would seem to be an extension of this type of scheme but the one emphasis that makes the idea innovative is that the card will receive top-ups with a monetary value, whereas such cards to date have merely offered discounts. This is a tangible reward in hard cash, a currency that young people will universally understand and where the loss of a discount would not be missed too greatly, foregoing a cash top-up could be an altogether different proposition.

A foreseeable dilemma for youth-work practitioners is the option to withdraw the card from young people who do not use the services within the local 'offer' in a pro-social manner. Young people at the margins of their communities are viewed by many professionals as vulnerable, therefore some flexibility in working with those who challenge mainstream norms is essential, in order to extend the reach of youth work proposed through the *Transforming Youth Work* agenda. It is also possible that some young people, who do not like the local 'offer', may choose to trade their credit rather than engage with the dialogue of developing or changing provision in their area. Those managing services and working face-to-face with young people will need to be alive to issues such as these when developing card schemes and delivering sessions that reach out across communities.

Bringing services for young people together is a laudable aim, considering the frustration many practitioners experience when trying to access or provide appropriate and timely interventions for young people at the point of initial issues or dealing with a crisis situation. The effect on resources and outcomes for young people and confidence in provision will only improve if common ground in professional discourse, assessment and delivery can be found and agreed upon. It will be a major challenge to local authorities and practitioners to deliver services in the manner outlined in the Green Paper. However if this signals an end to a paucity of up to date and accurate information available for young people in electronic media, then another cornerstone in the foundations for significant relationship building and inter-agency communication will have been laid.

The Connexions Service has been dealt a body blow from the paper's main criticism regarding the lack of cohesion in service delivery. This would suggest that Connexions, a 'one-stop shop' set up with the idea of improving cohesion in service delivery for 11-19 year olds has not succeeded in this area, or at least has not succeeded quickly enough. The task was massive and whilst the step change in service provision has seen many careers guidance workers change logos and carry on as before, the intensive Personal Adviser role for young people, that deals with issues of greater complexity or severity (homelessness, substance misuse, etc) has brought about a hitherto unseen access to services in a way a large number of young people felt addressed their needs. It appears however, that the main thrust of this Green Paper remains firmly with this type of inclusive service in mind and the belief that it will develop with time.

As a practitioner I am heartened to see the strength of the peer mentoring relationship acknowledged within the paper and the benefits available to young people from volunteering. This government makes much of the benefits of using life experience to support ones peers. Many practitioners will hope that mentors are drawn from a broad range of backgrounds, including those with disabilities, the unemployed and alternative life experiences and not just the 'undergraduates, apprentices, employees or trainee youth workers' (para.41), to avoid a life coaching emphasis focussing more on attainment than self-worth (para.6).

Government has also looked closely at other forms of community volunteering and is seeking to extend this option to greater numbers of young people in particular those with a disability or with special educational needs. For volunteering to continue to be a meaningful and enjoyable experience careful consideration will have to be given to the quality of placements, support and training for organisations particularly in workplace settings. To ensure that young people can grow and use or learn new skills the seed money from the Treasury of £45m over three years and projected private sector donations of £55m (paras.39-40) will need to enhance far more than the throughput of young people. The money needs to be utilised for sharing good practice from volunteering schemes demonstrating a positive difference in their field and that young people themselves consider to have an impact on their relationships with recipients of the volunteering services on offer. The celebration of such achievements also needs to be carefully managed but could over time change the jaded view of young people as either 'done to' or solely seeking to emulate a materialistic 'chav' lifestyle with no concern for others.

The advent of Children's Trusts provides the structure for commissioning of specialist provision and services for children and young people using a multi-agency partnership model as well as working up, potential delivery and or commissioning services for the local 'offer'. There are reasonable concerns from youth workers where the balance will rest between diversionary activities that either place them in the leisure or policing arena – charged with channelling young people through their four hours of contact per week. Additionally one wonders how any increase in contact rates and improvements in buildings and resources will be sustained, as there is little additional funding evidenced in the paper and most will be decided locally. Changes in working practices and structure where savings could presumably be made will, as has been seen in other agencies adopting a multi-agency structure, take some time to come to fruition. There is the potential for youth workers, amongst other professions working with children and young people to utilise their skills, to make an impact in areas of concern to young people and to gain some acknowledgement beyond their own organisations, if managers and directors can advocate for process in addition to 'tick in the box' outcomes.

Where the local 'offer' is to be delivered will also present a challenge, as many youth centres not located on school sites have not benefited from the coordinated investment seen in bringing formal education facilities into the 21st century. Whilst it is true that many youth services have done much to provide warm, welcoming and safe buildings, many do not have the kind of facilities requested by young people to underpin the skill base of youth work teams in providing educative opportunities in the informal sphere. Some consideration will be required from local authorities to avoid routing the local 'offer' primarily through schools in deference to an existing infrastructure. This is likely to further alienate a significant minority of young people who prefer not to access Kelly style 'educare' provision in this environment for a number of reasons including exclusion, low self-esteem, and wanting simply to be out of school at the end of the day. As Polly Toynbee points out, 'some heads still resist the idea of anyone else entering their schools to use their empty premises, wasted from 3.30pm onwards...constantly making life difficult. That leads to the next doubt. Will this always be of the highest quality? A ping pong table, some board games, a TV and sandwiches supervised by staff with minimum qualifications would turn this into dull warehousing of children with nowhere else to go, missing the whole point' (*Guardian*, June 15 2005).

Aside from the workplace issues that unions will agitate for on behalf of members regarding scope of job responsibilities there are opportunities for outreach work for formal educators in community settings. As well as for informal educators to perform 'inreach' work attempting to encourage schools and colleges to find a place in their wider curriculum for personal development and self directed learning.

In conclusion, the step change in provision of services, information advice and guidance to and with young people is ambitious given that many in the sector working with young people (youth workers included) currently deliver this work in far from ideal environments. Sometimes this is because of the wants and needs of young people who need to work up a relationship of trust in surroundings of their choosing. However, young people and workers would often benefit from a sustained and suitably funded infrastructure to assist them to achieve targets whether self-set or nationally directed. On the whole, it is pleasing to see

proposals that seek to support young people through the transition into adulthood and widen opportunity. It will take resolve and no little vision from managers, practitioners and young people to retain the benefits of youth work within this vision of further integration of services for young people. However the aspiration of deeper involvement in the participative process, better outcomes with improving resources, makes the journey worth starting.

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Call for Papers:

Birmingham University, in association with The National Youth Agency and *Youth and Policy*, will host a conference on the subject of
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Why Does Youth Matter?

Patrick Turner

This article on the Green Paper: *Youth Matters*, will consider the document in relation to the disavowal of informal youth work in recent years (DfES, 2005). Rather than give a detailed analysis of recent context or *Youth Matters* itself, I provide a glance back from the vantage point of one who until very recently was working as a youth work practitioner. I make no prescriptions and offer no practical suggestions. My interest is simply to situate the proposed changes within an ongoing discussion over the place of youth and community: a discussion that is far from concluded, let alone resolved.[1]

Most youth professionals, moved by a desire to secure equity for all young people, genuinely believed New Labour would, after the arid Thatcher/Major years, usher in a new dawn for youth work. Gratitude for more resources and pleasure at the long overdue recognition of youth work's important contribution, however, quickly dissolved into uneasiness. Deficit-based, often authoritarian, policies accompanied solicitude. Initiatives loudly proclaiming their progressive, egalitarian basis – diversity, inclusion and citizenship to name but a few – were coeval with a commitment to consumer choice in the provision of public services. Was New Labour practicing pragmatic 'big tent' politics? Were its policies riven with internal contradictions? Or, on closer inspection, was the ideology of the Third Way in fact proposing a new relationship between state and citizen whose contradictions were more apparent than real (Finlayson, 2003; Jordan and Jordan, 2002)?

In some sections of the youth profession, mild discontent and admiration coalesced around a so-called 'pragmatic' creed of youth policy and practice; one that broadly concurred with New Labour's revisionist analysis of the complex challenges posed by globalisation (Merton and Wylie, 2002). If frustrated and puzzled by government accommodation to conservative reaction, youth work's pragmatists nonetheless assented to its throwing down the gauntlet to public sector workers and their clients, indeed elaborating a variant for the youth service (DfES, 2002). Youth workers and young people would need to adapt or die. A traditional, some would say 'utopic', youth work of voluntary, informal association and discussion was deemed no longer applicable to a 'post-industrial' situation of fragmented communities, familial breakdown, consumer individualism, extended dependency, a knowledge economy and occupational insecurity (Beck, 2004; Bauman, 2003). Youth work was required to raise its game. The challenge now was to work alongside other front line public professionals to equip young people to circumnavigate transitions of a hitherto unknown order of risk and complexity. In such an era, table tennis, pool and well-meaning chats around the coffee bar just didn't quite do it. Risk and the proliferation of existential, consumer and life-style choices – often seemingly indivisible from one another – required conscious planning and cautious preparation. A youth work 'fit for purpose' would need to be activist and prepared

to serve a client's *ultimate* best interest, rather than immediate needs and concerns. Combining the reflective listening ability of a motivational counsellor, the assessment skills of a social worker, and the subject knowledge of a PHSE teacher, youth work would increasingly take on the interventionist character of one-to-one casework. Serendipity and a highly developed sensitivity to situation, context and the needs of the 'community' could no longer be advanced as a legitimate basis for professional practice (Jeffs and Smith, 2003). Such Third Way 'revisionism' was the guiding spirit behind the *Transforming Youth Work* reform agenda no less than the establishment of Connexions.

A structured, measurable, outcomes based youth work curriculum offered a middle course between the perennial call for government action on youth disorder and what many believed was long overdue official attention to issues of diversity, participation and inclusion.[2] Efficient management of resources, people and programmes could be married to an ethical curriculum dedicated to what Anthony Giddens (1998) has termed the fostering of the 'autotelic' self. A transformed pedagogy would have prevention and early intervention at its heart. Youth professionals would *facilitate* (rather than initiate debate about) 'positive, healthy choices', 'recognition and respect for difference', 'social responsibility' and 'economic well being' (Lupton and Petersen, 2000). Given decent funding, resources and the opportunity for young people to be involved in its design and to receive accreditation, a transformed youth work curriculum might at once minimize the impact of ASBOs and more overt forms of control, whilst extending entitlement and promoting good citizenship. No longer resting on the shaky supports of anecdotal evidence, but embracing structure, direction and transparency, a reformed youth work would at last be taken seriously, able to justify its place at the table when funding was being doled out.

In practice, however, the traditional neighbourhood club has been remarkably impervious to the worldview advanced by *Transforming Youth Work*. Meanwhile targeted and specialist services as well as partnerships between the youth service and, say, health have attempted, often in haphazard fashion, to strike a balance between attracting and entertaining target audiences and doing, where possible, more 'curriculum based' work. Lack of resources, training, knowledge, clarity of purpose, strength of will and management, continue, however, to dog progress in youth work. The residual, the stubbornly resistant, the indifferent and the emergent cohabit as per normal.

Many will doubtless therefore applaud the government's 'vision' in *Youth Matters* to put 'constructive activities' and 'integrated' 'multi-agency' 'support' for young people on a firmer – if not yet statutory – financial and professional footing. Threaded around the *Every Child Matters* 5 Outcomes,[3] the policy builds on a raft of initiatives that, since 1997, have attempted to target services towards 'at-risk' and 'vulnerable' youth, incorporate 'active welfare', ensure wider participation in youth and educational services, encourage greater multi-agency working and dissolve policy silos. *Youth Matters*, working through the institutional framework set out in *Every Child Matters*, will attempt to give coherent structure, greater comprehensiveness and an integrated identity to hitherto piece-meal developments.

The specifics of the policy largely concern mechanisms for ensuring a more well oiled and comprehensive 'roll-out' of existing and emerging programs, policies and resources such as

the Common Assessment Framework, Positive Futures and Extended Schools. The innovative part is a wholesale embrace of the concept of consumer choice as a mechanism for locking young people into 'constructive activities'. *Youth Matters* proposes to build upon the recent experiment with Connexions cards, an electronic swipe card that rewards a young person's 'good behaviour' by giving reductions on leisure goods and services. The Youth Opportunity Card is planned to operate along similar lines. The cute bit is the building of 'citizenship' into the bargain. A young person's right to receive publicly funded 'constructive activities' via the card will be balanced by a binding obligation to take up locally available services whilst not engaging in anti-social acts. Failure to comply with these conditions could lead to loss of credits or even temporary withdrawal of the card.

Transforming Youth Work (a policy admittedly generated within the youth service rather than across young people's services) largely took its cue for the redundancy of 'informal' youth work from the dominant 'risk society' thinking of the 1990s. *Youth Matters*, on the other hand, can, in addition to its implicitly postmodern assumptions, crucially adduce empirical evidence to support its cognate vision of 'integration', 'structure', 'constructive' activities and *prevention and early intervention*. Helping young people manage the use of their leisure time by steering them into organised cultural and sporting activities of their choice, whilst simultaneously providing continuous guidance and education around careers, sex, drugs and relationships, are intended as the core activities of youth work. The concept of the youth club is, therefore, virtually *verboten* in *Youth Matters*. Moreover, in an important semantic shift, youth workers of the future are continually referred to as 'youth support workers'. The political and sociological evolution of such thinking has already been referred to. Where, however, in *Transforming Youth Work*, it was largely the *content* of club life that was under question, the primary evidence for *Youth Matters*, concerns the specifically negative impact of the youth club attendance period. *Youth Matters* would appear to point to the eventual withering of publicly funded informal, club-based youth work.

The research, conducted by academics from the Institute of Education, claims to overturn the commonly held assumption that vulnerable and at-risk young people can be diverted from riskier forms of experimentation merely through the provision of somewhere safe to congregate, meet their peers, and enjoy themselves, such as a youth club (Feinstein, Bynner and Duckworth, 2005). The researchers' central claim is that for young people with a history of dysfunction and disadvantage, relatively unmediated peer contact during the crucial years of transition to adulthood within an unstructured 'leisure context', i.e. an average youth club, can exacerbate the problems that lead to long term negative outcomes. Using a longitudinal study of a cohort of British people born in 1970, the researchers were able to examine the relationship between demographic, choice and use of youth leisure activities, such as youth clubs, Scouts, Guides, volunteering and sport, and relative long-term outcomes. For the most disadvantaged of the cohort, youth club attendance, compared to the more structured activities looked at in the study, particularly sport, was correlated at age 30 with all major indicators of deprivation: higher levels of smoking, teenage pregnancy, unemployment and criminality.

I will leave questions concerning the methodology of the research and its interpretation of the data to others. However, I will conclude by stating what should be blindingly obvious

to all. The conclusions reached by the researchers are not particularly earth shattering. It does not take genius to work out that, in the absence of those 'protective factors' normally enjoyed by their more affluent peers, deprived young people that mix together may well experiment and take risks from a comparatively early age and with at times disastrous consequences. According to this logic, however, all environments populated by disadvantaged young people, including sink schools, sink estates, and poor neighborhoods, are problematic merely on the grounds that they provide multiple opportunities for close, frequently unmediated proximity. And of course in recent years maximum effort has gone into policing and regulating these very social spaces in order to minimize opportunities for direct, unsupervised contact between young people; contact that is seen as posing a threat both to the wider community and to young people themselves (Waiton, 2001). Like much of New Labour's youth policy, *Youth Matters* raises fundamental questions about justice and liberty that require endlessly re-posing. Does being born into poverty mean that one only has the right to associate in public with one's peers under virtually constant state surveilleance? Is it morally right that a poor person's access to publicly funded group recreation and informal education, 'constructive' or otherwise, is at one tied to evidence of 'good conduct' and a willingness to engage with 'therapeutic' intervention? *Youth Matters* makes an enormous play of government largesse in relation to youth. The language is all about 'opportunities', 'choices' and 'offers'. What, then, about the 'opportunity' to just be without interference? How about the choice to occasionally reject the stacked 'choices' put before one? Whatever its shortcomings, the open, negotiated spirit of club-life could occasionally at least 'offer' these things.

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Notes

1 See, for example, the recent debate in *Youth and Policy* over the place of Curriculum in youth work: *Youth and Policy* (83); *Youth and Policy* (84); *Youth and Policy* (85); and *Youth and Policy* (86). The present discussion does not engage directly with these articles. Their thoughtful insights have certainly helped me to reflect on the relationship between recent policy and my own practice, however.

2 Significantly, youth work's pragmatists have tended to accept uncritically New Labour's terminology for social and cultural issues and with it the conceptual framework behind its activism on the policy front. 'Diversity', 'participation' and 'inclusion' have become naturalized, post-ideological concepts. In the day-to-day world of youth policy and practice and particularly in the communications of organisations such as the NYA, these terms are treated as incontrovertible, commonsensical social goods whose meaning is transparent and universally self-evident. The pragmatists, in common with many on the political centre left, have assimilated the therapeutic orthodoxy of diversity, inclusion and participation to their own 'soft' egalitarianism. Such controversy and argument as there are would invariably seem to concern, for example, the reasonable balance between an individual's rights and responsibilities or how to simultaneously achieve cultural integration and cultural recognition. See Slavoj Zizek, (1999) *The Ticklish Subject: the Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (London: Verso).

3 Being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution; achieving economic wellbeing. DfES (2004) *Every Child Matters*, London: DfES.

Youth Matters – options for improvement

Kevin Williams

Despite chapters called 'Context' and 'Vision' the Green Paper quickly plunges into a review of many existing services for young people. It is therefore easy to let the Green Paper set the agenda for the ensuing debate, rather than stepping back and thinking about what could have been in the Green Paper (but isn't) as well as responding to what is there. This article therefore considers some of the 'missing chapters', before moving on to comment on some of the proposals that may have unintended consequences. Finally this paper briefly brings the Green Paper up-to date with consultation taking place after the London bombings.

The Missing Chapters

The Legislative Framework for Young People

It has never been easy being a 'teenager' (to use the term in the Green Paper). But today there are contradictory pressures on young people. There is considerable pressure to grow up fast. Young people have to cope with disrupted families, opportunities to abuse drugs that were not available to a previous generation and they also need to make decisions about their sexual behaviour at an earlier age. On the other hand the adult world of work, of home ownership, of having children has receded for most young people into a much later period of their lives. Hence young people both grow up more quickly than a previous generation but also grow up more slowly.

Most legislation affecting young people was developed at an earlier time when the pattern of growing up was quite different. Most of this legislation has not been reviewed and this Green Paper misses the opportunity to conduct that review. Hence the Government's clearest and most direct impact on young people remains confused. To give one example, a 15 year old committing a crime can be imprisoned in a Young Offender Institute, but will have to wait a further 10 years before they become eligible for Housing Benefit on the same basis as an adult aged over 25.

Schools

We know that despite the reorganisation at DfES, they retain the old distinction of a service based on an institution 'The Schools Directorate' and a service based on the individual 'Children, Young People and Families Directorate'. This split is carried into the Green Paper, which makes little of the fact that for the majority of teenagers the greatest influence the state has on their lives is school.

The Green Paper reminds us that the government is spending £835 million in developing extended schools and when you compare this with the £40 million for youth facilities it appears that the emphasis is clearly on schools. At the same time the demise of Connexions seems almost certain. Connexions is now a 'brand' in search of a purpose (para.257). One of the interesting aspects of the Connexions experiment was that it was an attempt to operate a holistic service across the school/non-school divide. This is being thrown into reverse with schools gaining the right to commission information, advice and guidance services directly. It is therefore possible that the dominance of school in a young person's life will become even greater. The clear disadvantage of this (apart from removing 'choice' from young people) is that schools are ultimately measured on academic performance, while the Green Paper is mostly about services which work with young people who don't do well at school.

Counselling

One of the 'new' services to emerge since the last major review of the Youth Service (HMSO, 1982) has been young people's counselling services. These services have grown up in response to the increasing complexity and stress of young people's lives over the last 20 years briefly outlined at the beginning of this paper. Unfortunately counselling only gets one mention (para 198) in the Green Paper and that appears to be counselling for parents!

The funding of young people's counselling services that are widely used but not universally available are haphazard. In some areas the youth service and education departments provide significant support or even run the service. In other areas they are primarily supported and/or delivered by a part of the NHS, while in yet other localities funding is obtained via short-term streams such as the Children's Fund. It would be a major step forward to give every young person the possibility of accessing a free independent counselling service geared towards their age group and issues.

Impact on the Voluntary Sector

Just as the Green Paper omits an overview of the impact of all government policy on the lives of young people, there is also no attempt to explore what the Green Paper's impact might be on the voluntary and community sector.

There are many proposals within the Green Paper which, despite the missed opportunities, will have a positive impact on young people. However it is very likely that the Green Paper will have a negative effect on smaller voluntary organisations. Consider the combined effect of these:

- Connexions budgets had a percentage ring fenced for the voluntary and community sector. That ring fencing is going;
- The voluntary sector will now have to compete with both 'in house' statutory provision and with *large commercial companies* (para.108);
- The voluntary sector put considerable effort into supporting Connexions and in many cases followed the Connexions brand guidelines; 'companies sub-contracted by the Partnership follow the corporate identity guidelines and understand that Connexions should be the predominant and primary brand' (Connexions Service Business Planning Guidance October 2001). We are now asked for our 'views on the range of services the

Connexions brand might cover' (para.257);
- The funding for young people's services is being put into the same pot as children's services, with no ring fencing. The statutory duties of local authorities with regard to children are rightly stringent. Although a statutory duty is proposed for local authorities to secure positive activities for young people, it is unlikely that this will bite as hard as the duties towards children. As a result there will be a tendency for funding to drift 'downstream' to the younger age groups;
- Even if the suggested Opportunity Card works, it is likely that smaller voluntary and community groups will not consider that the effort involved in setting up card readers, etc will merit the benefits;
- The £40 million fund for 'places to go' appears to be linked to local authorities and not voluntary sector properties (para.35).

While it is perfectly permissible for a government to develop policy that favours large voluntary organisations or even 'large commercial companies' it would be unfortunate if that policy was developed by accident.

Unintended Consequences

The Role of Parents and Information Sharing

One of the late additions to the Green Paper appears to have been an increased emphasis on the role of parents. Perhaps already we can see some of the dangers of services for young people being lumped together with children's services, as thinking from children's services creeps into thinking about youth services.

The Green Paper calls for several 'step changes' and the first of these is 'a step change in the extent to which professionals who support young people engage with parents' (para.34). Youth workers will see this as the culmination of a trend away from a young person centred, confidential relationship that characterised traditional youth work practice, into a relationship that appears to be little different in principle to that between a student and their school teacher. Back in 2001 the advent of Connexions established the concept of youth workers sharing information about the young people they worked with across a range of agencies. It also hoped to create by autumn 2002 a Connexions Customer Information System which would 'enable personal advisors to record, retrieve and share information and enable young people who move between partnership areas to be supported more readily'. Three years later this appears to be very similar to what is now outlined in the Green Paper as a 'clear and simple assessment process so that neither young people nor their family have to retell their story many times to different people' (para 33).

However sharing information with fellow professional practioners and sharing information with parents is indeed a step change. We may be moving towards the point where a young person will feel that the possibility of a confidential conversation with a youth worker is no longer open to them. If the youth worker is obliged to both share information with other agencies and also engage with the young person's parents then as young people gradually realise what is happening they will retreat from the trusted adult that the Green Paper talks about to relate with their peers.

Finally on this issue, it appears to be driven by the government's wish to make parents responsible for the activities of their children. The rationale for this is clear – it's not the government who should be blamed for anti-social behaviour by young people, but the young people's parents. Of course there is some truth in this – but there is a danger that both parents and young people could lose out, with parents being blamed for problems that they feel are beyond their resources and young people denied access to alternative adults who are skilled and able to support them.

Assessing Success

Within youth work we have now become used to outcome focused work however hard it is to measure an increase in self esteem or a decrease in prejudice. However the Green Paper raises a second kind of outcome which activities for young people may have to achieve – popularity.

Presumably stimulated by Treasury thinking and the success of EMAs, the Opportunity Card introduces 'market forces' into 'positive activities' for young people. While new thinking is welcome, it is clear that a tension is going to arise. Virtually all activities promoted by the youth service and voluntary youth organisations have an (informal) educational aim. They also clearly have to be popular as, unlike school, participation is voluntary. However, if young people effectively have to pay for these positive activities (through their Opportunity Card) there could be a gradual 'dumbing down' of youth work as voluntary sector and statutory providers compete with large commercial companies and positive activities become difficult to distinguish from entertainment.

Young People and Faith

The Green Paper was launched on 18 July, twelve days after London won the Olympic bid, 11 days after the first bombings in London, three days before the attempted second bombing. The Green Paper managed to include references to the Olympics but said little that was relevant to the fact that eleven days before four young people, two of them teenagers, motivated by a corrupted view of their faith, had killed themselves and 50 others with suicide bombs in London.

Spiritual development receives one mention in the Green Paper (para.32) and that is within a list of constructive activities. However within a few days Hazel Blears who jointly launched the Green Paper had written to MPs in the following way:

> *Dear colleague,*
> *Last week the Prime Minister, the Home Secretary and leaders of the main political parties met with representatives of the Muslim community, other faith communities, local authorities, the police and other agencies to discuss how we can work together to prevent young people being drawn into extremism....A number of strands of work were identified at the Prime Minister's and Home Secretary's meetings which need to be taken forward quickly. We agreed to set up a number of working groups, led by community members to focus on the following themes:*
>
> - *Engaging with young people;*
> - *Tackling extremism and radicalisation;*

- *Supporting regional and local initiatives and community actions;*
- *Engaging with women;*
- *Imam Training and accreditation and the role of Mosques as a resource for the whole community;*
- *Providing a full range of education services, in the UK, that meet the needs of the Muslim community;*
- *Security – Islamophobia, protecting Muslims from extremism, and community confidence in policing.*

It will be important that this initiative is fully joined up with the Green Paper and I suspect this is likely to happen. It will however mean that considerably more thought will need to be given to what we mean by spiritual development, and how faith can be used as a force for good in young people's lives and prevented from becoming corrupted into a force for violence and destruction. In particular a much greater emphasis on inter-faith experience for young people of all traditions may be required.

Conclusion

While this paper has tended to focus on the weaknesses or unresolved issues of the Green Paper, this exercise remains in the context that at last the government has stimulated a debate on these issues at a national level. The Green Paper is therefore unreservedly welcomed and its extended consultation period provides an opportunity for significant and creative improvement to both the paper and to the services for young people.

Youth Matters – a plan for development?

Mary Wolfe

The last few years have seen a rise in government intervention in the field of youth and community work delivery and development. Readers of *Youth and Policy* know the history – the move from frameworks for funding and evaluation of current delivery to a key text in *Every Child Matters* which has given rise to a number of policy documents, training initiatives and legislative proposals. A Green Paper, of course, comes from a context just as much as it frames that context.

Comments on any Green Paper are rarely straightforwardly positive and this is perhaps especially so when they are as rare as those concerned specifically with services for young people. I need to acknowledge that my own expectations of the Green Paper were low – after all, it is often easier to comment on the flaws than the strengths of a document, and the thinking made concrete in the Connexions Service has done little to promote or safeguard the 'educative statements of purpose or traditions of practice' (Smith, 2005) of the youth service in England.

But . . . while *Youth Matters* does disappoint in a number of ways; it also challenges. My hope is also to find ways in which it may inspire or inform. To borrow one of the key words of *Youth Matters*, we do have an opportunity here, and not only to respond to the consultation invitation, but also to promote our visions for youth work in a broader arena. Government ministers have presented the document on Radio Four, we now need to challenge a media focus on the razzmatazz of the Opportunity Card and its associations with bargain basement deals on sport and leisure, of topping up like a mobile phone or undergraduate fee levels, to a more careful review of the possibilities which *Youth Matters* might offer. I work for a College which offers education and training to youth and community workers, to informal educators and to community development workers. We get involved in research and we support employers and practitioners with short courses, conferences, training events, websites. Underpinning the work, giving it meaning and energy, are first the young people with whom our students work; second an international voluntary organisation committed to working – mind, body and spirit – with young people; and third a belief in the importance of critical learning and understanding for professional development.

This leads me to ask three key questions of a Green Paper. What views of young people does it promote? Based on these views, what scope does it allow workers in the field of informal and community education, including the majority working within voluntary sector organisations? Finally, what is the model of critical professional development on offer to newcomers to this field?

A portrayal of young people

In the document's strangely outdated language, young people are routinely referred to as teenagers. Is this to distinguish them from the children of *Every Child Matters*, to focus on the years from 13 to 19 (para.10) or, as I fear, does it reflect an overarching interest in what becomes an essentialist view of youth as simply a period of transition? This language, locating young people within an in-between age no longer children and briefly caught *en route* for adulthood and maturity, is fundamentally problematic because it denies integrity or currency to the experiences and understandings of youth. For youth workers, it implies working with people during an essentially short-lived phase but misses the point of the historical nature of humanity. I would prefer to see a model of working with youth which can acknowledge the potentials of their histories and that, in an educational sense, they are 'faced with the issue of responsibility in history [...] with decision, belief, valuation, ethics and aesthetics' (Freire, 1996:111). This belief is what orients us, as educators, towards working with both people's pasts and their futures.

Secondly, young people are consistently portrayed as consumerist by nature. There is considerable interest in exploring 'the impacts of different types of rewards in encouraging young people to volunteer [...]in extending the idea of earning points or credits to be exchanged for a choice of reward' (para. 22) there are references to 'incentivising (sic) volunteering' (para. 86). This leads to the Opportunity Card (which has grabbed most of the headlines to date) as one of the key strategies of the paper. Like many of the opportunities apparently on offer in *Youth Matters*, this at times becomes a threat, moving between offering young people increased control over, and access to, services (paras.110; 252) while expecting Local Authorities to 'withdraw or suspend use of the card' (para. 116) from young people whose behaviour is unacceptable. One of the inherent problems with this portraying of young people as consumers of services, benefits and opportunities is that it seems to leave those of us who choose to work with them, or to train those who would, with a sense that their work is based upon bartering. Volunteering is incentivised, but bad behaviour will lead to withdrawal of services. Once young people are perceived as consumers, then their relationship with workers (and others) is typified as materialistic. At the heart of this view is another key strategy phrase of the document, that young people should be given 'things to do'. Workers offer things like activities, advice or mentoring; young people do things like sport, volunteering or travelling and earn things like discount at stores, leisure centres and sports centres. This crude swapping serves to limit the possibilities for the relationships which I would hope to see students encourage in their work with young people. Too much of *Youth Matters* seems reliant upon reified notions of what can be given, earned and evaluated. Too little attention is directed towards the more subtle – less tangible – aspects of relationships. The aspirations of a youth service defined in 1951 as based upon young people having opportunities 'to discover and develop their personal resources of body, mind and spirit and thus better equip themselves to live the life of mature, creative and responsible members of a free society' (cited HMSO, 1982: 5) have been replaced by an integrated package of support (para. 32), ownership of decisions (para. 143), and receipt of services (para. 68). The approach to (working with) young people does not celebrate their human potential and energy as learners – indeed it is paragraph 126 before we find any clear reference to informal learning (and even there it is presented as fourth of a list of five activities...) 'Things to do' seems to encourage a rather busy, task-

driven approach to the work but fails to engage with the challenge of working with any real sense of curiosity about young people's abilities and potentials to be: mind, body and spirit. Things, after all, can be consumed, easily evaluated, withheld, listed and so controlled. *Youth Matters*, at its least creative, is left enumerating four challenges and six principles to underpin the existing five achievements of *Every Child Matters*.

I want to encourage some questioning of this focus on the transitory nature of teenage years coupled with the view of young people as consumers: of services, of opportunities and of social benefits. I find that at its essence is a view of those young people as dangerously unstable. This view, in turn, implies that young people are to be controlled rather than trusted; further it calls into question a (rarely mentioned by name) youth service which seems equally dangerous and in need of reform (para.10). In the end, it is not surprising that the Green Paper constantly refers to a service which will be overwhelmingly developed, delivered and reliant upon the settings, understandings and resources of the formal school sector. Central among the things and places on offer are (extended) schools (paras.85, 134-5, 155, 173, 227-8) 'personal development learning, delivered through the curriculum' (para.168) and volunteering or mentoring schemes located within schools and colleges.

If I draw together this overview of the representation of young people in *Youth Matters* I am at risk of simply confirming my preconceived expectations of a negative dismissal of its work. When students read the paper and assess its implications for their work they will need to remember that a Green Paper, unlike a Ministerial Report, promises future legislation, and so should we. The questions we all need to ask are how – whether – we can work within, and influence, a revised statutory service and thus how we might interpret, and so design our work towards, the associated outcomes of *Every Child Matters*.

Impacts on voluntary and community sector organisations

I have highlighted the significance of the 'central position' accorded to schools as both the location and provider of much of the services envisaged by *Youth Matters*. As a voluntary sector organisation, the YMCA George Williams College is one part of what is still the country's largest delivery framework for youth and community work. I am not sure that this balance will change fundamentally as a result of *Youth Matters*, although the nature of the partnerships between sectors predictably will do so. A simplistic reason for this view is that there is not the new funding promised in *Youth Matters* to bring about such a change, were it to be wanted. (I gave up counting after nine separate warnings that there would be little, if any, new funding: that this is the stuff of 'existing resources'). Perhaps equally simplistically, I am led to this view by the mere fact that this has not happened before. What interests me more is that, within *Youth Matters*, is an approach which, in many ways, resonates with some of the traditional characteristics of voluntary sector associations. After all, the question which I would want newcomers to the field to ask is not whether they will be funded or permitted to work within or alongside Children's Trusts or local authorities or schools – but rather whether they would be able to do so in line with their aspirations, principles and ambitions for work with young people. Of course, voluntary sector organisations do not have a monopoly on principles in their approaches to work.

Many of the guiding principles of informal education, youth work and community development – including a belief in democracy, diversity and accountability – are arguably more evident within local authorities than in voluntary sector organisations. However, for centuries people have opted to join together precisely to safeguard and develop "places to go and things to do" voluntarily, forming associations on the basis of their beliefs, cultural backgrounds, workplaces, abilities, interests and democratic aspirations. *Youth Matters* claims to value the relationship between local authorities and the voluntary and community sector (paras.36, 41, 55) – there is a challenge now for that sector to work out how it might become more active and so more accountable in accessing and developing the financial and associated cultural resources which are potentially available.

One part of what I believe is on offer from *Youth Matters* – and which I welcome – is a positive and democratic vision which values the intrinsic benefits for keeping young people 'at the heart' of youth volunteering (para.149) and peer mentoring (para.152), which offers time for young people to build up relationships (para.212), and to enjoy a 'rich and varied life outside school or work'(para.126). As part of a voluntary and community sector which claims to develop and sustain appropriate services for young people, we have something to work with here and a vision to seek to integrate. I have explored above ways in which I perceive *Youth Matters* characterises young people, and those who work with them, as contradictory – as both society's future and a threat to its stability.

Those of us who support its vision of democratic and positive working are faced with a similarly contradictory vision of the future it portrays. On the one hand, an acknowledgement that work with young people is essentially democratic and involves those young people themselves as well as their local councils and voluntary organisations; on the other, the spectre of an Opportunity Card linked to both rewards and sanctions, to both privileges and loss of benefit, to both autonomy and proof of identity. The Opportunity Card, successor as it is to the ill-founded Connexions Card, should be of little interest to any of us – it promotes neither a voluntary relationship nor the motivation for association. However, the challenge to work democratically and in partnership is one which I believe we should not refuse.

Critical professional development

This brief overview of the portrayal of young people linked to the scope for sector involvement in delivery gives us some insights into the kind of professional development which *Youth Matters* will either require or promote. At its heart remain the five principles of *Every Child Matters* and the associated core skills for working with young people. The generic nature of this stance is useful, promising as it does a holistic approach to encouraging the flourishing of young people's rights and potentials and challenging a needs-based, problem-solving approach to young people and their development. However, there is an inconsistency between the joined-up thinking which leads rightly to an increasingly creative partnership across existing professions, not being matched by a similarly joined-up – and so humane – view of young people. This inconsistency mirrors the flaw which Watts (cited Smith 2005) associates with the approach promoted by Connexions to a service which is required to be at once both targeted and universal. (And as a quick

aside here, we need to consider what the implications might be of the strange assertion in the *Youth Matters* to retain the Connexions 'brand' (para.39) while transferring its funding into local authorities. What is to remain behind as its brand – its ideology, its logo, the new profession of PAs – or this same blurring of the universal and the targeted in its approach?)

If we want to continue to promote an approach to work with young people based upon critical exploration and reflection, then such an approach is unlikely to come down to six core skills – to six things for professionals to do. Rather it requires a subtle and so thought-provoking exploration of the possibilities for such work, based on what I continue to believe is best understood as an essentially educative understanding of the relationship between young people and ... their youth workers, PAs, priests, teachers, advisers or any of us aiming to become positively involved with them at work. I am happy to include in this approach the six core skills – education certainly includes communicating, exploring human development, safeguarding, supporting, working across professional boundaries and the sharing of information. However, if this becomes our model and our solution, we risk losing the whole in the sum of its parts – and, worse still – in believing the parts give us the answer.

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Testing a Green Paper

Tom Wylie

The recent past

It is hard to avoid scepticism regarding another governmental initiative about young people. Such initiatives often reflect the changing pre-occupations of policy-makers rather than the changing needs of the young. In my own professional life-time, we have had: *Youth and Community Work in the 1970s* (Milson-Fairbairn report 1969); Experience and Participation (Thompson Report, 1982); *Towards a Core Curriculum for the Youth Service: Ministerial Conferences* (1989-92); *Connexions: The Best Start in Life for Every Young Person* (DfES, 2000); *Transforming Youth Work: Resourcing Excellent Youth Services* (HM Government, 2002). Now the Green Paper, *Youth Matters* (HM Government, 2005) which seeks to go well beyond the other reports by taking on most of the territory of youth policy, not simply that of youth work.

The pace of issuing official documents about the young appears to be speeding up. Does the nature and impact of its predecessors give any hope for enduring results from the latest pronouncement? Almost all policy work is now done in-house, by officials with ministers, rather than the previously traditional, external, 'blue-riband' committee. Neither external nor in-house drafting and associated ministerial support however guarantees subsequent implementation. Hence, Milson-Fairbairn was published by a Labour minister but buried by his in-coming, Conservative, replacement. The Thompson Committee's membership, although appointed by the Conservatives, did not produce a Conservative document; its principal recommendations were ignored by Keith Joseph and the rest dismantled by civil servants after an indecently short interval. The misnamed 'Core Curriculum' process met substantial field resistance and was then ditched by government, helping to put youth work in the policy shadows for a decade.

Recent years have seen the creation of Connexions and the rhetorical task of *Transforming Youth Work*. These were accompanied by various specific policies and actions in the fields of health, formal education, urban regeneration and justice which also affected young people and services for them.

Already the bold but deeply flawed vision of Connexions is fading: I described the nature of these flaws more fully in a recent *Youth and Policy* (Wylie, 2004). Despite individual examples of good practice, Connexions became an 'artificial sovereignty': like the old Austro-Hungarian or Ottoman empires, no-one quite knew what it stood for, so, in the end few could stand by its governance and professional structure. The jury is out on whether the fine architecture of *Transforming Youth Work* will result in a long-lasting new construction:

processes of reform, never mind transformation, usually take longer than impatient politicians permit.

Testing the Green Paper

It is against this backcloth that one makes even an initial appraisal of any new set of proposals. Can we be hopeful for the longevity and impact of *Youth Matters*?

The very title of the paper is itself a recognition – by government – of the need to balance its concern for the years of childhood with a policy framework which addresses the changing vulnerabilities, and the greater sense of self-determination, which characterise adolescence. The relentless use of the word 'children' to subsume all those aged 0 – 19 years is depressing. Not just because it is not how the young describe themselves, but also because it draws the policy eye to the early years and towards a welfare rather than a developmental philosophy.

Youth Matters begins to address that concern. Its narrative is measured and positive in tone, showing a proper regard for the generality of most young people and the normalness of their lives while also noting particular issues or groups which require more intensive attention. It proposes how various local structures, including Connexions, could be re-shaped to improve the co-ordination of services.

When the government originally announced its intention to publish such a paper, I suggested 'five tests' by which it should be judged. How does it score on these?

First – relevance. The paper does well here in handling the social concerns of young people themselves, and those of the wider society (which are prone to spill over into moral panics). It could be stronger on how one ensures successful transitions into young adulthood by paying more attention to housing and employability. It is also rather limited in the attention it pays to the most vulnerable, for example refugees or those already in the custodial system. But by strengthening the voices of young people in service design, delivery and evaluation, it builds in ways by which services may secure their continued relevance. The specific items of an Opportunity Card and an Opportunity Fund may turn out to be short-lived gimmicks but the purposes behind them can be applauded as ways of trying to secure better choice.

Second – entitlements. All government papers indulge in a measure of rhetoric. So we can make allowances for the heady talk of 'visions'. Some of these visions have been turned into more concrete statements of expectations and of standards to be met in local provision. This is a fundamental requirement if citizens' needs are to be met and performance assured. The term 'offer' is not strong enough as a concept and these expectations are not as wide-ranging as The NYA's own 'Pledge' proposals. They also give too much space to sport rather than the arts and to narrowly defined forms of volunteering but, overall, this is a good start towards generating greater equality in what is provided across the country.

Third – accessibility. To meet this requires attention to a range of factors, including ease

of local transport and having diverse provision to meet different – and changing – needs and interests. Universality and targeting are problematic concepts but each requires differentiation if young people's needs are to be met. Some progress can be seen in how the paper acknowledges this condition, including the announcement of a very modest level of capital funding which will refurbish a few rather careworn facilities. But the paper is weaker on how one pulls together multidisciplinary teams for intensive support to those who need it, not least in respect of justice. The Youth Justice Board and its sponsoring department, the Home Office, has been able to hold at bay any serious incursion into its bailiwick. It is also rather thin on how the extensive voluntary and community sector can be fully engaged in making provision. It is rather too optimistic about both the role of schools and of new technology, though it is undeniable that the young have a different approach to how one can access services, even guidance, from the ether.

Fourth – responsibility. Which bodies are to be accountable for ensuring all this happens? At present, there is not an adequate legal basis for securing good youth services across the country. Here *Youth Matters* offers the prospect of a major step forward with its proposal to legislate to establish a clear duty on local authorities. We shall have to see exactly how this is couched: it needs to go beyond just a responsibility for 'activities'. If properly drafted and enacted, this could be the most important, and enduring, legacy of *Youth Matters*. But, in turn, such a duty has to be supported by other levers – specific statutory guidance; mechanisms for transparent funding; clear local area agreements based on explicit standards; effective performance assessment including external inspection. And if young people are to gain high quality services such levers have to apply across the entire sector, not just in the local authority's direct domain.

Finally – sustainability. There are two principal themes here: will there be adequate – and consistent – financial resources to back up the duty and will these funds enable services for young people to recruit and retain sufficiently skilled personnel? As ever, the commitments on money are rather vague (and there is an important new battle to fight as the lines are drawn up for the next Spending Review, now scheduled for 2007). Local authorities traditionally resist ring-fenced funding as it inhibits local discretion to meet the needs they are willing to identify. But they have not always used their present discretion wisely or fairly. The new sums announced to support implementation are very limited although many existing government funding streams are now to be brought together into one pot. If we are not to have an earmarked funding stream for 'Youth', it is all the more important to ensure other elements of accountability in the interests of young people (and not just children). On average nationwide we only have one youth worker per 540 young people. That is not enough. Nor does *Youth Matters* deal thoroughly enough with workforce development issues which are absolutely essential if the work is to advance. Much more attention needs to be paid to matters of recruitment and retention and to the continuing professional development if workers are to maintain and enhance their skills. And if they are to approach their work with an appropriate set of values and ethics as well as the competences needed to relate well with young people and deploy effective programmes of learning.

Implications for positioning, reputation and capacity

The opportunities created by *Youth Matters* now require an imaginative response from both conventionally shaped youth services and from the form of professional practice we have come to define as youth work. This response has to go beyond simply answering the questions posed by government in its consultative paper.

The first order of response concerns positioning. Exactly what bundle of 'deliverables', to use the current ugly expression, will youth work in the local authority, voluntary and community sectors, be offering to the new Trusts? It needs to include that traditional array of local provision – clubs, centres, street-based work – and all have to be of higher quality. It should also embrace other activities, notably support for the expression of young people's own voices – more profoundly for empowering them to take greater ownership of services. The De Montfort University study on the *Impact of Youth Work* (Merton et al, 2004), illustrated how good youth work is already making an important, if patchy, contribution across a diverse range of public agenda – community safety, community cohesion, health. These beachheads in various territories of public provision have to be held – and expanded. To do so will require more focussed programmes especially with older adolescents. It also needs nimble-footed management, operating at more strategic levels than has sometimes been the case, if youth work's distinctive contribution is not to be marginalised by others' 'welfaring', 'schooling', or even 'policing' agenda.

A related task is that of reputation management. Despite some warm words in *Youth Matters* on the importance of youth work, there is still an intellectual battle to be fought for the policy value of youth work in the eyes of politicians, local and national, officials and other professional groupings. A recent slew of negative Ofsted reports on local authority youth services has not helped, even if Ofsted's own summary analysis (Ofsted, 2005) laid the reasons for some of the poor results at the door of bad strategy and worse resourcing by local authorities. (The extensive voluntary youth sector always emerges unscathed from such critiques because it is not inspected – and should be). Building the intellectual case requires skilful marketing, based on the identification of good practice, and the even more vital task of improving weak services. Youth work needs to be able to generate a more compelling narrative on the part it plays in redressing inequality and increasing the life chances of the disadvantaged young. It needs a more explicit curriculum and a stronger methodology on such matters.

Issues of capacity, and hence of recruitment and retention, are shot through the Green Paper but not properly explored, let alone addressed in its rather weak sections on workforce development. Why is training for youth workers being discriminated against in the support given to their initial professional formation in higher education and in their subsequent in-service development? Quite apart from numbers, the intellectual base of the work is becoming too slender. Where is the rigorously researched and reported practice? Moreover, what kinds of skills and attitudes are being conveyed to practitioners by some of the sector's principal academics? Too often we read a tone of unremitting oppositionalism to any national policy initiative. The sector needs more from its intelligentsia than cynical pessimism.

Conclusion

Youth Matters is the latest of the waves of policy development which have shaped youth work over the last half-century. We know that new structures often prove transient, but that the work on the ground endures. It is important, therefore, that in the inevitable re-arranging of titles and offices, we do not lose sight of the focus of youth work itself. Good youth work is built on three pillars: a clear purpose – the social, personal, spiritual and political education of young people, the deployment of particular methods – notably experiential learning through developmental relationships and group work; and a set of values expressing our common humanity and shared citizenship. *Youth Matters* will only succeed if it provides a policy and resourcing framework which enables such youth work to flourish.

Youth Matters is intended to nest work with young people inside the range of actions which sprang from *Every Child Matters* and subsequent legislation. It will aid the process of fitting work with adolescents into the current, wider 'Change for Children' agenda. This is not unproblematic, given the dominance of issues concerning childhood and the centrality of a welfare-based approach. Whatever local structures eventually emerge, four main themes are already evident in how they are being shaped: *Youth Matters* will accelerate these trends though, if they are to be sustained, the policy and resourcing will need to be maintained for a decade. The trends include: a concern for outcomes: all services now have a legal duty to seek five outcomes for all young people – being healthy; enjoyment and achievement; personal safety; active engagement in communities; and their economic well-being. Second, an attempt to produce integrated provision by drawing together different welfare and education services, sometimes on school sites. In turn each service will be increasingly staffed by multi-disciplinary teams of different professionals, sometimes co-located in order to provide a local integrated and holistic service, particularly for the more vulnerable. Fourthly, the involvement of young people in making decisions about the services which affect them, and in their evaluation. In handling such themes, my initial reaction is that *Youth Matters* strikes a good balance between continuity and change; it deals well with complex, cross-cutting issues; it makes some favourable comments about youth work as a form of professional intervention. And, importantly, it offers the prospect of drawing together effective local services for young people through the co-ordinating role – nay, duty, – of local authorities, working in partnership with others. Are we once again at a turning point for youth work? There have been too many false dawns to be entirely confident: but a measured hopefulness seems in order.

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The impact of *Youth Matters* on youth participation

Blossom Young

The full and active involvement of young people in the design, delivery and evaluation of services for them has long been an aspiration for those working in the field of youth participation. Talk about participation of young people has appeared from governments over the years, and much good work is being achieved in a range of public, voluntary and community sectors, and increasingly in business settings. In the long waiting period for the publication of *Youth Matters*, expectations were high that this good practice would be cemented by a firm commitment from government that young people's involvement would be a central component of the delivery of services. With its publication, questions are highlighted as to whether this is the case. In this piece, I will aim to explore in detail the impact of the recommendations in *Youth Matters* on participation work; the explicit suggestions of where local authorities should be involving young people and ask if it goes far enough in embedding young people's involvement. I will also examine where *Youth Matters* builds on participation and youth work development thinking over the past 40 years, look at some examples of good practice that, in my view, *Youth Matters* does not fully learn from, and identify key next steps in talking participation work forward.

Youth Matters is the latest key youth work document in a long history of publications from governments that attempt to move the youth participation agenda forward. The 1960 *Albemarle Report* states 'We value very highly the active participation of the young, and their own leadership of groups which they bring into existence themselves'. However questions must be raised about how much was achieved with the theme being addressed again in the 1969 *Fairbairn-Milson Report*:

> *...adults must in future accept young people as social equals and no longer as children expected to play adult roles only in those areas where it is convenient that they should do so. We see it as a task of the Youth Service to further this engagement of the young in and with society. There is talk in many quarters today about 'participation'. An important aim of Youth Service should be to facilitate critical and responsible participation among the rising generation.*

Developments were seen in the 1980s, with youth representatives (including the then Chair of the British Youth Council, John Collins) involved in the Thompson Review Group. The 1982 *Thompson Report* 'gave strong endorsement to young people's participation (including the role of local youth councils in facilitating this)'.

The discussions around participation from governments have therefore been taking place for many years, and alongside this there have been a number of initiatives to develop

the participation agenda, particularly in the voluntary and community sectors. The establishment of the British Youth Council in 1948 increased the role young people could play in influencing governments and other agencies nationally, and was a key initiative in the development of local youth councils and forums. The creation of the UK Youth Parliament in 1999, together with other voluntary and community sector groups establishing a local, national and international voice for young people, has built on this work and enabled young people to have more influence in government. However, in comparison with other countries, such as the Republic of Ireland where the national youth council has status as a social partner, it becomes clear that there are still great steps to be taken to ensure a consistent approach to young people's involvement at the highest levels of decision-making. The Children and Youth Board, as established by the DfES, can advise ministers and officials, but if there is no representative voice at the point at which decisions are made, the process of involvement can be viewed as consultation rather than active involvement at all stages.

Many of the key developments, particularly with regard to local authorities, have taken place over the last ten years, and more recently in some cases. The publication of *Learning to Listen* from the Children and Young People's Unit at the DfES in 2001 provided a basis for better involvement of young people in central government, through the identification of Learning to Listen Co-ordinators in government departments. Within the youth service particularly, the *Transforming Youth Work* agenda sets out standards for the involvement of young people, including the objective that 'Authorities must demonstrate clear arrangements for involving young people in democratic processes'. It also outlines a standard of self-indication by authority of its position on the LGAs Standards for Democratic Involvement.

This expectation on local authorities has seen the development of some innovative projects in relation to youth participation, with much good practice in the field. There is much to be learnt from the examples of the Connexions Service in the development of Youth Charters and the creation of Youth or Shadow Boards to advise Connexions Partnerships at a sub-regional level. The development of *Hear by Right* standards from the National Youth Agency has been a welcome move in providing an assessment tool for measuring the impact of young people's involvement. However this has yet to permeate throughout all local authorities, and there is still a long way to go in embedding these standards across all services for young people.

Without an explicit commitment and framework from government, with adequate resourcing, through which to involve young people fully at all decision-making levels, at all stages of development and across all services for young people, there is a danger that much of this good work could be lost. In the current climate much practice remains patchy and in early stages of development. Projects are often limited in the scope and reach of young people's influence, with young people often having little involvement in key decisions, and the challenges of tokenistic participation practice remain in force.

The challenge therefore for *Youth Matters* is to build on the wealth of good practice in the field, and provide the commitment, standards and resources to ensure youth participation can be fully embedded within all services for young people, in the context of developments around children's trust arrangements.

Explicit proposals for the involvement of young people are given in two clear areas; Opportunity Cards and the Opportunity Fund. The vision, a 'plan to give young people more control and choice over what is on offer in their area' is welcomed in principle, as a very direct expression of the commitment to young people making choices about their everyday lives.

Opportunity Cards as outlined in the Green Paper would in theory enable young people to have more direct choice about which services they access, with top-up funding being made available by parents, local authorities and young people themselves. In principle this is sound, with young people choosing the activities they want to take part in, and therefore influencing the way services are delivered: 'young people's choices influence directly what is available – ensuring that the activities available are those that young people want and will use'.

However, there are a number of questions about this approach. Leaving aside the logistical challenges that will be faced by local authorities in implementing the scheme, there are questions about how many and which groups of young people would have access to the card, including the proposed removal of cards for those young people engaged in crime and anti-social behaviour. There is also a potential tension between the developments in *Every Child Matters* around outcomes for young people under the five key outcomes, to be offered through youth services amongst others, and young people accessing the activities they want. It is possible to see a situation where young people choose to access purely recreational activities, and not engage in more constructive activities contributing to the key outcomes. This has particular relevance in the proposal that 'funding for providers will be directly linked to young people's choice about the activities in which they take part', and could lead to a retrograde step in the delivery of outcomes for young people. With specific reference to participation, the assumption that the link to funding 'should prompt providers to involve young people more closely in designing and delivering services' does not necessarily follow, and begs questions about how government sees participation. Is the intention that young people participate more fully as citizens, or is this about young people's participation simply as consumers?

The proposed Opportunity Fund, which would create a 'budget in each local authority to be spent at young people's discretion on projects to improve things to do and places to go in their area' is to be welcomed. The good practice examples from YouthBank and the Local Network Fund, which the proposal draws from, provide a sound basis from which to develop this work further. Young people having responsibility for allocating funding can achieve high levels of participation, if they are involved in the complete process, from development of the project, through to delivery and evaluation. Where this would not be the case is if parameters for funding were set by adults, with young people not involved in design of criteria, the application process, decisions over individuals and groups to fund, monitoring of work carried out through that funding stream etc. Where *Youth Matters* could go further in this concept is by insisting on young people's involvement in decision-making over other funding processes, including the allocation of youth service budgets.

Aside from these two specific proposals, references to young people's involvement throughout *Youth Matters* are plentiful, but do not necessarily carry significant weight.

Much of the language used points to a commitment from government and an expectation on local authorities that young people should be involved, however this appears with regard to certain aspects but not others. There is an expectation that young people should be involved in the development of an annual local offer, but there is no specification about what form that involvement should take. Other references appear to be limited to consultation; for example with the proposals on Information, Advice and Guidance 'this process should take full account of the views of young people and parents'.

The Green Paper does acknowledge that there is more work to do, for example 'reviewing with the inspectorates ways to assess how well the views of children and young people are captured, the extent to which young people are involved in designing services'. However, in some aspects of the proposals the document makes no reference to involving young people. There is no mention of how young people could be involved in the development of national standards, nor that they should be involved at all in this. In the section on delivering the proposals, diagrams are given on how services will be delivered through children's trust arrangements, with no reference to how young people could influence these structures. There are other examples where commitment is lacking; particularly around young people's active involvement in IAG delivery, targeted support programmes, and commissioning of the voluntary and community sector.

Telling, too, is the way government has approached the consultation with young people themselves. It is made explicit that 'young people are central to this document. We have sought and listened to their views and options throughout its development. We want to hear the views of all concerned...particularly young people.' The publication of a young people's questionnaire was produced – not without pressure from organisations – and contains very little about the proposals outlined in *Youth Matters*. There is no 'young people friendly' version of the Green Paper as such. As the *Somewhere to Go? Something to Do* document notes 'Would a card that gave you discounts and money to spend on activities encourage you to do more activities in your spare time?' Significantly many local authorities and organisations are choosing to run their own consultation work around *Youth Matters*, rather than using the questionnaire provided.

Ultimately, for those who have been striving in the field to ensure young people can have real voice and influence at all decision-making levels, these things combined leave a feeling that *Youth Matters* falls short. Unless there is the commitment to achieve young people's active involvement in every aspect of all the services delivered for them participation work will continue to be delivered as it is now. *Youth Matters* was expected to provide that commitment and give strong messages to local authorities on the delivery of participation work. It does this in part with the proposals for Opportunity Cards and Opportunity Funds, and with the language throughout reading as a commitment to involving young people in shaping services. But it does not go far enough. Too little is said about young people being involved in every stage of the development of services, and not enough attention is paid to ensuring young people can influence and take part in decision-making at all levels.

Youth Matters, as with every key youth work document produced by governments since the 1940s, does move the participation agenda forward and provides some strength to participation work. However, there is a need to be more ambitious in expectations

about young people's involvement; too often (and *Youth Matters* is no exception in this), participation is limited to consultation or specific projects within limited spheres of influence. We need to think broadly, and aim for young people to be involved at every level, every stage. Until government makes a firm commitment to this, it will remain a difficult goal to achieve. It is important that we consider where we think things should be now in relation to where things have been previously; perhaps Milson and Fairbairn in 1969 were right in their assessment that 'There is talk in many quarters today about "participation". Perhaps we have not come quite as far as we think we have since then.

Note

Unless otherwise identified all quotations are taken from *Youth Matters*.

Reference

Local Government Association/National Youth Agency (2001) *Hear By Right*, Leicester: National Youth Agency.

Classic Text

Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration (1904)

Tony Jeffs

The librarian who carried the fragile tied document from the storeroom estimated no one had requested it for 70 years. He may have been mistaken but possibly not. Now in a somewhat parlous state the *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration* hardly gave the appearance of being amongst the most significant and influential public documents of the last century – yet it probably is. Unread lately, maybe, but paradoxically it remains one of the most referenced and cited of government reports. Frequently credited by social policy writers and historians as having shaped and justified crucial initiatives in the fields of child welfare and youth, housing, public health and income maintenance policy. Initiatives that laid the foundation for the modern welfare state. Certainly in relation to the development of youth policy and youth work it has had a significant and lasting influence[1].

Origins

Inter-departmental committees of this nature were not then, or now, commonplace. Certainly the setting up of this one came about as a consequence of major public concern, articulated in the press, parliament and amongst leading figures in the military. The immediate trigger for the formation of this committee, comprising representatives of three departments of state (the Education and Local Government Boards and the Home Office), was an article by Major-General Maurice published in the *Contemporary Review*. Maurice, who at one point in his military career had been responsible for the discharge of those judged 'no longer fit to serve', in a substantive and cogently argued essay testifies that the physical condition of recruits was then so deficient only 40 per cent survived two years service. It was a revelation that reinforced the disquiet that had first emerged during the Boer War when it was rumoured that as many as half the volunteers in some areas were rejected as 'unsatisfactory'. It also lent added credence to an earlier article in the same publication by 'Miles' – *Where to Get the Men*. The fundamental problem, Maurice reasoned, was the appalling social conditions prevailing within our industrial and urban centres. These had precipitated wholesale physical deterioration. Enclosures, clearances and mechanisation had during the previous century impoverished and de-populated the rural areas. Thereby staunching the flow of healthy swains fit and ready for service. Therefore the army was now predominately reliant upon the surplus labour of the urban centres. Consequently:

> *Whatever steps are taken by increasing the inducements to enlistment or by any form of pressure, compulsory or otherwise, to raise the standard of the Army either in numbers*

or physique seem to me to be only like more careful methods of extracting cream from milk. The more carefully you skim the milk the poorer is the residue of skimmed milk. (Maurice, 1903: 54)

Unchecked, Maurice reasoned, this deterioration in physical 'vitality' would, within two or three generations, result in the nation being unable to secure its freedom, sustain its economy or uphold its imperial aspirations. Lloyd George encapsulated these fears in one of those graphic aphorisms for which he was renowned – 'you can't 'have an A1 Empire with a C3 population'[2].

Maurice eschewed a crude jingoistic line, carefully weaving together a number of intellectual threads. Accordingly although some might not endorse his thesis in entirety they were willing to align themselves with him. Social Darwinians and Eugenicists had few problems lending support. Predictably populist exponents of this tradition, such as Arnold White, exploited the article to buttress their cause. As did more thoughtful advocates of policies designed to persuade the better educated and physically superior segments of society to have more children and discourage the 'lower orders' from doing so (see White 1901; Searle 1971). Imperialists, of various hues, likewise rallied around Maurice calling for reforms designed to bolster the national 'stock' and protect the Empire. Less predictably the Major General found allies amongst social Liberals and reformers. Men and women, who although, as we shall see, distrusted the core thesis and were often uneasy about the whole Imperial project, nevertheless, like Maurice, advocated policies that would enable the industrial worker and denizens of the slums to 'command an adequate wage' and 'rear a healthy family' (Maurice ibid.).

The article created a furore that fuelled the existing disquiet regarding the mediocre physical and intellectual quality of those volunteering for service during the Boer War. Such was the cumulative pressure building in parliament and elsewhere the government had no choice but to 'act'. Within weeks of publication the Duke of Devonshire, Lord President of the Council, announced the establishment of a committee to enquire into the 'allegations concerning the deterioration of certain classes of the population as shown by the large percentage of rejections for physical causes of recruits for the Army'. Sifting the evidence to determine whether or not Maurice was correct was important. But irrespective of the conclusion arrived regarding that issue the government clearly had a problem on their hands – the army was finding it difficult to recruit sufficient numbers of men of an acceptable calibre. A widely canvassed solution was conscription, an option that appeared to be gaining increasing support in certain circles. But it was one that threatened to be electorally hazardous for a government contemplating an imminent general election. Germany already required all males to undertake a period of compulsory military service and advocates of reform, irrespective of whether they favoured conscription, were not slow to point out that only 16 per cent of those 'called-up' were judged unfit to serve (Vol. 1: 7). Clearly it was possible therefore to have an industrial society without the wholesale loss of 'physical vitality'. But at what cost fiscally? Yet in lieu of conscription the only feasible solution lay in improving the physical condition of those who volunteered, and given that one could not predict at birth who they might be that meant addressing the health and well-being of the whole 'pool' from which recruits were drawn. This did not escape the attention of those responsible for organising the work of the Committee and as a consequence the terms of

reference were augmented even before it convened. And they were instructed:

> *(1) To determine, with the aid of such counsel as the medical profession are able to give, the steps that should be taken to furnish the Government and the Nation at large with periodical data for an accurate comparative estimate of the health and physique of the people; (2) to indicate generally the causes of such physical deterioration as does exist in certain classes; and (3) to point out the means by which it can be most effectually diminished.*

Work Begins

Almeric Fitzroy, clerk to the Privy Council, was appointed Chair. The remaining members were G. M. Fox, HM Inspector of Physical Training Board of Education; J. G. Legge HM Inspector of Reformatory and Industrial Schools; H. M. Lindsell Principal Secretary to the Board of Education; Colonel Onslow Inspector of Marine Recruiting; J. Struthers Assistant Secretary to the Scotch Education Department; and J. F. W. of the General Register Office. Wisely they began by requesting submissions from the Royal Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons and the Director-General of the Army Medical Services. Each of these was specifically asked to provide an analysis of the evidence and data at their disposal. All three reported they could offer no proof to support the opinion that physical deterioration was taking place. All however highlighted serious concerns regarding the health and well-being of young people. Suggesting that even if actual physical deterioration was a fiction there was an urgent need for drastic action. As the Director-General concluded:

> *I trust that the inquiry may end in suggestions that will lead to the institution of measures which will result in bringing about a marked improvement of the physique of the classes from which our recruits are at present drawn.* (Vol 1. p. 2)

In addition to studying written submissions the Committee sat for 26 days listening to oral evidence from 68 witnesses and made a number of visits. Included amongst these was one to Oxford House Settlement. There they met with the workers, young people and observed the clubs operating. Thirteen of the witnesses were members of the medical profession, seven of these were specifically nominated by the Royal Colleges to give evidence. Besides these the list includes an array of notable figures. Pre-eminent social researchers such as Charles Booth and Seebohm Rowntree; key individuals from the field of social welfare such as C. S. Loch of the Charity Organising Society; numerous government and local authority inspectors; and an array of social reformers and activists. Including amongst the latter prominent youth work notables such as Maude Stanley and Douglas Eyre.

Full transcripts of the examination of the witnesses, as well as copies of the written submissions, were published as part of the Report. Overall they provide an extraordinary body of evidence that argues a persuasive case for reform. Because the transcripts are unedited it is possible to follow the line of questioning of the Committee. Even to acquire an impression of the prejudices and mind-set of individual members. What is noticeable is the degree to which they are open to persuasion, unafraid of having their assumptions challenged. Pleasingly confident when it comes to questioning the taken-for-granted

common sense of their contemporaries. The questioning of Maurice remains even after the lapse of a century an enthralling read, as does their determination to pin down Taylor, the Director of Army Medical Services. The exchanges with T. C. Horsfall, representing the *Manchester and Salford Sanitary Association*, are a gem of a different order. Horsfall was a man driven by a zeal for reform and social justice. Chair of the committee that founded Ancoats Settlement (Rose and Woods 1995), philanthropist and activist, he also possesses a sharp wit and a facility to coin a memorable phrase. Like at least a dozen other witnesses he had studied social policy initiatives elsewhere, especially Germany and France. These, in the main he, as do the others, considered to be well in advance of our cautious attempts at social reform. He readily quotes examples of where we might usefully borrow and adapt. During the course of his time before the Committee he ranges far and wide on issues of overcrowding, town planning, pollution, the value of playgrounds supervised by a 'master of revels' and school reform. At one point he describes in some detail the superior town planning encountered in German cities. This produces from Fitzroy the following question, asked one suspects in an exasperated tone:

> *You attach great importance to the trees?*

Horsfall responds magnificently:

> *I attach immense importance to the trees. I know no one fact that is having a worse influence on family life in Manchester and Salford than this fact, that for the majority there are no places where a decent working man can go with his wife and children on a summer evening to take the air, and to watch the children play. Family life is stamped out in Manchester and Salford by the impossibility of parents and children enjoying themselves together. But these street plans provide that possibility, and in Berlin and in the biggest towns in Germany I have hunted in vain for any part of the town where it is not possible by a few minutes walk for a family to all go together to some pleasant tree planted street. A tree planted street seems an emblem of civilisation and intelligence, and the absence of it an index of the contrary qualities.* (Vol 2: 232)

A little later he insists on raising the issue of the shortcomings of educational provision in poor areas. Low quality schools, often run by inadequate staff and administrators, had, in his opinion, to take some responsibility for the social problems that were exercising the minds of the Committee. One can, even now picture the jaws of his interrogators dropping as they question Horsfall and he lets slip that the University was running in Manchester 'a practicising school' that deliberately set its face against delivering the National Code (curriculum). Circumventing the obligation to do so by charging parents the nominal sum of one shilling a week. It was a school that took children from the slums on visits to the country, museums, libraries and picture galleries – to introduce them to the 'better side of civilisation'. That offered them ample opportunities for play and a curriculum written by the teachers themselves rather than bureaucrats in London.

If Horsfall's testimony is a master class in how to 'speak truth to the powerful' that of Mrs. Close must surely rank as amongst the most eccentric offered to such a body. A candidate for the title of the world's pre-eminent busy-body this woman travelled the length and breadth of Britain, and much of Europe besides, on horse-back. Deliberately choosing to

stay in the houses of the poor – never hotels. The poorest physiques she encountered were in Kent, blamed it appears on the habit of mothers going to the theatres in London. Indeed the ease of travel to London had created similar problems everywhere within a hundred miles radius of the City. 'In Hertfordshire and Kent, and say from Didcot on the Great Western up to London, all these people are idle, feckless and good for nothing people' (ibid.: 116). To confirm this she describes the worst lodgings she had stayed in. These were in Windsor, it being the only one where 'I have not been able to go into the bed, and have had to lie outside it'. The food there was also so badly cooked as to be uneatable. Her travels over many years convinced her that physical and mental deterioration was undoubtedly occurring apace. The cause being:

> *That the girls, first of all, have no sort of sense of duty; not the slightest. It is only amusement and pleasure with them. The last thing they think of is duty and, therefore, they do not take the trouble to cook or get up in the morning, and the children go to school without breakfast, because the woman is too idle to get up in the morning, and she is utterly indifferent and has no sense of duty.* (ibid.: 115)

The solution to all this fecklessness, she concludes, is less education and more training for the girls. Schools it seems need to concentrate on the basics – from an earlier age – and voluntary organisations needed to teach more religion.

Clubs

Few witnesses agreed with Mrs Close. Overwhelmingly they concluded that scant evidence existed to support the fears of Maurice and writers such as Arnold White. So strong was this body of evidence that the Committee at the outset assured those awaiting the result of their deliberations that 'the well-known facts relating to public health were sufficient to dispel anxiety' (Vol. 1:2). What the material set before them did show was that the condition of recruits was influenced by changes in the labour market. The calibre rose as unemployment increased, whereas when work was plentiful only those unable to secure the lowest quality paid employment were likely to volunteer. Crucially the Committee were persuaded that the class of 'casual labourers' from which the army predominately recruited was not a fixed entity, doomed to ceaselessly re-produce itself. They were led to this conclusion not merely by the evidence of the medics, who unanimously argued that improvements in housing, diet, working conditions, education and the overall environment had cultivated a gradual but sustainable improvement in the physical well-being of the vast majority of the population. But also by that of the welfare workers interviewed, including the three youth workers who appeared before the Committee and a fourth, C.E.B. Russell who submitted a written deposition. All conveyed an authoritative optimism, under-pinned by a conviction that much had already been achieved and a great deal more could be speedily accomplished, if the resources and will to do so were at hand. They advocated legislative reforms but also plainly grasped the inestimable value of informal educational relationships in bringing about change. As Maude Stanley, who by 1904 had been involved in club work for 34 years explained such clubs of which she estimated there were 1,200 in London alone, offered young people:

An enormous advantage to them. Then the kindnesses which are shown to these girls get spread among all the relations. It does them good and makes a better and kindlier feeling in that way. They take a great interest in what the girls learn. I started a club eighteen months ago in Walworth, because I heard of its being the very worst part in London, and the most neglected. I could not have imagined that the girls could have been so demoralised in their conversation, and in their actions as they were. When I went there they used to use very dreadful language, and say terrible things; they used to run about in forms, escaping from the lady who had charge. However we went on, and now we have a place to ourselves in Walworth . . . I have an old beer house for a club. These girls are so absolutely changed that I took twenty of them down on last Bank Holiday to Virginia Water. I took them to St. Ann's Hill and then to tea, and they behaved perfectly well. Many of these girls had passed the Seventh Standard at school, and could recite pieces of Shakespeare and Tennyson, and so on, but I felt it was an absolute waste, because after they had left school they went about the streets with no companionship but that of costers, with whom they talked. (Vol.2: 489)

Their self-belief in the worth of the work they undertook was matched by a confidence in the innate goodness of those they worked alongside. Individuals who others giving evidence had dismissed as 'rubbish' (Vol. 2: 179), unfit on every criteria for military service, these workers deemed to be good people surviving in appalling conditions. As Mrs Bostock a pioneering Health Visitor explained, when pressed, she only very occasionally encountered an inadequate mother and never any who did not wish to co-operate with her in improving the health and well-being of their child (Vol. 2: 287). Similarly the wonderful Mrs Josceline Bagot, married to an MP, who ran a boys' club in Lisson Grove, North London with 80 to 100 members. Unable to cajole anyone to help her unpaid she was reduced for many years to paying six shillings a week to 'an instructor' to teach the boys boxing and gymnastics. Anxious to expand the club to cater for those below 16, she was unable to do so for lack of helpers. The boys mostly lived in the adjacent single-roomed tenements and in the summer, because the rooms were so hot and overcrowded, 'slept in the street' (Vol. 2: 188). She describes how she kept in contact with the young men after they left the club, and how for most, membership led not merely to an improvement in physique but more significantly 'their whole character is changed' (op cit.).

Themes

Invariably different submissions placed flexible degrees of emphasis on their impact and importance, nevertheless certain core 'social factors' and 'problems' consistently emerged as urgently requiring legislative attention if the health and well-being of working-class young people was to improve. These were poor diet, unhealthy working conditions, poverty, slum housing and overcrowding, excessive consumption of alcohol, pollution, smoking, early marriage, inadequate parenting, working mothers, unsatisfactory schools and an inappropriate curriculum. Encouragingly witnesses and the Committee alike paraded a reluctance to avoid the easy option of depositing the blame disproportionately on the shoulders of the poor. Both groups were rightly not adverse to pointing the finger at the behaviour and failings of the powerful and influential. For example it was made clear that the appalling working conditions in many factories led to the health of many young people,

especially girls, deteriorating markedly soon after they entered employment (Vol. 2: 435). That it was not greed or indifference to the needs of their children that resulted in so many mothers working. Rather it was high rents, low wages, male unemployment and a lack of income support for single mothers. Or that air pollution in many urban areas was getting worse because the penalties imposed on the offending factories were so derisory that it was far cheaper to pay these than for the owners to do anything about the causes. Also that it was the failure of 'planners', voluntary and religious organisations and local authorities that ensured in many areas no alternative to the public house existed not merely for social life but also classes and meetings.

Witnesses made numerous suggestions regarding the direction reform might take. Ranging from tougher legislation to deal with working conditions, poor housing, food adulteration and making it a statutory duty for local authorities to ensure all children were in a fit state for school. To more generalised improvements such as:

- the introduction of two hours per week physical activity (as was already the norm in Germany) for all young people of school age;
- summer camps;
- better co-ordination of local youth services;
- inspection of youth provision;
- state funding for sport and youth facilities and play sheds;
- parenting classes for young women;
- crèche and nursery provision for those below 5;
- compulsory social education for those aged 14 to 16;
- better use of school and community facilities;
- setting up lads' clubs linked to schools.

Conclusion

Published the same year as G. Stanley Hall's two volume study *Adolescence* it is unlikely members of the Committee and few, if any, of the witnesses had read his mammoth tome before the Report was completed. However the authors, and many witnesses, shared Hall's view of the teenage years as a period of transition. One 'that determines so many lives' so that by the time they 'reached seventeen he has shown either self-improvement or self-deterioration' (Vol. 2: 560). Their findings dovetailed with those of Hall and likewise appealed to youth and social workers, educationalists and reformers. The back draft from each fuelled the enthusiasm of those anxious to do something either for or about 'youth'. Hall's highly successful speaking tour, designed to publicise his ideas, plus the efforts of his supporters such as Slaughter and Baden-Powell to heighten awareness of the crucial necessity for effective adult intervention during the dangerous years of adolescence, combined to reinforce the message sent out by the Report. Consequently within a decade many of the recommendations of the Report were either enacted or would enter the statute book during or immediately after the 1914-18 War. For example improved methods regarding the collection of data relating to the health of young people; subsidised health care for children, mothers and young people; expansion of the powers of the Factory Inspectorate; tighter controls relating to the sale of alcohol and tobacco to children;

provision of subsidised housing for low income families; and the development of Children's Services. The request for state funding for youth clubs and cadet forces; and sports and play facilities took longer to achieve but eventually came to pass, for good or ill. Surely few government committees can lay sole or partial claim to having achieved as much in such a brief time-span.

Looking back over a century it is difficult not be impressed by the efficiency and speed with which the members completed their task. Also the openness of the process, the independence of mind that was encouraged as well as the self-evident willingness of the Committee members to listen and learn is remarkable.

Postscript

In one respect the Committee accomplished little. Within a decade war with Germany broke out and two years later in 1916 conscription was introduced. Only one man in three out of almost two and a half million conscripted was pronounced fit for active military service (Report of the Ministry of National Service 1917-19 volume 1). Almost without exception observers declared the durability and physical condition of the German troops to be in every respect superior to that of their British counter-parts. Likewise with regards to the condition of troops from Australia, New Zealand and Canada. Furthermore the superior quality of the German educational system produced troops better equipped to operate more sophisticated weaponry, who required far less supervision from officers and were trusted to operate with greater autonomy. The many witnesses who appeared before the Committee and commented on the more advanced social and educational provision then existing in Germany were vindicated. But in a way none would have desired.

Note

All quotations unless otherwise identified are from the Report. The Report is divided into three volumes and details given provide information regarding both the volume and page number of the quotation.

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1 This article is an abridgement of a more substantial examination of the Report to be published in R. Gilchrist, T. Jeffs and J. Spence (eds.) *Essays on the History of Community and Youth Work – Vol.3* (Leicester: Youth Work Press).

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The Year of the Volunteer: Formalising the Goodwill Mountain

Heather Smith

Volunteering is a long established way in which we help others, be it through belonging to an organisation or by simply offering to give our time to help our friend, neighbour or colleague. Yet the government is concerned that young people are not engaging in voluntary action enough and so want to do something about it. They want to change 'one-off' acts of generosity into a life-long commitment of giving. The way forward they are suggesting is through a formalised structure that will offer the benefits of an accredited course and the increase of an individual's 'marketable skills'. This article discusses these points, alternative views and concerns about the impact a formalised structure may have.

With 'civic engagement' and 'voluntary participation' at an apparent low, 2004 saw the government take action. Chancellor Gordon Brown said, 'we have a goodwill mountain just waiting to be tapped. Now is the time to turn one-off acts of generosity into lifelong giving and lifelong voluntary action.' Home Secretary Charles Clarke said, 'Volunteering enables people to make a real difference in both their lives and the lives of others.' Together they launched the Year of the Volunteer 2005 to form an important part of a 'cross-Government commitment' encouraging people to give their time to make their communities better places for everyone. But the governmental promotion of volunteering didn't stop there. In May 2004 the Russell Commission was set up to develop a 'national framework for youth action and engagement'. The delivery of the final report was planned to coincide with the Year of the Volunteer.

The report was published in March 2005. By July, with the publication of the long awaited Green Paper *Youth Matters* (DfES, 2005) it was apparent that volunteering is an important plank in the overall policy approach to young people. The Green paper includes a commitment to expand the work of Russell and at its launch, the Home Office Minister for Active Citizenship, Hazel Blears announced the Government's intention to establish an Independent Charitable Body, supported by £50 million to implement the Russell Commission's recommendations (www.homeoffice.gov.uk, 18 Jul. 2005). The Russell Report is therefore of serious significance in terms of the relationship of young people to volunteering.

Historically, 'volunteering by definition is altruistic and philanthropic' (Fox and Besselink, 2004). Many non-profit organisations originated through the actions of volunteers, by people recognising a need and doing something about it, using their passion to make things right in places where the Establishment was seen as indifferent if not antagonistic (Ellis, 2001). Even the United Nations (UN) has its own definition. It recognises three main

characteristics of volunteering: the activity should not be undertaken primarily for financial reward; the activity should be undertaken voluntarily according to the individual's own free will; and the activity should be of benefit to someone other than the volunteer. In short, volunteering is about individuals freely giving in order that someone else may benefit. The UN recognise that there are 'types' of volunteering and highlight four main areas: mutual aid or self-help; philanthropy or service to others; participation or civic engagement; and advocacy or campaigning (Russell Commission, 2004).

This article explores what the Russell Commission has to say about voluntary action and its proposals for engaging the youth of the 'goodwill mountain'. Although much of the article will be devoted to the Russell Commission, there will also be discussion around what other bodies have to say on youth participation in the world of volunteering. I will draw on points of view from the National Youth Agency (NYA), Millennium Volunteers (MV) and the Fabian Society. But just as importantly I will draw on my experience as a practitioner in the field of informal education to understand the implications that the Russell Commission may have for young people and those who work alongside them.

The Consultation Process

Ian Russell is the Chief Executive of Scottish-Power and was appointed as sole commissioner. The focus of the commission is on youth participation in voluntary action. In the Consultation Document published in October 2004, Russell gave a personal foreword stating that the 'Russell Commission starts from a clear sense that there is great potential to empower young people through increased and improved engagement in voluntary activity' and that 'If more young people are to be attracted to volunteering, their awareness of and access to available opportunities must be improved'.

The idea behind the Russell Commission framework is to increase 'the level of community participation' by young people, both through new initiatives and by building on the existing network of volunteer programmes, and with this increased participation to 'deliver tangible benefits'. The benefits are emphasised as: young people developing skills and actively contributing to the community; the capacity of communities and voluntary groups being enhanced; and society at large being more cohesive. With the development of skills, it is anticipated that the UK's competitive advantage will increase.

Two advisory groups were established as support for the Russell Commission: a Young People's Advisory Group and an Independent Advisory Group. The purpose of these groups was to ensure that the developing recommendations from the Commission would appeal to the target group and to encourage contributions from a 'wide-ranging cross-section of the young general public'.

Leading up to and during the consultation period, a series of press releases were issued (www.russellcommission.com). These set the scene for the Commission, allowing prominent figures within society, including Russell himself, to voice their support and provide the premises from which the new framework could develop. The following excerpts from some of the press releases highlight the range of viewpoints:

YABster Mustafa Kurtuldu says: 'Volunteering is about helping yourself, not just helping other people or good causes. It gives young people experiences that they might not otherwise gain. They can learn new skills, meet new people and sometimes doors open which might even help with jobs. Young people are now being given the chance to choose what they want and it's important that they step forward and make a positive difference.
(Taking youth volunteering to new heights, *25/11/2004)*

Ian Russell, CEO Scottish-Power, says: 'By responding to the needs and aims of young volunteers themselves, the national framework aims to make volunteering the norm among young people and help establish a pattern of lifelong engagement which will be to the mutual benefit of the individual, the local community, and Britain as a whole'. (Russell Commission enables young people to drive volunteering forward, 31/01/2005)

David Blunkett said: 'What we are looking for are ways of developing the leadership and mentoring skills of young people, enabling them to both participate in building the capacity of their community and to develop their potential for the future both as citizens and as valued employees'.
(Boosting Youth Participation in Communities, *17/05/2004)*

Fiona Mactaggart, Minister for Community Policy, said: 'Through volunteering many young people develop a sense of what they can do. And many of them achieve important changes for themselves, for other individuals and the wider community'.
(Boosting Youth Participation in Communities, *17/05/2004)*

The aims are very clear. It is the job of the Russell Commission to develop a volunteering framework that young people will respond to and participate in. It is argued that this will lead to the personal benefit and gain of individuals and make a difference to their communities. Although it seems that there is a powerful communitarian/citizenship agenda within the work of the Commission, the achievement of this is dependant on the individual. The focus of volunteering therefore has to shift from how the community will benefit to what the individual will gain.

At the time of consultation the Commission argued that for an increased engagement in the volunteering world, it is necessary to concentrate on packaging, attractiveness and how it will be marketed to young people. The position was that young people should be at the 'centre of each stage of the volunteering experience, giving them choices and treating them as consumers'. Enhancing the attractiveness of volunteering may include things such as loyalty cards, giving discounts on varied products, and an accreditation scheme helping individuals with skills attainment and employability. There is something reminiscent in this of the manner in which the Connexions initiative was promoted (without success) to young people. Yet the popularity of the idea with Government is evident in that it reappears in *Youth Matters* as an Opportunity Card.

Within the Russell Commission's consultation document, chapter two is devoted to 'engaging young people'. Its aim is to explore 'how young people become aware of volunteering ...; what encourages them to volunteer', and considers options for raising

levels of awareness. It is highlighted that young people feel that volunteering needs an image overhaul (1.1) and that the profile of volunteering needs to be raised considerably (1.2). The 'Talk to Frank' campaign, which was introduced as part of the 'Positive Futures' initiative (www.talktofrank.com/) to raise awareness around drug issues for parents, carers and young people, is offered as an example of effective marketing. The Russell Commission felt that this type of comprehensive approach would raise the volunteering profile and help it become a focus within the community.

Through the press releases and the consultation document, what struck a chord for me was the superficiality of the approach. It is not the need for a decent marketing campaign and access to volunteering opportunity which is important. There is a need to assess why the Commission pursued such an instrumental approach to a volunteering framework in focusing on what the individual and communities can gain, rather than considering the inherently valuable, altruistic and philanthropic nature of volunteering.

The Final Report

The final report of the Commission (March 2005) seems to incorporate a different focus, or at least to move away from the focus on individual gain. The next section of this article will explore some of the Report's findings and recommendations.

In the Executive Summary the Commission sets out the 'overarching finding' that there is a need for a national volunteering framework. In his foreword, Ian Russell at first reiterates the earlier position that, 'We want to create significantly more opportunities to volunteer, and we want to give individuals a better more meaningful choice' and that, 'At each stage of the volunteering journey, we have placed the individual young volunteer at the heart of our proposals' (Russell Commission, 2005). However, the focus then shifts and it is argued that society as a whole will benefit from the national framework, the purpose of which is to transform the number of young people who engage in volunteering. The 2005 Report acknowledges that each day young people are already involved in 'acts of kindness' that go unrecorded, but it is Russell's aspiration that by improving young people's involvement in 'formal' volunteering there will be a positive impact on informal volunteering.

This move towards formal engagement within the voluntary sphere merits some cause for concern. Practitioners who work with young people have already experienced the implementation of the Connexions Service and worryingly the idea behind a national volunteering framework involves another targeted service. Connexions Personal Advisors were given the role of targeting young people who were not engaging. Through this service young people were to be given the opportunity and resources for personal development in terms defined by policy makers. Yet despite the widely acknowledged failings of the Connexions Service to live up to the aspirations of its creators, it seems that the proposed national volunteering framework has now adopted similar aims in similar terms. By developing formal engagement within volunteering it is the Commission's hope that young people will enhance their marketable skills, interests and self-esteem. Is this not what was promised through Connexions? Generic work, relationships and the idea of holistic practice interventions with young people are yet again being put in second place behind a target

group and numbers.

Meanwhile, there are many voluntary services that are already working with young people and marshalling the enthusiasm of young people to make a difference to communities both here in the UK and across the world. But do they work from a perspective that is so different from the one proposed by the Russell Commission? Is Russell offering anything new?

For example, Millennium Volunteers (MV) offers an accredited volunteer course with individuals being placed in voluntary positions that best suit their interests. This allows them to build up skills and gain accreditation for the hours they give. This is not so different to what the Russell Commission suggests. On their website, MV acknowledges that people volunteer for many different reasons and highlight five benefits: building confidence and self esteem; making new friends; making a difference; improving chances of getting a job; gain new skills (www.milleniumvolunteers.gov.uk). Although the central premise of individual gain is similar to that of the Commission, the approach is less materialistic. There is focus on self esteem and being part of a community, whereas the Commission focuses upon the acquisition of marketable skills.

I have come into contact and worked with young people who have been involved in the Millennium Volunteers scheme. Each young person has become involved with an activity that suits their interests, whether it be a radio station, a youth magazine or helping out in dance classes for younger children. What is important in the approach is that each young person gains a positive experience. Through informal discussions about reasons why they became involved in volunteering, not one young person said it was about marketable skills; the priorities were that it was something they enjoyed and often that it gave them an opportunity to mix with their peers and make new friends. Although the young people were proud to achieve the MV accreditation award, this outcome did not appear to be their motivation.

The National Youth Agency (NYA) has offered a perspective on what the Commission is seeking to achieve. In the May 2004 issue of *Spotlight* (issue 20) The NYA welcomed governmental interest in young people's volunteering but also counselled caution. In the main this caution was about young people being regarded as a problem and needing a full time placement centred programme. The NYA expressed concern that the Commission may seriously underestimate, 'the extent of local infrastructure necessary, the range of entry points needed, and the degree of sophistication required to deliver a menu of opportunities for young people that match their legitimate needs, interests, circumstance and aspirations, and draw on their ideas and skills' (NYA, 2004). The NYA also questioned whether projects such as school clubs, scouts and youth coaching might be overlooked if they do not fit in with the recognised approach to volunteering. Projects which do not fall within the government's remit will undoubtedly end up being de-valued.

In the final report, Ian Russell is clear that the intention is to build on the voluntary agencies that already exist within the community (HMSO, 2005, Ch2). The Commission canvassed the opinion that young people want opportunities that are flexible, but the Russell Report stresses the principle behind the national framework that volunteer activity should deliver community benefit. It is proposed that the means whereby this should happen is through

projects delivering measurable outcomes against agreed priorities. The report therefore contains a contradiction. Although the need for flexibility is acknowledged, such flexibility could be negated by the need for measurable outcomes.

Room for a Targeted Service

Although it is my view that targeted services should not take over from generic work and work based on relationship, it is important to acknowledge that there is room for targets. The formalised and specifically focused services often invite criticism from those who practice within the informal education setting, yet in terms of using a formal structure to develop a person's self confidence and self esteem chapter three of the final report of the Commission offers some interesting possibilities. This looks at how the benefits of volunteering can be maximised. Here particular attention is paid to exploring barriers to volunteering including benefit issues.

The Commission argues that there is 'considerable confusion amongst young people, volunteering organisations, and even benefit advisers themselves about whether volunteering on benefits is possible' (HMSO, 2005, Ch.3). The Report recommends that benefit advisers need to be made aware of the skills and personal development that young people can get from volunteering. Although it is important that voluntary activity does not get in the way of job seeking, Russell argues that voluntary activity can help improve skills and confidence and therefore employment prospects.

Within my practice I have worked with young people who have been claiming job seekers allowance (JSA) and whose self-esteem has started to suffer due to not being able to find work. I have also worked with young people who have had mental health issues that have taken them out of the job market for a considerable length of time and which causes difficulty when they are ready to return to work. In these instances a more formalised version of volunteering is ideal. It would allow the individual to build up skills and confidence whilst not placing them under the pressure that paid employment often brings. Formal, structured volunteering would allow routine to be established and access to opportunity increased. The Commission's ideas of taster sessions and part time opportunities could play an important role in this. The vital issue would be that the volunteering activity should not affect benefits. The 2005 Report acknowledges the complexity of the benefit network and that JSA is a 'critical gateway' to other benefits such as housing and council tax benefit. It recommends that the 'implementation body should make available a discretionary fund for providers of full-time opportunities to have access to for individual cases where housing costs constitutes a key barrier' (HMSO, 2005, Ch3.)

Funding

As a worker witnessing the effects of the implementation of the Connexions Service, the question of funding for this new volunteering scheme is a cause for concern. *The Russell Report* identifies a potential number of funding sources. It argues for a single funding stream from the Government, consolidating current funding and that

the implementation body should assume control of funds for delivering young people's volunteering. This would include MV and any other generic volunteering programme thereby subsuming their work within a government agenda. Other possible sources of funding are identified as the Lottery's Community and Young People's funds and the private sector. The Commission argues that funding should be medium term and sustainable to avoid 'a stop-go funding cycle that introduces uncertainty and inefficiency' (HMSO, 2005: Ch4).

The main cause for concern is not over the acquisition of new funding, although it appears that such finance is highly uncertain, but in controlling the current funding arrangements. The implementation body will have its own agenda defined in the terms outlined by the Russell Commission and will want to meet its specified targets. It is important that schemes that are already running and successful do not get sidelined in favour of this 'new thing' and do not have their work distorted by the instrumental agenda of the State.

Alternative Views

There are of course other views of how a new framework should work. Dr Ruth Fox and Thieu Besselink from the Fabian Society offer one alternative. It is their view 'that the Labour government's approach and often punitive language towards young people has contributed to youth alienation – and getting the new scheme wrong could exacerbate the problem rather than reverse it'. Their answer is a community service scheme called 'Connecting People' (Fox and Besselink, 2004).

Fox and Besselink start from a promising viewpoint. They acknowledge the validity of the ministerial perspective 'increased volunteering as the key means to build the social capital necessary to ensure the health and vibrancy of our communities in the future', but point out that if the government 'wants to properly tackle youth disengagement it must understand how and why young people are disengaged'. They also highlight the manner in which young people are mostly seen in a negative way through 'the prism of the "rights and responsibilities" agenda' and that policies made are framed in the context of addressing problems (e.g. ASBOs and curfews), rather than looking at the positive contributions that young people can make.

According to Fox and Besselink, establishing a voluntary service programme would avoid spreading a sense of 'do-goodism' and address the needs of young people whilst promoting 'civic involvement' and 'active citizenship'. A national community service scheme would allow national needs to be tackled by mobilising a 'cadre of young people into a focused, systemised effort'. Whether it is through helping the elderly with errands or working to clean up and maintain public parks and playgrounds, Fox and Besselink argue that it is through these low profit and labour intensive tasks that people will recognise civic value and make a difference to the community. Yet they also emphasise that how it is named and marketed will make a difference to whether young people get involved. They argue that the national programme should be called 'Connecting People' as it is through this type of community service that there will be interpersonal and intergenerational social contact (Fox and Besselink, 2004). So really what they are proposing is not so different from the Russell Commission.

A way of life

The Russell Commission acknowledges that there is a 'good will' mountain waiting to be tapped; Fox and Besselink name it as the connection of people through common endeavour and the achievement of civil renewal. What comes through both proposals, which aim to achieve clearly defined ends for individual young people and society, is the desire to create the framework of a formalised service, although this is not so obvious within Fox and Besselink's proposal.

What is missing is the fundamental principle of volunteering: where is the place for altruism and philanthropy? What has happened to helping others because it is the 'right' thing to do? Why is the moral reward of good behaviour as a way of life, as a good in itself, not being promoted?

For a stark contrast in approach we can look at an advert placed by Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO):

> ***Will you remember today forever?*** *You went to work. The tube was strangely empty. You got hilarious email. Someone made you a perfect cup of tea. You ate a delicious sandwich. The photocopier did not jam. There were no delays on the tube home.* ***But will you remember today forever?*** *You saw an ad on the tube that changed your life. You decided to do something about the state of the world. You offered your professional experience to VSO. You volunteered to share your skills in the world's poorest communities. You stood up not because there were no seats, but to be counted. To say you wanted to make a difference.* ***This is your chance.*** *This is your chance. This is the ad. This is the website: www.vso.org.uk. This is the number 020 8780 7500. This is the day.*

Notice the difference; it is not, 'if you volunteer look what you will get, a loyalty card and accreditation', it is, 'look what you can do, you can make a difference to someone else's life, you can make the world a better place': philanthropy is at the centre of the experience.

Structure and boundaries provide a solid grounding that allows people to flourish. People can and are able to develop a sense of who they are if their environment is a constant and provides stability. But it is equally important that these structures and boundaries are not always formalised. How we interact with each other in everyday life and the world around us as we experience and interpret it sets out boundaries and acceptable ways of behaving which can be distorted by formal interventions.

Doing things for other people whether it is a regular thing or a one off is an important part of life. It develops relationships, trust and social capital. These notions are essentially what the Russell Commission is trying to promote and achieve but this is what makes a formalised framework problematic. It is important to consider implications such as the impact on the social capital of the individual who engages in a formalised volunteering programme rather than volunteering informally. For example, would we view a group of MV or Princes Trust volunteers who painted a community centre differently from a group of young people who came together because they saw a need in their own community? It is not that one

group is more altruistic than the other because each is responding to a need, but are our expectations different because one group belong to an accredited course? There is a place for groups such as MV and Princes Trust and a place for formalised voluntary interventions, but when all voluntary intervention comes to be seen as a potential means to an end through a formalised structure of accreditation, then voluntary work is dehumanised. This is not just problematic as a moral problem, but it is also set to undermine the very activism which it seeks to promote.

Conclusion

One of the things that drew me to the area of informal education was its very nature; that we can learn from each other informally. Although it is important to measure outcomes of learning, there are many ways in which this can be done. Formal engagement more often than not means formal measuring, taking the emphasis away from reflection and experience and concentrating on statistics and proven outcomes. If the Russell Commission proposal of a formal volunteering framework is implemented, questions need to be asked about the actual intention of the scheme. Is it a scheme to build a more cohesive society or is it a targeted service aimed at those who are considered to be 'problematic' members of society? If it wishes to incorporate both then a tension will be reached which may in the end cause ideological complications for those managing the programmes. A clear definition of purpose needs to be identified.

Discussion of the Russell Commission's consultation process and the final report explored not only what the proposed framework would want to achieve but also how it might be achieved. Some of the practice concerns that arose for me were around the implementation of another formalised service and how this would affect not only the funding but also the societal value of the projects/organisations already running. Yet these did not seem to be addressed within the report.

As with most nationwide schemes there are implications that every practitioner should consider. For those of us who work alongside young people we know that they are not problems who need to be fixed, but individuals who need encouragement, support and guidance. Our values as informal educators are based on a belief in the positive potential of people to work not only for personal but also for the social good. We all practice within different agencies and settings which brings with it different guidelines and objectives. But hopefully, we are able to choose to work within agencies whose guidelines and objectives best match our own.

The questions that need to be asked of the volunteering framework are not about the actual experience itself but about what the experience is promoted as. Participating in a formalised framework can help some to reach and develop their own potential. For example, through involvement in the Prince's Trust schemes many young people have flourished. However, others need a less structured and more fluid experience. It is important that there is room for both and that each is presented as what it is.

If the Commission wish to set up a scheme that is about engaging young people who are

considered to be a risk to the community and themselves then it needs to be marketed as such and possibly focus on the mentoring idea. If it is a framework that seeks to promote civic renewal and cohesion in society then the focus should be on community action not individual volunteer placements. Whichever way is chosen or adopted what must be at the centre is the real reason for the experience and action.

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'Taking Volunteering to New Heights' – 25/11/2004
'Russell Commission enables young people to drive volunteering forward' – 31/01/2005

All of the above can be found on their website – www.russellcommission.org

The views expressed in this article are those of the author and not the organisation that she works for.

What does Paulo Freire have to say about youth work?

Dod Forrest

Whom does reality hurt? Whom does it serve?
(Freire: 1985, 169)

In this article I argue that a conscientised youth work practice is both a form of youth work intervention that encourages critical thinking by young people and at one and the same time is a starting-point for work with young people that is able to address their 'felt needs'. This Freirean method of dialogical education facilitates the role of youth worker as a 'teacher' in the broadest sense – a youth worker who is also an informal educator. This youth worker will be engaged in a process that 'problematises' the world of the young person, thus generating true insight into the lives of young people today.

Legacy of Paulo Freire: another world is possible

Paulo Freire, the Brazilian philosopher of education and politics died on May 2nd 1997 – the day after New Labour was elected. The writings of Freire developed a philosophy of education that combined political theory and educational practice with an avowed purpose of challenging the powerful, by empowering the poor. The literacy campaigns he initiated in the 1950s and 1960s in Brazil led to his imprisonment and exile. He called this process 'conscientisation'. This article seeks to explore further this central idea of Freirean philosophy as a guide to working with young people. To provide a brief summary of Freire's life and writings before looking in some detail at the meaning given to the term 'conscientizacao' or 'conscientisation' as identified in *Education: The Practice of Freedom* (1976). Subsequently it will consider certain criticisms of Freire's philosophy of conscientisation contained in the work of Berger (1977) and Taylor (1993). It will conclude by countering the claim that conscientisation is a form of indoctrination and manipulation and with a consideration of how the concept of conscientisation can act as a pointer towards a theory of education that can guide youth work practice towards risk, challenge and dialogue.

Writings of Paulo Freire

The writings of Freire were substantially influenced by what has come to be known as 'liberation theology'. This emerged from the Catholic initiatives to combat the poverty of Southern and Latin America in the face of colonial intervention and the influence of multi-national capital. This philosophy was heavily influenced by classical Marxist theory, especially Marx's writings on alienation as outlined in his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*

(1963). Freire's eclecticism in this respect marks his sceptical attitude to the distortions of Soviet and Maoist Marxism. Allman describes the tone of Freire's writing as '...imbued with the language of possibility which characterises the theology of liberation' (1987: 215). It is, however, undeniable that the centrality of class and alienation to the Freirean view of the world placed his thinking within a revolutionary perspective of political change.

It was the experience of adult education work in Brazil during the 1950s and 1960s that shaped Freire's educational philosophy. He identified his time as 'Co-ordinator of the Adult Education Project of the Movement of Popular Culture' in Recife as one of the most formative periods of his life.

> *Through this project, we launched a new institution of popular culture, a 'culture circle,' since among us a school was a traditionally passive concept. Instead of a teacher, we had a co-ordinator; instead of lectures, dialogue; instead of pupils, group participants; instead of alienating syllabi, compact programs that were 'broken down' and 'codified' into learning units...the topics for debate were offered us by the groups themselves.... nationalism, profit remittances abroad, the political evolution of Brazil, development, illiteracy, the vote for illiterates, democracy were some of the themes which were repeated from group to group.* (Freire, 1976: 41-42)

His thinking at this stage was influenced by the massive political convulsions of the 1960s. The movements for change that emerged in Southern and Latin America mirrored the protests against authoritarian governments elsewhere. From China in the East to France and Germany in the West the world was a melting pot of new ideas and revolutionary action. It was out of this crucible of experience of living political education that Freire wrote his two major texts *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972) and *Cultural Action for Freedom* (1973). I agree with Allman (1987) who argues that the extent to which Freire's ideas have been applied as a 'total approach' to educational work in Britain has been extremely limited. I take this to mean that this liberatory philosophy of education, taken as a whole, which Freire reasserted in one of his last texts, *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1996) has been reduced in many settings to less than the sum of its revolutionary parts.

At the heart of Freirean philosophy is an examination of the power relationship between educator and educated. Education cannot be neutral, in a society of oppressor and oppressed. Conscientised education can liberate the mind from ideological domination that sustains the existing power relationships; conversely education that is manipulative can act to domesticate and deceive the majority of the population, acting to reinforce the status quo[1]. Freire captures this perspective brilliantly by querying whom reality hurts, and equally, if not more importantly, whom reality serves?

Education for Freedom: a process of dialogue

A process of dialogical education is essentially empowering if that education avoids the pitfalls of traditional education. Traditional education is dismissed as a ' banking system' where the individual learner becomes a mere receptacle and teaching becomes an act of

deposit-making, devoid of creativity and critique. This form of education is now increasingly standardised and exemplified by 'learning outcomes' and pre-defined 'competencies', and it is this form of machine-model, systems-evaluation methodology that underpins most managerial supervision of youth work practice. This performance-related, task oriented and target setting ethos has led one influential commentator, England's ex-Chief Inspector of Schools, Mike Tomlinson, to sum up the process as teaching young people how to take penalty kicks rather than enable them to experience the practice of playing football. This emphasis on the management of pre-defined targets has substantially influenced the practice of contemporary youth work. In this setting the youth worker is expected to pre-define the knowledge requirements of the young person. An increasingly centralised curriculum also means that youth workers in turn are set parameters of legitimacy by the state.

In opposition to this perspective, Freirean youth work practice seeks to promote a quite different relationship between the youth worker and the young person. In this scenario the teacher-learner relationship can be described as follows: '...in education for liberation there is no complete knowledge possessed by the educator, but a knowledge object which mediates educator and educatee as subjects in the knowing process' (cited Allman 1987: 219). According to Freire this process is formed from 'dialogue' and Allman makes an important distinction between this and 'discussion' which she defines as a form of group communication in which participants engage in sharing monologues. This is a discussion structured around the theme of 'what we think' and she argues it is open to manipulation and control by the teacher or leader. In contrast, dialogue involves an exploration of '... why we think what we do and how this thinking has arisen historically (ibid: 222). Through dialogue there emerges a form of critical thinking which is generated in the first instance by 'problematising the world'.

However in a critique of Freirean teaching methods Taylor (1993) argues that the Freirean teachers of literacy are guilty of practising the same 'banking system' as traditional institutions, albeit they are 'benign banking educators'. Added to this criticism Taylor accuses these teachers of manipulation. This is a serious charge from a writer who has analysed virtually the complete texts of Freire. It is, however, a claim that is overly critical and essentially flawed. In a critique of literacy programmes Taylor argues that the dominant form of adult basic education in the West is 'functional literacy' and that the 'functionality of functional literacy' (p. 142) is to prepare the next generation of workers for a world of exploitation. This literacy is both basic and skill-based, where illiterates are considered 'under nourished'. This nutritionist view of knowledge relegates the role of literacy worker to 'spoon-feeding' words, concepts and ideas. In this scenario, Freire reminds us of Sartre's criticisms of this 'digestive practice' of knowledge accumulation, where 'to know is to eat' (cited in Freire, 1972: 23). Thus, few will argue with Taylor in his assessment that this style of education does little or nothing to generate critical thinking, and it summarises the central weaknesses of contemporary literacy work with young people. However Taylor (p.9) recounts the first time he used Freire's teaching method while working as an aid worker in West Africa:

> *In researching the urgent vocabulary of those communities, in identifying with them the generative words which were then discussed in small groups, from which came*

proposals for action, community development and change, I experienced Freire's method in action. I know that it works.

Taylor (ibid.) goes on to say that he also learned from Freire's writing that in his role of 'aid worker' he could become an 'agent of cultural invasion and political extensionism'. This is subsequently the same criticism Taylor makes of the Freirean teacher. According to Taylor the process is the same, albeit the cultural invasion is progressive in intent. The dialogic education of Freire is viewed as an illusion, it is simply a benign form of banking education.

Taylor bases his critical analysis of the Freirean teaching method on the ten learning situations detailed in the appendix to *Education: The Practice of Freedom*. These ten images were used in 'Culture Circle' discussions as the preparation for literacy teaching. Freire attempted through these images to educate and politicise groups of illiterate people and motivate participation in the next stage of thirty hours of literacy teaching. It is this core of teaching practice that is the focus of Taylor's analysis and critique and is contained in his section Generating Literacy (pp 82-132). Taylor suggests that the teacher manipulates by using these images. It is beyond the scope of this article to detail each of the ten situations. The images are used to guide the students through a discussion of the origins and developmental stages of human consciousness from the battle to survive and control nature through to the growth of culture and literacy. The images identify a historical process of development. From peasant life in the fields; to hunting with bow and arrow; hunting with a rifle; hunting in the animal world; working at a potters wheel; a painting of a vase and flowers; writing an anti-war poem; two people in discussion from different areas of Brazil, and finally a teacher and student group in a 'Culture Circle' setting.

By discussing these images Freire and his teachers generate words and themes which 'problematise' the world of the learners. It is from these words that the next phase of literacy teaching emerges. The underlying assumption is that the oral world of the illiterate has an untapped wisdom and that anyone can begin to learn to read and write as a result of these discussions. According to Taylor this process is an invasion of the oral world of the illiterate and acts to assimilate them into the dominant culture. It seems to me this is an ultra-critical position to adopt and in effect renders redundant any teaching role. It is also an overly romantic view that denies oral knowledge a future place in the literate world. The wisdom and the experience of the oppressed can equally invade the dominant culture to good effect. Taylor misses this point completely. If we look more closely at Taylor's critique, he says: 'It is the supplier/educator who has created the need, and the level of demand has been controlled so that the consumer will ask only for that which is currently available', (p. 138).

This is the essence of the accusation of manipulation. The students have been manipulated into finding out more about the world generally and their world in particular. What is available to the student is a teacher with declared political values. If these are the charges then Freire would have to plead guilty. The Freirean 'deposit' of knowledge, however, is one designed to encourage critical thinking. It is important to further emphasise that this critical thinking is linked to an educator who is not indoctrinating. As Snook stresses, Freire again and again criticised dogma of the left and the right which attempted to lead people in a set of predetermined directions. Snook however continues:

> *And yet a nagging doubt persists. Conscientisation involves helping people to see that they are oppressed. Is this not begging the question? For who is to say that they are oppressed and by what right can we encourage them to throw off their oppression?* (1981: 39)

Snook concludes this query as to whether the Freirean method is indoctrinatory by reinforcing the view that it is true that many people are oppressed and it is ethically defensible to commit time and effort to assisting an end to this oppression. In his assessment, on two fundamental counts the philosophy of conscientisation is not open to manipulation:

> *This is a pedagogy of the oppressed. Those who are not oppressed will resist conscientisation. The methodology of the educational process has built in defence mechanisms i.e. 'action + reflection' which are self-correcting.* (op cit.)

Particular examples of this form of so-called indoctrination is to alert young people to political campaigns that emphasise values of peace, non-violence, anti-racism and homophobia. These campaigns in opposition to bigotry and war are increasingly part and parcel of the activism of youth workers and young people. The encouragement by youth workers to get involved will have particular resonance with young people in Muslim communities. These are issues that youth workers cannot afford to avoid and they are central to Freirean youth work practice.

Goulet makes the point – in an introduction to Freire's (1976) two essays written in 1965 and 1968 *Education as the Practice of Freedom* and *Extension or Communication* – that Freire's central message is that one can know only to the extent that one 'problematises' the natural, cultural and historical in one's life. Thus problematising emerges as an educational process which sets the youth work agenda and informs an informal curriculum. The structure of the teaching in this setting acts as a reflection of the material interests, conflicts and contradictions of day-to-day life. These discoveries offer a guide to practice and can illuminate the world of young people who are struggling to make sense of family, sexuality, racism, poverty, and friendship. This process of dialogue in effect reveals contradiction in social relationships. Thus dialogue offers criticism of the existing world and a plan for action. This educational process is essentially the meaning given to the concept of 'conscientisation'. It is a form of education that can be a part of all settings – workplace, family, religious community, school, youth club, church, temple and mosque.

In this manner a new form of teacher as leader is created. In the process a new form of leadership is generated which can be described as the 'self-organised leadership' of young people. This organic leadership can create the type of knowledge which young people need to take control of their lives and engage in the transformation of society. In this sense all critical thinkers become educators and all educators become critical thinkers.

It was Freire's contention that education cannot be neutral. This is a prime example of critical consciousness. To assume otherwise is to remain naive to the conflicting interests that underpin the politics of our educational system. It is for this reason that Freire attacked the reliance on sheer memory as the cornerstone of the traditional educational system.

For Freire education must be an act of knowing. This 'knowing' is an accumulation of knowledge of history, culture and context – a qualitative process of unmasking the real world.

Freire sought to promote progressive educational practice as a process of 'unveiling' the world of state ideological domination, but this process was not to be a one-sided enlightenment of the non-educated by the educated. It is a process that locates the teacher as also the learner and the learner as also the teacher. This relationship seeks to challenge the existing world of the 'taught' and avoid the imposition of dogma. In *A Pedagogy of Hope* Freire argued for the combination of respect for people's lived experience alongside challenge. He described the duty of the progressive educator as follows:

> *...what is not permissible to be doing is to conceal truths, deny information, impose principles, eviscerate the educands of their freedom or punish them, no matter by what method, if, for various reasons, they fail to accept my discourse – reject my utopia.* (1996: 83)

Asserting that progressive educators must start from the actual material circumstances of people's lives, in the idiom of the present from 'where young people are at':

> *...their speech, their way of counting and calculating, their ideas about the so-called other world, their religiousness, their knowledge about health, the body, sexuality, life, death, the power of the saints, magic spells, must all be respected.* (ibid.: 85)

It is important to emphasise that this approach is not based on a romantic populism for the whole point of this respect is to challenge existing views of the world, to go beyond these aspects of 'living experience' by entering a dialogue. In this respect Freire suggests that the knowledge of living experience needs to be inserted into the larger horizon against which it is generated. This horizon of cultural context, he suggests, cannot be understood apart from its class particularities. In this respect *A Pedagogy of Hope* brings a clarity to his position which has grown out of his experience of the decades since the publication of his first writings. Few writers could look back on such a period of both reflection and review. In this text Freire is able to clarify his perspective with regard to the issue of class conflict within capitalist society:

> *I have never laboured under the misapprehension that social classes and the struggle between them could explain everything, right down to the colour of the sky on a Tuesday evening. And so I have never said that the class struggle, in the modern world, has been or is 'the mover of history'. On the other hand, still today, and possibly for a long time to come, it is impossible to understand history without social classes, without their interests in collision. The class struggle is not 'the' mover of history but it is one of them.* (ibid.: 90)

Freire's relegation of the classical Marxist perspective of historical materialism i.e. that all of history has been the history of class struggle, is perhaps a response to the mechanical and distorted variant of Marxism that became Soviet ideology and class rule. It was this resistance to dogma that made his philosophy liberatory and essentially non-sectarian. He

viewed with anger and disgust the harsh material circumstances of poverty, exploitation and oppression in Brazil, but not in a crushing or deterministic manner, arguing that people can make their own history and should turn their dreams of a better world into reality. It was this perspective that shifted his activism towards the formation of the Brazilian Workers Party in the years before his death. It was his contention that there can be no change without this dream that 'another world is possible' and no dream without hope. It is vital, however, that in this process action is taken to change the world and that this action is collectivised and conscientised. This is the central idea of Freire's pedagogy and it is a concept that I argue is also central to liberation from state control of education.

Conscientisation and Consciousness Raising

The concept of conscientisation is open to a multiplicity of interpretations. In the first instance we elaborate the meaning as Freire documents it in his *Education: The Practice of Freedom*:

- Conscientisation is a process of humanisation through the development of a critical consciousness.
- A teacher or enabler can assist a process of conscientisation by going '...to the people and help them to enter the historical process critically' (1976:16).
- Throughout history ideas about the world have changed from a distant "semi-intransitivity of consciousness" where consciousness is central to basic survival against the elements of nature. In this epoch '... perception is limited...impermeable to challenges situated outside the sphere of biological necessity' (ibid.17). In this period of history people fall prey to magical explanations because they cannot apprehend causality.
- It is possible to go beyond this semi-intransitive state to a more transitive history where people begin to question. At this time people begin to form a dialogue with each other about the nature of their world. This is a naive consciousness exemplified by fragility of argument; by strong emotional style; by the practice of polemics rather than dialogue; by continued magical explanations. This consciousness can be deflected into sectarian irrationality and fanaticism.
- The development of a critical consciousness is exemplified by soundness of argument; by the removal of magical explanation; by the practice of dialogue rather than polemic. This consciousness is characteristic of government which is fully democratic and arguably a feature of the organisation of emerging new social movements around the world.

Freire (1976) offers this summary:

> *Conscientizacao represents the development of the awakening of critical awareness. It will not appear as a natural by-product of even major economic changes but must grow out of a critical educational effort based on favourable historical conditions.* (ibid.19)

In an important review of the debate surrounding the concept of conscientisation Roberts (1996: 180) explains that the term 'conscientisation' is said to derive from discussions held at the Brazilian Institute of Higher Studies (ISEB) and attributed to the Catholic Bishop

Helder Camara, who first popularised the Portuguese term 'conscientizacao'. Roberts separates out some over-lapping terms so as to disentangle the accurate and essentially Freirean meaning given to the term. He suggests in the first instance it is useful to make a distinction between the following concepts: (a) conscientisation; (b) consciousness-raising.

The concept of consciousness-raising is a term which has been subjected to considerable critique, for example by Berger who sums up his criticisms in this way:

> *Consciousness raising is a project of higher-class individuals directed at a lower-class population. It is the latter, not the former whose consciousness is to be raised. What is more, the consciousness at issue is the consciousness that the lower-class population has of its own situation. Thus a crucial assumption of the concept is that lower-class people do not understand their own situation, that they are in need of enlightenment on the matter, and that this service can be provided by selected higher-class individuals.* (1977: 138)

In these terms Berger shows how the concept of 'consciousness-raising' is both elitist and arrogant. If viewed in this context then the criticisms can be sustained. It is entirely wrong, however, to place Freire in this intellectual camp. Freire quotes Plato and Marx on the theme of misinterpretation:

> *'The written word,' Plato said, 'cannot be defended when misunderstood,' Marx, irritated by the inconsistency of certain French Marxists – 'Well, then, all I know is that I'm no Marxist.'* (1996: 88)

Freire is no Freirean in the Berger sense. For these reasons it is important that we look again at the Freirean meaning of conscientisation. The idea of 'cultural action' is directly linked to conscientisation. There can be no cultural action without conscientisation and no conscientisation without cultural action. What Freire means by cultural action is in effect an educational process of liberatory empowerment, a form of cultural action for freedom – or the political practice of a challenge to domination. It is the movement of people from a culture of silence to the discovery of a cultural voice through revolution. Thus according to Freire, societal transformation and continued humanisation hinge on conscientisation. The essential assumption that underpins the concept of conscientisation is that humanity differs from the animal kingdom. Animals are 'in' the world but humanity is both 'in and 'with' the world. As Freire points out:

> *Whereas the being which merely lives is not capable of reflecting upon itself and knowing itself living in the world, the existent subject reflects upon his life within the very domain of existence, and questions his relationship with the world. His domain of existence is the domain of work, of history, of culture, of values – the domain in which men experience the dialectic between determinism and freedom.* (1973: 52)

Within this dialectic there is conscientisation. The concept has more meaning than simply an awareness of ideology, in the pejorative sense. It also has more meaning than simply an awareness of interests relevant to class position within a capitalist structure. Conscientisation is a form of empowerment that is able to unite material interest, protest

and ideological critique. This critical consciousness goes beyond a separate awareness of oppression and exploitation. It is the coming together of a multiplicity of 'angles of vision' i.e. race, gender, class, sexuality (Collins, 1990).

In a counter to a long-standing criticism Freire made it clear that conscientisation is not based on a man-world relationship of 'solipsistic idealism' or 'mechanistic objectivism':

> *For mechanistic objectivism, consciousness is merely a 'copy' of objective reality. For solipsism, the world is reduced to a capricious creation of consciousness. In the first case, consciousness would be unable to transcend its conditioning by reality; in the second , insofar as it 'creates' reality, it is a priori to reality. In either case man (sic) is not engaged in transforming reality....thus in both conceptions of consciousness there can be no true praxis. Praxis is only possible where the objective-subjective dialectic is maintained.* (1973: 53-54)

Freire was also at pains to point out that the relationship of men and women to the world is historical, in that people make their own history that in turn, makes them; and they can recount this history.

It is true that Freire introduces the notion of 'levels of consciousness'. He argues that 'to understand levels of consciousness, we must understand the historical reality of culture' (ibid: 57). Around the world, the Third World in particular, the history of nations has been one of subjugation and oppression. It is this relationship of domination that he characterises as generating a culture of silence – a culture that is unable to articulate the authentic voice of the oppressed and is tied to either 'magical' or 'naive' consciousness.

It is possible to move from one form of consciousness to another and it is undeniable that Freire suggests this is progress. It is however incorrect to interpret this process solely in terms of individual behaviour. Freire has in mind the collective consciousness of an epoch. Of course it must be true that individuals are the only source of this changing consciousness and in these terms individuals will change attitudes, values and perspectives.

Another World is Possible: towards 'untested feasibility'.

It is possible to interpret Freire's concept of conscientisation in the following manner. All of history can be divided into epochs, which are defined as: '...a complex of ideas, concepts, roles, doubt, values and challenges in dialectical interaction with their opposites towards plenitude' (1973: 91).

In each epoch there exists a state of consciousness. This consciousness can be dramatically altered or ruptured by revolutionary events and circumstances which transform the epoch. The epochs of slavery, Feudalism , colonialism and contemporary imperialism are examples of societies ruptured by revolt and by revolutionary change.

This interpretation is closer to Freire's actual meaning. Conscientisation is not a progressive series of stages with a final form of consciousness to be attained in some Hegelian linear

conception of the unfolding of truth towards the ultimate consciousness. Conscientisation is located in the ebb and flow of material circumstances and practice. It is a view of the world that glimpses contradiction and is able to break the boundaries of 'limit situations' beyond which lie the prospects for 'untested feasibility'.'

> *...when conscious beings will reflect and act for the overthrow of the 'limit situations,' which have left them – along with nearly everyone else – limited to being-in-a-lesser-way, to being-less so, then the untested feasible is no longer merely itself, but has become the concretization of that which within it had previously been infeasible.* (1996: 207)

It is my view that the central purpose of youth work is the generating of community – a process that involves the cultivation of a 'gift relationship' – a mutual relationship of respect and co-operation. In this context it is also a relationship of solidarity, something that links local activism to global issues.

At a local level there are now numerous examples of young people's involvement in a multiplicity of serious issues and campaigns. Scotland's 'Show Racism a Red Card' has been promoted by teachers in many Secondary schools. Fair trade initiatives in schools are on the increase as witnessed by the work of the Development Education Centres and other centres throughout the UK, supported by Oxfam, that have led to some small – scale investigations of purchasing policy and links with schools and villages in Africa. Anti -war protests have been increasingly supported by young people, as illustrated by the large numbers of Scottish school students who staged walk-outs and strikes on the day that the invasion of Iraq took place during March 2003. Issues of environmental justice are now central to many citizenship initiatives in schools and youth projects and student societies on the university campuses.

If we enter into an empowering relationship with young people we can contribute to this process of personal reflexivity and direct action for local and global social change. To quote one contemporary example that occurred in a multitude of settings across Britain, Europe and the world in the protests that surrounded the meeting of the G8 at Gleneagles in Scotland during the week of 2nd – 8th July 2005. In towns and villages; in trade union branches, community organising meetings; in youth clubs and classrooms there were young people who were debating, organising and preparing to 'make poverty history'.

The central plank of this social movement was to focus upon the so-called 'plight' of Africa in terms of unfair trade, the burden of debt and the lack of aid from the rich countries of the West. It has been Africa however that has delivered some of the most powerful social movements of the contemporary era in opposition to apartheid in South Africa in particular and the fight to remove poverty, disease and exploitation across the continent. The influence of Paulo Freire's writings in this respect has been significant. One particular example is the Tanzanian Gender Network (TGNP,1993). This is how they sum up the Freirean triple A Cycle of animation described as 'Assessment – Analysis – Action':

- Engage in political debate
- Encourage self-organised action
- Re-affirm the experience of participants in action
- Bring conflict into the open

- Create dialogue
- Generate participatory democracy
- Make action festival-like

The emergence of these social movements for change can generate a new relationship between young people and youth workers. The reality of life in Britain for many young people is a life of poverty, racism, violence and low expectation – this is a reality that hurts. This is a reality that cries out for an explanation. This is a dialogue we need to develop and it is a voice we can amplify. The writings of Paulo Freire provide explanation, inspiration and a declaration that ' another world' is not only possible, it is a necessity.

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Note

1 The meaning given to ideology in this pejorative sense is the concealment of contradiction and conflict. This is ideology defined in the classical Marxist sense as a set of ideas that seeks to manufacture consent and obscure the real world of economic exploitation.

Remembering Joan Tash: 1920-2005

David Collander-Brown

I did not dare to go for supervision with Joan and not have an issue or a question to start the session. If you did not know that you had come to work hard you very soon found out it was the case. Just having a starting point did not mean you could escape the illuminating penetration with which she was able to expose one's woolly thinking. Through her questions she would put my unexamined high-flown intentions alongside my actions, my attitudes or my thinking and thus lay bear my claims to be concerned about young people or whatever. "It seems that here you were just concerned to protect yourself from blame," was one conclusion with which, from evidence she had unpicked, I had to agree. For most people who have been taught or supervised by Joan Tash it is not really a case of having to remember her. Rather, she is impossible to forget. It is not possible to do justice to her without describing something of her way of thinking about her work.

M. Joan Tash began her real impact in the late 1960s on the then emerging post *Albemarle* youth service. She brought with her to this era a rich background, having worked as a social worker and on a training project in Iraq, before joining the YWCA project that produced the seminal youth work text she and George Goetschius wrote – *Working with Unattached Youth*. It was in fact a report of a sustained way of working with young people who had been called 'the unclubables. This description came from the perspective of the workers. The use of *Unattached* begins to throw light on the experience of the young people. Her thinking was always earthed in practice. Her work and this book brings together practice and theory in a way in which the usual muddle of reality could be thought about and the questions that emerge lead to further understanding and focus on the work. A range of what are now standard themes emerged as sense was made of the inevitably confusing experiences of the field worker's interactions with the chaotic lives of these young people. Understanding *relationships* and *roles*, *boundaries*, *values and standards* and above all *recording* and *supervision* stand out as themes which enabled the field workers to learn and to help the young people to make sense of their experiences.

Her second major publication was another report – *Supervision in Youth Work*. This time of a project set up by the London Council of Social Services and funded by the Department for Education and Science. It involved the training of ten volunteers to offer supervision and studied their subsequent practice. Joan was responsible for training and supervising these volunteers. It is not a light read for it examines in detail how supervision can happen but it links practice and theory to the process of learning. Her approach is to get the practitioner to describe the events that they want to think about, to draw their thoughts and feelings about these events and other linked experiences. But within this she sees so much more going on. One short paragraph shows the depth she was able to take someone to see if

they do really want to unlock their potential.

> *J's learning, therefore, was a slow process of learning from his situation, through examination and analysis, and included a growing awareness of himself as a factor within it. This reached a stage when he understood more clearly what was happening and what he was doing, thinking and feeling. But this process was hampered by J's desire at the same time to be in the position of 'knowing how.' He limited his understanding of learning to his own ability and this prevented him from learning to relate one area of knowledge to another. It was only after he had practised, which was what he felt what he should be able to do, that he recognises how much more he wanted to learn about himself in his work – that he could not concentrate on another person's needs in learning while his own were so pressing.*

Joan was a teacher through and through but her focus, as demonstrated above, was on how people learnt and indeed what, for each individual, stood in the way of learning.

She applied a similar approach in her own teaching and tutoring. I never heard her give a lecture, preferring to teach through small groups. She would introduce snippets of theory and then get the group to explore the ideas, often letting the discussion run on before introducing a question that moved the focus on. Because she would always insist of your learning, as distinct from her dispensing words of teacherly wisdom, one began to discover the golden secret, of taking responsibility for one's own learning. Allowing the secret to penetrate she helped move the learner from dependency on the teacher to responsibility for the use of the teacher. The group almost always came away from sessions wrestling to connect and embed these ideas and examples. One image that remains is of her describing learning as like a flower whose petals opened as it came to its full beauty. Putting her fingertips together, in the shape of a tulip, she described this before opening them out to illustrate the open mind and heart.

She also, I discovered, had an eye on the whole. On that first two year Youth and Community course, beginning in Walthamstow YMCA 1970, she stopped the psychology lectures, with the then North East London Polytechnic, which were about perception until a lecturer who could teach human development was found, in the end from the Tavistock Clinic. She kept an eye on the professionalism of the College and a personal story taught me an important lesson about confidentiality. The then Principal's wife was a Marriage Guidance Counsellor and my new wife and I sought help from the local organisation, not knowing of this connection. The next week the Principal, I am sure from genuine concern, called me in his office and asked how my wife and I were. It appears Joan heard of this and, I gathered from him several months later, was extremely cross.

She continued to offer supervision long after her retirement and her mind remained as razor sharp in her observation as ever. But it is not those sharp incisions that remain, afterwards one practiced the learning she had given you and recalled the underlying concern that she had for what you would do with young people. The experiences remind me of the affection that a soldier holds for their drill instructor. Learning to control your body may one day save your life. The parade ground that Joan drilled you around was your inner world, the developmental needs of young people and the environment of your work. She opened up

the capacity for real critical examination, a ruthless honesty with oneself. This was because it was through that self-awareness that young people would learn and grow and become themselves. That was always her abiding concern

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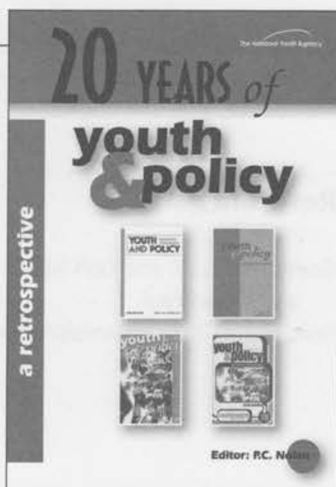

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Reaching socially excluded young people

A national study of street-based youth work

David Crimmens, Fiona Factor, Tony Jeffs, John Pitts, Carole Pugh, Jean Spence and Penelope Turner

The National Youth Agency

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The Editorial Group welcomes the submission of unsolicited articles which take an analytical approach to theoretical, policy or professional matters relating to young people in society.

Articles must be the original work of the author(s) and must not be under consideration for publication elsewhere.

Manuscripts should normally be between 3,500 and 8,000 words, including diagrams and references. In addition, authors should include an abstract of up to 150 words and three to five keywords.

If considered suitable, articles will be subject to anonymous peer review by two referees. This can sometimes take up to six months. The final decision regarding publication rests with the Editorial Group, who may occasionally recommend revisions and re-submission.

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Each manuscript should be accompanied by a cover sheet containing the following information:
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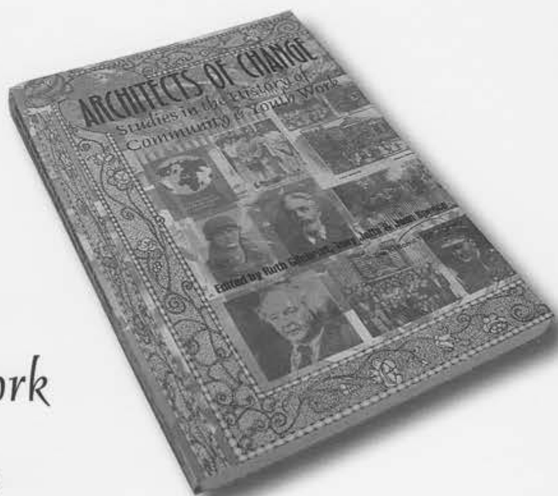

Edited by Ruth Gilchrist, Tony Jeffs and Jean Spence

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IN THIS ISSUE:

Editorial
Ruth Gilchrist, Tony Jeffs and Jean Spence
Youth Policy 1995–2005: From 'the best start' to 'youth smatters'
Bob Coles
If youth matters, where is the youth work?
Bernard Davies
Whose Green Paper is it anyway?
Tim Eyres
Youth Matters
Bryan Merton
***Youth Matters*: Money Matters. The role of the community and voluntary sector**
Billie Oliver
Review of Government Green Paper – *Youth Matters*
Kim Peake
Why Does Youth Matter?
Patrick Turner
***Youth Matters* – options for improvement**
Kevin Williams
***Youth Matters* – a plan for development?**
Mary Wolfe
Testing a Green Paper
Tom Wylie
The impact of *Youth Matters* on youth participation
Blossom Young
Classic Text: *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration* (1904)
Tony Jeffs
The Year of the Volunteer: Formalising the Goodwill Mountain
Heather Smith
What does Paulo Freire have to say about youth work?
Dod Forrest
Remembering Joan Tash: 1920–2005
David Collander-Brown

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