

Policy and Research Working Group

AUDIT OF RESEARCH

Updated Version : August 2007. Secretariat – Youth Council NI.

Ref No.	Date	Title	Publisher	Theme
SI :01	2004	The importance of being inclusive	Disability Action	Disability
SI:02	2005	In our sights : reflections on the first 2 years of the Eye Matter young people's project as supported and facilitated by the RNIB NI	Royal National Institute for the Blind NI	Disability (sight)
SI:03	2001	Big 'D', wee 'd' : The lives of young deaf people in Northern Ireland	NI Deaf Youth Assoc	Disability (hearing)
SI:04	2003	What about us?	Leonard Cheshire Foundation	Disability
SI:05	2005	Inclusion Rules OK! Including young people with learning disabilities in mainstream youth provision	Mencap / NEELB	Disability (learning)
SI:06	2003	Learning to grow up: multiple identities of young lesbians, gay men and bisexual people	NI Human Rights Commission	Sexual orientation
SI:07	2004	Lifting the limits : an evaluation of the community leadership programme for young mothers	Youth Action NI	Young mothers
SI:08	2003	Everyday life : Young men, violence and developing youth work practice in Northern Ireland	Youth Action NI	Gender (young men)
SI:09	2003	Young men and violence – thematic initiative	YouthNet	Gender (young men)
SI:10	1997	Young men talking : voices from Belfast	Youth Action NI	Gender (young men)
SI:11	2006	Out on your own : an examination of the mental health of young same sex attracted men	The Rainbow Project	Sexual orientation
SI:12	2003	Shout! The needs of young people in Northern Ireland who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender	YouthNet	Sexual orientation
SI:13	2000	The excluded adolescent : an exploration of the issues surrounding marginalised young people in Northern Ireland	University of Ulster Jordanstown	Social exclusion

Ref No.	Date	Title	Publisher	Theme
Sl:14	1997	A sense of belonging : young people in rural areas of Northern Ireland speak out about their needs, hopes and aspirations	Youth Action NI	Rural
Sl:15	2003	From strength to strength : the experiences of young people growing up in one parent families in NI	Gingerbread	One parent families
Sl:16	2002	Distant voices: an action research project on young people and rural isolation in the SELB area	SELB/YANI STAY/LYF	Rural
Sl:17	2005	Creating links : an independent evaluation of the rural youth community development programme	Youth Action NI	Rural
Sl:18	2005	Count me in : exploring cultural diversity amongst children and young people	Save the Children	Minority ethnic
Sl:19	2005	Troubled youth? Young people, violence and disorder in Northern Ireland	Institute for Conflict Research	Crime
Sl: 20	2007	Still Waiting : The stories behind the statistics of young women growing up in Northern Ireland	Youth Action NI	Gender (young women)
YW:01	2003	Worth their weight in gold : an investigation into the career paths and views of community youth work graduates	University of Ulster Jordanstown	Youth workers
YW:02	2005	Detached youth work – Symposium report	Symposium report	Detached Youth work
YW:03	2003	Upper Shankill area project : a framework for establishing detached youth work projects	Upper Shankill Area Project	Detached Youth work
YW:04	2005	The nature of youth work in Northern Ireland : purpose, contribution and challenges	University of Ulster / Queens University Belfast	Youth work
YW:05	2005	In their own words : research on the views of participants of North South school and youth exchange and cooperation	North south Exchange Consortium	Youth Work North/South

Ref No.	Date	Title	Publisher	Theme
YW:06	2005	Research on the current provision of North South school and youth exchange and cooperative activity 2000-2004	North south Exchange Consortium	Youth Work North/South
YW:07	2001	JEDI audit: community relations and education for citizenship within the NI youth service	JEDI partnership	Community relations
YW:08	2004	Acting in good faith : Churches, Change and Regeneration	Churches Community Work Alliance	Role of churches
YW:09	2003	Windows on Practice	JEDI partnership	Community Relations
YW:10	2007	Youth work in schools : an investigation of youth work, as a process of informal learning, in formal settings.	University of Ulster	Youth work in schools
YW:11	2006	Faith based youth work in Northern Ireland	YouthNet Faith based interest group	Faith based youth work
YW:12	2006	A scoping study on young people volunteering within the youth sector	Volunteering and youth volunteering sub group	Young people as volunteers within the youth sector
PN:01	2004	Beyond the surface: Young people's views on the draft Youth Work Strategy	NI Youth Forum	Report of a consultation with young people
PN:02	2001	Seen and Heard : consulting and involving young people within the public sector	Youth Council for NI	Consultation and participation
PN:03	2006	Young people's views on NI suicide prevention strategy	Young Citizens in Action: VSB	Report of a consultation with young people
PN:04	2006	Its always at the back of your Mind : needs assessment of marginalised young people aged 13-25 throughout Newry and Armagh	Youth Action NI	Report of consultation & peer research with young people
PN:05	2005	Turning up the Sound: the feasibility of establishing a consortium to support the involvement of children and young people in public decision-making processes	Youth Council NI/ NI Youth Forum/ YouthNet/ Save the Children	Consultation and participation
PN:06	2004	Regional consultation with young people to assist in the planning and delivery of the NICCY conference on self harm and suicide among young people	Opportunity Youth	Report of a consultation with young people

Ref No.	Date	Title	Publisher	Theme
PN:07	2006	Youth participation in the democratic process	Institute for Conflict Research	Youth engagement in electoral and democratic processes
PN:08	2006	Refer 2 Us – safe and happy consultation report	Barnardos	Report of peer research with young people
PN:09	2007	Evaluation of Young Voices project 2004-2007	Include Youth	Evaluation of a participative initiative
PN:10	2006	Consultation with young people on the Northern Ireland Network for Youth	Northern Ireland Youth Forum	Report of a consultation with young people

Ref : SI:01

Title: The Importance of Being Inclusive

Theme: Examples of youth work practice involving young disabled people in Northern Ireland.

Year of Publication: 2003/04

Author: Hazel Gordon, University of Ulster Jordanstown

Publishers/Agency: Commissioned by Disability Action and Disability Interagency Support Group

Pages: 89

Aim of Publication: To identify and describe good youth work practice and to inform strategic development in the youth service.

Methodology: The study was qualitative and indepth in nature. The research sample included five disability organisations which work with young people (Action Mental Health, Blind Centre NI, Mencap, NI Deaf Youth Association, and Phab Inclusion Matters) and five mainstream youth work settings which had been nominated by each of the Education and Library Boards. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a total of 16 young people with disabilities, and ten youth work practitioners. The interviews were audio recorded and recurrent themes were then extracted from the transcriptions.

Findings: 2.5% of the membership of all registered youth groups in Northern Ireland are young people with a disability – a proportion which the report refers to as ‘discouragingly low’. However the report does recognise that some workers show great commitment to delivering inclusive practice, and the research findings highlight some of the methods, barriers and outcomes of such practice.

The report notes disability organisations tend to advocate youth provision on a continuum, starting with segregation and moving towards inclusion, based on the capacity of the young person involved. However the five case studies of disability organisations demonstrate that the goal of integration may be hampered by the under-capacity of mainstream youth providers to offer inclusive and accessible opportunities.

The research looks in some detail about the issues involved in promoting inclusive youth work, such as support needs, transport, accessibility, methods used to advertise youth groups, deployment of designated workers, and preparatory work such as induction meetings with parents.

Key issues were identified as resource limitations – including staffing, training and funding – and also attitudinal barriers (which includes attitudes of some parents of disabled young people who may perceive segregated provision as ‘safer’ for their children). The research also studied perceived benefits of inclusive practice, not only for the young people involved but for non disabled young people and for youth organisations.

In terms of the direct impact of inclusive youth provision on young people with disabilities, the report found strong evidence that inclusion enhanced young people's self confidence and increased their opportunities for skills development.

Critique: This research set out to identify and describe good youth work practice involving young disabled people throughout Northern Ireland. Both the workers and the young people involved in the research were highly motivated and enthusiastic about their experiences. There can be no doubt that the research has identified excellent youth work practice, and this was largely attributed to the personal commitment of individual youth workers. These findings could be instrumental in the development and implementation of inclusive strategies in youth provision for both the Education and Library boards and voluntary sector disability organisations. However, the research process also indicated that this excellence is not likely to be typical and widespread.

Conclusions:

- Previous studies carried out by statutory and voluntary organisations have consistently shown that there are limited opportunities for young disabled people to attend and benefit from youth provision in NI
- The findings show that there are pockets of excellent youth work practice involving young disabled people in Northern Ireland
- Whilst the research participants were enthusiastic about their experiences the process indicated that inclusive practice might not be widespread
- There is a suggestion that, despite section 75 of NI Act 1998, which places a duty on statutory bodies to develop and implement policies and strategies that will lead to equal opportunities for everyone, there is a reliance on the voluntary disability organisations to meet the needs of young disabled people. Further, the findings clearly show that inclusive youth work takes place in a poorly resourced sector.
- This research demonstrates the need for a comprehensive empirical study into the existing youth provision available. Further research would help facilitate the policy-making process and map the organisations' activities, locations, funding, resources and number of staff involved.

Report can be downloaded from: www.disabilityaction.org following the links Publications....Young People

Disability Action Tel: 02890297880

Ref :SI:02

Title: In Our Sights : Reflections on the first two years of the Eye Matter young people's project as supported and facilitated by the RNIB NI

Theme: Young people with sight difficulties

Year of Publication: 2005

Author: Harry Reid (Creative Change)

Publishers/Agency: Royal National Institute for the Blind NI

Pages: 55

Aim of Publication: To consider the major issues and concerns of young people with sight difficulties.

Methodology: EYE MATTER is a group of young people with sight difficulties from Northern Ireland which provides a platform for young people to express themselves through a range of self programmed activities.

The two main objectives of the research were to establish a perspective of the impact of the EYE MATTER project on participating members and to determine the major issues and concerns of young people with sight difficulties who live in Northern Ireland.

Research methodology was qualitative and entailed the researcher attending EYE MATTER events and meetings over an eighteen month period to observe, listen to, converse with and interview EYE MATTER members. As a result of this contact the researcher compiled six profiles or case studies of participating members which convey what EYE MATTER has meant to them.

Critique: Whilst the nature and extent of the impact of involvement in EYE MATTER varied between members, a number of positive benefits were discernible amongst core members. There was an increased sense of collective self-confidence and self-esteem which manifested itself through camaraderie, acquiring a voice, being more assured of capabilities and potential and gaining a better understanding of the dynamics of the forces that shape their lives. Members also reported a reduction in feelings of isolation and loneliness. Both 'hard' and 'soft' skills have also been acquired and developed through ICT, advocacy, decision making and leadership.

However, the study raises important questions about the concerns of EYE MATTER members on issues which impact negatively on their lives. There was a strong conviction that people with physical and sensory difficulties have historically had their needs and interests less well represented than others. Participants felt that attitudes based on a mixture of pity and fear led them to being patronised, excluded and ignored. Current education and youth service provision arrangements were

reported as being grossly inadequate and failing them to fulfil their potential. Employment, accessibility of information, transport and independent living were also major issues of concern for study participants.

Conclusions:

Whilst the immediate future of EYE MATTER was secured through extended funding from the Youth Council of NI, the major difficulty faced was that existing funds did not allow for the employment of a dedicated Development Officer.

A dedicated Development Officer could help raise awareness of the major employment, education, health, housing and youth service issues and concerns which were highlighted in the study.

Report available from: *(limited copies available)*

RNIB NI
40 Linenhall Street, Belfast BT2 8BA
Tel 02890 329373

Ref: SI:03

Title: Big‘D’ wee ‘d’: The lives of young deaf people in Northern Ireland

Theme: Young people with hearing difficulties

Year of Publication: 2001

Authors: Barry Campbell, Caroline Doherty, Teresa Geraghty, Pat Henry, Michael Johnston, Elizabeth McArdle

Publishers/Agency: The Northern Ireland Deaf Youth Association (NIDYA)

Pages: 79

Aim of Publication: To present the views of young deaf people in relation to their experiences of living in Northern Ireland

Methodology: The study explored the attitudes and opinions of young deaf people, on existing social, educational and support services which aim to meet their needs. This was achieved through quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis.

A purposive sampling technique was employed for the study which involved 100 young deaf people who were known to the Northern Ireland Deaf Youth Association (NIDYA) with 60% of survey respondents drawn directly from NIDYA membership. These young deaf people were drawn from different age, religion, gender, geographical background and level of deafness.

Approximately 50 young deaf people participated in semi-structured focus group interviews. One of the most important elements of the qualitative data collection was that the interviews were mainly conducted by at least one of three deaf researchers from NIDYA. The researcher’s identities assumed particular importance because of the increased awareness of deaf issues and the use of sign language contributed to the ease and flow of information. An interpreter assisted by verbalising all the information communicated by sign. The recordings from the interviews were all transcribed and analysed thematically. To corroborate findings and enhance the validity of existing data, three individuals agreed to be interviewed and presented as Case Studies.

The title Big ‘D’, wee ‘d’ was taken from one of the key issues under discussion among deaf people in general – Big ‘D’ representing those people who identify themselves with deaf identity, language, culture and community and wee ‘d’ referring to a wider group, encompassing all deaf people

Critique: Research which illustrates a life as lived by a member of a community has the advantage of educating others from the 'inside out'. The reader is therefore presented with a deeper insight into the personal, functional and political issues which face young deaf people in Northern Ireland. As a minority group the participants are very clear about the changes necessary to ensure a strongly recognised cultural deaf identity. The participants ultimately expressed the need to be recognised on an equal basis and to be given the right to self-determination, intellectual development and educational achievement.

Conclusions:

- While the perceived proficiency in sign language of study participants did vary, it was very apparent that the majority of these young deaf people had a preference for sign language to meet their communication needs.
- 43% of participants indicate that almost all their friends are deaf. 96% have friends from different religious backgrounds which would suggest that religion/politics does not appear to be an issue for young deaf people.
- The study demonstrated that the education of young deaf people in Northern Ireland is an area of concern. The findings emphasised the pressing need for the Department of Education to carry out an extensive review of the adequacy and standard of education provision for young deaf people in Northern Ireland.
- Within the world of work, research participants identified many barriers including discrimination, negative attitudes, linguistic and cultural isolation, exploitation and under-employment, in spite of legislative protection.
- Mental Health support services are inadequate, and some young deaf people had to access counsellors from England. Others were unaware that such a service existed. The development of specialist counselling and psychiatric services for young deaf people would be of immeasurable importance to them.
- In Northern Ireland the expression of culture and identity consumes the political and religious 'hearing' communities of Protestants and Catholics. But in the deaf community, deaf identity is so strong that it supersedes the religious or political identities. The message is clear, deaf identity is fundamental to self-determination and fulfilment.

Report available from:

The Northern Ireland Deaf Youth Association (NIDYA)
5 College Sq North
Belfast BT1 6AR
Tel: 028 90 438566

Ref: SI:04

Title: What about us?

Theme: Adequacy of youth service provision for young people with disabilities

Year of publication: 2003

Author: Hazel Gordon

Publisher: Leonard Cheshire Foundation

Pages: 49

Aim of publication : An exploration of the physical and additional barriers to youth provision facing young people in South Education and Library Board (SELB) area.

Methodology: A research advisory group was established to bring together expertise and to provide support for the researcher. The group's role was to guide, inform and monitor the research process so that best practice was observed.

Fieldwork conducted in 2002 gathered qualitative and quantitative information by means of : i) Focus groups with 36 young people aged 10-25 with a disability; ii) questionnaires completed by 20 youth workers from full time youth service provision; and iii) an access audit of youth club premises. The latter was carried out by Disability Action to obtain an objective view on access in a sample of 6 full time youth centres (3 each from the voluntary and statutory sectors).

Critique: In its introduction the report provides details about the incidence of disability in N. Ireland and notes that although 40% of young people in N Ireland attend youth clubs, very few young disabled people are members of mainstream youth clubs. Reference is made to a number of research papers and to the UN Human Rights and disabled persons study. There is also an extensive bibliography which includes details of several Northern Ireland papers with a disability focus.

The Appendices include a brief history of disability; a comprehensive review of the legislative framework which applies; and details of the research methodology.

The research found that only 3 of the 36 respondents attend mainstream youth clubs but 10 attend youth clubs specifically for people with a disability. In addition 2 attend uniformed organisations. The youth workers data indicated that only 102 young people with a disability attend youth clubs out of a membership of 4000 ie 2.6%.

The report contains useful comments from the young people and also notes that youth workers have been trying to address the situation by introducing new initiatives. Physical barriers were not considered to be the only problem relating to potential membership, and attitude was seen to be a major barrier. There has been

some disability awareness training for youth workers but this had not necessarily resulted in greater participation by young people with a disability.

Conclusions:

The recommendations of the report are made under 2 headings : Practice: and Resources.

Practice

- The recommendations relate to policy statements and initiatives
- There should be training strategies, including sign language, to promote inclusion including the development of a shared risk strategy developed by young disabled people, their parents and youth workers
- An active recruitment drive targeted at young disabled people and the introduction of a buddy / peer educator and mentoring system

Resources

- The recommendations included specific recommendations for some of the youth clubs and more general recommendations about improvements which youth groups and organisations could make to improve access.

Report available from:

Leonard Cheshire Regional Office
5 Boucher Plaza
4-6 Boucher Road
Belfast
BT12 6HR

Tel: 02890 246247

Ref: SI:05

Title : Inclusion Rules OK! Including young people with learning disabilities in mainstream youth provision

Theme : Integration of young people with a learning disability

Year of Publication : 2005

Author : North Eastern Education and Library Board / Mencap

Publishers/Agency : North Eastern Education and Library Board / Mencap

Pages : 87

Funders : Department of Education - Children's Fund

Aim of publication This is a good practice guide to support youth workers in promoting the inclusion of young people with learning disabilities within mainstream youth groups. The guide draws from a pilot process in seven youth groups in the NEELB area, with data recorded from youth workers, parents and young people (both disabled and non-disabled).

Methodology This publication is the result of a partnership between Mencap and NEELB, who jointly facilitated a pilot project to recruit and integrate young people with learning disabilities within mainstream youth service provision. This was in response to the current situation where the majority of young people with learning disabilities attend special schools which may be situated outside of their own communities, and therefore lack the 'natural' social and friendship networks that draw them into the life in their local community.

The development of the resource materials drew on case study research within seven youth clubs, and the ensuing publication is an example where practice and research are mutually informing. During the pilot process, data was drawn from youth workers, parents and young people. In particular, data was recorded by youth workers by means of structured 'Nightly' and 'Monthly' recording sheets which were used to capture information on activities, observations, interpretation, and future actions.

Critique : This is primarily a practice guide rather than a research publication. However it includes observations and learning gained through the pilot process. The key message is that the successful integration of young people with a learning disability is not simply a matter of proactive recruitment, but is dependent on establishing a culture of inclusion which needs to be reflected by all staff and non-disabled young people, as well as by the selection of group activities.

The publication highlights that successful integration is a long term process and it may take many years to make a significant impact on the population of young people with learning disabilities. To support a culture of inclusion within mainstream youth groups, the following factors emerged from the case studies:

- Staff time and expertise were central : this includes provision of disability awareness training to staff, and nomination of a key worker to support new members with a learning disability
- Induction meetings with young people and their parents/carers, to assess needs and risks and to provide reassurance
- Preparatory work with non-disabled young people. It was found that the establishment of relationships between disabled and non-disabled young people could take considerable time, and in some instances there was a need to address tensions
- The need to record progress on a nightly basis and to communicate with parents/carers
- The need to adjust the programme of activities – and to explain to non-disabled young people why this had been done

Conclusions:

The guide is structured as follows :

Preparation and Training
Recruitment and Induction
Participation
Maintenance
Case studies
Resource materials

Over half of the publication is given to the reproduction of resource materials, eg. sample promotional leaflets, sample letters of introduction, suggestions for training sessions, data recording sheets, ideas for activities, contacts etc.

The publication is a good example of how the evaluation of a relatively small-scale pilot project can be capitalised to provide practical information and a learning resource for a much wider audience.

Report available from:

NEELB / Mencap

Ref: SI:06

Title : Learning to Grow Up: Multiple Identities of young lesbians, gay men and bisexual people in Northern Ireland

Theme : sexual orientation

Year of Publication : 2003

Author : Dr. Christine Loudes.

Publisher : Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission

Pages : 38

Aim of publication: This research explores the multiple identities and experience of young lesbian, gay men and bisexual people (LGB people) in Northern Ireland, with a particular focus on access to the Health Care system.

Methodology: Qualitative data was collected by means of 3 focus groups (one in L/Derry and two in the Belfast area) involving a total of 24 young LGB people aged 16-27. In addition, three in-depth interviews were conducted with young LGB people aged 16-24.

Data was also collected from health service providers by means of one focus group.

Findings: This report recounts how young LGB people face different or additional issues to those from 'straight' young people (eg. invisible identity, homophobic bullying, victimisation in schools). It also differentiates their issues from those of older LGB people (eg. absence of social provision for younger LGB people and the invisibility of a teenage gay culture). The report includes a comprehensive review of literature, noting recurrent issues of the invisibility of young LGB people, the diversity amongst young LGB people, the lack of relevant sex education and access to tailored sexual health services, the high number of suicides, drug abuse, self-harm and mental health issues amongst young LGB people, and in some instances the denial of human rights.

Data from the focus groups with young LGB people corroborates these issues. The research was slanted towards an exploration of multiple identities, wherein personal identity develops through an interactive process between the individual and his or her environment. In terms of young LGB people, the focus groups revealed a number of resistances within the environment towards accepting their identity. It also found that an important aspect of identity was the process of 'coming out' which for some respondents had negative repercussions such as rejection by their families.

The report also notes a tendency for some young LGB to have 'internalised homophobia' where they feel hostile about their own sexuality due to societal representation of homosexuality. The study also found differentiated experiences among research respondents according to their age, their gender, and the place

where they live. For example the 'gay scene' is largely city-based in Northern Ireland, with no support or meeting points for young LGB people from rural areas.

The report noted that many respondents had faced 'institutionalised heterosexism' in schools and public services, ie. a system which discriminates in favour of heterosexual people. Prejudice against LGB people was also experienced in terms of social isolation and homophobic bullying and violence.

The report proceeds to outline specific experiences of prejudice in health care services and in the workplace.

Conclusions.

This report encourages Health professionals, schools and decision-makers to give more weight to the multiple identities of young LGB people when designing their Services, particularly in the application of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and the inclusion and extension of the EU Framework Directive on Equal Treatment in Employment and Occupation in the Single Equality Bill.

This research highlights that the experience of young LGB people in Northern Ireland is characterised by four elements:

1. Invisibility,
2. Denial of human rights,
3. Isolation of young LGB people and
4. Diversity amongst young LGB people.

Recommendations.

Many of the research recommendations are specific to the health care sector, to the workplace, and to statutory agencies such as the Human Rights Commission and Equality Commission. There are several recommendations which relate to the education and youth work sector. These include

- Schools should play a proactive role in providing information for LGB people of relevant issues.
- LGB organisations should be properly funded.
- Government should provide adequate information and support to homosexual young people under the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

The report can be downloaded from: www.nihrc.org, using the following links :
Resources....Research....Sexual orientation

Ref: SI:07

Title: Lifting the Limits – An evaluation of the Community Leadership Programme for Young Mothers (2001-2003)

Theme: Education and employment for young mothers

Year of Publication: 2004

Author: Dr R Moreland

Publishers / Agency: YouthAction Northern Ireland

Pages: 30

Aim of Publication: An external evaluation of a Community Leadership Programme for Young mothers aimed at addressing the barriers they faced in accessing further and higher education and employment.

Methodology: The Community Leadership Programme targeted eight young mothers aged sixteen to twenty-five from Armagh, Dungannon and surrounding rural areas, and aimed to address the inequalities and barriers facing the young mothers in education and employment. Key features in the success of this programme included paying the participants a salary to allow them to take up employment and move out of benefit dependency, reduced working hours, and payment of childcare and travel allowances. Alongside accredited training, which promoted personal, professional development and ICT skills, the programme sought to encourage participants to become active in their local communities thereby contributing to both collective and individual development.

The programme was evaluated to assess the effectiveness of the Community Leadership Programme in meeting these aims. The evaluator drew information from a number of sources including documentary evidence, programme content and participant's evaluations, student's work and an external verifiers report. A focus group was conducted with programme participants and semi-structured interviews were undertaken with the two Peer Educators and the programmes External Verifier. Finally there were discussions held with the Programme Co-ordinator, the internal verifier and a representative from the partner organisation (SELB).

Critique: The evaluation raised the issue that young women, particularly those with child-rearing responsibilities, may experience difficulty accessing employment and /or education. This problem was exacerbated for young lone mothers who were highlighted as having the weakest support infrastructure and similarly, those young mothers living in rural areas due to isolation and poor public transport. The use of peer support workers and peer education were identified as significant factors in developing support to programme participants. Importantly this evaluation highlights

both the psychological barriers facing young mothers accessing employment and training e.g. low confidence, and the physical and social barriers, including isolation, lack of affordable and accessible childcare, limited choice in type of childcare, difficulty in finding flexible, family friendly employment and training opportunities.

Conclusions:

The evaluation demonstrates the major positive impact on the lives of the young mothers who participated in the Programme. Gaining confidence in themselves and their abilities was a core theme of participant evaluations. Participants gained a range of skills as well as benefiting personally and enhancing their quality of life and aspirations. All participants successfully completed the programme and had gained either full or part time employment since. The evaluation of the programme clearly indicated that when the appropriate measures are put in place to address the barriers, young mothers can and do access employment. Recommendations included:

- Projects such as the Community Leadership Programme that have a proven ability to meet government strategy should be supported financially by government funds.
- In order to facilitate young mothers to obtain employment, childcare must be affordable and available and young mothers should be allowed to pay this to family and/or friends.
- Childcare provision in further and higher education colleges is inadequate. Mothers need to be able to avail of childcare when attending education and training courses in line with their ability to pay for this.
- Support systems in educational institutions for those from disadvantaged backgrounds need to be adequately resourced and academic staff in institutions should be encouraged to obtain training in an awareness of the specific needs of adult returners and non-traditional students.

Report available from:

YouthAction Northern Ireland

Ref : SI:08

Title: Everyday Life: young men, violence and developing youth work practice in Northern Ireland

Theme: Gender: young men and violence

Year of Publication: 2003

Authors: YouthAction Northern Ireland

Publishers / Agency: YouthAction Northern Ireland

Funders : Funded by YouthNet through the EU Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation

Pages: 30

Aim of Publication: To present young men's experience and attitudes towards violence as victims and perpetrators, and to explore potential youth work responses to working with young men around the theme of violence.

Methodology: A baseline study was carried out with 135 young men from rural and urban communities throughout Northern Ireland. Consultations encouraged young men aged 14-25 to talk and reflect upon their experience of violence. Consultations were taped and analysed in order that key themes could be identified. Findings from these consultations were used to inform the planning and delivery of six pilot youth work programmes with young men. The final phase of the initiative was to disseminate the findings from the pilot programmes to the wider youth service. The project was externally evaluated.

Critique: The study found that young men experience a wide range of violence – and for many this is encountered on a daily basis. Themes identified by the research participants included the normality of violence; acceptable levels of violence; male powerlessness; violence and gender; excitement of violence; alcohol and drugs related violence; causes of violence and accessing support.

The study also identified important considerations for the delivery of youth work with young men around the theme of violence which is useful for those intending to develop violence related work with young men.

Four key elements were also identified within each pilot project – approach and environment; awareness raising and individual reflection; improving knowledge of alternatives to violence and skills development.

Conclusions:

A number of conclusions / recommendations were drawn from this study.

- Being male significantly increases an individual's experience of violence both as victim and perpetrator
- The young men were more inclined to see themselves as victims rather than perpetrators of violence
- Despite the fact that the majority of the young men reported living in fear of violence much of the time, they never had the opportunity to discuss this with others
- The majority of the young men would like their communities to be less violent but considered this unrealistic
- The pilot programmes provide the basis for a broad based curriculum of materials for working in a range of environments.
- The skills of the worker are central to the delivery of this work
- The pilot programmes effectively enabled young men to express themselves and reflect upon their lives and experiences of violence
- The young men felt comfortable talking about sensitive issues
- The young men appreciated an approach that was generally supportive and sympathetic to their issues
- The young men reported that sessions involved activity and fun
- The learning from this project was widely disseminated. This included presentations in each of the communities where the young men lived
- Violence related programmes with young men should include – an exploration of masculinity; opportunities for young men to express themselves; interactive exercises that combine energy and reflection; training in skills useful for avoiding violence and confidence building

Report available from:

YouthAction Northern Ireland (very limited copies available)

Ref: SI:09

Title: Young Men and Violence: Thematic Initiative

Theme: Young Men and Violence

Year of Publication: 2003

Author: Trefor Lloyd

Publishers/Agency: YouthNet

Funders: EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation

Pages: 36

Aim of Publication: To develop an understanding of the relationship between young men and violence within contested communities in Northern Ireland.

Methodology: In 1999 YouthNet funded three projects under the EU Special Support programme for Peace and Reconciliation (EUSSPPR) focusing on young men and violence. Three projects were selected to carry out a baseline study which documented the experiences of young males, both as perpetrators and victims of violence. There was to be an exploration of the relationship between masculinity and violence and the design and delivery of a programme that addressed the needs of young males. The programme also sought to develop and deliver practice models which demonstrated how youth work processes could effect positive change in violent attitudes and behaviour.

The three selected projects were: YouthAction Northern Ireland, to carry out action research with 135 young men aged 14-25 in urban and rural areas ; Queen's University Belfast's 'Be a Sport' programme, through interviews and focus groups with 27 young men and youth workers; and a consortium of Intercom Enterprises, University of Ulster and CTC Associates who supported young men from two schools to conduct 34 one-to-one interviews with other young men. The range of methods included activity, discussion, games and exercises that enabled reflection. All three projects relied on other agencies to identify appropriate young men.

Critique: This innovative programme produced three very different projects and generated a large amount of data in regard to young men and violence. This document is important in that it demonstrates how youth work processes are useful for engaging young men in addressing potentially controversial and contentious issues. Many of the young men who participated in the research were perceived as 'difficult.' The style and expectations of the workers were considered more important than the methods. Findings revealed that many of the young men who participated in the study rarely spoke about violence in a reflective way and that adults seldom engaged them in this type of discussion. While the young men were

willing to discuss their attitudes and experience of violence, they were particularly interested in learning skills and strategies that would help them deal with unwanted incidences of violence.

Recommendations and Conclusions

- Young men reported that they valued the opportunities the projects offered and they had a positive and stimulating impact upon them.
- Young men reported they rarely talked about violence in a reflective way.
- For the majority of young men violence was neither 'good nor bad', but a complex mixture of experiences ranging from extreme excitement to extreme fear.
- There was a strong link between the young men's perceptions of manhood and their attitudes towards violence.
- In spite of the young men saying they did not think schools would be willing or able to deliver programmes focusing on violence, the project that worked within schools found this was a setting where violence could be discussed.
- Programmes should be developed that appreciate the complexity of violence in young men's lives.
- Workers should be given the opportunity to develop appropriate skills to work with violence and young men.
- Programmes with less than five sessions were deemed too short.
- A range of skills and curriculum based materials need to be developed in partnership with community based organizations.
- Projects need to be developed within a broader context of community safety.

Report available from: YouthNet

Ref: SI:10

Title: Young Men Talking – Voices from Belfast

Theme: Gender: young men's mental and emotional health

Year of Publication: 1997

Authors: Ken Harland

Publishers / Agency: Working with Men, London / YouthAction Northern Ireland

Pages: 96

Aim of Publication: To increase awareness within the Northern Ireland Youth Service of the absence of a youth work concern in regard to the mental and emotional needs of young men.

Methodology: A needs assessment was carried out with 25 young men aged 14-16 from inner city Belfast. Semi-structured individual interviews questioned the young men about their experiences of school, expectations of work, becoming a man, how they dealt with their feelings, where they received support, and relationships with their fathers. Each interview was taped and transcribed. Consideration was given to the importance of adopting a methodology that encouraged young men to talk and reflect upon their needs and issues from their perspective.

Critique: This booklet is significant as it was the first study to highlight that the needs of young men were not being fully addressed through traditional Youth Service provision. Prior to the publication of this booklet, the needs of young men were typically responded to through recreation and sport. The booklet argued the importance of listening to young men and not assuming their needs. It also stressed the need to support and encourage young men to discuss their feelings, thoughts ideas and vision. The booklet has been influential in helping the Northern Ireland Youth Service clarify the role of youth work with young men and providing pointers for practitioners wishing to engage young men in more creative ways.

Conclusions:

Examples of the conclusions included:

- The need for schools to provide more effective and longer work placements
- The need for young men to influence their own learning

- The need for more consistent health, sex and relationship education and offering parenting skills on courses
- School curriculum to include more focus on life skills
- Approaches to working with young men should be flexible and include opportunities for reflection, sharing of feelings and skills development
- Those working with young men should have an understanding of issues that impact upon young men and their development
- Agencies working with young men need to record, monitor and evaluate the work in order that others may benefit and learn from their experience and contribute to the identification of good practice
- Further research should be carried out into the mental and emotional needs of young men
- Future research should give consideration to finding effective ways to encourage young men to express their views

Report available from:

The University of Ulster Library at Jordanstown

Ref: SI-11

Title: Out on your own: An examination of the mental health of young same sex attracted men

Theme: sexual orientation

Year of Publication: 2006

Authors: Helen McNamee

Publishers / Agency: The Rainbow Project

Pages: 99

Funders: The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund

Aim of Publication: To investigate the perceived and expressed mental health needs of young same sex attracted men in Northern Ireland and explore how young same sex attracted men's health has been affected by society's attitudes to people of a non-heterosexual orientation.

Methodology: Qualitative and quantitative methods were utilised involving a large scale quantitative survey followed by 16 face to face interviews. Interviews were conducted at a mutually agreed venue and lasted from 30 minutes to one hour. Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed by the researcher.

190 questionnaires were completed. Issues that appeared most pertinent were developed into interview questions to find out about the mental health needs of young same sex attracted men and the relationship between mental health and society's attitudes to people of a non-heterosexual orientation.

Critique: This report provides comprehensive insights into the experiences of same sex attracted men. It highlights the need for more local and national materials in regard to the mental and emotional health needs of young gay and bisexual men.

The main findings were that almost one third of respondents had a potential psychiatric disorder and over one third had been diagnosed with a mental illness at some time in their lives. 37.9% of respondents had received professional help.

The negative impact of 'coming out', isolation, difficulties in school and work related to sexual orientation and homophobia in society were also analysed. The primary

factor which revealed signs of mental health difficulty was the absence of someone to talk to.

27% of respondents had attempted suicide and 71% had thought of taking their own lives. 80% of the respondents who had suicidal thoughts had indicated that these thoughts were related to their sexuality.

Conclusions:

It was clear from the research that homonegative attitudes in Northern Ireland, together with the isolation that being non-heterosexual may bring, play a major part in the incidence of emotional and mental health difficulties, suicidal inclination and self harm in this population.

The education sector provides little positive teaching on LGB people and fails to provide young same sex attracted men with life and relationship skills needed to negotiate often dangerous situations. Also, most same sex attracted men grow up in heterosexual families and may not have the family support experienced by their heterosexual counterparts. Same sex attracted men when entering the gay community can also be exposed to new risks such as alcohol, drug abuse and unsafe sexual behaviour. These collective factors have a bearing upon the mental health of young same sex attracted men.

The report also provides a set of 9 comprehensive recommendations.

Report available from:

The Rainbow Project
2-8 Commercial Court
Belfast
BT1 2NB
TEL: 02890 319030

Ref: SI-12

Title : Shout! The needs of young people in Northern Ireland who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender.

Theme : sexual orientation

Year of Publication : 2003

Authors : Sharon Redmond ; Fidelma Carolan

Publisher/Agency : YouthNet

Pages : 40

Aim of Publication: This research was commissioned by the Department of Education as part of their statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998).

Methodology: The research was carried out on three dimensions :

- Young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender (LGBT), with data collected via questionnaires and focus groups.
- Organisations working with young people.
- Public authorities.

362 young people who identified as LGBT under the age of 25 completed an anonymous questionnaire either online or on paper. This questionnaire was promoted widely through youth, community and gay organisations, as well as online. The researchers were unable to promote the questionnaire in schools, as permission could not be obtained. Approximately 25 young people participated in focus groups.

Findings:

- There were approximately 5 years between a young person knowing they were LGBT and telling someone;
- 78% of the sample 'came out' to friends first;
- 63% did not feel they could tell their parents when they first 'came out';
- 86% were aware of their sexual orientation while at school;
- 11% received support or information in school;
- 29% of the sample had attempted suicide;
- 44% were bullied at school because of their sexuality;
- Of the 63% who experienced negative attitudes in school around sexual orientation, only 13% sought support;
- 69% of the sample left school earlier than they would have preferred due to bullying;

- Young LGBT people were five times more likely to be medicated for depression;
- 50% of the sample who identified as 'transgendered' had self-harmed;
- 50% experienced a negative attitude towards sexual orientation whilst being a member of a youth organisation;
- 91% believed that youth organisations should deal with the needs of young LGBT people;
- 79% of youth organisations would like access to training for staff on issues which affect young LGBT people.

Conclusions.

This research highlights many difficulties for young LGBT people in Northern Ireland, but also some of the good practice which exists. However, the key issue is that all young people deserve to be protected in the school and youth sector environment, and all young people deserve to benefit from the commitment to support them to develop personally, socially and educationally.

Recommendations.

- i. Development of support services for young people who identify as LGBT.
- ii. Development and delivery of appropriate training.
- iii. Production of specific information materials on sexual orientation for young people and the incorporation of LGBT issues into existing youth information strategies.
- iv. Curriculum and programme development which will address issues of sexual orientation and recognise the needs of young people who identify as LGBT.
- v. Inclusion of sexual orientation matters in all pertinent policies, procedures and guidelines.
- vi. Further research.

Report available from: YouthNet Tel : 90331880

A summary report can be downloaded from www.youthnetni.org.uk following the link to 'Shout'. This link also provides update reports following the publication of Shout.

Ref : SI-13

Title: The Excluded Adolescent - an exploration of the issues surrounding marginalised young people in Northern Ireland

Theme: social exclusion

Year of Publication : undated

Authors: Dr Tony Morgan, Dr Brian O'Hare. Hugh Campbell

Publisher: University of Ulster at Jordanstown

Pages: 114

Aim of Publication : To investigate the notion of marginalisation as a condition that negatively influences the education and development of young people in Northern Ireland.

Methodology: The original proposal for the research identified difficulties reaching an agreed definition of the term "marginalisation". Therefore the structure for the research was developed as follows:

- To define what marginalisation means theoretically and as a personal social construct
- To incorporate a variety of understandings of the term
- To assess and analyse the implications of marginalisation on individuals and the implications for practice and outcomes within agencies and organisations

A set of questions was developed for use with individuals who work with young people followed by interviews with young people. A pilot study was carried out with qualified youth workers completing their Community Youth Work degree course.

Findings: The interviews with the young people revealed several specific examples of marginalisation and also identified "location" as a major factor in maintaining and creating marginalisation and as an influence on life choices. Other key factors included school, unemployment and family. The pilot study revealed both a general discontent and implicit acceptance of their disadvantage by the young people.

The researchers then developed their work by building on the findings of the pilot study, expanding the sample of respondents and using questions and interviews. The findings of the research are presented under the headings:

- Marginalisation: the concept examined
- Marginalisation: the response of youth work ; and
- A concluding comment

The concept of marginalisation is developed under a range of headings including family, behaviours, and education. The response of youth work recognises many practical difficulties in the community and an opportunity for a further specific community based project. The report also recognises that there are two main

groups at risk of exclusion: those on the margins who may respond to positive influences at school or the youth club, and those on the extreme margins whose needs are more complex and who may require more specific interventions and support. It is suggested that issues relating to the latter group could become a major research study.

The report makes 5 recommendations which are expanded in the text. A diagram depicting key influences on young people in Northern Ireland is also included. There are particular references to the education system, the benefits of participation in citizenship education, and basic inequalities which must be addressed to enable young people to have opportunities and to develop.

A very comprehensive literature review includes references to origins and definitions; the nature of social exclusion; current social policy context; and addressing the problem. The roles of both education and youth work are explored.

Critique: The comments of youth workers provide a good insight into issues affecting young people and the circumstances in which youth work is currently being delivered in many areas. The report acknowledges that many approaches have been tried, with an emphasis on social education, building social skills and promoting empowerment. It recognises the boundaries and limitations of the various agencies working with young people and the complexity of their problems. The main conclusion of the report is that there must be more practical joint working between agencies and an actual sharing of resources and skills to provide a well structured responsive service for the marginalised adolescent.

Recommendations:

- Detailed interagency discussion required about the design and implementation of a long term strategy for the future education of disadvantaged and marginalised adolescents, organised under the auspices of Department of Education (NI) or other lead body
- A new multi disciplinary module on understanding adolescent development, with focus on a holistic methodology and curriculum should be designed and targeted at agencies working with disadvantaged youth
- All agencies should have an integrated approach with young people at the centre of the structure
- Those most at risk in schools and the community should be targeted for special programmes and resources and skills should be shared by agencies for common and co-operative provision
- Communities should be given resources and support to set up neighbourhood demonstration projects to pilot a “total approach” to youth development.

Report available from: University of Ulster, Jordanstown

Ref : SI:14

Title: A Sense of Belonging : young people in rural areas of Northern Ireland speak about their needs, hopes and aspirations

Theme: Rural young people aged 14-25. The areas included in the research were South Mourne, Glens of Antrim and Castelederg.

Year of Publication: 1997

Authors: Teresa Geraghty, Caroline Breakey & Tricia Keane

Publishers/Agency: Youth Action Northern Ireland

Pages: 186

Aim of Publication: To give voice to the young people, community groups and service providers who live and work in rural communities. It starts from the premise that young people in rural areas have been neglected by youth work and professional training.

Methodology: This research adopts an action research approach. This is a task oriented approach to research which allows researchers to adopt a range of flexible, adaptable strategies in data collection. These included questionnaires, case studies (individuals and groups) informal discussions, interviews and participant observation. The report includes a theoretical framework for the use of action research within a youth work context, with guidance on the phases required for this research approach.

Critique: This is a significant piece of research for the youth service, not only for the findings on rural young people, but in the utilisation of an action research methodology. This meant that the young people who engaged with the project had a sense of control and ownership of both the process and the final research product.

The report opens with an outline of the work of Youth Action and set against the context of the Youth Service in NI. It lays out very clearly the aims and objectives of the project and the climate in which the work took place.

Chapters 2 & 3 provide the reader with a discussion on rurality and leads into a description of the three research areas (see above). It then describes in detail the research methodology.

Chapter 4 profiles the participants and to present their views on life within rural communities, their experiences of services, and their hopes for the future.

Chapter 5 looks at youth service policy with particular emphasis on the themes of regeneration and community development. The chapter ends with an comprehensive and well-asserted argument for a community development youth work praxis.

Chapter 6 draws out key conclusions of the report

1. Young people as a group are relatively powerless and have difficulty in finding ways to contribute to communities. Despite this, they demonstrate a capacity and willingness to become more involved in their communities and really want to make a difference
2. For many of the adults in these communities young people are seen as a priority but probably because they are seen as a *problem, and not an asset*, in those communities. There is little evidence that shows young people are viewed as equal citizens or active stakeholders in the development of the communities in which they live
3. There is a clear need for the development of processes that encourage inter and intra generational dialogue about the role of young people in rural communities
4. There is a need to build on the enthusiasm and positive energy of the young people who participated in this research and look for ways they could become equal partners in communities
5. Service providers have been wrongly assuming that young people are able to access their services (e.g. health and housing) as readily as adults are.
6. Localised community development strategies, inclusive of young people, will ensure those unheard voices are at least given a chance to speak out.

The final chapter outlines Recommendations in following areas:

- Re- allocation of Resources;
- Partnerships;
- Training,
- Support and Development;
- Models of Piloting;
- Policy

Whilst the research is now relatively dated, it retains methodological value in constructing a template for data collection with young people. It also demonstrates how a community development youth work praxis can create the climate and circumstances where real change can take place in peoples lives and impact positively on whole communities.

Report available from : Youth Action Northern Ireland

Ref: SI-15

Title: From strength to strength -The experiences of young people growing up in one parent families in Northern Ireland – Research Report. (2003)

Theme: Teenagers growing up in one parent families

Year of Publication: 2003

Authors: Dr Valerie Bunting, Dr Ann Marie Grey, Ms Lynda Spence

Publisher /Agency : Gingerbread

Pages: 69

Aim of Publication: This research aimed to elicit the views of young people, between the ages of 13 and 18, living in lone parent families. The study also took account of the views of lone parents.

Methodology: A preliminary focus group was held with young people to establish their views on themes identified from literature, key issues in relation to growing up in a lone parent family and appropriate methodology for data collection with young teenagers. As a result, the chosen methodology took the form of multiple-choice questionnaire and vignettes (short stories and scenarios), providing examples of people and their behaviour, on which participants offered comment and opinion. In total the views of 29 teenagers and 24 lone parents were obtained for this study through a combination of completed questionnaires and focus groups. The majority of participants in this study had lived in a two-parent family at some point in their lives. This was in keeping with the fact that the vast majority of families come to lone parenthood as a result of separation or divorce.

Critique: Much research has been completed regarding lone parent families, however little attention has been given to the views or perspectives of the children and young people living in these families. This research highlights and addresses the necessity of listening to the voices of children and young people.

One in four families is now a one parent family and are twice as likely to be poor as two parent families. Teenage years can be difficult time for both parents and young people and additional stresses are added when there are limited amounts of time and money. Teenagers expressed a desire to spend more time with their parents. Financial problems were the main source of worry for both parents and teenagers. Research participants felt that schools lacked sensitivity, often assuming that all children had two parent families and schools also appeared to be indifferent to financial circumstances of lone parent families. There was found to be a gap in

services available to both lone parents of teenagers and to the teenagers themselves. However what emerges clearly from this report is a picture of loving and supportive families, finding the strength to overcome the difficulties, barriers and prejudices encountered. Comments throughout illustrated the love teenagers felt for their parent and the fact that they felt loved and secure within the family environment.

Conclusions and recommendations:

For the parents the most difficult aspects of bringing up teenagers alone included financial problems, lack of emotional support and worrying if they were doing enough. For teenagers main issues included the financial problems of their parents, problems due to not having the absent parent around, and problems associated with normal family arguments. Some key recommendations included:

- Increased and more relevant income support and increased minimum wage.
- Improved training and childcare for lone parents entering the labour market.
- Increased availability of mentoring and parent support programmes.
- Schools disseminating information regarding family diversity and change and increasing their sensitivity to lone parent families.
- More support services available to lone parent families regarding financial advice, emotional support and more practical advice on raising teenagers.
- Peer support projects to teenagers for practical advice, emotional support and sharing experiences.
- Access to free counselling services.

Ref : SI-16

Title: Distant Voices: An action research project on young people and rural isolation in the Southern Education and Library area

Theme: Young people and rural isolation

Year of Publication: 2002

Authors: Gerard Doran, Caroline Breakey, Micheal McKenna, Louise McShane, Maureen McGuigan, Louise McBride, Martin McCann.

Publishers/Agency: Rural Isolation Project (Southern Education and Library Board, YouthAction Northern Ireland, South Tyrone Area Youth project and Loughshore Youth Forum)

Aim of Publication: To explore the impact of rural isolation on young people, help young people develop strategies to address their particular needs and to promote greater understanding of these needs within the wider community.

Methodology: The central aims of this project were to enable young people in three separate and distinct geographical area of rural Northern Ireland to explore issues that impact on their lives, to share their experiences as well as to undertake a short piece of developmental work to enable them to directly address some of the issues identified. This was achieved through the use of qualitative data collection and analysis whereby consultations were carried out with 40 young people from Newtownhamilton, Glennane, The Loup and the wider South Tyrone area.

Inherent in the action research methodology is a community development approach as well as one which is led by the young people themselves through giving them the opportunity to openly share their experiences and identify issues. Issues identified during the consultations were then used as a basis for developing programmes focussed on supporting young people to address issues as well as learning for those working with young people in similar environments.

Critique: A key characteristic of this project was the youth-led approach. The conclusion of the report states that this has had a positive impact on young people's lives, allowing them to experience real participation and take control of their own development as evidenced in the individual projects carried out by each of the three groups in response to their identified needs. For example, in the Loup area, young people identified the lack of youth provision in their area, in particular a youth club. Following the consultations, the young people were keen to get their voices heard and start planning for a youth facility in their area. This particular approach to this project highlights the importance of coming from a value base that acknowledges

young people as equal stakeholders. Indeed the relevance of this emerging theme is evident in the contribution this project has made to the development of a Model of Practice that details the different stages necessary to support rural young people to address identified needs; the model is detailed with the Report and again highlights the overall youth-led, community-based approach.

Conclusions

- Older young people want to get involved in developing their own projects that are important to them and which address their needs.
- Friendships are very important to young people, and venues to meet with their peers outside of home are needed.
- Young people often feel powerless in rural areas; they want to become more involved in decision-making and in taking responsibility in community development.
- Young people have mixed feeling about living in rural communities, valuing on one hand the closeness that such an environment can bring but, on the other hand, feeling inhibited because everyone knows what they are doing.
- A large amount of time is spent travelling to access services. The need, therefore, to improve physical resources such as transport needs to be addressed.
- In rural areas there are few opportunities to engage with young people from different cultural backgrounds; the young people who were involved in inter-cultural activity found this to be a positive experience and were willing to engage in future activities. However, some young people found this difficult due to perceptions within their own community.
- The learning from this report has relevance for all those working in similar environments with young people and those making decisions about the allocation of resources to rural areas in general.
- It was concluded that young people have a vital contribution to make to ensure the sustainability of rural communities. Subsequently, more development and training, such as maximising young people's potential as community leaders, the provision of on-going consultations and the active participation of Community youth Workers to engage young people, were highlighted as necessary actions to be taken.

Report Available from: YouthAction Northern Ireland

Ref: SI:17

Title : Creating links – an independent evaluation of the rural youth community development programme

Theme : Social inclusion in rural communities

Year of Publication : 2005

Author : Nick Mack

Publishers/Agency : Youth Action NI

Pages : 87

Funders : Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Southern Education and Library Board, Cadbury Trust, Youth Council NI, Garfield Weston Foundation

Aim of publication: The Creating Links Programme operated for over 2 years in rural communities within the Southern Education and Library Board area. The programme sought to demonstrate how community youth work, informed by action research techniques, can support young people to contribute to rural regeneration, both at local community level and at a more strategic policy level.

Methodology: The evaluation report aimed to investigate both the formative dimension of the Programme (ie. evaluation of the process) and the summative (ie. evaluation of the strategic outcome). In terms of the formative dimension, the evaluator adopted a facilitative role, working to assist programme members in self-evaluation through periodic 'active reflection' sessions, informed by the use of a structured diary by each team member to record observations and events. The data was hence largely qualitative in nature, and acted as a resource for later collective review. The summative evaluation used two key tools to collect evidence and assess strategic impact, these being : Four Voices Framework and Descriptor Scales.

Critique : This report outlines a comprehensive and sophisticated approach to programme evaluation, and one which can be adapted for use in many youth work contexts. In examining the impact made with young people participating in the Creating Links Programme, the evaluation developed a series of 'descriptor scales' as a method to gain an objective view of progress, particularly in areas involving 'soft skills' which are traditionally difficult to measure. These scales included measures for the personal development of staff (Personal Confidence, Learning and development of best practice, Support and Teamwork); measures of impact on young people (Trust and Confidence, Knowledge, Connections, Community group confidence); and measures for the strategic impact of the Programme.

The Four Voices Framework is a tool drawn from action research, which describe the different areas of information exchange which take place within a project. These

voices include : First Voice (staff, peer workers and Youth Action); Second Voice (the work with beneficiaries, in this case young people and communities); Third Voice (other service providers/activists working with young people); Fourth Voice (influencing policy and wider thinking). The team recorded all activities they had been involved in on a quarterly basis, using this four-dimensional framework.

Conclusions:

The report offers a model for working with rural young people in the community, with detailed advice on each stage within the model.

The report also makes 22 specific recommendations to ensure the sustainability of young people's engagement in rural communities. These include:

- The need for strategic resourcing of youth participation structures in the voluntary sector (to complement those within the statutory sector) which are inclusive of rural young people
- The need for partnership arrangements with the Rural Community Network and the youth sector, specifically to link youth participative structures
- The need for creative methodologies to support rural young people's contribution to rural policy development
- The need for further investment in rural youth participation
- The need for various statutory agencies to work in partnership at a policy level to support young peoples inclusion in rural regeneration
- A number of recommendations concerning training and development for youth workers
- Implications of the research in terms of the employment of rural outreach workers, and for statutory agencies which have an obligation to support rural communities.

Report available from:

Youth Action NI www.youthaction.org

Ref : SI:18

Title : Count me in : exploring cultural diversity amongst children and young people

Theme : Ethnic minorities and multiple heritage

Year of Publication: 2005

Author : Dr Katy Radford

Publishers/Agency : Save the Children / NICEM

Funder : Youth Council NI

Pages : 40

Aim of Publication : To explore the experiences and expectations of 10-18 year olds from a minority ethnic or multiple heritage background, living in Northern Ireland. The specific research questions were : Are the issues that young people from minority ethnic communities different from those faced by children from the majority communities? What prevents young people from accessing existing social provision? What would young people like to change? What new ways of working can be found to engage more meaningfully with minority ethnic young people? What are the key issues which arise on a recurring basis for minority ethnic young people?

Methodology: The research design was qualitative in nature, with data being collected from 50 young people aged 10-18 representing a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. A notable feature of the research was the care and attention paid to the methodological design to ensure that the process was culturally sensitive and that it would enable young people to make a full and considered contribution to the research.

The research project was guided by an advisory panel of representatives from a range of minority ethnic communities, and the young research participants were recruited to the study through nomination by members of the advisory panel. The author notes that the support and co-operation of the advisory panel was central to gaining access to, and the confidence of, young participants. The initial phase of the study used 1x1 interviews and focus group methodologies to elicit the views of 50 young people aged 10-18. On the advice of the advisory panel, parents or parental representatives were present during the interviews – although the author notes that this did not appear to constrain young people’s responses to the research.

Following the interviews a one-day workshop was held to explore the preliminary findings in greater detail. The workshop used participatory methods to assist young people to reflect on issues – methods included photography, arts-based activities, role play and life-story telling in addition to group discussion.

Critique : The report is divided into five sections. The first outlines the aims and context of the research, along with an overview of the methodology. Section two provides a statistical overview of minority communities in Northern Ireland, indicating that young people constitute a large proportion of the population, with the largest single group being in the under-four age-range. Section three explores how the lives of young people from ethnic minority backgrounds diverge from those from the majority population. It discusses the opportunities for young people to interact and integrate with the majority population, the pressures upon them to conform to a set of cultural norms, issues of gender difference, and access to cultural interests. Section four considers the impact of racism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia on young people. In particular this section explores discrimination with regard to the education and youth service sectors. Section five provides a summary of the key findings, along with a series of recommendations.

Throughout the report, the author highlights the differential experiences of young people, indicating that any mainstreaming of the needs of young people must recognise that groups and individuals from minority ethnic communities are not homogenous. This is supported by the use of direct quotations from the research participants, which poignantly capture a wide range of pressures experienced by those from minority ethnic and multiple heritage backgrounds.

Conclusions: The participants noted a virtual absence of role models from their communities within schools and the youth service. They felt that education providers do not mainstream their interests, nor provide them with adequate opportunities to access their rights to a cultural identity. They were also concerned that racism perpetrated by young people appears to be condoned by adults who do not directly challenge and address such behaviour.

The report includes fifteen recommendations which seek to mainstream the rights and interests of minority ethnic children and young people. In the first instance, the need to accurately quantify and research the range of minority ethnic groups is identified, along with the need for wider anti-racist training throughout government departments. There are also specific recommendations for the Youth Work Strategy, for the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure, for educational bodies such as CCEA and the Education and Library Boards, and for organisations which work directly with children and young people. In terms of education, there are a number of specific recommendations such as the need for peripatetic posts to provide greater support to pupils, the need to explore time-tabling and holidays in terms of cultural concerns, the need for culturally specific training for teachers and youth workers, the need to incorporate anti-racist work into play and learning, and the need for further action within the youth sector to support young people to develop their own strategies for dealing with inter-cultural conflicts.

Report available from: Youth Council NI (charvey@ycni.org)

Ref : SI:19

Title : Troubled Youth? Young people, Violence and Disorder in Northern Ireland

Theme : Crime and community

Year of Publication: 2005

Author : Ulf Hansson

Publishers/Agency : Institute for Conflict Research

Pages : 108

Aim of Publication : To explore the role of young people in aspects of community disorder, including sectarian conflict, intra-community violence and city centre disorder. In particular the study aims to increase an understanding of the behaviour of young people in these contexts.

Methodology : The study was sited in North Belfast (New Lodge, Newington, Tigers Bay, Whitewell, White City, Sunningdale) and Derry/Londonerry (Fountain, Bogside, Galliagh). The study took a multi-method approach, using focus groups, interviews, survey work and analysis of documentary evidence. In total 132 young people (aged 14-17) took part in the formal focus groups, and interviews were held with youth and community workers, local residents, and representatives from education, policing and the criminal justice system.

In addition to these structured forms of data collection, the researcher used observation and participatory approaches to interface with young people *in situ*, such as attending communal events (parades, bonfires etc.) and local meetings. The decision to include these more free-flowing methods of data collection arose from the recognition that conventional research methods are limited in capturing the complexity of data about young people's lives.

The researcher notes difficulties in accessing research participants in the older age group (20+) and also the issue of 'research fatigue' among both adult and youth participants. To ensure that research participants would feel a degree of ownership over the study, workshops were held with participants to allow them to comment on the research report.

An additional aspect to this research is that it triggered a further eight smaller scale research projects in the specific research locations. These were conducted by local groups, with support from INCORE staff. These studies included a survey of 417 school pupils in Galliagh to explore experiences of violence and conflict, a youth-led research study in North Belfast to explore crime, anti-social behaviour and the role of the police, and a further study in North Belfast exploring perceptions of young women to various forms of violence. These separate research reports can be accessed at www.conflictresearch.org.uk

Overall this is a significant piece of research, with great attention paid not only to ensuring that the research methodology would elicit comprehensive and useful

knowledge about young people, but that it would also bring value to the research participants themselves.

Findings : The findings are divided into four sections : firstly an exploration of young people's views, experiences and understandings of various forms of violence in their lives. This is followed by analysis of the gendered aspect of violence, looking specifically at young women's perceptions. Thirdly, the findings look at youth provision and activities, followed by a section which explores young people's perceptions of structures of adult authority (including police, restorative justice, and paramilitaries). Interestingly, in terms of youth facilities, the study found that whilst young people complained about boredom and the lack of local facilities, there were in fact a variety of resources targeting young people within each of the areas studied. The issue appears not to be the lack of facilities, but perceptions of the accessibility and relevance of provision to different age groups and to the interests of the research participants. The most successful interventions by youth, community and arts projects appeared to be those that aim to actively involve young people from an early stage and invite them to help design and develop activities.

The study proceeds to explore the range of responses to violence and disorder by different structures of authority. In general, the study found that relations between young people and the police, and young people and paramilitaries, were based on hostility and fear.

Conclusions : What emerges from the research is the complexity of issues surrounding young people and their roles in terms of violence, community conflict and disorder. The study also noted the differential nature of crime in the various geographical areas studied, as well as often diverging attitudes by young people towards the local paramilitary presence. The report notes that young people from both communities seemed to be alienated from the police in particular, although the researcher notes that it was difficult to obtain any ideas as to how this situation might be improved from young people. Disturbingly, the study found that the combination of recurrent violence and a lack of any wider social engagement were both cause and effect of a sense of alienation among a significant number of young people. Although the study found that many young people had an optimistic view towards cross-community work, there were also suggestions that sectarian violence had been displaced from interface areas into forms of anti-social behaviour within their own communities.

The report concludes that many of the 'solutions' to violence, such as ASBOs, could lead to further alienation among some young people. The study re-affirms the importance of a strategic and multi-agency approach to issues of youth violence, involving the voluntary, community and statutory agencies.

Report can be downloaded from www.conflictresearch.org.uk following the link to Documents....Reports.

INCORE Tel: 02890742682

Ref : SI:20

Title: Still Waiting – the stories behind the statistics of young women growing up in Northern Ireland

Theme: Young women

Year of Publication: 2007

Authors: Dr S McAlister, Dr AM Gray, G Neill

Publishers/Agency: YouthAction NI

Pages : 186

Aim of Publication : To provide insights into the lives of young women (ages 16-25) in Northern Ireland through in-depth interview data. A parallel aim of the research was to develop and pilot resource materials which would reflect the key themes of the research and could be used to work with young women in informal settings.

Methodology : This was an extensive qualitative study, guided by action research methodology and underpinned by feminist principles. As such, the fieldwork evolved through ongoing consultation with young women who helped to identify the key themes of the research. The components of the methodology included: extended literature review, consultation on the format of focus groups, 7 focus groups with 48 young women (aged 13-25) further consultation to identify interview themes, in-depth interviews with 43 young women (aged 16-25) and engagement of young women in the interpretation and dissemination of the report. YANI also employed a peer researcher for two years to assist with the fieldwork. In parallel to the research process, the Gender Equality team at YouthAction and a young womens working group developed gender-based resource materials which addressed some of the key research themes.

The methodology section of the report provides a particularly useful rationale and exposition of feminist action research, and includes a detailed examination of issues such as research ethics and qualitative data collection methods.

Findings : The findings are presented as a narrative of the young womens stories, and include case studies and direct quotes from those interviewed. Each chapter includes conclusions and specific recommendations.

The report chapters and sub-sections are structured as follows :

Home, Family and Relationships : Housing, Violence and Abuse, Caring responsibilities, Experiences of being in care, Motherhood, Gender roles in families, Family life and the conflict

Education, Training and Employment : School experiences and school support, Gender and schooling, Sport and physical education, Equal treatment, Careers advice, Alternative education, Training, further and higher education experiences,

Finances, Attitudes/Aspirations to education, Employment and work, Education, training and the conflict

Leisure : Barriers to participation in youth provision, The value of youth provision, Street culture and alcohol use, The time and leisure squeeze, Leisure and the conflict

Community and Social Capital : Social networks and support, Loss of privacy and external hostility

Sex, Sexuality and Gender : Sexuality, gender and society, Sources of information on sex and sexuality, Barriers to accessing contraception and advice

Health and Well-being : Perception of own health, Emotional well-being

Politics and Participation: Views on voting and local politics, Women and politics, Young women's voices/participation

Conclusions

In their totality, the report findings suggest that young women's lives in Northern Ireland are significantly shaped, and in many instances constrained, due to their gender. The findings consistently point to a range of limited opportunities for young women and to the prevalence of structural discrimination. Many of the research informants either accepted this discrimination as inevitable, or tended to individualise their problems rather than identify the source as external. The report also highlights the inter-connectedness between problems within the family and career trajectories and overall well-being. On a more optimistic note however, the report does provide evidence of the positive contribution of some support services, of the impact of stable family and community bonding on young women's development, and on the emotional resilience of young women. The report also concludes that the cessation of conflict in Northern Ireland may enable a policy shift away from constitutional issues and onto equality issues.

For report availability and price, contact : Youth Action Northern Ireland, 14 College Square North, Belfast BT1 6AR Tel : 02890 24055 | www.youthaction.org

Copies of resource materials which were developed during the course of the research are also available from the Gender Equality Unit at Youth Action NI.

Ref : YW:01

Title: Worth their Weight in Gold (an investigation into the career paths and views of Community Youth Work graduates in Northern Ireland 1972 – 2001)

Theme: Youth work graduates in Northern Ireland - their career paths and views of the youth work service

Year of Publication: 2003

Authors: Ken Harland, Clare Harvey, Tony Morgan, Sam McCready

Publishers/Agency: Youth Council Northern Ireland

Pages: 80

Aim of Publication: To map the career paths of individuals from Northern Ireland who had graduated in youth work, and to collect qualitative data on their perspectives of the profession.

Methodology: The target population for the research was primarily individuals from NI who had graduated from youth work courses at the University of Ulster (formerly Ulster Polytechnic) but also included those workers who had trained in other colleges and universities in UK and Ireland. A postal questionnaire targeting 540 individuals was the primary means of data collection. This was supplemented by a number of focus groups across NI as well as 6 individual interviews with qualified youth workers. The questionnaire had a 49% return rate.

Critique: The findings from the research are presented in 6 separate but inter-related areas *Youth Work `career`*; *Management Issues*; *Training*; *Ideological/Paradigm shift*; *External Influences and The Future*.

1. *Youth Work `Career`* - Key points from this category include how youth workers felt that their profession was not always seen by other professionals as a serious career. Workers also commented negatively about the uncertainty created by the fixed term contract culture in the profession. For example only 47% of those working in the voluntary sector had permanent contracts. Interesting this section highlights the main reasons for people leaving the profession. These are:
i) domestic reasons (ii) lack of support from their employer (iii) unsociable hours (iv) the stress of the job
2. *Management Issues* – The first issue that arises here is the gender and religious imbalance of the NI workforce. The early demography of youth workers up to mid 1980`s was male and protestant, whilst from mid 80`s onwards the balance shifts towards Catholics and females. The age balance of the workforce is interesting in that, for example, 25% of the workforce over 50 years of age are male and only 6% female. Statistics in relation to this area are interesting and highlight some potential gaps in the workforce in the near future.

3. *Training* - This section draws attention to the lack of people taking up post qualifying training, despite options, but also highlights the appetite workers say they have for more training. This would appear to be a contradiction. There was a worrying trend from those that did take up post qualifying training that these were not always in areas directly related to youth work.
4. *Ideological/paradigm shifts* – The researchers drew attention to the lack of clarity from respondents in how they defined youth work. The findings also suggested that there had been a change in the focus of the work over the years, with an increased tendency toward youth work which is driven by government policy and finance-led. There was a distinct lack of evidence pointing to youth workers engaging in ideological debates on the ground about the purpose and practice of youth work. There was also a trend away from youth centre work and a `falling away` of young people in the older age group (i.e. 14+) using this facility.
5. *External Influences* – The study found divergent perceptions of the impact of temporary employment contracts in the youth sector. On the one hand it creates a diverse and wide ranging workforce and service, but the drawback is that there is the inevitable funding precipice ahead and an inability to plan strategically
6. *The Future* –The report advocates for a more youth-led service underpinned by a partnership between the voluntary and statutory sectors, with a more coherent and participative culture of delivery.

The Recommendations are far reaching and include comments about encouraging more movement (in employment terms) between voluntary and statutory sectors and encouraging the development of a culture of supportive management. Noticeably one recommendation encourages employers to be more pro-active in encouraging women to apply for senior management positions. This is balanced with a concern that men are not applying for training in recent years in the same way they had been in the early years of the service (i.e. 1970 – 1985)

This was a major piece of work and provides insight to the profession by tracking career paths and listening to the views of those in the profession (past and present) about its past, current state and future direction. It covers 30 years of different vintages of youth workers.

Report available from: Youth Council NI and University of Ulster (Community Youth Work team)

Ref : YW:02

Title: Symposium Report

Theme: Detached street based youth work/participation

Year of Publication: 2005

Authors /Speakers:

Graham Tiffany, Eamonn Keenan, David Gardiner, Steve Carr

Pages : 25

Aim of Publication: Report of Symposium

Methodology: The report consists of 3 main papers and an Introduction by the Department of Education. Graham Tiffany, Vice President of the National Federation of Detached Youth Workers, gave an Overview of detached street based youth work. Eamonn Keenan, Director of the Centre for Social Action, de Montfort University, spoke on Consulting Young People. David Gardiner, Chief Executive of Challenge for Youth, and Steve Carr, Area Officer at BELB, spoke on Street based youth work in Belfast City centre. The Symposium also had a session on group discussions.

Critique: The second keynote Address by Eamonn Keenan focussed on youth participation and defined consultation as follows: “*Consultation... means to take notice and act on what is being said in a two way process that means talking, listening and debating*”. He referred to Article 12 of the UNCRC, Government policy, legislation and said that consultation with young people is a key element of youth service curriculum themes. He referred to a model of approach by Sherry Arnstein, details of which are contained in the report and noted that a one way communication system, which does not involve sharing responsibilities for action, is a form of tokenism.

Eamonn Keenan gave details of a youth consultation exercise carried out in 2004 for Belfast City Council in which 320 young people’s organisations and organisations supporting youth participation for 11-20 year olds were contacted. Meetings were also held with over 80 young people. Quotes of what they said are included in the report. The young people identified some ways for agencies to engage with them; comment on what would make consultation work; and how young people want to be treated by adults and agencies.

Recommendations:

The paper lists 8 lessons learned from this consultation:

- credibility, ownership and partnership were all considered very important
- there has to be consideration of the type of model to be used
- there has to be commitment
- resource issues
- young people's rights
- policies and procedures

Report available from:

CDU (Curriculum Development Unit) Library
17 Lough Road
Antrim

Ref : YW:03

Title: Upper Shankill Area Project - Levels of engagement model – a framework for establishing detached youth work projects

Theme : Detached Youth Work

Authors: Mc Bride M., West M., Mitchell W.

Publisher/Agency : Upper Shankill Area Project

Year of Publication : 2003

Pages: 24

Aim of Publication: To provide guidelines for other communities or agencies wishing to establish an outreach or detached programme.

Methodology:

The report is based on 2 years research by the Upper Shankill Area Project Team which appointed 4 workers in March 2000.

Critique: In the introduction the report defines the difference between outreach and detached work and describes the features of detached work. Section 1 describes the “cycle of progress” which has 4 phases:- design phase 1 identifies key issues – support, staff, mapping, network, observation, compiling information; design phase 2 relates to implementation – code of conduct, making contact, confidentiality; phase 3 reflects on action and includes a diagram of the process; phase 4 is evaluation. Section 2 of the report describes ‘The Gear Stick Model’ - moving from a standing start in first gear, to picking up speed in second gear, accelerating in third gear and cruising in fourth gear. The model outlines programme methods and potential outcomes and includes a timeframe for the different stages. Examples of how the workers engaged with young people are included. The report also includes a number of useful references for further reading.

Conclusions:

The summary describes the working model:

- The cycle of progress demonstrates the grounding of policies and procedures needed to operate and develop a detached youth work project
- The gear stick model is an example of detached youth work interventions with young people and demonstrates, in theory, how detached youth work practice can be used effectively.
- The summary explains how the cycle and model are interlinked

Report available from:

Upper Shankill Area Project c/o Glencairn Primary School, Forthriver Parade
Belfast BT 13 3 UU

Ref: YW:04

Title: The Nature of Youth Work in Northern Ireland: Purpose, Contribution and Challenges

Theme: Youth work and social exclusion

Year of Publication: 2005

Authors: Ken Harland, Tony Morgan, Orla Muldoon

Publishers / Agency: University of Ulster & Queens University Belfast

Pages: 66

Aim of Publication: Investigating the role of youth work in Northern Ireland in addressing social exclusion.

Methodology: The central aim of the research process was to investigate, using qualitative analysis and appropriate research methods, the nature of youth work practice as it applies to and addresses social exclusion. The sample was chosen from 44 youth workers who were both experienced and currently practising in the field of community youth work. This sample included students enrolled on the postgraduate diploma in Community Youth Work at the University of Ulster. The sample included both professionally qualified and non-professionally qualified indigenous workers. They represented a diverse range of agencies; from a rural and urban background; gender balance; and from the statutory and voluntary sectors. Respondents were interested in exploring the multiple meanings and perspectives of youth work and were willing to discuss their own understanding of youth work practice. This narrative approach was then scrutinised for themes and patterns emerging from the transcripts. The loose exploratory hypothesis allowed the researchers to conceptualise emerging youth work theory as understood by practitioners.

Critique: This study investigated the role of youth work in Northern Ireland in addressing social exclusion. Four focus groups and two in-depth interviews were carried out with 44 practicing youth workers. Findings revealed that youth workers are dedicated and committed to working with young people they primarily perceive as marginalised, socially excluded or experiencing difficulties that mainstream youth provision struggles to deal with effectively. Findings also revealed that youth workers place huge significance on the nature of relationship building between a youth worker and a young person. While this is fundamentally important, youth workers appear to experience difficulty measuring social progression or identifying concrete outcomes from their work with young people.

The study raises important questions about 'levels' of youth work expertise, practice and training that impact upon the status of youth work as a profession. Finally, the research findings challenge the Youth Service in Northern Ireland to comprehend and clarify the implications of delivering youth work outside its perceived traditional context, for example youth work in formal settings and in areas of community tension.

Conclusions:

- Youth workers engage and build relationships with young people irrespective of their academic capability, their social position, and even their behaviour. In this capacity, youth work can be perceived as addressing social exclusion.
- The relationship between the youth worker and a young person was considered by all participants as the central plank of youth work. Unlike the relationships between young people and teachers in formal education settings, the quality of this relationship and its person-centred focus were seen as of paramount importance.
- While formal education is focused on a prescriptive curriculum, youth work is much more diverse, leaving the outcomes nebulous and difficult to measure. Although there is a danger of being too specific about measurable outcomes, youth workers experience increasing demands from funders and policy makers for youth work to produce more tangible forms of measurement and accountability.
- Unqualified youth workers should carry titles such as 'associate youth workers' that clearly denote they are not qualified to carry out certain duties unsupervised and that differentiate them from professionally qualified youth workers.
- Further research should be carried out to help clarify the role, purpose and contribution of youth work in a society emerging from a period of prolonged conflict.
- While there are important challenges presented within this study, the findings reflect a profession where its workers are passionate, dedicated and committed to young people and their issues.

Report available from:

The University of Ulster Library at Jordanstown and Magee.

Ref: YW:05

Title : ‘In their own words’ : research on the views of participants of North South school and youth exchange and cooperation

Theme: Youth Work - North/ South

Year of Publication: 2005

Author : RG Consultants

Publisher/Agency : North South Education Forum

Pages : 60

Aim of Publication : To explore the views and experiences of those who had participated in North/South exchange and cooperative activities from 1996-2003, including the personal impact of their participation.

Methodology: The sample for the study included teachers, youth workers, and young people who had been involved in North /South exchange in either a school or youth work context. The sample sought a balance of Northern and Southern participants, as well as balances of age, gender, religion and formal/non formal contexts.

In total 11 focus groups and 21 1x1 interviews were held. In terms of the focus groups with young people, the researcher incorporated a number of age-appropriate participatory exercises to encourage responses, and these methods are outlined in the report Appendices. The report also draws heavily on use of direct quotations to illustrate the range of respondents’ feedback.

Findings: The research found that the impact of participation in North/South exchange and cooperation was multi-dimensional, including the following key outcomes:

- It has a significant impact on individual personal and social development
- It provides opportunities to discover and explore religious, cultural and national similarities and differences
- It challenges stereotypes and prejudices and builds tolerance, respect and understanding
- It often results in the development of cross cultural relationships, friendships and understanding
- It can result in ongoing networking by the participants, outside of the structured programmes
- ICT is used effectively as a way of maintaining communication
- It provides added value to the curriculum, both formal and non-formal

Critique: This report was commissioned in tandem with a separate yet interlinked study (Research on the current provision of North South School and Youth Exchange and cooperative activity 2000-2004) and is an important guide to decision makers tasked with the development of future North South exchange and cooperative activities. Beyond that, however, the report makes an important contribution to capturing the thoughts and experiences of individuals who are engaged in this work – in both formal and non formal education contexts. It notes areas of methodological difficulty, for example in terms of the difficulties which respondents had in articulating impact in local communities. Whilst the report ultimately affirms the value of North South work, it does not underestimate the challenges which accompany this work, including logistical issues, resource limitations, and attitudinal barriers.

Conclusions : The researcher identified the following common themes as important to the development of future North South activities :

- A need for more sustained contact and co-operation
- A need for the effective development of a whole school or organisation approach
- A need for stronger efforts to maintain a balance between the theme/curriculum and the North/South dimension
- A need for the development of measures to generate greater impact at local community and group/school levels
- Exploration of measures to overcome structural and practical barriers to participation
- A need to address particular barriers to participation from within the Protestant community
- Support for the work of structurally cross border organisations.

The report re-affirms the value of North South exchange and cooperation, and concludes that consideration must be given to the development of more sustained and progressive approaches and opportunities to roll out the benefits and impact to a wider audience at a local community level.

Report can be downloaded from : www.ycni.org following the link to Publications, or alternatively from www.nsec.info

Ref: YW:06

Title : Research on the current provision of North South School and Youth Exchange and cooperative activity 2000-2004

Theme: Youth work – North South

Year of Publication: 2005

Author : RG Consultants

Publisher/Agency : North South Education Forum

Pages : 103

Aim of Publication : To identify the complete range of current programmes within the education sector (formal and non-formal) that provide for North/South exchange and/or cooperation.

Methodology: The first stage of this study entailed collating baseline information on each school and youth exchange and cooperation programme in Ireland, north and south, from the year 2000 until 2007 (including anticipated activity). The consultants used a specially designed database to map a sample of 686 such groups, which comprises an estimated 40% of the overall total. Statistical data was then supplemented through 1x1 interviews with a wide range of key stakeholders. The report provides comprehensive background information on a spectrum of strategic organisations and initiatives which support cross border cooperation.

Findings: The study found that North South exchange and cooperation (for the formal and non formal education sectors) is supported by thirty different programmes administered by 18 different organisations. Key organisations include the Departments of Education (north and south), major organisations set up specifically to support cross-border activity (such as Co-operation Ireland, International Fund for Ireland, Centre for Cross Border Studies, North South Education Forum), cross border partnerships involving statutory and voluntary organisations, all-island organisations (such as the National Council of YMCAs, unformed youth groups, church-based youth work) and organisations that contribute to cross-border and reconciliation work (such as St Columb's Park House, Glencree, Training Trust, Irish Peace Institute and Corrymeela).

The report also calculates the extent of cross border exchange and cooperation across the formal and non formal education sectors. It states that approximately 3000 school and youth groups were supported, involving over 55000 participants in cross-border exchange and cooperation. Around two thirds of these groups originated from the formal education sector, and one third from the non-formal.

The report also calculates the nature and scale of funding available in this area. In excess of 69M euro was invested in cross-border exchange and cooperation between 2000-2004, ie almost 14M euros per annum. It found that 80% of such funding originated from non-exchequer funds, with the International Fund for Ireland and the European Union being the two most significant external sources. However the report notes that whilst the funding environment appears reasonably stable in the short term up to 2007, the situation from 2007 onwards is less clear.

Conclusions :

This report was commissioned in tandem with a separate yet interlinked study ('In their own words' : research on the views of participants of North South school and youth exchange and cooperation) which provides qualitative insight from the participants of exchange and cooperative activities.

The report was commissioned by the North South Exchange Consortium, and makes two main recommendations specifically to guide the future direction of the Consortium. These are :

1. The existing North South Exchange Consortium should be developed further and established as a Trust;
2. The North South Exchange Trust should coordinate and manage the north south programme framework by identifying priority areas for funding, delivering programmes through tenders, developing an overarching monitoring and evaluation framework and developing a corporate plan.

Report can be downloaded from : www.ycni.org following the link to Publications, or alternatively from www.nsec.info

Ref: YW:07

Title: JEDI Audit: Community Relations and Education for Citizenship within the Northern Ireland Youth Service.

Theme:

Youth work and community relations/citizenship..

Year of Publication: 2001

Authors: Regional Development Partnership

Publishers / Agency: Joined in Equity, Diversity and Interdependence partnership (JEDI)

Pages: 106

Aim of Publication:To audit community relations and education for citizenship practice within the youth sector.

Methodology: Quantitative and qualitative research techniques were used in the form of a self- completion questionnaire in order to gauge the level of activity and views of youth organizations. Stage one involved sending thirty questionnaires as a pilot exercise to a random sample of youth practitioners. After the pilot exercise, a total of 2,589 self-completion questionnaires were sent to statutory, community and voluntary local youth work units, identified by JEDI through each of the Education and Library Boards. These questionnaires examined issues around community relations policy, CR training, meaning and importance of community relations work, meaning, purpose and training in education for citizenship. Qualitative data was then gathered through a series of key-informant interviews. Nineteen semi-structured interviews were carried out with stakeholders who impact upon the youth sector at a strategic level.

Critique:

The research aimed to examine the baseline data from youth work practitioners of all sectors and key personnel within the youth sector, as to the extent to which community relations and education for citizenship practice and training are being delivered within the youth sector. Findings revealed that a high percentage of practitioners felt that community relations (89%) and citizenship (80%) are very important aspects of youth work, and that there existed a high level of commitment to these principles across the two main communities within Northern Ireland and across differing dimensions of the youth sector. Findings also revealed lower levels of understanding of the themes of community relations (71%) and citizenship (51%) amongst practitioners. Despite this over half of the respondents had delivered community relations activities/programmes during the preceding year. Whilst this factor is encouraging what is of more concern is the high number of practitioners whom identified that they needed assistance in developing community relations

(55%) and education for citizenship (61%) work. Given this factor the need to examine the impact of current training in these disciplines is important.

This study raises important questions about the delivery of community relations and education for citizenship programmes within the youth service. Practitioners require additional training, resources, funding and clear policies to assist them, but most importantly unambiguous guidelines in measuring the true impact of these programmes with the young people involved in such programmes.

Conclusions:

- Youth workers identify that community relations and education for citizenship activities are a very important part of their youth programmes and that they are contributing to peace and reconciliation.
- A large number of youth work practitioners however still appear unclear about the full meanings of community relations and citizenship, and the importance and delivery of work in these areas.
- Some workers felt that that community relations and education for citizenship work is frequently superficial, does not address contentious issues, is often of questionable and inconsistent in quality, and is sometimes counterproductive.
- Practitioners are not being equipped with proper training to deal confidently with community relations and education for citizenship issues. There is a clear need to investigate the content of community relations training.
- Over half of practitioners continue to have difficulties in measuring the true impact of their community relations work. Barriers to embedding EDI into the work of the youth service may be symptomatic of wider issues of concern in terms of policy, resources and co-ordination.
- There should be greater co-ordination and collaboration in addressing issues 'on the ground' between practitioners.
- JEDI should be the driving force in developing a strategy for embedding the EDI principles into the structures, policy and practice of youth work in NI.
- The content of current training in community relations and education for citizenship needs to be examined so as to ensure appropriate levels of quantity and quality involving accreditation at all levels.
- Additional research with young people involved within the youth sector, and the training needs of practitioners are important to shape future strategic developments and action.

Report available from: JEDI. Forestview, Purdy's Lane, Belfast Tel 02890643882

Ref: YW:08

Title: Acting in Good Faith: Churches, Change and Regeneration

Theme: Church Community Youth Work

Year of Publication: 2004

Authors: Bacon, D., Groves, K., McDowell, E., and Robinson, J.

Publishers / Agency: Churches Community Work Alliance

Pages: 45

Aim of Publication: The report aims to describe and critically discuss some of the faith based community development work that is currently being undertaken in both urban and rural areas across Northern Ireland. The intention is to identify some of the key themes, activities and day-to-day practices that make church related community development distinctive.

Methodology: The report profiles church related community development in action throughout Northern Ireland. Examples include:

- Mornington Community Project, South Belfast offering employment training and provision of work experience for young people in the lower Ormeau Road.
- St. Peter's Cathedral, West Belfast, offering a day centre, six beds and a nightly outreach programme for homeless people.
- Fortwilliam Presbyterian Church, Belfast dealing with community transitions from familiar and traditional ways to changes in the patterns of home, work and social life as presented in a community audit.
- The Link Family and Community Centre, Newtownards promoting equal opportunity and community relations through interdenominational projects.
- Derry and Raphoe Action actively supports and encourages the engagement of marginalised protestant people in counties Tyrone, Derry and Donegal.
- The Society of St. Vincent de Paul active since 1844 has been engaged in service provision of emergency need.
- The Oasis centre, East Belfast operates a range of projects aimed at providing opportunities for the long term unemployed and supporting and strengthening the life of local families

Critique: The relevance of this publication is not simply to recognise the “good work” of the churches and faith communities but also to pose some key questions for the churches at this particular point of time.

Some of the questions are:

- In the changing structures of governance in Northern Ireland does church-related community development have a distinctive contribution to offer?
- How prepared is church-related community development for this challenge?
- In the emerging patterns of public service provision what does the church have to offer?
- Is the contribution of church-related community development well understood and supported by the churches, church structures and instruments?
- How will different Christian groups and interfaith groups work with each other?
- How can learning and development for community development work best be structured and resourced in the churches and faith communities?

Conclusions:

The case studies presented in this publication suggest that churches are more involved in responding to social needs than is sometimes assumed. They illustrate different kinds of community provision and community development work. They give some insight into the orientation of churches toward mission and Christian obligation. The case studies provide evidence of people ‘acting in good faith’ and involved in a variety of community based activities. The case studies are informative and provide a signpost for those who are searching for a distinctive role for their churches and faith witness. The intention of this publication is to illustrate the potential of church-related community development in responses to communities needs issues and concerns.

Report available from:

Churches Community Work Alliance
St. Chads College
North Bailey
Durham
DH1 3RH
Tel: +44 (0) 191 334 3346

Price £5.

Ref: YW:09

Title : Windows on Practice

Theme : Illustration of Equity Diversity and Interdependence in five different youth work settings through the use of in-depth case studies.

Year of Publication : 2003

Authors: Andrea Duncan and Joanne Sweeney, in collaboration with staff, volunteers and participants of the youth groups involved.

Publisher / Agency : Joined in Equity, Diversity and Interdependence partnership (JEDI)

Pages : 76

Aim of publication: Using a case study approach, to document five examples of equity, diversity and interdependence within youth work contexts.

Methodology: The case study approach was facilitated by two youth workers acting as ‘critical friends’ who supported youth groups to critically reflect on their own youth work setting. As the title suggests, the publication aims to provide a snapshot of practice, which involved both internal and external exploration of EDI within five organisations. The cases studies were : i) St Teresa’s Youth centre in Belfast ii) the Church of the Nativity guide unit iii) Carrickfergus Mencap club iv) the Xtreme FM radio project in Craigavon, and v) the Education for Peace programme developed by YouthLink.

The text of the case studies reflects different ‘voices’ – these being the staff and volunteers of each group, the critical friends, and the young participants.

Critique: Each case study is unique in terms of narrating the process of youth work in each context and in the learning points attached to the programmes. Although primarily a guide to good practice, this publication also offers guidance on the process of critical reflection in youth work which can be replicated in other contexts. In this respect, the Appendices are useful in providing examples of audit tools used, the fundamentals of a reflective action research proposal, methods of recording critical reflection, and evaluation tools to explore equity, diversity and interdependence within different youth work settings.

Report available from : JEDI c/o Youth Council NI, Foretview, Purdy’s Lane, BT8 7AR Tel : 02890643882 or www.jedini.org.uk

Ref : YW:10

Title: Youth work in Schools – an investigation of youth work, as a process of informal learning, in formal settings

Theme: Youth work in schools

Year of Publication: 2007

Authors: Dr T Morgan, P Morgan, B O’Kelly

Publishers/Agency: University of Ulster, Jordanstown

Funder : Department of Education

Pages : 210

Aim of Publication : To investigate the application of youth work methodology and the involvement of youth workers within the context of post primary schools in Northern Ireland.

Methodology : The research objectives were :

- To seek clarification on the outcomes of youth work in schools, Youthreach and informal education settings
- To ascertain if the profiling web could be developed and integrated within school based work in Northern Ireland
- To assess the delivery mechanism of youth work in schools
- To investigate the ecology of the learning environments in terms of youth work approaches to learning in schools
- To understand the curriculum around youth work for marginalised/disaffected/disengaged young people in formal settings

The study used qualitative methods to collect data from a range of key informants. These included : in-depth interviews with 9 teachers familiar with informal or youth work practices in schools; interviews with 8 youth workers based in schools and 11 informal educators working in Youthreach ; 5 focus groups of young people ; and a questionnaire completed by 117 school pupils. The researchers also conducted overt observation within the school settings, as well as a study of all related documentary evidence. Sampled schools were based around Northern Ireland, and were all secondary schools.

The study also entailed an extensive literature review, incorporating theories on youth work, formal education, and the measurement of outcomes of youth work.

Findings : In the context of extended schools and the drive towards a learner-led curriculum, the report found that youth workers are well placed as effective partners within formal education. Youth work approaches were found to be effective in re-engaging pupils who had, for various reasons, become marginalised or disaffected from the formal education processes. The study also found that schools principals and teachers generally responded positively to the interventions of youth

workers, as did school pupils. However pupils were not always able to differentiate between youth workers and other 'visiting adults' within their schools, and the report suggests that some informal educational inputs may not need to be carried out by youth workers. Hence the report distinguishes between the role of actual youth workers within schools, and the application of youth work methodologies by other professions within schools.

The report notes that a lack of strategic planning and /or short-term funding has led most youth work providers to offer short-term programmes, and that this is a limitation to the potential of youth work within schools. The findings also note a number of practical and administrative barriers which reflect the differences in the ethos and delivery of formal and informal education. In spite of these, the findings are overwhelmingly positive in terms of the contribution made by youth work approaches in maximising the learning potential of pupils.

Based on the findings, the report identifies a number of evolving models of practice. These include Youth workers coming 'into' the school model; school instigated model; informal intervention model ; youth centre 'in' the school model; Youthreach model ; supplementary model ; complementary model ; alternative model' localised contextual model' funding led model; and client led model.

Conclusions: The following points are made in the report's Conclusions :

- The agenda followed by most youth workers in schools is one of personal and social development - however further work needs to be done in terms of identifying and measuring the outcomes from this approach.
- The report indicates that there is no singular delivery mechanism, but that youth workers use the groupwork process and traditional youth work principles as a vehicle for their programmes.
- The school based environment however did, at times, compromise these youth work principles, and the report notes that a number of practical measures should be taken to ensure that youth work in schools maximises its potential.
- The report also concludes that further debate is needed on the potential for a curriculum for youth work in schools.
- The report also refers to the Youthreach programme which operates in the Republic of Ireland, and suggests that the profiling web could be adapted for use in Northern Ireland in the future.

The report contains a number of recommendations for youth workers and schools, and for training and future research.

Availability:

Report available from:

The University of Ulster at Jordanstown : Community Youth Work Department

Ref : YW:11

Title: Faith based youth work in Northern Ireland

Theme: Faith based

Year of Publication: 2006

Authors: Macauley Associates

Publishers/Agency: YouthNet Faith Based Interest Group

Pages : 60

Aim of Publication : To scope the range of faith based youth work provision within the membership of the YouthNet Faith Based Interest Group and its contribution to social capital in Northern Ireland. A further aim of the research was to scope faith based youth work within the wider youth services in Northern Ireland.

Methodology : Primary data collection included eleven semi structured individual and group interviews with a sample of relevant organisations, as well as a series of telephone consultations with groups beyond the membership of the YouthNet Faith Based Interest Group. A focus group was held with seven youth workers, and two focus groups were held with a sample of 15 young people who had accessed faith based youth work. Interpretation of the findings was discussed at a workshop with the steering group of the project. Secondary data collection entailed a statistical analysis of data held by the Youth Council NI's 'geomapping project' which relates to all registered youth service provision.

Findings : Statistical data relating to all registered youth provision in Northern Ireland found a significant majority of youth groups are linked to churches. In 2005 there were 1,405 registered faith / church based groups in NI with a total of 98,902 members, 16,457 volunteer leaders and 160 full time youth workers. In total, 68% of all youth groups in Northern Ireland in 2005 were faith / church based, and 58% of the membership of youth groups were participants in faith /church based groups. The statistical analysis also outlines the significant proportions of youth workers and volunteers working with faith/church based youth work provision, and the particularly close connection between many uniformed youth groups and their location in church settings. However the report notes that the terms 'church based' and 'faith based' are not synonymous, and that some uniformed groups such as Girl Guiding Ulster and Scouts NI do not define their youth work as 'faith based' although provision may be delivered at church halls. The report notes that there is currently no form of data collection to audit all faith based youth work, as many groups are not registered with Education and Library Boards and hence do not contribute to centralised data collection.

The report provides qualitative data in terms of the nature of youth work provided by the member groups of the YouthNet Faith Based Interest Group. The members of the group are Baptist youth, Boys Brigade, Catholic Guides of Ireland, Church of Ireland Youth Department, Frontier Youth Trust, Girls Brigade, Methodist Department of Youth and Children's Work, Presbyterian Church Youth Department, Youthcom, Youth Initiatives, Youthlink, and YMCA.

The findings which relate to provision by these groups include :

- The main outcomes for individual participants are personal and social development, community participation, faith development, local and global citizenship, international service and new practical skills.
- There are good models of faith based youth work targeting social need, and church based youth work has the potential to target social need in a more strategic way
- There is evidence of the contribution of faith based youth groups to social capital within communities, including citizenship, leadership development, community participation, networks, volunteering, trust and social cohesion.
- There is evidence of faith based youth work bridging the sectarian divide, with good practice in cross community integration and co-operation.
- There is equality of access for all young people to participate in groups represented in the Faith Based Interest Group.
- Barriers to young people accessing this provision include 'negative perception' and 'low profile'

Conclusions

Although the report has some limitations due to the absence of comprehensive statistics on 'faith based' provision, the report has indicated the substantial contribution of faith based youth work in Northern Ireland. The qualitative dimension of the report also suggests how faith based youth work contributes to the concept of social capital, to the equality agenda, to targeting social need, and to the Shared Future policy.

The report concludes with ten recommendations for the Faith Based Interest Group. This includes the need to raise awareness of the outcomes of this provision, to counteract negative perceptions of the work held by young people, to increase recognition of the work among a range of partners, to liaise with the Equality Commission in respect of perceived unfair treatment of faith based groups in relation to Section 75, to ensure mechanisms are in place to collect more comprehensive statistics, to generate discussion on segregated provision, to develop a more strategic focus on Targeting Social Need, to stimulate debate within the wider youth service on approaches to spiritual development, and to pursue specific training qualifications for full time faith based youth workers.

Availability:

Report and summary are available from www.youthnetni.org.uk

Ref : YW:12

Title: A scoping study on young people volunteering within the youth sector

Theme: Young people as volunteers in the youth sector

Year of Publication: 2006

Authors: Volunteer Development Agency

Publishers/Agency: Volunteering and Youth volunteering sub group of the Youth Service Liaison Forum

Pages : 69

Aim of Publication : To audit and study young people aged 14-25 involved as volunteers in the youth sector.

Methodology : Both qualitative and quantitative data was sought from a variety of informants as follows :

- A postal questionnaire to all youth service groups which yielded 209 responses (10% response rate)
- A postal questionnaire to all Volunteer Centres which yielded 9 responses (60% response rate)
- Four organisational focus groups, involving 31 respondents
- One Volunteer Centre focus group, involving 10 of the 15 Volunteer Centres
- A total of 43 responses from young people, including 17 young people involved in focus groups, and a further 26 who completed questionnaires.

Findings : The low response rate of 209 from the population-sample of 2165 youth service organisations meant that the research could not provide a definitive number of young volunteers in the youth service, and the results from this part of the study may not necessarily be representative of the youth sector overall. The findings showed that each responding youth group had an average of 15 young volunteers per organisation. The most popular volunteer role for young people was as youth club leader/helper (83%). The majority of young volunteers were in the 16-18 age range, but there were also significant numbers in the 19-21 and 22-25 age ranges. 62% of the young volunteers were female, 32% male, and 6% not specified. Organisations responding to the survey perceived that significant barriers to involving young volunteers appeared to be lack of spare time, lack of confidence, the same young people being asked too frequently, lack of awareness of benefits, never being asked, negative peer pressure, and lack of information. The organisations had a range of support needs in relation to volunteer management and child protection.

Data collected from the Volunteer Centres showed that there was a wide range of roles available to young people through Volunteer Centres, the most popular being

youth club leader/helper and summer schemes. The majority of young volunteers registered with Volunteer Centres were female (69%) and most were in the 16-18 age range. Volunteer Centres felt that a lack of awareness of the benefits of volunteering was a key barrier to involving young people as volunteers.

Focus group data highlighted the benefits of young people as volunteers, both to young people themselves and to the vitality they bring to the work. However some organisations felt that young people have a negative image of volunteering, and within some areas there was also a perceived lack of suitable volunteering opportunities for young people.

Data from young people – collected through questionnaires and focus groups – found that 60% had a very good understanding of volunteering. Failure to get involved in volunteering was linked to negative peer perceptions (47%) as well as a lack of information (26%) and insufficient time (23%). Young people emphasised that the option of volunteering should be promoted through young people themselves.

Conclusions: The report provides a discussion on the findings, and their implications for young volunteers, organisations, the youth service, and government/society. The report notes the changing youth service landscape and the impact of the Youth Work Strategy and the Review of Public Administration. In this environment, the report emphasises the need to maintain and improve levels of support to young volunteers.

The report concludes with a number of action-based recommendations, including :

- Improvements to the management of volunteering processes, to enhance the experience for young people. This includes a support framework, training, youth-led volunteering, recognition and application of the Investing in Volunteers Framework.
- Improvements to the levels and processes of volunteer recruitment. This includes development on an appropriate value base, provision of flexible volunteering opportunities, promotion which involves young volunteers and clarity of information.
- Improvements to the support for youth service organisations. This includes resource implications for sustaining volunteer involvement, a plan to support the role of young people in governance, and support mechanisms for youth sector organisations.
- Recognition from government and society of the contribution made by young volunteers. This includes a volunteering promotion strategy, regular data collection on young volunteers, and a more proactive approach to enabling access to volunteering through the school environment.

Availability: For information on availability contact

Volunteer Development Agency, 4th floor, 58 Howard Street, Belfast BT 1 6PG
Tel : 02890 236100

www.volunteering-ni.org

Ref: PN:01

Title: Beyond the Surface

Theme: Young peoples` responses to the draft Youth Work Strategy

Year of Publication: 2004

Author: Louisa Ward

Publishers/Agency: Northern Ireland Youth Forum

Pages: 35

Aim of Publication: To ascertain the responses of young people to the themes outlined in the draft Youth Work Strategy

Methodology: The main aim was to investigate the views of young people on the Draft Youth Work Strategy (2005-08). Data was collected through focus groups and self completed questionnaires. The participants in the research were aged between 12-25 and came from a broad spectrum from within this age band i.e. gender, religious affiliation and political opinion, rural/urban, disability, race, ethnicity and sexual preference. The young people were contacted with the co-operation of the five Education and Library boards. As well as the co-operation from the boards, regional and voluntary organisations assisted with the recruitment of participants. In total 106 young people were involved in the consultation. Focus groups were seen to be the most effective approach to involving young people and each group was co-facilitated by 2 professionally qualified workers who had research experience. Each focus lasted approximately 2 hours.

Critique: The four main themes of the draft Youth Work Strategy provided the framework for discussion.

The Findings

- *Delivering Effective, Inclusive Youth Work* – Respondents felt that accessibility to youth provision should not be determined by the behaviour of the young person, but should instead reflect equality of access. Participants suggested there should be more youth workers going into schools and explaining their work to young people and teachers.
- *Participation* – Most young people talked of positive experiences in using youth services. They encouraged the youth service to be consistent in its approach to all young people and be more up to date, relevant and accurate with their information. Participants also felt it was important to consult them on *all* matters and not just the ones adults felt they needed to consult young people on. A need was identified for more youth workers and detached youth workers to target those not currently involved with the service.

- *Resources and Funding* – Participants felt that training needed to be consistent and accessible to all youth work staff including volunteers. It was expressed that young people in certain areas appeared to have less services than others and they felt strongly discriminated against. When asked about funding the answer was virtually unanimous with all groups believing more money was needed from government sources
- *Implementation* – Findings revealed that most young people were resolute that they should not only have a role in shaping the vision and future of the service as they were the key stakeholders but they wanted to be involved on all aspects of the youth work strategy. They gave a clear message to current youth organisations about working together with young people to help meet the aims of the strategy.

It was clear from the research that young people found it hard to define *youth work*. It was felt that the final strategy should be easy to read, de-jargonised and with bureaucratic terms avoided.

Conclusions:

- Young people want and deserve a strategy and youth service that is *inclusive, innovative and meaningful*
- The Youth Service must give consideration to the opinions and take action on the recommendations noted in this report and to ensure that young people are central in any final youth work strategy that emerges. The strategy has to reflect their needs.
- Organisations and agencies in the youth service must work in partnership to deliver a strategy that maintains a good working relationship with other education providers and other relevant agencies and sectors outside the youth service
- The NI Youth Forum is committed to ensuring young people will continue to be consulted in all aspects of the youth service from design through to evaluation

Report available from: Northern Ireland Youth Forum

Ref: PN:02

Title: Seen and Heard: consulting and involving young people within the public sector

Theme: Youth Participation

Year of Publication:2001

Author: Clare Harvey [case studies by Pat Henry and Vernon Ringland]

Publishers: Youth Council for Northern Ireland

Pages: 66

Aim of Publication: To assist public sector agencies to plan for young people's involvement in a strategic manner and a way in which organisational and cultural change can be anticipated and managed.

Methodology: The report presents a theoretical and organisational framework to support public sector bodies to involve young people in decision making, through both short-term consultative events and more sustained involvement in decision making structures.

The report also draws upon case study research from 13 examples of young people's involvement in decision making processes from both the public sector and the youth work sector in Northern Ireland. The case study approach entailed interviews with lead professionals in each context, and separate focus groups with the young people involved. These interviews and focus groups were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed and analysed thematically.

Critique: The report is made up of 4 sections:

- 'Principles and structures' describes types of approaches
- 'Getting started' explains the use of existing structures and provides a planning tool for an organisational audit
- Examples of practice from Northern Ireland
- A list of Useful Publications

The report acknowledges that there is a considerable amount of literature and expertise already available and focuses on what has been learnt as a result of the many initiatives which currently exist. It recognises that there is no single model to suit all agencies or young people as the needs of groups and communities are often very disparate. The report recommends that organisations develop a structure and procedures suitable for their own young people to ensure that they become actively engaged and that their voice is heard.

The Principles and Structures section refers to Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which relates to young people's right to be consulted about decisions affecting them. It also cites local legislation which places statutory duties on

organisations. It refers to evidence that policy and procedures which do not take young people's views into account can lead to ineffective services and alienation. This section also notes that any youth participation initiative must be meaningful and not tokenistic.

The second section deals with the practice of setting up a youth participation initiative and provides advice and guidance on how to develop a structure suitable for the organisation. The case studies in section 3 provide examples of both short term consultative events and long term initiatives. Each of these profiles gives information on the numbers of young people involved, how events/ groups developed and records outcomes or key considerations. The range of examples included illustrates the diversity of youth participation structures available in Northern Ireland and how each has emerged to meet the needs of the young people and their communities.

The Publications section provide references for groups wishing to set up a youth participation project or further develop an existing initiative.

Conclusions:

Each of the case studies has shared learning from its own experience. These include useful tips for other agencies such as providing transport or reimbursing travel costs; having a clearly identified co-ordinator who has a defined role; ensuring the group is representative of young people in the area and providing training and good information to participants. From these comments it is possible to determine several key features which should be considered at the outset of setting up a youth participation group.

Report available from:

Youth Council for Northern Ireland
Forestview
Purdy's Lane
Belfast
BT8 7AR

Tel: 02890 643882

Ref: PN:03

Title : Young Peoples Views on the Northern Ireland suicide prevention strategy and action plan 2006-2011

Theme : Social inclusion

Year of Publication : 2006

Author : Angela Teggart

Publishers/Agency : Young Citizens in Action (Voluntary Service Belfast)

Pages : 60

Funders : Health Promotion Agency, Youth Council for Northern Ireland, VSB

Aim of publication: The Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety established a multi-sectoral Taskforce in 2005 to develop a Suicide Prevention Strategy for Northern Ireland. Young Citizens in Action were tasked with consulting young people on the draft strategy, and this publication reflects feedback from 83 young people.

Methodology: The study combined quantitative methodology (self-completion questionnaires which had been piloted with a group of young people) along with qualitative focus group sessions with young people. The study was concerned to ensure representation from young people around Northern Ireland, and to include a mix of social characteristics (eg. male/female etc). The focus of the study followed the specific questions from of draft suicide prevention strategy consultation document.

Critique : The study not only sought feedback on the draft strategy, but also questioned young people on the consultation process itself. The responses include suggestions for ways to ensure policy consultation is more inclusive to young people in the future. It was suggested that the consultation process (held over early summer) was ill-timed in terms of young people due to:

- Exam period
- A lot of youth groups had closed for the summer
- Young people are 'winding down' and reluctant to address such 'weighty issues'

In addition, young people found that the methodology of the consultation and the sequencing of the strategy development could have been improved:

- Too short a timescale for the consultation process
- Need to ensure consultation is inclusive of illiterate young people

- Questionnaire format can be too 'old school' and boring and should instead be in a more young person friendly format
- There was a perception that young people's inclusion in the consultation process had been added as an afterthought, and that young people's voices should have been included from the start of the strategy development process

Conclusions:

The study found that young people were generally supportive of the aims and proposed actions of the draft suicide prevention strategy, with some reservations about unrealistic timescales, lack of funding to support the strategy, the need for preventative measures, and the need for non stigmatising support services which are accessible to young people.

Report available from:

Young Citizens in Action, Voluntary Service Belfast

Ref: PN:04

Title : ‘It’s always in the back of your mind’ Needs assessment of marginalised young people aged 13-25 years throughout Newry and Armagh

Theme : Participation

Year of Publication : 2006

Author : Youth Action NI

Publishers/Agency : Youth Action NI

Pages : 205

Funders : EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, through YESIP

Aim of publication: The aim was to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment of young people aged 13-25 in the Newry and Mourne constituencies.

Methodology: The study was conducted in collaboration with the Community Youth Work Department of University of Ulster, Jordanstown, and involved the development of an action research framework. Central to this was the establishment of a young person’s peer research group to assist with data collection, analysis and dissemination of findings. The research took place over 2004 and 2005 and comprised interviews, focus groups, assessment of existing research, and a mapping of models of practice.

Critique : This is a lengthy report, structured as follows :

Chapter 1 – an outline of the Newry and Armagh area, including statistical information and case studies of young people. An outline of the Newry and Armagh Area Based strategy

Chapter 2 –A rationale for the development of strategic partnerships in the youth work context, and analysis of the implications of these for the voluntary sector.

Chapter 3 – A theoretical framework for the adoption of action research and peer research models, followed by an outline of the methodologies used in the needs assessment study

Chapter 4 – An overview of the research findings, supplemented by models of practice in each of the themed areas (Peace-building’ ‘Citizenship and Participation’ ‘ Education’ ‘ Youth Provision’ ‘Employability’ ‘ Marginalisation and under-supported groups’ and ‘Partnership working’)

Chapter 5 – Conclusions, Action steps and Recommendations (incorporating models of practice)

Conclusions:

There are around 50 recommendations, grouped under the headings 'Peace-building' 'Citizenship and Participation' ' Education' ' Youth Provision' 'Employability' ' Marginalisation and under-supported groups' and 'Partnership working'.

The key issues for sustainable and inclusive youth work practice are identified as :

- Opportunities for young people to receive accreditation, but equally opportunities to simply take part
- Better communication about what opportunities are available for young people
- Accessibility of services, particularly for rural and marginalised young people
- The need for feedback to young people following consultation
- Improvements needed to opportunities for participation in decision making
- Local services should cater for holistic needs of young people
- Young people are often unaware of legal rights
- Further investment required in initiatives which train young people as young leaders, peer educators and mentors

Whilst these recommendations are specific to the Newry and Mourne constituencies, the study does offer a model for the development of needs assessments within localities.

The study is also a significant exemplar of the development of peer research models for specific geographical areas, and offers recommendations in relation to the peer research model, as follows:

- Action research needs to be seen and understood as integral to any youth work process
- Develop a resource model and training pack for the youth sector on peer research using practical examples and broad guidelines
- Broadened exposure and growth in activity of peer research. It is one of the most important types of youth work because it allows a forum for opinions to be discussed within a system capable of change
- Meetings which enable adults and young people to discuss and share practice, resources, methods in addressing problems and solutions to action research and peer research issues
- Peer research within the youth work context provides a vehicle for young people's involvement in public decision making in Northern Ireland

Report available from:

Youth Action Northern Ireland

Ref: PN:05

Title: Turning up the sound : the feasibility of establishing a consortium to support the involvement of children and young people in public decision-making processes

Theme: Involving children and young people in public decision making processes

Year of Publication: 2005

Authors: Paula Keenan and Clare Harvey

Publishers/Agency : Northern Ireland Youth Forum, Save the Children NI, YouthNet and Youth Council for Northern Ireland

Pages : 48

Aim of Publication: To explore the feasibility of establishing a consortium which would support the involvement of children and young people's decision making into the development of policy and services.

Methodology: The feasibility study focused on the participation of children and young people in decision-making processes relating to policy making and service development within statutory agencies and departments of the Northern Ireland Assembly. Desk research and internet searches were performed to provide an overview of existing resources and material.

The primary method of data collection comprised of structured interviews and focus groups with senior personnel from 30 voluntary sector groups, managers from 14 statutory and public sector organisations and with 10 senior officials at Departmental level. In order to elicit the views of young people, a reference group of 9 young people was established. These participants advised the researchers on the most appropriate questions for interviewing young people. As a result of this process, in-depth interviews and focus groups were conducted with a further 54 young people.

Critique: The feasibility study was designed, firstly, to assess the nature of existing and future participation needs, from the perspectives of young people and statutory/departmental groups. Secondly, it explored whether the appropriate skills and support exist within the ranks of child/youth providers to fulfil this need.

As a general overview, the study found overwhelming support for the development of a strategic and collaborative approach to extend the involvement of young people in public decision making in Northern Ireland. The need for this was affirmed by the potential members of a future consortium primarily voluntary sector groups, by potential service recipients (statutory and departmental bodies) and most importantly, by young people.

There were, however, several important caveats to this support; from young people, the view that participation would have to be meaningful and impacting; from NGO groups there were concerns about the effective operationalisation of such an endeavour; and concerns from statutory bodies and departmental groups centred on ensuring senior level commitment. Many respondents voiced concerns about current and future constraints in terms of adequacy of resources.

Conclusion

It is clear from the feasibility study that there are many examples of good practice in relation to the statutory sector consulting with children and young people, most often with the support of external youth agencies. However, a situation persists whereby many statutory authorities do not have the resources, operational capacity or an effective mechanism to fully support the engagement of young people in policy making and service development.

The study proposes the establishment of a Participation Consortium which would be piloted and thoroughly evaluated over a two year period. The focus of this consortium should be to:

- Offer an access point for statutory bodies who wish to consult young people.
- Act as a co-ordination point for the expertise of child and youth providers.
- Offer training and consultancy support.
- Develop and promote standards of good practice in relation to child and youth participation.
- Develop a bank of resource materials in relation to child and youth participation.

Report available from:

The Youth Council for Northern Ireland
Forestview
Purdy's Lane
Belfast BT8 7AR

Tel : 028 90643882

Ref: PN:06

Title: Regional Consultation with young people to assist in the planning and delivery of the NICCY Conference on self harm and suicide among young people.

Theme: Youth participation

Year: 2004

Publisher / agency: Opportunity Youth

Pages: 15

Aim of publication: Report of a regional consultation in preparation for a conference to address the issue of self harm and suicide.

Methodology: A questionnaire was distributed in October 2004 to 595 young people aged 16 to 18 years. This contained questions aimed at identifying issues which young people worried most about and were the same questions used in the previous Design for Living Research (2001). This allowed a comparison to be made over the 3 year period. The questionnaire is included in the report.

38 focus groups, producing 334 responses, were facilitated through peer educators. The questions used in these groups were more specific and also asked participants for their views in shaping the Conference.

Critique: The findings of the consultation make up the rest of the report and are presented in table / graph form. The research carried out in 2001 and 2004 identified the same 5 main concerns:-

- Money
- Family problems
- Choosing / starting a job/course
- Friends
- Schoolwork/exams

The ranking differed in the surveys but money issues ranked number 1 in both surveys – from an unprompted list of 18 responses. Money issues also topped the prompted responses from a list of 32 issues.

In response to the question why respondents thought young people resorted to self harm / suicide the top three answers, from a list of 21 given, were:

- mental health related 16%
- bullying /crime related 13.5%
- sexual issues including rape / abuse 12%

A broad range of support services was identified (31) with the top two categories being medicine / allied professions (10%) and teachers/ youth workers and related posts (10%).

The remaining questions related to the format of, and involvement in, the conference.

The report is available from: Opportunity Youth
31 Hill Street
Belfast

Ref : PN:07

Title: Youth participation in the democratic process

Theme: Youth engagement in electoral processes

Year of Publication: 2006

Authors: Institute for Conflict Research and Pricewaterhouse Coopers

Publishers/Agency: The Electoral Commission

Pages : 79

Aim of Publication : To study young people's attitudes and behaviour to electoral and democratic processes in Northern Ireland (age group 16-24).

Methodology : The study took the form of a three stage process, with the results of each stage informing the next. Stage 1 was co-ordinated by the Electoral Commission, with facilitation from ICR and Thinkbucket (an arts based project). Stage 2 was co-ordinated by ICR, whilst Stage 3 was conducted by Pricewaterhouse Coopers.

Stage 1 entailed a residential for 16-17 year olds, and a residential for 18-24 year olds. In total 30 young people were involved in Stage 1. Discussion on the democratic process was encouraged through the use of participative and creative activities.

Stage 2 entailed 16 focus groups around Northern Ireland involving a total of 80 young people. The aim of the focus groups was to assess views on politics, elections, voting and democracy, and to help to design Stage 3.

Stage 3 comprised street surveys in all constituencies around Northern Ireland, which collected data from 1113 respondents aged 16-24.

Findings : The qualitative stages of the study found that many young people feel negatively about both politics and politicians, with 16-17 year olds more likely to express these views. Many felt that politics in Northern Ireland focused on religion and political division to the detriment of other mainstream social issues. This was reinforced by the survey data which found that half of the respondents associated politics with the 'peace process'.

The focus groups found that most young people felt frustrated by what they saw as an unwillingness to listen and respond to the views of young people. Nevertheless, the survey found that almost half of respondents believed that politics was relevant to their life.

The majority of residential and focus group participants were aware of electoral processes such as the need to register to vote. The discussions revealed a range of influences and pressures shaping how young people voted, or intended to vote once they reached 18, with consensus that community and family voting patterns were a strong influence on this decision.

Of those respondents to the survey who were eligible to vote, the main reason given for not voting was because they were not registered or hadn't received a poll card.

Almost 40% of those who had not voted said they would be encouraged to vote if politicians focused on issues of interest to them, while 32% said they would vote if they believed it would make a difference. Some practical changes to the voting process were suggested, such as 24 hour polling stations, text voting and voting at weekends.

The participants in the residential and focus groups were asked what would encourage them to become involved in the democratic process. A common response was that politicians have to 'start to engage with young people and go where they are'. There was also a consensus that more education for young people on politics, elections and voting was required through various outlets, including schools and youth groups.

Conclusions: Whilst the report may not have immediate ramifications for the youth work sector, the potential contribution of both formal and informal education is highlighted throughout the report as a vehicle to engage young people in democratic processes. The report does not make specific recommendations, but clearly the findings will inform the future work of the Electoral Commission in terms of encouraging the youth vote.

The report is informative not only for its findings, but also for the literature review on young people and democracy, which includes examples of initiatives adopted in other countries to find ways to encourage young people to participate in the electoral process.

Availability : Full report and summary can be downloaded from www.electoralcommission.org.uk

Ref : PN:08

Title: Refer 2 Us – safe and happy consultation report

Theme: Report of peer research with young people

Year of Publication: 2006

Authors: Barnardo's Northern Ireland

Publishers/Agency: Barnardo's Northern Ireland

Pages : 17

Aim of Publication : To conduct peer research with children and young people who use Barnardo's services, with a focus on the question 'What do children and young people in Northern Ireland need to feel safe and happy?'

Methodology : 'Refer 2 Us' is a group of 10 young people aged 15-21 who have been involved with a Barnardo's service at some point. This group conducted a peer consultation with a further 150 children and young people who had been users of Barnardo's services. The first stage of the methodology entailed training the Refer 2 Us group in research processes (eg questionnaire design, interview skills, data analysis etc). The Refer 2 Us group conducted data collection over a five week period in 2005, and the study involved almost 150 children and young people who had used Barnardo's services. Different research methodologies were used to reflect the variable age ranges of respondents (from children of three to young adults in their early twenties). The main method was focus groups, but there were also one-to-one interviews and a small number of questionnaires. The Refer 2 Us group were also responsible for the analysis of the data. As such, this is an example of peer-led research, with young people in control of the project from initial research design to dissemination.

Findings : The findings are presented thematically to reflect the responses to the question 'What do children and young people in Northern Ireland need to feel safe and happy?'. The responses were :

- Emotional, physical and mental health : Issues raised included young mothers who felt they were isolated from former friends after giving birth, and disabled children and young people who cited examples of discrimination and bullying.
- Protection from harm : Many respondents felt unsafe in their own communities, with issues raised such as the availability of drugs, alcohol related violence, knife crime, internet exploitation, and bullying. There was no obvious urban/rural split, with young people from rural areas expressing as much fear as those from urban areas. Several reasons were cited for feeling unsafe, such as a lack of transport and poor public lighting. The majority of respondents felt that the police did not make them feel safer.
- Positive family life : There was great variation in the family-types of respondents. It was particularly apparent with pre-school and primary school

children how important family is to their sense of happiness. However not all comments about families were positive, and a number of respondents gave examples of insecure or frightening family life.

- **Community** : 60% of respondents did not feel safe in their own communities. The findings showed that awareness of paramilitary activity increased with age of respondents, with some feeling safe in this environment and some not. Disabled children and young people cited examples of exclusion from community facilities and lack of access to transport, whilst the threat of racism was also felt to inhibit community life.
- **Education** : Most children and young people felt safe in schools and with teachers. However a significant number said they did not feel safe. The quality of the school experience was linked to having friends and having good teachers who they could trust. Respondents of primary school age felt that after-school groups were very important to them, both as a source of educational support and a social outlet. However the disabled children and young people surveyed said that school was mainly where their experiences of bullying took place.
- **Stake in society** : All those interviewed said that they should have a say in the things which affect their lives. However 74% felt that in general children and young people are not trusted to make important decisions, with examples given of social workers, parents and professionals excluding them from key decisions.

Conclusions : The importance of this study is twofold. Firstly it provides an insight into the issues which children and young people face in their daily lives, with examples of how disability, young parenthood, family functioning, school and community environment etc can significantly impact on the experience of childhood, adolescence and young adulthood. Secondly, the process of the research itself is important. The research process was entirely driven by a group of young people themselves, and as such they were responsible for the generation of knowledge about their peer group. The findings of the peer-led research were then used as a basis for future planning by Barnardo's. This demonstrates the genuine embedding of participation into organisational planning and strategy development. The Refer 2 Us group met with the Barnardo's Children's Services Management Team, and all service providers of Barnardo's have been instructed to use the report when planning and reviewing their work.

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Ref : PN:09

Title: Evaluation of Young Voices project 2004-2007

Theme: Evaluation of a participative initiative

Year of Publication: 2007

Authors: Rodney Green Consultants

Publishers/Agency: Include Youth

Pages : 52

Aim of Publication : Young Voices is a participative initiative co-ordinated by Include Youth, which enables young people (aged 16-21) who have experience of the criminal justice system to be involved in policy decision-making processes. This report is an evaluation of 3 years of the project.

Methodology : Evaluation data was collected through personal interviews with eight government and agency representatives and three unit staff at the Juvenile Justice Centre. Questionnaires were completed by a further 10 agency representatives. Three focus groups were held with young people who had been involved with the Young Voices initiative, and a further interview was held with a young person at the Juvenile Justice Centre.

Findings : From 2004-2007 the Young Voices initiative has worked in depth with approximately 100 marginalised and excluded young people, with a further 570 participating in training or consultation events. The evaluation process highlighted key achievements of the project, with evidence of marginalised young people interacting with a wide variety of policymakers.

Conclusions: The report has internal importance to Include Youth, in affirming the positive outcomes of the project and providing information for forward planning. However the research also has wider application in its analysis of the conditions needed to develop participative practice with marginalised young people.

One of the objectives of Young Voices is 'To produce, promote and disseminate a model for engagement, developing a transferable model of practice for consulting young people at risk'. The report notes that, by 2007, this had been largely achieved but that further work was needed. Based on the evaluative data, the report emphasises a number of underlying principles for engagement, these being :

- Clarity of purpose and realistic goals
- Investment - of time, energy, and resources to adequately and effectively support the process and relationship building with young people and staff
- Respect for young people ; listening to them, taking into consideration what they have to say, and treating them as equals in the process
- Adopting an inclusive, non-discriminatory and non-judgemental approach

- Providing feedback to young people/staff/agencies on action taken and demonstrating how their views have been taken into consideration
- Reassurance ; providing a safe environment for young people to engage and affirmation that their views will be taken seriously
- Use of appropriate methods/approaches to engaging using what works for them and recognising/rewarding their contribution to the process
- Joint ownership of the process by young people, staff and agency
- The development of appropriate support and working partnerships from others in the community who work with these young people.

Another strategic objective for the Young Voices project was 'Contribute to the development of mechanisms to link organisations needing to consult young people on policy development, with those who have young people to consult, in a permanent but flexible structure'. The report outlines a proposed positioning of Young Voices within such a model, and emphasises the need for interaction within and between a number of existing participative networks in Northern Ireland.

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Ref : PN:10

Title: Consultation with young people on the Northern Ireland Network for Youth

Theme: Young people's initial ideas for NINFY

Year of Publication: 2006

Authors: Northern Ireland Youth Forum

Publishers/Agency: Northern Ireland Youth Forum

Pages : 24

Aim of Publication : Commissioned by the Department of Education, the aim of this study was to gather young people's initial ideas on the shape and functions of a 'Northern Ireland Network for Youth' which would provide a direct interface between children and young people and government providers.

Methodology : The consultation process was peer-led, organised by a steering group of 16 young people. The steering group comprised members of Belfast city council youth forum, NIYF, Young Unionists, SELB, Express, Challenge for Youth, RNIB, and Carrickfergus youth council. There was also a number of young people who had no previous involvement of participative structures.

The steering group co-ordinated a full day open consultation in October 2006, followed by additional group consultation with Fermanagh shadow youth council and Omagh District youth council. In total 69 young people took part in the consultation, including some young people who had no previous involvement of participative structures.

Findings : Consultees were asked to explore four possible models for NINFY, looking at the structures, purpose and functions of NINFY as well as making general observations about key principles. The key findings were as follows :

It was proposed that NINFY should not simply enable a process for government to extract views from young people, but should be beneficial to young people in a range of ways. Therefore there should be forms of learning opportunities for young people, as well as feedback from government. In the same vein, it was felt that young people should have a degree of control over the NINFY agenda, so that it is not simply a mechanism for reacting to a government agenda. This included capacity for NINFY to support young people to engage in local action on local issues, as well as initiating youth-led campaigns.

Other suggested functions of NINFY were to promote a positive voice and image of young people, and to raise the standards of youth participation.

A number of features were seen as fundamental to any proposed model, as follows:

Staffing structures / role of young people : Overwhelming agreement that the Network should be youth-led (in turn it was noted that this feature has implications for young people in terms of time commitment and the need for some form of recompense). Consultees felt that the Network would need to employ staff (adults) but that their role should be supportive rather than directive.

Selection to NINFY structures : There was less enthusiasm the idea of electing members to NINFY, with concerns that elections favour a certain type of young person to the exclusion of others. There was greater consensus that membership needs to be representative of all young people (though avoiding tokenism).

Methods : The involvement of as many young people as possible through a range of roles and activities was an important feature for the consultees. It was felt that NINFY will have more appeal to young people if it is committed to finding ways of engaging with young people and helping them make connections to the Network.

Interaction with government : There was discussion on the need for direct interaction with Government ministers.

Awareness of NINFY : Promotion of NINFY was consistently raised as a critical issue to its success.

Unattached young people : The issue of how to involve young people who are unattached to existing groups was raised as a potential difficulty.

Location : It was proposed that NINFY should have a HQ building and a system of local branches.

Existing structures : In terms of selection methods, it was noted that a range of approaches, methods and structures would be needed to ensure inclusivity. It was proposed that youth councils could be one of these mechanisms, but should not be the sole mechanism for selecting young people at local level.

The report identifies six **'key things that will make the Network work'**, these being :

- Finding ways of including young people
- Making sure that young people know that the Network exists
- Creating effective ways of young people getting involved in the decisions of the Network
- Giving time and space for young people to contribute to the ongoing development of the Network
- Finding ways of ensuring that young people have access to representatives at both local and regional level
- Changes happen as a result of the Network

Availability: For availability contact Northern Ireland Youth Forum
www.niyf.org.uk

