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'What are you doing at the weekend?' First Impressions of an Evaluation of a Detached Youth Work Project on Friday and Saturday Nights

What young people get up to on Friday and Saturday nights is a topic which engenders moral panic amongst adults. A correspondent under the nom-de-plume 'A Ratepayer' sent the following letter to the *Manchester Evening News* in 1877:

On Saturday nights it is quite dangerous for any person to come up or down New Bank Street, Longsight, on account of the rough lads who infest Gray Street and Red Bank Street [with] weapons ... Last Saturday night they paraded up and down the street for above two hours, and whenever they [caught] sight of a policeman, they were off. What it takes is a plain clothes' man to watch them and take them in the act. I am sure that all respectable people will agree with me... (Davies 2008 p94).

The weapons took the form of palings and belts with heavy buckles although other groups of young men -

referred to at the time as 'scuttlers' - used knives and razors.

The 1877 letter writer's demand for more police on the beat and employing plain clothes police to apprehend the lads 'in the act' is arguably one which can be found to this day. Presumably 'A Ratepayer' wants the lads punished in some way. He does not advocate alternative - dare I call them 'positive' - activities for the 'rough lads'.

During August 2010 the BBC's 'Have your say' webpage 'How should anti-social behaviour be policed' carried a vast number of posts from people who want to apprehend and lock up young people (BBC, 2010). Again, few mention of alternatives for young people with time on their hands who would like to hang out with their friends. Moreover a similar approach to the one advocated in 1877 has been implemented in many English towns and cities with increased police patrols. Police reports from areas across England are available online and suggest that increasing policing in identified 'hot spots' in neighbourhoods reduces anti-social behaviour on Friday and Saturday nights. In late July 2010 David Cameron included a proposal for

more special constables when he outlined his vision of the 'big society' (Phibbs, 2010)

During the 1880s and 1890s alcohol was linked with much of the violence according to Andrew Davies (Davies 2008, p98, p214). He cites a contemporaneous edition of the *Manchester Guardian* which quoted Joseph Billam, a master shoemaker. He 'identified youthful drunkenness as the principal cause [of gang fights] and demanded prompt action from the licensing authorities. 'It is always at the week-end, when the passions of our youth are inflamed by drink, that these disgraceful acts are perpetrated.' Billam went on to blame the landlords who kept selling alcohol to young people who were already inebriated (Davies 2008, p194). Around the same time, according to Davies, 'A resident of Miles Platting complained that Sunday evenings had long been ruined by a gang of twenty youths, who congregated at a nearby street corner. "Here they would play ... games, sing comic songs and dance, and use the most filthy and abominable language. It was impossible to read or write or even converse in the house"'. (Davies 2008, p353). Apparently some respectable residents moved out of the area to get away from this manifestation of early twentieth century anti-social behaviour.

Davies wrote about Manchester's nineteenth century phenomenon of 'scuttling' or violent territorial gang warfare. Throughout his book, paragraphs start by giving a date and, frequently, a day of the week. Saturday predominates. In the nineteenth century the gang members (mainly aged 13+) worked long hours from Monday until Saturday lunchtime. They were market porters, errand boys, factory and mill hands. They weren't NEETs: this wasn't an option in those days. Like in developing countries nowadays, you went and found a source of income if you didn't want to starve on the street.

By the outbreak of the first world war several things had happened, leading to a drastic reduction in drunken rowdiness. Clearly a new generation of young people had appeared: the children of the drunken young people of 1877. Also adults across the UK's cities and towns had begun to run positive activities for young people. Boys' clubs, girls' clubs, boy scouts, girl guides and other uniformed groups were launched. Football teams were started. Whilst they built on the territorial rivalries and were identified with localities and/or particular churches or chapels, they led to the birth of teams now known around the world. Many of the adults

involved in these initiatives were motivated by Christian faith and were doing quasi-missionary work to rescue young people who were 'at risk'. Was this the birth of an earlier 'big society' when mainly rich people built on the Victorian vogue for engaging in philanthropic deeds?

Another explanation for decreased trouble on the streets was the exponential growth of cinema. For anyone with an income, the cinema proved a powerful lure and numbers going grew from the mid-1890s. Also, in Manchester at least, policing had taken on the problem. From around 1900, a new chief constable had given his men '*carte blanche* to "move on" any gathering of lads on street corners, however few in number, and however orderly their conduct' (Davies 2008 p351). The prototype for twenty first century dispersal orders... Residents wanted young people to be magicked away but the Guardian observed that lads were being arrested just for standing chatting to their mates: 'poor people have as much right as rich ones to the use of the streets'. To this I might add, do 'young people have as much right as adults to the use of the streets'? And to what extent are young people being criticised for standing chatting to their mates to this day?

Although older youth workers insist that working at weekends was part of their approach in the 70s and 80s, I'm inclined to think this is a manifestation of false memory syndrome with the exception of residentials and one-off events. And whatever older workers tell me, that is also my memory of the 1970s when I was a teenager in a London suburb. When the youth club was open on a Friday or Saturday night, it was - to use Tony Taylor's term - a 'hurly-burly' - an evening of open attendance at a disco or gig (Taylor 2009). The business of the club, when youth workers did group-based youth work, occurred between Mondays and Thursdays unless they were organising and leading residentials. Interestingly, my research concerning the Leeds Association of Girls' Clubs from 1904 showed clubs almost exclusively met on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

Whatever was happening in the 1970s and 80s, Friday and Saturday evenings have evolved into being largely youth work-free evenings. As suggested earlier, historically responses to young people on Friday and Saturday nights have tended to focus on bringing in the police. So what space exists for youth workers to engage in youth work rather than operating as 'the soft police'? Is it possible to

do high quality youth work on Friday and Saturday nights? Is youth work on Friday and Saturday nights symbolic of a shift away from accepted models of practice towards diversionary activities? Do young people want to engage in 'positive activities' at the weekend? New Labour thought so. The July 2009 report 'Expanding Friday and Saturday Night Provision', compiled by the then Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) suggested that England's young people needed 'an appropriate offer of activities which are accessible, interesting and relevant'; provision 'for which it is worth behaving well'. In what ways does this correspond with the traditional view of youth work as based on the values of voluntary engagement, association and informal education?

The New Labour government's policies led to the creation of the Youth Sector Development Fund (YSDF). It was designed and established to contribute to the commitments outlined in the DCSF's 'Aiming high for young people: a ten year strategy for positive activities' (July 2007). This was the final document in the New Labour Government's Policy Review of Children and Young People. It outlined a strategy aiming to transform 'leisure-time opportunities, activities and support

services'. As such, it complemented previously published strategies concerned with formal education and the youth service.

'Aiming high' saw young people's use of their leisure time as providing scope not only for fun and relaxation but also for informal learning and engagement in positive activities which have potential to contribute to their longer term success in life. The following indicators were identified as means of measuring success:

- The reduction of the percentage of 16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training (NEET);
- More participation in Positive Activities;
- The reduction in the proportion of young people frequently using illicit drugs, alcohol or volatile substances;
- The reduction in the conception rate amongst under-18s;
- The reduction in the number of new entrants (aged 10-17) to the Criminal Justice System (DCSF 2007)

The Youth Sector Development Fund is concerned with building the capacity and sustainability of third sector organisations (TSOs), focusing on those with

track records of successful delivery of services to the most disadvantaged young people. Round 3, with a total value of £10.7m, focused on organisations whose individual turnover is under £1m apiece. Proposals were required to outline the types and numbers of young people who would be beneficiaries of the proposed work, including reduction in involvement in 'negative outcomes' and the increase in 'social and emotional skills'. In addition, proposals had to be in line with relevant Children and Young People's Plans, Local Area and Multi Area Agreements and to show support from local authorities and other stakeholders. Friday and Saturday night provision had to be central to the proposals.

According to Ed Balls in July 2009 when he was Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, 'We know that places that are offering activities on Friday and Saturday nights have seen a reduction in the amount of anti-social behaviour at this time, which means there is a clear benefit for local authorities to meet young people's demands to have activities they want and need.'

(DCSF 2009) Rates of youth crime and antisocial behaviour have been found to be measurably higher on Friday and Saturday nights and Youth Sector

Development Fund funded 'interventions' were intended to be located in neighbourhoods where reports are significantly higher.

The Youth Sector Development Fund was clearly targeted towards young people identified as at risk of becoming socially excluded and corresponded with the then government's pre-occupations.

Ideologically one might question the identification of young people's leisure time on Friday and Saturday nights as an opportunity to focus on their choices in terms of training, education and employment. How many adults would want to spend their Saturday evening seeking careers guidance? Nonetheless, organisations saw the funding as providing scope for the extension of their work, not only at weekends.

The Youth Association was one of those organisations. It is a medium-sized third sector organisation based in Wakefield, West Yorkshire. Along with 24 other organisations, it was successful in its bid for funds from the Youth Sector Development Fund. The Youth Association runs programmes in West and South Yorkshire and also has a very successful affiliation scheme which dates back over a hundred years. Its allocation was the

fourth largest in financial terms. The Youth Association believes itself to be the only organisation which is using detached work methods to deliver the work. This is important: the young people are not being magicked off the streets and out of the parks. The workers are going to them. The Association's mission is 'to champion good youth work' and it defines good 'detached or street-based work' as 'a very powerful tool for positive change in the lives of some young people' which 'should never be seen as an instrument of social control'. According to the Association, 'children and young people have the right to share public spaces responsibly' (TYA 2010). When this was written recently, I imagine the authors weren't aware of the 1890s comment previously quoted, that 'poor people have as much right as rich ones to the use of the streets'.

The Youth Association's tender built on its existing record of success in engaging in detached youth work in Kirklees (chiefly in Huddersfield) and took the form of a programme of face-to-face work delivered on the streets of Wakefield and Barnsley. The proposal included the following objectives for the work:

- Provide activities and opportunities for young people out on the streets, complementing existing services including on both Friday and Saturday nights to between 10 and 20 young people at each session. (Figures which have been exceeded considerably.)
- Meet police and community need to reduce nuisance from street-gathering in hot-spots.
- Contribute towards NEET reduction targets through referrals .

The proposal included a comprehensive delivery plan with measurable outcomes and potential impacts. It is worth pointing out that the Association meets police but doesn't engage in work alongside police or with police alongside unlike in some other areas.

The University of Huddersfield secured the contract for the evaluation of The Youth Association's programme. The terms of the brief were made clear by DCSF:

- To evaluate overall effectiveness, performance and results against The Youth Association's proposal's proposed objectives, impact and outcomes;
- To identify aspects with scope for transfer to future delivery in comparable locations;

- To explore lessons learned from the project of potential broader relevance.
- To assess the impact of Youth Sector Development Fund on TYA.

Interviews are currently being conducted with the Youth Association's Chief Executive, Director of Business Operations, Department Manager for Detached Work, the detached workers, young people and other key stakeholders. Interesting data have been gathered from a parent and members of a local community group.

The detached youth workers undertaking the work are involved in projects which suit the wishes of many communities to see young people involved in positive activities although theoretically detached work doesn't take the young people out of sight and out of mind which adds a potentially interesting dimension to the work. Members of the community organisation observed that there was less evidence of young people 'hanging around in gangs' and that less damage was being done. One example of 'damage' was the theft of mobility ramps from bungalows to be used in the construction of a circuit for BMX bikes and skateboards. Less an example of vandalism and more of young people trying to fend for themselves. The Youth Association's workers are

working in the park and so the young people are in a big open area rather than on the street. As a local person said, 'We'd like them to be all there instead of everywhere and shouting odds and stuff'. The local people also suggested that the workers had helped to build bridges between them and the young people, creating respect on both sides.

At the time of preparing this paper, we have yet to complete the interviews, nonetheless some clear themes started to emerge when early data were analysed. First, the Association argues that its approach to detached work is innovative. Detached work tends to be associated with cities but Barnsley and Wakefield both have populations of fewer than 80 000. In towns of this size, outreach work is more frequently found: work which seeks to bring young people to building-based provision. This work meets the criteria outlined by the Federation for Detached Youth Work where workers do not 'sell' centre-based provision (FDYW 2010).

The Youth Association's Chief Executive said of work in Barnsley and Wakefield, 'you are working with affinity groups ... for them to want to stay engaged night after night and weekend after weekend especially if it is going to be anything that is a

diversion in any way you have got to have something to do and I think that's the difference: we brought something that young people could actually do and where the whole programme is packed with stuff'.

However, the Federation for Detached Youth Work is also clear that detached youth work should not be about 'reducing the offending rates of young people by curbing or controlling their behaviour' although that might result as an almost unintended outcome. For the Federation, 'detached youth workers are not tasked with crime or anti-social behaviour reduction or reintroduction of young people into the mainstream' [my italics] (FDYW 2010). I suspect there's a strand of detached work epitomised by the Federation which challenges the status quo on a range of grounds.

The Youth Association's Chief Executive explained that the Youth Sector Development Fund programme included targets. 'It's very much a new wave of programme. The targets have got very little to do with youth work... they are very much about moving young people from one place to another.' He added, 'There is an awful lot of social engineering involved ... in terms of making sure that young people don't bother people in their own communities

and they have to move from this place to that place. It is all about making sure that young people don't drink in these ways and at these times and maybe they should be doing something more wholesome'. Clearly using money under these conditions poses challenges for an organisation which states that it believes in the 'power and value of good youth work' and that detached work should not be an 'instrument of social control' (TYA 2010). Nonetheless the Chief Executive concluded that the work was high quality youth work and the Director of Business Operations expressed a similar opinion when she said, 'It's about ... youth work in a very pure form out on Friday and Saturday nights ... [just] youth workers and groups of young people'.

Even at this early point, it appears that there is an inherent contradiction: the managers think that their detached workers are engaged in innovative work, doing detached work and bringing activities including film making, sport, art, music and residential to young people where they are. The Director of Business Operations spoke of 'pure' youth work despite the Youth Sector Development Fund requirement for a high level of record keeping and monitoring including measuring 'soft' outcomes.

However the department manager described the work differently. She said, '[The workers] find out about anti-social behaviour and they have built relationships with the local youth service, with the police, with other voluntary sector organisations like housing associations and schools to find areas where there is a need and where there is young people who need access to detached work'.

The Youth Sector Development Fund was specifically intended to provide positive activities on Friday and Saturday nights. But it appears that the two nights have rather different characteristics. The Youth Association's work on Friday nights has proved popular and sizeable groups of young people have participated in activities. And, as one of the Barnsley workers told us, 'Drinking time is Friday. Friday night is a very big drinking time'. And one of the young people said that, before the workers began to come round, they'd spend their evening drinking in the park. However the situation appears to be different on Saturday nights when young people go into town or plan other activities with their mates. Saturday night remains the primary 'leisure' night of the week to this day. It is also arguably significant that the C-card work is done on Tuesdays, suggesting that weekends are not for

all forms of youth work. Sexual health sessions are done in a local base rather than on the street, and the premises are booked on a weekday evening.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is fair to assert that youth workers have long been involved in the creative use of public funds. For example, established workers may remember the controversies of the early 1980s when some challenged the use of ideologically tainted money from the Manpower Services Commission whilst others maintained that it could be used for 'good' youth work.

The University of Huddersfield's evaluation will be looking at the extent to which The Youth Association has met the outcomes it outlined in its tender. As far as we can tell, the Association appears to be exceeding its targets in terms of the number of young people with whom they are in contact. They have achieved the different projects (these include making films and running residential) which they set out to do. Local stakeholders based in communities where they're active appear to be content with the work. The main reservation appeared to be that the workers had not

announced their plans through leafleting or the local paper. Hence parents saw strangers talking to their children and weren't aware that the Association was intending to start visiting the local parkland.

However, when we come to critique the work from a more academic perspective we might be looking at the paradox - which is neither new nor unique - of whether it is possible to engage in good youth work despite the terms outlined by funding bodies. The Youth Association's detached work clearly starts from the values of voluntary engagement, association and involves informal education.

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