

also works with a wider group of about 100 young people aged 12-18 who are at risk of anti-social and nuisance behaviour. The beneficiaries of the Right on Track project, specifically, are young people aged 14-19 who are out of mainstream education (school and college) who need intensive support for their behaviour and key skills (literacy, numeracy, group work) to achieve a qualification”.

The Project involves young people in the following:

“Young people refurbish double-decker buses and ambulances, these are then donated to community projects in developing countries via links with development charities. The young people learn practical vehicle maintenance skills as well as gaining an understanding of cultural issues, self confidence and key skills. This learning is accredited through the Open College Network and City & Guilds NVQ programmes. This project has been developed with the support of and in partnership with Karting 2000 Limited, Salud International and International Rescue (2 British based Aid charities), (and) Oldham Youth Offending Team.”

CONCLUSION

Different practitioners and professionals will draw their own conclusions from the experiences described above. In my view the following were key to their success and they represent the ‘lessons learnt’ and the aspects of the initiatives which may be borrowed and replicated elsewhere:

- quality of the relationships between the youth work staff and the young people;
- presence of skilled and informed senior youth work practitioners in each project;
- quality of the relationship between local initiatives and the youth work team;
- availability of skilled youth work staff experienced in detached/street based work;
- willingness of project/regeneration initiative staff to ‘learn from’ the skills and knowledge base held by youth work practitioners;
- willingness of regeneration staff to ‘learn from’ the young people themselves.

This debate sits alongside a number of other policy and practice issues, including the level and support afforded to adult community/resident participation. Whilst regeneration practitioners may feel they understand the processes involved in encouraging adults to be involved the jury is still out of their capacity to actively seek the views, experiences and aspirations of young people. But, there is (and remains) a wide range of practice, skill and knowledge available if local managers would ask. The challenge for professionals/local managers is to seek out that experience and be willing to learn from it.

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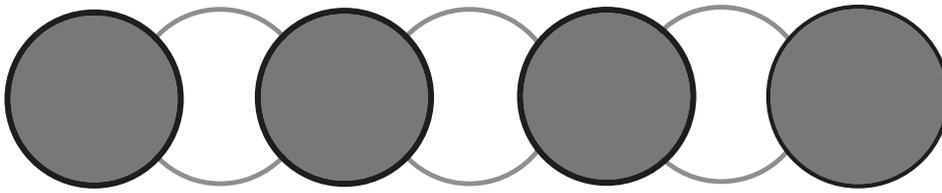
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INTRODUCTION

In this edition of Local Work the intention is to 'capture' some of the core elements present in a number of regeneration initiatives which seek to include and to promote the needs of young people. The significance of this work rests, in part, on the way initiatives can both 'learn' and 'borrow' from the voluntary and community sectors as well as from the experience of centrally driven initiatives and projects. For many youth work practitioners the experiences highlighted below will be very familiar. They confirm the value of having access to and supporting good quality youth work staff who have imagination, commitment and support from senior managers.

SETTING THE SCENE

Over the past years a number of reports have argued the case for the inclusion of young people in regeneration activity. The strategies and practices recommended in these papers are often framed in the following ways:

- Young people need to be supported in the promotion and development of 'citizenship' and practice can include the formation of young people's councils shadowing and/or replicating the decision making fora of the local authority.
- Young people need to be encouraged to participate in the planning and design of local estates in the same way that adults are encouraged to become involved. In practice this can include 'planning for real' days in schools or youth centres.
- Young people 'at risk' of being involved in crime and anti-social behaviour on deprived estates and practice can include targeting such young people and providing diversionary activity during school holidays centred on potential 'hot-spots'.

- Young people who have been excluded from school and/or part of the youth justice system need additional support and interventions from appropriate agencies which can provide alternative education provision.

Since 1997 New Labour have introduced a number of reforms which reflect these approaches and have established specific agencies or funded particular initiatives to address them. You will be aware of most of them and they include:

- Youth offending teams;
- Connexions service;
- reforms in the youth service;
- youth contact teams;
- youth inclusion programme;
- positive action for young people.

The challenge for practitioners and local regeneration managers is to navigate their way through these separate (and sometimes contradictory) approaches and to imagine ways in which some or all of these initiatives and agencies can work with local regeneration partnerships. If for no other reason because young people themselves do not fit easily into the models outlined above and will occupy a number of the approaches indicated, at different times. At times some local managers may see these initiatives as a way of addressing issues of crime and disorder. But, the approach encouraged by some practitioners may centre on notions of being at 'risk'. It is this contradiction which throws up real challenges for local managers.

In addition, the challenges for all practitioners are to be clear about why they are seeking to involve children and young people in regeneration initiatives; and to be willing to work with agencies and organisations which have experience and knowledge of working with young people. A real 'challenge' for all is the confusing message conveyed by the models outlined above. Are children and young people an asset to be encouraged and listened to with respect? Or are they a real (or potential) threat to local communities who need to be contained and 'policed'?

YOUNG PEOPLE AND REGENERATION:

OPPORTUNITIES FOR INNOVATION

By John Diamond, Research Associate, Centre for Local Policy Studies

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DISCUSSING THE POLICY AND PRACTICE ISSUES

The value of exploring the ways in which regeneration projects can engage with children and young people is that it is based upon the assumption that it will bring together a whole mix of practitioners. If we reflect upon a model of collaboration which is aimed at the active and positive involvement of young people then we can identify a number of principles which might inform both the process to be adopted and the outcomes which follow.

As Margaret O'Brien (2003) argues

"... in the mid-1990s British local authorities and city planners rarely incorporated children's perspectives, at least not in the self-conscious manner we see signs of now..." (p142).

She goes on to make the significant point that:

"Whilst neighbourhood regeneration schemes are beginning to incorporate ideas about people so the child's dimension is often overlooked" (p 143).

Some of the observations and recommendations which arise from O'Brien and her co-authors work are not only relevant for children and young people but also for adults too. Some of their suggestions for developing child friendly neighbourhoods include:

- more powerful street lights that are closer to the ground;
- lighting up pathways;
- regular estate and street cleaning;
- walkabouts with different children prior to new developments;
- removal of child-unfriendly notices in parks (eg 'no games');
- consulting with girls to enhance parks' attractiveness to girls;
- sensitivity to materials used in defensive structures for parks and buildings;
- play areas close to home;
- regular neighbourhood-based and centre 'free access for children's leisure events'.

As O'Brien observes, these issues came out of a process of listening to children and their parents/careers describe their neighbourhood, inviting them to talk about their community and to identify ways in which it could be improved. For a fuller account of the processes involved you may wish to consult their final report (O'Brien et al 1999).

This approach has the potential to draw schools, planners, and regeneration initiatives into a local conversation with children and young people. It has the value of incorporating discussion about the development and design of areas designed for 'regeneration'. By building in such approaches at an early stage it can be used as a means of establishing contact with adult

residents too. As an approach it sits at one end of the continuum identified at the start of this paper. It is, essentially, a pro-active approach to involving children and young people in the process. The usual approach is, perhaps, reactive – responding to the needs of young people after the event. In their reports both Alsop et al (2001) and Fitzpatrick et al (1998) describe the extent to which young people are encouraged to participate in regeneration activity. Alsop et al, in their thoughtful report for the YMCA, focus on the extent to which young women are encouraged and supported to become active participants in the regeneration process. They cite a number of positive examples. These range from the involvement of young women in local initiatives to the development of their self-confidence and ability to describe their needs. Fitzpatrick et al concentrate on the need to 'involve young people' and reflect the fact that young people have often been absentees in the process and practice of regeneration initiatives.

This point is discussed in some detail by Benedict Phillips (2004). He describes the points of conflict between the aims of local managers to engage in consultation and participation processes on a 'pragmatic' basis; the conflict present in the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit on who should be involved; and the practice and philosophy of those agencies (state, voluntary or community) who do seek to break down barriers. Part of the 'problem' is not just how young people are 'seen' but also the extent to which this categorisation is played out with adults too. The real value of Benedict Phillips' paper is that when taken together with the work of Margaret O'Brien (or the examples below) is the way it presents not just an alternative perspective but rather an alternative reality to those who feel that young people cannot be engaged and do not have a relevant and serious contribution to make.

Successive reports for the Social Exclusion Unit (1998, 2000) have identified the need to prioritise the involvement of young people as part of the neighbourhood renewal strategy. The importance of recognising the value of incorporating young people in the regeneration process was highlighted some years ago (DETR1997) with the publication of a 'good practice' guide on the involvement of young people in urban regeneration initiatives. Whilst this guide identified two reasons for this (unemployment and crime) and fits with the notion of seeing (intentionally or not) young people as a 'problem' the report did make the case for a positive/pro-active approach to the participation of young people. The report concluded that there were 3 core features of any successful initiative:

- Partnership and localised inter-agency co-operation
- Integrated approaches
- Public/Private collaboration

To this we could add:

- Voluntary/community sector participation
- Explicit involvement of young people themselves in the developmental phase of any initiative

As has been argued elsewhere (Diamond 2002), any of the above strategies need to draw upon experienced and informed practitioners to facilitate this approach. As a pre-condition for devising a successful strategy it may be necessary to draw together the appropriate local agencies, especially the Youth Service, to discuss and to agree an approach.

The advantages of utilising skilled youth work practitioners lies in the way good youth work professionals can both articulate the value they bring to any initiative but also the multiplicity of ways in which they can work with young people in a variety of settings.

An 'ideal' youth work approach might include the following:

- aims to work with young people not necessarily engaged with other services;
- stresses the importance of young people's participation in the process;
- adopts a multi-layered strategy;
- seeks to give support to those 'at risk';
- seeks to enable young people to develop a sense of being part of their 'own';
- liaison with other agencies/services in the neighbourhood;
- demonstrates local knowledge and awareness;
- provides an honest broker role in working with local young people which might not be available to regeneration managers.

IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL GOOD PRACTICE

As Edwards and Hatch (2003) suggest, in their IPPR report *'Passing Time'*, there is a need to exchange examples of good practice, both as a means of informing the public policy debate at a national level and shaping local interventions. They cite the following as the reasons why this is necessary:

- messages from the Government about young people are confusing;
- early intervention is vital – but so too are later interventions;
- provision for teenagers can be patchy, unreliable and inconsistent;
- modern youth clubs that combine activity with support and advice are in short supply;
- new types of professionals are necessary;
- young people need a stronger voice in communities;
- there is some way to go to develop policies that add up to a service commitment to young people in their early teens as well as into their teens.

They recommend the development of an approach modelled on the Sure Start initiative which would signal a policy shift in favour of supporting young people through their teenage years. The newly formed Children's Trusts and the Connexions Service have a role to play here. But, the tone and content of the Report suggests that the positive shift in thinking in public policy at a national level has yet to happen. A real value of the Report lies

in a series of case studies it draws upon. In this section of the paper I want to highlight local examples where local practice has been linked to regeneration activity and the success of which suggests that it may be possible to learn and borrow from:

CASE STUDY 1: Lightbowne Estate, Manchester

A proposal to develop a kickabout area on the estate was progressed and the residents (and some professionals) had concerns about its security, the safety of the children using it and its long term future. The Youth Service as part of the detached youth work project, worked with the young people to encourage their involvement in the debate about whether the kickabout area should be constructed. These discussions between the Residents Associations and the renewal team went on for some time. From the perspective of both groups, however, the involvement of the young people was a 'revelation'. The following extracts from interviews highlighted some of their responses:

"I was present at the meeting to discuss the kickabout. There were displays by the young people Very good work by them and the youth service".

"I noticed a big difference when I met them".

"They (the young people) started to come to Residents meetings. They had relevant issues to raise. Their progress was amazing...."

"They (the young people) were willing to meet to discuss it. I met them. They discussed its design... They came to a public meeting ready to defend their ideas".

"The Kickabout Project illustrates how far we have come. You had young people in the estate really involved. They helped design leaflets. They talked about its design. They went to meetings. Originally some of the local residents were opposed. They won them over".

"They went to meetings. These are the same people who 18 months ago the residents were complaining about".

From the youth workers point of view the kickabout area represented a means to an end. As with any good working practice it was a vehicle to engage with the young people (and the wider community of residents and agencies) but it was not an end in itself. From the perspective of those external to the process it was tangible evidence of the success of the initiative.

CASE STUDY 2: Youth Inclusion Project, Oldham

"Oldham Youth Inclusion Project is a youth project aimed at re-engaging extremely disaffected young people aged 13-16, those either already offending or at high risk of offending. The project