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## **The Right to Respect: an alternative paradigm in the battle against social exclusion**

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**Paper presented at the British Educational Research Association Conference, University of Sussex, at Brighton, 2-5 September, 1999.**

Our paper is about the power of education to transform lives and combat social exclusion; an alternative to the welfarist paradigm formulated around problems and solutions. It draws on a case study of Trinity House Resource Centre in Moss Side, Manchester; a piece of research commissioned by Save the Children [SCF]<sup>1</sup>. Trinity House was designed as a beacon; a community centre where innovative approaches to practice could be developed. As such, regular research / evaluations of its intended outcomes were conducted: financial, statistical and other quantitative data had been collected and analysed. It was seen to be an effective organisation. But it was thought that there was something more. We were commissioned to explore the 'unintended outcomes'. What made Trinity House somewhere 'special'? What was its recipe for success?

The people who used the centre didn't talk about education but the accounts of personal development were clear. In many cases they had been failed by compulsory education and by a range of welfare institutions. They included single parents, children and school non-attenders. Yet as one single parent said:

I think I was one of the typical success stories of Trinity where I came in as just a mum and now I'm starting my own business ... It's been a long, long process for me ... it's a path, it goes through Trinity and carries on.

A school non-attender praised the support she had received:

[People here help me] by listening to me, respecting me. Just being there for me, being able to listen and hear my views instead of just ignoring me. As a young person, my teachers at school think they're the only ones who are supposed to get the respect.

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<sup>1</sup> The research was funded wholly by SCF who commissioned the work and to whom we are grateful for the opportunity to become involved in such a rewarding piece of research

We used a focus group approach to secure insights into people's lives, perspectives and stories in the context of the centre. We looked at the dynamic between individuals, groups and the organisation resulting in material which was interpretative; hermeneutic in nature. This paper draws on the case study to interrogate the validity of current approaches to tackling social exclusion. It explores definitions of popular education and social movements before re-examining the case study methodology and data and showing how relevant messages can be drawn for the future from the place described by one interviewee as 'a little haven'.

## Introduction

In considering our contribution to the battle against social exclusion and in pursuit of the principle of social inclusion, as educators and educational researchers, it is important to remind ourselves that, as Freire said, the process of education is not neutral: it can be used either to domesticate or to liberate. Our paper is written in the light of our commitment to liberatory and transformatory models of education.

In the original report on the work of Trinity House which we compiled for SCF, we identified the potential presented by employing a foundation of children's and young people's rights, involving a commitment to developmental education and putting a relevant contemporary interpretation of 'respect' into practice. Our data suggested that, in the context of social inclusion, the approach taken by the centre demonstrated an alternative to the predominant welfarist problem / solution paradigm. In this paper these discussions have been developed further in the light of the popular education and social movement frameworks outlined in Ian Martin's introductory essay to the newly published collection 'Popular Education and Social Movements in Scotland Today' (1999). The original analysis of the data and our subsequent reflection indicate how the feeling of inclusion in social groups - or movements - has a potentially powerful role to play in combating social exclusion.

## Tackling Social Exclusion

The Social Exclusion Unit, established by the government following the 1997 election, defines social exclusion as 'what can happen when individuals or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown'. The first phase of the Unit's work, to July 1998, prioritised truancy and school exclusions, street living and 'worst estates'. Currently the focus is on teenage parenthood, 16 - 18 year olds outside education or employment and further, follow-up work on 'deprived neighbourhoods'. In comparison with the initiatives put in place by previous governments attempting to deal with the checklist of intractable issues, the Unit brings a longer term perspective. This means combining the rapid results measured in quantitative terms which characterised earlier schemes with a wider, more sustained and more imaginative perspective. Previous agendas focussed on quantitative criteria: it is possible to count the number of rough sleepers or pregnant teenagers and to quote a statistical decline - or increase - in numbers over a period of time to define that success - or failure. However, although it only takes nine months to make a teenage parent, it takes far longer to have a meaningful impact on many aspects of social exclusion and this more qualitative perspective has been taken on board by the Unit.

Given the finite resources available, funds need to be targeted. Under the 'New Deal for Communities' Pathfinder Programme, criteria have been defined and estates meeting them identified. Yet, whilst limited resources need to be spent appropriately, questions remain around the stigmatising nature of the very identification of a problem, whether focussing on a neighbourhood, family or individual. Using normative, and in some cases comparative, definitions devised by professionals, social and welfare inputs are targeted towards people who have been identified as having a 'problem' or 'need', being 'at risk' or being 'troubled'. The approach is often 'to help people to find solutions to their own problems'. Actually, this is a positive development and introduces 'felt' and 'expressed' need alternatives to normative and comparative definitions [see Bradshaw's (1972) 'A taxonomy of social need']: historically the 'expert' would define the need or problem and go on to outline the appropriate solution. Inevitably, both the definition and solution were formulated in terms comprehended by the 'expert' and not necessarily appropriate to the individual in terms of gender, class, race, sexuality or (dis)ability. Working with people to find their own solutions is undeniably a progression. However, when designing their solutions, people are restricted by their own knowledge about the possibilities and by the expert's knowledge. Professionals' use of power and patterns of practice retain an arrogance founded on the belief that they have the expertise to understand problems and ability to formulate solutions. Such an approach is specifically disempowering for clients. A contemporaneous example of this is the provision of parenthood classes, which tend to be formulated around a model emphasising the expertise of the leader, placing them in a position which validates their power and establishes a relationship based on dependency.

Thus, despite the welcome changes, the need to target resources tends to result in pathologising: the suggestion that the 'problem' lies with the individual or the estate and that the solution comes from a change within the individual or estate. The professional is often working in terms of defined needs in order to promote welfare. But this model is associated with the threat of encouraging dependence. As this paper goes on to explore, professional educators' skills could have a significant role to play in the battle against social exclusion. Popular education avoids the pathologisation of individuals and estates and the dependency-encouraging 'welfare' model.

### Popular Education and Social Movements

Martin points out that, although the term 'popular education' has not been used widely in the UK, the idea of an education rooted in 'the interests, aspirations and struggles of ordinary people' remains familiar to many of those involved in the education of adults (p4). Such education has an overt, articulated value base. The recently established Popular Education Forum for Scotland's 'Statement of Definition and Purpose' includes the following points:

Popular education is understood to be popular, as distinct from merely populist, in the sense that:

- it is rooted in the real interests and struggles of ordinary people
- it is overtly political and critical of the status quo
- it is committed to progressive social and political change

Popular education is based on a clear analysis of the nature of inequality, exploitation and oppression and is informed by an equally clear political purpose. This has nothing to do with helping the 'disadvantaged' or the management of poverty; it has everything to do with the struggle for a more just and egalitarian social order.

The process of popular education has the following general characteristics:

- its curriculum comes out of the concrete experience and material interests of people in communities of resistance and struggle
- its pedagogy is collective, focused primarily on group as distinct from individual learning and development
- it attempts, wherever possible, to forge a direct link between education and social action (Martin: 1999 p4)

Martin explores the significance of a contemporary model of popular education for praxis in Scotland and shows how it presents a paradigm within which practice elsewhere may be explored. This is important for revisiting our data. The relationship between popular education, social movements and social change shows the learning which occurs as the result of people's 'autonomous civic and voluntary activity outside the state in civic society' (p8).

In employing Martin's framework, three points need to be made. First, the focus on 'adult education' is limiting: 'popular education', using the Forum's own definition, has the weight of a portmanteau term with an inclusivity which brings in other informal educations: youth work and community work with their foundations in informal developmental models of liberatory and transformatory education may be comfortably located there. The Association of Community Workers' aims and objectives include changing power structures, spreading knowledge, encouraging self-determination and promoting co-operation within a belief structure founded on challenging oppression, promoting greater equality and social justice and using community action methods (ACW: 1994 3.1). The National Youth Agency's definition, values and principles in youth and community work have a comparable focus (NYA 1996).

Secondly, the definition of civil society is restrictive. Martin defines it as the areas of 'social and "civic" life and voluntary association which remain relatively autonomous, ie unregulated by the institutions of the state' (p9). Thus, 'civil society' is public but clearly differentiated from the state. The interface between

the state and civil society is identified as dynamic, as a site of conflict and change. It is also, by implication, separate from the personal / private / domestic / family. However, where the state, through a range of institutions of intervention (such as Social Services, Probation, Education Welfare) has involvement in the family, it could be argued that the 'private' has been shifted into the public sphere. Furthermore, where the family is constructed in any format other than the heterosexual and nuclear, it is cast in opposition to the state and has become relocated in the public arena. During the period of our research, single mothers were castigated in the media and by politicians. People responding through voluntary and/or community groups to state interventions and public stereotypings of alternatives to the heterosexual and nuclear serve to reduce the separation between the 'public' and 'private'. Thus, whilst Martin implies that the interface between civil society and the family is public / private, for the purposes of reconsidering the research data, it is important to note that an acceptance that the personal is political results in the role of the family (especially the extended family or alternatively constructed family) being intrinsically located within civil society.

Thirdly, it is important to consider the significant ontological difference between 'social movements' and 'social organisations'. The latter involve membership, whether formalised or informal. However, the former may be unconscious as people gradually learn to name themselves and the world around them. Initially, people may 'feel' and only subsequently develop the ability to express areas of commonality and sense of group. Single mothers, for example, would not see themselves as a social movement. Nonetheless, despite these provisos, Martin's work offers the timely opportunity to use a popular education and social movement paradigm for the reconsideration of the SCF data.

#### Trinity House: the centre and the research

From 1981 - 1998 SCF managed Trinity House, which had always been intended to offer a model of innovative practice from where approaches could be transferred on a national and international basis. It was always seen as a potential case study. The ongoing programme of formative and summative evaluative research conducted within Trinity House showed the success of the organisation but, it was thought, did not explain the magic or provide the recipe for transferring elsewhere. In commissioning research with a focus on 'unintended outcomes', SCF intended that not only would we establish the ingredients which made the centre 'special' but also the method, so that the recipe could be transferred and could have a wider impact on policy.

In gathering the research data, we drew on the range of interpersonal and observational skills characteristic of youth and community work and equally valuable for gathering qualitative data for interpretative analysis. Themes were introduced in both individual and group interviews, which were

taped and later transcribed in full, with paid full-time, part-time and sessional staff, volunteers and users at the centre, elected members and a range of public and voluntary sector staff who were involved with the centre in a range of capacities. We worked with full-time staff during the process to explore ideas which were emerging both from the data and from discussions which the staff, volunteers and users were having amongst themselves: our questions led to people talking about topics they had not necessarily considered before. One senior worker said:

I've had general vibes ... that it's been an interesting process and it's got them thinking about things

In addition, since we spent a good deal of time at the centre, an ethnographic dimension was added to the methods used. As a consequence of our appreciation of the way barriers were removed by the centre's approach to work, the report was written to be accessible to everyone who contributed.

On the surface, Trinity House provided a fairly typical range of provision for local people in a renovated former school building in a deprived neighbourhood with a poor reputation nationally. It supported families ('from time to time parents and carers need support, information and advice or just a bit of a break') and worked with young people ('to ensure children and young people are allowed to develop to their full potential and that their voices are heard and their views and opinions are taken into account'). Provision included activities for young people, information and advice sessions, a group for parents and toddlers, childminders' drop-in and training courses intended for parents and carers: a wide range but scarcely unique for a community centre. The unusual addition was provision for young people excluded from school: the School Non-Attendees' Project. However, the list of activities does not explain how the approach was distinctive. Arguably, the critical difference is that support often comes directly from state institutions without the involvement of a long-established social organisation with an overt value base. SCF identifies children's rights as the key to, and foundation for, its work. This foundation translated into a distinctive approach to work with children, young people and adults alike. The Rights of the Child could be described as qualified universal rights: they are universal to everybody who is a child and the situation changes only when the child reaches adulthood. They concern the entire context of the child's life from food and shelter to personal development. The 'rights agenda', as it was referred to by people at the centre, ensured a holistic approach to provision for children. Their 'needs', 'problems' or 'difficulties' were not removed from other aspects of their lives. This resulted in the centre's approach moving away from the pathologising and developing a distinctive approach to its work with adults, children and young people.

When writing the report, devising appropriate nomenclature for the people who used the centre proved difficult. They were not 'members': there was no membership system unlike many social organisations. They were emphatically not clients or consumers and, as one woman explained, the word 'user' was not



appropriate due to its connotations of drug misuse and implied dependency. She said that it suggested a neediness she did not feel. In fact, the range of terms associated with people coming to any community centre carries baggage implying a purchaser / consumer relationship, exclusivity or need and dependence. Due to a lack of alternatives, the word 'user' was employed but its shortcomings were identified. This terminological difficulty is indicative of a problem inherent in the established range of relationships between qualified professionals and the individuals and communities with whom they work. The roots lie in a critique of 'welfare' services which *do* things to people in areas of multiple deprivation and are the outcome of the limited range of approaches to the work. Interestingly, in his chapter, Martin generally refers to 'people' and uses qualifying adjectival phrases rather than identifying an alternative noun (Martin 1999).

### SCF and Civil Society

A key difference between Trinity House and many other family or community centres is that SCF is a social organisation rather than an arm of government. As a non-governmental organisation [NGO], it is part of the civil society, with a strong sense of mission and value base; striving to eradicate poverty and injustice and work for a world where children have rights and are respected for who they are and the contribution they make to their neighbourhoods. Drawing upon these principles, it acts locally and thinks globally, encouraging people to draw parallels and to identify areas of commonality and difference across the globe. In doing so, issues of injustice, which contribute to social exclusion, are moved beyond the personal and into the social, economic and political sphere. This sharpens the naming / understanding of self and experience but puts that into the public realms. The need to take action to challenge, campaign and to change things becomes more apparent. When this bigger picture emerges, the need to form alliances, to work alongside others is self-evident.

SCF set up the centre as part of a campaign, not in the traditional sense of petitioning, lobbying and marching in the manner of the 'old social movements' but with the same objective: to challenge social injustices. It was to do so by modelling: showing good practice and what could be done. By influencing policy makers, practitioners and funders through the practical demonstration of a different paradigm and showing them a way of working in situ. It was thought that this would influence the provision of services and policy which affected children. SCF also realised that they would have a direct effect on the lives of people who used the centre.

## Popular Education in Context

The terms 'empowerment' and 'participation' have become buzz words in welfare services. It could be suggested that like the word 'community', they have been devalued. However, they were mainly absent from the centre's vocabulary. Instead, there was clear evidence of a robust, shared philosophical value base, sometimes described in very ordinary, 'naturalised' ways and sometimes put in more formal terms. However it was described, it was clear that the key was a belief in the power of a model of education with the features of popular education: a model located in a sphere philosophically different to the problem - solution discourse of welfare. Whilst paradigms of need suggest that there are basic essentials which need to be in place before people move towards self actualisation, reality shows that people seek respite. *Big Issue* sellers contribute writings to the paper, spending time in creativity in parallel to seeking satisfactory homes. A transformatory educational agenda does not only have relevance when the component aspects of social exclusion have been tackled. For some people coming to the centre, the opportunity to meet over a coffee whilst the children were looked after provided the breathing space which met their need. Significantly, they could be confident that whilst others would face the same situations as them, the group had not been conceptualised around an agenda of need, problem or difficulty. They were able to 'be themselves' and, for many, this was the first step towards further self-development. The centre's ethos promoted personal growth and change with the focus on the individual in the context of the community - as part of a social movement - rather than on the person defined by difficulties and problems.

The distinctive nature of the relationship between paid staff and users at the centre was partly due to the continuum which meant that an individual could be a paid worker, volunteer and user at different points in the week or over a period of time. Such fluidity was encouraged as an aspect of personal development: a practical outcome of popular education. Moreover, many of the people who worked at the centre lived in the neighbourhood. Indeed, the role of indigenous workers - workers drawn from local communities whose local experience-based knowledge and understanding are a vital addition to skills gained through college studies - was significant in the centre's approach. In general, there was no clear separation between people who were paid for being at the centre and people who were not. Workers' approaches were not designed to suggest an elitist, protected or mysterious expertise. Moreover, people starting out were offered support and training. One woman who had moved through being a user, volunteer and paid worker described her experience:

When I first came into the building I'm sure that I said, 'Oh, I'm just a mum, I'm a single parent and I don't work'. And the first response was, 'No, no, no, not at all, you do a very good job'. And I argued with them for a long time until eventually I took the pat on the

back and that raised my self esteem ... they've encouraged me to see I've got skills ... Instead of them saying, 'She's a problem parent, she has problems, let's deal with the problem', it was always more like, 'Well, you're doing this right and you did really well when you did that'. And eventually I would say I'm a good parent now.

During her journey along the continuum she was part of informal groups, attended training at the centre and moved on to courses provided by other institutions. Her explanation of how she was not perceived as a person whose problems needed to be identified and dealt with as a first priority provides a clear illustration of the alternative approach. The growth in self-confidence and the validation of who she was and what she did by those around her were typical. The key word used by people at the centre was 'respect'.

### A Powerful Combination - Rights and Respect

Respect is culturally constructed. It has a range of interpretations from awe, dread, deference and reverence to consideration, regard, courtesy and kindness. It extends beyond the individual to the group(s) - the social movements - with which individuals identify. Downie made the connection between respect and rights when he emphasised the ultimate value of the human being, that 'persons' are 'alike in being ends in themselves' and that they are 'entitled to a minimum equality of consideration' (Downie :1971). Banks incorporated the social work context and explored typical lists of users' rights starting with the right 'to be treated as an end' (Banks :1995). Historically, however, 'persons' tended to be white, middle-class, heterosexual men: the apparent objectivity of the phrase 'respect for persons' is spurious. Trinity House's model differed from the one which has been translated into clients' charters in welfare agencies because it was built on a humanist position rooted in moral philosophy in the context of an understanding of cultural difference. Whereas social welfare agencies build their work on the concept of respect for all persons, the alternative paradigm included the concept of respect for the group(s) with whom people identified and with the shared and common ground; respect for self-identified social movements. Such 'movements' included not only gender, race, sexuality and other core parts of one's being but also a wide range of aspects of current experience and life history. The naming of the groups of which one feels a part is a facet of transformatory education through which one moves beyond being defined as, for example, somebody's mother to being defined in your own right. The formula of 'accepting individuals as ends in themselves' is inadequate. Whilst some people may feel included, the lack of inclusion of the group context will result in other people feeling excluded. When dealing with social exclusion, the inclusion of the group - or movement - dimension is important. Difference and diversity need to be celebrated as vital components of the respect which people need, want, crave - and to which they have a right.

The translation of a theoretical emphasis on people's rights into practice can result in an approach which is condescending or patronising. However, such an outcome is one where respect is absent. 'Respect' has a range of meanings from showing people courtesy and valuing them to expecting deference or inculcating awe or dread. For many people, the 'street' interpretation with its roots in African Caribbean usage is closest to what they seek in their relationships and which is important in establishing a centre as a place they wish to be. The ingredients include an honesty in valuing people which means they know that they are hearing the truth: an approach which is without dissimulation, which feels real rather than assumed or false. At the centre people felt that they were listened to, that they had opinions and experiences which were of importance. For the young people who were school non-attenders, the issue of respect was central. They told us that, at school, respect was a one-way issue where teachers expected to be respected as their just due but offered nothing in return. For school non-attenders, respect meant having their views, ideas and experiences listened to, not being ignored and being trusted. The trust included open access to resources including the office and reception area. On occasion this resulted in young people assuming the responsibility for welcoming new arrivals: being respected and trusted resulted in people sharing ownership.

The combination of the 'rights agenda' and the respect perspectives made a distinctive contribution to the ways in which the centre operated, the models of practice through which staff operated and the ways people were at the centre. We would suggest that it is useful to consider 'rights' as the political dimension and 'respect' as its personal manifestation which, at Trinity House, were brought together in a paradigm formed around social justice as opposed to a welfare formulated model. People were encouraged to look to new horizons for themselves, their children and for others. The approach encouraged a problematisation of social policy and its practical effects: an alternative to the pathologising of the individual characteristic of current welfarist formulated strategies to combat social exclusion. The drawing out of shared experiences and commonalities between groups and the understanding difference facilitated the development of clear alliances rather than rivalries over the centre's resources. It even extended beyond the centre: a group from the centre went to Manchester's gay and lesbian festival (although this observation was due to happenstance rather than planned ethnographic research).

### The Personal and Political

In revisiting the data in the light of Martin's work on social movements, it is evident that a central strand in the dynamic (or chemistry) was the broader, essentially ontological connections made by the women. These connections, which we now realise may be identified as aspects of social movements, are more fluid than those of the 'old' social movements which were based in the ideas and practices of social

organisations but equally powerful. The women who used the centre shared ideas about new ways of living their lives and seeing their worlds with new social movements. This is not to suggest that they were personally connected with organised forms of these movements: the research did not aim to identify this and it has only become apparent on revisiting the material. However, on reflection it has become apparent that there was a strong sense of connectedness with some of the ideas - not in abstract form but naturalised and owned - evidenced by the ways the women defined who and what they were, how they lived their lives and hence how they took the SCF agenda and reinterpreted it to define their space. The predominant social movement frameworks within which the centre's users were engaged and expressed themselves are best termed 'heritage' (or 'who you are'), 'feminism' ('what you are'), 'equal opportunities' ('why you are') and 'exclusion' ('when you are how you are challenged').

(i) Heritage

Many of the 'users' of the centre were second or third generation African Caribbean and Irish Catholic. They had a strong sense of who they were, their family backgrounds and ties. One of the things binding the women together was their sense of the different struggles which had similar effects on their families' life chances as immigrants. A strong feel for the importance of their histories had the potential to set them apart from some of their neighbours. Talking and thinking about heritage has the potential to develop a critical consciousness and political identity. These identities were also shaped by ideas / experience of class.

(ii) Feminism

None of the women voluntarily defined themselves as feminist. When we asked staff and users about the management of the centre and introduced the idea of gendered models of management, there was need for further explanation. However, when we spoke about feminine or female ways of doing things and treating people and organising, there was an immediate recognition of the differences, without 'dissing' male staff or users.

The language used to greet, talk to one another and the sharing of experience conveyed a genuine sense of women's ways of being. Sentences were punctuated by terms such as 'support', 'love', 'concern' in many ways not dissimilar to terms used by Freire. The women's self confidence in themselves went beyond the superficial as they spoke about the periods they had 'fallen apart':

I was in the park and somebody found me and brought me home crying I can't do it and it's all awful and I'll never get out of it ... They couldn't do it for me but I kind of got a grip of it and took a step up.

The women's self esteem in who they were was strengthened by their reflections, sharing and experiences within the centre. They shared with generosity of themselves the good, the bad and the ugly: they felt energised and validated by their shared and immediate experience - the feeling that they were not on their own. As a group, the women had developed a clothing subculture: a preference for particular tight and revealing styles of fashion. They encouraged one another: one said that it was important to be yourself although the 'norms' characteristic of a social movement were evident. Another aspect was how many of the women spent time together outside the centre, looking after one another's children and socialising together. It appeared to be more of a lifestyle.

A linked social movement was single parenthood. Doing things for and with their children was what initially brought women into the centre. On the surface it was the situation that they all shared. Some came having previously left their partners and some became detached during their time at the centre. Some gained new partners en route. There was a sharp focus on being mothers and wanting things to be better and easier for their children. This was part of their battle to challenge the element of social exclusion.

### (iii) Equal Opportunities

SCF and the centre had a robust and pluralist equal opportunities policy. Whilst undertaking the research we sought to get below the rhetoric. In response to our questioning, many of those interviewed appeared to be surprised that it was even a question. In one woman's words, '[at Trinity House] the racism and sexism is sorted'. It appeared that the SCF agenda provided the framework and the right to question / challenge the unacceptable.

The processes people had gone through to understand and define themselves and the complexities of their identities and those of their children, some of whom were of mixed heritage, formed the engine driving 'the right to respect for everyone'. The result was not based on tolerance but on the celebrating and valuing of difference; a reflection of the 'rights orientated' concepts from new social movements. Other centres, we were told, might have policies on paper but, 'we were *living* it instead of struggling to get there'.

### (iv) Exclusion

The escalation of exclusions from schools led to the establishment of a project for school non-attenders at the centre. Whilst the adult users of the centre fell into categories of social exclusion and experienced the consequent marginalisation and media scape-goating, the young people were formally identified as 'excluded'. Parsons makes a clear link, 'disadvantage and inequalities overlap and join together to socially exclude significant proportions of young people in a general sense and to contribute to the more specific exclusion from school' (Parsons: 1999 p36). The adults' approach to the young people indicated that this was tacitly understood.

### Conclusion

The existence of significant cultural differences means that a single centre cannot provide adequately - let alone better than adequately - for all groups within a neighbourhood comprising many communities. Trinity House's success was partly based on the fact that its activities were focussed. Clarity of ethos and values led to the appreciation that it was inappropriate to attempt to cater for everyone in the geographical area around the centre. The focus also ensured in addition to being obvious whose needs the centre would attempt to meet, it was also clear whose needs will not be met. Some of the ingredients of the recipe which made the centre successful for certain user groups meant that it would never feel appropriate to other local people. This was not a failure but rather symbolic of the retention of a clear vision of the work and its basis in the stated underlying ethos and clear aims. It can be tempting to fund omnibus centres - centres for all - but the resultant conflict produced by housing many groups under a single roof can be destructive rather than the starting point for positive change. A pluralist approach to social organisations and movements within a neighbourhood and the consequent sharing of local power and responsibility by a number of local groups in separate centres provides the opportunity to construct projects and programmes within cultural requirements and expectations. Whilst 'sharing' is accompanied by elements of competition and conflict, there is potential for creative and innovative outcomes.

The Social Exclusion Unit's definition of social exclusion focuses on responding to a range of 'problems', which indicates normative and comparative approaches to formulations of need. The centre's work showed the potential of developing individuals' feeling of inclusion in groups - or social movements - and the impact of popular education in changing lives had a long-term effect. Shifting the focus away from professionally devised definitions of need and formulated welfarist responses and involving workers with skills in approaches to informal developmental education in community contexts offered an alternative paradigm valued by the people involved. The centre was designed to be a model of innovative, good

practice. Our research suggested to us that its strategies and methods are worthy of further research and the establishment of pilot projects on a wider scale.

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## Appendix

The following list of ingredients was included in a paper we provided for SCF as being those we identified at Trinity House:

- i) People and professionals need to be treated as equals regardless of age, gender, race, sexuality and other points of difference. In addition to the aspects on which equal opportunities policies focus, equity needs to encompass differences defined by people and, in doing this, to respect all groups with which people identify. The challenging of prejudice needs to be the norm and creative approaches to confronting supportively need to be developed alongside clear guidelines on what is entirely unacceptable.
- ii) Valuing pluralism not only involves co-existence with other provision but also accepts and manages conflict, seeing it as positive. Effective management of conflict engenders creativity rather than destruction.
- iii) The number of key outcomes identified for a project needs to be limited. This focuses everybody's effort.
- iv) A clear focus does not preclude exploring combinations of work such as housing school non-attenders alongside parents and toddlers. For non-attenders to see the reality of parenthood in non-didactic, informal contexts could be an important outcome. It also emulates the old extended family context.
- iv) The incorporation of opportunities for the employment and training of indigenous workers builds in durability; after the funding has gone, the knowledge and skills remain.
- v) A transparency in professional approach; the conscious erosion of the power relationship between the worker and user put concepts of equality - and the key emphasis on respect - into practice.
- vi) Projects often see their aims and objectives in the local context alone rather than as part of a wider paradigm. In addition to delivering a local service, projects are given self-esteem and confidence when they identify themselves as having the potential to affect good practice in the wider arena and to have an impact on policy debates.

- vii) The focus needs to be on the present and the future when people are changing and being supported in taking risks.
- vii) The shift away from the problem - solution discourse in combination with the foundation created by the rights agenda and respect for individuals creates a context which enables lasting development and change.