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Original Citation

Boyd, Lyn (2011) Whose Night Off? An Exploration of the Issues involved in Youth Work on Friday and Saturday Nights. *A Journal of Youth Work* (8). pp. 7-26. ISSN 1469-0780

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‘Whose Night Off?’ An Exploration of the Issues involved in Youth Work on Friday and Saturday Nights

Abstract

A growing issue for youth work practice in England is that of the challenges to youth work values and practice arising from the compulsion to provide Friday and Saturday Night Youth Work. This article draws on primary and secondary research undertaken through a seminar on Friday and Saturday night youth work to explore the debate about ‘compulsory’ weekend working. It considers the impact specific policies have had on young people, youth workers and youth work on Friday and Saturday evenings in England. The debate highlights competing ‘visions of youth work’ and suggests that workforce reform and compulsory weekend working, along with the consequent re-focusing of the emphasis of youth work, are creating challenges for youth workers adhering to practice based upon traditional youth work principles and values.

Introduction

This article explores the issues around the policy of ‘compulsory’ Friday and Saturday night youth work in England through a piece of research undertaken in a seminar at the University of Huddersfield in May 2010, just as the votes were being counted in the election of a new government. More than seventy people came together to consider the questions and issues arising from the policy and practice of ‘compulsory’ weekend working. Delegates ranged from Heads of Service to part-time hourly paid workers and were drawn from both the third and statutory sectors. This article draws on the discussions in that seminar and on secondary research into the debate about Friday and Saturday night youth work in England to consider the challenges posed for professional youth work practice by the drive to undertake ‘compulsory’ youth work on weekend evenings. The research considers four questions: what impact does such weekend working have on workers’ relationships with young people? What is the impact on youth

workers? How does 'compulsory' weekend working impact on youth work practice and what impact does it have on the youth work profession?

A Changing Delivery Context for English Youth Work

Pre 1997 youth work, the Youth Service and youth policy supported a range of youth work practice which included detached work, club based or 'open youth work', project based work, residential work and the provision of information and advice, see for example Jeffs and Smith (1987). Policies such as the Albemarle Report (Ministry for Education, 1960) and the Thompson Report (HMSO, 1982) focused on specific aspects of such work and acknowledged the importance of 'association' and that of reciprocity and trust in the youth work relationship. Work with young people in their groups was seen to be a key element of youth work practice and the voluntary participation of young people and the negotiation with them of the time, place and content of youth work activity was considered a hallmark of youth work practice and the youth work relationship. Weekend working at that time took place as part of residential activities, specific activities or project work and often as the 'Friday Night Disco' on the open youth club session.

However, these reports also focused on 'problem youth' and targeting of youth work resources and youth work practice. In 2002 *Transforming Youth Services - Resourcing Excellent Youth Services* (REYS) set out requirements for the Youth Service in England and included work with Youth Justice Services. This was a key policy in directing youth work to specific targets, priorities and weekend working, e.g. 'Youth Standard 5 ...80% of larger youth provision is open for 80% of school holidays and weekends' (DfES, 2002: 24). REYS and subsequent policies increased the level of funding for youth work but also increased the focus on 'problem youth'. Further policy developments and guidelines followed including *Aiming High for Young People* (2007) which introduced more targets for youth services and the requirement for provision of 'positive activities for young people'. Other policies detailed how youth services should contribute to the reduction

of anti-social behaviour and youth crime. In this process the government provided funding for positive activities on Friday and Saturday evenings in England and such work became a requirement of local authority youth services. The Youth Crime Action Plan Two years on (2010) and Aiming High for Young People – Three Years On (2010) continued this trend of requiring Friday and Saturday evening working.

These policies introduced a range of elements into youth work provision and practice including the 'targeted youth support' which required work with specified individuals in 'multi-agency' work with other agencies such as Youth Offending Teams. They also included the requirement to work at specific times, with specific agencies (such as the police), in specific locations where anti-social behaviour was known to be occurring. They introduced the requirement to work with specified young people e.g. the fifty young people most involved, or at risk of involvement in, youth offending or anti-social behaviour in a particular area.

Such policy developments in England initiated a re-focusing of the emphasis of youth work to the social control of young people and changing delivery patterns based on marketisation of activities for young people (Giroux, 2009) and on the individualisation of youth and community work practice (Smith, 2003). This focus points to the pathologisation of young people (Mizen, 2004) and the policy of targeting specific young people and the introduction of compulsion into youth and community work presents challenges for youth workers adhering to practice based upon traditional youth work values. The implications for youth workers and youth work arising from these issues and practitioners' responses were the subject of the discussions at the seminar.

Field Research

The 'Whose Night Off' seminar sought to identify examples of good practice in weekend working. The central question of 'Whose Night off', young people's or youth worker's?', generated a small scale research project through the gathering of primary data presented in discussions at the seminar and relevant case study material and through secondary research in analysing relevant policy documents.

Sample Selection

The seventy participants were mixed in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, disability and sexual orientation. Participants consisted of managers of, and practitioners from, Youth and Integrated Youth Support Services, students of youth and community work, lecturers in youth and community work and police officers. Thus the research group comprised a range of people involved in professional youth and community work to illuminate understanding of Friday and Saturday evening working. The participants had self-selected and therefore could not be claimed to be a random representative sample. Nevertheless, as Kumar (2005:165) points out 'in qualitative research the issue of sampling has little significance....a study based on the information from one individual or undertaken to describe one event or situation is perfectly valid,' which would suggest that the experience of seventy people of a particular youth and community work practice is a reasonable sample.

Research Design and Methodology

The research project was designed to identify and interrogate some of the issues involved in the policy of Friday and Saturday evening working using a case study strategy as defined by Robson (2002:178) 'case study is a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context.' A flexible design was required to explore 'what is going on in a novel situation where there is little to guide what one should be looking for.' (Robson 2002:182).

The research gathered qualitative primary data, the rationale for which is its 'richness and openness' (Birley and Moreland 1998:141) and the methodology selected was based upon the 'World Cafe' approach which is 'a flexible, ...process for fostering collaborative dialogue, sharing mutual knowledge, and discovering new opportunities for action. [which is] based on living systems thinking,' (Brown and Isaacs, 2006) This approach enabled the identification of participants 'starting points and... their experiences and understandings of the complex, contradictory and fast changing working situations in which they find themselves.' (Merton and Davies, 2009:5)

Ethical Considerations

The research methods focused on gathering evidence from the discussions of participants in the seminar therefore the seminar could be viewed as a legitimate research forum. Several ethical issues arose from using the discussions in such a research forum: the informed consent of participants, the maintenance of confidentiality and the anonymity of the participants due to the sensitive nature of some of the discussions.

Participants had self-selected to attend the seminar and they were keen to have their voices and opinions heard in a safe manner. Prior to the discussions the research and its aims were explained to the participants and their consent was sought. It was explained that they could withdraw from the discussions at any point and that they could control the data collection process through the recording of their comments and thereby their consent through identifying what they did and did not want to be recorded and captured as evidence.

The discussion took place in self-selected groups in which they identified the issues they thought that Friday and Saturday evening work raised. There were serious challenges to overcome in designing this research process as

many of the participants were employed practitioners or managers and would be discussing issues which they might feel were sensitive as they and their employers were all involved in delivering 'compulsory' Friday and Saturday working. Participants were asked to record their discussions through making notes on the tablecloths and / or post it notes provided which meant that participants could select which elements of their discussion they wanted to record. This methodology addressed the issue of the sensitivity of the material and discussions, however it also weakened the recording process and with hindsight it can be seen that the addition of rapporteurs would have enhanced the process which could have taken into account participants' wishes concerning what was or was not recorded. Participants were also asked 'In the light of the election results, what message would you like to send the new government concerning working with young people on Friday and Saturday nights?' and were offered the opportunity to provide a message in a 'ballot box'. Finally participants completed seminar evaluation 'sheets which gave a last opportunity to make points concerning their views of the issues involved in Friday and Saturday evening working.

Reliability and Limitations of the Research

The research methodology introduced an element of data triangulation into the research process which, according to Denscombe (2008:136), enables 'the validity of findings... [to] be checked using different sources of information. The process ensured a level of reliability of the data as it used a cross-sectional design which is 'best suited to studies aimed at finding out the prevalence of a phenomenon, situation, problem attitude or issue.' (Kumar 2005:93). The research was designed to gain a snap-shot of the issues in 'compulsory' weekend working at the time of the seminar. The use of the World Cafe methodology resulted in a number of limitations to the research; the process gave the participants considerable control over the discussions and the research was undertaken in a very short timescale of a morning seminar. Whilst this had positive effects in providing participants with freedom to discuss issues of importance to them in weekend working, it limited the range and depth of some discussion, especially those concerning

young people's views of weekend working and the impact on their relationship with youth and community work practitioners.

The transferability to a wider practitioner population is also limited, as transferability would depend on a wide range of factors which could not be controlled or monitored. For example exactly how each organisation or practitioner implements Friday and Saturday evening working will be different. However, the research can claim to have reliably identified a number of issues arising from Friday and Saturday evening working as it 'enable[s] a depth of understanding about the situation or events being described [which]...is particularly valuable in terms of transferability of findings.' ((Denscombe 2008:300). The secondary research consisted of a review of the literature and an analysis of a range of policy and guideline documents concerning youth work and weekend working. In addition a small amount of case study material was gathered through attendance at relevant meetings and through individual discussions with youth work practitioners. In the following discussions participants' responses have been coded as PI (post it-notes), TC (tablecloth comments), BP (ballot papers) or EC (evaluation comments)

Discussion

The field research provided practice insights about innovative responses to the challenges of Friday and Saturday night working. Data were provided about youth worker's responses to weekend working; participants discussed concerns for the protection of workers, concerns about worker's own families and they identified good practice in weekend working. The data provided some evidence of young people's responses to weekend working, although this was more limited than expected. More detailed evidence was generated around issues of youth work practice and the impact of policies on that practice and the purpose, principles and values of youth work.

Results

The research identified practitioners' concerns about the re-focusing of youth work practice and values towards a social control approach to youth work and included concerns not only about youth work practice but also youth work principles and values. Participants expressed particular concern about workforce reform and their work / life balance. Five key themes emerged from the research: the individualisation of youth work and the identification of 'problem' young people, the youth work relationship, the marketisation of youth work, workforce reform and youth work values, principles and purpose. The discussion now considers these themes.

The Individualisation of Youth Work and the Pathologising of Young People.

The data provided evidence of youth work as intervention and crime prevention with an emphasis laid upon youth work as an element in the control and surveillance of young people. One example cited was that of the practice of '*triage*' (PI:9) – taken from medical practice, this is the placement of YOT workers in police custody suites... to ensure that young people who get into trouble are given the right intervention from the start.' (Youth Crime Action Plan: Update, 2010) This policy context moved youth work and youth services towards focusing on individuals rather than focusing on young people in their groups and called into question the voluntary relationship in youth work. According to Jeffs and Smith (2002:49) 'group work lay at the conceptual heart of youth work' whereas these policies based youth work on work with the individual. The focus on individual rather than groups of young people is based upon a 'deficiency model' (Davies, 1986 cited in Mizen, 2004: 57) view of young people which sees them as a problem and causes them to become socially excluded. In contrast the traditional youth work view of young people is based upon an optimistic view of their potential and capacity for development. Smith (2003: 47) suggests that, in discussing targeting, 'the focus on 'at-risk' young people... involves a movement away from what might be described as social capital building towards a more individualised social pathology.'

In policies such as the *Youth Crime Action Plan* (2008), youth work is seen as an intervention aimed at prevention or reduction of youth offending and anti-social behaviour, with the role of youth workers being 'to control, monitor, distract, 'develop' and oversee 'troublesome' young people.' (Jeffs and Smith, 2002:55) Participants were concerned about this approach and even advised the new government against this trend: *'Do not continue down the road of 'young people as problem' route, see the potential of individuals and communities.'* (BP: GG)

The Youth Work Relationship

The data showed that practitioners have a strong view of the importance of the youth work relationship and the trust established between youth workers and young people and it showed that they are concerned to protect that relationship. The research produced evidence of the threat to the youth work relationship through the impact of youth worker's involvement in 'soft policing' This impact can be identified in the following two examples which show a negative impact. *'A worker accompanied police officers to known hotspots of antisocial behaviour on Friday evening and found that young people were reluctant to engage in conversation. The young people commented about the worker being seen as a police officer.'* (Case Study 1) And *'a worker was engaging with young people who were drinking in a park alongside work with a police officer when other police officers came and confiscated the bottles and issued a penalty notice requiring the young person to leave the area and not return within 48 hours.'* (Case Study 2)

Youth Workers' involvement in 'soft policing' is further corroborated by Davies and Merton (2009:38) who identified that 'In several cases outlined in different authorities, youth workers had had to resist being drawn into the enforcement process.' Thus the focus on young people's involvement in crime and anti-social behaviour and the view of young people as 'problem'

young people was identified as undermining the youth work relationship. As Davies (2010: 2) states 'youth work has based its practice on the assumption that young people would choose to take part, almost always in their own (leisure) time.' However through policies like *Operation Staysafe*, youth workers are not working with young people on a voluntary basis in providing 'non-negotiable youth support' (Home Office, 2008). Under this policy 'Street Teams' of police and other workers, including youth workers, take young people home or to a safe place until they are collected by their parents. There is some case evidence of the use of youth centres as such 'safe places' which further introduces a 'soft policing' element into the youth work relationship.

Practitioners suggested that young people's response to Friday and Saturday evening youth work was variable and there were mixed reports concerning young people's response with a general agreement that Saturday evenings were not very popular: *'Friday night's busy but young people and police don't want youth work on a Saturday'* (PI:48) ; *'19-25 year olds cause anti-social behaviour in town centres so younger teenagers avoid city centres at weekends'* (PI:55) As a result participants focused on their practice, in response to what they perceived as young people's view of weekend working and the implications for the youth work relationship. The discussion supported the concept of weekend working as a modern response to young people and participants started to identify possible innovations which could support those responses in order to maintain their relationships with young people:

'Build up joint working by working in different contexts - street / club / school' (PI:23), *'Big Things work at weekends - not little youth clubs, offer something different, you need a joined up strategy to make Fri / Sat night work e.g. free admission to sports centres'* (TC:ff) *'PAYP as a source of funding for Friday and Saturday nights has been excellent - commissioning new and innovative projects. This has to continue'* (BP:C)

These responses suggest that in this move to individualised practice and in the requirement to work with young people without their voluntary participation youth workers are pushed to develop innovative practice, to find new ways of encouraging recalcitrant young people to 'engage' with youth services. This is supported by Merton (2001: 4) identified a number of drivers of innovation which included 'some national initiative or policy that requires the service or organisation to respond in new ways.' In this process it is important to recognise that 'social policy impacts upon the space for professional youth work practice' (Dickie, 2009) and therefore upon the space for such innovation; the consequent reduction in that space through the limitations of imposed 'visions' of youth work not only impacts on the youth work relationship but also on the ability of youth work practice to respond to young people and their needs

The Marketisation of youth work

Some of these comments linked to the focus on positive activities on Friday and Saturday evenings and youth work as leisure provision which is open to marketisation. The policy of weekend working fits with this framework as the, then, Minister for Children, Young People and Families stated 'it's about activities rather than informal education' (Barrett 2005 cited in Jeffs and Smith (2006:28). A PriceWaterhouseCoopers report on the potential market for the provision of positive activities for young people (DfES, 2006) provides an insight into the significance of this view of youth work. In this report the focus is on 'growing and developing the future market for positive activities' (DFES, 2006:9). Smith (2003) has identified that there are problems in the way that youth work policies have framed youth work. 'Education and the work of youth services are being commodified.... youth work agencies have had to market their activities... [and] young people and their parents become 'consumers. (Smith, 2003: 48) This is further corroborated by Giroux (2009) suggesting that there is a 'larger framework of a politics and market philosophy that view children as commodities... treating young people as individual units of economic potential and walking commodities.' The

implication of this marketisation is that young people will want to 'consume' youth work as positive activities. However, there were mixed reports concerning young people's response with a general agreement that Saturday evenings were not very popular. According to an article in CYPN 'Young people [are] lukewarm about weekend opening...young people would prefer youth clubs to be open between Monday and Thursday evenings.' (Watson, 2010)

Workforce Reform

Participants recognised that modernisation of service provision has strong implications for workforce reform and there were many concerns about the impact of this reform on youth workers and youth work practice. In addition they recognised that compulsory weekend working would create difficulties for them in managing their personal lives and their work. Through modernisation the JNC, the mechanism by which youth workers are recognised as qualified in England, was restructured to include the role of Youth Support Worker as well as the Professional Grade Youth Worker. (JNC, 2004) Proposals were developed for the training of the Integrated Youth Support workforce which included youth workers; the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) was tasked with taking these reforms forward. This created a range of concerns amongst youth workers which focused on job security and the security of the youth work profession as CWDC 'agreed that the youth workforce reform programme should be underpinned by a skill set that is based on a social pedagogical model of skills and training ' (CWDC, 2009:3) rather than on informal education.

Data showed a strong focus on JNC and Terms and Conditions and on training needs. As part of the modernisation process some local authorities had moved to 'a single status pay spine' and some workers were not covered by JNC. Participants questioned their '*Terms and Conditions: Should youth workers get paid for working weekends?*' (TC:II) Participants identified the issues arising from changes to terms and conditions and to multi-agency

working on Friday and Saturday evenings. *'[There are] difficulties of different terms and conditions for Friday / Saturday [multi-agency working].'* (P1:78) as some workers would be working in the 'Street teams' with others not employed on JNC. Some of the concerns focused on training; calling for *'Health and Safety training for youth workers'* (TC:l) and *'Training of staff to understand each other's cultures and values'* (P1:63). However some of the concerns expressed by participants related to poor practice in the implementation of workers' terms and conditions and workers' lack of understanding of those terms and conditions: *'If we work weekends we should get two days off in the week.'* (TC:nn)

There was a strong commitment to providing services for young people but participants were concerned that their commitment might be exploited. *'Friday and Saturday nights are when young people need somewhere to go But remember do not exploit staff. We work hard in difficult circumstances and should retain JNC terms and conditions and be properly valued and recompensed for what we do.'* (BP:D) There was also considerable concern about the youth work profession and the quality of the workforce. *'If you're not careful you will lose the experienced youth workers who have a crucial role in teaching and modelling good youth work practice'* (BP:CC)

The overwhelming concern expressed by participants concerned the impact of compulsory weekend working on their family and how they would manage their family life. *'What's bad about week end working? My own family, I need to think about them also'* (P1:88) and *'Every child matters what about ours?'* (P1:83) Under JNC youth and community workers work ten sessions per week which can include up to eight evenings in a fortnight. These conditions enable youth workers to work weekends and have traditionally included some weekend clubs, detached work or residential work. These programmes (and therefore the worker's working hours) were negotiated with young people, thereby giving workers some element of control of their working hours through those negotiations. This flexibility and autonomy enables

workers to balance their work and family life whilst working 'unsocial' hours. However requiring a worker to work every Friday and Saturday evening without those negotiations is a different matter as it removes any chance of negotiation both for young people and the youth workers and it limits the youth workers autonomy.

According to Gornick, Heron and Eisenbrey (2007) 'parents throughout these [OECD] countries are struggling to balance the demands of employment with the needs of their families'. Yet the participants questioned '*Long term – where is family time? It's different in other European countries*' (TC:y) Kotowska, Matysiak, Styrzyc et al (2010) suggest that, like the participants, 'Europeans are more dissatisfied with the amount of time they spend with their family than with the amount of time spent at work, family life being more adapted to employment requirements than work arrangements are to family life.' They cite 'working hours (non-standard hours, more intense work)' (ibid) as one of the reasons for this dissatisfaction.

This raised a question of importance both for youth workers, youth work and for society as a whole in managing the work/life balance. Participants asked

why are we tasked to look after young people on a weekend, every weekend?...Young people need to spend quality time with their family, if the family are not meeting this role then we need to look at why and what we can put in place to support these families? (BP:G)

These questions once again raise the issue of competing 'visions of youth work' with 'compulsory' Friday and Saturday evening being viewed by youth workers as a form of 'babysitting' of young people because of the difficulties of engaging with young people on Friday and Saturday evenings: '*Fridays - if you are going to engage positively you need to do this in the early evening before they are drunk - or your time will be wasted as young people can't remember the engagements.*' (PI:50)

Youth work values, principles and purpose

The purpose of youth work and youth work values and principles were raised by participants. The data indicated that youth workers are concerned about the tensions between a young person-led negotiated service and a policy-led provision. *We have always done weekend work negotiated with young people. What happens to that?* (TC:n) Participants pointed out that *'work with the police is establishing a particular agenda around Anti-Social Behaviour but it should be our youth work agenda and more inclusive, regarding e.g. disability etc.'* (TC:ee)

Key youth work values are that 'young people choose to be involved' and 'the work starts where young people are' (DfES, 2002:29) and the data would suggest that participants have concerns about how the policy of weekend working fits with these values. In particular participants identified impacts around issues of inclusion and youth work values.

The Friday / Saturday agenda focuses on limiting Anti-Social Behaviour and Crime. Does this: A) Move away from the core values /ethics of youth work? B) Marginalise those young people who aren't involved in Friday Night Anti-Social Behaviour? And C) will this take youth work away from areas with lower Anti-Social Behaviour levels?
(TC:f-i)

Further issues were focused around the targeted versus universal divide in youth work provision and especially around youth service outcomes. Data suggested that youth workers would recommend universal services which encompass targeted support. *'Keep universal and engage with targeted'*. (PI:25). However targeted youth support policy sets out a separate provision which is aimed at early intervention as 'a central aim of targeted youth support is to help vulnerable young people early, to address their problems as soon as possible and prevent their problems escalating' (DfES, 2007:4)

Participants' concerns have some support from the literature which suggests a trend from universal to targeted services; in 1987 Douglas Smith suggested that 'the traditional youth service as it has been understood will become more the province of the voluntary sector whilst the statutory side shifts towards being a specialised targeted service focused on a variety of particular needs and groups of young people.'(1987: 23). The voluntary and community sector are involved in modernising and delivering youth services through the commissioning process as part of the 'third way', the involving of public, voluntary and private organisations in youth service developments. However, Gibson and Price (2001:60) have concluded that 'domestic reform of youth and education services is increasing private sector participation and private ownership of service infrastructure.'

The concerns of policy makers can be found in the measurement of the impact of youth work which depends upon the aims identified in the particular 'vision of youth work'. Historically 'statements of purpose for the youth service emphasised not only the recreational but also the educational aspects of youth work', (Young, 2006:2), rather than social care in the form of 'babysitting', or 'social control in the form of 'soft policing'. Participants recognised that the impact of youth work was measured by the achievement of identified outcomes but frequently youth work operates outside those specific outcomes and weekend working is in the same position. '*At under 18 nights at night clubs a youth worker was needed to diffuse tensions, to support young people at the end of the session but there are no "outcomes" that can be recorded*' (P1:46). It was noted that there were '*no recorded and accredited outcomes from detached work at weekends*' (P1:51) However, which work can provide 'outcomes' will depend on the specific targets chosen and upon the 'vision of youth work' underpinning those targets.

In addition participants recognised that in the move to weekend working they were expected to achieve accredited and recorded outcomes when the young people they work with regard themselves as being in 'social' time. As

a consequence participants were concerned about the link between youth work and targets for the youth service.

'The role of government in determining targets for the youth service needs to be clearly defined. There should be some flexibility and clarity in terms of the set targets. Sometimes, we youth workers try to hit the targets and miss the whole point of youth work. This is clearly placing strain on the nature of youth work.' (BP:U)

Participants made a strong plea to government to *'Value Youth Work and Youth Services and its contribution to the agenda around places to go and things to do and 'youths causing annoyance'* (BP:A) The focus here was on youth work practice: and there was concern for professional values and processes; especially as the policy of weekend working is based on the, then, government's notion of "a youth professional status across the sector, underpinned by a social pedagogy approach". (DCSF, 2008:51)

The impact on funding was seen to be a central issue: *'Not enough resources for weekend working, it's a shift in resources from the week. Will that mean lack of things to do in the week? How will this be funded in the future?'* (TC:aa) and *'the funding for Friday and Saturday night provision should become part of the core funding of youth and community work.'* (TC:d). Funding remains a central issue for youth work and youth services and is tied to the particular 'vision' of youth work espoused by the policy makers. Different 'visions' of youth work came through in the research and were particularly focused around the process of association, see Jeffs and Smith (1999), Batsleer and Davies (2010). *'We need to look at values, building community spirit to bring people together, adults and young people. To educate parents re: young people's needs'* (TC:j) and *'Young people need adult role models; these need to be from their own community as this creates sustainability / stronger communities'* (PI:13)

Participants put forward a strong argument for viewing a role for youth work as being one of educating young people as outlined by Batsleer (2008: 21) 'informal education starts from assumptions about the potential and capacities of young people and their rights to develop those capacities.' The participants were concerned as they felt that *'Young people need a good foundation in order to move on and be a positive person, if this is not met then this is when we start to see the consequences through ASB, teenage pregnancy etc.'* (BP:H). Nevertheless the prevailing view concerning the role of youth work today, arising from both the primary and secondary research, could be summed up in the article by Hillier (2010): 'They [youth services] are the ultimate prevention and early intervention service that help to turn around young lives...and save taxpayers money.' Whatever the 'vision' of youth work and youth services put forward by policy makers the data suggests that youth work practitioners are concerned to develop and practice youth work as they view it. *'There is a need for us to actively become involved in shaping and designing the Friday and Saturday agenda.'* (BP:R)

Conclusion

The research highlighted the different vision of youth work to be found in the policy-led form of weekend working; the data suggests that the policy-led vision was based on an individualised and pathologising model of youth work underpinned by concepts of social pedagogy, whilst the participants' vision was based on an associational and developmental model underpinned by concepts of informal education. The data identified that these competing visions hold significance in understanding and agreeing youth work values, principles and practice with participants demonstrating the difficulties of maintaining their vision of youth work when they felt that those principles and values were compromised. The research identified that youth work practitioners were innovative in their response both to young people's needs and the policy context and they supported a modern response to those needs. However, they re-iterated that youth work is predicated upon the youth work relationship - the relationship between youth worker and young person which is challenged by 'compulsory' weekend working. The research

would indicate that young people's interest in weekend work is focused on having somewhere to chill, socialise, drink and have fun – 'a night off'. However, according to the evidence produced by the seminar it seems that 'compulsory' weekend working does not have a great impact on workers' relationships with young people due to their ability to respond, innovate and maintain those relationships, although the space available to innovate is reducing. The impact on youth workers appears to be far greater; they are presented with the dilemma of how to balance their work and family commitments with reduced autonomy whilst working unsocial hours. Under these circumstances their terms and conditions become important in facilitating that balance. The evidence showed a considerable concern amongst practitioners about changes to youth work practice and therefore the youth work profession.

Whose night off?

The research found that 'whose night off' is a question about both youth workers and young people, in recognising their right to 'a night off' we recognise and value them both and we recognise and value youth work itself. The conclusion drawn from this research is that the findings indicate that Friday and Saturday evening work, depending upon the vision of youth work, can also be viewed as a contribution to parents' and societies' 'night off'. This calls into question competing visions of the purpose, role and values of the youth service. How we answer the question 'whose night off?' depends upon which 'version' of youth work is practiced in weekend working and the principles and values involved in that practice.

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