



TITHE AN OIREACHTAIS

**An Comhchoiste um Ghnóthaí Ealaíon, Spóirt,
Turasóireachta, Pobail, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta**

Éifeachtacht Clubanna Óige sa Phobal

HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS

**Joint Committee on Arts, Sport, Tourism, Community,
Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs**

Effectiveness of Youth Clubs in the Local Community

**Meán Fómhair 2003
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Table of Contents

1. Report of James Breen, T.D. including Conclusions and Recommendations
2. Recommendations of the Joint Committee

Appendix I: Orders of Reference of Joint Committee

Appendix II: Membership of Joint Committee

Effectiveness of Youth Clubs in the Local Community



**A Report to the Joint Committee
on Arts, Sport, Tourism,
Community, Rural
and Gaeltacht Affairs**

By Mr. James Breen, T.D.

**Researched by Flan Spaight MA
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Introduction

“We have a brilliant youth club!.....we went bowling last week and have a disco next week”

“Our youth club is great everyone just hangs out and has fun”

“The youth club is great for keeping kids off the streets”

“The young people in our youth club gain a lot from our personal development programme”

“The youth club is boring”

“I go to our club every Friday night but nothing ever happens”

“The youth club should do something about the drink problem”

“How did you get on at youth club?.....Fine!.....What did ye do?....Loads!....”

Different opinions on the value of a youth club, and many more could be added to give us a jumble of opinions on what a youth club is, what it should do, what makes it enjoyable or not, and what value it is to the community. In this report we intend to examine the effectiveness of youth clubs in their local communities and offer recommendations in relation to improvements that can be made.

In the compilation of this report we have drawn on our own experiences as youth workers, both in a voluntary and professional capacity, and on various effectiveness reports submitted to the Youth Affairs section of the Department of Education. We also carried out case studies on two youth clubs that were able to provide us with reports of their activities over the past ten years. This allowed for a longitudinal study on the evaluation and history of their effectiveness. We would like to thank Kilnamona and Kilnaboy youth clubs for helping us in this regard.

In chapter one we explore what is meant by youth work and offer a number of definitions used by young people, youth workers and the community in general. Chapter two strives to put a context on the development of youth work policy in Ireland. Chapter three outlines the activities carried out in various youth clubs with a view to giving a clearer picture of what a youth club is and the diversity of programmes on offer. Chapter four discusses quality in youth work and ways of

measuring such processes. Chapter five offers an analysis on the effectiveness of youth clubs in local communities by reference to the research undertaken. Finally chapter six offers a summary of the main findings of this report and the recommendations for improvements in this area.

Throughout the report you will notice we have used various articles, submissions, letters, and comments regarding youth work and youth clubs in their communities. These are by way of allowing you, the reader, access to some of the rich material that was kindly made available to us, and to encourage you to form your own picture on youth clubs and their effectiveness from the words of those involved directly in the process.

Table of Contents

	<u>Page Number</u>
Chapter 1	
What is Youth Work?	4
What the state says:	4
What youth work practitioners say:	5
What participants say:	6
Chapter 2	
Development of Youth Work Policy	8
Chapter 3	
What is a Youth Club?	16
Chapter 4	
Quality in Youth Work	18
Models for measurement	24
Chapter 5	
The Effectiveness of Youth Clubs	27
Young People	27
Needs of young people	29
Parents	37
Wider Community	41
The Youth Service	44
Volunteering	44
Contracts and Accountability	50
Standards	52
Selection, Recruitment, Training of Staff	54
Fluidity and Flexibility of the work	56
Outcomes	57
Chapter 6	
Conclusions and Recommendations	59
List of References	68

What is Youth Work?

Jason

Youth Work is difficult to define in a precise way in that it is not an exact science, it is a relatively new process, and its functions are influenced by the varying perceptions of the state, youth organisations and participants alike. In this chapter we will endeavour to offer various definitions of youth work in an effort to portray the multiplicity of expectations of a process that is essentially educational and enjoyable.

Later in this report we will offer a brief historical account of the development of youth policy in Ireland, but for now we will concentrate on the definitions of youth work offered in significant government publications on the matter.

What the state says:

The Bruton Report accepted that the primary objective of youth work is the education of young people in an informal setting (Bruton, 1977, p.9), and recognised that education is not the sole prerogative of the school and that at times the schooling system is inadequate and “may even permanently dull the eager curiosity which is the very stuff that education feeds upon” (Bruton, 1977, p.1). The O’Sullivan Report defines youth work as “essentially concerned with the provision of strategies, opportunities and services to meet the developmental and other needs of young people, its aim is to help young people towards a more secure, independent, creative and active role in society, by enabling them to formulate values and goals to plan for the future and accept responsibility for their decisions, to develop relationships with individuals and society and to make their own contribution to the community at large” (O’Sullivan, 1980, p.11). “In Partnership With Youth” defines the purpose of youth work as “assisting all young people to become self-reliant, responsible and active participants in a democratic society...to result in an Irish society characterised by a more participatory and active citizenry.... It has been seen not only as a fulfillment of a duty to our young people, but also as a means of safeguarding the future well-being of Irish society” (National Youth Policy, 1985, p.9).

Jason had a lot of problems in his life. He was always in trouble, at home, at school, in the youth club, in the community.

The youth worker tried her best to involve him in activities and to give him a chance. They got on quite well together.

When she left, Jason met the new youth worker and told her “I was the last youth worker’s pet, and I bet you before long I’ll be yours too”

The contact Jason had with the youth worker was probably the first and only positive contact he had with a significant adult, and for him it was important to maintain this contact with the new worker.

In the Youth Work Bill 2000, youth work is defined as “a planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young persons through their voluntary participation, and which is –

- (a) complementary to their formal, academic or vocational education and training;
and
- (b) provided primarily by voluntary youth work organisations” (Youth Work Bill, 2000, Section 3).

It can be seen that from 1977 to 2000 the state’s definition of youth work varied from the informal education of young people, to the provision of opportunities to meet the needs of young people in taking an active role in society, to enhancing the personal and social development of young people through their voluntary participation in a planned programme of education provided primarily by voluntary youth work organisations.

What youth work practitioners say:

Youth work has always embraced alternative and competing modes of practice, which have revolved around such issues as whether it should be centre-based or open access provision. However, differences between youth work approaches have often been exaggerated whilst key commonalities have been overlooked. In particular, insufficient attention has been paid to the core activity of creating educational dialogue through the medium of conversation within the setting of a voluntary relationship (Jeffs, 1997, p.159). Youth work, and informal education generally is built around conversation. The job involves talking with people, listening to them, participating in encounters and experiences. A lot of what we do is achieved by being there, being around. Our task is to foster environments that make for good conversations. Conversation is not about trying to win an argument, but about trying to understand and learn. This does not mean that we do not debate matters and take up positions that challenge. What it does involve though, is being open to the possible truth of what others are saying. This makes it a risky business. To be open to what others are saying we have to bring our own beliefs and feelings into play. In other words we have to enter conversations with a readiness to change our view of things (Smith, 1995, p.4). Thus, informal education lies at the heart of all youth work, but how it is structured has always been

profoundly influenced by the assumed status of the young people upon whom attention is focused (Jeffer, 1997, p.159).

The aim of mainline youth work is to assist in the personal, social and spiritual development of all young people. Fundamental to this is a belief that adults and young people should work collectively to identify needs and possible solutions. In addition to this, youth work with disadvantaged young people seeks to actively target people affected by social exclusion and rural isolation. It does this with special programmes and initiatives designed to tackle the specific social needs of these individuals and groups (CYS, 2000, p.7). The job of the youth worker (paid and voluntary) is not only, or even primarily, to serve young people who need remedial treatment; s/he is responsible for a much wider service, offering opportunities to a range of young people to develop their own potentials. But if young people are to be given real opportunities for personal development, they will need to be caught up in the kind of experience that is likely to extend them (Button, 1976, p.141).

Youth workers see the primary role of youth work as a process whereby adults and young people work together on a voluntary basis, engaging in educational dialogue through the medium of conversation. Emphasis is placed on the relationships formed in order to facilitate the empowerment of young people and aid their personal, social and spiritual development. Young people are involved in the identification of their individual needs and offered a range of opportunities to develop their own potential and to help combat such problems as social exclusion and rural isolation.

What participants say:

Young people don't use the jargon of state or youth work organisations in defining or discussing youth work. Those that are involved in youth work programmes tend to define the process in a way that expresses what they get from the experience. They tend to describe the activities they are engaged in rather than any of the aims and objectives. There is an agenda of participation, enjoyment, and feeling secure in developing a positive relationship with the adults involved. In the experimental and sometimes turbulent world of the developing adolescent, the formation of a positive relationship with a youth worker or voluntary leader is often a factor of key

significance in the lives of young people. Their involvement in activities with groups of their peers in a secure environment, with the knowledge they have adult support and respect, aids the adolescent in their journey of discovery on the road to adulthood. The relationship with the leader or youth worker is what most young people refer to when discussing what they have gained from youth work. Young people who are not directly involved in youth work programmes tend to view them from the margins in a somewhat envious way, and feel they are being denied a right to participate in a way that other young people can. Combined with other exclusionary factors, this non-involvement can have a significant negative impact on how these young people progress in their journey through adolescence, and their future involvement in society.

Extracts from "A letter from Joe"

I'm going to describe my involvement with youth clubs. It is much more than my involvement with youth clubs it is a turning point in my life as it turned out. It is a time when an aggressive young boy turned into a calm mature young man. The person in question is me, Joseph.

After my first few weeks as a member I felt very let down as it was nothing that I had expected. There was no organisation but when there were actually leaders attending the club it was either their way or the club was closed for the night, so members quickly learned to say nothing and do as they were told. In a sense the youth club was like school to me, you were treated like a kid and you should be seen and not heard. Members never got a chance to share their views because leaders were always right because they were older. Taking part in youth club events didn't bother us because we weren't told about them, so we never knew what we were missing. This all changed when friends of ours started asking why we never take part in any events. When we approached the leaders with this question and in reply to our question the youth club was closed down for the rest of the year.

My third and final year as a member was a changing time for the youth club. The year started off again with new leadership. These had to be the worst leaders as far as I can remember. Even though they probably meant the best but it didn't turn out this way. John was too quiet and shy, he can't talk to anyone and look them in the eye. Michael on the other hand was too bossy. Every night he turned up there was a big argument between him and the members, he was too aggressive, on the other hand I'm not saying the members were saints.

When we got to the basketball I went looking for the funny looking man with the glasses to tell him we were there. When I met him he told me he was a youth worker and explained what that was, it was my first time every seeing or hearing about youth workers. As far as I was concerned he was the guy in charge of the games. At this stage I was beginning to feel very grown up. This was mainly because somebody had asked me to organise something and it worked. I got the bus and a team organised. Secondly, there I was in Ennis talking to an adult and he was talking back to me and treating me as an adult. This was the first time anything like this had happened to me.

The next thing really took me by surprise. I was introduced to another adult, Seamus, but it was the way I was introduced as "the man from Miltown". Now I was really grown up and very mature. I was sitting down drinking tea and talking to two adults in a mature conversation. We weren't talking about school and sports - it was grown up talk, just things in general.

The rest of the year finished out well with an excellent tour to finish up the year. It was a camping tour for the members of the club. The best thing I got out of that weekend was watching my cousin taking part in the activities, he was so young and full of life it made me feel right old because I feel he is just like how I used to be. I hope in years to come he can have the same wonderful experience as I had being involved with youth clubs.

Development of Youth Work Policy

In order for us to understand how youth clubs of today are structured, and to explore some of the reasons behind the activities and programmes on offer, it is necessary to discuss the development of youth work policy in Ireland. In this chapter we will discuss the historical development of youth work policy and the effects on youth clubs and youth work practice in general.

The latter half of the 19th century and the early 1900s saw a transformation in many spheres of British society that were highly influential on later developments in Ireland. The beginnings of youth work emerged simultaneously with the process of industrialization that occurred at that time (Jenkinson, 1996, p.35). According to Davies and Gibson "Modern youth work is a phenomenon of industrialised society.....and came into existence because of the special social conditions and requirements of an urbanized and mechanized way of life"(1967, p.23-24). The industrial revolution transformed the nature of the family, employment patterns, where people lived, and leisure time. Up until then the family unit had a primary role as most aspects of everyday life took place within the context of family, including the provision of employment and the protection, regulation and development of young people (Hurley, 1992, p.4). The family was a self-contained entity requiring little or no involvement from the outside world. Thus there was little need for any organized statutory or voluntary intervention in the lives of young people (Devlin, 1989, p.11). The industrial revolution had a huge impact on family life, and as people were now going out to work, daily life began increasingly to revolve around activities outside the home such as work, school and leisure. The impact of the industrial revolution was particularly marked in relation to the situation of young people. There was a significant change in their circumstances and also in the way they were perceived by the wider society. There was a concern among the middle-class regarding the types of leisure activities being pursued by working-class youth, and at the rising levels of juvenile crime. These factors contributed to a disquiet among the middle classes about

In shaping youth work policy the Republic of Ireland has an open, loose and pluralist approach that is highly political with much bargaining and negotiation. While this bottom-up approach empowers voluntary groups and supports flexibility, there is a serious lack of policy clarity. The fragmentation and diversity of the service makes it difficult at times to see a 'whole' youth service and to bring about effective co-ordination. Some areas are very well catered for while other areas do not get covered at all. At the end of the day, youth policy probably gets made neither in a planned rational manner, nor incrementally over a period of time but rather in a 'knee-jerk' reactive manner (Corry, 1992, p.9).

working-class young people that was instrumental in bringing about the first youth work initiatives in Britain (Jenkinson, 1996, p.35-37).

These first initiatives were aimed at the social and moral improvements of adolescents, particularly young boys (Hurley, 1992, p.2). Early youth work was mainly recreation based and the aims focused on character-building and the moral development of young people. The first organisations involved in youth work in Britain were, for the most part, church based and strongly rooted in religious conviction. They operated on a voluntary basis and focused their work around industrialized, inner city, slum areas. The main function of the youth worker was seen in terms of being a role model for the young people. The early youth work initiatives in Ireland bore a close resemblance to their British counterparts and were, for the most part, church based. Prior to 1921 most youth organisations were Protestant and their main aim was the social and moral development of young people. However after 1921 a few factors, particular to Ireland, greatly influenced the development of youth work in the country and have contributed significantly to the nature and character of the youth services here. These influencing factors were Nationalism, the Roman Catholic Church, and limited State intervention.

Nationalism was a strong force in Irish society in the early 1900s and this was reflected in the growth of nationalist and political youth organisations such as the GAA and Na Fianna. With the establishment of the Free State in 1921 there was a flourishing of Catholic youth organisations including: the Catholic Boy Scouts, Catholic Girl Guides, and the Catholic Young Men's Society. The Legion of Mary and St. Vincent de Paul also got involved in the development of youth clubs (Hurley, 1992, p.14). These organisations had a strong Catholic ethos and were concerned with fostering corresponding values and ethos in their work with young people. This influence still remains today in that most youth work organisations have a formal link with the church, with many having an ordained person as the director, and having a bishop as patron. In addition to this, a lot of local youth services are run on a diocesan basis (Jenkinson, 1996, p.36-38).

In contrast to developments in the UK where the youth service was placed on a statutory footing in 1939, Ireland's youth service in the main remained in the

the lead player and has resorted to a largely reactive and administrative role leaving nearly all of the action to the voluntary sector (Corry, 1992, p. 3). During the late 1960's the main social and political developments were in relation to the increased growth in social expenditure, the increase in the youth population, and the growth in educational research. The establishment of the NYCI in 1968, the employment of the first paid youth workers, and the first youth Dept. grant in 1970, were the main changes in the provision of a youth service.

The first major attempt to establish a National Youth Policy was in 1974 when the NYCI prepared a document entitled "The Development of Youth Services", which was published at a time of a change of government and the appointment of John Bruton to the post of Parliamentary Secretary. Mr. Bruton appointed a panel of advisors to draw up a youth policy but he did not include any representative from the voluntary organisations. He required youth organisations to clearly articulate the educational benefits of youth work and the NYCI document prepared earlier was submitted in response. The resulting "Bruton Report" (1977) accepted most of the arguments of the voluntary organisations and supported a youth work service based on volunteerism. This report was published in the wake of the general election in June 1977, however the Coalition Government lost the election and Fianna Fail formed the new government, with Mr. James Tunney returning to office favouring sport above youth services, and giving no extra finance to the voluntary agencies. He refused to commit himself to the Bruton Report and instead in May of 1978 commissioned District Justice James O'Sullivan to chair a 14 member committee with the task of reporting on: "the nature and effectiveness of the programmes being carried out by the

youth organisations in receipt of grants direct or indirect from the Department of Education and to make any recommendations deemed appropriate for the improvement and development of the youth services" (O'Sullivan, 1980, p.7).

This report made over 100 recommendations on areas of youth work needs, young people's needs, the questions of volunteerism, the nature and effectiveness of youth programmes, social disadvantage, youth employment and the role of statutory agencies and the Department. Youth Organisations welcomed this report and drew particular attention to sections of the report that concerned itself with the employment of youth workers and the functions of these workers. There followed three General Elections in June '81, February '82, and November '82, with three successive changes of government. The Fine Gael / Labour government, elected in November '82, did not implement the recommendations of the O'Sullivan Report, but instead appointed Justice Declan Costello to chair the new government's Youth Policy Committee, "to prepare for government consideration, recommendations for a national youth policy"(Costello, 1984, p.8). This report proposed the need for the establishment of a National Youth Service, independent from the VEC, but monitored by committees at local level to co-ordinate the services in local areas. The estimated cost of developing the service was £20 million. The grant aid in 1984 was £2 million. In 1985 the government responded to the report with the publication of the National Youth Policy "In Partnership with Youth" which recommended, among other things, the establishment of Local Youth Service Boards to be administered by the local VECs. A number of pilot councils were put in place, but the operation of these was not reviewed or evaluated.

During this period there was a need to develop community-based responses to the rise in youth unemployment, vandalism, substance abuse and crime. Youth organisations that were ahead of others in getting funding for the Development Officer Scheme were able to take on more work and projects as sporadic government funding became available. The purpose of youth work was seen as two fold; Mainline and Disadvantaged. In retrospect, 1988 was a watershed year for it opened up a clear distinction between what is now known as 'mainstream services' for leisure time youth work and 'special services' for disadvantaged projects. In 1991, the core grants to mainstream services were cut for the first time affecting some organisations so

badly that some staff had to be let go. This indicated a growing preference by the Minister to favour priority funding for disadvantaged projects (Corry, 1992, p.4). This preference has had enormous influence in funding for youth work and in particular in relation to funding for youth clubs.

In the early 1990's the main social and political developments were in relation to European integration and mobility, rising unemployment, falling youth population, growth in extremes of wealth and poverty, growth of lone parent families and teenage pregnancies, the spread of AIDS, and the growth of conservatism. During this period, while standards were increasing through the back-up support of full-time professional development officers, there were as yet (there still isn't) no obligatory arrangements for all leaders to go through a recognised standard of leadership training or adhere to a code of ethics (Corry 1992, p.5). Community services, whether statutory or voluntary, were increasing seen as a civic entitlement to be judged in terms of consumer rights rather than a service ethos. The nature and extent of problems facing all caring agencies seemed to increase in volume and degree every year. Some, such as child abuse, drug related crime and teen suicide, presented particularly difficult challenges for youth workers, paid and volunteer. Faced with such developments it was incumbent on voluntary organisations to support the volunteers on whom they depend by minimising personal cost and maximising security for the individual volunteer (Dunne, 1995). On 26 November 1991, Mr. J. Deenihan, T.D. moved that the Youth Service Bill 1990 be read. Proposing this Private Members Bill, he said he hoped it might create a stepping-stone through which the establishment of a legislative base for the youth service might be moved forward. The Bill envisaged a new National Advisory Committee on Youth Work, a national register for youth organisations, new initiatives in the area of education and training for youth workers, local advisory committees and tax relief for gifts to the youth service. It was defeated by 73 votes to 67.

The sad history of government involvement in the development of a national youth policy or a legislative base for youth work is once again reflected in the Youth Work Bill 2000. Many youth workers feel the Bill itself is weak in that it lacks any real commitment to youth work, is lacking in the definitions offered, and appears to be a rehash of the mistakes of some of the previous attempts. The inherent weaknesses of

the Bill will become evident when it comes to its implementation and the interpretation of the various definitions, functions and structures will vary and be a cause of much debate.

While one may not agree with all the previous attempts to define youth work, they at least had some substance in the definition. The definition in the Youth Work Bill 2000 is too vague and could be interpreted to include virtually any “out of school” activities that can be seen to “enhance” or “complement” the young person’s formal education; dancing classes could thus be defined as youth work. It furthermore fails to take into account the provision of “formal” education through the Leaving Cert Applied currently being offered by various Youth Services. The implication of this is that Youth Services may not receive either funding or recognition for this initiative if it is deemed not to come under the definition stated in the Bill.

It further weakens the argument for the educational aspect of youth work if it is considered to be “outside” the formal education remit, or as an “add on”, or indeed is seen to be a system of “mopping up the mess” left by the failures of the formal education system in relation to a significant number of young people. The formal education system is clearly failing a significant minority of our young people and has been doing so fairly consistently for over 20 years. Such consistent and high levels of failure must surely rule out any suggestion that the failure in question is the fault of the young people concerned. It is the failure of the system (Dunne 1996, p.5-6). Youth workers for the most part have a strong belief in the integrity of youth work as a distinctive (even unique) type of educational process, with its own distinctive value base, principles and programmes. They are sensitive to the suggestion (or – more usually – the unspoken assumption) that the job of youth work is fundamentally one of compensation, to mop up the failures of the formal education system, and to define itself and set its objectives in the shadow of this system (Devlin, 1998, p.108). There are some who would question the place of youth work in a holistic education system. Whilst they are willing to accept the youth service assuming the mantle of non-formal education, they do so largely on the basis that youth work is so marginal to the whole endeavour that it is quite irrelevant what fancy language is adopted to try to dress it up. Oddly enough, most of the proponents of this view seem to be from within the mainstream education system – by and large representatives of other parts of the

public sector and of society at large are far more open to the relevance and effectiveness of youth work. The youth service's claim to be part of a holistic education system is valid, and the realisation of this aspiration would be a meaningful barometer as to the real substance and scope of educational reform in this country (Dunne,1996, p.1).

The National Youth Federation believes that the definition of youth work should make reference to a national register of voluntary youth work organisations maintained by or on behalf of the Department of Education and Science, based on criteria agreed by the National Youth Work Advisory Committee and approved by the Minister (NYF, 2000, p.3). This would give recognition to those who are involved in the delivery of the service and would in some way validate those organisations that fulfil the necessary criteria. As it is with the present definition anyone could say they are involved in youth work.

While the Bruton Report proposed a role for full-time workers to “motivate, train and support volunteers. The objective in creating a full-time post will always be to support organisations run by voluntary adults and not to render them redundant” (Bruton, 1977, p.15). As such, within the current bill no definition is given to a “youth worker” which could be described as: “a suitably qualified person whether employed or voluntary who has undergone an acceptable level of training and development as provided by a national voluntary youth organisation or designated accrediting authority approved by the National Youth Work Advisory Committee”. Consequently, NYF believes that a national register of staff and volunteers (i.e. their qualifications) should be maintained in order to ensure quality assurance measures and, in particular, child protection procedures and personnel development (NYF, 2000, p.7). The result of the failure of the government to take the lead in defining the necessary issues and the issue of the necessary guidelines covering the work, has been that it was up to the youth service to do so, both at national and local level. This has been a long and difficult process involving staff and volunteers using resources that could have otherwise been used in the delivery of the service to young people. While it is necessary that those involved in the delivery of youth work should be involved in the development of policy and guidelines, it is made all the more difficult when they

are left unsupported in their work through lack of governmental initiatives and funding in this area.

In relation to the work of youth clubs today it is important to note the influencing factors from the historical context of youth policy development in Ireland. The influence of the Catholic Church, although dwindling, has meant that many youth clubs are still run on a parochial basis, have a limited number of clergy involved as leaders or patrons, and are involved in elements of character-building and charitable works such as organizing Old Folks parties, cleaning graveyards, church choir, etc. and generally where leaders are expected to act as role models for young people. The various definitions of youth work put forward down through the years have left a legacy of confusion as to what exactly youth work is. This confusion exists not only in the eyes of the general public, but also in the eyes of youth work practitioners themselves. The role of volunteers has remained a strong feature of Irish youth work, however in recent years the focus has lessened somewhat due to increased state intervention, the increased use of Community Employment schemes, and the increased professionalisation of youth work. The meager financial resources made available by successive governments, and their scant regard for youth work in general, has meant that many organisations have had to set their objectives based on what particular issues were highlighted as being worthy of funding at particular times. The increased competition for funding has had a divisive effect on youth organisations which has led to much internal squabbling, overlapping of activities and services offered, and a general weakening of the voluntary youth sector at a time when they should be working together to obtain the deserved recognition and funding for their work.

What is a Youth Club?

We have already explored what youth work is and have seen it means different things to different people. It will, therefore, come as no surprise that there are different interpretations of what constitutes a youth club. In this chapter we will endeavour to give an account of the different activities, structures and functions of a youth club, along with proposing a definition of the youth club as a means of delivering youth work through direct and indirect work with individuals, groups, and the local community.

Youth clubs provide a wide range of activities for young people. In many instances the ideas for the club's activities come from the members themselves. This is one of the features that distinguish youth clubs from other clubs involving young people. While most sports clubs are now offering a range of activities to their members, their primary aim is the promotion of their own particular sport. A similar aim is evident in other clubs or special interest groups such as Arts groups, dance groups etc. Involvement in the particular sport or activity is the primary reason that young people become members of such clubs. While these groups offer a range of activities to their members, they are often related to the primary activity, or operate as additional programmes to promote the aims of the organisation. An example of this can be seen in the GAA, who primarily offer hurling, football or camogie as their main activity, but also offer such events as Scór and Scór na nÓg as additional or alternative activities for their members.

The role of a Youth Club in any community is very important. Young people need to get together and relate to each other in a healthy atmosphere to learn and discern and provide leadership. The revitalisation of our local Youth Club has brought new life to the community. The weekly programmes have been carefully planned by the leaders involving a large section of our youth population in cultural, educational and sporting activity. Visiting other clubs in different parts of the county has brought a new dimension into the club and some of our leaders travelled abroad to experience and share the ways of others in the E.U. Our Youth Club has concerned itself with the community and its development by submitting comprehensive and concerned views in relation to the future of Crusheen and Ballinruan. Favourable comment was made in relation to this submission at the house meetings.

The leaders must be commended on their commitment to ongoing projects and they have enlisted the support of parents and others in the community who realise how important our Youth Club is. Long may this spirit continue. The good wishes of the community go with the Club and we all look forward to another adventurous year.

"Mol an Oige agus Tíochfaidh se"

Fr. Tony Cahir, P.P.

Youth clubs are different. In asking young people why they joined the local youth club they often reply that it was because they were “the right age to join”, or “because I want to be with my friends”. Youth clubs in the eyes of many young people are about meeting friends, doing things together and having fun. They seldom mention individual activities or events, as these are the “tools” of the youth worker or voluntary leader to deliver a comprehensive youth work programme to young people. While the activities are important in the success of a youth club they are not a goal in themselves. At the core of youth work is the activity of creating educational dialogue through the medium of conversation within the setting of a voluntary relationship (Jeffs, 1997, p.159). The aim of mainline youth work is to assist in the personal, social and spiritual development of all young people. Fundamental to this is a belief that adults and young people should work collectively to identify needs and possible solutions. To realise this aim, training and support is provided for volunteers who are involved in a network of youth clubs, groups and projects. Activities include: personal and social development programmes, development education and issue based work, individual support for young people 'at risk', national and international exchange programmes, community based initiatives, sports and recreation programmes (CYS, 2000, p.7).

by Edel Daffy,

Over the Winter I took part in a Social and Personal Development course. Our group consisted of friends and people who didn't play a major part in my life. We met each Sunday night from 6.00 to 7.00.

Naively we all thought it would be a waste of time but during the course what we thought wouldn't happen, did! We spoke mainly about trust. We in the group discovered how we relate to one another, our friends, foes, family and teachers etc. We didn't just talk, but we played games to show how a person's trust can be gained. We could now speak about more personal issues knowing that we could trust each other. We had two speakers who came to us to give the group a chance to meet someone different and to practise the social skills we had learned. The final part of the course was a presentation night, where we met people from other clubs who had also done the course and where we mixed with them and discussed some issues of importance to young people, and we received our certificates to say that we had successfully completed the course.

I found the course very beneficial, challenging and most of all, worthwhile.

Quality in Youth Work

The concept of quality has in some ways become a modern phenomenon in that it has become a buzz word in the business circles of today, however the Youth Service has always been conscious of the quality of its work, and it has only been since the number and nature of the stakeholders in the Service changed that the concept of quality, or its definition has changed. The variety of ways in which the stakeholders in the Youth Service view the work is one of the major dilemmas in finding the best way to identify and manage the quality of the work.

Young people and many adults become involved in the Youth Service on a voluntary basis and can quite easily “vote with their feet” and leave at any time, should they feel the Service is not doing what they want. In a way the very existence of a youth club or group in an area was an indication that they were doing something right, or at least something that the young people wanted. Therein lies the first dilemma – how can we know that the young people involved in the Youth Service have the knowledge and skills to assess the quality of the work? Is the Youth Service concerned with giving people what they want or with providing a curriculum of informal education in a voluntary setting?

The adults involved in the Youth Service form the basis for the second dilemma. Many parents want their children to operate in a safe and controlled environment, where they are “properly supervised” and protected. Many see the local youth club as a glorified “baby-sitting service” in that they drop the children at the club and simply pick them up afterwards, this being their only involvement with the Youth Service until of course they feel something has gone wrong. Others see the Youth Service as offering a range of activities and opportunities and want their children to avail of as many of these as possible. Some see the range of educational opportunities and want their children to gain additional certification to build up a better CV. In its work with disadvantaged young people the Youth Service is often seen as the rehabilitation ground for young criminals and drug users. Adult volunteers and staff can hold a mixture of these views and also hope to gain personally from their involvement in terms of their personal and social development and often in furthering their own

education through training and certification. How can quality be assessed with such a variety of views being expressed?

Early anecdotal evidence is beginning to demonstrate that increased integration with the state through a partnership model is developing an attendant requirement for reporting and accountability. The interaction with statutory groups in relation to such issues requires a certain group set of skills that are only developed over time and with extensive training. This is contributing to a self-fulfilling need for full-time professional staff to instigate and maintain such relationships (Geoghegan, 1998 p.5). The criteria for assessing the quality of work within partnerships are often at variance with those of the other stakeholders in the work, and so require a different set of measures and reporting procedures to satisfy the partner organisation, be it voluntary or statutory. This again leads to problems in defining a generic model for the evaluation of the quality of youth work.

The job of the youth worker or voluntary leader involves talking with people, listening to them, participating in encounters and experiences. Their task is to foster environments that make for good conversations. Conversation is not about trying to win an argument, but about trying to understand and learn. What it does involve though, is being open to the possible truth of what others are saying. This makes it a risky business. To be open to what others are saying they have to bring their own beliefs and feelings into play. In other words they have to enter conversations with a readiness to change their view of things (Smith, 1995, p.4).

One of the ways to assess the quality of youth work is to explore the willingness and ability of youth workers and leaders to change their view of things, to assess how willing they are to understand the young people with whom they work. Carl Rogers notes that if you really understand another person in this way, if you are willing to enter their private world and see the way life appears to him or her, without any attempt to make evaluative judgements, you run the risk of being changed yourself (Rogers, 1999, p.333). In trying to assess the quality of youth work and that of youth workers and volunteers, it is important to look at the quality of conversations with young people and the relationships formed. This is not easy to assess from the outside

as it occurs in the reality of the settings in which people converse and relate to each other.

Training for youth workers and volunteers is important in starting this process of communication and the techniques used offer practical and supportive measures by which the youth worker can assess the quality of relationships formed. The use of role-play, for example, allows people to practice their skills in the security of a controlled environment. It also allows for feedback from others and a chance to assess each person's ability. It is partly through the training process that one can assess the quality of youth work being delivered. Part of the role of the youth worker in having relationship building conversations with youngsters is to be aware of the kinds of topics of conversation that will be helpful to each youngster and when an opportunity occurs, seeing that an arena is cleared in front of a particular youngster should he or she want to move into it. So much of what is written about the exploration of relationships and introspective discussion will come to nothing unless the worker trains himself/herself in the sensitivity that is required to discern and build upon opportunities to lead into this type of discussion. In particular the worker must be able to hear the emotional undertone of what is being said (Button, 1976, p.101-102). The importance of good preparation and of a personal agenda can be seen in the worker's ability to link one statement with another, recognising the significance of statements in a line of discussion by not jumping in too soon to seize an opportunity, and by creating pigeonholes for the material until it can be used and linked to other statements (Button, 1971, p.152-155). This skill improves with practice and while repeated role-plays are useful, it is vital that the conversation with the youngster is built into all of the work with young people. It is important that the programmes and activities organised by the Youth Service take this into account and are organised in such a way that time and facilities allow for meaningful conversations to take place.

In working with young people it is important to treat each person as an individual and to try to get to know him or her for the person that they are. In building a relationship with the young person it is important to empathise with them, to be able to sense their private world as if it's your own without however losing your sense of the world (Kirschenbaum & Hendersen, 1998, p.226). It is important to be aware that at the core of youth work is the ultimate self-reliance and self-determination of the youngster,

and that any diagnosis needs to be a shared diagnosis with the youngster playing a central role in the investigation of their situation, problems, feelings and responses (Button, 1976, p.68). Carl Rogers proposes that in order to achieve this non-judgmental empathy we should hold the young person in unconditional positive regard. This means there are no conditions to the acceptance of the other person, it means caring for them as a separate person with permission to have their own feelings and experiences. It involves as much feeling of acceptance of the person's expression of negative feelings as for their expression of positive feelings, as much acceptance of ways in which he/she is inconsistent as of ways in which he/she is consistent (Kirschenbaum & Hendersen, 1998, p.225). However it is possible for the youth worker to take the respect for the personal autonomy of the young person to absurd lengths, sometimes under the banner of being 'non-judgmental'. It does not mean that they should be 'non-influencing'. If they take any hand in people's lives they must necessarily be influencing them. The position is one of inescapable leadership, which one shall exercise as surely by one's inactivity as by one's positive intervention. One cannot be so neutral as not to attempt to steer young people away from anti-social activity which bears directly on others, from practices that may harm the young person or to do something to help the unhappy youngster in making friends or building relationships (Button, 1976, p.69).

Having a positive regard for the young person does not mean simply giving them a series of positive evaluations about themselves and their behaviour or work as curiously enough a positive evaluation is as threatening in the long run as a negative one, since to inform someone that he/she is good implies you have also the right to tell him or her they are bad. The more one can keep a relationship free of judgements and evaluation, the more this will permit the other person to reach the point where they recognise that the centre of responsibility for evaluation lies within himself or herself. The meaning and value of his/her experience is in the last analysis something which is up to him/her, and no amount of external judgement can alter this (Rogers, 1999, p.55). The major barrier to mutual interpersonal communication is our very natural tendency to judge, to evaluate, to approve or disapprove, the statement of the other person, or the other group (Rogers, 1999, p.330). The absence of such judgements is therefore an indicator of quality in youth work.

Although the tendency to make evaluations is common in almost all interchange of language, it is very much heightened in those situations where feelings and emotions are deeply involved. So the stronger our feelings the more likely it is that there will be no mutual element in the communication. There will be just two ideas, two feelings, two judgements, missing each other in psychological space. The tendency to react to any emotionally meaningful statement by forming an evaluation of it from our own point of view is the major barrier to interpersonal communication. Real communication occurs, and this evaluative tendency is avoided, when we listen with understanding. This means to see the expressed ideas and attitude from the other person's point of view, to sense how it feels to him or her, and to achieve their frame of reference in regard to the thing they are talking about. We know from our research that such empathic understanding – understanding with a person, not about him/her – is such an effective approach that it can bring about major changes in personality (Rogers, 1999, p. 331/332).

Measuring such quality in youth work can be difficult, not least because in carrying out an evaluation one could be considered guilty of the very practice one is trying to discourage. Evaluation is always a threat, always creates a need for defensiveness, always means that some portion of experience must be denied to awareness (Rogers, 1999, p.357). In attempting to gauge the quality of youth work being carried out by leaders in youth clubs, we have found that action research is a useful method in trying to get a better picture of the quality of the service. This approach directly involves the young people in the enquiry and they begin to affect the situation they are examining. Their discoveries also have a strong impact on them, and stir in them a determination to take some action about the situation they have uncovered. The process induces objectivity, and often compassion, so that the situation is approached realistically rather than in a sentimental or glamourised way. Action research differs from exact research since it leads the enquirer into becoming enmeshed with what he/she is examining, whereas the academic researcher is more detached and takes their findings away from the situation (Button, 1976, p.85-86).

Noreen Hayes of the Dublin Institute of Technology stated that “quality is a relative concept - subject to the impact of beliefs, culture and background, - it can't be

captured – it's a continuous process". In trying to assess the constantly changing quality of youth work one must really make oneself a part of the process and actively engage with the participants in order to get a truer picture of what is happening and the various processes involved. The fact that many of the main stake-holders such as; officials from the Departments of Education and Finance, parents, local community councils, and partnership companies, are not directly involved in the youth work process is the main stumbling block in the efforts by the youth service to educate them in the value and quality of youth work. Youth service staff involved in NYF Partnerships referred to the system of reporting and assessing the outcomes and value of some capacity building youth projects. In particular, they commented that the nature of their work was process driven – which effectively meant that projects or programmes were aimed at smaller groups and the content of programmes involved developmental work, some of which was not assessable in the short life span of the projects. The nature of the reports describing and assessing these activities were not easily measured using the traditional measurement tools of statistics required by partnerships for their own progress reports (O'Beirne, 1998, p.68).

Youth work has traditionally focused on the process of working with young people rather than working towards specific outcomes or products. This is going against the tide of most current funding policies. Purists argue that it is impossible to work with an agency that measures success only with specific outcomes, however maybe youth work agencies need to have greater confidence in what they can achieve and apply greater rigour and analysis to their work than has historically been the case - one can no longer rely on our "gut feelings" (Rogers, 2001, p.10). There is a need for clear agreement from the outset on how work will be measured, and it is at the initial stages of the work that the various partners should agree these systems of reporting and assessment, rather than leaving it until near the end of the life of the project to find the system used doesn't accurately reflect the work. "Since a great deal of what is learned.... occurs outside of the planned formal curriculum, (e.g. young people learning from each other; the growth of self awareness through group interaction, etc), it is sensible to process these processes, thence tapping into a rich source of extra learning." (Coulshed 1993, p.12). This needs to be carried out much more by the Youth Service as after all they are the experts in their field and need to better define the indicators of quality in their own work.

Models for measurement.

In order to fully assess the quality of the work of youth organisations it is necessary to measure the "youth work" and "organisational" qualities. Alan Rogers and Nigel Gann offer models by which youth organisations can measure the quality of their work, and if used as a template for such measurement these models can give us a clearer indication of where we stand. Rogers identifies five recurrent themes in looking at the strengths of quality work with young people. These strengths are:

- A wide range of work, both in terms of the themes and issues explored and the methods used;
- A commitment to social justice and equality of opportunity which is demonstrated in action;
- Working with a group is a way of preparing young people for the future as well as working in the present;
- Young people's active participation in decision-making is a common factor, and
- Workers demonstrate an ability to deliver accredited learning and progression in an informal setting (Rogers, 2001,p.8).

In writing about quality standards in an organisation, Nigel Gann identified fourteen areas within which organisations would develop their own statements of quality. Seven of these standards related to the management of the organisation:

- Training of staff, volunteers and management committee;
- User participation in management;
- Terms and conditions of employment for staff;
- Job descriptions regularly reviewed;
- Equal opportunities employment;
- Financial controls operating within the organisation;
- Systems for staff supervision, including appraisal.

The other seven standards related to service delivery:

- A procedure for client assessment;
- Written procedures in, for example, health and safety, user complaints, disclosure of abuse;
- Equal opportunities policies and procedures in access for, and treatment of, users;

- An agreed list of services provided for in addition to the core function of the organisation;
- Building conditions and facilities;
- Reporting, monitoring, and evaluation;
- Networking with other organisations.

Quality assurance assumes, at least the following characteristics (which are not always evident in the voluntary sector):

- People are trusted to work as professionals;
- There is a strong emphasis on teamwork;
- There is a weak emphasis on hierarchy;
- Goals are clear;
- Communications are good;
- Everyone has high expectations of themselves and others;
- The organisation is 'fit for purpose' (Gann, 1998, p.15-16).

It would be undoubtedly useful for any organisation to use the above points as a template for measuring the quality of their work and their organisation. It is important that such work is carried out in a way that involves all the stakeholders in the organisation so that people can learn from a complete picture and take ownership and responsibility for ensuring that the ever-changing concept of quality remains an important one in youth work.

Conclusion.

In assessing the quality of youth work and the Youth Service, we need to understand that the concept of quality is constantly changing and it varies quite a lot when seen from the different perspectives of the stakeholders in the organisation. Taking these perspectives into account we must assess the quality of work in three distinct areas; - youth work; - programmes and activities; - and organisational structure and management. The criteria that apply to statements of quality in each of these areas are quite different, but when taken as a whole give a more accurate view of the overall quality of the work. It is vital that all stakeholders in the Youth Service are involved in clearly defining what quality is required and in evaluating that quality. They need to have real influence on decisions taken which affect their work, learning, and participation in the organisation. As the concept of quality is a constantly changing

one, we need to make sure that the evaluation methods used also change in order to ensure they are effective in measuring the quality of the work.

The Effectiveness of Youth Clubs

In order to examine the effectiveness of youth clubs in the local community it is important to consider the different people involved. The effectiveness of youth clubs needs to be considered from the viewpoints of the key stakeholders; young people, leaders, the Youth Service, parents, and the wider community. In this chapter we will present the findings from our research in each of these categories and assess the effectiveness of youth clubs in relation to each one.

Young People.

Obviously the main stakeholders in a youth club are the members of the club, but quite often these are the very people that can be overlooked when assessing the effectiveness of the club within a community. Young people lack power in Irish society and for this reason are sometimes overlooked and have their views ignored when it comes to addressing community needs or assessing the effectiveness of various strategies. Young people's lack of power can be discussed very briefly since it is so complete. People under eighteen effectively possess no political rights as a consequence of both legal and attitudinal factors. Laws prohibit young people from voting, joining a political party and, at least until they are twenty-one, from being a candidate in a local or national election. For adults each of these activities is fundamental to a democratic way of life and the denial of any would constitute a breach of basic human rights. It is the adult attitudes towards young people's competence, as well as the legal barriers, which exclude the latter from political life (Franklin, 1990, p.18).

Being a new member

I joined the Youth Club last September and I have enjoyed every night so far. I have learned three new fun sports like uni-hoc, volleyball and olympic handball. I was not very good at these sports in the beginning but through practice every week and patient guidance from our leaders, I am now extremely better at these sports.

Status ambiguity is an appropriate term to outline the position of adolescents in our society, as it is used to describe a situation where the individual's rights or roles or responsibilities are not clearly defined. This can lead to a high degree of uncertainty and confusion, not just on the part of the young person, but for many adults as well. Within the legal framework young people are allowed to do different things at different ages. The question of status ambiguity is a key one because of what it tells us about the balance of power in the relationships between adults and young people. If the individual's status is ambiguous, and if his or her rights are not clearly defined, then inevitably he or she will lack the power to influence events and to take control of his or her life (Coleman et al, 1997, p.228).

The uniqueness of the Youth Club lies in the voluntary nature of the 'engagement' with young people. Young people are there by choice. Many of the young people we spoke to said they joined the youth club because it was a place where they could relax, hang out with friends, and where they were free from the restrictions of home and school. They felt they were treated as equals for the most part and that the adults involved were "sound" and "not bossy like other adults". The young people spoke of having a role in deciding what happened in the club and that they were given responsibility and tasks to undertake. For them it meant they were being taken seriously and being listened to, and this is an important element of involvement in the community. Many also felt their views were ignored by adults in the wider community and they depended on the help of the youth leader to have their views expressed. Youth clubs that offer this form of choice, consultation and support are effective in giving members a forum in which to express their views in the local community. An example of this can be seen from what one of the boys we spoke to told us:

Another extremely important part of our Youth Club is the rules. At first I thought it was a little strict, but now I know and understand that every rule is worthwhile and important and are well thought out. Our Youth Club goes beyond Friday we meet every week. We do a lot of other activities during the year and if there is a shortage of activities we do something worthwhile and 'a great help to our community. Every year we hunt the wren and go around our parish providing entertainment by singing and impressing them with our traditional dancing skills. There is a great response from the community and it is a very goods way of fundraising. A very important group in our community benefit from us hunting the wren, these are the senior citizens. Each year, towards the end of Christmas we hold a senior citizens party. We provide food and drink for them and an evening's entertainment by the Clubs best talent. I, myself in my first year was lucky to be in a sketch that won the County competition and performed well in Munster. We all put in hard work and it was rewarded.

“In October 1997, I spent a training weekend in Co. Kerry with leaders from Youth Clubs in Kerry, Offaly, Cork and Dublin.

We had the opportunity to take part in various seminars about issues pertaining to Human Rights including Discrimination, Power, Work and Educational Rights and Gender Rights. The course was run by the National Youth Federation in partnership with DEFY and everyone agreed that it was very interesting. I think I learned a lot of good information and games which I intend to use to raise awareness about issues in the third world when I get back from college. But what was most important for me was that the adults were prepared to listen to our views and asked us what we thought about the different situations, this was the first time that I was asked my opinion about human rights”.

It is important to consider the needs of young people and in particular of adolescents when discussing the effectiveness of youth work. The majority of youth clubs in Ireland cater for the 12-16 yrs age group, but many are now beginning to cater for the younger age group as well and have 10-12 year-olds among their members.

“Youth work is about providing social, recreational and educational outlets for young people and fulfils an important function in the needs of the adolescent. It is about helping young people to develop as individuals and participate in the life of the community. Young people are encouraged to identify their needs and to be involved in the planning and running of activities to meet these needs” (Slattery, 2003).

So what are the needs of the young people involved?

Middle childhood (ages of approximately 6-10 years) is a period of time when children enter the larger culture (primarily through schooling) and develop the intellectual and social skills they need to function effectively outside their family environment (Eccles, 1999). Children spend more and more time with non-family members, including peers and teachers. They spend less time under supervision of parents, more under supervision of teachers and other adults, such as coaches, youth group leaders, or teachers. Consequently, they spend more time with peers outside the immediate influence of parents and become more concerned with social expectations

of peers and adults. Under these external pressures, many children begin to lose confidence in themselves and may not find their interests in music, science, sports, or other areas encouraged. Out-of-school programs can provide a safety-net for middle-children to “...safely explore independence, peer relationships, and leadership...”(Eccles, 1999). Youth clubs, and other such informal environments can provide children opportunities to learn without external evaluations and chances for children to control their own experiences and learning. Well-designed programs can foster respect for all participants, demonstrating strong emotional and social support. Many of the young people we spoke to felt they were dealt with in a non-judgemental way in their youth clubs. Many spoke of being accepted for who they were rather than being judged on the basis of their family or social standing.

Adolescence is a time of rapid physical maturation, intellectual growth, and the development of skills to meet new social demands. Adolescents have more opportunities to do things independent of home and more unsupervised time. The noted psychoanalyst Erik Erikson has characterized adolescence as the time when youth strive to bring together the elements of their psychological, social, and intellectual selves together to form their identities (Erikson, 1968). Erikson characterized this task as “Identity vs. role confusion,” as youth try to figure out, “Who am I?” by developing sexual, cultural, and career identifies, and defining what roles they will play in society.

Some of the key developmental changes occurring during adolescence include:

- The physical changes associated with puberty.
- The increasing ability to think abstractly—consider the hypothetical, look at multiple dimensions of the same situation, and reflect on themselves.
- More understanding of internal psychological characteristics; the development of friendships based more on perceived compatibility of personal characteristics.
- Distancing of relationships with parents and family.
- Importance of social acceptance, peak of peer conformity.

The structure of schools (greater size, multiple teachers) may actually reduce opportunities for adolescents to form close relationships with teachers. The higher standards of judgment imposed in school and work settings may be related to decline

in self-perception. Well-designed out-of-school programs and contexts can provide adolescents with experiences to counter the potentially negative impacts of school settings by providing:

- Opportunities to form secure and stable relationships with caring peers and adults.
- Safe and attractive places to be with their friends.
- Opportunities to develop relevant life-skills.
- Opportunities to contribute to their communities.
- Opportunities to feel competent by highlighting effort rather than competition.
- Opportunities to try new challenges within a safe environment (Erikson, 1968).

According to one of the submissions we received:

“Young people who participate in for example Club Committees, Personal Development Groups, President’s Awards and Community Work receive an excellent training in responsibility and in working with and caring for others. This is education for life as it provides young people with the necessary social skills, confidence and practical experience to play an active role in society. Young people are encouraged to participate on an equal basis in creative, sporting, recreational and social activities. It also provides them with a forum where they can explore and develop their personal talents as well as testing their values and beliefs in a group context”.(Slattery, 2003)

All of these experiences can be critical as youth strive to develop their identities and find their places within the larger world. One important quality of many out-of-school programs is the freedom participants have to choose who they spend time with and what they do, which are paramount in importance. A number of reports suggest some common elements that contribute to the design of effective youth programmes:

1. Developing a plan based on a thorough assessment of community needs and adolescent developmental issues.
2. Emphasizing social relationships by encouraging a family-like atmosphere

3. Involving parents.
4. Involving youth in programme design.
5. Developing a wide array program content, services, and contexts that are fun, flexible, culturally relevant, and linked to activities that capture adolescents' interests
6. Collaborating with local community organizations that have experience with targeted youth.
7. Providing a safe and accessible environments.
8. Linking to schools
9. Evaluating program progress and effectiveness.

Many of the clubs involved in the research are very active in including parents in their work. Some recruit parents as leaders or helpers in the club, others organise "Parent's Nights" where club members inform the parents about their activities, and others have included parents in their training programmes in an effort to engage their help and to inform them of the educational value of the training. One parent told us:

"I was amazed at what the youth club were doing. I thought they only played sports and had some discos.....it was wonderful to see that my child was getting a good education about things that matter in her life.....the youth club do a great job but they should be more open about it, we didn't know what was really going on until the parents evening, but now I'm happy that the children are getting a lot from the club....more than I ever got when I was their age".

The programmes can be designed to include components that contribute to adolescent development and strengthen the community at the same time:

- Health and physical well-being: health promotion, including substance abuse, sexuality, sports/physical fitness.
- Personal and social competence: life and leadership skills training, including conflict resolution, decision making, mentoring, preparation for parenthood, and sexual abuse prevention.

- Cognitive and emotional competence: tutoring, homework clinics, communication and computer skills, opportunities to develop interests and avocations in science, technology, music and the arts.
- Preparation for work: career awareness, technical training, internships, summer job placements, and paid employment in youth and community organizations.
- Leadership and citizenship: community service, leadership-skills development, youth advisory boards, and civics education. (Mincy, 1994. Freedman & Bass, 1993. Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development 1994 & 1999).

The following are some examples of the range of activities offered by youth clubs that we have selected from the Youth Work Effectiveness Reports submitted by youth organisations to the Dept. of Youth Affairs:

- Learn practical skills, eg. cooking, decorating, woodwork, budgeting.
- Investigate how our society supports the family through its laws, social services etc.
- Organise joint parents / members discussions and activities.
- Invite a past member to speak on living away from home.
- Research the process of buying / building / renting a home. (Feroige, 2002).

The YMCA has been working with young people for over 150 years. The YMCA in Ireland is made up of locally managed “associations” which deliver programmes and services relevant to their local communities. This means that the expression of YMCA work will vary from one community to another. However there are a number of themes that run through most YMCA work today. These include Addressing Youth Health Issues, facilitating personal development, addressing issues of Equality, diversity and interdependence, supporting “family youth work”, developing innovative responses to particular youth issues (YMCA, 2002).

For most of us, recreation and leisure provide relaxation, companionship and the chance to develop new skills. Many of us take these things for granted. Arch recognises how vital these needs are to people with intellectual disabilities and

holidays. Arch offers all its members a chance to participate and learn while socialising in a relaxed informal setting both within clubs and in the wider community. Above all Arch provides the environment for us all to mix and form friendships (National Federation of ARCH Clubs,

car wash or a people wash as it turned out to be. Imagine people paid us not to touch their cars!! We went up to Maynooth very early on a June morning and met our match in the Youth Club representing Ferns. Unfortunately, we were asked the harder of the two tie breakers, a question

The above are examples of the extensive list of activities offered by various youth clubs and groups around the country. In our discussions with clubs we found that it was important to provide a varied programme for club members and that the more successful clubs were those who ensured their programmes were relevant to the needs of their members and those who were pro-active in involving members in deciding the activities to be offered. One of the criticisms offered in relation to club activities was that youth clubs were slow to advertise the range of activities and in particular did not provide sufficient information to parents, thus leaving people to make assumptions regarding activities offered. This has resulted in the perception among many that youth clubs are about games and discos, as these are often the areas of youth club programmes that are easily seen by the general public. In order to be more effective it is important that clubs inform members, parents and the general public of the range and scope of activities on offer, along with the need and relevance for such programmes.

symbol for?" So they won but we went on to have a great weekend. We took part in all the activities and really enjoyed the Disco. We cheered on all the other County teams and got loads of sleep (Ha-Ha).

The following letter from one parent is an example of how the local youth club can offer a wide range of services and programmes to the young people in the area, and can have a positive effect on the local community.

What the Youth Club means to the Community

“I think the Youth Club is a major asset to the Community. It gives the youth a place to meet their friends each week, exchange views, participate in different sports, quizzes, comedy sketches, plays etc. Through the Social & Development Programme they learn how to communicate with each other and to relate to adults. It gives confidence in speaking out, which I am sure will be of great benefit to them as they prepare for oral exams and interviews. It gives them an opportunity to interact in a happy relaxed atmosphere.

They take part in mini region sports which include uni-hoc, basketball, soccer, pool, darts and table quiz.

During this year they also took part in a cardio pulmonary resuscitation course which should help them keep calm in an emergency and know the appropriate steps to take.

Every year just before Summer break the *parish clean up* is organised and the youth go out with their rubber gloves and black bags and pick up all the litter from the roadside around our parish, making it a pleasant and welcoming sight for our visitors and holiday makers. This increases their civic spirit.

Each year they hold the tradition of *hunting the wren* and collect money for the senior citizens party, which they host in early January. This evening of food, drink, music and craic is thoroughly enjoyed by all.

The youth help raise money for our new community centre by packing bags in the local supermarkets and by selling lines at matches.

They go on trips during the year to Galway, Dublin etc., and sometimes they get the opportunity of an exchange trip to another county , e.g. Newry Mourne exchange which took place last August. Some lucky members may even get a chance of going on a youth programme abroad.

This programme took some of the members on an environment and conservation project to Germany with young people from five other countries.

I am delighted as a parent to have a youth club in our parish, as I find it of invaluable benefit to my children. I have watched them grow and develop through the years and have such fun doing so. I hope that it will help them to be responsible citizens and have an interest in their community and its people.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank the leaders for their endless patience, dedication and voluntary time given to this most worthwhile project”.

Marcella O'Neill.

Should youth clubs improve the marketing of their activities and programmes there will be an increased level of their effectiveness in local communities and a consequent improvement in the relationship between the club and the community.

In summary, youth clubs are effective in their local communities if they offer a wide range of activities that are relevant to the needs of the young people in the area. The voluntary involvement of young people and the equality in the relationship between the adults involved and the young people is key to the effectiveness of the club in promoting inclusion, understanding and involvement of young people. The young people need to have a certain ownership of the club and to be included in all aspects of the club's activities. There is a need for the involvement of parents both from an information point of view and as leaders, helpers and supporters of the club. But most of all, the club must be a place where young people feel secure and happy in the knowledge that they can meet their friends, develop relationships, and enjoy themselves. Clubs need to promote the range and quality of the activities they offer so that the local community can be aware of the benefits to their community.

Youth Club

On a Tuesday night

When the winds and rain blow

On a dark cold night

Off to the youth club we go

Me and my mates

To fool around for an hour or two.

by: David Moloney.

Parents.

“Mam, can I go to the youth club?”

“Not until you do your homework”

“It’s Friday night....all my friends are going....I’ll do my homework tomorrow...I promise”

“You’ll do it now....your education is important...there will be plenty of time for youth club afterwards”

Familiar scene on a Friday night? In some house holds, Yes! Parents are not the natural enemy of youth clubs, neither are youth clubs the natural enemy of parents. But at times one would swear there’s a war being waged between the two. Parents want what’s best for their children; both in terms of their education and well-being, and also that they should enjoy themselves and make friends. However, they need to be assured that these things can take place simultaneously in a good youth club.

In the Ireland of today it’s very important to have a good education and formal qualifications, as there is a lesser risk of unemployment for those with formal qualifications. Parents are naturally concerned about the education of their children, but in many cases they see education solely in terms of the formal education offered in schools. There is a need to inform parents of the value of the non-formal education offered through involvement in voluntary groups such as youth clubs. The recreational and social value of youth work is usually quite visible to people, however, the educational aspect of the work is often more difficult to observe from the outside as the location of the learning is not set in the traditional educational establishment of the school.

We all use drugs

Last November I was asked to participate in a four day course for parents dealing with the issue of substance abuse, it was entitled "On my own two feet" I was delighted to be asked, as I felt this area was not being fully addressed.

The course was put together by the Drug Education Advisory Committee in conjunction with the National Youth Health Program The overall aim is to enable young people develop their ability to take charge of their health and specifically to make conscious and informed decision about the use of drugs (legal and illegal) in their lives We learned it just not enough to teach young people to "say No to Drugs"

The first shocker came when everyone admitted to using drugs -tea, coffee, cigarettes, alcohol and painkillers and aspirin to be exact, it was something to think about. through various excises we explored the issues surrounding decisions making, assertive communications, feelings, identity and self-esteem, and understanding influences. I thought this course was one of the best I have ever taken and although it has been supplied to many secondary schools it has not (as far as I know) been implemented, so I am looking forward to when the youth club will start to deliver it to young people in our area.

It is important in any evaluation that the environment in which the learning takes place is taken into account. Adolescents find the pressures of school, college and university stressful. Both the risk and experience of failure, in an educational setting, are sources of psychosocial stress for adolescents. Generally, in formal educational environments, the student has little power or authority while teachers have a considerable amount of both. For the emerging adolescent, issues of power and authority are very salient. If adolescents are to learn to take responsibility in the way that adults do then they need to be able to have some level of control over what they do and how they do it. Formal educational environments may therefore be stressful for them because they are disempowering (Geldard and Geldard, 2000, p.29-30). This is something that parents do not always see, and they often fail to recognise the significance of the youth club in terms of being a place where young people can exercise some power in determining their own future. One of the proposed purposes for youth work is that it should empower young people to develop a critical involvement in their own and their community's life (Costello, 1985). This empowerment takes place in their own environment, the street, club or Youth Club, where young people have a certain amount of control and involvement in their own learning. There is therefore a need for the young people to be involved in any evaluation of the effectiveness of training in the delivery of the service, as they need to be treated as equal partners in the process. As we are working with individuals we need to take each case separately when evaluating the outcomes of the work. The youth sector has not capitalised on those claims and has made limited gains in gaining recognition which would give them credibility, status and security. It's

Parent's views

1979 the Pope was coming to Ireland. The youth of the parish got together to travel to Galway for the Youth Mass. It was the first time that these youths had met socially apart from the G.A.A. activities. They liked it and decided to start a Youth Club. There had been a very successful club some years previously. Having discussed the possibility of starting a Youth Club with our Parish Priest and enlisting the help and support of leaders - St. Cronans Youth Club was resurrected and ran very successfully for many years.

However like all clubs it had its ups and downs and after a break of about 3 years has come back again through the efforts of a strong adult group (many who were previous members) and the Youth Service.

As parents we are all delighted that our children have a place to go and meet their peers, partake in the social events of the club and get together with other clubs sharing their talents and experiences. Our Youth Club is lucky enough to have several excellent young adult leaders whom the club members and parents like and trust. While keeping a Youth Club active is an ongoing challenge, we sincerely hope it lasts, and due to their constant efforts and recent success we believe this is truly possible.

Michael and Anne O'Doherty.

possible to claim that one reason for this is the lack of any coherent and more importantly agreed theory of youth work and its practice (Tierney, 1999, p.9).

From our research we have found that youth clubs that engage in a dialogue with parents are more effective at local level and gain the support and understanding of parents. Clubs that have a deliberate policy of including parents in their work have been able to get their message across regarding the non-formal educational value of their processes and programmes. Those that don't involve parents in this way have remained on the battlefield in the "Adult v Youth Club War", and will continue to be less effective at local level.

The following example from the Kildare Youth Service Effectiveness Report serves to illustrate the importance placed by the Youth Service on the involvement of parents and families in youth work projects and youth clubs in order to promote better community involvement.

"Community involvement is a fundamental part of the ethos of Kildare Youth Service, reflected in their Strategic Plan as follows Kildare Youth Service believes that participation and community development are essential to developing quality youth work provision, therefore we work in conjunction with local communities in all aspects of our work. Kildare youth Service is committed to working in partnership with parents of children and young people who avail of services and projects". (KYS Strategic Plan, p.5) Kildare youth Service is also actively involved at community level with initiatives such as community development projects, family resource centres and various interagency community initiatives".

From the following extract from the Clare Youth Service Effectiveness Report we can see some of the methods used to involve parents directly in the work of the youth club and indeed the Youth Service in General:

“Over the past year clubs have made concerted efforts to involve parents in youth work. There has been considerable success in this area and there are now 100 parents directly involved in the clubs in North Clare. Parents are involved in support groups where they receive information on club activities and have an input into club policy and development. They support and assist the club leaders in their work and attend parents meetings to discuss issues concerning the club and the young people. Parents and community activists receive a regular newsletter which acts as a forum for them to express their views and also provides them with information on youth work in the region. This has proved to be highly successful and clubs that involved parents through the personal & social development programmes have gained a lot of valuable support. The weaker clubs in the region are those who have not yet managed to involve parents and the local community.”(CYS 2001)

In summary, youth clubs that have succeeded in involving parents directly in the work of the club are more effective in their local communities, as parents are major stakeholders in the education and well-being of their children. Parents should be involved in a number of ways such as; information about policy and practice, training for parents on relevant issues, involvement in policy making bodies and as volunteers in youth clubs and groups. While it is important that young people have a sense of ownership of the youth club, it is also necessary that parents are involved so that they can be aware of the value of the club to their children and to the local community.

.....As part of the programme we had a parent's meeting. The purpose of this was to explain to parents what we were doing and to invite them to the presentation of certificates at the assembly of the groups. The parents showed great interest in what we were doing and I was really pleased that they turned up at the assembly. It was an important night for my group as they had completed the programme and it was good to have their parents there when they were presented with their certificates. It also showed that the parents respected their children and the youth club. I was very proud that night as my group were great.

Wider Community.

A youth club that exists solely for its members can have a positive effect, but hidden behind closed doors, and catering solely for its membership, this youth club has less effect on the local community and in many instances will not survive. The youth club must be an integral part of the community if it is to be effective, but that doesn't mean it has to cater for all the members of the community all of the time. The club should reflect the community in which it exists and should offer support to that community should a need arise, along with challenging aspects of community life and culture if that is deemed necessary. Many youth clubs in Ireland attach a great importance to involvement in the wider community and have developed various strategies to that effect. The different strategies undertaken reflect the needs of different clubs, and in our exploration of the involvement of the wider community in youth clubs, we will examine these needs and the strategies employed.

While not wanting to appear cynical about community involvement, we need to face the fact that many clubs are in dire need of funding for their activities and become involved in community activities in order to fulfil this need. The poor record of state funding for youth work and in particular for mainline youth clubs means that youth clubs have to spend a considerable amount of time raising money for their activities. In order to do this, they need to promote a positive public image and many undertake community projects, such as "clean-ups", "senior citizens' parties", "church choir" etc. in an effort to gain a sense of legitimacy in their local community and as a way of projecting a positive image that will help them in their fundraising activities. Others have used such activities directly as fundraising events by attaching sponsorship for example to a clean-up campaign. Some clubs, particularly in rural areas have existed in a tradition of community co-operation and self-help groups, and see it as their duty to be involved in helping others in their community. Others, particularly in disadvantaged areas, take the approach that if they are to successfully promote the

In August the People in Need campaign was being advertised. We decided that for a change instead of always asking for money we would raise it for someone else. We put a notice in the parish newsletter that a Father-Son, Mother-Daughter Hurling and Camogie match would take place the following Sunday for People in Need. We got a great response. We got a hold of a loud speaker and Mikey Barrett did the commentating or rather a comedy act. Everyone enjoyed the day and we raised £400. When the check was presented to Olive in the office she suggested that we apply for something for our community center. To our great joy and surprise we were awarded £1000 for equipment for the new hall. We will definitely help them again.

well being of their members they need to be involved in improving things in the wider community as this has a direct influence on their club. Another reason for community action stems from the sense of justice and fair-play evident in many adolescents, and their desire to right some of the injustices in this world and to become involved in helping various charities or organisations carrying out such work. This view of the adolescent is the one that is rarely commented on in our society today. The media and population in general tend to concentrate on the more turbulent side of adolescence, as perhaps to concentrate on the more humanitarian side forces us to answer awkward questions about injustice in the world today. Young people genuinely care about other people and are willing to work towards helping others and in some way towards forming a fairer society. The successful youth club is one where leaders are tuned into that aspect of young people and can plan and provide programmes and activities that allow young people to express this side of their nature. If one listens to adolescents, and looks for the good nature that they possess, one can see that it's possible to make a big difference in local and indeed the wider community. If one seizes the opportunity to harness the good nature of young people, and provide them with activities that act as tools for them to help others, then we have clubs that are willing and able to contribute greatly to the betterment of local communities. Where this good nature remains un-harnessed, we remain in the rat-race of selfishness and individualisation all too common in our society today. In noting the comments from senior citizens regarding youth clubs, it's interesting that they refer to the generosity of young people as being a reminder of the past, the caring community. Perhaps these young people serve as a reminder of the compassionate side of human nature, something which in this busy world we, as adults, sometimes leave behind in our quest to make life better.

Whatever the reason and the motivation behind it, youth clubs are involved in the wider community and can play a significant role in improving life in local

Youth Club – A Senior Citizens View

The Youth Club is a bye product of the Old Macra na Feirme and it grew out of the need to provide entertainment for the teenagers of the Parish and to keep them from going into town too early in life. Many people throughout the 30 or so years it is in existence have given generously of their time and talents to make it a success. It is a vital part of our community. Eileen has thrown her weight into it now for the past 10 years or so and the all "Hunt the Wren" to provide funds for the Christmas party. The Youth Club gives us a hearty meal, plenty Jameson and Stout, spot prizes galore and a display of concert items in music dance and drama. The old folks wish to express their gratitude for a wonderful evening. Some dance and sang at the occasion, not having done so during the whole year and they look forward to be alive for another year. Long may it last!

own place -a sense of community. we have always taken pride in where we came from and to a great extent this pride was often reinforced by the achievements of our own people down through the years. There have been many achievements, particularly in the area of sport -hurling, camogie, boxing, athletics and even tug-of-war. I suppose in many ways our feelings towards our own place would not differ from those who live in a thousand other parishes. But as the song says "The times they are a changing". The world is becoming a smaller and smaller place as the years go by. Part of the unfortunate outfall of this shrinking world syndrome is that once vibrant rural communities are being lost young people are moving away to more centralised and ever expanding urban or city areas.

In Kilnamona, although some of our young people have moved to other parts of the country and other parts of the world as they inevitably will, we have been relatively unaffected by migration or emigration. This may be possibly due to our closeness to Ennis- one of the fastest growing towns in Europe. This closeness to Ennis offers us the opportunity to work in the area while still remaining in our community. But this proximity to a major urban area like Ennis, in itself, poses a threat to our sense of community in Kilnamona. There is a real possibility that "the town" could become the focus of our world at the expense of our own place -after all most of us are only about 10 minutes away from Ennis. To maintain and strengthen our sense of community we must work at it. Every organisation that we have in our parish serves to provide the impetus, which helps to maintain and develop that sense of community. In this context our Youth Club plays a very important role in the well being of the community. Kilnamona Youth Club itself was one of the main driving forces behind our new and recently constructed Community Centre, which has added significantly to the infrastructure of our parish. The existence of the youth club in the parish during the last 30 years or so into the present day has, and continues to have, a positive but somewhat immeasurable impact on our community. Probably, without realizing it, the weekly youth club meetings, which in the main revolve around fun and enjoyment activities are also helping to develop useful skills for the participants. These are skills that we do not often appreciate but which the young to become better adults – skills such as social interaction, leadership, responsibility, competitiveness, and organizational management. The present group of senior and junior youth leaders in Kilnamona are testimony to this in so far as most of all of them are former youth club members. Outside of the youth club many of those involved in other organizations in the parish, are also former youth club members. Proof if any is needed that youth is the future and the youth club is the bridge to future community well being in Kilnamona.

Tony Barrett

The Youth Service.

We have already discussed various aspects of community involvement by youth clubs and the views and actions of people involved, but successful community involvement on a wide scale depends on successful management and support. This task falls to the relevant youth services in the various locations and we will now explore the management and support of youth clubs in their efforts towards effectiveness in local communities.

Within the youth service a number of issues arise regarding this area of their work.

These issues are:

- ✚ Volunteering
- ✚ Contracts and Accountability
- ✚ Standards

Volunteering.

One difficulty in relation to the management of a voluntary organisation is the Irish concept of what voluntary work means. The concept of voluntarism as a natural and intrinsic absolute, which develops from what Billis (1993, p.159) has termed 'the personal world', where welfare is provided by relatives, neighbours and friends, to a more formal setting within a voluntary organisation is widely shared. The values attaching to voluntarism in Ireland have deep roots in pre-modern Ireland (Powell and Guerin, 1997, p.113). Joyce and Mc.Cashin (1987) have written that the values attached to voluntary work have their basis in the traditional nature of social life in Ireland, particularly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Rural social values were based on reciprocal social relationships and a strong community spirit. Joyce and Mc.Cashin also highlight the impact of the lack of State social services as well as the role of the Catholic Church, which provided resources, both spiritual and material, that were vital to the development of the voluntary movement (1987, p.97). Faughnan points out that while religious organisations played a major role in the shaping of the voluntary sector, a tradition of self-help organisations also influenced the nature of the sector, in particular the growth of Muintir na Tire (People of the land) in the 1930's (1990, p.26). The basic concept of volunteering was described as activities or work done of a person's free will for the benefit of others (beyond the

immediate family) for no payment other than in some cases a small honorarium and/or expenses (Gaskin and Smith, 1995, p.7).

This tradition of self-help and freedom of choice within the voluntary organisations has contributed to the reluctance of youth clubs to outside intervention (i.e. interventions by people or organisations outside of their local communities). There is a belief in clubs that they can be fully self-sufficient within their own community and do not require assistance or, more particularly, direction from outside. Many Club Leaders see themselves as offering a service to young people and their community during their free-time and often as considerable cost to themselves. Many resent the imposition of rules and regulations on the work they do and feel that because they are delivering the service free of charge they should be the sole determiners of how it is done. In dealing with such groups, one has to be careful in the approach used. One must make sure that they are seen to be offering a useful service rather than an imposed system, that any intervention is seen as being due to a request from within the club or community, and that although coming from outside is accepted by the community.

In order to do this, youth workers have to spend time in the community and often have to attend various social functions which does not constitute part of their work. Youth workers have found that local acceptance is often established quicker when they carry out a piece of direct work with the young people. The youngsters are quicker to accept the worker and their comments and enthusiasm about the work are relayed to those at home and gradually filter through the community at large. However this causes difficulties for many professional youth workers in that they are performing the role of the volunteer in working directly with the young people, and have to be careful to ensure the right balance exists so that they do not take over that role. One way of doing this is to carry out pilot programmes for new pieces of work and involve the leaders in the direct work with members with a view to training them in the new work. Gaining acceptance in a new community also takes a considerable amount of time and this needs to be balanced against ongoing work in other areas.

While the role of the professional youth worker involves the training and support of volunteers in the delivery of a local youth service, there is a danger that such a role

may change to a more direct interventionist role due to the professionalisation of the youth service, inadequate funding for mainstream youth work, and the decline in the number of those willing to volunteer as youth club leaders. This is an issue of major concern to the youth service, and faced with such dilemmas, local youth services have employed a number of strategies to ensure the continuation of a proper service at local level. The following are some examples of such strategies:

“The purpose of Foróige is to enable young people to involve themselves consciously and actively in their own development and in the development of society.

This purpose challenges and supports young people to involve themselves in

- **Developing their character and talents**
- **Thinking for themselves, reflecting on their actions and taking responsibility**
- **Having fun and making friends**
- **Building positive and helpful relationships**
- **Acquiring knowledge and skills for life**
- **Improving the community**

Foróige provides a comprehensive range of youth work services through the operation of Foróige Clubs, Local Youth Services, Local Youth Development Projects and Youth Information Centres. This multi-pronged approach enables the organisation to

- **Meet the developmental needs of young people in general.**
- **In particular circumstances to focus on vulnerable young people in relation to issues arising from poverty, marginalisation and social exclusion, under-achievement at school, early school leaving, youth crime, substance abuse and family difficulties**

Community involvement is a sine qua non of Foroige. There are two aspects to this involvement: i) the involvement of a community in influencing the development of its youth and ii) the involvement of youth in the development of their community.

It would be extremely difficult to quantify accurately the level of involvement – many examples of community involvement are reported in the Club news Publication and in the local press- but we know it involves thousands of people. The quality of responsibility exercised by community members in our organisation includes fulfilling roles such as: project leaders, resource personnel, helpers at events, contributors of funds, participation in Achievement Days, Symposia, etc.

The quality of responsibility exercised by Foroige members in their communities includes such matters as participation in community parish committees, improvement of the natural environment, service to disadvantaged groups, raising community awareness on various topics through research and public symposia, organising community events, providing community entertainment, functions, etc.

The Citizenship Programme

This programme aims to assist young people to develop the values and skills of good citizenship. Club members study their local area and take action to improve the community. There are three main elements to the activities of the Citizenship Programme:

- Awareness: Study the community or some aspects of it, eg. the needs of the elderly, facilities, environment, employment. Identify one or more improvements needed.
- Action: Carry out an action project to bring about selected improvements, eg. visit the elderly, transform a derelict area into an amenity.
- Evaluation: Discuss what members learned and what the community gained from the project.

The Leadership Programme

This programme enables young people to understand, exercise and follow effective leadership so that they can influence others in a positive way and take active responsibility for the development of themselves, their club and their community.

The Family & Life Skills Programme

This programme provides opportunities for young people to understand and contribute positively to family life. Club members learn practical skills, study family life and develop interpersonal relationship skills”.

(Foroige, 2002)

Bearing in mind the decline in the number of volunteers, other strategies have been developed, such as those employed by Carlow Youth Service:

" Carlow Regional Youth Service is there to support and promote community based open youth work and to bring young people's needs and agendas to the attention of the decisions makers in the areas that affect their lives.

The youth service believes in being open with young people, and working with young people to create a supportive environment for their self-development. Promoting and supporting all community based youth work and youth activities is the key mission of the agency.

What are our objectives?

- 1. To be open to all community based youth groups in the Carlow region.**
- 2. Providing young people in the Carlow region with opportunities to develop their physical, mental and social needs.**
- 3. To provide young people with the opportunity to express their opinions.**
- 4. To promote the formation of youth groups and support any community youth initiatives.**
- 5. To develop an awareness among the public of issues affecting young people in general.**

As the volunteer base for the delivery of a traditional youth work model shrinks, training is targeted for the delivery of programmes that are not dependant on long-term commitments from volunteers". (Carlow Youth Service, 2002)

The following example from Donegal Youth Service shows a common trend in youth service strategies toward community involvement and also leads us into the next issue of concern to youth services, that of accountability.

Donegal:

"In all our youth units, volunteers either run the local youth unit or manage staff that run the programmes for them and the young members. All our youth units are linked to their community. During 2001 the Donegal Youth Service involved more people in the management committee. With eleven volunteers now making up the Board of Directors of the Service their level of involvement has increased for good effect through the working/sub group strategy noted above. These volunteers have overall responsibility for the work of the Donegal Youth Service.

Consciously aware of need to have greater involvement of our wider volunteer base the Service set up the Volunteer Forum in 2001. This was part of our work this year to include volunteers in the running of the service. Following the AGM of the Regional Youth Clubs Council (an anticipated system of volunteer involvement that wasn't working) youth units were invited to send three representatives to a meeting every quarter of a new volunteer forum. This forum has now elected its own core group who meet monthly with staff to organise programmes and follow through on decisions from the forum. This structure is in its infancy at present and while being staff led, has the potential to be a great vehicle for active involvement of volunteers in the Service.

The Donegal Youth Service is committed to interagency work for the betterment of youth service for young people in the county. While we

have good working relationships with some agencies we are working on identifying allies in our work so that the agendas of youth work can be furthered. At present we work with the following agencies: National Youth Federation, National Youth Council of Ireland, Co. Donegal VEC, North Western Health Boards, Western Education and Library Boards N Ire and its members, FAS, Youth Workers Network Donegal, Donegal County Development Board, Donegal Local Development Company, Youth Action Nire, Community Workers Co-operative, Glenwood Park Residents Association.” (Donegal Youth Service, 2002)

Contracts and accountability.

The Youth Work Bill requires that the local Vocational Education Committee ensures the provision of youth work programmes or youth work services, or both, by co-ordinating with approved national voluntary youth organisations, designated local voluntary youth work organisations and authorised organisations within its vocational education area, so as to ensure the provision of those programmes and services by those organisations (Youth Work Bill, 2000, Part 2, section 9). In effect it means that the Youth Service will be in competition with other voluntary organisations for youth work contracts awarded by the VEC. Considerable organisational efforts are needed to ensure that contractual guidelines are adhered to and that public funds are accounted for. This can lead to a huge increase in formalisation and bureaucratisation within the organisation. This results in an imitation of the formalistic attributes ascribed to state agencies, thereby negating the special advantages (e.g. flexibility) associated with voluntary organisations (Powell and Guerin, 1997, p.146). This presents a dilemma for youth workers in that the management of contracts will have to reflect the desires of government and the VEC’s in terms of reporting and accountability, and will allow for less flexibility in the delivery of the aims and objectives of the Youth Service.

Early anecdotal evidence is beginning to demonstrate that increased integration with the state through a partnership model is developing an attendant requirement for reporting and accountability (Geoghegan, 1998,). This will fall to professional full-time workers in the main and will add to the current managerial aspect of the work.

The general public are becoming increasingly aware of the need for accountability in relation to the spending of public monies. In their 1995 study, Ruddle and Mulvihill found that 42% of the respondents felt that charities are not sufficiently accountable to the public for how the money given to them is spent (Ruddle and Mulvihill, 1995, p.98). However the difficulty arises for voluntary organisations when the criteria for accountability don't always reflect the values of the organisation or the quality of the work undertaken. The Department of Finance requires other departments to place an emphasis on reporting the 'outcomes' and not the 'inputs' of state funded projects. Circular letter F21/94 from the Department of Education states that "VECs and all other bodies which are audited by the C&AG will be subject, at his discretion to examination by him regarding value for money, i.e. of the economy and efficiency of their operations" (Treacy, 1995, p.3). Value for money is seen by the government in terms of the delivery of a youth service at local level with particular emphasis being placed on the numbers of males and females who participate, rather than on the quality of service delivered. This forces youth workers to become more involved in setting up new groups, recruiting voluntary leaders and young people, thus having less time and resources for the training and development of existing groups.

A second disadvantage is that the reliance of voluntary organisations on public funding places them in a vulnerable position in an era of Government cutbacks (Powell and Guerin, 1997, p.146). Writing about the British voluntary sector, Brenton has identified the phenomenon of 'grantmanship'. Organisations orient their activities towards the contracts they feel are most rewarding rather than allowing their own interests to be the determinant of their activities. The funding of voluntary organisations, whether by grants or payment for contract service, is still the expenditure of public funds and is therefore subject to the same criteria as are used to assess all Government expenditure (Brenton, 1985, p.182).

The uniqueness of the youth service lies in the voluntary nature of the 'engagement' with young people. Young people choose to be involved in this service in order to access resources, activities and, most importantly, in the knowledge that there are people interested in their needs and issues, and in working with them to fulfil their aspirations (Gibbons, 2000, p.9). In putting a strong emphasis on the 'political hot potatoes' of Juvenile Crime, Drugs and Disadvantaged Youth living in urban areas,

the state has allocated the majority of youth work funds to projects dealing with such issues, and as a result the Youth Service has been forced to put more resources into these areas to the detriment of mainstream youth work, particularly in rural areas.

While it is extremely desirable that the Youth Service targets work with 'at risk' young people, it is also very important to remember that all young people can be said to be at risk at some point in their lives. It is those young people that generic youth work has always served so well. Generic youth work is aimed at all young people regardless of whether or not they fit into any category of disadvantage or disaffection. Surely this kind of inclusiveness is one way of breaking down the barrier of social exclusion that confronts so many young people in Irish society today (Gibbons, 2000, p.9). In the managerial role of the Youth Service it is difficult to deliver the aim of the organisation in assisting the holistic development of young people and those who work with them, when many of those people do not seem to fit the criteria for participation in the majority of the projects funded by the state. The Youth Service is somewhat powerless to do much about this situation as the third principal problem is the possible loss of autonomy of voluntary organisations once contracts are entered into with Government. Fear of losing contracts may result in a fear of explicitly attacking Government policy (Powell and Guerin, 1997, p.146). Faced with these dilemmas, how does the youth service ensure that standards of youth work are maintained?

Standards

The issue of standards is important for voluntary organisations of all sizes. Concerns about reliability, availability and consistency can be important for volunteers and users alike (Report of the Commission on the Future of the Voluntary Sector, 1996, p.104). The issue of standards may mean different things for different stakeholders. Describing the UK experience the Report emphasises the lack of a national regulator of standards, performance or effectiveness that applies to all voluntary bodies. This is despite the extensive use of contracts as mechanisms of funding between voluntary bodies and statutory agencies. The issue of standards is also bound up with the expectation that users and professional staff will be involved in their development.

may not be formalised (Powell and Guerin, 1997, p.160-161).

One of the main difficulties for the Youth Service is that the standards they use to measure the effectiveness of their work do not always coincide with those of the main funders, the Government, or indeed those of their perceived

beneficiaries, the Public. It is difficult to be seen as an effective manager who's tasks include: making people capable of joint performance through common goals, common values, the right structure and the training and development they need (Drucker, 1989, p.214), when the funders, agencies, members and general public all have different ideas of the standards required in the delivery of an effective youth service.

by some today, but it does serve to point out the needness of not having a proper recruitment and screening strategy.

Through YOUTHWORK 2000 Clare Youth Service offers communities a clear and effective recruitment policy for the recruitment and support of voluntary youth leaders.

Communities are involved in surveying the needs of young people and developing a plan to cater for these needs. Based on the developmental plan, clear job descriptions are written for all levels of responsibility in the club. People are invited to apply for specific jobs and everything is fully explained to them in advance. There is a proper support structure in place through the club structure in the local community and through specific training from Clare Youth Service, funded jointly by the club and Youth Service. Our volunteers are too valuable an asset to be left unsupported.

Northern Exposure (3) August 1997

In relation to the evaluation of training in the Youth Service a number of issues arise:

- Selection, recruitment and training of staff and volunteers;
- The fluidity and flexibility of the work;
- The different outcomes required by the various stakeholders.

It is not sufficient to simply evaluate the particular piece of training or learning in isolation. One must also evaluate the broader issues that help or hinder the attainment of the objectives. The successful organisation will be one where attention is paid to minimising the demotivating factors by creating a supportive climate and by developing people's confidence in their ability to tackle and overcome barriers to learning (Reid and Barrington, 2000, p.74).

Selection, recruitment and training of staff and volunteers.

Those involved in the Youth Service identify the volunteer youth leader as the single most important resource available to youth organisations. This will continue to be the case because this type of community involvement is a desirable and well established principle in youth work in Ireland (NYCI, 1994, p.36). The phenomenon of community education is located in a long tradition of voluntarism in Ireland. It has arisen from a feeling of discontent and a sense of exclusion from the dominant ideology and establishment on the part of a large part of the population. Community education is contributing to a process of redefining the world. It is responding to an experience of the inadequacy of current definitions, where this sense of inadequacy is experienced at the level of the individual, the community, the class or the gender. It is a response, then, to a learning need, but it is not particularly an institutional response. It is a response which is primarily created and driven by the participants themselves (Collins, 1995, p.94-95).

Volunteers come to the Youth Service for help and advice about setting up clubs or projects in their locality. The initial motivation for the provision of a voluntary based youth service comes from the local community in the majority of cases. The willingness of people to give up their time for such voluntary work is based on what is happening with the rest of their lives. For many it is not a clear sense of wanting to work with young people that prompts involvement but a desire to satisfy other more

personal needs (PAVET, 1984, p.5). According to Taylor (1983), the traditional notion of the volunteer as a purely altruistic provider of help has always been misleading, volunteers themselves recognise the complex interplay between altruistic and self-oriented considerations. Volunteers have personal needs and the act of volunteering is often the first step to meeting some of those needs (Twine, 1983).

Training of voluntary leaders is obviously of great importance in order for them to learn the basic principles of youth work and to develop professional competence (NYCI, 1994, p.36). However the Youth Service must take into account the personal needs of volunteers when devising such training as the success of such programmes will be conditional on those needs being met. One of the ideas behind Youth Work 2000 was that Leaders would be trained in skills specific to their role in the club (CYS, 1995, p.10-12). The evaluation of this training therefore should be carried out in conjunction with an evaluation of the leader's performance in fulfilling their roles in the youth club, coupled with the evaluation of the success or otherwise in meeting the needs of the individual volunteer.

Where the Youth Service sees a need for intervention in a specific area and has the resources to recruit people to satisfy the need, they invariably recruit either part-time or full-time paid youth workers. Entry to the youth work profession should be open to people from a wide variety of backgrounds. However, for full-time youth workers, a basic pre-service course in youth and community work is a desirable pre-requisite. This course should provide the youth worker with a general training. It should span youth and community work and look at how youth work functions in the context of community. The course should also allow for specialisation for those workers intending to work in specific areas of youth work (NYCI, 1994, p.36). The evaluation of such work is often easier to carry out as the certification of the training has at least given a set of benchmarks against which the performance and work can be measured.

Many youth organisations recruit people for the job that needs to be done (e.g. a youth leader in a local club, and outreach worker to work in a drugs awareness project), but rarely recruit people specifically to meet the aims of the organisation in general (e.g. someone who is employed to promote the holistic development of young people). Training needs analyses often concentrate on the person analysis level and neglect the

links with organisational goals which are necessary to ensure that the training is effective in advancing the cause of the company (Bramley, 1996, p.49). Often applicants with the most appropriate personalities and social skills are not those with the right technical skills. If the organisation faces the need to upgrade technical skills quickly, it may be forced to make tradeoffs. Organisations in this situation often place greater weight on personality and social skills, on the grounds that it is easier to train technical skills than change personalities or develop social skills. However, if the work technology is complex and training times are long, management may be forced to recruit people who better fit the organisation's technical requirements than its cultural requirements (Bowen et al, 1999, p.143). In a youth organisation it is important that those recruited meet the cultural requirements of the organisation as it is difficult to train someone in the skills of youth work if these conditions are not met.

The fluidity and flexibility of the work.

The available research indicates that many workers, paid and unpaid, are currently free to interpret the concept of youth work according to their own analysis, experience and competence (Harvey 1994, Hurley & Treacy 1993, Treacy 1992). A model of youth work that relies primarily on a practice base leaves much unexplored and unarticulated, the methods used by workers are rarely grounded within any one theoretical framework and have no real explicit guides to practice (Staunton, 1992). Youth workers need to be able to respond to the uniqueness of each encounter with young people and to operate in a flexible, creative and imaginative manner. They need to be able to cope effectively with the demands of an informal education role which now seems more important than ever as Irish youth work is increasingly characterised by an emphasis on programme planning, delivery, development and evaluation (Tierney, 1999, p.9).

Under the Youth Service Grant Scheme, organisations and projects are encouraged to engage in a planning and evaluation process which will identify clear objectives, set performance indicators, and develop measures for determining the outcomes for interventions and initiatives. Evaluation is seen as a vital part of the planning and action of a project/organisation and is not something separate and removed from the struggles of the work. It is recommended therefore that evaluation should be part of an internal process and address all aspects of the project or youth service. Two levels

of evaluation are required, evaluation of the operation of structures and systems within the service, and evaluation of the direct work with young people and the community. Evaluation, therefore, must be both internal and holistic. Internal – in that it must be organised and facilitated from within, and holistic – in that it must actively involve all sections of the service and all the key people in the continuous process of monitoring, recording and assessment of the planning, implementations and outcomes of the work (Treacy, 1995, p.6-7).

The social and institutional context of youth work has become considerably more complex. The social problems confronting youth workers – and which they are often specifically employed to deal with – have become more severe and demanding, as have the skills necessary for dealing with such complex situations (Devlin, 1999, p.12). A feature among youth workers is the diversity of talents, life experiences, interests, approaches and motivation that they bring to the youth work situation. This diversity is both a source of potential enrichment and a challenge to those developing training programmes and to the organisations providing them (Tierney, 1999, p.9). Youth workers must be professional in their approach, whether they are volunteers or full-time workers. Such a professional approach to youth work can only be obtained by providing adequate and relevant training for all youth workers. A comprehensive training policy is therefore the key to the development of youth services. The adequate training of staff, management and volunteers in the Youth Service is a necessary prerequisite to effectiveness, and trained personnel are the Youth Service's most important asset (NYCI, 1994, p.35). The difficulty is in finding the best method of evaluation that will take account of the diversities outlined above, and reflect an objective and accurate picture of what is happening.

The different outcomes required by the various stakeholders.

The number of Government departments and statutory agencies with an interest in youth work and closely related services has increased, and sources of funding, nationally and internationally, are much more diverse (Devlin, 1999, p.12). This had led to an increase in the number of stakeholders in projects and the Youth Service generally. Other relevant aspects of the changing social and institutional context are the increased concern with child protection and related issues, and the broad trend

whereby people in all walks of life are more concerned with formal qualifications and certification than before – a trend towards what sociologists call “credentialism”.

Taken together these factors have had a huge impact on volunteering. The profile of youth work volunteers has changed significantly over the last few years. In simple numerical terms, the volunteer base has diminished considerably. Furthermore, volunteers are now more likely to expect something concrete from their volunteering – in terms, say, of certified training or of entry into a paid youth work job. There is general agreement that youth work in Ireland is “professionalising”, if only in the sense that more and more it is a job that people get paid for and for which they are expected to have certain demonstrable skills and aptitudes (Devlin, 1999, p.12). The demand for certification of training from volunteers and funders alike has led to an increased emphasis on the evaluation of youth service training programmes. This brings its own difficulties as the requirements of the stakeholders (Youth Service, Academic Institutions and Funders) can often be a variance with each other, thus often requiring three separate evaluations of a piece of work. The nature of youth work is process driven and needs to be evaluated over a longer period of time than is often allowed for in the funding of various short-term projects. It is difficult to use the traditional measuring tools of statistics to evaluate this work (O’Beirne, 1998, p.68). Yet many funders, and in particular statutory funders, require evaluation of training and delivery of youth work to be expressed in terms of statistics reflecting the numbers involved and the relationship with the Government statistics relating to the specific geographic areas involved.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Definition of Youth Work.

Youth Work is difficult to define in a precise way in that it is not an exact science, it is a relatively new process, and its functions are influenced by the varying perceptions of the state, youth organisations and participants alike.

The state has made several attempts at defining youth work through the work of various committees and the Youth Work Bill 2000. These definitions have changed somewhat over a period of time and reflect the issues of main concern appropriate to their particular era or to the politics of the time. The common threads included in these various definitions are that :

- ✚ Youth Work's primary objective is the education of young people in an informal setting.
- ✚ It is concerned with the provision of strategies, opportunities and services to meet the developmental and other need of young people.
- ✚ It assists young people to become self-reliant, responsible and active citizens in a democratic society.
- ✚ And it's a planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhance the personal and social development of young people, through their voluntary participation, and is provided primarily by voluntary youth work organisations.

Youth workers see the primary role of youth work as a process whereby adults and young people work together on a voluntary basis, engaging in educational dialogue through the medium of conversation. Emphasis is placed on the relationships formed in order to facilitate the empowerment of young people and aid their personal, social and spiritual development. Young people are involved in the identification of their individual needs and offered a range of opportunities to develop their own potential and to help combat such problems as social exclusion and rural isolation.

Young people don't use the jargon of state or youth work organisations in defining or discussing youth work. Those that are involved in youth work programmes tend to define the process in a way that expresses what they get from the experience. Theirs is

an agenda of participation, enjoyment, and feeling secure in developing a positive relationship with the adults involved.

Our conclusion from the research undertaken is that while the various definitions of youth work have common characteristics and terminology, they are viewed from different perspectives, and interpreted differently by the various stakeholders involved. While one doesn't necessarily need a blanket overall definition that will satisfy everyone, as such a definition would probably become so complex as to render it unusable, or so dilute that it's insignificant, there is a need for dialogue between the various people involved in order to clarify perspectives of current definitions. There is a need for youth work to be seen as a valuable educational process, and to promote the aims and objectives of such work in such a way that society in general can understand its importance.

Youth Work Policy.

We have seen from this research that youth work policy in Ireland has been driven by a partnership between the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) and the Youth Affairs section of the Department of Education. The Department has never really been the lead player and has resorted to a largely reactive and administrative role leaving nearly all of the action to the voluntary sector.

While there have been several attempts by various governments to establish a youth work policy, they have been subject to political interference and due to a general state apathy towards youth work and young people, have had little effect. The Youth Work Bill 2000 was a significant attempt at redressing the imbalance but has fallen short on a number of issues regarding current youth work practice. These issues include a perceived lack of commitment to youth work from the state, a lack of clarity in defining the work involved, and a lack of sufficient funding to provide for a comprehensive youth service. A positive aspect, however, is that youth work has now gained statutory status and structures have been put in place to allow for participation and discussion in relation to future policy provision.

The result of the failure of the government to take the lead in defining the necessary issues and the issue of the necessary guidelines covering the work, has been that it

... of most current funding policies. I must argue that it is impossible to work with an agency that measures success only with specific outcomes, however maybe youth work agencies need to have greater confidence in what they can achieve and apply greater rigour and analysis to their work than has historically been the case - one can no longer rely on our "gut feelings". There is a need for clear agreement from the outset on how work will be measured, and it is at the initial stages of the work that the various partners should agree these systems of reporting and assessment, rather than leaving it until near the end of the life of the project to find the system used doesn't accurately reflect the work. Since a great deal of what is learned.... occurs outside of the planned formal curriculum, (e.g. young people learning from each other; the growth of self awareness through group interaction, etc), it is sensible to process these processes, thence tapping into a rich source of extra learning. This needs to be carried

out much more by the Youth Service as after all they are the experts in their field and need to better define the indicators of quality in their own work.

Definition of a Youth Club.

Youth clubs provide a wide range of educational and recreational activities for young people. A feature that distinguishes youth clubs from other clubs involving young people is that the ideas for the activities very often come from the members themselves rather than from a set of core activities promoted by a central organisation. Youth clubs in the eyes of young people are about meeting friends, doing things together and having fun in a safe environment supervised and supported by adult leaders. Youth work in youth clubs is normally referred to as mainline youth work, with an aim to assist in the personal, social, and spiritual development of young people, where adults and young people work together to identify needs and possible solutions.

While the research indicates a general sense of agreement on the definition of a youth club, such a definition is not clearly evident in the wider community. There is a need for youth services and youth clubs to promote their work in their local communities in such a way that people can be made aware of the uniqueness of such work and the educational value their youth club can offer the community. There is also a need for recognition to be offered by the state, and in particular by the Department of Education, of the role played by youth clubs in their local communities and the educational benefits available to members of such clubs.

Effectiveness of Youth Clubs in the views of young people.

Young people lack power in Irish society and for this reason are sometimes overlooked and have their views ignored when it comes to addressing community needs or assessing the effectiveness of various strategies. As they are the main stakeholders in the youth club it is imperative their views are taken into account when assessing the effectiveness of youth clubs.

In the opinion of members, youth clubs are effective in their local communities if they offer a wide range of activities that are relevant to the needs of the young people in the area. The voluntary involvement of young people and the equality in the

relationship between the adults involved and the young people is key to the effectiveness of the club in promoting inclusion, understanding and involvement of young people. The young people need to have a certain ownership of the club and to be included in all aspects of the club's activities. There is a need for the involvement of parents both from an information point of view and as leaders, helpers and supporters of the club. But most of all, the club must be a place where young people feel secure and happy in the knowledge that they can meet their friends, develop relationships, and enjoy themselves.

We strongly recommend that youth club leaders consult with their members on a regular basis in order to continually assess the effectiveness of the club in meeting the needs of young people. This need not be a lengthy exercise, but rather a regular piece of work to be included in any evaluation of activities. Many of the youth clubs surveyed in this research did not have material to hand that would indicate the effectiveness of their club, yet it was found that these clubs were indeed effective, however, the clubs that did have a record of their achievements and views of members, parents and the community, proved to be more effective and better organised. There is a need therefore for clubs to evaluate their work and to record that evaluation so that improvements can be made in the service they deliver.

Effectiveness of Youth Clubs in the views of parents.

Parents are naturally concerned about the education of their children, but in many cases they see education solely in terms of the formal education offered in schools. There is a need to inform parents of the value of the non-formal education offered through involvement in voluntary groups such as youth clubs. The recreational and social value of youth work is usually quite visible to people, however, the educational aspect of the work is often more difficult to observe from the outside as the location of the learning is not set in the traditional educational establishment of the school. Generally, in formal educational environments, the student has little power or authority while teachers have a considerable amount of both. For the emerging adolescent, issues of power and authority are very salient. If adolescents are to learn to take responsibility in the way that adults do then they need to be able to have some level of control over what they do and how they do it. This is something that parents do not always see, and they often fail to recognise the significance of the youth club

in terms of being a place where young people can exercise some power in determining their own future.

From our research we have found that youth clubs that engage in a dialogue with parents are more effective at local level and gain the support and understanding of parents. Clubs that have a deliberate policy of including parents in their work have been able to get their message across regarding the non-formal educational value of their processes and programmes. Those that don't involve parents in this way have remained on the battlefield in the "Adult v Youth Club War", and will continue to be less effective at local level.

We recommend that youth clubs involve parents in a number of ways such as; information about policy and practice, training for parents on relevant issues, involvement in policy making bodies and as volunteers in youth clubs and groups. While it is important that young people have a sense of ownership of the youth club, it is also necessary that parents are involved and informed of the aims and objectives of programmes, so that they can be aware of the value of the club to their children and to the local community.

Effectiveness of Youth Clubs in the views of the wider community.

The youth club must be an integral part of the community if it is to be effective, but that doesn't mean it has to cater for all the members of the community all of the time. The club should reflect the community in which it exists and should offer support to that community should a need arise, along with challenging aspects of community life and culture if that is deemed necessary. Many youth clubs in Ireland attach a great importance to involvement in the wider community and have developed various strategies to that effect. The different strategies used reflect the needs of particular clubs or their communities.

The poor record of state funding for youth work and in particular for mainline youth clubs means that youth clubs have to spend a considerable amount of time raising money for their activities. In order to do this, they need to promote a positive public image and many undertake community projects, such as "clean-ups", "senior citizens' parties", "church choir" etc. in an effort to gain a sense of legitimacy in their local

community and as a way of projecting a positive image that will help them in their fundraising activities. Others have used such activities directly as fundraising events by attaching sponsorship for example to a clean-up campaign. Some clubs, particularly in rural areas have existed in a tradition of community co-operation and self-help groups, and see it as their duty to be involved in helping others in their community. The youth club has in many instances become the breeding ground for future community activists and leaders in that it allows young people to participate in a leadership role for the first time and provides confidence in such roles through training and participation. Others, particularly in disadvantaged areas, take the approach that if they are to successfully promote the well being of their members they need to be involved in improving things in the wider community as this has a direct influence on their club. Another reason for community action stems from the sense of justice and fair-play evident in many adolescents, and their desire to right some of the injustices in this world and to become involved in helping various charities or organisations carrying out such work.

It is our recommendation that youth clubs focus on the willingness of young people to help others and that this aspect of adolescence is promoted actively at local level. We also recommend a national campaign to market the positive images of young people and their achievements in an effort to counter the prevalent media image of young people as being troublesome and difficult. There is a need to redress the balance in this area and the Youth Service has an important role in this regard.

Effectiveness of Youth Clubs in the views of the Youth Service.

One of the difficulties experienced by the youth service relates to traditional views of volunteerism in Ireland. These views have lead some clubs to believe that they can be fully self-sufficient within their own community and do not require assistance or, more particularly, direction from outside. Many Club Leaders see themselves as offering a service to young people and their community during their free-time and often at considerable cost to themselves. Many resent the imposition of rules and regulations on the work they do and feel that because they are delivering the service free of charge they should be the sole determiners of how it is done. It is therefore necessary for professional youth workers to establish themselves in local communities and gain the trust of local people. Youth workers have found that local acceptance is

often established quicker when they carry out a piece of direct work with the young people. The youngsters are quicker to accept the worker and their comments and enthusiasm about the work are relayed to those at home and gradually filter through the community at large. Gaining acceptance in a new community also takes a considerable amount of time and this needs to be balanced against ongoing work in other areas. We recommend that youth services allocate sufficient time to youth workers to establish themselves locally, and that funders include sufficient resources for this initial work to be carried out, especially in relation to new youth clubs, struggling clubs, and projects in newly established communities.

Due to the ever-decreasing number of adults willing or able to volunteer as youth club leaders there is a need for a volunteer development strategy at national level. Such a strategy needs to include a study on the reality for volunteers involved in youth work, an assessment of their needs, and a targeted response to such needs. The strategy also needs to provide clear job-descriptions for youth leaders, training and support, and a reward system that gives sufficient regard to the value of the work undertaken. This strategy should also include accredited training at all levels and for all volunteers involved. The uniqueness of the youth service lies in the voluntary nature of the 'engagement' with young people. Young people choose to be involved in this service in order to access resources, activities and, most importantly, in the knowledge that there are people interested in their needs and issues, and in working with them to fulfil their aspirations. In putting a strong emphasis on the 'political hot potatoes' of Juvenile Crime, Drugs and Disadvantaged Youth living in urban areas, the state has allocated the majority of youth work funds to projects dealing with such issues, and as a result the Youth Service has been forced to put more resources into these areas to the detriment of mainstream youth work and volunteers, particularly in rural areas.

One of the difficulties for voluntary organisations in relation to contracts, accountability, and standards, is when the criteria for accountability don't always reflect the values of the organisation or the quality of the work undertaken. Value for money is seen by the government in terms of the delivery of a youth service at local level with particular emphasis being placed on the numbers of males and females who participate, rather than on the quality of service delivered. This forces youth workers to become more involved in setting up new groups, recruiting voluntary leaders and

young people, thus having less time and resources for the training and development of existing groups. A second difficulty is that the reliance of voluntary organisations on public funding places them in a vulnerable position in an era of Government cutbacks. Organisations have tended to orient their activities towards the contracts they feel are most rewarding rather than allowing their own interests to be the determinant of their activities. This has had particular effect on youth clubs, as the funding for youth work in Ireland has been increased in relation to disadvantaged youth work, but significantly decreased in relation to mainstream youth work.

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Recommendations of Joint Committee on Arts, Sport, Tourism, Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs

1. The Joint Committee acknowledges and welcomes the study undertaken by Deputy James Breen, T.D. and compliments the author on the rigour of the analysis and the clarity of the conclusions. It is indeed a model for a rapporteur assignment.
2. The Joint Committee for its part strongly recommends the establishment of a legislative framework for youth clubs and their activities bearing in mind their importance in the communities in which they operate. Such legislation should have regard to the voluntary and paid nature of youth club work and it should embrace the principles of volunteerism as described in the groundbreaking report "Tipping the Balance" produced by the National Committee on Volunteering.
3. As with all ngo activities, resources are a problem for youth clubs and as a partial solution to this difficulty, the Joint Committee strongly recommends the establishment of youth club links with Business in the Community Ireland. The Joint Committee has met with this group and were favourably impressed. Founded in January 2000, Business in the Community Ireland is a non-profit and charitable organisation specialising in consultancy support and guidance on corporate responsibility and corporate community involvement.
4. In terms of direct financial support, the Joint Committee are of the opinions that IBEC and ICTU, who often attract the graduates of the youth club sector, could make some provision – perhaps in the form of scholarships alongside a scheme of state support.
5. Youth clubs should have a significant role in dealing with social problems among young people such as alcohol and drug abuse, single parenthood, disability and mental health problems etc. The Joint Committee believe a network of peer based support groups would be beneficial.

APPENDIX I

Sport, Tourism, Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, consisting of 11 members of Dáil Éireann (of whom 4 shall constitute a quorum), be appointed to consider -

- (i) such Bills the statute law in respect of which is dealt with by the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism and the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs;
- (ii) such Estimates for Public Services within the aegis of the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism and the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs; and
- (iii) such proposals contained in any motion, including any motion within the meaning of Standing Order 157 concerning the approval by the Dáil of international agreements involving a charge on public funds,

as shall be referred to it by Dáil Éireann from time to time.

(b) For the purpose of its consideration of Bills and proposals under paragraphs (1)(a)(i) and (iii), the Select Committee shall have the powers defined in Standing Order 81(1), (2) and (3).

(c) For the avoidance of doubt, by virtue of his or her *ex officio* membership of the Select Committee in accordance with Standing Order 90(1), the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism and the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (or a Minister or Minister of State nominated in his or her stead) shall be entitled to vote.

(2) (a) The Select Committee shall be joined with a Select Committee to be appointed by Seanad Éireann to form the Joint Committee on Arts, Sport, Tourism, Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs to consider -

- (i) such public affairs administered by the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism and the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs as it may select, including, in respect of Government policy, bodies under the aegis of those Departments;
- (ii) such matters of policy for which the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism and the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs are officially responsible as it may select;
- (iii) such related policy issues as it may select concerning bodies which are partly or wholly funded by the State or which are established or appointed by Members of the Government or by the Oireachtas;
- (iv) such Statutory Instruments made by the Minister for Arts, Sport and

Tourism and the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and laid before both Houses of the Oireachtas as it may select;

- (v) such proposals for EU legislation and related policy issues as may be referred to it from time to time, in accordance with Standing Order 81(4);
- (vi) the strategy statement laid before each House of the Oireachtas by the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism and the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs pursuant to section 5(2) of the Public Service Management Act, 1997, and the Joint Committee shall be so authorised for the purposes of section 10 of that Act;
- (vii) such annual reports or annual reports and accounts, required by law and laid before either or both Houses of the Oireachtas, of bodies specified in paragraphs 2(a)(i) and (iii), and the overall operational results, statements of strategy and corporate plans of these bodies, as it may select;

Provided that the Joint Committee shall not, at any time, consider any matter relating to such a body which is, which has been, or which is, at that time, proposed to be considered by the Committee of Public Accounts pursuant to the Orders of Reference of that Committee and/or the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act, 1993;

Provided further that the Joint Committee shall refrain from inquiring into in public session, or publishing confidential information regarding, any such matter if so requested either by the body or by the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism and the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs; and

- (viii) such other matters as may be jointly referred to it from time to time by both Houses of the Oireachtas,

and shall report thereon to both Houses of the Oireachtas.

- (b) The quorum of the Joint Committee shall be five, of whom at least one shall be a member of Dáil Éireann and one a member of Seanad Éireann.
 - (c) The Joint Committee shall have the powers defined in Standing Order 81(1) to (9) inclusive.
- (3) The Chairman of the Joint Committee, who shall be a member of Dáil Éireann, shall also be Chairman of the Select Committee.”.

Seanad Éireann on 17 October 2002 (*23 October 2002) ordered:

- (1) (a) That a Select Committee consisting of 6 members* of Seanad Éireann shall be appointed to be joined with a Select Committee of Dáil Éireann to form the Joint Committee on Arts, Sport, Tourism, Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs to consider-
- (i) such public affairs administered by the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism and the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs as it may select, including, in respect of Government policy, bodies under the aegis of those Departments;
 - (ii) such matters of policy for which the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism and the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs are officially responsible as it may select;
 - (iii) such related policy issues as it may select concerning bodies which are partly or wholly funded by the State or which are established or appointed by Members of the Government or by the Oireachtas;
 - (iv) such Statutory Instruments made by the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism and the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and laid before Houses of the Oireachtas as it may select;
 - (v) such proposals for EU legislation and related policy issues as may be referred to it from time to time, in accordance with Standing Order 65(4);
 - (vi) the strategy statement laid before each House of the Oireachtas by the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism and the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs pursuant to section 5(2) of the Public Service Management Act, 1997, and the Joint Committee shall be so authorised for the purposes of section 10 of that Act;
 - (vii) such annual reports or annual reports and accounts, required by law and laid before both Houses of the Oireachtas, of bodies specified in paragraphs 1(a)(i) and (iii), and the overall operational results, statements of strategy and corporate plans of these bodies, as it may select;

Provided that the Joint Committee shall not, at any time, consider any matter relating to such a body which is, which has been, or which is, at that time, proposed to be considered by the Committee of Public Accounts pursuant to the Orders of Reference of that Committee and/or the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act, 1993;

Provided further that the Joint Committee shall refrain from inquiring into in public session, or publishing confidential information regarding, any such matter if so requested either by the body concerned or by the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism or the Minister for

* by the substitution of '6 members' for '4 members'.

Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs;

and

(viii) such other matters as may be jointly referred to it from time to time by both Houses of the Oireachtas,

and shall report thereon to both Houses of the Oireachtas.

(b) The quorum of the Joint Committee shall be five, of whom at least one shall be a member of Dáil Éireann and one a member of Seanad Éireann.

(c) The Joint Committee shall have the powers defined in Standing Order 65(1) to (9) inclusive.

(2) The Chairman of the Joint Committee shall be a member of Dáil Éireann.

APPENDIX II

**An Comhchoiste um Ghnóthaí
Ealaíon, Spóirt, Turasóireachta,
Pobail, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta
Teach Laighean
Baile Átha Cliath 2**



**Joint Committee on Arts, Sport,
Tourism, Community, Rural and
Gaeltacht Affairs
Leinster House
Dublin 2
☎ (01) 618 3000
Fax (01) 618 4123 / 618 4124**

LIST OF MEMBERS

Deputies:

James Breen (Ind)
Michael Collins (FF)
Jimmy Deenihan (FG)
Damien English (FG)
Jim Glennon (FF) {Vice-Chairman}
Cecilia Keaveney (FF) {Chairman}
Peter Kelly (FF)
Fiona O'Malley (PD)
Brian O'Shea (Lab)
Jack Wall (Lab)
G.V. Wright (FF)

Senators:

Brendan Daly (FF)
Joe McHugh (FG)
Labhrás Ó Murchú (FF)
John Paul Phelan (FG)
Kieran Phelan (FF)
Joe O'Toole (Ind)