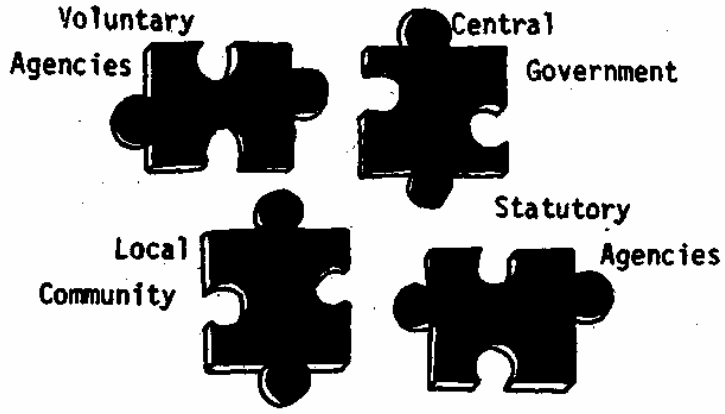
Strategies and Interventions 1985

By Dr Howard Williamson and Kaye Weatherspoon

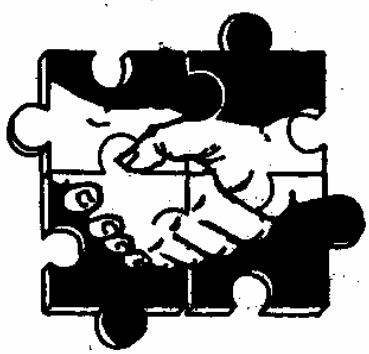
Introduction

We have produced a lengthy and detailed report on the Ely Youth and Community Project arising from our evaluation of its work during a two and a half year research study. This much shorter report is intended to stimulate thinking about some of the issues which have emerged out of our examination of one particular style of youth and community work. The report aims to highlight the issues concerning policy, practice, provision and research which we believe to be the most central messages to be shared with the wider field. At times the points we make may appear to be somewhat detached from any overall whole and lacking grounding in any broader cultural or community context. This is unfortunately an almost inevitable consequence of our attempt to remain brief and sharp* the 'missing links' are almost certainly to be found, however, in our Final Report. We hope that this report will still provoke serious discussion and thought amongst policy makers, practitioners and students alike (and indeed anyone concerned with working with young people) from both within and outside the youth and community field

STRATEGIES FOR INTERVENTION



An Approach To Youth And Community Work In An Area Of Social Deprivation



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Social Research Unit, University College, Cardiff. 1985

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The comments and views presented in this report are, however, very much our own and should not be seen as reflecting the views of DES/Welsh Office or any other party.

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INTRODUCTION

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1.1

We have produced a lengthy and detailed report on the Ely Youth and Community Project arising from our evaluation of its work during a two and a half year research study. This much shorter report is intended to stimulate thinking about some of the issues which have emerged out of our examination of one particular style of youth and community work. The report aims to highlight the issues concerning policy, practice, provision and research which we believe to be the most central messages to be shared with the wider field. At times the points we make may appear to be somewhat detached from any overall whole and lacking grounding in any broader cultural or community context. This is unfortunately an almost inevitable consequence of our attempt to remain brief and sharp* the 'missing links' are almost certainly to be found, however, in our Final Report. We hope that this report will still provoke serious discussion and thought amongst policy makers, practitioners and students alike (and indeed anyone concerned with working with young people) from both within and outside the youth and community field.

Our research was prompted both by demands from fieldworkers in Ely and toy a wider concern within Wales over a number of years about the need to develop more collaborative inter-agency approaches to working with young people and the community (see CWVYS 1980). This concern has been reflected and re-emphasised more recently both in England (HMSO 1982) and in Wales (HMSO 1984). It has also been seen as a neglected area in research on 'youth work' issues (NYB 1984).

Both prior to and during our research we identified and developed the following areas of thought:

1) Youth work, most would accept, is integrally related to questions about the control of young people - about countering 'deviance (in its broadest sense) and attempting to provide and develop legitimate and acceptable opportunities for youth. Youth work, as formally defined, is however often top closely connected with questions concerning delinquency, it needs to be recognised that youth work cannot be expected alone to succeed in tackling the kinds of problems which manifestly have wide-ranging and deep structural and cultural roots.
2) Youth work is but one of many forms of professional intervention in the lives of young people. Such interventions take place both within and away from the communities in which those young people live. There is a growing recognition and acceptance of the ineffectiveness of many of these methods of professional intervention whether they are theoretically designed to contain and control (cf. prison service, police; social services, probation) or to care and enhance opportunity (cf. social services, education). Moreover, such interventions are often aimed at the same group of young people - though in an often unco-ordinated and indeed aimless fashion.
3) Despite counter-forces emanating from the advocates of law'n' order and of the need for compartmentalised professionalisms, two growing beliefs concerning such professional intervention can be detected:

i) that young people, delinquent or otherwise, should remain within their own communities. Any provision deemed relevant or necessary should not involve their removal from those communities

ii) that there needs to develop collaborative inter-agency approaches to the problems both faced and caused by young people

Both beliefs potentially attract support across the political spectrum. The left perceives such developments to be humanitarian, democratic and effective in meeting need; the right can detect money-saving and anti-bureaucratic trends.

4) Unlike other professional 'welfare workers', youth workers have traditionally operated very close to the 'coal face' of the local community. Their tradition has been firmly rooted in 'working on a patch', something which is today presenting a fresh challenge to social workers (National Institute of Social Work 1982) and probation officers (Home Office 1984) and, to some extent, teachers. The police tradition is, of course, a similar one, though it has been usurped somewhat by recent technological developments in police work.

5) Youth workers have remained, however, the 'unattached' of the professional world (see Holmes 1981). Their lack of a distinct and specific clientele has invested them with an ambiguous professional status. Moreover, they have tended to remain low-profile and often centre-based, working in severe isolation. No wonder that at times they have done little more for young people than offer those willing to cross their threshold 'crisps and Coca-Cola' (Ewen 1980).

6) Yet youth workers have the potential to co-ordinate and develop professional work with and provision for young people at the local level, precisely on account of their general knowledge of the local patch and its people. This potential was recognised tentatively in both the Thompson Report (HMSO 1982) and the more recent Welsh HMI Report (HMSO 1984).

7) Such an approach to youth work would, of course, demand adjustments in priorities. But we believe that youth workers working alone will remain locked in the 'crisps and Coca-Cola' syndrome. And this will do nothing to address the severe problems faced by young people in the 1980s. Some innovative thinking and experimental planning is imperative if the Youth Service i-s to get a realistic 'handle' on the problems faced by young people today: the dole, despair, demoralisation... This is likely to be best achieved through collaboration and consultation - through a Joint approach. If the potential of inter-agency approaches is realised it will not solve such problems, but it may do something for young people beyond 'crisps and Coca-Cola'. But for youth workers to play a part in such developments, they must move out of the shadows towards the centre of the professional stage.

Is all this idealistic? Ultimately, improved provision for young people and the community is dependent upon substantial and radical policy change (see Wolverhampton Borough Council 1985) which is more than likely to

present an unpalatable challenge to conventional departmental and professional domains. Should such policy change fail to materialise, inter-agency developments, far from representing a milestone in provision for youth, become a millstone which saps the energy and initiative of those involved. At the local level, however, the Ely Youth and Community Project provides a case study of the possibilities for enhancing youth and community provision through working together.

The Research Project's Steering Committee

The Steering Committee of the research project was itself an inter-agency group consisting of social workers, probation officers and clergy as well as youth and community workers, and an observer from the police. Not only did members of the Committee provide sustained support, guidance and encouragement throughout the project as well as ensuring that the research retained a practical focus and emphasis, but they also commented on the professional value of the products of the research in different ways and for different reasons.

The research-your right to reply

We believe that this report can serve as a useful additional resource for many of those engaged in 'community work' and 'youth work' in their broadest senses. We hope it will be used in many different ways by different groups for different reasons. Certainly it has not been designed to be read from cover to cover, but to be 'dipped into1 selectively according to the specific interests and concerns of the individual reader. However, despite our intentions, we recognise that the report may not live up to such expectations. The acid test, therefore, lies in the extent to which the report is used, for what purposes, and its perceived value (if any!) to the reader. With this in mind we have appended a 'reader's reply page1 at the back of the report (on p.100). We would greatly appreciate any feedback you may wish to offer.

ELY

Ely is a typical urban municipal housing estate. Set on the edge of Cardiff, it "does not have a lot going for it" (local newspaper). It has a population of around 26,000 - the size of a small town like Neath or Durham Divided in two by a major road, the north of the estate is characterised by inter-war council housing while the south is essentially a post-war municipal development.

Unemployment is, particularly high, well over 30% in some patches; those who do work tend to be in unskilled, low-paid employment. Ely is very much a one-class - lower-class - locality. Predictably it has large numbers of single parent families and makes disproportionate demands on state and local authority welfare services.

The area has a reputation; for criminality and delinquency. Truancy is a major problem, and extensive vandalism exacerbates the images of environmental decay.

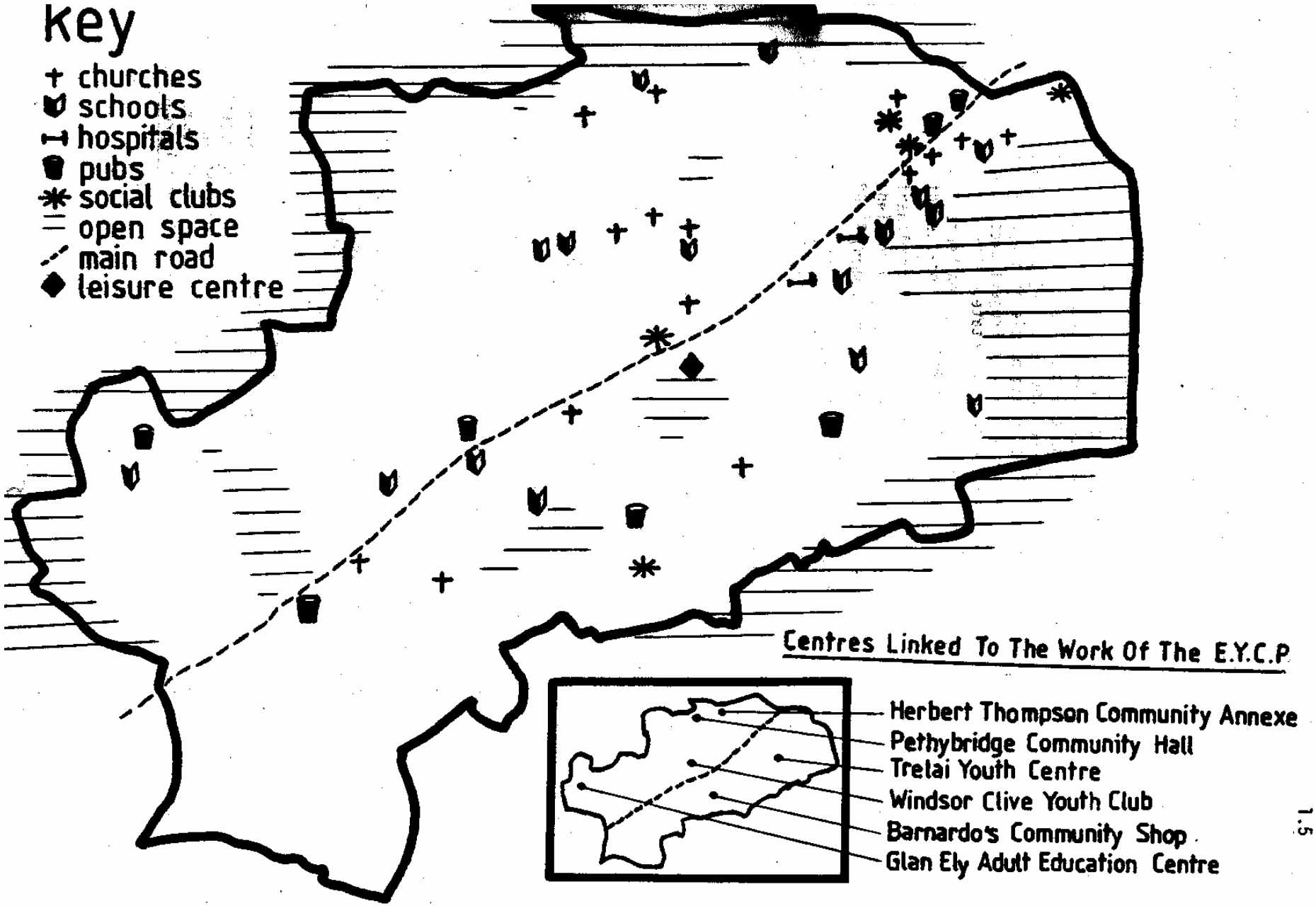
The name of Ely is notorious throughout the city, a problem which is compounded by the regular adverse publicity it receives from the local press while 'good news' from Ely is frequently ignored.

Given the size of its population, Ely's facilities are appalling. The scantiness of local authority provision is compensated to some extent by the thriving clubs. Even the few pubs operate as social, recreational and welfare centres as well as selling beer. A new Leisure Centre has improved recreational facilities, though Ely residents compete for its use with others from the west of the city.

Prior to the interventions of statutory and voluntary organisations, the churches played a crucial role in ensuring the material, as well as the spiritual, welfare of local people. That role is far from diminished in spite of the incursion of new methods of social intervention.

Selective 1981 Census data*

Ely		Cardiff	
Total resident population	26,089	269,459	
Children aged 0-9 (as % of total resident population)	4,050 (15.5)	33,528	(12.6)
Young people 10-19 (as % of total resident population)	4,863 (18.6)	43,904	(16.5)
Households with at least one single parent family (as % of all households)	971 (10.8)	6,013	(6.2)
Unemployed (as % of the economically active)	2,064 (18.8)	15,494	(12.4)
Unemployed aged 16-19 (as % of economically active 16- 19s	385 (27.7)	2,480	(21.7)
Owner occupied houses (as % of all houses)	1,576 (26.0)	60,180	(60.0)
Households without a car (as % of all households)	5,134 (57.0)	42,148	(43.5)


key
churches
schools
hospitals
pubs
social clubs
open space
main road
leisure centre
Centres Linked To The Work Of The E.Y.C.P
Herbert Thompson Community Annexe
Pethybridge Community Hall
Trelai Youth Centre
Windsor Clive Youth Club
Barnardo's Community Shop
Glan Ely Adult Education Centre

The ELY YOUTH & COMMUNITY PROJECT

The Ely Youth and Community Project was established in 1976. Initially only one individual was involved - the first local authority appointment not attached to a purpose-built youth and community centre. His brief was to develop links with local clergy and others working in the community, with particular reference to the needs/of young people in the north of the estate. Over the years the perspective of the Project broadened to include community and youth needs throughout the estate. ,

The *work* of the Project falls into six categories: ..

1 'Conventional' centre-based 'club' work

2) Direct work with specifically identified groups of young people (cf. unemployed, 'at risk', young women)

3) Indirect; work with specifically identified groups of young people - through involvement in the planning of initiatives

4) Intra-departmental liaison and co-ordination - between Youth, community and Adult Education workers in Ely

5) Collaborative 'inter-community' work - Involving agency workers and local people in the planning of local initiatives

6) Inter-agency liaison and co-ordination -. between workers in voluntary and statutory agencies involved in work with young people and the community in Ely

The emphasis, on 'inter agency work' (in its broadest sense) should be self-evident. The Project has always sought to offer neutral ground upon which local professional workers may come together to share ideas and develop provision. Indeed, the identity of the Project is intentionally hazy - it is in effect the umbrella under which community and youth initiatives in Ely may be discussed, planned, implemented, evaluated and co-ordinated.

If the 'Project' itself has no substance, how is its work conducted? It has a Management Committee composed of elected representatives and professional workers from fringe of agencies. The Committee "acts as a forum for policy in Youth, Community and Adult Education terms and also in terms pf the starting point of community needs".

The 'practical' arm of the Project's work is the Ely Community Education Team, composed of local Youth, Community and Adult Education workers from the local and voluntary sectors (some more formally attached to the Project than others). The Team meets, usually, on a weekly basis to discuss in detail current practice and proposed initiatives, and to ensure that local practice is effectively co-ordinated and inter-related, (see A Team Approach).

The achievements of the Ely Youth and Community Project have been considerable. It has, for example,

- sponsored both Job Creation and Youth Opportunities Programme schemes
- established a 'community newspaper', the Ely Grapevine
- successfully argued the case for the establishment of an Ely Citizen's Advice Bureau
- developed a range of services for the elderly
- expanded and co-ordinated playscheme provision throughout the estate
- transformed its base - Pethybridge Hall - from a run-down shell built by the unemployed in the 1930s into a well-equipped community resource
- organised biennial Action Days for Professional Workers in Ely to share information, identify need and strategically plan for a concerted effort to realise specific ends
- established an estate-wide annual community festival
- attracted considerable resources to the area

In this report we have, by necessity, had to be selective in the achievements we have chosen to examine. Nonetheless, it is important to recognise this selectivity and to stress the considerable practical achievements of the Ely Youth and Community Project in an area of pervasive social disadvantage.

2

PERSPECTIVES

PERSPECTIVES ON THE *PROJECT*

The Management Committee

The Management Committee of the Ely Youth and Community Project, despite its varied membership, held surprisingly consensual views. Most alleged that the main purpose of the Project was to bring local workers together in order to

- share information
- communicate ideas
- develop local provision

The Project's impact in the neighbourhood was seen in terms of its success in facilitating a multi-disciplinary response to local need and in attracting much needed additional resources to the area. And, as a result, the Project had, according to the Committee

- affected the levels of delinquency and vandalism
- increased the levels of recreational and educational provision
- enhanced awareness of community and youth issues amongst professionals working in the area
- started to redress the poor image that Ely had acquired

The Project had "enabled a positive, sustained and concerted effort in Ely to be made, resources maximised and friendships forged". Nonetheless, criticisms were voiced, notably on three counts:

- the Project had failed to involve the local community in its work
- the Project often neglected longer-term community-based initiatives and instead focussed too much on too many short-term initiatives
- the Project engaged in too much talk, too many meetings and not enough action

Such allegations are, of course, open to rebuttal. They are, in essence, perceptions based upon various (perhaps conflicting) conceptions of what the Project's priorities should be. These conceptions of purpose do, for the most part, tally with the Project's overt rationale - hardly surprising since the Management Committee is concerned with the policy aspects of the Project's work. But while its may be the Management Committee which apparently defines this rationale, it is others who both implement and participate in the everyday work of the Project. A key issue, therefore, is the extent to which such perceptions 'match up' or find themselves in conflict with those held by the people 'on the ground'.

The Ely
Community Education Team

The Ely Community Education Team were broadly agreed that the purpose of the Project was to improve chances and choices for people in Ely and to "help people to help themselves". This involved:

- meeting the needs arising from truancy, delinquency and vandalism
- combating the low self-esteem of local people
- stimulating community groups
- co-ordinating and expanding youth facilities
- raising people's expectations
- acting as an information centre and a forum for the exchange of ideas, and as a referral agency

The Team expressed concern that there were inadequate resources to perform all these roles effectively and were critical of the lack of local participation in the Project's work. And while its members felt that the Project had had a remarkable degree of success given its limited resources, funding issues stood out as the over-riding and most persistent anxiety.

Despite the Project's relative success in attracting funding for specific initiatives (see Funding) and the Team's extensive collective knowledge of funding sources, the constant uncertainty about finance placed a permanent strain on the Team's attempts to develop and consolidate community and youth provision. Yet despite an apparent desire to place the Project's work on a "sounder footing" (cf. a known level of revenue funding), there were counter-arguments that the ad hoc way in which the Project's work was funded encouraged creativity ("you have to put up a strong case for everything you want to do") and permitted flexibility, growth and experimentation. With a specified income, it was argued, work would take place within those financial parameters.

The Team's perspectives on the Project reflect the realism concerning any efforts to expand and develop community and youth work. Whatever the ideals or the principles, much rested upon the availability of resources and the conditions attached to the giving of resources, which often necessitated compromise (see The Motivation Courses). Funding issues were always at the forefront of the Team's thinking when discussing the work of the Ely Youth and Community Project.

Professional workers

Professional workers in Ely maintained that the purpose of the Ely Youth and Community Project was:

- to bring together, integrate and co-ordinate statutory and voluntary organisations
- to provide activities for young people (work, educational, recreational)
- to develop community spirit and identity
- to provide facilities and support for community groups
- to combat social deprivation and respond to social problems
- to promote new initiatives and to compete for and improve resources for the area
- to combat crime and delinquency

Professional workers seemed to feel that the Ely Youth and Community Project had an overarching responsibility for all youth and community intervention in Ely. In some senses, of course, they were right: the Project did attempt to act as a co-ordinating forum. In other senses, that the Project had some kind of direct responsibility for everything, they were wrong, yet that perception affected the attitude of some professionals towards the Project. Certainly some resented the apparent 'ubiquity' of the Project. They perceived its efforts as attempts to control all youth and community work in the area - a view which clearly conflicts with the notion of the Project offering 'neutral ground'

Nonetheless the majority of professional workers who had been involved with the Project attributed considerable value to its work. It had performed a valued role for three main reasons:

- it had been of value to many groups of local people through the initiatives it had co-ordinated and developed. These groups included children, teenagers, families, the elderly, the community in general, local schools and voluntary organisations
- it had been of value to local professional workers in professional terms through its cultivation of a co-operative approach. Professional practice had been enhanced specifically as a result of:
    - increased knowledge of the local community
    - improved understanding of the nature of other professional work
    - an improved service to specific 'client' groups
    - improved use of existing resources
    - access to the Project's resources
- it had been of value to professional workers in personal terms as a result of:

- learning about alternative approaches to working with people in the community
- greater contact with other professional workers in the area, which had sometimes improved personal relationships
- having acquired a broader general knowledge of the local context, which had increased personal satisfaction about working in the area
- the networks established through the Project, which had provided a forum for personal support

Professional workers were, however, critical of the Ely Youth and Community Project for two reasons:

- it sometimes imposed additional, even unrealistic demands on professional workers already stretched by statutory and routine commitments
- it failed to involve the local community in the planning and organisation of its work.

A range of other criticisms were voiced but, for the most part, these originated from just one or two individuals (see our Final Report).

Young People

Young people who had been involved with the work of the Ely Youth and Community Project either 'intensively' or 'casually' held highly disparate views about its work. The range of initiatives in which they had participated and .the time and intensity of that participation makes any generalisations all the more problematic.

The young people we surveyed offered some very different explanations for why they had become involved -

- fun**,** enjoyment, the need for a holiday
- to get away from Ely/to get away from family tensions at home
- because their friends were involved

One in six were indifferent, saying they "had nothing better to do".

Their expectations also varied considerably. The vast majority had initially, attended the youth club and this had led to involvement in other activities which they had not at first expected. But their expectations of these other initiatives were high. Three-quarters of those we talked to had had high expectations: two-thirds of these said they had derived benefits from their participation in these events. This still leaves half of our sample somewhat disappointed - a quarter who had had low expectations in the first place and those whose higher expectations had not been fulfilled. A more detailed examination of our data pointed to an increasingly polarised set of firm views about the work of the Ely Project following initial indifference.

With age, one set of individuals tended to become increasingly positive about the Project's work and showed a retrospective appreciation of the provision in which they had participated. A different set of individuals displayed increasing cynicism as they got older: the Project 'hadn't really done much for them'. It is useful to note that the older members of our sample tended to offer a more articulate and assertive perspective on the Project's work and were less inclined to answer 'don't know'.

In their reactions to the Project's initiatives with which they were familiar, (although these reactions were so diverse that they almost defy classification), young people did appear to

- have a fine sensitivity to the ways in which activities were organised and run, and towards the attitudes of the organisers
- recognise, at least partially, the significance or relevance to them of the objectives of different initiatives (cf. diversion, opportunity, etc.)
- distinguish carefully between different aspects of the Project's provision

The individuality of responses reveals not only the complexity of young people's attitudes towards the Project's work but also points to the difficulty in constructing general conclusions about their behaviour, attitudes and values. However, when asked whether they had subjectively experienced any lasting benefit from having taken part in various Project initiatives, young people positively endorsed two-thirds of all the activities in which they had taken part. In different terms, rather more than half gave positive assessments of the Project's work. In view of the inevitability of some initiatives 'falling flat' (for a host of reasons), such a response suggests that the benefits seen to accrue to young people in Ely by the Project's Management Committee and local workers find considerable support amongst the recipients themselves.

Local People

Local people appeared to know little about the 'Ely Youth and Community Project' per se with the exception of one specific group of local residents - young adult women with children. This is not surprising. This group is most likely to be familiar with the Project since their children are frequently the targets of the Project's direct work with young people.

Much of the Project's other work is 'indirect', focussing on the co-ordination of professional work and 'behind the scenes' planning. Consequently the practical and visible outcomes of the Project's work cannot always be clearly traced back to the Ely Youth and Community Project. This is reflected by the fact that most local people were familiar with such events and provision as the Ely Festival and the Ely Summer Playschemes and the Ely Grapevine, all products of the Ely Youth and Community Project. The high profile of such provision may be contrasted with the low and somewhat intangible profile of the Project itself.

Reactions to those aspects of the Project's work with which they were familiar were, on the whole, favourable. Responses were usually pitched around the view that 'well, they've got to be a good thing' given the dearth of youth and community provision in the area. However, involvement in such initiatives seemed to be essentially passive: very few local people surveyed had been actively involved in the planning and organisation of the Project's work.

Conclusion

It is apparent that, many different perspectives are held on the Ely Youth and Community Project. These differences in perspective often cross-cut the different categories whose views we have outlined above: the Project's Management Committee, the Ely Community Education Team, professional workers in Ely, young people and local residents. Common themes do, however, emerge.

By far the most important theme concerns the role of the Project as a facilitator of inter-agency approaches to working with young people and the community. Such a role is not without its problems but the co-ordination of local community and youth provision does appear, amongst other things, to have provided elements of continuity for young people who have participated in the Project's work, though their responses to such interventions were diverse.

Such co-ordination and collaboration has remained, however, pitched very much at the level of the professional worker. The reservations expressed by the Management Committee, by the ECET and by professional workers themselves about the low level of community involvement in the Project's work are borne out by the evidence of local people. Few have participated in any significant way in the planning of local initiatives.

The Ely Youth and Community Project serves a range of different purposes in Ely and is, valued by different groups for a number of different reasons. It has attracted new resources and promoted new developments, made a sustained and relatively successful attempt to cultivate and co-ordinate inter-professional work in Ely, and has established social, recreational and educational opportunities for both adults and young people which did not exist before. The meaning of such achievements differs between the Management Committee, the ECET, professional workers, young people and local people, and within these groups. All have their specific criticisms and commendations. This account of their perspectives not only identifies the strands linking these perspectives but also prepares the ground for an examination of the pertinent issues of policy, process and practice which have emerged from the work of the Ely Youth and Community Project.

3

STRATEGIES

A TEAM APPROACH to youth & community work

Introduction

All too often youth workers, community workers and adult education workers operating in the same neighbourhood work in relative isolation from each other. More regular contact, communication and mutual co-operation may be worth the extra effort and enhance community and youth provision in a locality.

Some questions

Can a Team approach respond more effectively to local needs than alternative (more individualistic) approaches?

In what ways might a Team approach benefit the individual workers involved?

To what extent might a Team approach improve the co-ordination, development and delivery of local provision?

To what extent might a Team approach facilitate inter-agency approaches to meeting youth and community needs?

Likely advantages

A range of potential advantages accruing from a Team approach may be identified:

Information A Team approach

(a) allows for a more thorough and accurate identification of local need

(b) permits the development of a detailed collective knowledge of the neighbourhood

(c) more generally enhances the potential for the exchange of information both between its members and between the Team and others (since it operates on a higher profile than would individuals working alone)

Organisation A Team approach

(a) increases the possibility of conceiving, through brainstorming and 'putting heads together', effective methods of responding to local need

(b) allows for the establishment of a coherent and cohesive set of aims and objectives

(c) increases the possibility, through the maximisation of individual strengths and the minimisation of individual weaknesses, of implementing relevant and co-ordinated provision

Consultation A Team approach

(a) provides, within the Team, a 'testing ground' for ideas and an arena for offering advice, criticism and encouragement of embryonic proposals

(b) provides, for those outside the Team, a forum within which other professional and local workers can seek feedback on planned community and youth developments

Co-ordination A Team approach

(a) can ensure the co-ordination of local initiatives by individual members, avoiding duplication and improving continuity and connections between them

(b) can contribute to the co-ordination of initiatives proposed by those from other statutory and voluntary organisations working in the neighbourhood

Resourci ng A Team approach

(a) can maximise the use of existing resources possessed by its members (cf. minibuses, video, etc.)

(b) increases 'lobbying power' for new resources not only through its group identity (which gives it greater strength) but also through presenting a well-informed and well-constructed case (see Information and Consultation above)

Learning A Team approach is likely to enhance the capacities and capabilities of individual members through their learning from each others' knowledge, expertise and experience

Support '. A Team approach

(a) provides both a professional and personal support mechanism for its members

(b) is better equipped to respond supportively to 'crises' relating to local community and youth initiatives whether in terms of funding, staffing or practice (see also Organisation and Resourcing)

Evaluation A Team approach can be used productively for critical self-examination of current practice (see also Consultation)

Possible problems

Over-commitment A Team approach

(a) can make. too many demands on its members, particularly with regard to the level of commitment to collaborative! .work which, in turn

(b) can effectively reduce commitment to projects/ initiatives not associated with the Team

see counter-point above on Support

Saturation — A Team approach

(a) can stretch the capacity of its members in that the Team may overestimate its collective ability to deal with the tasks at hand

(b) can result in an overload of information, which may be difficult to digest and of relative insignificance to some members (e.g. the 'minutae of each individual's everyday workload). The time consumed in sharing and absorbing such detail may preclude more pertinent issues being discussed in any depth

/see counter-points above on Information and Learning/

Conflicting interests — A Team approach can result in professionals compromising their time and perspectives in the interests of the Team's activities and views

see counter-point above on Information

Integration — A Team approach may establish a clique which:

(a) can intimidate those who are not members of the Team from both the professional arena and the local community
see counter-point above on Consultation

(b) can result in reluctance to expand membership even when that appears to be appropriate

(c) can generate a paternalistic and dictatorial image amongst 'outsiders'
see counter-point above on Co-ordination

Conclusion

Different teams have different combinations of strengths and weaknesses which may often be the two sides of the same coin.
The Ely Community Education Team's approach to community and youth issues represents simply one 'model' which might be adopted in other contexts. However, the problems which did emerge in Ely would probably be endemic to any team, albeit in somewhat different forms, according to

- the constitution of the team
- the personalities of its members
- the level of commitment to a Team approach by its members
- the group dynamics of the team
- the setting in which the team operates

The potential problems identified above should not, however, divert us from the very real benefits which appeared to accrue from an area-based collective approach to youth and community work. In the case study of the Ely Community Education Team the advantages of a Team approach greatly outweighed the difficulties.

Inter-Agency Issues

Introduction

Inter-agency groups may be convened for a range of purposes:

To formulate policy
To allocate resources
To lobby for resources
To monitor and evaluate existing provision
To plan new provision
To collect and exchange information
To become familiar with other agency workers operating on the same patch

Inter-agency work may therefore be focussed on professional workers themselves, on policy matters, on the process of developing local provision and on practice.
It is crucial to recognise that the specific purpose of an inter-agency group will have implications for

- the level at which agencies need to be represented
- the types of agencies which need to be involved

Some general problems

Agency boundaries often differ
Agency bureaucracies differentially dictate methods of work
Agency structures allow different degrees of professional autonomy
Agency bosses may hold different views about the value of inter-agency work
Agencies have statutory priorities
Professional ethics such as confidentiality

Commitment

Unless inter-agency collaboration is a formal component of the professional task, commitment to inter-agency work will differ between individuals. Certain 'ideal types' may be identified in any locality in which inter-agency co-operation is attempted:

- Core Participants: committed to the principle as well as the practise of inter-agency work
- Peripheral Participants: interested in inter-agency approaches but constrained (for a variety of reasons) from full involvement
- Drifters: drifting in and out of inter-agency groups for a number of reasons:
  - ambivalence about the value of inter-agency work
  - self-interest, participating only when there is very clearly something 'in it for them[1]
  - disinterest, participating only as a result of pressure 'from above' or when it seems politic to do so
  - competing pressures, such as occupational or personal demands
- Non-participants: avoiding involvement because:
  - they see no value in inter-agency approaches
  - there is personal animosity to other participants
  - they lack the necessary organisational freedom to participate

Ground rules

Inter-agency work is grounded in reciprocal relationships - working together. The fundamental ground rules for realising productive inter-agency links are therefore:

- exchange: a willingness to share ideas, information and effort a willingness to give
- reciprocity: and receive for mutual benefit
- diplomacy: a willingness to respect (if not accept) the different priorities and perspectives held by workers from different statutory and voluntary organisations .

Vulnerability

Inter-agency approaches to working in the community rest upon a precarious equilibrium which is always vulnerable on account of changing perceptions held by members of an inter-agency group:

- Perceptions of reciprocity: members of an inter-agency group may feel that their efforts are not being matched or reciprocated by others. Though equal contributions may not be necessary, expectations concerning involvement and contribution need to be clarified and agreed at an early stage.
- Suspicion of 'colonisation': the central individual or group within an inter-agency initiative may be suspected of "colonising[1] the efforts of others. In this event, it is likely to lead to a reduction in commitment and motivation to an inter-agency approach.
- Fears about 'di1ution': the compromises essential to inter-agency co-operation may be seen as a challenge to distinct professional responsibility and expertise. Inter-agency approaches are about finding common ground and developing common strategies within that common ground, not turning everyone into community workers.

Inter-agency work is imbued with competing perspectives. What one 'faction' may perceive as an attempt at colonisation may be seen by another as a concerted and legitimate attempt to maximise and co-ordinate the use of existing resources. What may be seen as a pernicious erosion of specific professionalisms may equally be viewed as the necessary and timely breakdown of obstructive professional barriers.

Many of the issues to do with inter-agency work are similarly double-edged and are dependent upon individual and/or agency perceptions (sometimes valid, sometimes not). Where they work into a negative combination, the precarious equilibrium on which inter-agency relations are often based may be irretrievably upset.

Constraints

The potential for inter-agency work is already hampered by some very real constraints:

- Organisational Constraints: limiting involvement as a result of an agency's organisational structure and policies
- Professional Constraints: limiting involvement as a result of the parameters of professional responsibilities
- Personal Constraints: limiting involvement as a result of competing domestic and personal commitments

Some requirements for success

The membership of an Inter-agency group needs to be related to its purpose

All members of an inter-agency group need to be clear about its purpose

Members need to know why they are participating: what are the expectations of them by others?

Members need to be motivated to be part of the group (whether for personal, professional, organisational or political reasons)

Members need to feel that they will achieve something through the inter-agency group which they would be unlikely to achieve alone (ie within their own agency)

All members need to be willing to recognise and respect the contribution and expertise of others

All members need to be willing to accept the constraints on involvement which may exist for others

An inter-agency group needs efficient servicing (secretarial/administrative)

The chair of an inter-agency group need not be 'neutral , but the choice of chair is important since it says something about the group

An inter-agency group needs to be willing to accept failure - some goals will not be achievable, at least not immediately

An inter-agency group should not be over-ambitious until it has survived a period of consolidation

Conclusion

The construction and development of sustained and positive relationships between agencies on behalf of young people and the community is a sensitive and delicate process. The most well-grounded motives for 'organising[1] and co-ordinating such relationships run a constant risk of backfiring as a result of (perhaps) misguided or distorted perceptions of why this is taking place. The 'balance' required to maintain healthy inter-agency relations and thereby productive inter-agency co-operation remains always precarious, vulnerable not only to changing perceptions but also to the very real organisational, professional and personal constraints which may prohibit desirable levels of commitment and involvement.

The Ely Youth and Community Project was commendably successful in encouraging and co-ordinating different inter-agency groupings in working towards specific ends (see the case studies of practice) and in engaging in more general inter-professional dialogue. By taking on the time-consuming secretarial and administrative tasks involved it oiled the wheels for productive inter-agency co-operation, requiring in the first instance simply the time of interested professionals. Throughout its history, the Project has acted as a catalyst, facilitator and co-ordinator of inter-agency work in the community. Yet despite its successes the quality of inter-agency relations has undulated over time: there have often been occasions of very token commitment to inter-agency work and there have been instances where the Project has been perceived as dogmatic and dictatorial, with inevitable negative consequences.

It would seem that the key word in considering inter-agency relations is diplomacy. The formation of an inter-agency group is a diplomatic task, and its maintenance demands constant sensitivity and diplomacy. The purpose of such diplomacy is to assuage any growing suspicions or misguided perceptions concerning the group and its members. On top of this, four factors seem crucial in any attempt to sustain cohesion and to construct a common sense of purpose:

- a degree of organisational licence
- professional motivation
- personal motivation
- a co-ordinating and administrative facility

Without these factors, commitment to and the sustenance of an inter-agency approach will always rest upon extremely shaky foundations. Once a group is established with these factors present they are likely to reinforce each other as the benefits of shared knowledge, experience and effort are felt. If, however, for whatever reasons, relationships break down, the legacies of such a collapse will make the reconstruction of sound inter-agency relations on the same patch even more problematic.

Careful planning and early consultation with relevant parties in the process of developing any inter-agency initiative is therefore of absolute importance.

FUNDING [& Management]

Introduction

Finance is the perennial headache of any voluntary organisation. As the economic recession bites, not only does funding become harder to find but levels of social need requiring social interventions also become more acute.

Nonetheless the number of funding sources remains immense, though tight criteria are often imposed for making monies available and submissions therefore require careful thought and construction. For the individual community worker the whole theme of 'external1 funding often appears as a confusing maze; it often seems wiser not to enter it at all and instead to rely solely on local effort (fund-raising, etc.) and personal commitment.

But in areas of social deprivation such as Ely such an approach would yield little; levels of need are too great. Furthermore, as alternative voluntary sector 'liberal' provision for young people dries up through lack of finance, local authority youth workers may experience a growing sense of responsibility to (somehow) fill the breach. Whether they like it or not, they are getting propelled into the maze. Some messages concerning funding processes may therefore prove instructive.

Ely

The Ely Youth and Community Project was not bound by set levels of revenue funding. Indeed it had almost none beyond the salaries of its workers and modest funds for secretarial and administrative support. The initiatives it established depended upon a dynamic approach to developing responses to local need. As such it sought funding from a range of sources, especially the local authority. The process by which funding was sought and sometimes secured rested upon the following stages:

- identification of need and conception of an appropriate response by the Community Education Team or a constituent member
- a tentative stab at costings for such an initiative
- discussion, refinement and construction of a funding submission
- presentation of the submission to the Project's Management Committee for ratification and support
- possibly further refinement
- submission to funding body

The two essential features on which the successful acquisition of resources depended were knowledge and method. Within the latter, the role and status of the Management Committee was crucial.

Knowledge

The first key to a successful submission is that it is both well-informed and directed to an appropriate potential funder. This demands:

- an in-depth knowledge of funding sources
- a general knowledge of the group or issue for which funding is sought (the picture nationally, city-wide and locally), to provide the framework for the submission
- a specific knowledge of the group or issue for which funding is sought, to ensure a well-grounded case

Method

Funding bodies are unlikely to respond favourably to submissions which are cobbled together. A submission which attracts a favourable response is likely to be strong in

- content
- presentation
- support

A persuasive case will depend upon the material on which argument is based as well as the argument itself (CONTENT), how this material is set out (PRESENTATION) and the extent to which the idea for which funding is sought has the backing of 'significant others' (SUPPORT). A Project's Management Committee may exert an important influence here.

The role of the Management Committee

The composition of the Management Committees of many youth and community projects is dependent to a large extent on who is invited to serve on them. For busy, 'significant' people, such committees are but one amongst many and attendance often leaves a lot to be desired; for less busy, less 'significant' individuals, the invitation to serve on a committee is often flattering - attendance is better but their contribution to the work of the project, either directly or indirectly, may be minimal. Naturally there is a dilemma here: notwithstanding the question of how to motivate 'important' members to attend, the ethos of youth and community work favours local participation and involvement by 'ordinary' people - hence the often cited desire to have local representation on Management Committees. However, projects with Committees which have no, or limited, 'clout' in the right quarters are likely to lose out in the intense competition for resources to projects which do have such 'clout', not because their cases are necessarily any worse, or even more badly presented, because they have been made on the wrong ears.

The Ely Youth and Community Project makes its cases for funding not only on the right ears (i.e. those of 'significant others') but also on ears which already have a commitment to the work of the Project by their very presence on its Management Committee.

Any Management Committee may help to refine and improve the content and the presentation of a funding submission. A Committee which includes 'significant others' (cf. those well placed in the local political, professional and cultural context) may offer additional direct or indirect support to attempts to secure funding.

Such support is especially crucial with regard to funding applications to the local authority. A persuasive case which finds support amongst a Management Committee which includes Councillors and individuals from 'key' agencies is likely to be more actively supported in the more formal arenas where it counts. Moreover, such 'political' support may help to ensure that a good case is not subverted or obstructed by the vagaries of local personal and political rivalries.

The critical issue is to construct a case of sufficient persuasion that Management Committee members themselves become its vociferous advocates.

Issues

Any funding submission needs to be well-informed, soundly constructed and, if possible, supported by 'significant others'. But even the best case will not always be' successful. The Ely Youth and Community Project had considerable success in attracting resources to the area. This was, in part, due to atypical political and other connections and contacts, but other issues were also important. Virtually all of these related to the collective strengths resulting from a team approach to youth and community work in Ely (see also A Team Approach):

Knowledge of funding sources

The collective knowledge about sources of funding enabled the Team to identify the most appropriate funding bodies for particular initiatives and to tailor (though not necessarily compromise) submissions accordingly.

Knowledge of the area and specific social need

The Team's collective knowledge of the patch permitted well-informed submissions to be constructed. Certain 'stock in trade1 material (refined and revised over time) was collectively available to preface the specifics of a funding submission.

Developing and refining a 'persuasive case'

The Team acted as a sounding board/testing ground for funding proposals. Weak links could be strengthened and the structure of proposals sharpened up through discussion, consultation and criticism.

Support and encouragement following failure

The Team was able to counteract the despondency following the failure (or partial failure) of a funding application, through both personal support and the identification of possible alternative sources of funding.

Sharing the ground rules

No application is guaranteed success. But the overriding value of a collective approach was that, with regard to funding, certain ground rules could be shared and the lessons of failure learned by all.

'Creative' planning

Successful initiatives demand careful planning. Monies are often not made available until the last minute. Some preliminary work therefore has to be done on the supposition that applications will be approved. This requires the 'creative' movement of resources (as a temporary measure until monies can be 'clawed back') which would be a patently foolish strategy unless there was some confidence that an application would be approved. Second-guessing the outcome of submissions is based on

- general experience of the funding maze
- specific experience of certain types of application
- informal communication with those 'in the know'
-

Creative planning can only be done if other resources are available (temporarily) and should only be done when there is a strong likelihood of funding being approved. Otherwise the consequences would clearly be catastrophic.

Conclusion

Negotiating the maze of funding bodies and funding processes is a daunting task, all the more so for individuals with little or no experience. Collaboration with colleagues in similar situations or with similar concerns would seem to be a desirable and productive method through which to

- share experiences of success and failure and thereby develop some conception of the ground rules relating to funding submissions
- share knowledge (about the locality and about the groups or issues about which there is mutual concern)
- share ideas (about the most appropriate ways of responding to the issues under consideration)

Management Committees may also make a useful contribution to the potential success of funding applications.

No applicant for special funds can control the outcome -- but applicants can develop a range of general strategies which may help to swing the odds in their favour (albeit perhaps to the detriment of applicants elsewhere, though this could be debated). No-one can pretend, however, that grant-aid is given on any kind of absolute 'objective' basis. Successful submissions depend not only on 'political' considerations and meeting various criteria, but also on content, presentation and the support of 'significant others'. The effective development of these can enhance any funding submission no end, thereby avoiding early rejection and probably considerably increasing its chances of success.

LOCAL POLICY problems & developments

Introduction

Although inter-agency work in Ely has had many productive consequences (witness the various strategies for intervention discussed in this report), it has always depended essentially on a high degree of personal commitment. Inter-agency relations have rested on informal foundations. During the research period, local professional workers made a start in attempting to formalise and develop existing relationships and to make a case for a 'policy for Ely'.

Background

The Action Day for Professional Workers in Ely in 1983 took the usual form of previous Action Days:

- the identification of priority aspects of local need
- the formation of Working Groups to discuss these issues in more depth (see Table)
- consideration of appropriate responses and the means of achieving them

The Working Groups

- Isolation and Mobility (the elderly and handicapped)
- Making policy for Ely
- Truancy and motivation towards education
- Leisure and alternatives to work
- Voluntary work and community involvement
- Coping with stress
- The environment and image of Ely
- Employment opportunities

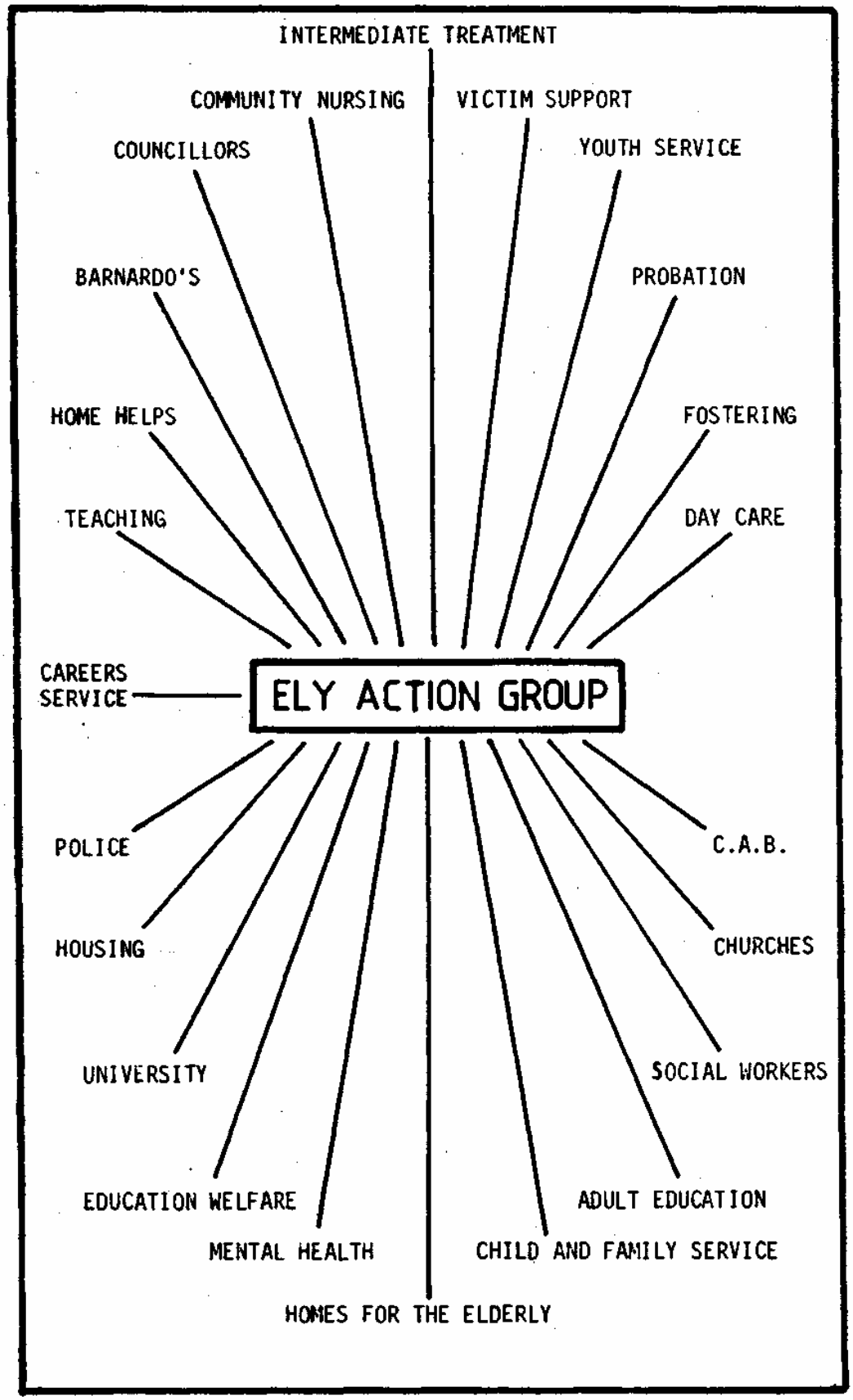
The Steering Group established to co-ordinate these Working Groups suggested that their responses could be put together to provide a Policy for Action which might be considered by the full Action Group.

Two factors influenced the thinking of the Working Groups and led to a departure from the process of previous Action Days:

- The provision of statistical data by the research team, and particularly the identification of a 'critical patch', which led to more focussed and grounded consideration of the various issues being examined by the Working Groups
- an acute awareness of the inter-relationship of many of the issues being examined, which appeared to demand a co-ordinated response on a level which was not always possible given existing agency policies

The Steering Group supported the views of many of the Working Groups that, while additional resources were clearly desirable, a more effective use of existing resources was possible, but only through policy change at departmental level.

Agencies represented at the Action Day



Attempting to influence policy

While there was powerful consensus from fieldworkers from a number of agencies (see Diagram) concerning the need for revisions in existing policies, there was doubt and disagreement over how such policy change might be effected (if at all). Various strategies were considered; all had their pros and cons:

Alternative strategies for moving forward

1 Seek the most appropriate person to take the lead in bringing together the different agencies at policy level and ask them to act	PROS Could secure a committed advocate for policy change, who would not be diverted, distracted or dissuaded by inter-departmental protocol	CONS A 'lead' agency might be seen by others as a 'threat' No action might take place It could lead to the neglect of fieldworkers in the debate
Write direct to each agency head asking each of them to take action and to enter into discussion on the 'Policy for Ely' document	Democratic? A deferential approach which might generate a considered response	No reference point No-one responsible Risk of getting 'buried in in-trays' and momentum being lost Neglect of the field?
Set a date and invite agency heads to join those from the field for a discussion of the 'Policy for Ely' document following a presentation by the Steering Group	Would potentially guarantee the involvement of both policy makers and those in the field	Might cause offence by apparently attempting to 'take over[1] policy-making responsibilities No guarantee of policy-makers' participation

It was finally agreed that the way forward was through local politicians, with an eye to effecting strategy number 3.

A presentation of the 'case for change', backed by statistical data and diverse accounts of how existing departmental policies could obstruct effective practice, was made to all local councillors at a specially convened meeting. Persuaded - eventually - of the *'case for change' and of the futility of continuing to 'plough old furrows', their advice was sought on the best means of moving forward.

The Councillors suggested that the Leader of the (County) Council, through the Chief Executive, should convene a Day Policy Conference for Ely, involving all Chief (or senior) officers from the 'key' agencies.

The Ely Policy Day Conference

It was essential that the Steering Group was neither political nor prescriptive: the purpose of the Day was to persuade agencies of the flaws in existing policy, not to suggest the specific means of resolving them. That was a later step.

One dilemma had been who exactly to invite. Which exactly were the 'key' agencies? In the event, the following agencies were represented by the following individuals:

Chief Executive (County Council)
Principal Administrative Assistant
Administrative Assistant

Assistant Director of Education
Youth and Community, Adult Education Adviser
Youth and Community Adviser

Assistant County Planning Officer
Principal Planning Officer

Chief Probation Officer
Senior Probation Officer

Deputy Director of Social Services

Assistant Director of Administration (City Council)

Deputy Transport Manager

Deputy Administrator, Ely Hospital
Representative of Planning Department, A.H.A.

Chief Superintendent, South Wales Police

The remaining participants in the Conference comprised Ely Councillors and members of the Steering Group from education, social services, housing, police, clergy and voluntary organisations.

Surprisingly, perhaps, there was little dissent arising from the presentation of the 'case for change'. On the surface at least there was unanimous support for the recommendation that

an inter-agency working party be established combining field and policy making levels to maintain regular liaison following the policy conference. The working party should be concerned with an effective structure for

(a) communication

(b) decision making at local level

(c) inter agency work and co-operation

(d) examining the application of County wide and City wide policies for Ely and vice versa

It was intended that this Working Party should be made up of all organisations represented at the Conference and that it should meet at monthly interval. Quarterly meetings should be attended at Chief Officer level and local elected representatives be sent copies of minutes of meetings of the Working Party and be invited to attend the quarterly meeting as observers.

Sustaining the momentum

A critical problem was to ensure that the time of senior departmental officers was not wasted by 'irrelevant' material. Consequently a small Sub-Group of the Steering Group weeded through all the issues and recommendations raised by the Working Groups (and contained within the 'Policy for Action.[1] document) in order to isolate

(a) those which could be dealt with effectively at the local level

(b) those which could only be dealt with at a policy level

The latter were seen as key matters for consideration by the Ely Working Party,

Numerous delays - some predictable, some not - have meant that the Ely Working Party has not met to date (September 1985), though the Policy Conference took place in January 1985.

ISSUES

Many of the issues arising from this concerted attempt by fieldworkers to influence local policy are also issues which crucially affect any inter-agency work (see Inter-Agency Issues) since this excursion into the policy arena was itself an inter-agency initiative". The following issues concerning this policy initiative therefore encapsulate some more general inter-agency issues.

The need for a catalyst

Any development in inter-agency liaison and collaboration cannot take place in a vacuum. Without a stimulus, the need to share and reflect upon longer term issues concerning professional practice and service delivery is likely to remain neglected. The catalyst in Ely for bringing together professional workers for this purpose was the Ely Youth and Community Project. Elsewhere it has been the police or a voluntary organisation.

The need for an organising group

Whoever acts as a catalyst may be viewed with suspicion by workers from other agencies. There is a need for a small group of workers from different agencies who - though not necessarily 'representative' - can identify the common ground upon which inter-agency organisation may be constructed.

The need for careful pianni ng

Without a clearly defined purpose, an inter-agency initiative is likely to dry up. Yet there will always be a tension between closely prescribing the nature of an initiative without taking full account of the range of professional perspectives (and thereby risking a cynical or hostile reaction) and leaving things so 'open-ended' and 'loose' that any clear sense of purpose disappears. Careful planning can open up a compromise strategy which provides a broad structure and sense of direction but within which there is sufficient room for manoeuvre and modification which can accommodate different professional perspectives.

The need for an administrator/secretary

There is inevitably a large amount of administration involved in any inter-agency development:

- arranging meetings
- taking minutes
- ensuring the dissemination of minutes and other material

While a rotating responsibility for this task might seem attractive, there is also a strong need for continuity and consistency. As a result, the same 'pivot' throughout an initiative would appear to be preferable. However, it is a considerable burden for just one agency (meaning, often, just one individual).

The need for administrative/secretarial support

A considerable amount of paperwork is likely to be generated in any inter-agency development, particularly in the early stages as ideas and plans are put forward, discussed, formulated, recorded, filed and disseminated both for information and motivation. If inter-agency developments are truly collaborative initiatives, then the resources needed for this important task need to be injected equally by all participants. Otherwise the burden is immense and it is to be commended that the Ely Youth and Community Project performed this task efficiently in spite of its meagre resources.

Who should chair the Group?

In the policy initiative, the question of the chairperson was highly problematic. In Inter-Agency Issues, it is suggested that the chair of an inter-agency group need not be neutral but that the choice of chair is important since it says something about the group. It conveys certain messages both to local professionals and to a wider 'external audience. A chairperson from a specific agency may suggest that that agency is orchestrating the initiative. This may prove embarrassing for the agency concerned, especially if the initiative becomes controversial.

The chair of the Steering Group (and the Action Group) was a member of the local clergy. Throughout, this had two advantages:

- he was detached from the local authority and local political structure which, symbolically, gave the Action Group a degree of 'independence'
- it conveyed a message concerning the equality of Action Group participants within the Action Group, whatever their external status (in contrast, a social services team leader as chair might have proved difficult or embarrassing for participating social workers)

But such a 'neutral' chair also posed a problem. As the Action Group entered the political arena, he argued that he was 'out of his depth . Yet his fronting role was now even more important since he could not be pressurised by departmental superiors or political overlords. Behind him were individuals who could brief him on local political and organisational issues but who could use him as a shield from pressures to which they were vulnerable.

Action, talk and commitment - the need for a sense of purpose (again!)

Despite frequent assertions that the inter-agency policy developments were concerned with action, most of what happened over two years was talk. Talk, by necessity, precedes action, and takes time. Furthermore, whether talk or action, the developments were premised upon an inter-agency consensus. Two questions remained central to the whole initiative:

- How could one ensure that the initiative remained genuinely inter-agency?

  Participants in the Action Group could not be forced into Working Groups in which they did not wish to be involved. Yet permitting total self-determination (which was all that could be done) risked the possibility of professional workers retreating to their traditional domains. In such an event (for example, the Working Group on Truancy etc. comprising only teachers and EWOs despite its apparent relevance also to social workers and the police) there was little point in framing such an initiative in inter-agency terms since such a group could have been convened without an inter-agency initiative. The risk needs to be recognised, even if little can be done to counteract it.

- How can commitment and motivation be sustained?

  Inter-agency developments inevitably demand extra commitment from participants, at least initially. Things will often take longer than originally anticipated. Participants may well have to experience failure in realising objectives. Sustaining momentum and motivation is therefore a key problem. Without fairly quick pay-offs, things may very easily fizzle out as the inherent delays sap energy and reduce interest.

These points raise once again the need for a. strong sense of purpose which will override the frustrations which will certainly spring from repeated delays, obstructions, and yet more talk and still no action. They also implicitly state the case not only for a catalyst in the first place (see above) but also for someone who is able to continually re-generate the commitment and motivation of participants.

Clarity of purpose

An inter-agency policy development of the type described above addresses both 'internal' and 'external' audiences. The nature of the audience significantly affects the way in which an initiative is likely to be received, which in turn must influence the way in which the 'case' is presented:

INTERNAL AUDIENCE: all those professionals working within a given locality who would constitute a potential, if hypothetical, 'Action Group'

RECEPTION OF IDEAS: more likely to be sympathetic, tolerant, supportive and sensitively critical

PRESENTATION OF IDEAS (can therefore be), somewhat casual, loose, explorative, etc.

EXTERNAL AUDIENCE: anyone else - local people, the media, senior officers, local politicians

RECEPTION OF IDEAS: more likely to be cynical, critical, suspicious, perhaps ruthless (seeing inter-agency initiatives as a challenge to conventional ways)

PRESENTATION OF IDEAS (must therefore be) tight, clear, to the point and purposeful

No weak links must be visible 'externally'. A strong case risks being torn apart on the basis of just one weak illustration.

The need to remain overtly apolitical

Politics is about the exercise of power. The formation of an inter-agency group immediately engages in 'polities' since its (potential) power increases relative to other groups. Yet it seems important that no inter-agency group engages in overt/formal party politics. Gains made through exploiting a favourable political climate would most likely be reversed in an adverse one. However, it is as equally essential that inter-agency groups are not blind to the nuances of the local political structure. They must, if need be, maximise political knowledge and contacts at an informal level while remaining formally apolitical.

Being apolitical (in party terms) does not, however, mean avoiding the political dimensions which may attach to inter-agency developments. Indeed, the policy developments in Ely firmly shifted the Action Group (and its sub-groups) into the arena of local politics. Without the support of local politicians - to whom a strong and persuasive case had to be made -it seems, unlikely that Chief Officers would have given much credence to criticism from the field, whatever their rhetorical statements about 'meeting need[1], 'maximising resources', 'avoiding duplication' and so on. With the backing of local politicians, the Action Group was at least able to bring such senior officers from different agencies together and they had, at least, to appear to give serious consideration to the Action Group's case.

Edging forward strategically - tactics

Within the broad sense of purpose (i.e. the ultimate goal), there are likely to be more immediate goals to achieve. These may require strategies which Bay appear - to some participants at least - tangential to the central purpose. Yet clearly hurdles will need to be overcome and different means may be required to overcome them. Inter-agency developments, if they are to succeed, rest heavily on tactics and diplomacy. Participants need to be aware, as early as possible without destroying interest and motivation altogether, that the process is a 'long and winding road' and that the first bend neither signifies failure nor justifies demoralisation or withdrawal.

The role of the research

The research influenced the policy developments in four respects, which may be termed direct, reciprocal, strategic and symbolic.

Direct (see also Using Information)
The initial crude analysis of the 1981 Census and some selective comparisons between 1981 and 1971 for the first time provided the Action Group with some statistical foundations upon which participants could base their thinking and against which they could pitch their professional experience and expertise. In other words, their 'hunches' could be borne out or challenged with direct, recent statistical material.

Reciprocal
Further analysis of Census data took place as a result of professional comment and inquiry; professional workers also offered additional data which could be examined by the researchers and synthesised with existing material. It was this reciprocity (a core feature of the research overall - see Researching youth" and community work) which led to the profiling of the 'critical
patch' (see Using Information).
This in turn sharpened up thinking about the nature of professional
practice in Ely.

Strategic
The statistical exercise engaged in by the researchers in collaboration with local professional workers provided a strategic basis for promoting developments towards a Policy Conference, first in offering a framework within-which the Working Groups could focus their thinking and, secondly, around which the Steering Group could construct its case.
It offered a cornerstone for considering the strategy of the Action Group.

Symbolic
Once the Action Group developments started to address 'external' audiences, the strategic role of the research was supplemented by a symbolic role. For 'external' audiences, the statistical data ensured that professional arguments were solidly grounded in 'hard fact1. The researchers would be the first to concede that modest Census analysis (indeed, even sophisticated Census analysis!) has only limited value unless it is interpreted carefully and 'contextualised'.
For a wider audience, however, research work of this kind can have a powerful symbolic effect in demonstrating that thorough groundwork has been undertaken.

Conclusion

There are potentially insidious implications arising from more effective inter-agency collaboration - the emergence of a kind of professional Big Brother. More favourable interpretations might suggest that collaborative inter-agency effort allows for the more effective delivery of services. But can it be done without changes in local policy? Local workers in Ely thought not; perhaps uniquely, inter-agency initiatives 'graduated' into the policy arena as a result of a cohesive fieldwork lobby. Whether the desired changes will actually materialise still remains to be seen.

4

PRACTICE

HERITAGE COAST CAMP
A Working-Holiday

Introduction

Youth and community workers often find themselves working with young people who are

- disadvantaged
- troubled
- troublesome
- at risk
- delinquent

As such, youth workers have much in common with social workers and probation officers, who may well be working with the same individuals and groups. Collaborative strategies for making provision for these young people might well be worthy of consideration. Heritage Coast Camp was one such initiative,

Background and aims

Heritage Coast Camp is a tripartite initiative between Education (Youth Service), Social Services and Probation designed to offer a 'working holiday' for young people in trouble, disadvantaged and 'at risk[1]. The Camp has been running since 1975 and consists of three separate weeks: a Social Services week, a Probation week and a Youth Service week. Over the years it has attempted:

- to provide an alternative (or additional) method of intervention
- to achieve 'better results' with clients
- to develop more constructive relationships between client and professional
- to stimulate more productive co-ordination and communication between the three services
- to alleviate deprivation (by offering at least a type of holiday for the poorest young people)
- to divert young people from delinquency through the controlled but creative environment of Heritage Coast

The aims of Heritage Coast Camp have always been diverse, since the different agencies themselves have used the Camp for different purposes. However, three overriding aims are possible to identify:

1 To break down social barriers through the deliberate blurring of roles

2 To enhance the personal development of young people through work experience and working together

3 To develop positive relationships amongst peers and between 'clients' and 'professionals'

Funding

The three services contribute towards the costs of running the Camp. Some additional finance is obtained through fund-raising and a small contribution from those who participate (though obviously this is kept to a minimum). Heritage is something of a shoestring operation and its meagre resources affect the availability of transport and facilities on the Camp.

Staffing and organisation 4.2

Although the Camp is supposedly a co-operative venture between the three services (with negotiations with the Heritage Coast Wardens on the work to be undertaken), the Community Tutor for Ely has been the pivot of the Camp's planning, administration and organisation, having been involved in the initiative since its conception.

A substantial number of volunteers work on the Camp, including students and some former 'clients'/participants.

Impact

The popularity of the Camp is evident from the fact that many young people attend over successive years, some eventually taking on the responsibilities of 'staff as volunteers - itself a further indication of the Camp's success.

Despite various criticisms of the Camp, most of the young people involved responded positively to their participation in the Camp

- as a holiday
- as a way of developing new friendships

But the work that had to be done was not very popular!

Client-professional relationships also appeared to benefit from the relaxed and informal setting of the Camp.

ISSUES

Inter-agency constraints

Despite several successful Camps with highly productive co-operation between the three agencies, such co-operation is always vulnerable to changes in the structure, organisation and priorities of the statutory services. For example, a reduction in the levels of juvenile supervision by the Probation Service meant that commitment to the Camp could no longer be so strongly justified. The specific consequences of changes in organisation and responsibility of agencies have been

- the loss of some social workers who were both ideologically and professional committed to the idea of the Camp, and personally committed to making a practical contribution
- the lack of continuity in the 'professional' staffing of the Camp has made it more difficult to establish specific responsibilities and expectations within the Camp, and the aims of the Camp have become blurred
- the channels of communication between the three services are unpredictable - broadening and narrowing according to changes in structure, responsibilities and personnel
- the character of the Probation contingent has altered to include almost entirely difficult delinquents, which has sometimes led to acute disciplinary problems
- the sporadic attendance on Camp of some Probation Officers and Social Workers - due to overriding commitments elsewhere - has created uncertainty and inconsistency
- the youth workers involved have by necessity, therefore, had to play a leading role in the organisation of the Camp, which has not always fostered strong inter-agency co-operation (see Inter-Agency Issues)

Competing expectations

The basic organisational dilemma which these constraints have highlighted is contained within the diverse nature of the aims and objectives of the Camp. It appears that especially when there is an under-current of lack of commitment (or perhaps different notions of what commitment means) it becomes practically impossible to agree on common objectives and expectations. For instance, the increasing uncertainty of the suitability of the Camp for Probation clients seemed to be related to the gradual erosion of commitment and interest shown towards the Camp.

Control and leadership

In theory, leadership within the Camp alternated during the three weeks. In practice, the Youth Workers had more of a controlling influence. At another level, the volunteers were encouraged to take on responsibilities but the communication of these ideas was limited.

Communication

Communication both before and during the Camp was problematic between all parties:

- professionals were uncertain about the roles they were expected to play
- volunteers were often left in the dark
- some of the young people had little idea about the structure and content of the Camp

Discipline v tolerance

The dual purpose of the Camp (a working-holiday) and the make-up of the participants (both troublesome and_ well behaved) made the implementation of blanket rules difficult. The underlying dilemma for the young people was also rooted in the ethos of the Camp:

- they resented paying for the 'privilege' of working
- they disliked rules while on holiday

Conclusion

The philosophy of Heritage Coast Camp appears to be the creation of an awareness in young people of the relationship between work and leisure and an appreciation of the importance of both.

The Camp is a small but well established initiative, which operates on a thin resource base but it is backed up by other projects organised under the auspices of the E.Y.C.P. and as such it has in its own right a significant role to play.

PLAYSCHEMES

Introduction

Playschemes have become an increasingly central component of holiday provision for children. Often run on a shoestring or with help from Urban Aid, such provision might well benefit from a co-ordinated and systematic strategy within particular communities.

Background

The genesis of playscheme provision in Ely was a free holiday for 32 deprived children organised by a local church in 1968. By 1975 there were three summer playschemes and 1976 witnessed the establishment of a co-ordinated strategy for summer play, operated by all those "concerned about the number of children who never left the streets during the school summer holidays." These included local clergy and a local community worker. Urban Aid funding was secured in 1977. By 1983 the Ely Summer Play Committee co-ordinated eight playschemes which ran for four weeks in different parts of the estate; the Committee represented all bodies involved in play in Ely.

Organisation

Aims

- to improve play provision
- to combat delinquency
- to reduce vandalism
- to relieve boredom
- to ease family pressures
- to occupy teenage volunteers

The Role of the Ely Summer Play Committee

- to secure external funding
- to co-ordinate the playschemes
- to provide an arena for the development of co-operation between playscheme organisers
- to encourage the involvement of residents in the organisation
- to undertake the considerable preparatory work throughout the year which gains momentum as the summer approaches

Planning

- to submit applications for Urban Aid and other grants
- to personally approach potential staff (conditional offers of work, some paid, are made subject to money being available)
- to provisionally book visiting theatre groups and films
- to publicise through Ely High Schools the need for volunteers
- to advertise locally when and where playschemes will be operating
- to arrange accommodation and transport for the German volunteers, taking part in the annual Ely/Stuttgart Exchange

- to organise and run Play Training Days designed
- to integrate the staff and ensure that the schemes are innovative and stimulating
- to collect waste materials and order play equipment
- to devise a detailed minibus schedule and identify available drivers

Funding

The Ely Summer Play Committee (E.S.P.C.) proceed with these lengthy and detailed arrangements based only on the assumption that its main source of financial support, Urban Aid, will save the day. Smaller grants are sometimes secured from various children's charities; however, they act only as a supplement to Urban Aid.

Staffing

The uncertainty created by the timing of the decision on Urban Aid is an endless source of frustration and concern. Notice is given only within a matter a weeks before the Playschemes start, which makes the task of 'appointing' staff particularly hazardous. Therefore, the E.S.P.C.'s policy on recruitment has partly out of necessity had to be internal. Payment of staff depends on the level of responsibilities undertaken, experience and need. Playscheme staff included:

- members of the Ely Community Education Team
- members of Ely churches
- housewives and mothers
- people with youth work or other relevant experience
- people involved with other community activities

Impact

During the summers of 1982 and 1983 a local magistrate said that he had noticed fewer gangs of young people hanging around the streets
In 1977 the Police Superintendent for Ely commented on the drop in the number of incidents involving youth Certain Head Teachers have been encouraged by the drop in the number of school windows broken during the summer vacation Social Workers and clergy have reported a reduction in the level of family pressures and the number of family crises Year after year staff, volunteers and young children actively support the Playschemes; in recent years the latter have totalled approximately 700 each year. At one of the Playschemes organised by the churches, which rely heavily on unpaid volunteers, the number of volunteers per-day numbered between 60-80 in 1984

Issues

Co-ordination

The Ely summer Playschemes are orchestrated, not centralised. The advantages of the umbrella-like structure in the guise of the E.S.P.C. are fourfold:

- comprehensive geographical cover of the area, can be achieved
- the schemes operate with relative autonomy- whilst complementing other provision
- the representatives of the statutory agencies, voluntary bodies and Ely residents on the E.S.P.C. combine and share their
- skills, knowledge and expertise
- the Playschemes have become more professionalised

Maximising resources

As a large scale operation the Playschemes are subject to economies of scale at least in financial terms. For instance, a relatively expensive theatre group can provide entertainment in several locations within one day.

Control

The E.S.P.C. has been able to sustain its control over the management of summer play in Ely in view of it's record of success.

However, in 1983 the Education Department, in response to certain complaints it had received concerning the apparent lack of supervision of children at some Ely Playschemes, decided (without consulting the E.S.P.C.) to take over the E.S.P.C.'s domain of staff appointment and play training. This move provoked a series of reactions within the E.S.P.C. :

- surprise at the accusations - unanimous opposition towards centralisation
- defence of its autonomy and integrity
- concern over the additional (and unnecessary) bureaucracy
- fear that Ely residents would not perform well at formal interviews
- anticipation of a clash of criteria used for appointing staff (ie. clash with the Education Department's emphasis on professional qualifications)

The E.S.P.C. held out against this 'interference'; the Education Department backed down on certain issues; a dual system of appointments emerged; almost all the individuals the E.S.P.C. suggested were assigned and some talented people were identified from outside Ely through the widespread advertising.

Local participation

The Playschemes have a firm foundation within the community. The schemes simply could not function without the wealth a voluntary support from residents. The E.S.P.C. have successfully achieved and maintained this level of involvement which is so vital. But there remains reluctance on the part of residents to participate at Committee level.

Founding

Urban Aid applications had been consistently approved in Ely for seven years. In 1984 Urban Aid was withdrawn. This critical incident demonstrated several issues:

- the precarious but vital dependence on external finance
- the determination of the E.S.P.C. to provide a service despite the increasing odds
- the practical and professional benefits of co-ordinated action (particularly in the face of adversity).

In December 1983, two months after the E.S.P.C. had submitted its applications, it heard that due to the large numbers of applications all had been directly forwarded from the Education Department to The Welsh Office, resulting in further delays. Then in early June 1984, less than four weeks before the Playschemes were due to commence, the E.S.P.C. was informed that almost all applications throughout the County had been rejected, including all those for Ely. This exceptional decision had devastating repercussions:

- the E.S.P.C. felt that its extensive preparatory work ought not to be wasted; a salvage operation took place

- even with the supplementary grants in the bank (which also could not be relied upon in the future) and 25% of the desired amount of Urban Aid forthcoming from the Education Department, cut backs were made. Three of the eight schemes had to be sacrificed, those remaining were curtailed

- the E.S.P.C. was sensitive to the fact that it may be accused of treating prospective staff "extremely shabbily"; all staff were informed as soon as possible about the situation

- offers of emergency help, especially from youth clubs, (volunteers and money) were received

- there was anxiety that if the schemes were shown to run adequately without Urban Aid, future applications would be undermined

- it was generally felt that the Playschemes had been as popular as ever, but that the consequences of catering for approximately 400 children (300 less than the norm) with fewer schemes had been felt by the staff and certain parts of Ely were deprived of any form of organised play activity

- the E.S.P.C. had found out at first hand what it had always maintained: that the Playschemes were unable to operate effectively purely on voluntary support and grants other than Urban Aid

Conclusion

The experiences of 1984 increased the inherent financial insecurity of summer play provision in Ely. Inspite of this, however, and given the justified belief in the real need for Playschemes in Ely, the E.S.P.C. proceeded, albeit cautiously, with its plans for 1985.

THE COMMUNITY FESTIVAL

Introduction

Local 'festivals', developed with varying levels of resources and varying degrees of ambition, have become an integral feature of community provision in many areas. The now well established Ely Festival serves as one model of such provision.

Background

The idea for an Ely Festival emerged from three separate initiatives (see diagram). The first Ely Festival in 1980 was a one day event. Today it runs for ten days, spanning two weekends and incorporating a wide range of social, cultural and recreational activities:

Funding

In 1983 the overall cost of the Festival was estimated to be between £7,000-£8,000, a figure which grows each year with the Festival. Approximately £3,000 of this amount was raised by the community through the work of the Fund Raising Committee, the remainder was met by grants and sponsorship from:

- South East Wales Arts Association
- Cardiff City Council
- South Glamorgan County Council
- Welsh Arts Council
- and many other local organisations and individuals.

By 1985, however, the situation had altered slightly in that the extent of local fund raising had exceeded all expectations (through several auctions and a highly successful Charity Shop) which meant that, in that year at least, the Festival had a sound financial base on which to operate and that the programme could be expanded accordingly. Evidently the content and impact of the Festival are directly related to the amount of money available and the voluntary commitment of the organisers.

Organisation

The Role of the Ely Festival Committee

The Ely Festival Committee (E.F.C.) is the central co-ordinating body. Its main responsibility lies with resourcing. Although other tasks are largely delegated there is also much mutual assistance and moral support between Committee members; perhaps the great strength of the E.F.C. can be found in the existence of trust and friendship amongst its 'core' members. The collective role of the E.F.C. is to piece together, rather like the bits of a jig-saw, the numerous contributions which make up the Festival programme, while taking into consideration the importance of the timing of events, location, venue and content. These strategies ensure that the Festival covers .geographically, the community as evenly as possible. Co-ordination and communication are essential features of the E.F.C.'s work.

E.F.C. membership

Constitutionally, the E.F.C. is a sub-committee of the Ely Youth and Community Project's Management Committee. In 1983 the E.F.C. contained representatives from:

- churches
- schools
- social/sports clubs
- Western Leisure Centre
- police
- Ely Community Education Team
- Ely residents
- South East Wales Arts Association

Despite such a broad representation of local organisations both voluntary and statutory the E.F.C. operates primarily on the strength of the voluntary commitment of a group of core members. Their work, however, would have less impact if it were not for the links the Committee has developed with other organisations and the degree of co-operation which has grown over the years:


Welsh Disabled Motorists Association
St. Francis Catholic Church
South East Wales Arts Association
St. John's Ambulance Brigade
Ty Newydd (Home for the Elderly)
Western Welsh Omnibus Company
Trelai Training Centre
Ely Community Education Team
Ely Council of Churches
South Wales Echo (newspaper)
Grapevine (Ely newspaper)
Western Mail (newspaper)
Glamorgan Wanderers R.F.C.
United Reformed Church
West End Social Club
Home Guard Club
South Wales Police
Primary Schools
Barclays Bank
High Schools
Local Historian
Nursery School
Junior Schools
Lloyds Bank
Venture Scouts
Ely Hospital
ELY FESTIVAL 1984
Over 50's Club
Ely C.A.B.
C.B.C. Local Radio
Ely Library
Musicians Union
St. David's Church
Royal British Legion
Wiggins Teape plc
Caerau Sports Club
Cardiff City Council
Trelai Youth Centre
Brain S.A. & Company Ltd
Cardiff & Vale Enterprise
Ely Adult Education Centre
Pethybridge Youth Club
Church of the Resurrection
Barnardo's Day Centre
Ely Western Leisure Centre
Ely Adventure Playground
Caerau Community Association
Welsh National Opera Company
South Glamorgan County Council
South Glamorgan Schools Orchestra
South Glamorgan Education Authority

Aims

Ely's image

City-wide publicity projects the positive aspects of Ely which are apparent during the Festival, in marked contrast to the prevailing bad press Ely traditionally receives. In 1984, the Festival attracted coverage from regional and national television; the innovative community Opera performed by Ely residents with the professional assistance of some members of the Welsh National Opera Company (W.N.O.) proved to be the most intriguing part of the Festival, whilst not reducing the significance of the Festival as a whole.

Community spirit

Through highlighting the potential of the area in the performances of Ely residents, for example. It is hoped that the Festival will engender some self-esteem and credibility within the community.

Community needs

The Festival helps to redress the balance of recreational facilities and opportunities for entertainment in Ely. The E.F.C. believes that the Festival is more sensitive to the needs of the community than the centralised leisure services in that it is largely free (or at least reasonably priced) and locally organised.

Cultural needs

The Festival enhances the cultural environment of the area; it introduces new (and traditional) forms of music drama and art - it educates in the broadest sense.

Working together

The E.F.C. encourages the involvement of residents, community groups and statutory and voluntary organisations particularly in the planning and organisation of their own contributions. In this respect the E.F.C. has received a mixed response even though important inroads have been made.

Impact

[see diagrams]

The views of the residents

Of all the activities and projects organised by the E.Y.C.P. the Festival was the most well known amongst residents. The overwhelming response of residents towards the Festival was positive: in a limited survey 42% thought that the Festival was 'great' and a further 22.5% said it was 'O.K.'

The Opera Project

The significance of the Ely Opera or the 'do-it-yourself' Opera as it became variously known, deserves particular attention in that it represented a type of landmark in the development of the Festival:

- the project embraced all the aims embodied in the Festival
- the W.N.O. residency in Ely was a novel idea, as such it broadened the experiences of the members of the Company and the people from Ely who took part
- the project was partly intended to "bring Opera down to earth"; it was ambitious, risky and experimental. But the lessons that were learnt in the processes of building the Opera were of undoubted value to all concerned
- the project met with numerous pitfalls, not least being the lack of a suitable venue for the performances. As it turned out, however, the staging of the 'people's Opera' in a derelict bus depot ideally matched the feeling which was conveyed during the performances
- direct liaison between the W.N.O. and community groups was vital and successfully achieved, with the guidance of the E.F.C., consequently the cast represented a balanced cross
-section of the community ranging from school children and the unemployed to pensioners
- as a direct result of the Ely Opera several residents expressed a desire to develop their new found interest in Opera and formed the Ely Opera Society in 1985, in line with the original long-term objectives of the project
- the Opera project stimulated the interest and enthusiasm of Ely, culminating in two thoroughly enjoyable performances; it will be remembered for many years

Issues

Commitment

The organisations involved in the Festival believe in the aims it sets out to achieve. In order to maintain a complementary and co-ordinated programme, however, they must also adhere to the doctrine of working together within the forum of the E.F.C. But the level of commitment shown by both statutory and voluntary bodies varies.

Control v autonomy

The E.F.C. have successfully encouraged local groups like the Caerau Community Association to manage their own events, but the complexities of working together, particularly at an inter-agency level, imbued as they are by competing expectations, misguided and (sometimes) justified suspicions and perceptions, were well illustrated in the relationships between the E.F.C. and some local Head Teachers:

> tensions based on distrust and dislike have emerged and others revolved around issues of control; some Head Teachers wished to protect their autonomy and others perceived the E.F.C. as a threat to their authority. These suspicions were personified when the E.F.C. felt concerned over the lack of consultation received from certain Head Teachers on the arrangements for the school concerts, whilst the Head Teachers felt justified in 'doing their own thing'.

Communication

'Power play' acted as a restraint on the development of commitment to the Festival, furthermore overriding commitments hindered communication. Again, communication between the Head Teachers' Committee and the E.F.C., a crucial link, was inhibited by the sporadic attendance of the Head Teachers' representative at E.F.C. meetings.

External constraints

The inter-professional work which forms one of the foundations of the success of the Ely Festival provided a further example, in 1984, of some of the reasons why inter-professional co-operation does not always reach its full potential:

- the N.U.T. called for its members to take industrial action over a pay claim, effectively preventing Teachers from taking part in extra-curricular activities, including the Festival. The E.F.C., not wishing to impede the cause of the Teachers, approached the N.U.T., as there was much uncertainty about the possible effect of the industrial action on the Festival. The N.U.T. agreed to supply some firm guidelines on the issue and advised its members to consider the decision to be a matter of personal choice.

- In the event the Teachers' action resulted in the loss of some school events, though the Opera project was not adversely affected and indeed the Opera which involved around 150 school children partially filled the gap left by the schools' projects. The somewhat limited involvement of Teachers in the Festival did not appear to seriously undermine the industrial action.

Certain members of the E.F.C. felt in retrospect that the incident had brought to the surface the underlying lack of enthusiasm of Teachers for community initiatives, in that it seemed that the industrial action had been used as an excuse to withdraw the Teachers' 'token gesture[1] of participation in the Festival.

Local involvement

There was some support for the notion that there was insufficient involvement of residents in the planning and organisation of the Festival, particularly those not attached to local organisations. The E.F.C. recognises the difficulty and importance of motivating residents to become active rather than passive participants.

Conclusion

The Ely Festival harnesses the human resources of the community, in so doing its focus centres on the co-ordination of the work of these various local organisations and individuals rather than targetting on specific groups within the community - the Festival has something for everyone. As such the content and impact of the Festival affirm the advantages of this particular strategy. Close examination of the workings of the E.F.C., however, also demonstrated some of the personal, professional and statutory barriers which restrain collaborative intervention at an inter-professional level. But the Festival has a secure anchor based in the voluntary commitment of Ely's community groups which to a certain extent counteracts these potentially harmful factors.

THE MOTIVATION COURSES

Introduction

The '16-19' Initiative (the Ely Motivation Courses) started as an attempt to develop an appropriate Youth Service response within the Youth Training Scheme to the needs of local unemployed young people. It became an alternative to both unemployment and mainstream MSC-type provision for a section of young people neglected by or alienated from the latter.

The Motivation Courses were dependent upon co-operation between professional workers in three respects:

1) Planning was undertaken first by the Ely Community Education team and subsequently by a separate Working Group consisting of some members of the ECET and the Course workers.
2) The course programme depended upon the involvement of a range of professionals (cf. police, careers officers, etc.) to contribute to and participate in discussions.
3) Continuity (see Diagram) depended upon the willingness of other professionals to explain opportunities and to provide encouragement and support to Course participants.

Background

The ECET had been requested to develop an appropriate Youth Service response through YTS to the needs of unemployed youth in Ely. It concluded that this was impossible since MSC criteria precluded the type of response (in terms of both aspects of provision and resource levels) considered by the Team to be essential to the needs of Ely's highly disadvantaged youth. However, the local authority identified an alternative source of funding which, in theory at least, had "no strings on the way the money is used". The flexibility argued for by the Team was apparently permissible.

Early questions

Flexibility was crucial since at this very early planning stage, various key questions remained unresolved:

- what kind of content and structure would motivate (often very demoralised) young people who could be offered no financial incentive to attend?
- should the Courses be made up of 'integrated[1] or 'segregated' groups (according to special need)?
- what were the implications of commitment to the Course for the receipt of Supplementary Benefit?
- how would participants be identified, contacted and selected?
- should the Courses be publicised/advertised - if so, how and where?
- should different types of Courses be tried (cf. sessional, part-time, full-time). If so, what were the organisational implications?
- what would constitute an attractive, accessible and appropriate venue?

Planning the Course

Despite assertions about the need for flexibility and a desire to construct the Courses in response to the voiced needs and interests of prospective participants (who might be bribed to an Open Day to determine this by a free pie and chips!), there was increasing pressure to tighten up and flesh out the programme for the Course before funding was finally approved and monies released.

A third plan, making considerable concessions on earlier ideas, was finally approved. The Course, it was argued,

> "has the capacity to attract clients through its opportunity to take part in an enjoyable, creative and varied programme. In addition, the course structure will allow other sorts of development to take place and, whilst every effort will be made to give clients the opportunity for self-achievement, it is also to be noted that teamwork, problem-solving and self-awareness are also aims.
> We need to open new doors and give these young people experiences and opportunities which they probably thought were not actually available to them - we must endeavour to prove they are"

Funding+ Staffing

The local authority made funds available for a six-month experimental scheme. A full-time co-ordinator and a part-time assistant would organise six three-week 'motivation courses'. There would be a week in between each course for reflection, evaluation, follow-up and planning.

Content

Each course offered twelve young people:

- the opportunity to visit a variety of places
- the opportunity to discuss issues with a variety of visitors
- the opportunity to get involved in a variety of activities

Visits to:	Visits from:	Discussion issues:	Activities:
radio station	radio presenter	media	tape-editing
airport	photographer	nuclear war	photography
community workshop	community worker	law	pottery
arts centre	criminologist	relationships	
castle	police officer	crime	video
leisure centre	careers officer	hooliganism	abseiling
outward bound centre	adult education principal	jobs & training	badge-making
international college		unemployment	
		marriage	
		sex roles/family	
		adolescence	
		education	
		drugs	
		racism	

The emphasis throughout each Course was on the connections between its different components and on participation by the young people involved. It was their Course. Visiting guests and films stimulated discussion. This was followed by often heated debate amongst Course participants, drawing on their own personal experience.

Impact

The day-to-day goal was to develop a shared, group approach to issues and activities in which participants were involved and to an understanding of their life situation. What kind of impact, if any, did the Courses have?

- Few dropped put, despite their being no payment for attendance, suggesting that participants welcomed the opportunities offered by the Course.
- Participants developed a sense of their own worth: their ideas, experiences and feelings were valued and accorded equal if not greater importance than those of the 'experts' who came along.
- Participants grew in self-confidence.
- Participants became more willing to work together and perform tasks/projects collaboratively.
- Participants became less dogmatic, and more willing to see alternative viewpoints and to consider alternative opportunities.

The Course participants were, on the whole, severely disadvantaged young people. Many of them

- had never worked
- were cynical about YTS
- had been in trouble with the law
- had poor school histories
- had family problems

Of those on whom there is information, the following qualitative picture emerges of what happened to them afterwards:

- eight found legitimate jobs soon afterwards (and others found more dubious employment)
- Some eventually formed the Ely Young People's Co-operative [see The Young People's Co-operative]
- at least three soon got into further trouble with the law
- some drifted back into their previous lethargic routine of 'rotting on the dole'
- two produced a video about growing up in Ely and continued to help the Course assistant in running a youth club
- twelve joined Elywise courses /see Elywise: experimental adult education/
- one became involved in voluntary work at the local hospital for the handicapped

It is a potted history and these things may have happened anyway. But given the cynicism and demoralisation of many of the young people involved, the fact that they saw the Course through in a positive and constructive style and the fact that some pursued opportunities brought to their attention by the Course, must serve as a firm commendation of the value of such provision.

ISSUES

The Ely Motivation Courses were an experiment and much rested on trial and error. Various issues emerged which provide questions which need to be addressed by anyone contemplating a similar initiative.

1) Funding
Monies were earmarked for an experimental six-month scheme but were paid on a month-by-month basis. This had negative implications for both cash-flow and for the motivation of the staff, who were burdened with unnecessary anxieties about finance.

2) Staffing
The two staff involved experienced:

- cumulative pressures as former Course participants continued to make demands on them after they had left the Course
- competing pressures to establish creative relationships and to maintain adequate levels of surveillance and supervision

These burdens also sapped the energy and motivation of the staff. Were two staff sufficient, given the responsibilities that were expected of them?

Staff Responsibilities

administration and planning
day-to-day running of the Course
responding to the needs of former participants
individual counselling
follow-up work

3) Support
Although during the preliminary stages the Community Education Team was deeply involved in the establishment of the Motivation Courses, this involvement was substantially reduced once the Courses were under way. Yet there was no effective alternative forum for supporting the Course staff and their need for support became more critical as the pressures accumulated.

4) Flexibility
The need for flexibility was progressively challenged by bureaucratic procedures and demands. The potential for a 'flexible response1 became steadily undermined.
How compatible are local authority bureaucratic procedures with a genuinely flexible response to the needs of young people?
How great is the 'room for manoevre1?

5) Uncertainty
Uncertainty is, of course, an inherent problem in any experimental, innovative programme. But the Course staff faced a different kind of uncertainty:

- what would 'motivate[1] participants?
- what kinds of problems would they encounter?
- what would count as success?

The creative potential of such uncertainty was jeopardised for two reasons:

a) unnecessary uncertainty about funding (see above)

b) a certainty about course structure which effectively tied the organisers' hands even had they contemplated a more flexible mode of operation.

6) Opening doors - continuity

A fundamental question persisted: what was the point of raising expectations if nothing could be delivered at the end? Not only did opportunities for continuity have to be identified but participants needed to feel supported if they sought to take them up. Some openings were available and some participants did follow them through (see Diagram), but there was little in the way of an overall strategy to ensure continuity if it was required.

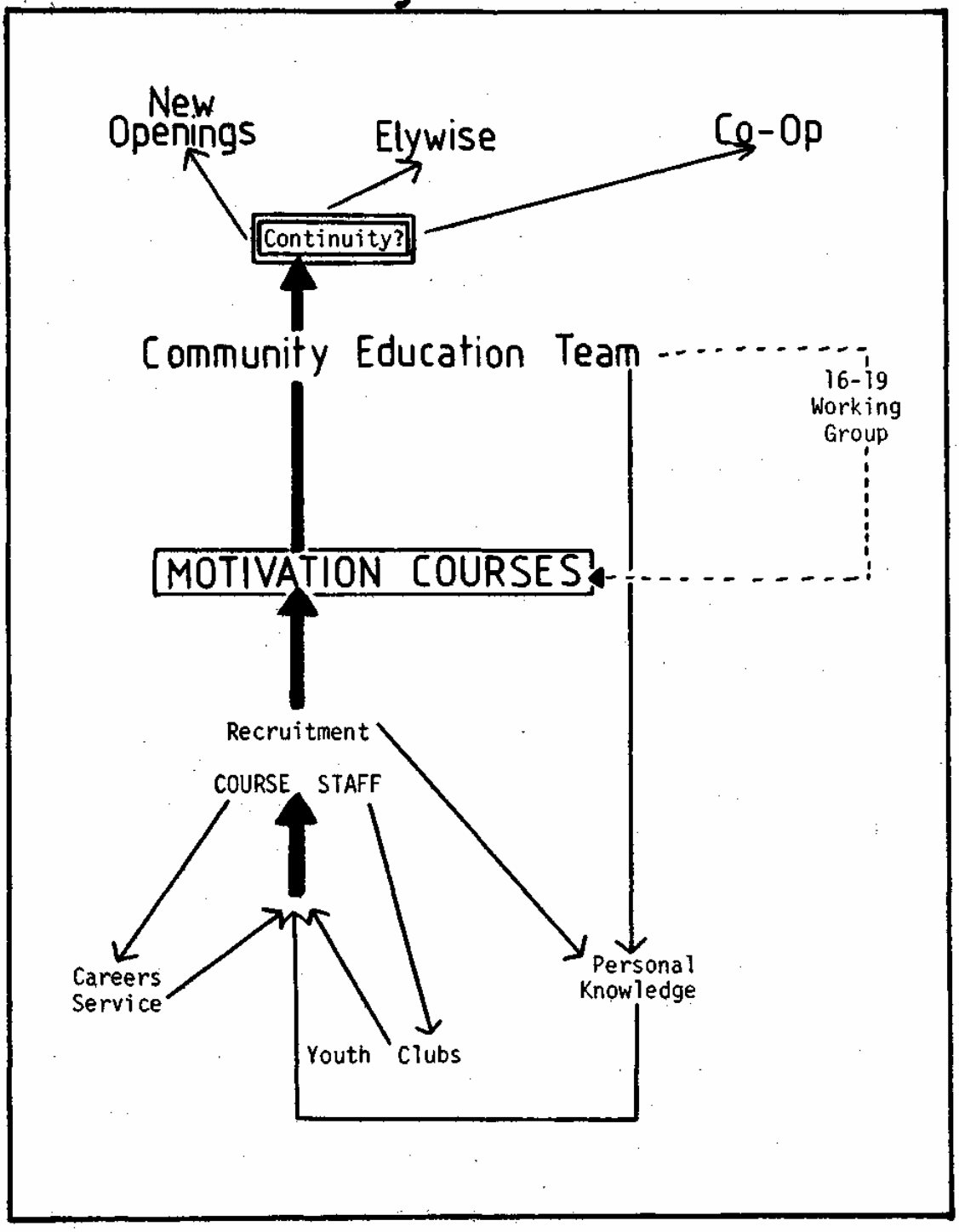
Is it possible to construct a more effective strategy within the framework of local provision (i.e. MSC, education, recreation, arts and cultural, sport, etc.)?

What implications might such a strategy have for inter-agency relations?

Conclusion

The Ely Motivation Courses attempted to 'fill a gap' in provision for the young unemployed. Pressures to radically modify original proposals were resisted, though concessions were made. Despite various difficulties, the Courses clearly made a positive impact on a group of young people who have been consistently neglected by other recreation, education and training provision. The Ely Motivation Courses made a modest yet relatively effective effort to bring elements of such provision together in a manner which responded to the needs and interests of young people themselves.

Continuity?


New Openings
Elywise
Co-Op
Continuity?
Community Education Team
16-19 Working Group
MOTIVATION COURSES
Recruitment
COURSE STAFF
Careers Service
Youth Clubs
Personal Knowledge

ELYWISE
experimental adult education

Introduction

Adult Education is an important, if often underestimated, aspect of community and educational provision. However, critical considerations of 'relevance' and 'accessibility' have often been subordinated to issues to do with availability. Furthermore, the location and structure of adult education opportunities may often have served to deter potential participants. 'Elywise' was an innovative attempt to respond to such issues.

Background

An examination of educational needs and provision for Ely residents by the Ely Community Education Team suggested that very few local people availed themselves of conventional adult education opportunities, particularly the unskilled, under-educated and unemployed. Some key reasons for this were suggested:

- the location of classes (at a local High School)
- the cost of classes
- the timing of charges for classes (at the critical
- times immediately after the school summer holidays and after Christmas)

In combination, these acted as a substantial deterrent from participation.

Seeking experimental funding

A submission was made to the Education Department seeking funding to support an alternative experimental approach to adult education specifically to respond to the educational needs of Ely residents. This would require:

- lower fees
- lower numbers to make up a learning group
- a client-based administrative system to encourage take-up
- no hire charge for local buildings
- consideration to be given to the development of a major non-school based learning centre
- consideration to be given to making provision in small, local bases
- flexibility: taster courses, introductory courses, variable course lengths
- consideration to be given to the appointment of outreach workers

Funding was sought therefore to subsidise, promote and develop an alternative approach to adult education.

Funding

The local authority made available, following some minor amendments to the funding submission, £30,000 for a one-year experimental pilot scheme.

Structure and organisation

- Course venues	Community-based facilities were sought as possible venues. Home-based classes for small groups were also permissible
- Group size	The minimum group size for Elywise courses was reduced to seven (partly in order to give the project a chance to prove its worth)
- Course fees	Elywise courses were heavily subsidised. The fee was set at 15p per course hour or £3.00 per term
- Publicity/ recruitment	In order to attract Ely residents, particular y those who had no previous knowledge or experience of adult education, publicity was predominantly local and low-key. Free 'taster' courses were arranged for already established community groups (i.e. mother and toddler groups), some through collaboration with the Community Education Team and its breadth of contacts (see Diagram)

Co-ordination

The Community Education Team maintains close links with a wide range of initiatives in the area and these contacts became an integral part of the planning and development of Elywise (see Diagram):

- 'taster' courses were offered as part of the Ely Festival
- the community newspaper (the Ely Grapevine) advertised and reported on the courses
- New Openings, working to provide opportunities for the unemployed, referred some of its clientele to the courses and offered the services of its staff as tutors
  Provision by Elywise and New Openings was closely monitored "To avoid duplication.
- former participants in the Ely Motivation Courses were encouraged to take up suitable Elywise courses
- some courses were arranged to tie in with local nursery facilities, to encourage the participation of mothers with young children

IMPACT

Early indications

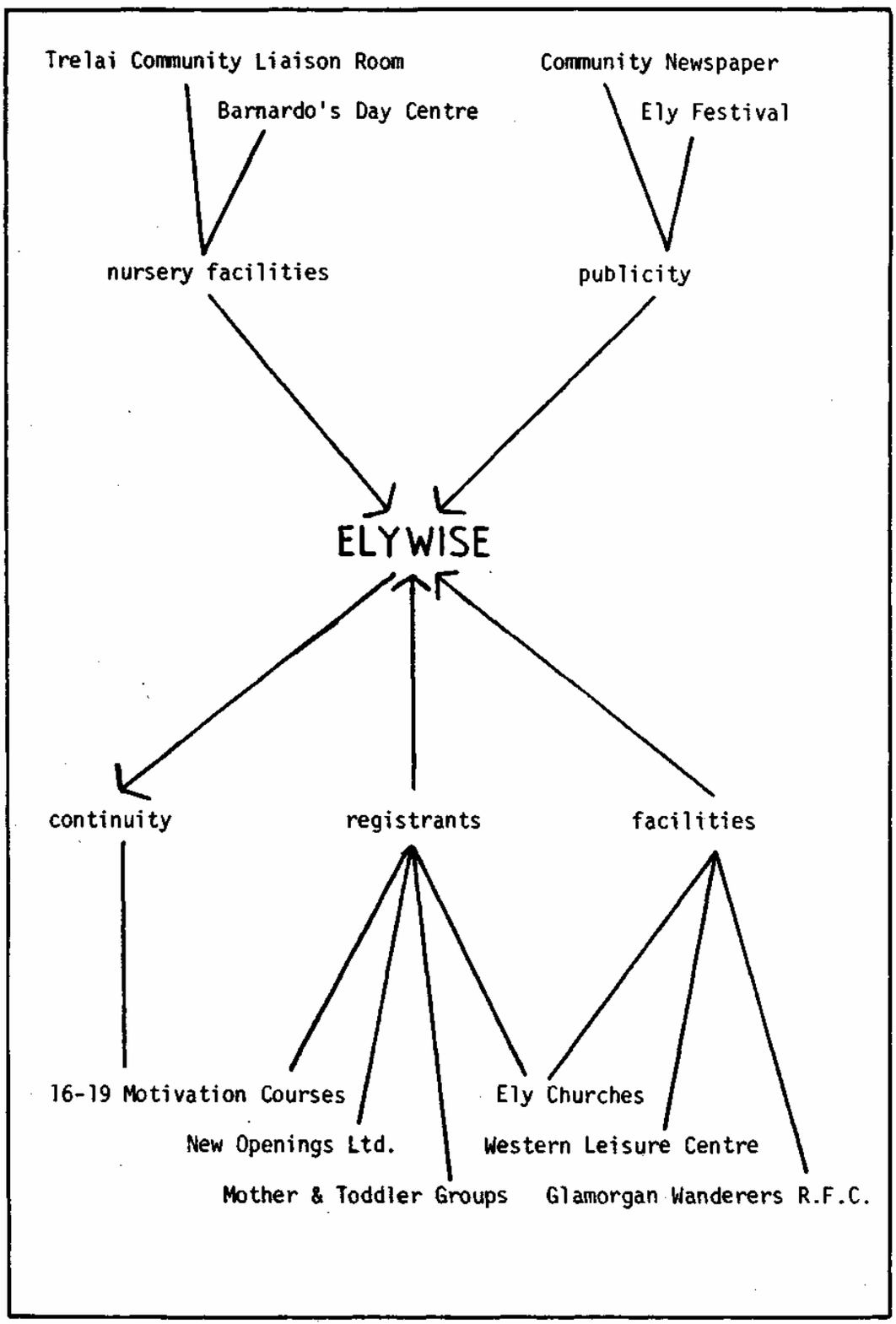
Early on in the first term Elywise had already attracted 240 Ely residents; a month later this figure had grown to 340.

By the end of the first term, the number of Ely residents who had taken part in Elywise was equal to 80% of the total enrolment figure for the Adult Education Centre.

Conventional adult education course enrolment had not been detrimentally affected by the existence of Elywise; normal levels of registration had been maintained.

There was a relatively low drop-out rate from Elywise courses.

ELYWISE WITHIN THE FORUM OF YOUTH AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVES



The Survey Findings

The sample

A total of 196 participants in 25 Elywise courses completed a questionnaire (this was 53% of all Elywise registrants at the time). The survey obviously did not cover non-attenders on the day the questionnaire was distributed, whose views may have been valuable and provided an alternative perspective.

A new clientele for adult education

90% of the registrants sampled lived in Ely compared to 46% of conventional adult education registrants at the time.

Over half (56.5%) had not previously taken part in any other adult education courses. Of those who had, one-third were or had been involved in other Elywise courses.

Publicity

Local information networks, predominantly friends, school and the Ely Grapevine, were the main sources of knowledge about Elywise.

Significantly, information about Elywise generally seemed to have been dispersed by word of mouth, thus vindicating the low-key approach taken by the Adult Education Principal.

Enrolment

Data was obtained on adult education provision during the second term of Elywise:

- Conventional courses: 23 courses; 148 registrants
- Elywise courses sampled: 25 courses; 368 registrants

In terms of the enrolment figures and number of courses, Elywise compared very favourably with traditional adult education at the Ely Adult Centre.

Price and location

The survey showed clearly that the price and location of Elywise courses were important motivating factors in decisions to participate. The top three reasons (out of nine) for attending the Elywise courses were:

- to improve knowledge and skills
- the proximity of the course to home
- the price

However, in terms of the benefits derived from the courses, enjoyment and learning topped value for money - participants appeared to enjoy the courses more than they had initially anticipated.

Popularity

The general responses to Elywise were overwhelmingly positive; only three of the 196 sampled stated that they would not do another course in the future.

ISSUES

Securing the foundations of success:

- the Community Education Team collaborated to construct a persuasive and convincing application for funding
- the Community Education Team exerted its collective influence and lobbying power to keep the idea of Elywise on the local political agenda in the face of a degree of political and professional opposition (which was anxious about the potential implications of a successful Elywise - see below)
- the Community Education Team offered solid backing and moral support to the Adult Education Principal throughout the initiative
- the Community Education Team helped to ensure that Elywise was effectively 'locked into[1] the range of community initiatives in the area

The threat posed by a successful Elywise:

- it was feared in some quarters that a successful Elywise would expose the inadequacies of existing adult education provision in terms of meeting real need (professional fear)
- it was feared that a successful Elywise might be at the expense of more conventional provision. Elywise courses would become a substitute (this did not in fact happen) (professional and political fear)
- it was feared that a successful Elywise would state the case for developing similar provision elsewhere, with considerable resource implications (political fear)

Recreation v. education:

Although Elywise offered a wide variety of choices, many registrants opted for the popular 'keep-fit' classes. As a result Elywise contained (at the time of our study) a strong recreational element. In this respect the dilemma for an Education Department might be in what ways, within its terms of reference, it can accommodate this apparent demand for recreational pursuits under the umbrella of Adult Education.

Funding:

It seems important to note that the future of Elywise hinged on the availability of additional resources. Indeed, it would not have been possible in the first place without experimental funding. It needs to be emphasised that the cost of Elywise was relatively little in view of the fact that its- 'clientele' were those who have been traditionally and consistently passed over in the distribution of educational resources.

Conclusion

The 'prototype' structure of Elywise would appear to have been thoroughly vindicated during its experimental year. The combined effect of such a strategy for delivering adult education fully realised its objectives. (Elywise has in fact continued, though on a considerably reduced budget.)

THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S CO-OPERATIVE

Western Multiservices

Introduction

Concern about youth unemployment, especially in depressed urban areas, had led to much rhetoric within the Youth Service about developing responses and particularly alternative responses to MSC provision. Yet only infrequently has such rhetoric been translated into reality. The Ely Young People's Co-operative (Western Multiservices) was one modest innovative attempt to do so.

Inter-agency

Throughout the development and emergence of the Ely Young People's Co-operative an inter-agency dimension to the initiative was present, first amongst local professionals asserting the need for such a development and later through a partnership between those with youth work and those with business experience.

Background

(see Diagram)

The idea of the Co-operative had two immediate sources:

- the Action Group for Professional Workers, which had established a Working Group on 'Employment Opportunities'
- the Motivation Courses (see The Motivation Courses), during which concern had been expressed about continuing opportunities for participants

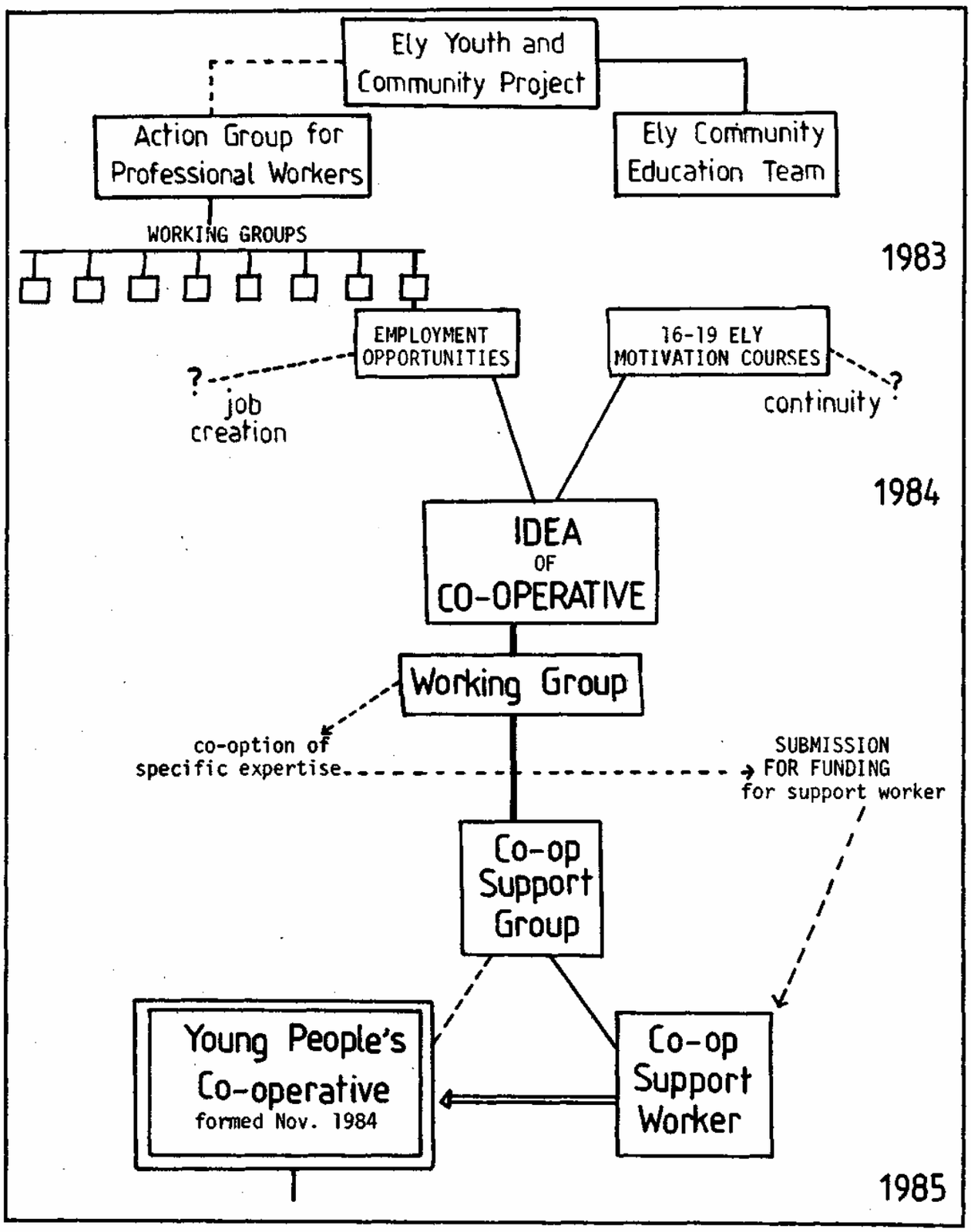
Instant Muscle?

It was argued that while the majority of young people in Ely lacked formal skills, they did have the capacity to 'turn a hand' at a range of tasks. A Co-operative offering labour for any kind of labour-intensive, relatively unskilled work was seen as most appropriate. Instant Muscle, now a national network of young people's Co-operatives, provided a model for such a Co-op. However an Instant Muscle franchise was not seen .as appropriate for Ely, on account of the aptitudes and lack of self-confidence amongst the young people for whom the Co-op was envisaged.

There was a need for a reinterpretation of the Instant Muscle concept to suit the needs of the local context. There was a need, prior to full engagement in the 'commercial struggle', for

- training
- learning
- support
- advice

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ELY YOUNG PEOPLE'S CO-OPERATIVE



A Support Worker

To enable the Co-op to 'go it alone[1] successfully, it was argued that it needed to have a 'Support Worker' who would build the confidence of the Co-op's members and distribute business savoir.This worker would ideally possess a blend of business arid youth work experience.

Funding + Organisation

- A successful submission for £12,000 to fund a Co-operative Support Worker was made to the local authority
- The Support Worker was accountable to the Co-op Support Group, consisting of youth workers and businessmen This Group formally had no direct influence on the Co-operative itself
- Four of the five original Co-operative members applied successfully for the Enterprise Allowance (£40.00 per week per person), which provided an additional 'buffer[1] for the first twelve months
- Prior to its formal constitution, the Co-op had undertaken so-called 'training jobs' (of dubious legitimacy in view of social security regulations) in order to 'tool up'
- Temporary premises were, after some delay, acquired at a peppercorn rent in an unused school building
- The Co-op members - three young men, two young women - started to leaflet houses in the locality in order to attract work. How they organised the overall workload (not just the jobs to be done) was up to them, though the Support Worker was there to provide guidance and advice

Early problems

Sexist assumptions: The (male) Support Worker focussed on 'the lads' (sometimes even "my lads") to the detriment of the two young women, who were often left uninvolved in the 'men's work' secured by the Co-op.

Irrespective of the principles raised, there were very practical reasons why this should not continue:

- the young men will soon get resentful if they feel they are having to 'carry' the female members
- the young women will soon get resentful if they are not being allowed to make a contribution
- the Co-operative cannot afford it: unless every member makes a full contribution, the Co-op is unlikely to succeed

The Co-op therefore resolved that: all work requested could be undertaken by all members unless there were strong physical or commercial reasons against this!

Pub1icity and the problem of 'swamping': if publicity was too effective, the Co-op would not be able to respond to work requested, thus undermining its credibility. The Co-op therefore resolved to:

- focus initially on a small area, gauge the response and expand the area if necessary
- make people within the 'area' aware of what the Co-op can offer
- use persuasion and letters of recommendation from already satisfied customers to sell the 'product' (cf the Co-op)
- do the job well - at a good price.

- Costings: The price of a job had to be 'realistic' - i.e. as much as the market could stand. Undercutting would not help the Co-operative in the long run. The Co-op therefore resolved: that even the smallest job must be carefully thought out and pricing levels should take proper account of the costs of labour! materials and overheads (cost of premises, 'empty' time, petrol, travelling time, etc.)
- Members' involvement: Larger, more lucrative, jobs would ebb and flow. It was important to obtain or decide upon smaller 'time filler' jobs (such as making soft toys, or small carpentry jobs) which would fill the gaps. The Co-op therefore resolved: that all members should work a full day, every day, thus generating at least some income all the time. Alternatively, in order to increase the prospect of some income, members might use 'free' time to acquire new skills through a process of 'sitting by Nellie'. The Support Worker could contribute to the identification of such opportunities for training. It was the ful1-time occupation of Co-op members which was important.
- BEING YOUNG: A central problem, according to the Co-op members themselves, was that "because we're young, people don't take us seriously....they think we're just messing around". The Support Worker's role in bolstering the confidence of the Co-op members during such perceived attacks on their competence was critical.

Types of work done

Painting
Decorating
Plumbing
Hedge cutting
Patio laying
Wall building
Electrical work
Upholstery
Typing
Catering

Later problems and dilemmas

Some early problems remained unresolved and new dilemmas emerged as the Co-operative became fully operational:

- The geographical area of operation: The temptation to search wider afield for work, though attractive in one sense, had to be pitched against the additional costs (petrol, travelling time) involved which had implications for the pricing levels of jobs
- Finding a niche in the market: The temptation to 'tap into' (e.g.) the needs of the elderly by undertaking, for example, part-jobs (doing only the bits of painting an elderly person was unable to do, for example) had to be weighed carefully against a more eclectic approach. 'Blind alleys' had to be noticed sufficiently early to avoid commercial suicide
- Doing skilled work; A temptation was to do work which the Co-op was not equipped to do if this meant winning or losing a larger job. Strict regulations, however, govern such things as electrical work. It was therefore necessary for the Co-op to be able to sub-contract the skilled components of any work taken on

" Pricing jobs: The early dilemmas persisted. The temptation was to undersell the Co-operative in order to get the work. However, 'pitching' too close to professional price levels would make the Co-op unattractive. While the loose guide was to price jobs according to 'what the market would stand', fluctuations in the market demanded that regular reflection and attention was given to the price levels offered by the Co-op.

- Finance and cash-flow: 'Working capital' quickly became a problem. The Co-op accepted the need to wait for payment for jobs completed but was unwilling to seek credit facilities for itself. It appeared to be increasingly important to
    - seek some pre-payment for jobs about to be undertaken
    - seek credit facilities from suppliers of materials
- Training: The temptations was for the Co-op to undertake only those jobs it was fully equipped to do. Yet it needed to expand its range of collective skills in order to be able to respond to diverse requests for jobs to be done. 'Training' needs were all too easy to ignore, overlook or defer, but could be identified from
    - members' own wishes
    - the kind of work the Co-op was being requested to do

  It seemed important for the Support Worker to (a) identify such training needs, (b) develop opportunities which would respond to them and (c) encourage members to take up such opportunities
- Work dilemmas: The temptation was for the Co-op to go for larger, more lucrative, jobs within its existing 'specialisms' (cf. patio laying). But this left gaps. The Co-op needed to plan a workable balance of jobs to be done, between
    - large and small jobs
    - outdoor and indoor jobs
    - (perhaps even) 'male' and 'female' jobs

  It also needed to strike a balance between attracting sufficient work to stay busy but not so much that it became stretched and thereby less efficient, thus damaging its reputation on which its ability to secure work depended.

ISSUES

Process Issues

Need and relevance

Co-operatives can hardly be the answer to the extensive youth unemployment which currently exists. Yet a Co-operative in Ely appeared to be the only way of providing those who participated with any kind of occupational future. However, there were no pretensions that it would be an unmitigated success: it was very much an experimental venture which might well fail.

Testing the water

Models for young people's Co-operatives are few and far between. The 'Instant Muscle' model would have been relatively easy to adopt. Yet its appropriateness for the demoralised, unconfident and unskilled prospective participants was rightly questioned. Whether or not the strategy ultimately adopted in Ely is the correct one remains an open question, but it was clearly based on very careful thought and consideration.

The Inter-agency dimension

Individuals from different agencies were involved at different times in the Co-op initiative:

- the Action Group for Professional Workers identified a need to develop opportunities for self-employed
- the Project's Management Committee, which supported the idea of attempting to develop a Co-operative and whose members were asked to promote the Co-op using personal contacts
- the Ely Community Education Team laid the ground for serious discussion of the possibility of establishing a Co-operative and paved the way for the formation of a separate Working Group to consider the detail involved
- the Co-operative Working Group recognised its lack of expertise in certain aspects and sought to co-opt expertise from the business and commercial sector. This undoubtedly contributed to an improved balance between idealism and realism

The Co-operative was very much the product of collaboration between those in youth work, social welfare, careers, industrial development and business.

Getting the right Support Worker

For the Co-op to have any chance of success, it needed support from a worker with not only business knowledge and contacts but also experience of working with and building relationships with a group of young people with characteristics typical of those from deprived working-class neighbourhoods. The Working Group was fortunate to know of such an individual.

Not being too ambitious

The Co-op was a venture into the dark. With only a few members, unforeseen difficulties were potentially more easy to pre-empt or resolve. Once lessons had been learned, it might be possible to expand the existing Co-operative and even develop others (which, indeed, has since happened).

Issues concerning practice

The Support Worker: between the devil and the deep blue sea

The idea of a Support Worker for the Co-operative was an essential one. In practice, however, the Support Worker in Ely was confronted by a range of competing expectations.

Formally, his role was to enable the Co-op to 'go it alone' by equipping its members with the necessary knowledge, skills and confidence. His job was to offer back-up, guidance, advice and support to the Co-op.

The Support Group, however, also expected him to identify and respond to the training needs of the Co-op members, but to take a back seat and play a more reactive role elsewhere in the day-to-day activities of the Co-op.

The Co-op members, on the other hand, expected him to actively secure work, negotiate pricing and engage in PR work on behalf of the Co-op.

The role of a Support Worker will, of course, differ according to the context and the group of young people involved. The key question, however, remains:

What support does a ‘Support Worker' need and can the competing expectations about his/her role be clarified and reconciled?

Sexism

Sexism in the business world, however undesirable, is commonplace. Sexism in youth work is intolerable. The tensions emanating from this issue are perhaps irresolvable.
Youth workers may wish to press for an anti-sexist principle of equal participation by both sexes in whatever work is obtained. But the Co-op was a business venture, not an exercise in principle, and was regularly confronted in practice by the obstacle of assumptions that certain types of work could only be done by 'men'. Indeed, the Co-op members themselves also held such assumptions.
The Co-op was already 'handicapped' in the market place by low levels of confidence and skill: to risk losing jobs by (e.g.) sending young women to do 'men's work' was usually not seen as a risk worth taking.

Co-operation

A central practical issue for the Co-op was to learn about co-operation and to recognise that the success of the Co-op depended upon a number of different tasks: leafletting, pricing, accounting, organising (planning), not just 'grafting[1]'.
Two related factors stemming from the cultural experience of the Co-op members served to obstruct attempts to engender 'real co-operation':

- this experience conveyed messages about effort at work: 'do as little as you can get away with' and 'look after number one'. The whole rationale and organising framework of the Co-op confronted both
- this experience also 'told' participants that 'real work' was limited to direct 'grafting'. This was challenged within the Co-operative since aspects of work which usually remain 'behind the scenes' (touting for business, accounting and administration) were brought to the fore.
  Co-op members found it difficult to accept that such 'work' was as important to the survival of the Co-op as the labour power which finally brought in the cash

These obstacles were substantial and only gradually overcome. The Co-op therefore offered its members a very practical learning experience in co-operation.

Self-determination?

In theory the Co-operative was autonomous. In practice the Support Group (which had no formal control of the Co-op) offered a sense of direction.
There was always a fine dividing line between advice and instruction.
The Support Group clearly possessed knowledge, ideas and advice which was of value to the embryonic Co-op. Indeed, unless the Co-op heeded its 'advice', it was likely to flounder.
Occasionally the Co-op did reject the 'advice' of the Support Group. Sometimes this was good advice, rejected because it was perceived as an attempt to 'lay down the law[1]'.
Co-op members distinguished between 'youth work' and 'business' advice. The former was frequently seen as irrelevant to the functioning of the Co-op.
There was a constant, if implicit, clash between conceptions of relevance between the Co-op and the Support Group. The Co-op was primarily concerned with short-term, immediate business matters; the Support Group was concerned with the business and inter-personal foundations on which the Co-op might have a long-term future.
Any attempt to subordinate the former in favour of the latter demanded an assertiveness on the part of the Support Group which smacked of control and challenged the Co-operative's right to self-determination.
It was an almost irresolvable dilemma.

Alternative Support

The Co-op's dissatisfaction with the Support Group as a forum for receiving guidance and advice on everyday concrete issues led to its convening of an alternative support group, comprising local trades people willing to offer practical guidance and instruction.

Relationships, business and skill

The Co-op could not survive without

- a level of productive collaboration
- some sense of the market in which it operated
- a level of skill to do jobs competently

The Co-op members valued the last component to the detriment of the other two. The Support Group stressed the importance of all three but focussed particularly on the first two.
It was only as a result of some heavy 'steering' of the Co-op in the areas of mutual co-operation and 'business acumen' which saved the Co-op from early collapse though this was not recognised by the Co-op members and indeed led to resentment - see Self-determination above.

Members' preferences

The Co-op members became increasingly selective about the work they were willing to do. They were reluctant to take on work which did not demand the skills they already possessed. They were less and less prepared to spot the 'main chance' and do anything that paid.
The Co-op members consistently failed to value those parts of the 'work' of the Co-op which did not involve actually earning money.
The Co-op members continued to treat the whole exercise as a 'bit of a Laugh'.

Explanation - a jumped-up YTS ?

It is possible to explain much of the scepticism, apathy, casualness, complacency, etc. of the Co-op members by reference to a 'YTS mentality'. The following points may offer some reasons:

- Four Enterprise Allowances (shared between five) gave Co-op members a guaranteed income for one year of £32 per week
- This was better than the dole
- This was better than a training scheme
- This was perhaps better, in some senses, than work - the members were (more or less) 'their own bosses'
- The Co-op members were, therefore, better off in a number of respects than most of their peers
- The Co-op members would be unlikely to have done anything else

The 'cut and thrust' of the hard business world did not appear to touch the Co-op members. They were cushioned by the Enterprise Allowance (whereas the Allowance had originally been thought of as a means of cushioning the Co-op - a subtle distinction).

Conclusion

A vast amount of time and effort went into preparing the ground for the establishment of the Co-operative. Numerous problems and dilemmas were experienced. Some persisted; some were resolved. What lessons were learned? Was it worth it?

- For community and youth workers, the Co-op demonstrated that rhetoric can be turned into reality. The adventure into this relatively uncharted territory was a test of the skills and knowledge of those involved.
- For the Co-op members, the Co-operative provided a forum for voluntary, relatively independent, experiential learning, requiring the exercise of collective choice (even if, at times, such 'choices' were rather firmly circumscribed).
- For others, the Co-operative provides a working model and some idea of the obstacles likely to be encountered if a similar initiative is contemplated elsewhere.
- In terms of costs and benefits, conclusions must be speculative:

COSTS	BENEFITS
Professional time £12,000 (Support Worker) Enterprise Allowance x 4 (£8,320)	Suspending/dispelling the despair and demoralisation of participants Growth in self-confidence of participants Skill acquisition by participants Savings in Supplementary Benefit (c. £6,500) Benefits to the community (through jobs done which could not have been afforded professionally) ?? Savings related to the costs of criminal activity and custody

As an experimental initiative, the Ely Young People's Co-operative provided a number of illuminating messages about the processes of developing self-employment opportunities for young people which cannot be ignored by the wider youth and community field.

5

CONCLUSIONS

CONCLUSIONS

strategies for intervention

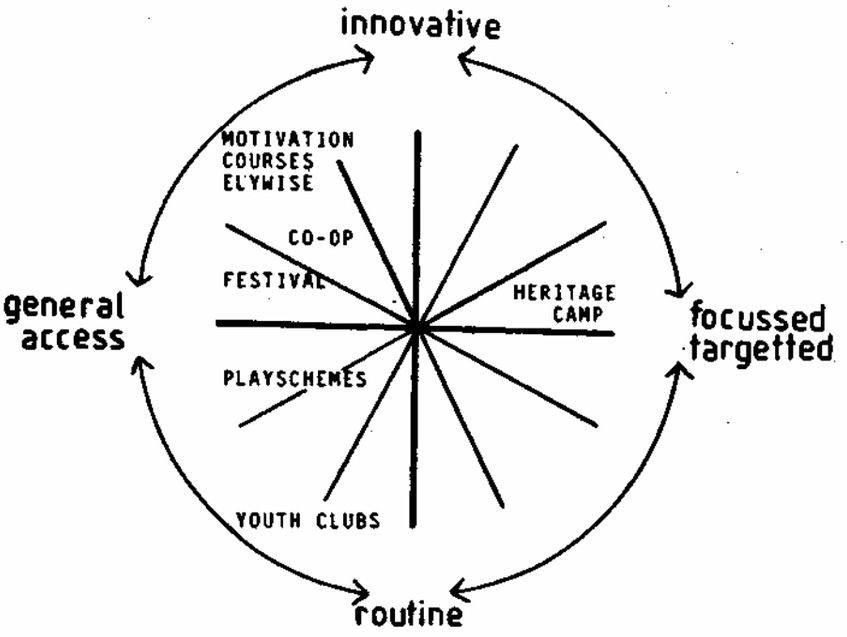
Introduction

This study has been concerned with an evaluation of the work of the Ely Youth and Community Project for itself and on its own terms. It must be for others to judge the appropriateness of the parameters within which the E.Y.C.P. has defined its task and to assess the pros and cons of alternative methods of youth and community intervention.

The emphasis of the E.YC.R

The rationale which underpins the practice of the E.Y.C.P. is unequivocably, though often only implicitly, embedded within a conception of social need which is framed in terms of 'youth and community[1]. Within this conception of need the Project has adopted a flexible stance which has enabled it to develop a disparate number of responses. The Project's workers have chosen to play an active, dynamic role in identifying local needs, in attracting resources to meet them and in harnessing, co-ordinating and facilitating the diversity of existing professional effort focussed on youth and community needs. Their role has been, in short, to consolidate existing and develop new provision.

The work of the E.Y.C.P. therefore fits somewhat uncomfortably within traditional classifications of 'youth work' or 'community work'. It displays some features of both ideal typical strategies (i.e. 'conservative and 'radical') while not engaging fully with either. Instead it has developed an approach which addresses actively local issues from a self-determined 'community' perspective (with some priority given to the young) but has continued to emphasise the qualitative rather than the structural dimensions of the issues. Within this broad framework, however, the focus and method of the Project's work was quite diverse:



The emphasis of the work of the E.Y.C.P. lies undoubtedly within the top right-hand corner of the diagram since, in principle at least, it is concerned with the development of appropriate (and this usually means innovative) responses to the needs of specific groups. In theory, many of these initiatives are 'open to all[1], in practice, however, those who become involved are the product of a complex process of either a chance or deliberate identification. Once absorbed into this 'frame of reference[1], some progress through a range of the Project's provision, a few eventually becoming voluntary or paid staff/leaders. Like any form of provision in which participation is not compelled, the Project actually caters for those at the juncture between objective need and subjective awareness and motivation.

Impact

Funding

The E.Y.C.P. has no substantial revenue funding. As a result the success of any proposed initiative is dependent upon securing adequate resources by means of grants from external bodies (a range of grant-giving bodies and often the local authority) and, to a lesser extent, through local fund raising strategies. The Project has managed to attract an impressive level of resourcing to the area, which has enabled it to increase considerably social, recreational and educational provision in the area (see Provision below) both directly and indirectly.
In seeking funding for local initiatives the E.Y.C.P. illustrated the crucial importance of:

- unanimous support from the Project's Management Committee
- persuasive submissions firstly, to the Management Committee, representing a kind of 'pre-advocacy[1] in the personal and political arena and, secondly, to the funding body
- the capabilities of a cohesive group like the Ely Community Education Team in constructing applications and planning initiatives particularly in the event of applications being rejected (see PI ayschemes)

The channelling of such resources through a 'youth and community' forum which operates with the kind of eclecticism portrayed by the E.Y.C.P. serves two purposes:

- it prevents the rigid ear-marking of resources and permits flexibility
- it then allows for the development of provision which is sensitive and responsive to local need, since each proposed initiative should be considered and re-considered in relation to changing priorities in local needs

But since so much has always depended on the Project's capacity to obtain resources from disparate sources there have always been two related risks attached to such a strategy:

- shattering new found local expectations and confidence, (but some attempt to counteract this problem has been made by ensuring connections between different aspects of the Project's work - see the Inter-locking relationships between initiatives below)
- constantly having to walk the funding plank, with an ever-present likelihood of unfavourable decisions by the funding bodies, which generates a high level of uncertainty and anxiety

However, Ely's deprivation is acute on many counts and, in socio-economic terms, any consideration of social justice would conclude that it merits the allocation of substantial public resources. Sadly, funding decisions are not always based on rational, objective grounds.

Provision

As a result of its relative success in securing new resources and maximising the use of existing resources, the E.Y.C.P. has "3eveloped an impressive range of initiatives and interventions on behalf of young people and the community, some of which have been discussed in this report. Some such provision is now:

- 'permanent' (cf Citizen's Advice Bureaux)
- 'established', but dependant upon re-applications for financial support each year (cf Playschemes, Festival)
- other provision is, at least initially, 'one-off, attracting experimental funding, although placing such provision on a more 'established' basis may be the Project's ultimate intent (cf Elywise, 16-19 Motivation Courses, Co-operative).

While it is hard to tease out the effects of that provision, in that the E.Y.C.P. was in no position to address its work to the economic problems faced by the community, apart from in the most indirect and marginal ways (see Meeting social need below), the Project has significantly added to and influenced the content and structure of service delivery in Ely. Its attempts to do so have inevitably met with obstacles. and hic-cups but it is quite clear that those young people who have had intensive and sustained contact with the Project's interventions speak positively of that provision (see Perspectives on the Project). Such positive responses are a commendable tribute to the efforts of the E.Y.C.P.

Inter-agency work

Not only has the E.Y.C.P. established a far greater range of initiatives than would have been possible had it operated in centre-based isolation, but as a result of the Project's amorphous identity and its efforts to cultivate and harmonise an inter-agency approach to meeting youth and community needs, it has developed diverse forms of provision some of which are well beyond the spectrum of what is usually considered to be the conventional domain of youth and community work.
The successes of the Project are testimony to the positive effects of the strategies adopted by the Ely Community Education Team. Such strategies have been the product of a laudable aim to establish liaison and co-operation between individuals and agencies to bring about greater effectiveness in local work and to avoid duplication through collaborative effort. However, this endeavour has been hindered by certain restraints highlighting the somewhat shaky nature of the ground on which such collaboration takes place (see Professional relationships below).

Meeting social need

It would be unreasonable to expect a modest youth and community project to be able to meet the fundamental needs of young people and the community; they are patently rooted in the social, political and economic inequality of the wider social structure. The E.Y.C.P. will never have the capacity to tackle the contemporary cultural and material deprivation which is endemic in the area. For instance, a considerable number of young people availed themselves of the opportunities which have emanated from the Project, but the E.Y.C.P. is quite likely to have had, only a marginal effect on their Instrumental delinquency, since it can make little contribution to their material resources. However, in terms of expressive delinquency, we would maintain that the strategy of broadening opportunities and widening choices for disadvantaged individuals and groups may have started to meet some of their less fundamental needs : the need for activity, 'occupation' and excitement.
What the Project has done, therefore, is to begin to offer access to the same kind of resources that can already be found -indeed, are often taken for granted- in many less disadvantaged areas.

Issues :

The advocate approach of the E.C.E.J.

The E.C.E.T. acts as the lynchpin which precipitates, plans and implements many of the policies of the E..Y.C.P. The E.C.E.T., and in particular one member of the Team bears a strong resemblance to the ideal type of 'advocate' in community work. The role of 'advocate' has been instrumental in the development of the work of the E.Y.C.P. and the influence of the Team has been strengthened by this approach. However, certain potentially negative consequences were also identified both in the working relationships within the Team and with professionals from other agencies.
Whilst the E.Y.C.P., through the E.C.E.T., clearly had an objective neutrality, what was viewed by the E.Y.C.P. as an attempt to cultivate a co-operative approach between agencies was sometimes greeted with suspicion and cynicism by other professional groups as a challenge for control. Where the 'colonising tendency' was perceived some serious in-fighting sometimes took place. This, coupled with some very real constraints on other professional groups (due to their statutory and professional obligations), militated against whole-hearted inter-agency co-operation in practice.

Professional relationships

Evaluating the work of the E.Y.C.P. has demonstrated a common, coherent and co-operative approach between agencies in making provision to be desirable for the following reasons:

- to share knowledge and expertise
- to avoid duplication of effort and services
- to maximise resources

The range of inter-related provision has been achieved through differential combinations of:

- inter-agency groupings
- the energy of the E.C.E.T.
- the aptitudes of certain individuals

These combinations have given rise to constructive and sustained planning and implementation of initiatives on, many occasions despite the problems observed which arose from:

- the informal base upon which most inter-agency work has had to be constructed
- the conflicting perceptions of motives, rationales and expectations
- the very real organisational, professional and personal constraints on many of those involved

Regular and effective inter-agency co-operation has often been severely hampered by competing organisational demands. But though organisational licence is a necessary condition for an inter-agency approach, it is not in itself sufficient; professional and personal motivation is also of paramount importance particularly if the history of relationships has been negative. The E.Y.C.P. has worked within many of the problems identified, and sometimes overcome them, reaping many dividends, both for the community and for some of the professional workers themselves. Despite these achievements the question might be raised about the degree of genuinely 'inter-agency[1] work which has taken place in Ely; very little real change has been made in terms of inter-agency practice and organisation which might facilitate improved inter-agency links, though some progress is currently being made on this issue (see Local Policy; problems and developments).

Local involvement

There were of course instances in which members of the local community participated in the planning of initiatives developed by the E.Y.C.P. (cf Playschemes, Festival). Those local people who have tended to do so as a result of their status in other quarters (ie. local council, clergy). In general terms, however, there was a distinct lack of effort by the Project to generate commitment by 'ordinary', local people in its affairs; a decision ultimately resting on a question of priorities set by the Project's workers and as such its work cannot De judged outside the parameters which it set for itself.

Clearly the under-use of E.Y.C.P. facilities during the day is partially a consequence of the lack of involvement of local people in the management of the Project which 'prevents' demands being made on these premises. In contrast, the Project has been quite adept at securing the use of other premises for its use.

Inter-locking relationships

The opportunities developed by the E.Y.C.P. have been a consequence of carefully thought through decisions to ensure that provision for both young and old in Ely remains inter-connected with a sense of continuity and purpose (see diagram below). Most initiatives bear some reciprocal relationship to others, serving three main purposes:

- information and publicity, any one initiative can heighten the awareness of participants to others
- continuity, which may be a product of effective information and publicity
- to ensure that the work of the E.Y.C.P. maintains a high profile in order to attract participation by members of the community.

Control

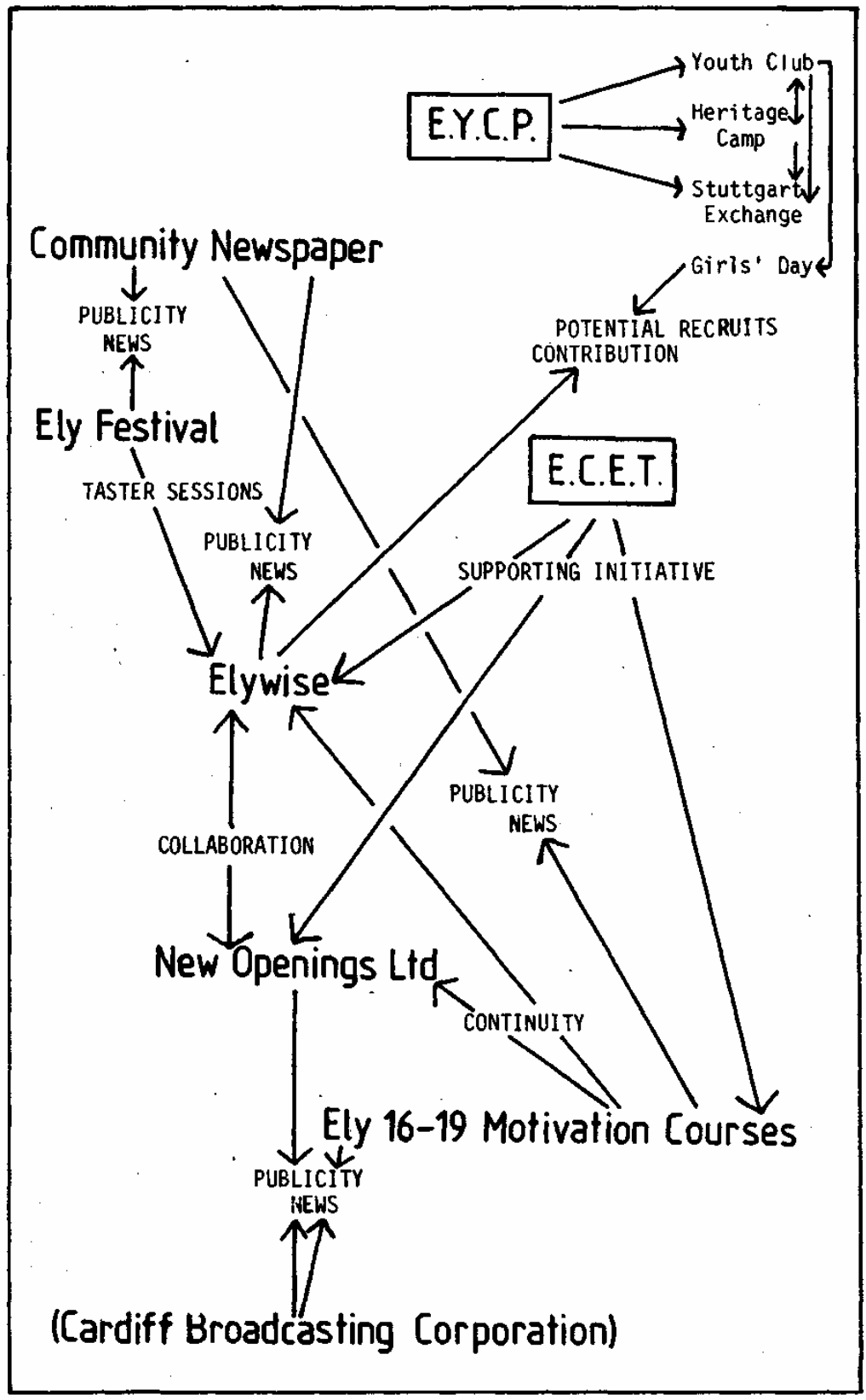
It is a popular view to dismiss any attempt at constructive intervention in the lives of young people as a subtle attempt at control. Controlling youth is, without doubt, one of the major rationales for intervention, but its centrality in the various justifications for intervention varies accordingly with the type of intervention envisaged. Participation in the work of the E.Y.C.P. is essentially a matter of personal choice, qualified perhaps at times with an element of professional 'encouragement', and the Project has attempted where possible to respond to the voiced desires of the young people involved.

To connect such initiatives too closely to the question of 'diverting' young people from delinquency or reducing criminality is to follow a false trail. That is not to say that the Project has not succeeded in so doing, but that this should be seen as a by-product, rather than a central component, of its work.

Conclusion

The development and expansion of social, recreational and educational provision under the auspices of the E.Y.C.P., arising out of the efforts of a small band of committed professionals working together and organised around a modest youth and community Project, is no mean achievement. The research set out to examine and evaluate one particular style of youth and community work; this report has attempted to communicate the central issues concerning policy, practice and provision which have come to light as a result, in a concise style. We hope that our work will have some practical benefit to those with an interest in youth and community work and arouse some debate within the spheres of policy-making.

THE INTER-LOCKING RELATIONSHIPS OF SELECTED YOUTH AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVES



6

RESEARCH ISSUES

RESEARCHING YOUTH & COMMUNITY WORK

some notes on evaluation

Introduction

The evaluation of community-based agencies and interventions has always presented core dilemmas for researchers (see P. Marris and M. Rein, Dilemmas of Social Reform, Penguin 1972). A recent short account of the issues and questions concerning such evaluation can be found in W. Peek and D. Smith, Value Judgements, National Youth Bureau 1984.

Youth ,and community work is far removed from the controlled setting of the scientific laboratory. 'Objective' criteria for evaluation are probably non-existent and, as a result, a whole range of judgements have to be made about 'relevant' criteria and methodology which are always vulnerable to challenge. Here we provide some notes on the problems, dilemmas and tensions we encountered in our attempt to 'evaluate' the work of the Ely Youth and Community Project.

Early dilemmas

Definitional problems

1) What exactly was the 'Ely Youth and Community Project'?
   - a formal organisation developing community work in Ely?
   - a collectivity of professionals concerned with community work?
   - an umbrella under which professionals might group for specific ends?
   - an organisation responsible for implementing specific forms of provision for young people and the community?
   - something else?
   - some combination of the above?
2) What exactly was its purpose?
3) On what aspects of the Project's work should the research focus its attention?

Competing expectations

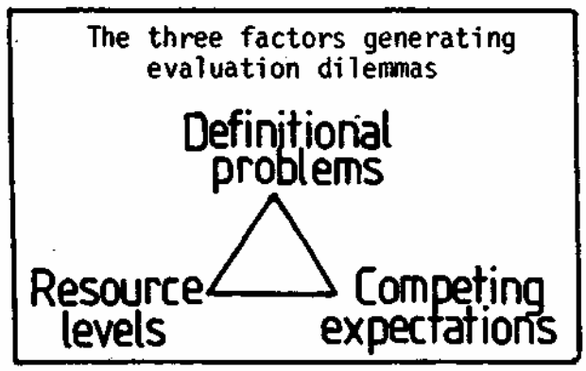
Different groups and individuals associated with the research had different conceptions of the purpose of the research. These were further complicated by their different ideas about how the 'Ely Youth and Community Project should be defined and about appropriate methods of 'evaluation'. Two areas of tension in particular emerged:

- was the research primarily to serve the needs of local practice or to convey methods and principle and issues concerning this practice to the wider field?
- if the research was about improving local practice, how broadly could or should it focus: individuals from different professional groups (social work, probation, police as well as youth work) expressed hopes that it would inform their practice in the area

Resource levels

There are real dangers arising from being over ambitious in an attempt to 'please all camps'. The research project had limited human and financial resources and therefore had to ensure that any research programme agreed on could be undertaken within these limits.

These three factors are closely related. Greater resources, for example, might permit the adoption of a broader definition of the 'Project' and/or a response to a wider set of expectations. The three factors therefore have a triangular relationship with each other: a change in one can affect either or both of the others.



'Relevant' evaluation

Evaluation - somehow - judges the way a community agency works according to the purpose it has set for itself. There is little point in criticising an agency for not doing what it never intended ! That is a different issue from evaluation. It was therefore necessary to pin down the aims and objectives of the Ely Youth and Community Project.

Creating a workable research design

The literature on evaluation suggests a spectrum of possible strategies, ranging from highly sophisticated to apparently quite ad hoc approaches. The former leave little scope for flexibility and responsiveness (and often assume vast resourcing); the latter often lack any system or framework at all. In the past 'scientific' approaches to evaluating the work of social/community agencies have been attempted, but it is now generally accepted that these are fallible on the following grounds:

- lack of controls
- few standardised measures
- doubts over the indices of evaluation
- insensitive research instruments
- selectivity
- subjectivity

a vested interest in the fate of the project

In the face of all this it has been suggested that all you can do is 'do your best' and 'hope good sense will prevail'. But this hardly informs the construction of a research design which takes account of the inherent problems of studying the processes and outcomes of youth and community work. 'Youth work', like the related fields of social work and education, reflects a complex social reality. For this reason we favoured a contextual or illuminative approach to evaluation.

Contextual evaluation

Contextual evaluation is concerned with description and interpretation. It recognises and promotes the interactive processes of social life. It represents an exploration- (a contemporary history) of one particular form of social intervention:

> "The whole process - the false starts, frustrations, adaptations, the successive recasting of intentions, the detours and conflicts - needs to be comprehended. Only then can we understand what has been achieved, and learn from that experience-----
> Even though no one ever again will make exactly the same journey, to follow the adventures of the projects offers a general guide to the dangers and discoveries of their field of action" (Harris and Rein op cit, p.260)

Contextual evaluation attempts to unravel and make sense of the complex scene under observation as a result of submersion in and familiarisation with its day-to-day reality. Its goal is a 'holistic understanding' of all aspects of a project's operation, including:

- an examination of its history
- its development of 'treatments' or 'interventions'
- its organisation and management
- the social and economic context in which it operates
- descriptions of those who participate
- accounts of the perceptions of different actors involved

The data on which such evaluation is constructed will be collected from four main sources:

- observation (often through participation)
- interviews
- questionnaires
- documentary and background sources

Such an approach needs to be flexible to allow for 'progressive focussing' on issues which may emerge as of particular significance (to whom?) during the, research.

Some key issues (arising from this approach)

Relationships

Such an approach to evaluation requires close involvement with the field. There is a risk that the 'independence' of the researcher(s) may be compromised. Clearly, trust and credibility are crucial features of successful illuminative evaluation, which depends so much on interpretation. But the roles of the researcher(s) in relation to the 'subjects' of the research need to be clarified and specified at an early stage.

Collaboration

Contextual evaluation demands that the research is conducted on a 'participative principle' on which the researchers regularly consult with research subjects over the progress of the research.
But such collaboration does not and should not imply a denial of expertise: researchers have a duty to perform their research task seriously, just as practitioners (teachers, social workers, youth workers) are expected to practice with professional expertise.
The essence of collaboration lies in the sharing, cross-communication and cross-fertilisation of two equally valued forms of expertise.

Reciprocity

Beyond collaboration lies reciprocity, implying a more active part on both sides, overtly actually contributing to the work of the other though often implicitly (and intentionally) building credibility, trust and support for oneself. In a sense, it is building up 'credit' which may be 'drawn on' at a later date.

Such reciprocity may be both personal and professional, though one may reap benefits for the other. However, in collaborative research there are already expectations concerning professional acts of reciprocity

since both sides should have agreed that active collaboration is mutually advantageous. Therefore building up 'credit' may depend upon personal acts of reciprocity.

Squaring such personal acts of reciprocity (such as 'helping out' on a playscheme) with the professional research task, though potentially beneficial, may also at times be problematic, possibly threatening the researchers' independence and jeopardising the positive effects of a collaborative venture (see Collaboration) by 'sucking' the researcher too far into the arena of practice.

The problems experienced

The need for time (to get acquainted with the context)

Practitioners often both expect and assume of researchers a degree of knowledge and expertise about all features of a project's work which is absurdly premature, if ever possible!

Researchers need time and space to 'acclimatise' themselves to the context they are studying.

Tensions arising from competing expectations

However much things are clarified early on, some tensions are likely to persist over matters such as:

- the precise ultimate aims of the research (who is it for?)
- the realism about what the research is likely to achieve
- the focus of the research during the research period

However eclectic a start, researchers will inevitably, if slowly, establish priorities and a sense of direction which may well generate conflicts of interest between those associated with the research project.

Catch 22?

Researchers can't win! A distanced, 'ivory tower' approach generates accusations about a failure to grasp the complexity 'on the ground'. A close, collaborative but critical approach generates accusations about being 'too close to the action'[1] and consequently 'too subjective'. A collaborative venture places researchers in a somewhat invidious Catch 22 situation. The researcher's role is, of course, to identify and highlight successful working practices but it is also to examine operation critically. Such criticism may be hard to take, especially when it comes from individuals (the researchers) who do not have to face the everyday problems of doing the work. Ironically, practitioners may be most desperate to reject or devalue criticism which comes from researchers close enough to the field to have been sensitised to the 'critical' issues. The means by which practitioners may most effectively resist such criticism is to deny its validity, which implicitly simultaneously challenges the researchers' competence. And by challenging the competence of the researchers, by questioning the approach and methods adopted, the disputed issue is subtly (and sometimes not so subtly!) shifted away from practice to 'research'.

The paradox is that the collaborative venture, which was premised upon a desire to bring together the strengths of both 'practice"[1]" and 'research' becomes a denial of the right of research to question practice through the challenging by those in practice of the appropriate methods of research.

Getting 'sucked in'

A close relationship between research and practice may reap many benefits but also creates a problem in drawing boundaries. 'Mucking in' and 'helping out' by researchers may not only contribute to the construction and maintenance of positive relationships (see Reciprocity) but may also be seen by the researchers as an important component of the illuminative exercise. The researcher engaged in illuminative evaluation is not constrained by 'fixed rules'.
But the researcher may sometimes face pressure to take an active role in practice. There is, of course, a delicate balance between emphasising a discrete research role and working on the 'participative principle . However, to avoid getting disproportionately 'sucked in' to everyday practice, it must be the researcher's decision to become involved, and this must be respected.

Handling disagreement: reciprocity, feedback and interpretation

The 'findings' of an illuminative evaluation rest upon, hopefully, carefully weighed interpretations following the dissemination to 'significant others' of draft ideas, consultation and feedback. A key problem for researchers is how to handle fundamental disagreement with one's arguments or conclusions. While, of course, one must accord any feedback due respect, it is also necessary for the researcher to retain integrity and not simply bow to pressure and revise 'findings' according to either individual or collective 'preferences'. There is bound to be a tendency for research 'subjects' to press for a more favourable interpretation of critical research findings. At times, persuasive evidence and/or argument may indeed 'swing' the case; at other times, however, re-interpretation cannot be justified. Researchers carrying out collaborative, interpretive research need to recognise the potentially compromising nature of the situation they are in and, while they should be quite prepared to engage in sensitive negotiation, they must also maintain a firm and strong-willed stance as and when this seems to be necessary on the basis of the data acquired.

Confidentiality

Research confidentiality (commonly promised to research subjects) is rather different from the professional principle of confidentiality as it applies, for example, in social work. When research subjects are in welfare professions, the meaning of research confidentiality needs to be very clearly spelt out in order to avoid confusion and negative repercussions. Research confidentiality offers to subjects a level of anonymity which prevents their identification while still permitting the analysis and dissemination of their (collective) views and opinions (and/or facts about them). Otherwise the exercise of seeking information through surveys, interviews or observation would be quite pointless. Confidentiality in social work is a far more absolute concept. The two must be carefully distinguished.

CONCLUSION: the limits and achievements of this study

1. We were concerned with evaluating the work of the Ely Youth and Community Project on its own terms (though there still remained some conflict about the precise meaning of these terms)

2. We were concerned with the forms, methods and rationale of the interventions made by the Project in the lives of young people and the community and the reactions to these interventions by 'significant others' (young people, local people, local professionals)

3. We employed a variety of methods in order to 'illuminate' the processes, practices and perceptions of the Project's work: participant observation, scrutiny of records, observation, interviews and surveys. The precise method we adopted in order to explore different issues depended upon

    - our judgement about the appropriateness of a particular method
    - the feasibility of applying a particular method to a particular context
    - the cost in time and money of adopting a particular method

4. What emerged clearly was that the Project developed various forms of innovative practice based on carefully thought through assessments of the needs of particular groups in the community, though perhaps at the expense of more routine, mundane forms of youth and community provision

5. We failed at times to get direct access to the people, events and documentary material that we desired, which placed limits on what we considered to be an 'ideal' research strategy

6. We established priorities for study with which some would disagree.
   These concerned

    - relationships and service delivery
    - actual provision as illustrations of the potential and constraints of inter-professional effort

7. What do we feel that such an evaluation has achieved?

    - it can provide an account of one method of attempting to develop an inter-agency approach to working with young people and the community, and the problems which may arise in such an attempt
    - it can demonstrate how a concerted youth and community Team (and inter-agency) approach to specific youth and community needs can generate pioneering, innovative practice, despite numerous obstacles and various forms of resistance

On a 'lower' level, this evaluation can also

- make a contribution to understanding the relationship between research and practice in collaborative research (see Research and Practice)
- describe, in some depth, the range of services and interventions developed by the Ely Youth and Community Project, the reasons why they were developed, the issues which emerge of during the process of their development and establishment, and the responses of young people and local residents toward? them

But whose judgement counts?

Any researcher engaged in contextual evaluation would readily admit to close involvement and participation and concede to an emphasis on reflexivity and Interpretation.
There is no pretence to 'impartiality' or 'objectivity', but such researchers would usually claim to offer a balanced and meaningful account which has made concessions where feedback and criticism have appeared relevant and justified.
The value of such research ultimately rests on the readers' faith in the researchers' ability to provide such an account.

"The final product of an evaluation will come out of a field of competing interests, values and feelings. Its content will be determined by political, structural and emotional factors as well as by theoretical and methodological ones"
M. Key et al, Evaluation Theory and Community Work, Community Projects Foundation 1976.

Research and practice

In broad terms, .collaborative/reciprocal research may contribute to practice in the following ways:

- It may contribute to practice in the locality where the research is being done both
  - directly: through active discussion, the provision of relevant data, and the making of suggestions and recommendations in accounts of local interventions
  - indirectly: through raising or resurrecting (both implicitly or explicitly) issues which have been left unconsidered or neglected, thus creating a space for their fuller consideration
- It may contribute to practice in the wider youth and community field by providing models, frameworks and a basis for discussion for those contemplating similar initiatives elsewhere

In terms specific to the locality, we detected four ways in which our research contributed to practice:

- developmental: our reports on particular initiatives led to more intense consideration of the problems identified and attempts to modify such provision in order to resolve them
- policy formulation; our reports perhaps made a modest contribution to the ways in which those at policy level assessed decisions about funding various initiatives in Ely
- policy consideration and implementation our examination of Census data and the community profile we developed contributed to professional consideration of the effectiveness of current policy and formed the basis for discussion about how existing resources should be allocated and new initiatives developed
- policy evaluation: our research may be seen as having made a contribution to formal 'evaluation' of local initiatives, whether by funding bodies or local workers. The effort expended on particular initiatives was sometimes vindicated and sometimes questioned by the research: one would hope that our comments made some partial input to considerations of the value of these initiatives.

USING INFORMATION identifying need & community profiling

Introduction

There are numerous ethical and political implications concerning the identification of social need (see Michael Carley: Social Measurement and Social Indicators - Issues of Policy and Theory, London: Allen and Unwin 1981).However, community and youth workers, like others working in the community, often require some basis upon which to focus their efforts beyond 'hunches' and 'gut feeling'. Simply responding to 'voiced need' may lead to the neglect of the needs of the unconfident and inarticulate. One 'quick and dirty' method of developing a framework within which priorities may be discussed and determined is described below; it may perhaps also be considered as 'fast and practical'. Similar ideas are put forward in Winifred Stone's useful guide, Identifying Social Need (Children's Society Child Care Study Paper No.6, 1981)7

Method - the steps involved

1. Decide upon the groups or categories about which you are concerned

   - the elderly, young people, single parent families, the unemployed, the homeless

   Use Census data (Census Small Area Statistics) to provide some basic information by Enumeration District on these groups or categories

   - Local Authorities can often provide such information in a reasonably accessible form - both in raw numbers and as percentages of households or relevant populations

   *Be highly selective to avoid the problem of information overload - you are looking for indicators.

   Identify the Enumeration Districts (EDs) in which there are disproportionate concentrations of these groups or categories. This will involve a random value judgment concerning 'cut-off points and will depend on the norm for the patch: cut-off points need to be sufficiently low to include a reasonable number of EDs, but sufficiently high to distinguish areas of particular disadvantage

   for example, if unemployment averages 20% throughout the patch, look for EDs with 25%+, but pay special attention to EDs with 30%+

4. Get hold of a map of your area showing the Enumeration Districts. Map in such 'critical concentrations[1] to develop a picture of the distribution of groups and categories throughout the patch

   LAs should (?) be able to make these available

5. Identify those EDs which have clusters of such concentrations

6. Each ED will have a certain number of 'critical concentrations' of the groups and categories you have examined.
   It is useful to map in (using different colour pens) the numbers of 'concentrations' identified in each ED. This will help to locate the 'blackspots[1].

   if you have examined 12 indicators, you may wish to map in the exact number of concentrations in each ED. If you have looked at 20, it will be necessary to map in groupings of numbers of concentrations: 0-3, 4-6, 7-9, 10-12, etc.

7. Make another judgment, according to the degree of disadvantage on the patch, about an appropriate cut-off point to help identify 'critical clusters'

8. Group together those EDs which have 'critical clusters' which are adjacent.

9. Examine (and remind yourself) what these 'critical clusters' actually represent and what they start to suggest

   - they may start to suggest specific needs concerning young adults, teenagers, unemployment, children," single parents in various and distinctive combinations

10. Examine other Census data concerning these 'critical areas'

11. Construct tentative profiles of these 'critical areas'

12. Seek out other data which may be available and accessible concerning these 'critical areas'

    - YTS take-up/school leaving destinations
    - Probation caseloads
    - Adult literacy referrals
    - Social Services Child and Family involvement
    - Housing Dept. data

    **Much of the information which would be useful is strictly confidential and therefore technically inaccessible. A shared approach to profiling can provide sufficient "access[1] to such data while avoiding breaches of confidentiality

13. Examine the views and opinions of local people and local professionals about these 'critical areas' and the issues emerging about them

14. Existing provision: check on the provision which currently exists for these 'critical areas', with particular regard to provision for the groups or categories under consideration

15. Construct a detailed profile of these 'critical areas' , focussing on:

    - social /demographic composition
    - specific/distinctive characteristics
    - existing provision
    - PRIORITY AREAS OF UNMET NEED

16. CONSIDER IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

This process not only sharpens thinking about developing community provision but also produces a profile which may contribute to a persuasive case for additional funding to support new provision or an experimental initiative.

Issues

- It is often surprising how little knowledge practitioners have about the general or specific characteristics of the patch on which they work

- 'Community profiling' is an interactive process between numbers, percentages and perceptions. Interpretation and analysis can only stem from their inter-play

- 'Community profiling' has an enabling function; it offers a set of indicators (both quantitative and qualitative) which can contribute to thinking in a structured and systematic fashion about social need and developing appropriate responses

- Exactly what you do depends, obviously, on why you are doing it: WHAT ARE THE BASE-LINE ISSUES AND QUESTIONS YOU ARE SEEKING TO ADDRESS?

- There are three levels to consider in this process:

    - the potential sources of information
    - the relevance of information available
    - the interpretation of that information

- Most profiles will draw on a number of sources of data:

    - Census data and Small Area Statistics
    - Professional data - facts and views
    - 'Subject' data - facts and views
    - Provision data (professional, public and commercial)

Advantages

Using indicators in this way has certain advantages:

- it reduces the problem of information overload - indicators serve to classify and highlight the important aspects of policy problems and to identify target groups for service provision

- indicators can support or reject the idea that certain social problems have a spatial component

- indicators can be useful not only for constructing but also for evaluating policies and programmes

- indicators can provide a back-stop against which to assess ideas and demands about local provision from both local people and local professional workers. They offer a framework within which competing claims may be carefully weighed

Some problems

Using indicators cannot dictate the way forward: they should always be used carefully and cautiously, for the following reasons:

- indicators are often not the 'objective[1] guides they are presumed to be'. They can be ambiguous and should be constantly 'checked' against other data which may be available

- there will always be numerically more 'deprivation[1] outside critical geographical concentrations of deprivation

- Census data will always be, to some extent, out of date. Likely changes (in, for example, the demographic structure or unemployment rates) must be considered on the basis of known trends in the wider context

- Data will often not be strictly comparable. It may refer to different times, be based on different definitions, relate to different groups, etc. **Making sense of the 'patch will therefore demand some theorising beyond the data at hand

- there will always be fundamental ethical, political and ideological problems relating to resource allocation decisions and defining social need (see Carley op cit.)

Conclusion

The process of 'community profiling' cannot magically provide answers about how to determine priorities in areas of social need or in appropriate responses. What it can do, however, is to sharpen the thinking of those who work in the community about how they allocate their time and to whom they allocate it. Moreover, it provides a foundation upon which to construct local policies and practice which acts as a brake on 'crisis' and intuitive reaction. It is a suggestive process which allows for a more considered approach to social intervention.

RESEARCHING YOUNG PEOPLE

Introduction

In an attempt to describe some of the practical and personal aspects of researching young people, this account highlights some of the issues which have emerged from one experience rather than the detail of" the methods employed. It is concerned particularly with the processes involved in a door-to-door survey of 100 young people (in contrast to other research techniques such as participant observation or interviewing young people in group locations such as youth clubs).

The Survey

Access

In terms of gaining access to the names and addresses of the young people on whom the research was focussed (i.e. those involved at some point with the work of the Ely Youth and Community Project), there were no great difficulties. The Project's records were open to the research team, though some were incomplete. From these records, a sample had to be constructed.

Sampling

From the Project's records a list of 591 young people aged between 11 and 24 was compiled. Some individuals had been involved with the Project over several years. The sample was intended to give due weight to differential intensity of involvement. Consequently

- from those with a more intense history of involvement with the Project a sample was randomly selected
- from those with only limited contact with the Project a smaller sample was taken, again at random
- young men and young women were considered separately so that the sex ratio identified in the original list of 591 was reproduced in the final sample

The ease with which young people could be contacted and interviewed was unpredictable. A sample of 200 young people was constructed in such a way that, hopefully, at least 50 (later increased to 100) individuals could be interviewed successfully. If tracking down and interviewing proved relatively easy, further names could be drawn from the sample. In the event, 100 individuals were finally interviewed.

Issues

Getting through the door

Very few individuals who were contacted refused to be interviewed. Few interviews were conducted on the door step. In order to 'get through the door' and gain the confidence of the respondents any one of a number of approaches was adopted to allay their suspicions and misconceptions. Depending on the reaction of the respondent to the request for an interview and a quick assessment of the situation, the following strategies were employed:

- stress connections to the Ely Youth and Community Project or local youth clubs, dropping relevant names
- convey some knowledge of the area to appear less of an 'outsider[1]
- emphasise links with the University to increase one's anonymity and neutrality from the neighbourhood itself
- use professional status to provide a defence mechanism against instances of harassment and provocation (see below)
- strongly deny any links with social security, social workers, probation officers or the police!
- refer to other respondents in the neighbourhood to allay fears of being singled out
- request help in contacting prospective respondents to establish a degree of familiarity

It should be clear that such 'strategies' are often at different ends of a spectrum: the strategy adopted rests strongly on the researcher's immediate assessment of the presenting situation (and it may not always be accurate!}.

Two further 'ground rules' appeared to be important in order to gain a sufficient degree of acceptance:

- dress casually but avoid appearing unconventional
- accept hospitality (but to what extent - see below)

Asking the questions

Young people are open to many influences and may be subject to several forms of care and intervention. These may be confused in their minds. This makes the task of examining the perceptions and effects of one form of intervention both difficult for young people and, equally, for researchers. In this respect, the younger interviewees found some of the questions difficult to decypher and answer; as a result, it was sometimes necessary to offer reassurance and guidance by explaining and/or simplifying the questions.

Securing meaningful answers

The questions for the interview were pre-set but allowed for open-ended responses which were recorded verbatim. However, in some cases where the responses were especially vague and inarticulate, the respondents were probed (i.e. "Do you mean that.....?" or "Are you trying to say that.....?) so as to pinpoint exactly the meaning of the respondent's reply. With young people who often lack confidence, this is often the only way to avoid monosyllabic answers.

Getting out of the door

Accepting hospitality (i.e. a cup of tea) can help to create a relaxed atmosphere and establish a degree of rapport. But a key problem is where and when to draw the line. The researcher's task is to conduct the interview and then move on. Time spent accepting hospitality after the interview has been completed appears to be time 'wasted'. Yet disappearing too sharply may appear rude and may jeopardise future interviews if negative rumours about the researcher start to circulate. Having secured a respondent's co-operation, it may be important to spend some additional time discussing apparently 'irrelevant' things. This may not be obligatory but it is civil. 'Getting out of the door' is a delicate, and sometimes difficult process.

Diminishing returns

Of those in the sample who were not contacted, despite several return visits, the majority were either never at home or had moved house. This frustrating and time-wasting factor increased as the survey progressed and as the list of 'possibles' gradually diminished. It needs to be recognised that the amount of time spent tracking down the last few respondents can often greatly exceed the time taken to interview the majority of respondents.

Personal factors

The majority of respondents were young men. The researcher in this instance was a young woman. There were, as a result, occasions when there was a fine, and problematic, dividing line between 'persuasion1 and 'suggestion' when dealing with some of the male respondents. Some of the encounters with young men were made more difficult on two counts:

- in terms of coping with blatant sexism, hostility and harassment
- in terms of feeling trapped in the confines of the respondent's home

Casual appearance and age (being similar to those of many of the respondents) perhaps did little to counteract these problems whereas professional status (and different, 'posh1, accent) certainly did. But in general it was always difficult to predict how any of the interviews would develop - including potentially threatening situations - precisely because they developed from interactions which usually appeared quite harmless at the outset. Female researchers(in particular) must therefore remain constantly alert in these situations and be prepared for what are very often very subtle changes in the mood and context in which the interviews are taking place.

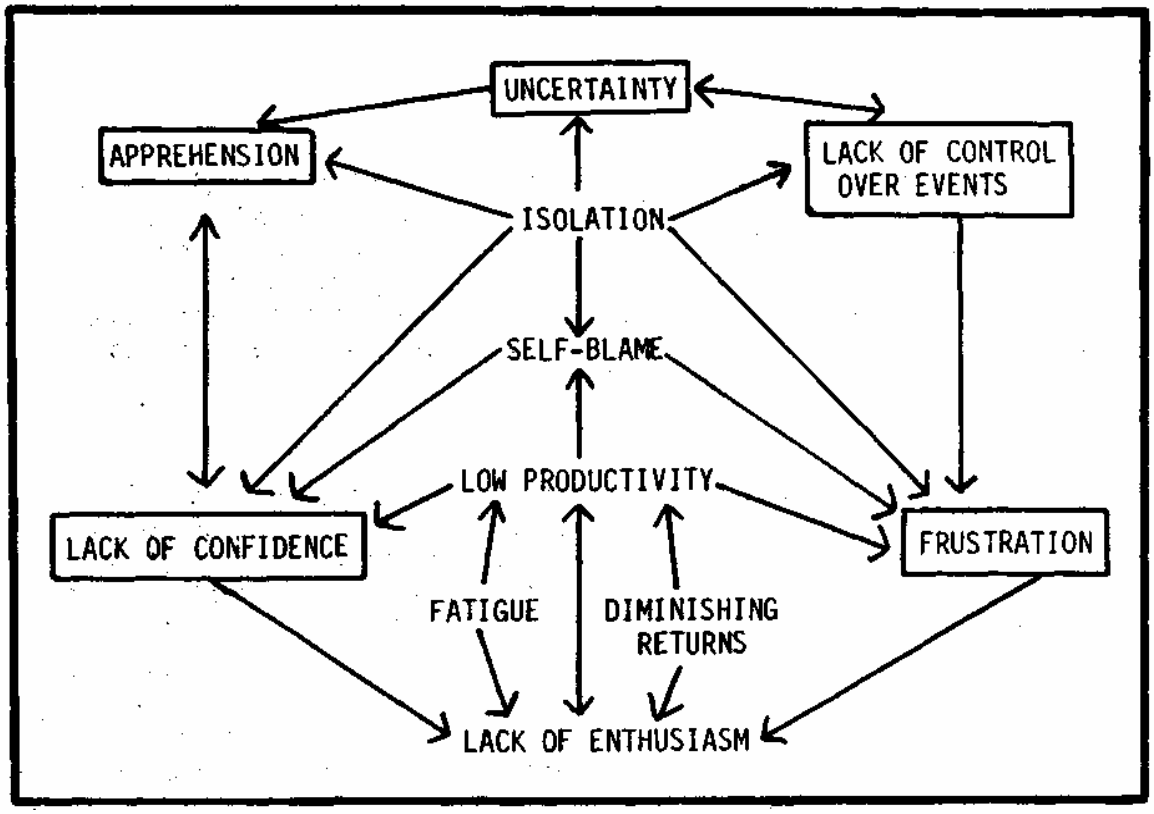
Personal reflections

Being out on your own

Door-to-door surveys create very artificial situations. Even the monotony and, repetition of - and the growing experience arising from - knocking on door after door did not reduce the associated apprehensions: apprehensions which were largely unfounded but which were always in the back of one's mind. They were related to

- confidence, a vital psychological tool, but one which can fail at the critical instant
- uncertainty, arising from never knowing whether the pattern which is developing will suddenly be jolted in a different direction

Uncertainty was a major component of the entire exercise. This form of survey work is always likely to be very unpredictable. It is usually a very lonely task. Each day was different; each day had its results, failures and specific experiences. But the uncertainty attached to the work generated a series of related feelings which formed a kind of negative chain reaction or vicious circle:



The rewards

Of course, on a good day the cycle illustrated above could be reversed, creating a highly positive chain of reactions. However, the uncertainty and isolation remained fixed,-although in retrospect these factors which are associated with 'being out on your own' became, ironically, the primary source of rewards, in that the eventual outcome and achievements of the survey are largely the product of one's efforts alone.

Researching young people in a deprived urban setting proved to be a valuable learning experience. First hand experience of the living conditions of some of the most poverty-stricken families aroused feelings of surprise and horror! In addition, the conventional stereotypes associated with young people, based spuriously on notions of appearance, language and behaviour were directly challenged. This is hardly surprising in itself but nevertheless it remained difficult Whilst conducting the survey not to react to sub-conscious images and expectations. Moreover, the idiosyncratic nature of the experiences, attitudes and views of the young people in question did not match up to the prevailing generalisations.

Conclusion

Conducting a door-to-door survey on young people can be a demanding and complex task, in that there is a strong but unpredictable relationship between the social, psychological and physical factors at play. This account has tried to extract and convey some of those practical issues which arose from one particular survey and, in addition, to present some of the personal rewards and problems experienced in the field.

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