



THE  
JUBILEE CENTRE  
FOR CHARACTER & VALUES

# Building Character in Young People

A frontline practitioner's perspective



# What is Youth Work?

- Youth work helps young people learn about themselves, others and society, through informal educational activities which combine enjoyment, challenge and learning.
- Youth workers work primarily with young people aged between 13 and 19, but may in some cases extend this to younger age groups and those aged up to 24. Their work seeks to promote young people's personal and social development and enable them to have a voice, influence and place in their communities and society as a whole.
- Youth work is underpinned by a clear set of values. These include young people choosing to take part; starting with young people's view of the world; treating young people with respect; seeking to develop young people's skills and attitudes rather than remedy 'problem behaviours'; helping young people develop stronger relationships and collective identities; respecting and valuing differences; and promoting the voice of young people. (NYA website)



# Where we were...

*"The young people of today think of nothing but themselves. They have no reverence for parents or old age. They are impatient of all restraint. They talk as if they alone knew everything and what passes for wisdom with us is foolishness with them. As for girls, they are forward, immodest and unwomanly in speech, behaviour and dress."* Hesiod – Greek oral poet (8<sup>th</sup> Century BC)

*"The children now love luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority, they show disrespect to their elders....and are tyrants over their teachers."* Socrates (470-399 BC)



# Where we were...

The Youth Service is at present in a state of acute depression. All over the country and in every part of the Service there are devoted workers. And in some areas the inspiration of exceptional individuals or organisations, or the encouragement of local education authorities, have kept spirits unusually high. But in general we believe it true to say that those who work in the Service feel themselves neglected and held in small regard, both in educational circles and by public opinion generally. We have been told time and time again that the Youth Service is “dying on its feet” or “out on a limb”... No Service can do its best work in such an atmosphere. (Department of Education 1960)



# Where we were...

There was a concern about a significant growth in “adolescent and teenage delinquency” resulting in a perceived “youth problem” in society.

The Albemarle Committee was particularly concerned about '*a kind of selfishness which will not yield itself to any demand outside its own immediately felt needs*' (1960: 33-34).



# Positive for Youth

cross-government policy for young people aged 13-19 in England  
(published December 2011)

- Sets out the Government's vision for youth by bringing all its policies for 13-19 year olds together from across nine different departments (including the Department of Health, the Home Office, Department for Education and the Department for Communities and Local Government) .
- It focuses on the role of: young people, parents, carers and families, other adults, the media, businesses, teachers, youth workers, other professionals, local authorities, other commissioners and Government.
- It explicitly states the role of youth workers in “supporting young people’s personal and social development and helping them develop strong aspirations.”



# After the riots: the final report of the Riots Communities and Victim Panel

- In asking what it was that made young people make the right choice in the heat of the moment the Panel heard of the importance of CHARACTER.



# The importance of character education in shaping young people's sense of identity and belonging

- Focusing on developing character builds identity (who I am) and nurtures aspiration (what kind of person I would like to become).
- Good character brings its own personal reward as well as a benefit to others and wider society.
- Developing good character is a “good end in itself” and not simply a “means to an end.” As such it should be prized and promoted by Government and not used as a trojan horse to push other political agendas.
- Character education helps us appreciate the value of others and develop deep, meaningful relationships and a sense of belonging.
- Character is caught as much as it is taught. Good youth work shows what good character looks like and doesn't just say what it looks like.



# Give Thanks – Give Back

- Exploring the themes of gratitude (thankfulness) and service (making a positive contribution) in three schools – The International School, Shirestone Primary School and Blue Coat C of E School.
- The project will explore how *identity* and *belonging* can help contextualise gratitude and service. Focus on gratitude will critically explore what influences – historical, social, biological, cultural and religious - have positively shaped young people’s sense of identity and belonging; and the tangible ways these can be “given thanks for”, promoted and celebrated through young people “giving back” to their local community.



# Give Thanks – Give Back

- The project will be filmed throughout and a final documentary produced which will be shown at showcase events and also on the Jubilee Centre website.
- The project will aim to demonstrate a rise in the number of young people volunteering their time to make a positive contribution in their school and local community.

