

# TOO OLD TO BE YOUNG



Discussion Paper One

## **WHY WORK WITH YOUNG ADULTS ANYWAY?**

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That Youth Service has turned its back on Young Adults as an identifiable group with different but demanding needs is evident to anyone visiting youth clubs these days.

No Noise? The need to work with Young Adults is not so obvious as the need to work with younger children who express themselves by their banging on the doors of youth clubs for attention. The evidence requiring a response from Youth Service from Young Adults is perhaps the lack of noise - the absence of expectation.

17, 18 and 20 year olds can no longer relate to the services offered: they relate to a different culture and to different norms than those provided by existing youth provision.

Processed? At present there seems to be a greater pre-occupation with what Young Adults have to offer the service than with what the service can offer Young Adults.

It is not enough to see work with Young Adults as training material, turning "Senior Members" into "Junior Leaders". It is **not acceptable to assume that all those who have turned their back on present Youth Service facilities have no needs of their own.** Processing the few remaining "Seniors" in the Club to become 'conscripts in an army of social control' is dangerous, and not just for those they seek to control. It is confusing too for the Young Adults themselves to have their youth extended, and their identity as adults obscured and difficult to find.

New Status The goal in working with Young Adults should be to enable them to face up to and cope with the demands their new status makes of them.

Youth Service should facilitate a young person's discovery of self; it should develop self-determination.

Youth Service is always setting itself new objectives, but the greatest real change in recent years has been the way the service has turned the majority of its attention to the younger age group and left only isolated pockets here and there of work with Young Adults.

Commercial Competition Many Young Adults have moved on, or been chased away, from Youth Service and disappeared from the notice and the conscience of those who set themselves up as caring agencies. They turn to the commercial world which is neither caring nor takes responsibility other than that required by law, and they are often left feeling dissatisfied and depressed. These Young Adults go to the commercial world in search of facilities and recreational activities which symbolise an adult culture. Youth Service should offer to the young worker what the student organisations offer the young academic.

Power on Demand Young people demand and have a right to expect a say in the formation of society around them, but they need help and information. If we are to give young adults power over themselves as individuals - in local community groups, local councils and national government, they need a political education. They need to know about their rights to housing, education, employment and welfare, to name but a few. Young Adults have a right to be represented and Youth Service has a moral obligation to enable them to make their own decisions.

#### QUESTIONS FOR DEBATE

1. *If the oldest members in your club are 16, does that mean that those who have left have no need for you as a youth worker?*
2. *If there are no Young Adults in youth clubs, where are they?*
3. *Who benefits from using "Senior Members" as "Junior Leaders"?*
4. *Are there benefits in providing a separate programme for older members in youth clubs?*
5. *Does school-based youth work lend itself to working with Young Adults?*
6. *What sort of resource material is necessary for workers with Young Adults? Is there enough available?*
7. *Do your premises lend themselves to the sophistication required by Young Adults?*
8. *Is it sufficient to see Young Adults provision as an extension to the Junior Youth Club?*
9. *Should Youth Service try to compete with the commercial world?*
10. *Are there advantages or disadvantages in providing alcohol in a club for Young Adults?*

## "TOO OLD TO BE YOUNG" -

### A SERIES OF LOCAL DEBATES

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF YOUTH CLUBS wants to encourage open discussion and action on work with the over 18's. A number of people have been working together with NAYC to produce background material which is available to stimulate debate and the following have volunteered to assist any local events to achieve debate and action with this important age group:

**PAT BARRY & RAM BOLTON** - Full time workers at Chestnut Lodge, an ILEA statutory youth provision opened in 1975 and designed to meet the social and recreational needs of young adults.

**LINDA FIRSHT** - Staff members at West Central Jewish Centre, London - an independent agency primarily concerned with community development vis-a-vis helping people find resources and activities meaningful to themselves in a Jewish Community context.

**KEITH PULLMAN** - Community Education Organiser working with Young Farmers Clubs and young adults throughout Oxfordshire. YFC have within their membership a large proportion of young adults and place considerable emphasis on membership involvement.

**JOHN L. HUNTER** - County Youth and Community Officer, Isle of Wight (ILEA Centres plus voluntary centres). Previously Bristol and Wiltshire.

**BERT JONES** - Course Tutor for new two-year Diploma Course in Youth and Community Work, commencing at Cartrefle College Wrexham in September - an emphasis on working with 18+ age group will be a feature of the course content. Previously full-time Youth Worker in South Wales - 7 years - working especially with older age group.

**GEORGE RUDDOCK** - District Youth & Community Officer, Liverpool Education Authority. Previously Senior Youth Worker of 18 - 30 Club in inner London.

If you feel there is a need in your area to call together workers concerned with over 18's, please contact JANET HUNT at: NAYC, P.O. Box 1, Blackburn House, Bond Gate, Nuneaton, Warwickshire CV11 4DB, who will try to arrange a local seminar with you, with the assistance of the nearest resource person to your area.

## "TOO OLD TO BE YOUNG" -

### A SERIES OF DISCUSSION LEAFLETS

This is the first of a series of leaflets edited by Janet Hunt of NAYC. Paper Two deals with "The Needs of the Young Adult" and Paper Three gives an example of "Programme Development". Other topics include "The Role and Needs of the Worker" and discussion of where responsibility for working with this age group lies.