

At the sharp end

tales from the field

Heard the one about the youth worker and the magical mystery tour?

Once upon a time, long before Oakwood Leisure Park was a twinkle in its proprietor's eye, a group of youth club members in West Wales asked their Youth Worker to arrange a trip in Porthcawl Funfair. Never one to say 'no' the worker set about hiring a self-drive minibus and advertising the event. He was requested by the Management Committee to ensure that all monies were collected well before the trip. A week prior to the excursion the worker was asked if all the seats had been booked and monies collected 'Oh yes, I've had to start a reserve waiting list and I'm expecting all the money by Monday evening.'

On the Wednesday the same question attracted a similar response, except the money was promised by Friday - the day before the trip.

On Saturday morning a colleague decided that he should 'pop down' the Centre to wish the group bon voyage. Sitting on the step were four members - two couples to be exact. Asked where the other members were, they cautiously explained that there were no other participants - lots of excuses had reduced the group to four (three of whom had their 'fare' in hand). But they were pleased to announce that a part-time worker had been persuaded to fill one of the vacant seats.

At 8.00am the bus and youth worker arrived. The part-time worker rounded the corner and all six set off for Porthcawl.

By 10.00am the Big Wheel and Roller Coaster were in sight. 'We'll meet back at the bus at 11.30am' said D (oops, I nearly let his name slip). Reconvening after one and a half hours, 'D' asked if they had enjoyed their time in the funfair 'Oh yes' was the unanimous response. 'Well' said 'D', 'we're not too far from Bristol; have you been to Bristol Zoo?'.... 'No' they all replied. 'Would you like to go?'.... 'Yes' they replied.

So off they went to Bristol Zoo arriving around 1.00pm. 'We'll meet again here at the entrance at 3.00pm' said 'D'.

Again at the appointed time they were addressed with the same interrogation - did they enjoy it etc. 'Well' said 'D' (it was no secret that he was a 'Brummie'), 'I don't think it's as good as Dudley Zoo, have you been there?' Again a negative response triggered the inevitable 'would you like to go?'

So off they went to Dudley all mutually agreeing that they were having a jolly good day out for only £3! By the time they arrived at Dudley there were only two hours remaining before closing time (the zoo that is), so they agreed to meet at the main gates at 7.30pm.

Again at the appointed time the weary travellers were posed the same questions which resulted in many synchronised nods and 'yeses'. 'Do you know' said 'D' 'it's the last weekend of the Blackpool Illuminations. Have you ever seen them?' No prizes for guessing the response and subsequent outcome.

Blackpool has always held a mystique for those young people living in the most rural parts of West Wales.

By midnight the worker back at base was receiving irate phone calls from parents asking why the 5.00pm scheduled ETA had not materialised. Apparently, by 1.00am on the Sunday the one parent who was on the telephone had been mandated by her daughter to visit the other parents and inform them of the change in itinerary.

At 7.00am on the Sunday morning the 'Porthcawl bound' party returned from their expedition, thoroughly exhausted but claiming their right to be first on the list for the next trip.

Question: - Was this a good piece of youth work practice?

Do you have a humorous youth work story to tell? If so, Ymlaen would like to hear from you. Contact Liz Sharp at the address on page two.