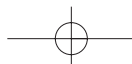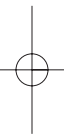# Passing Time

A report about young people
and communities

**Laura Edwards and Becky Hatch**
December 2003

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The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) is the UK's leading progressive think tank and was established in 1988. Its role is to bridge the political divide between the social democratic and liberal traditions, the intellectual divide between academia and the policy making establishment and the cultural divide between government and civil society. It is first and foremost a research institute, aiming to provide innovative and credible policy solutions. Its work, the questions its research poses and the methods it uses are driven by the belief that the journey to a good society is one that places social justice, democratic participation and economic and environmental sustainability at its core.

# Contents

## Acknowledgements

IPPR would like to thank the Gatsby Charitable Foundation for supporting the Communities programme. Other titles in the series include *Making Sense of Community* (Nash 2003) and *Reclaiming Community* (Nash and Christie 2002).

We would also like to thank all of the young residents of Tile Hill who got involved in the project, in particular: James, Jimbob, Naidene, Laura, Danny, Kelly, Jamie, Haydn, Hollie, Stacey, Lisa, Kayleigh and Sam. We are also grateful for help and guidance from: Colin Bell, Frances Porter and Matt at Frontline AV; Faye Donely, Jackie Fox and Laura Thompson at South West Area Co-ordination in Coventry; Hillary Snell and Yvette Adhami at the Youth Service; and Elin Stefansson at the National Children's Bureau. In the course of the project we were also grateful for the opportunity to speak to a range of other services providers and to attend meetings of local partners working to deliver services for young people.

Thanks also to Liz Kendall, Sue Regan, Nick Pearce, Kate Stanley and Martin Johnson at IPPR for their helpful comments and guidance.

## About the authors

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# Executive Summary

**This is a report about young people and communities. It explores how young people talk about their community and the activities and support they want to see provided out of school. It starts by focusing on young people in just one neighbourhood and ends by using their experiences to look at how well teenagers are provided for across England. It argues that providing good services and activities for teenagers is vital for building strong communities that feel safe, vibrant and supportive for everyone.**

## Key findings:

**Messages from Government about young people can be confusing.** At times young people are pictured as empty vessels waiting to be filled with useful information and skills in order that they may be productive in their adult life. At times they are depicted as vulnerable and in desperate need of protection. And at times they are characterised as thugs and potential thugs whose actions infringe on the rest of the community. The message of Government policy – whether it comes from the Department for Education and Skills, the Children and Young People's Unit or the Home Office – needs to add up. It must be underpinned by the notion that young people are many things but we are interested in them not just because they will be adults one day in the future but because they have rights now and deserve good services and support.

**Early intervention is vital – but so too are 'later' interventions.** There is growing consensus around the role and value of early intervention in improving children's life chances and reducing inequalities. Early intervention must be complemented however by 'later' interventions for young people in their teens. By the time young people reach their teens the job of interrupting a cycle of, for example, poor attainment, problem behaviour or low self-esteem may be harder and less appealing than a 'fresh start' with younger children, but the job is no less important. Encouraging young people to aspire to achieve more and enabling them to tackle the issues and problems they face in their teens must be seen as part of a continuing process of improving life chances and tackling social inequality. Without raising the stakes communities can become defined by a group of young people with little sense of their capacity to change either their area or the opportunities open to them.

**Provision for teenagers can be patchy, unreliable and inconsistent.** Providing activities and opportunities for young people consistently tops public opinion polls when people are asked what they would most like to see improved in their area. Activities for young people have come to symbolise a solution to many of the problems that communities face including crime and safety, drink and drugs and anti-social behaviour. On the ground however services and activities for young people often fall short of public expectations.

**Modern youth clubs that combine activity with support and advice are in short supply.** No national strategy is in place to revive the often tired and out-of-date centres that are currently available and in use. There is a need for the modern, social and friendly spaces that young people want. The Kids' Clubs Network 'Make Space' campaign is making good progress in this area and sets out a positive vision of what a youth club should aim for. However, Make Space alone is not enough to effect the sea change in provision for teens that is needed. Funding and staffing are both major issues. Funding can be short term and project-specific or simply not enough. There are already concerns about where the new money promised by Government for the Youth Service is to come from. The increase also comes after years of under-funding. In terms of staffing, recruiting skilled youth workers can be difficult, particularly to work in communities which are in real need.

**New types of professionals are needed who can apply a range of skills and knowledge when working with young people.** These will be people who can gain the trust and confidence of a young person and have a range of options available to support them. If the focus of youth work is primarily on increasing educational achievement or on providing diversionary activities to keep young people out of trouble there is a danger that the underlying causes of low expectations and problem behaviour are not tackled head on. A new profession might combine youth and community work, social work, adolescent mental health services and careers services to provide more holistic services for young people. This is a role that is filled to an extent by social educators on the continent. Connexions personal advisers were developed with the vision of a more rounded service in mind yet, in its early years, evidence suggests that education and work goals are prioritised above social and emotional support. Whether it can achieve a more rounded service in the future is unclear. Part of the challenge is in breaking down professional boundaries (for example between the Youth Service, Connexions and social care providers) and recognising the shared agenda of supporting young people.

**Young people need a stronger voice in communities and in the provision of good services.** Young people need to feel part of their community and take responsibility for both its problems as well as its assets. However they often feel that they are typified as a problem, a nuisance or simply not a priority. Perceptions of young people as perpetrators of anti-social behaviour need to be tackled head on. Most young people do not commit crime and want to tackle

anti-social behaviour as much as other members of their community. There is scope to experiment with new relationships and dialogues between young people, the police and other service providers to develop local level solutions to anti-social behaviour. Developing roles for young people as managers, advisers, governors, auditors, fundraisers and volunteers in community level services should also be a priority. There is also scope to develop civic service for young people; pilot projects like the Young Volunteer Challenge launched by the DfES are to be welcomed.

**There is some way to go to develop policies and services that add up to a serious commitment to young people, not just in their early years but well into their teens.** A 'Sure Progress' or 'Sure Futures' programme for teenagers would echo the Sure Start model and could be a way of building momentum and commitment to providing consistent and effective support, intervention and activities for teens. Such a programme would emphasise the need to tackle the root causes of why young people can underachieve and see themselves on the periphery rather than at the heart of communities. This might include problems at home, drink and drug use, bullying, depression or peer pressure. A 'Sure Progress' of 'Sure Futures' programme would combine activity with a range of support, advice and interventions, potentially including a role for parenting support for parents of teens.
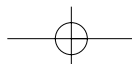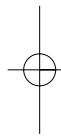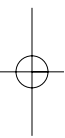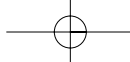
# Introduction

*'I bet all of this lot, in two years time, will be in prison.'*

*'We just want somewhere to go where we can feel safe.'*

*'I'm bored by my own boredom.'*

**The range and quality of services and activities provided for young people is important not just for young people but for the community as a whole. When young people have safe spaces to play in and hang out; well-maintained and affordable facilities to use; activities to take part in; good quality support services to turn to; and good schools to go to, then their communities are also likely to feel safe, vibrant and supportive for everyone.**

This study takes a step back from the national picture. It focuses attention on just one community, Tile Hill in Coventry, and uses it as a lens through which to learn wider lessons about what is and isn't working for young people and communities. The project involved working with young people at a neighbourhood level over a month in Summer 2003. IPPR and a local youth arts project worked with young people to help them articulate the issues they faced and what they wanted to see change in their community. The output of the project is a 12-minute film made by young people, *Tile Hill Uncovered*, in which young people tell their story in their own words.

The report accompanies the film and gives a flavour of the issues, concerns and ideas that young people came up with for their community. It unpicks some of the problems facing the area and the role that young people play in communities. It then looks at national policy through the eyes of the young residents of Tile Hill. It uses their experiences to analyse national policy in detail and to ask the question: are we doing enough for young people?

The report confirms many of the things that are already known about the provision of services for young people and adds to the existing body of research evidence and knowledge. It highlights that while new initiatives, such as Connexions, Positive Futures, Sure Start, Children's Centres and Positive Activities for Young People are underway, there is still a long way to go and many gaps to be plugged. Above all it shows that services for young people can lack continuity. Young people themselves tend not to think that they have something to rely on. Young people's hopes and ambitions are raised by the provision of activities and services one moment, only to be dampened not long after when funding runs out, services are remodelled or discontinued, or staffing problems emerge. There is a real challenge in

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developing a framework that allows services to engage with young people over a period of time and maintain their trust and interest.

The report also highlights the importance of sustained provision for young people. Providing support in the early years of a child's life is vital but is not an alternative to providing the same level of support and provision when they are older in their early and late teens. Early interventions need to be sustained and built upon. The report recommends that there is a need to think about new models for the provision of integrated services for young people, using the Sure Start experience as a guide. A type of 'Sure Futures' or 'Sure Progress' model could emerge which would combine health, social care, education and sport and arts activities for teenagers, potentially with parental support built in.

## Context

In *Making Sense of Community* (Nash with Christie, IPPR 2003) the role of provision for young people in supporting community was highlighted. Young people are often portrayed as 'hanging around' in public places. For some this is intimidating and can lead to public spaces being marked out as no-go areas, not just by older people but other young people too. The young people 'hanging around' are likely to say that they have nothing else to do, and if they hang around in numbers it's for their own safety too.

Doing right by young people is not a marginal concern. It is commonly recognised as a priority by the public. In a

recent MORI/Audit Commission[1] survey of over 2,000 adults, 'activities for teenagers' came top of the list of improvements most needed in people's local area. It came significantly higher than improving health, education and housing. This finding is not unique. In the 2002 – 2003 Survey of English Housing[2], 'opportunities for young people' again came top of the list of aspects people most wanted to see improved in their area. Provision for young people features ahead of crime and vandalism, education and health and even parking and public transport as an important local issue. This suggests that providing activities for young people is seen not just as an end in itself. Activities for young people have come to symbolise a solution to other problems that communities face: crime and safety, drink and drug problems and the low aspirations and ambitions of young people.

Despite being a top priority for communities, investment in youth services has had a patchy past. The past few years however have seen a flurry of activity and greater investment by Government in provision for young people. This has been driven by multiple factors: an ambition to tackle poor educational achievement, a desire to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour, a commitment to reduce child poverty and to address the rise in mental health problems among young people. There is also an increasing body of evidence that stresses the importance of early intervention strategies to prevent or interrupt cycles of deprivation and low achievement. New initiatives and funding streams are coming through. Connexions, Sure Start, Positive Futures, Children's Centres and

the Children's Fund are just some of the flagship programmes introduced in recent years. Many, but not all, are focused on early intervention and working with children rather than teenagers.

This project is based on work with young people and local service providers carried out in Tile Hill in Coventry. Tile Hill is a fairly typical estate; 1950's council houses, mainly low rise but with a few high rise blocks in the process of being done up. The population numbers just over 6,000 people, predominantly white and with under-18s making up around a quarter of local residents. There is a parade of shops occupied by adult street drinkers and shoppers in the day, where young people hang out in the evenings. Unemployment is higher than the national average. There is a smattering of community and sports facilities that have seen better days. There are green spaces and woods around but safety is an issue. Money for new services and to tackle old problems is filtering into the area. It is one of Coventry City's Council's 'priority neighbourhoods'.

### Aims

In *Making Sense of Community* (Nash 2003), IPPR identified several key policy areas that have an important effect on community. These areas are: planning and development; provision for young people; crime reduction and policing; design and liveability of public space and methods of frontline service delivery. The aim of this project was to explore in more detail just one of these areas – provision for young people – and to continue using Coventry as a case

study for research[3]. Working with one group of people within a community, young people, the research focused on a number of key questions:

■ How involved do young people currently feel within their community?
■ What do they think of the opportunities, activities and services available to them?
■ How do young people interact with each other and with other residents and service providers?
■ What do young people want to see change in their community in the future?

The particular focus of the project was teenagers aged 13 to 19 and provision outside of mainstream education. Key service providers here are Youth Services and Connexions but delivery agents are far broader and include Sure Start (who will support teenager parents), the Library Service, voluntary and community groups, sports and leisure services, Youth Offending Teams and health and social care services.

### Methodology

It was important to identify a way of working with young people in Tile Hill that would be interesting to them. The process needed to engage young people in order to allow them to take the lead. A formal question and answer survey-based approach might only scratch the surface of their opinions. IPPR worked in partnership with Frontline AV[4] to make a film with the young residents of Tile Hill; a lasting account of their views on the area, its good and bad points and the things that they wanted to see happening that would make a difference. The

project worked mainly with teenagers, although the youngest participant was 10 and the oldest around 19. In order to build interest in the project and recruit young people to take part, IPPR and youth workers from Frontline AV spent three evenings walking around Tile Hill, talking to young people, telling them about the project and inviting them to get involved. It was felt important to find young people on their own turf and outside of school, not least in order to pick up those who were not attending school regularly. Those attending the youth club and those involved in a 'Busting Street Crime' initiative at the sports centre were also invited to take part.

A core group of around ten young people stayed with the project from beginning to end. Aged between ten and eighteen, taking part was a statement of their commitment to the community and desire to make it a better place. Many other young people appear in the film or were interviewed as part of the project, around 40 in total. Their views and ideas were recorded through interviews conducted by both the young film crew and Frontline AV and IPPR. Participants were informed about the purpose and nature of the project and were asked to give their consent to using their views and images in the final film. Selecting what was included in the final film was a sensitive process. Participants some-times revealed things on camera that they didn't want to reveal to a wider audience or which were likely to make them feel vulnerable or exposed if included. Some chose to be anonymous in the film by having their faces blurred. No financial incentive was paid to participants who took part in the film but each

evening session ended with food being provided. At the end of the project core participants were also given a certificate of achievement to thank them and recog-nise their contribution.

The project itself ran over four evening sessions, each lasting between 2 and 3 hours. Part of the time was used to show participants how to use the cameras and sound equipment and develop questions and topics to discuss on camera. The rest of the discussion was focused on key topics including: young people's role in the community; activities and opportuni-ties for young people; the state of the local environment; drink and drugs; and who they turned to for support. Discussions that began in one session were continued and developed in subsequent sessions. Many comments and experiences were also discussed away from the cameras when walking around the area or over food at the end of the filming session. This report also draws on observations of young people and their interactions with each other and with youth workers.

Using film was a way of getting young people interested in the process as well as an opportunity to record their views in their own words. It also gave some the opportunity to develop new skills. They took turns as camera crew, sound opera-tors and interviewers and responded to questions and ideas raised. They identi-fied places where they spent time and examples of what was good and bad about their area. They interviewed other young people, and some older residents, in the area. Their film explores how young people see themselves, their area and their interaction with other residents and service providers. It provides an account

of what they'd like to see change. The 12-minute film is ready to be used to both inspire and challenge local service providers and young people and adults in the community alike to create something better for the residents of Tile Hill.

This report complements the film. It puts the story of young people in Tile Hill back into the bigger picture. What goes on Tile Hill may be different to what goes on in other areas, a different mix of providers, funding, initiatives and people. But Tile Hill is not unique. Many of the issues facing the area are the same as those being grappled with in many other neighbourhoods. These include developing services that meet the needs of different residents and not just young people; competition for funding; a community which can be mistrusting both of service providers and of each other; community venues in need of repair; public transport that doesn't always match public need; anti-social behaviour and lack of staff to run community level provision. Tile Hill highlights lessons and problems in getting work with young people right that will resonate in many other areas.
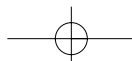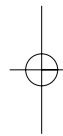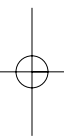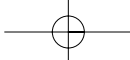
# *Section one:* Young people talking about community

**The issues raised as important by the young residents of Tile Hill will not surprise or shock. They are likely to be repeated in many neighbourhoods and estates across England. They confirm something that is known already; that services for young people and the provision of activities and opportunities can be patchy and unreliable. Telling this story will be important as long as this continues to be the case. This section of the report covers the detail of young people's views on their area. Subsequent sections put their account into the context of a wider analysis of how services for children and young people are being developed across England.**

Below are the main themes raised by young people in Tile Hill. These issues were raised in response to questions about what was good and bad about their area and how they felt young people were seen.

1. Lack of things to do
2. Drink and drugs
3. Safety
4. Negative perceptions of young people and anti-social behaviour
5. Poor state of the local environment

Each is discussed in more detail below.

## 1. Lack of things to do

Young residents consistently highlighted 'more things to do' as a priority. At the time of the fieldwork two main projects were running. The first was the Youth Service youth club for teenagers, running two evenings a week at one end of the estate. The youth worker had recently left and a replacement was being sought. The venue was not seen as attractive and some parents and young people considered it unsafe. The second was a range of sports and arts activities running one evening a week at the sports centre at the other end of the estate, run by the Coventry Sports Foundation. One-off projects have taken place in the past – go-carting and paint balling trips for

example – where short-term funding has been levered in by local service providers. Applications for similar trips are also in the pipeline, with young people themselves sometimes suggesting ideas and helping to write applications for money.

There are a number of green spaces available to play football and other games outside. Often these are close to houses and used as pathways and therefore can lead to young people getting in trouble with residents. Behind the youth club there is a sports court in need of repair that is no longer used. Funding has however been secured to do it up and young people are likely to see the benefits within the next year. The library was mentioned by some young people as a good place to go. They used it to do homework and revise for GCSEs.

Young people are most likely to be found in the evenings in different 'hotspots': the Jardine Crescent shops and woods nearby, the fish and chip shop on Beech Tree avenue or the grassland down by Gravel Hill. Others, often younger, simply gather at the corner of their road.

> *'All they [the Youth Service] do is stuff for people who are about ten.'*
> *'We're just playing football in the street and we get into trouble.'*

Those in their teens felt particularly hard-done by. They felt that they were too old for the activities put on by the youth club, but not old enough to go out to pubs and clubs in the city centre. Drinking, smoking and taking drugs in public spaces was for some the alternative option. They explicitly linked the lack of things to do with many of the other

problems in the area. For others, areas where young people gather in groups to drink and smoke become places to avoid or walk quickly through with your head down. Some were told by their parents to avoid particular areas.

> *'They hang around drinking because they've got nothing else to do.'*
> *'I reckon if there was more for teenagers to do, there'd be less crime, less litter, less underage drinking and drugs.'*
> *'We're just minding our own business, sitting on the wall smoking a bit of weed, we're not harming anyone.'*

The low level of youth work provision for young people in Tile Hill is exacerbated by mistrust between different groups of young people in the area. Young residents from the bottom end of the estate were unwilling to take part in projects and activities at the top end of the estate by Jardine Crescent. Different young people and groups of young people have a reputation that means that others stay away or choose to create their own 'safe' areas elsewhere. For those providing services and activities for young people this poses real problems. Attracting young people from all parts of Tile Hill to participate in a single project is difficult. Efforts to provide opportunities for young people can get diluted if they only reach a specific group of young people but exclude another who do not want to mix. In the process of making *Tile Hill Uncovered*, IPPR and Frontline AV had to film in three different areas in order to involve a wide as possible a range of young people in the project.

For the moment many young people in Tile Hill create their own amusement. For some this involving smoking and getting

drunk and high with their friends. For some this route seems the most obvious and inevitable option. For others it can mean that they feel less safe in their area and want a better alternative.

*'If they made a park or something then we wouldn't be hanging around.'*

**The national picture**

**"Providing young people with a safe place to go after school, and giving them real opportunities to engage in sport, the arts, volunteering and wider activities is a major priority for Government"**
**Tony Blair**

**6 out of 10 teenagers and 8 out of 10 parents think that there is not enough for teenagers to do in the area where they live**

**8 out of 10 15-16 year olds are dissatisfied with the quality of outdoor play facilities where they live**

**In 2000 – 2001 the typical local authority spent 1.15 per cent on youth services, a decrease on the previous year. The median spending per young person aged 13-19 in the same year was £60.45 . The new government target established in the Transforming Youth Work paper is to spend a minimum of £100 per head.**

**The most concerted effort to boost provision of modern spaces and youth clubs for young people is the Make Space Campaign, run by Kids Club Network with Nestle Trust funding. It aims to develop a network of contemporary, out of school clubs for young people aged 11-16. The campaigns' objective is to establish 3,000 Make Space clubs in England by 2015.**

Sources:
The Rt Hon Tony Blair, MP, Kids' Clubs Network annual review 2002
Nestle Family Monitor *Make Space for Young People* October 2002
Cited in *Green Spaces, Better Places: Working Group 3, People and Places* DTLR, London, May 2002
*England's Local Authority Youth Services – the basic facts 2000-01* The National Youth Agency, September 2002

## 2. Drugs and alcohol

### *Drugs*

Drugs were felt to have a hold on the neighbourhood and many young people identified them as a big issue. Drug taking was thought to be common among young people. There were visible signs of this, and we interviewed teenage users out on the streets sitting on a wall by the shops. Young people openly talked about using drugs. Some participants mentioned seeing drug deals at the back of the shops and flats and a number of young participants stated that cannabis was easy to get hold of and commonly used among young people. Other drugs were also talked about, including ecstasy. The exchange below illustrates how young people can take on board the messages about drug use being a problem but also the extent to which others define it as the norm. The two girls were sitting side by side on a wall by the shops.

> Girl one: *'If you have to take drugs to have a good time, then you're pretty sad'*
> Girl two: *'So you're saying everyone round here's sad then?'*
> Girl one: *'Yeah'*

The younger participants tended to be against taking drugs, and felt that it contributed to the run down appearance of the area. They worried that it was a bad influence on younger children. Some avoided particular areas because of their reputation for drug dealing and use, or were told to avoid them by their parents.

> *'The teenagers make the area look trampy'*
> *'It puts a bad influence on the younger ones. They shouldn't have to see things like that at their age'*

> *'You don't really want to see that every day.'*

The older teenagers (over 15) had a more ambivalent attitude towards drugs, a number of them appeared to be users. Some stated that they were against taking drugs only to be rebuked by friends who claimed that they were lying. There appeared to be rules governing what was acceptable and unacceptable. For example even those using drugs felt that younger teenagers shouldn't be doing the same. The group hanging around by the shop was mixed in age and there was a sense that while the younger members of the group, aged around 10 to 13, might be alright smoking, they weren't ready yet to take drugs, although some may experiment with cannabis. Another rule appeared to be that cannabis was not a problem drug but one that was just taken for granted as something that young people would use and talk openly about. For some ecstasy and other pills were not considered particularly dangerous or serious either. Some felt that it was only 'hard drugs' like heroin and crack that should remain illegal and be the focus of police attention.

> *'Heroin is like a really harsh drug. I think everything else should be legalised.'*

### *Alcohol*

Attitudes towards young people and drinking were more ambivalent. Drinking appeared to be more acceptable. For the older teenagers in particular it was felt that it was natural for them to want to drink and that they could handle it, even if others couldn't. However, underage drinkers also stated that it would be better if they weren't able to access

alcohol so easily. Some stated that off licences regularly sold alcohol to young teenagers. Many of the young people felt that off-licences were wrong to do this, yet admitted that they bought alcohol there themselves. Government statistics show that young people are more likely to get hold of alcohol through friends and family than they are to buy it directly from an off-licence[5].

> *'It's difficult because I want to drink myself, but at the same time I don't think they [the off-licence] should be selling it to us'*
>
> *'Some people can't handle alcohol. Some people go stupid, some people go violent, but if you're like me, you just go happy.'*

Among some young people there was support for lowering the drinking age to 14 or 16. As with drugs there seemed to be a form of self regulation taking place, whereby the older teenagers would not give alcohol to those considered too young (this appeared to be those under about 13). However the attempts to ban street drinking by punishing it with a £500 fine and giving the police the power to remove alcohol from residents found drinking in the streets by the shops were mocked as unrealistic and unenforceable.

> *'It's stupid. Who around here has got £500?'*

*'No one takes any notice.'*

Drugs and to an extent drink, were therefore raised as a common concern by young people. Those taking drink and drugs claimed it was all they had to do in the neighbourhood. They didn't see their drinking or drug use as a problem and felt that police efforts should be focused on more serious crimes, including the dealing of hard drugs. Those on the outside of groups congregating to drink and take drugs felt that the level of drink and drug taking in particular areas made the area feel rundown and unsafe and led to a number of fights.

Two drug and alcohol projects operate in the Tile Hill area, both of which have a citywide reach. One is focused specifically on drug and alcohol use problems and offers advice and treatment as well as dealing with referrals from the criminal justice system. Another is a partnership initiative between Coventry Health Authority and Coventry Youth Service which aims to take a holistic approach to health education and prevention by educating people around sexual health, pregnancy, smoking and other health issues. It was not clear from our research whether any of the participants had come into contact with these services.

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## Drugs

**45% of 15 year olds have taken drugs in their lifetime, 36% have taken them in the last year**

**Over 30% of 15 year olds have taken cannabis, between 5 and 10% have taken Class A drugs and volatile substances**

**The Home Office Drugs Strategy Directorate has a target of**

*The national picture*

**reducing the use of Class A drugs and the frequent use of any illicit drug amongst all young people under the age of 25, especially the most vulnerable young people. Many of the interventions designed to meet this target are based within the criminal justice system, others, such as Positive Futures, focus more broadly on the role of sports-based social inclusion in tackling substance misuse problems.**

## Alcohol

**24% of 11 to 15 years olds have had an alcoholic drink in the last week – 47% of 15 year olds**

**A quarter of 13 and 14 year-old students in Year 9 at school admit they have recently downed five or more alcoholic drinks in a single session, rising to more than half of all 15 and 16 year-old pupils in Year 11**

**Two issues not raised by young people in Tile Hill but known to be significant 'risk' issues for young people nationally are levels of smoking and sexual health**

## Smoking

**10% of 11-15 years olds are regular smokers. The Government target is to reduce this to 9% by 2010.**

**23% of 15 year olds smoke, with girls more likely than boys to smoke.**

## Sexual Health

**Between 1995 and 1999 in the UK, gonorrhoea increased by 58% and genital Chlamydia by 76%, with the major increase in those under 25 years of age.**

Sources:
Home Office *Updated drug strategy 2002* Home Office 2002
Beinart, Anderson, Lee and Utting 2002
Boreham & McManus S 2002
*Teenage Pregnancy: a Social Exclusion Unit Report*, June 1999
*Trends in Sexually Transmitted Diseases in the UK, 1990-1999* PHLS 2000

### 3. Safety

Safety came up as dominant issue for young people in Tile Hill. It emerged in different contexts. For some it was a matter of feeling unsafe on the walk home from school, in areas that were poorly lit or which might conceal a threat. Sometimes this was a generalised threat, for example certain characters were labelled, probably incorrectly, as 'paedophiles' on account of looking different or sticking out. For others the concern was being picked on, beaten up or mugged by other young people hanging around in groups. More broadly bullying was an issue. The boys, particularly, appeared to be most concerned about being beaten up by their peers or by slightly older local groups. They stated that the reason that they tended to gather in groups was for their own safety and protection. In some of our discussions there was a clear undertone that bullying wasn't just a marginal or one-off problem. One participant claimed to have attempted suicide while his friends emphasised bullying as an important issue and one they were keen to protect him from.

> 'You can't stop people going on the streets but you'd like it to be a bit safer so you wouldn't get battered by the older people'
>
> 'If you go up the shops you can get abuse, shouted at… so some people don't like coming up there.'
>
> 'I've seen quite a few fights round here… with the drunkens'

Some participants stated that the fear of bullying or being beaten up meant that they held back from accessing some activities and services. One participant stated that he never went to the cinema because you were likely to get mugged on the way in. For younger participants safety could also be an issue that prevented them from taking part in after-school activities or doing things in the evenings. They did not feel safe or were not allowed to walk home alone. Other young people were also concerned for their safety when outside of Tile Hill and several had been victims (and sometimes perpetrators) of theft.

> 'I like singing and dancing… but I don't go to the club after school because it finishes quite late and I have to walk home on my own'
>
> 'If I'm on my own I keep my head down and walk. If I'm with friends I carry on chatting. I feel safer'

Young participants talked of both witnessing and being involved in fights and physical attacks. Sometimes this was only semi-serious fighting, within groups of young people – the result of a combination of alcohol, drugs or just boredom. For some it was more than this. One participant was serving a year's community service sentence for assault. Discussing the incident she still felt she was right to react when she was being challenged. Community service was turning out to be a good option for her as she was accessing new educational opportunities as a result. Her friends agreed that she was in the right. Protecting your name, not being seen to back down, not 'taking it' from someone else were all seen as important. This instinct of sticking together and not letting others get the better of you is reflected in the way that the young people created allegiances with others from the same area or background as

them and were reluctant to mix with others from elsewhere in the neighbour-hood, or beyond.

A wide range of issues faced by young people came up in the course of making the film with young people in Tile Hill accounts. These included bullying, domestic violence, siblings in prison, suicide attempts, bulimia, teenage preg-nancy, young people being chucked out of their home and difficult relationships with parents. Each of these impacts on how safe and happy young people feel. Their ability to cope with these issues in turn will impact on how they develop as individuals and their ability to seize the opportunities that are available to them.

The young participants involved in *Tile Hill Uncovered* emphasised the role of friends above all else in helping to deal with issues such as bullying and prob-lems at home. Friendship networks and the support and security they offered

came across strongly in the process of making the video. The young people were quick to state that they looked out for each other and were ready to defend or support friends when necessary. Parents, in particular mums, were also mentioned as people to turn to for advice and support. Some also turned to a trusted neighbour or the parents of a friend. Less clear was the role of sources of advice and support outside of family and friends. A number mentioned Connexions personal advisers although this was primarily in relation to advice with training and work. One however did refer a different type of support from Connexions and the help he had received when he was chucked out of home and was feeling depressed. From some young participants there was a call for more trusted and independent sources of advice. Some felt that problems that they discussed within school were not kept confidential and therefore they chose to turn to friends for support instead.

*The national Picture*

Perceptions of Danger

**79% of people agree that 'Life for children is more dangerous than it used to be'**

**57% agree that 'Children are more at risk from paedophiles than they used to be'**

**An ESRC study highlighted strangers, drugs and traffic as the main risk to children identified by both parents and children**

Support

**Nine out of 10 young people aged 11-19 years agree that their family is more important to them than their friends, whilst mothers (82%) and fathers (60%) are regarded as their main source of personal advice and guidance. 56% say that their friends are their main source of personal advice and guidance**

**Disadvantaged teenagers have less sources of advice: 18% of disadvantaged 14-17 year olds said that they would never turn to their parents or other family for help or advice. Almost half (45%) said they were confused about where to go for help. 81% liked the idea of a single organisation that could help with all their problems.**

Crime

**33% of males aged 15-16 years report to having committed at least one offence in the past 12 months.**

**8% of 11-12 year old boys said they had attacked someone intending serious harm, increasing to 19% for 15 and 16 year olds.**

**Almost four out of ten of all young people agreed it was 'alright to beat people up if they start the fight'.**

**Young men are most at risk of violent crime, 15% reported experiencing a violent crime in the past year.**

Sources:
Guardian/ICM poll, August 2000
Children 5-16 Research Briefing No 19: *The Impact of risk and parental risk anxiety on the everyday worlds of children* December 2002, ESRC
Nestle Family Monitor 1998
Prince's Trust 2003
Beinart, Anderson, Lee and Utting 2002
British Crime Survey 2002/03

## 4. Negative perceptions of young people and anti-social behaviour

A common thread throughout the discussions with young people in Tile Hill was a feeling that they were 'hard done by'; neglected or misunderstood by other residents and some service providers; seen as a cause of problems rather than positive participants in the local community. Some older residents who also wanted a better deal for young people echoed these sentiments.

*'The young people in this area have little to do in the evenings, and not just in the evenings, but at the weekends too. We have the facilities here for a youth club and many other facilities but I don't think they are being used to their potential.'*
Older resident

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But there is more to it than this. Young people talked about a lack of respect. They described their behaviour and attitudes as a response to what they perceived as a lack of respect from others. Service providers may well argue the reverse, that young people do not gain respect because their behaviour can be disruptive and they do not take responsibility for their actions. The two sides of the story appear to be played out most acutely in Tile Hill in the relationship between young people and the police. Young people involved in the research generally had a poor perception of the police. Many had dealings with them. The police were perceived to be heavy handed in dealing with young people, approaching them for little reason and picking up on minor offences which young people themselves didn't consider important. This caused resentment, for example one young person felt that the police hadn't responded quickly to a domestic violence situation she was aware of but were happy to crack down on street drinking. Some felt that they were targeted by the police simply because they did not like them. The cycle of boredom and 'nothing to do' was again cited by some young people as a reason for getting into trouble.

*'Every 5 minutes they come round the corner speeding every time, like they own the place.'*

*'They nick us just for the sake of nicking us because they don't like us.'*

*'They come up to teenagers doing nothing when they could be out catching people doing real crimes.'*

*'They can come up now and again, but they're here too much. Really too much, all the time.'*

*'They just think we're thugs.'*

*'What more is there for us to do? That's why a lot of lads get into trouble around here. It's boredom isn't it?'*

Young people drinking, taking drugs, fighting and vandalising the area were seen as a priority by the local police who were interviewed as part of the project. Young people also objected to the impact that the behaviour of a minority of people had on the area and resented being 'tarred with the same brush' in their own dealings with the police. Some had sympathy with the police. They generally wanted some police presence in the area and recognised policing to be a difficult job. They accepted their own responsibility for keeping out of trouble and achieving their potential. There was a feeling that it was your own choice whether to turn to crime and that if you did, you should pay the price.

*'At the end of the day if you commit a crime you should face the consequences.'*

*'I've always lived in Tile Hill and I've kept myself out of trouble. I've seen lots of people be arrested and I've never been arrested once. So it's down to me really, ain't it?'*

Speaking to a police officer during the course of the research also revealed some of their frustration with anti-social behaviour.

*'Boredom is not an excuse for some of the stuff they do around here.'*
Police officer

But for the young people being 'anti-social' they felt that they were just hanging around with friends having fun. A difficult cycle of behaviour and responses emerges. Young people them-

selves sometimes admit to acting in ways that both they and others might consider anti-social and sometimes criminal; stealing from the vending machine at one of the youth clubs, throwing stones at a car, dropping litter, painting graffiti, getting into fights. Many knew of people around them, neighbours, friends, brothers and sisters, who had been in trouble with the police and were living with the consequences. When talking about the future one young male participant stated that he expected he and many of his friends to be in prison in two years time. They felt that they were just responding to their environment and the lack of opportunities they could see open to them.

For the police and other agencies providing services for young people, working out the right response to some young people's problem behaviour is tricky. There is a neighbourhood level policing unit in Tile Hill which is set up to respond to the dynamics and problems facing the area, in recognition that the level of policing needed can be intense. In neighbouring Canley, Neighbourhood Wardens are in place. In Tile Hill the ways used to deal with problem behaviour are seen by young people themselves as too harsh, and, more importantly for those who keep out of trouble, lead to a sense that all young people are seen as anti-social. At one end of the scale there are stories of young people being banned from the youth club for disruptive behaviour, at the other end of the scale there is a fine for street drinking and the application of anti-social behaviour orders and court procedures. Tile Hill police have now implemented nine Anti-social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs), three are

current and one has been unsuccessful. The challenge for the police and other service providers is recognising that the majority of young people in Tile Hill neither cause trouble or want to cause trouble, whilst at the same time tackling the anti-social and criminal behaviour of a minority. Young participants in *Tile Hill Uncovered* felt that they were all 'lumped' together and seen as a nuisance and weren't able to give their side of the story to the police and others.

How others see young people also impacts on how young people see themselves and the opportunities open to them. There were lots of positive stories and young residents talked about where they felt that they were heading. Going travelling, becoming a car designer, a footballer, a singer/MC, a travel rep, an air hostess, a chef and a sound and light technician were some of the answers. Some, particularly the younger participants, were confident that they could make it. For some getting out of Tile Hill was a priority.

*'I won't be here. I want to be a holiday rep and travel the world.'*
*'I'm going to be a car designer, I'll go to university to study.'*
*'I'm going to be an MC.'*
*'We're all going to Great Yarmouth. There's less smack-heads there.'*

Many however seemed unconvinced about what they might achieve. This included a number of the older participants in their late teens. They focused on the short term and seemed limited by what they knew and what they were used to.

*'We're like, the lower class people.'*

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Passing Time

*'People like us don't get good jobs.'*

*'In 5 years time all of these people will be
jail. Every one of them.'*

*The national
picture*

**70% of older secondary school pupils had mixed views on
whether adults in England were friendly towards children and
young people. They agreed that 'some are, some aren't'**

**More than 50% of adults agree with the statement 'I feel
threatened by groups of teenagers hanging around in streets and
public places'**

**75% of the adult population support a legally enforceable
evening curfew on teenagers.**

**In David Blunkett's introduction to the anti-social behaviour White
Paper he paints a negative picture of young people as a threat to
others by referring to "youth hanging around street corners
intimidating the elderly"**

**The proposed Anti-Social Behaviour Bill would introduce new
powers to allow police to disperse groups of two or more people
and to remove young people under 16 who are unsupervised in
public places from 9pm to 6am to their place of residence**

**70 per cent of young people agree that the police should not be
given powers to move them on if they have not done anything
wrong. 80 per cent say that curfews are not fair because not all
young people cause problems. 81 per cent say that the police are
very important in helping children lead safe and secure lives.**

Sources:

Madge 2003

Nestle Family Monitor No2

*Taking a Stand Against Anti-social behaviour* Home Office 2003

NOP survey of 702 10-16 year olds, September 2003 conducted on
behalf of a coalition of 13 children's charities opposing elements of
the Anti-Social Behaviour Bill

## 5. The state of the environment

*'If you say to someone that you live in Tile Hill, they're going to think, "oh, that's not a very nice place".'*

The final major issue that young people involved in the *Tile Hill Uncovered* project raised was the poor state of their local environment. Litter, graffiti and the bad state of repair of some of the buildings and housing were thought to give the area a depressing and uncared for feel. They filmed areas that had become a dumping ground, buildings that were boarded up and neglected and flats in the process of being smartened up.

*'When you go round the back of the shops you've got broken bottles, drug packets, litter.'*

*'I just feel ashamed really. People round here could do a lot more to help but they don't.'*

*'I wouldn't like to bring my kids up around here.'*

There was little sense of pride in the area and a sense that those from outside would be likely to view it as rundown. Some however recognised that they were at times part of the problem. Whilst many teenagers moaned about the state of the area, they also admitted to dropping litter and pointed out each other's names in graffiti on the walls.

*'I don't know, it is natural. You aren't gonna put it in your pocket until you get home because the stuff might leak. So why not throw it away on the grass or something?'*

*'We need some more bins around here.'*

Whilst a scarcity of bins was highlighted, many of the teenagers were not optimistic about the likelihood of the culture change needed to bring about respect for their environment.

*'People wouldn't stop dropping litter, not even if you paid them ten pounds.'*

*'I think they care, but they don't have the time and can't be bothered to get off their butt and do it.'*

The physical regeneration of the area was a priority for young people.

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**In identifying the most serious threats to their local environment, people put crime and vandalism first (68%), followed by people's lack of concern/care/interest (42%). This was followed by pollution from traffic (35%), loss of green spaces (29%) and litter (28%).**

*The national picture*

Source:
*The Environment, who cares?* MORI poll, June 2002

### So what do young people in Tile Hill want?

This section has covered the big issues for young people in Tile Hill and the extent to which many of these problems were caused or heightened by boredom. It is not surprising therefore that things to do and places to go were most commonly mentioned as priorities for the future.

When discussing what sort of places and activities young people wanted to be available the following were highlighted:

**A neutral space that they can call their own**

*'Just somewhere we can go and, like, hang around, so the Old Bill don't come down.'*

*'A big house, but for teenagers.'*

*'I'd build a youth room.'*

**Somewhere safe and secure**

*'You should have CCTV or paid security guards.'*

*'It should be run by someone like you guys'*

*'You should have bouncers on the doors.'*

**Easy to get to**

*'Somewhere close around here like Triple Triangle Club and if we had a youth club it would be somewhere where we can go.'*

*'The Midland Sports centre is too far from here.'*

**No drugs or alcohol**

The young people recognised that some people might prefer to hang out on the streets where they could drink, but most thought that any youth space should have a strict policy against alcohol and drugs.

*'If you allow drinking you will find a lot of people coming in drinking and they will start to abuse it; smashing everything and stuff.'*

**Things to do**

The young people all had their own ideas about what activities should be on offer, depending on their own interests. Common themes were music and sport and were loosely divided along gender lines. The boys tended to opt for football pitches, basketball and trips to theme parks, whilst the girls wanted music, dance, chill-out space and parties.

*'Sports, discos, music, just things that teenagers like.'*

*'Yeah. Help, and advice, support, sports, football ground, tennis court and discos.'*

*'More residential trips.'*

*'If we had a basketball court we would use it from morning till night. Just pure basketball training because that is what we like.'*

*'A fair here all the time'*

*'A new park'*

*'Make places for us to go and things to do. Not just sitting around watching telly, but acting and singing and dancing and stuff like that.'*

**Help and advice**

Several of the young people expressed a wish to have more sources of advice. They felt the lack of someone older who they could turn to in times of trouble or talk to about the big issues in their lives.

*'I wouldn't go to the school counsellor, because I've tried that before and people*

*have found out about things that I said.'*

*'Social services have helped me quite a lot… but I don't think many people would know how to contact them.'*

They stressed the need for any such person to be independent and for them to be able to tell them things in strictest confidence.
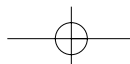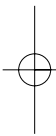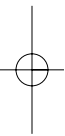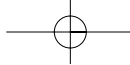
## *Section two:*
# Identifying the problem

**It is important not to over generalise what can be learnt from Tile Hill. The area has its own dynamics which all play a part in how young people see themselves and their neighbourhood. There are always limitations to drawing national lessons from local areas. However, Tile Hill is also typical of a lot of places.**

Tile Hill is one of Coventry City Council's priority neighbourhoods which means it receives extra funding and attention but many similar neighbourhoods can be found around England. The accounts that the young residents give of their area and their calls for more things to do and a safer environment are similarly echoed elsewhere. What stands in the way of providing sustained, good quality services and opportunities to young people in Tile Hill will resonate in many other neighbourhoods. Despite a range of initiatives taking place in the area, including Positive Futures, mentoring schemes, citizenship and democracy initiatives and some innovative new health education partnerships, the message that emerges most clearly is that there are still gaps. Comprehensive and sustained provision of opportunities, activities and support for young people is not in place. Below some of the main problems facing service providers in the

area with their work with young people outside of school are identified.

### Funding: not enough, short-term, not reliable

Youth service funding constitutes the core funding base but money is tight and will only stretch so far. In addition, local service providers have to draw on funding from different areas in order to provide activities for young people, each time meeting different criteria and filling in different applications. Funding may come from the lottery, from Crime Concern, from the Youth Justice Board or from government initiatives such as Positive Futures or Positive Activities for Young People for example. The process can be highly bureaucratic. The result is that activities can feel 'one-off' or time limited. Summer schemes that stop after summer, trips to go paint balling or go-carting which leave young people wanting more but which require further

funding applications to repeat. Local service providers in neighbouring Canley are currently in the process of staking claim to renewing their Neighbourhood Renewal Funding (NRF)[6]. Sometimes funding just doesn't stretch far enough. The local sports centre ran a range of successful activities on Wednesday night including a singing class and sports activities but even with young people paying to attend there was no money to extend this to other nights. The Make Space initiative has given Coventry Sports Foundation £15,000 over 2 years to develop provision, with a specific focus on extending the number of nights that activities are provided but it is unclear how far this grant will stretch.

Securing the confidence and trust of young people and staying with them to help them develop and be ambitious and hopeful for their futures is crucial. Yet in practice the provision of services often raises hopes and expectations at one stage, only to dash them further down the line when funding runs out or a key youth worker moves on. There is also a sense of only being able to do so much; one or two nights at the sports centre or the youth centre rather than every night and little or nothing at weekends. There will always be limitations on funding and resources. Yet the current framework of provision, which sees different providers drawing on different pots of money for time limited projects, in tandem with a youth service with resources that will only stretch so far, can lead to young people becoming disillusioned and confused.

## A shortage of good community venues and youth clubs

The Abermarle report of the 1960s gave rise to a wave of new youth club buildings across England but these are often out of step with the type of modern, social, friendly spaces that young people are now looking for. In Tile Hill the sports centre hosts some activities and the youth club is also used. Both have their limits; the youth club in particular was felt to be aimed at much younger children and not inviting to teens. This is likely to be because a children's club operates from the centre and there is no full-time youth worker at present. From the outside it doesn't look welcoming: boarded up and backing on to a sports court that has overgrown (although funding has been secured to make it useable again). The youth club is recognised to be isolated and with poor street lighting. Parents can be reluctant to let their children access activities provided there as it can be seen as unsafe and inadequate. The sports centre at the other end of the estate is a more suitable and welcoming space for young people but there is recognition that access to the centre is difficult for some young people. There is no direct public transport link from the top end of Tile Hill to the sports centre, the walk would take about half an hour and many young people will not be allowed to undertake it on their own.

However, improvements are planned for the future. The Jardine Crescent youth club building is due to be re-furbished in 2004 with a budget of £250,000 allocated by Coventry Council. The plan is to

involve young people in deciding how the youth club might be developed. It is also hoped that in the future, once a new youth worker is in place, music technology programmes will be developed using state of the art equipment.

## A mixed and sometimes divided population of young people

Young people don't always feel safe mixing with different groups and can be wary of going into different parts of their areas where they might be bullied. An element of mistrust between different groups of young people in Tile Hill was evident. It is hard to tackle this head on as it requires significant groundwork by youth workers to build trust and confidence. As a result youth work provision tends to reach only particular groups of young people. This was true for the *Tile Hill Uncovered* film project. In order to reach different groups of young people we had to go out and meet them on their own turf. Young people were reluctant to come together in a single venue and work collectively on the film.

## Young people with little sense of control over their community

Many of the young people who took part in the film project had little sense of their capacity to change things. They gave articulate accounts of what was wrong with their area and particularly what they felt young people were lacking. There was a sense however that they were repeating what they knew were age-old problems. They were looking for others (the Council, local service providers) to make things better whilst

at the same time being doubtful that anything would actually change. There is a danger that the local population gets wary of being consulted on what they would like to see change with little evidence that their views will be acted upon. There is a challenge in trying to configure a relationship between local residents and service providers that is not just about service providers consulting people on what they want but rather working with them so that local residents themselves help deliver real change.

For some of the young people involved in *Tile Hill Uncovered*, the sense of powerlessness went further. They didn't have faith in their own ability to direct the course of their lives. Some were hopeful of their chances of a good job or the opportunity to travel and take on new challenges. Others however had a fatalistic approach. Teenage boys in particular stated that good job opportunities and prospects were out of reach and more likely options were prison or a dead-end job. At times it felt that young people gave these accounts because they were acting out what was expected of them. Even so they demonstrate an underlying challenge in encouraging young people to expect more and to re-assess their capabilities. Without raising the stakes communities can become defined by a group of young people with little sense of their capacity to change either their area or the opportunities open to them. Public policy and service providers must challenge low expectations, if they don't then they can end up colluding with young people's sometimes low assessments of themselves and their capabilities.

### Drink and drugs have a grip on the area

The impact of drink and drugs came up repeatedly. For many they made the area feel run down and unsafe. Areas with a reputation for drug dealing and use and drinking became 'no-go' areas for some. For the core group of young people drinking and taking drugs regularly they simply became routine – it's just 'what you do'.

### A shortage of youth workers

At the time of the film project the Tile Hill youth club was reaching only a fraction of the local population of young people. The club was running only two evenings a week with a low turnout. A youth worker from a neighbouring area had been called in to cover for the departure of the permanent youth worker. The club is based at the Jardine Crescent area of Tile Hill meaning that those living in other parts were reluctant to go. There appears to have been little progress made with the core group of drinking and drug taking teenagers hanging around by the local shops, they were not keen to attend the youth club and no outreach youth worker was in place (although outreach work has been undertaken in the past).

For some the youth club had bad associations as they had been banned from attending. The problem is in large part one of capacity and a shortage of good youth workers. Working with a broad and diverse group of young people in a way that builds their trust and confidence, engages them in creative and meaningful activity and meets underlying

goals of raising achievement and tackling individual problems is a hard task. Youth work is suffering the same problems as the teaching profession: a shortage of well qualified staff and the challenge of keeping hold of the ones you've got. In particular there is the task of recruiting youth workers who are prepared to take on the job of rejuvenating youth provision in rundown areas like Tile Hill.

### Negative perceptions of young people based on the behaviour of a minority

Young people in the film talked about how the behaviour of a few affects the feel and safety of the area. They felt that they were often all labelled as potential troublemakers rather than being given the benefit of the doubt. Some talked about a lack of respect. They described their behaviour and attitudes as a response to what they perceived as a lack of respect from others. This led to a strong sense of young people defining their relationship with some service providers and other residents as one of 'them and us'. There is a need to find common ground and spaces for young people to talk to and interact with people across the generations to tackle negative perceptions and find common ground.

### Local service providers grappling with the delivery of 'joined-up services'

Joined-up working has become a buzzword of public service reform. Putting into practice this common sense way of working on the ground is difficult. In

youth provision different providers work to different agendas and there is not always a coherent story of what the end goal is. Is it about raising educational achievement and enhancing future prospects? Or providing opportunities and activities to engage and keep young people out of trouble? Or is it about identifying the health and support needs of vulnerable young people and making sure that they are met? The reality is all three but the agendas rarely mesh together. This is partly about different work cultures – the target driven, Ofsted-inspected Youth and Connexions Services can rub against the freeform culture of voluntary youth work, arts and sports organisations (even though they

too will have to meet the targets of funding requirements). Both can stand in contrast to the narrow focus of specific support and referral services who come into contact with young people to offer help in particular areas such as teenage pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, family or mental health problems. In Tile Hill a working party of people delivering services to young people meet (covering school based initiatives, health support such as Sure Start and sports and area-coordination team staff). It is not clear yet whether the different cultures and organisations can work to a common goal of tackling long-term, entrenched problems such as drugs and anti-social behaviour.
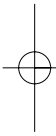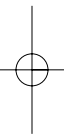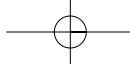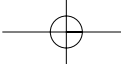
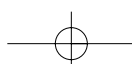# *Section three:* Giving young people something better

**The Tile Hill Uncovered project takes place against a backdrop of renewed government spending and activity on services for children and young people. Young people are an important target of national policy, particularly those from the poorest backgrounds and the most deprived communities.**

Not least there is the target of ending child poverty by 2020 and halving it by 2010. The creation of a Minister for Children, Young people and families and the Children and Young People's Unit is further evidence of the government's commitment to focus its attention on providing good services for young people. The message is that policy and initiatives focused at young people should be consistent, joined up and working towards a common goal: protecting and supporting young people and enabling them to reach their potential. It is clear that the work of every government department has an impact on young people's lives, including the Home Office, which continues to develop strategies for dealing with criminal and anti-social behaviour, with young people recognised as an important target of such strategies.

When taken as a whole the goal of initiatives like Sure Start, Connexions,

Children's Centres, the Children's Fund, Positive Activities for Young People and Youth Offending Teams is no less than to radically interrupt the cycle of deprivation that traps young people from poorer backgrounds and prevents them from achieving their potential. But getting services right for young people is not easy, particularly when trying to achieve multiple goals: *reducing* crime and anti-social behaviour, drug and alcohol use, teenage pregnancy and poverty for example on the one hand and *raising* educational achievement, aspirations and self-esteem on the other.

Much has already been made of the mixed messages about children and young people that exist in different policies. The emphasis on educational achievement and sound careers advice sees young people as vessels to be filled with useful information and skills that will set them up well for a productive

future. The *Every Child Matters* green paper stresses the importance of safe-guarding children at risk and depicts the potential for children to be victims. The anti-social behaviour white paper and new proposals for more stringent laws to curtail anti-social behaviour target young people as thugs or potential thugs whose actions infringe on the rest of the community. These distinctions are oversimplified but there is a danger that the more complete messages about children and young people being people in their own right *now and not just the future*, can get lost in the bigger stories that emphasise education, protection and diversion from anti-social behaviour. There is also recognition of the fact that a single young person may be the target of all of these policies: underachieving in education, at risk at home and committing crime in the community. Yet linking different policies together in a way that offers the most effective interventions possible to support a young person is rare in practice.

Despite the flurry of activity and renewed focus on children and young people, Tile Hill illustrates just how far there is to go. Much has still to be done to create safe, vibrant spaces and places for young people in communities and the support services to back them up. Below the main issues to be addressed are set out. These are the issues that need to be tackled in order to make the national level commitment to doing right by young people a convincing reality on the ground in communities like Tile Hill.

## 1. Get the basics right: consistent service provision and decent places to run services from

In Tile Hill young people's experience of the provision of activities and services was patchy. They wanted something reliable. The key to building the trust and confidence of young people and encour-aging them to engage over a period of time is sustained provision. There was recognition of this in the *Every Child Matters* (2003) green paper:

> *A consistent theme of consultations with children and young people is the importance of having communities where there is 'somewhere safe to go and something to do' […] The Government intends to widen access to a range of structured and unstructured, supervised and unsupervised activities*

Young people and activity is often viewed as a happy marriage. A way of keeping young people 'off the streets' and less likely to cause harm or trouble, leaving the rest of the community feeling safer as a result. A number of government programmes focus explicitly on creating programmes of activity for young people in order to divert them from anti-social and criminal behaviour[7]. But the message of youth provision must be about more than diverting young people away from nuisance or criminal activity. There must be a positive story about creating activities for young people to support them in their own right, to provide them with opportunities to develop new skills and experiences, to have fun and to help them acquire new responsibilities and independence as they grow older.

***Funding: not enough, often short-term and doesn't add up***

Spending on youth services is beginning to gain ground as a real priority in Government as the link between services for young people and a range of positive outcomes is recognised. In December 2002 extra funding was announced for the youth service, bringing the potential youth service budget to £513 million per year. It was announced as a 5.9% increase in funding for the youth service with a target of spending at £100 per head. There are already concerns about where the new money is to come from and the extent to which local authorities will be expected to find the funds to pay for better youth services. The increase also comes after years of decline in youth services and against the backdrop of a still limited knowledge of the effectiveness of different approaches and models of youth work.

More money is being linked to raising standards and setting minimum requirements. These include youth services reaching at least 25 per cent of the 13-19 population in their area with a specific focus on those in 'at risk' categories and 70 per cent of those using the service should express satisfaction with them. There is also a standard requiring all youth provision per 1,000 population to be accessible for a minimum of 4 hours per week[8]. The focus on raising standards and being clear on the extent to which youth services should be reaching out to young people in their communities is to be welcome. However, the funding to resource the transformation is not certain. There is still a danger that these funds can be diverted into other areas by Local Authorities as they are not ring-fenced[9].

Youth Service funding is the biggest part of the funding mix but not the only one. A wide range of Government, lottery, European and charity funding sources might also be called upon to resource services and activities for young people. In Tile Hill funding from Crime Concern, the Youth Justice Board, the New Opportunities Fund and the Children's Fund has been levered in by different service providers. Another funding prospect is proposed in the *Every Child Matters* green paper. It sets out a £200 million 'Young People's Fund' to be allocated by the lottery for activities out of school. The fund currently appears likely to be open to offers, with young people to be part of determining how it is spent.

That there is lots of funding around to call upon can only be positive. However, there is a time commitment involved in accessing these funds which requires resources, skills and capacity. Each will be aimed at a slightly different target group of young people. Taken as a whole, funding for services for young people involves a scatter gun approach. Different pots of money are available for different things, often for a time-limited period and often only available in particular target areas. The result, as in Tile Hill, can be a programme of activities for young people that does not come together as a coherent whole. When the service that can potentially join different young people initiatives together – the Youth Service – is short-staffed there is further danger of fragmentation.

### Lack of spaces

There is no concerted effort or funding to revive many of the tired and closed down youth clubs and centres around the country. Innovations in youth service provision have led to multiple models of provision, including outreach models that are not based in a physical building or youth club. However, in order to deliver most programmes of youth services some form of community space or centre is necessary. It means that youth services have a recognised base and focus within an area.

There is a strategy gap in this area. No national strategy is in place to audit what places and centres are already available and useable and where more are needed. The most concerted effort to revive youth clubs is the Make Space campaign run by Kids Club Networks. Make Space aims to transform opportunities for young people by establishing a new network of modern teenage after school clubs. To access funding potential clubs must show that they will offer a dynamic place, different types of areas including chill out and activity spaces and must also involve young people in developing their club. There is a target of establishing 3,000 Make Space clubs for 2015.

The vision of the Make Space campaign is a positive one. Tile Hill itself has been awarded a grant of £15,000 over two years to develop the number of nights of youth provision available at the sports centre. The focus is also not on bricks and mortar but on getting in place an innovative mix of activities and opportunities. Yet funding is not guaranteed by Government but with £2.5million in seed funding from the Nestle Trust. Longer term Make Space aims to attract major government funding. Accessing funding will be competitive and dependent on the skills and motivation of local service providers. Grants are awarded at a low level, to develop existing provision, and will not cover the creation of new centres. 2015 is also a long time to wait to see the sort of sea change in provision of services for young people that is needed. IPPR has previously identified the need for a programme of capital investment for the development or construction of 'Young Clubs' – a programme for revitalising youth club provision and other facilities for young people (Nash 2003:p38).

School buildings should also be taken into account as possible venues for the provision of youth services. Primary school populations are dropping and are likely to continue to do so for another decade. Secondary school populations are just peaking. There is likely to be an increase in spare accommodation in schools which have the potential to be used as community facilities, the most obvious use being for the provision of activity and support for young people and parents. Schools may not always want to be defined as a community resource but youth workers could make good use of school buildings facilities (for example IT and arts equipment). It also makes sense to maximise the value of this capital resource within a community. There are barriers in using school locations to deliver youth services when trying to attract those young people who are antagonistic to school or may be excluded from it. A combination of the right staff, programme of activities

and atmosphere may help to overcome these barriers. The announcement of funding for at least one extended school in every local authority area by 2006[10] is a step in the right direction. Extended schools will provide childcare, health and social care, lifelong learning opportunities, family learning, parenting support, study support, sports and arts, and ICT access. Thinking about the role of youth work within this context must be a priority.

### Staffing

More funding and more youth centres are vital but not enough to up the ante in youth service provision. Even with funding in place and spaces from which to provide youth clubs and services there is also the issue, highlighted by Tile Hill, of recruitment. The main youth worker for Tile Hill had left the post a few months before we made *Tile Hill Uncovered*. Finding a replacement was proving difficult and an advertisement in local and specialist press was unsuccessful.

Creating a sustained programme of activities and opportunities over a period of time that reaches a broad range of young people in an area like Tile Hill is a skilled and challenging job. It is not glamorous and involves unsociable hours. It is likely to require resilience and hard work to build confidence among a group of young people who feel like they have been let down in the past. It requires someone who is prepared to champion the importance of providing good services for young people and not just meet basic requirements.

Government targets in this area aren't ambitious. The goal is one nationally qualified, full-time staff member per 400 of the 13-19 youth population. There is some commitment to staff development with 5 per cent for the youth service budget to spend on the professional development of staff. But more innovative ways of developing staff to deliver good youth services are needed. One place to start is building the capacity of people living and working in the community to work with young people. It is at this level that commitment to working in a particular area over a period of time is most likely to be secured.

## 2. Tackle the root causes of problem behaviour

In the course of making the film with young people in Tile Hill accounts spontaneously came up in discussions of bullying, domestic violence, siblings in prison, suicide attempts, young people being unwelcome at home, difficult relationships with parents and young people serving community sentences. It was also evident that alcohol and drug use was common and routine among some groups of young people. The range of issues and problems that young people might have to deal with is broad. Getting the basics right in terms of providing good spaces and places for young people to go to and things for them to do is only the start of a serious commitment to addressing young people's needs. Different young people will require different levels of support and for some the provision of enjoyable and engaging activities will be enough. For others the scale of support and level of intervention required will be greater.

The provision of services for young people, outside of school and formal education, often appear to do one of two things. Either educating young people and preparing them for work or keeping them active and diverting them from problem behaviour. Both models are important but there is a danger that the activity created skirts around entrenched social and emotional problems that will continue to hold young people back unless they are tackled head on. Neither provides an adequate response to teenagers locked into a cycle of drink, drugs, low expectations, boredom, mistrust of authority and so on. There is a need to consider young people's support needs as a whole. High on the agenda must be a serious commitment to tackling problem drink and drug use. Yet support services that target issues like drug and alcohol use, teenage pregnancy, criminal behaviour are often to be found only on the peripheries of mainstream youth provision and may only kick into action once a problem is entrenched.

### Education, education, education

The Connexions service typifies the education model of youth provision. The underlying philosophy of Connexions is to provide a rounded service that fully addresses young people's needs but in its early days of implementation it has not achieved this. There is some local variation in the delivery of Connexions but the dominant story is undoubtedly about education, training and work. Support and intervention to help with social and emotional needs gets a smaller billing. The service is in its infancy and deserves time to fully develop. However, early evaluations show that the

workload of Connexions personal advisers and young people's perceptions of their role is focused on careers, training and education advice (Joyce, White and Franses, October 2003). In the recently published first phase customer satisfaction survey[11] less than 12 per cent of young people surveyed had talked to a Connexions personal adviser to discuss stress, alcohol and drugs, housing or bullying for example. Onward referrals by Connexions were exclusively to work or education-related organisations such as the Job Centre or local college. This is in despite of the fact that whilst Connexions is a universal service, it has a specific focus on those most socially excluded, who are likely to have a wide range of needs.

That education and work dominate the Connexions service and its targets is not surprising. The education mantra has carried through New Labour's time in office since 1997. Standards and achievement drive the education agenda with a strong focus on improving numeracy and literacy, raising educational attainment and increasing the number of young people who stay on at school after 16 and gain access to higher education. Whilst employment is the lynchpin of the overall anti-poverty strategy it is raising educational attainment that dominates this agenda in relation to young people, and rightly so. Better qualifications lead to better jobs and higher incomes. Education is a driver of social mobility and enables young people to step outside of the limitations of their upbringing and their surroundings.

The extent to which educational attainment is seen as the best hope for eradi-

cating poverty and improving outcomes for young people from the most disadvantaged backgrounds is further evident in recent funding commitments. The 2003 Budget announced a cross-government review of financial support for 16 to 19 year olds, including financial incentives to participate in education or training and the case for extending the National Minimum Wage. Specifically September 2004 will see the launch of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), a means-tested grant of up to £30 a week during term-time to stay in education. Additional bonuses of £100 will be paid if pupils remain on the course and make good progress with their learning.

However, there is a danger that the dominant focus on education and work crowds out other important goals for youth work. It can mean failing to recognise that the extent to which young people are able to take up these opportunities is dependent on tackling some of the barriers that get in their way such as low self-esteem, substance abuse problems, poor social skills and so on. One young male in the *Tile Hill Uncovered* video describes how Connexions visited him in his own home yet all they had to offer him was factory work. A home visit that offers only the opportunity of factory work may reflect the local job market but seems unlikely to motivate or inspire a young person to broaden their ambitions[12]. This was not the only story to tell however. Another young male described how his Connexions personal adviser helped him when he was chucked out of home and was feeling depressed. The extent to which this more responsive advice that meets the

different needs of young people is available through Connexions is still to be proven. It is dependent on the skills and ability of individual personal advisers to respond to very different needs of young people. It is also reliant on the ability of the service as a whole to reach the critical percentage of young people who need this type of fuller support.

***Keep them active***

The other dominant model of provision for young people is diversionary activity, often with some tie-in to educational goals. The Government's flagship programme in this area is the Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP) programme, launched in time for summer 2003, funding is secured for three years with £25 million available in the first year. The focus is on providing activities for young people in the school holidays with the aim of reducing youth offending and increasing the number of young people staying on in school.

The views of young people in Tile Hill clearly show a demand for more provision of engaging activities. Those involved in programmes run at the sports centre (called Busting Street Crime, funded by the Youth Justice Board) were positive although they wanted them to run more than one day a week. Feedback on the ground for schemes like PAYP is also positive. It means more funding for those struggling to provide a programme of engaging activities to young people in communities like Tile Hill.

There are two potential problems with such schemes. The first is the danger of 'initiative-itus' combined with a lack of

overall coherence. New programmes are launched and old ones re-packaged. We have already seen how funding sources for youth work are varied – from lottery grants, to Home Office/Youth Offending Team money to European funding streams. The result may be more activities provided for young people but no sense of strategy as to how they add up to something that will really have an impact on the lives of young people in an area. Projects may only begin to scratch the surface of a problem and make only small inroads in improving the lives of the young people they target.

The second potential problem is that the target of these programmes is to provide activities for young people to interact, sometimes with an education target tied in. It is not to tackle the root causes of why some young people are excluded, unmotivated and at risk. Programmes may include a commitment to building self-esteem and building trust and confidence between different groups of young people. However, there is rarely a systematic approach to integrating activity with good quality support and advice to tackle underlying problems, not least drug and alcohol use. By far the most commonly provided PAYP activity, for example, is sports-based with a more marginal role for, for example, drug advice.

### Tackling underlying problems

Providing support, advice and interventions that work to tackle underlying problems is a hard nut to crack. Those providing youth work provision will stress the importance of hooking young people into services with interesting and fun activities rather than a suggestion

that they need help to tackle a drug problem for example. But there is also a sense that an opportunity is being missed. There is evidence that real problems are only picked up when it is already too late. For example once young people are in contact with the criminal justice system they are much more likely to receive a intensive level of intervention or treatment to help with a substance misuse problem. The new anti-social behaviour bill introduces an individual support order that will require children and young people with Anti-Social Behaviour Orders to accept help, such as drug treatment, where appropriate. Such interventions are important, but too late if they only kick in when a young person gets in trouble with the police. The challenge is getting the balance right between prevention and enforcement and recognising that both are needed.

Other interventions will come in the form of social care services and indeed some of the young people involved in the project mentioned that they were in contact with social services. Again there appears to be a need for on-going sources of support and advice that young people trust that does not require the more serious and involved process of being referred to social services.

One way in which youth work and support services can be integrated successfully and convincingly is by locating them in the same area or centre. Such initiatives, which link up health, social care, advice and support services with youth work and provision of activities for young people are relatively rare but should provide a useful model for

others. The Sure Start model is one example, linking support and activities for parents and potential parents with health, housing, parenting, work and education advice. The proposed Children's Trusts and Directors of Children's Services are also examples of attempts to integrate and connect different types of provision for young people. There is potential to carry this model through for teenagers and their parents – a type of 'Sure Future' or 'Sure Progress' programme. This would integrate support, advice and information services, the provision of activities and opportunities and practical guidance in dealing with a range of issues, aimed at both teenagers and their parents.

The reinvention of the library as a safe space for young people to spend time, is a positive development in this direction. Peckham library is the most often quoted example, but Stratford in East London, Sunderland, Norwich and Bournemouth have all encouraged young people through their doors with chill-out rooms, sofas, free internet access and multi-media centres. They run homework clubs, teenage reading groups and computer courses, taking on a youth work role as well as providing access to books. Innovative schemes are also beginning to spring up around young people's health services. The Parallel in Bolton is a flagship example. It is primarily a young people's family planning clinic, but is taking on a much larger remit, dealing with mental health issues, running lesbigay support groups and giving advice on any other problems its users may be dealing with.

However, some attempts to meet the full range of young people's needs are simply misplaced or off target. The 2002 Transforming Youth Work government document provides an annual youth service target of '60 per cent of young people engaged within the service undergoing personal and social development which results in an accredited outcome'[13]. This seems too vague in one sense and too specific in another. Personal and social development may cover an enormous range of different activities and does not communicate a sense of what exactly it is that youth work should achieve: that is a tangible and positive impact on the lives of young people and support in tackling the barriers that stand in the way of them achieving. The focus on accreditation by contrast is too specific. The current drive within the sector is to get everything and anything accredited with a danger that the process and accreditation is itself more important than the output. The paper also sets as standards for provision for Youth Services that 5 per cent of the youth population is worked with 'intensively'. This suggests a commitment to recognising the range of issues that a young person might have to deal with in his life without any sense of where priority should be placed or how a positive outcome of 'intensive' youth work might be judged.

In Tile Hill drink and drug use appeared to have the potential to get in the way of young people achieving. Yet targets driving work in this field are either vague or non-existent. At national level a drug strategy targeted at young people is in place with two key strands. One is Positive Futures which aims to divert

those at risk into sports activities, the other is an education strand focused on exploring different ways of delivering drug education for 11 to 13 year olds. There is a broad national target to reduce drug use, particularly class A drugs, among young people but no specific goal that states by how much drug use should be reduced. The Prime Minister's Strategy Unit is currently working on the development of the National Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy but there is, as yet, no specific target to reduce problem drinking among young people. Targets are only one way of achieving change but they can be a starting point in building commitment and momentum in tackling some social problems. More ambitious and clearly defined targets to tackle problem drink and drug use among young people, and the investment to achieve them, are needed.

### 3. New types of professionals

The skills of youth workers and other professionals working with young people are crucial. There is scope to develop jobs that involve supporting pupils in school and other settings during the day and in youth settings in the evening[14]. People who can apply a broad range of skills and knowledge when working with young people will be vital as new services for young people develop and new programmes are rolled out. These will be people who can gain the trust and confidence of a young person and have a range of options available to support them. It is also important that young people do not get referred from one service provider to another in order to access the support and advice

they need. Building trust and confidence in one adult worker takes time and may be hard enough. If a young person is then referred on to another service or source of support his needs may simply fall through the net.

IPPR has already argued that a major realignment of professional boundaries in social care will be required in future and ultimately the creation of new professions (Kendall and Harker 2002). One key example of where there is real potential for this to happen is in the creation of a new profession combining youth and community work, social work, adolescent mental health services and careers services to provide more holistic services for young people. This is role covered on the continent by 'social educators'.

> *A 2020 vision would see a unified profession being established to provide staff for youth and community work settings, social work teams, youth justice services, teenage health profession, adolescent mental health services, residential homes, foyer schemes, adolescent careers services and Connexions.*
> Liam Hughes in Kendall and Harker (2002).

This model of provision will take time to develop. Practice is likely to be patchy and much is dependent on the skills and approach of individual youth workers. Part of the problem in Tile Hill is a lack of youth workers ready to champion such a rounded service. Those that are available are often over-stretched and more able to provide programmes of activity than programmes of support and advice. Specialist services are tailored to meet

particular needs, such as a drug and alcohol advice and treatment service and a sexual health, alcohol and drug outreach project. The extent to which these services can join up with mainstream youth work provision is hampered both by the lack of such provision on a regular basis and also in some cases a lack of venues from which to provide advice and support. Services focused on effective interventions and support in relation to drug and alcohol use, mental health problems or sexual health advice for example will often have to cover a wide area. As such they cannot compensate for the value of having a local and trusted point of contact who can spend time building up trust and confidence over time and recognise young people's needs in the round.

The development of the Connexions service and its focus on the 'Personal adviser' role however had exactly this model of provision in mind when it was developed. Personal advisers are located in schools, colleges and community settings. There is a focus on one-to-one support, information and guidance. Advisers are expected to be able to assess need and opportunities, to maintain contact over time and to work with community networks and other agencies to meet the full range of young people's needs. The personal adviser has become a new profession, with a diploma for the role to match. A yearlong course trains advisers with backgrounds ranging from careers, housing, youth justice, health and social work to NVQ level 4. Personal advisers are expected to develop skills in working with young people on issues and projects from sexual health to building confidence. In Tile Hill all of the

personal advisers are school based. Their workload is dominated by those young people who are most excluded, often defined as those who are excluded from or opting out of school.

The extent to which Connexions Personal Advisers can match the vision of a rounded 'one-stop' service for young people has still to be proven. The content of advice and guidance is biased towards education, training and careers advice with a much smaller billing for other issues such as housing, bullying or substance abuse problems. This is true for both for the content of the advice given and for the other agencies to which young people in touch with Connexions are referred[15]. The service has grown primarily out of the old career advice service and in its development schools were keen not to lose the old careers service function that they relied upon. The new, broader personal adviser role will take time to develop and embed itself. There is a job to be done in meshing together the different traditions of the different types of workers: social workers, youth workers, career's advisers and teachers. The bias of Connexions targets however is also in favour of education and work related outcomes. The focus is on reducing the proportion of 16 to 18 year olds not in education, employment or training and increasing the numbers of teenage mothers, care leavers and other target groups who are in education, employment or training. Those targets that concern other issues, such as drug use, are more loosely based, for example, 'to refer young people, with a drug related problem, to specialist support'[16]. Even if the more rounded 'personal adviser' role is realised in prac-

tice, targets still emphasise educational achievement above all else.

There are signs to suggest that, even with time, the more rounded personal adviser able to respond and support the full range of young people's needs may not emerge in Connexions. In addition to problems around recruiting and attracting sufficient numbers of personal advisers there are problems in the way that the service has been configured. The first is that the extent to which personal advisers offer specialist or generic support is not resolved. The emphasis appears to lean towards the role of personal advisers in referring young people on to other, more specialist providers, whilst at the same time retaining contact with them themselves. This begins to tackle the issue of fragmented services but doesn't really answer the need for services themselves to be shaped round individuals rather than particular types of specialist support. The personal adviser becomes the 'youth broker' (Bentley and Gurumurthy 1999) and not necessarily the trusted and knowledgeable youth worker who gains the confidence of a young person over time.

The second challenge for Connexions is its reach. The service tries to achieve a delicate balance between being a universal service and a targeted one. The reality is that it can't be both and the focus on those young people on the periphery of society and at risk of exclusion become the main focus. This is the right focus but it still leaves a major gap in terms of providing the less intensive, more everyday support and guidance that young people need and want.

It is within the youth service that this gap should be picked up but we have already seen how this can be blighted in areas like Tile Hill by lack of staff, a divided community, poor local transport and lack of regular provision. Even the new funding allocated by Government is unlikely to stretch to cover this. Another issue is how Connexions and the national youth service can pull together. Both aim to bring disaffected young people back into society, but the extent to which individual partnerships have embraced the service varies greatly across the country[17]. Part of the challenge is in breaking down professional boundaries and recognising the shared agenda of supporting young people.

We know that workforce development among those delivering services for children and young people is a priority. The *Every Child Matters* Green Paper proposes a Children's Workforce Unit to develop a pay and workforce strategy. In 2002 Government announced funding for 450 places on the first national management training programme for senior youth service managers in the voluntary and statutory sectors. Behind this renewed drive to raise professional standards and develop skills among those working with young people there is a need for professionals to have a nuanced understanding of what underpins problem behaviour and low expectations and the skills and expertise to tackle them. 'Together Academy'[18], launched as part of the anti-social behaviour action plan and with a focus on joint working and knowledge sharing, may offer some help here.

## 4. Sooner or later? Not an either/or choice

In part a response to the death of Victoria Climbié and the subsequent Lord Laming inquiry the current *Every Child Matters* Green Paper stresses the importance of early intervention and ensuring children and families receive help before it is too late. Proposals include the integration of key services across education and social services for children and young people within 'Children's Trusts', to be led by a new post – Director of Children's Services.

There is consensus that support and service provision in the early years of a child's life can have a big impact on tackling poverty and boosting later life opportunities. Parenting support, good quality childcare, creative play and enabling parents to access employment opportunities are key components of the Sure Start programme for example. Plans are also afoot for Children's Centres to be established in each of the twenty per cent most deprived neighbourhoods in England and Wales. These would combine nursery education, family support, employment advice, childcare and health services in one place. The Children's Fund also takes the preventative model and receives the lion's share of the Children and Young People's Unit budget. It is targeted at providing activities and interventions to support 5-13 year olds. Provision is often in the form of clubs and play schemes.

> *Our commitment as a party is social justice from cradle to the grave but we know that the months that do most to determine life chances are the months from the cradle to the nursery school*
>
> Gordon Brown, Labour Party conference speech October 2003

In *An Equal Start* IPPR also identified the crucial importance of early intervention and support to try and break the link between children's life chances and the circumstances they are born into.

> *Even though they are of equal worth, children are not born equal. To a great extent the trajectory of our lives is set before we are born. A child's inheritance –the economic circumstances, health, cognitive ability, personality traits and parental expectations of each new-born – immediately place them on a hierarchy of life chances […] Achieving an equal start is dependent upon a willingness to prevent (or compensate for) the disadvantage that begins well before birth.*
>
> Kendall and Harker 2003

Our focus in Tile Hill was on older young people, those in their teens. Within this age group there are big differences between those aged 13 and 14 and those aged 16 and 17 for example. There was a sense that those in their early teens would 'graduate' through different stages of behaviour and activity. Those 12 and 13 year olds who were on the peripheries of the group hanging out by the shops now may well feel that their places are reserved for them to be more central players in the future when they are older.

The need for supportive, enabling services for young people in their teens, like the ones involved in *Tile Hill Uncovered*, is just as important as it is for younger children. Early intervention versus later intervention is not an either/or choice. The value of early intervention may be lessened if it is not built upon and sustained over time. Sub-teens

and teenagers now have also already missed out on early intervention.

By the time young people reach their teens the job of interrupting a cycle of poor attainment, problem behaviour and low self-esteem is harder. At this age the interventions on offer may appear to come too late. In the long-term the establishment of consistent and sustained supportive provision for children is vital in building the foundations for more effective youth work when they get older. But it is also important to believe that it is never too late to change the course of a young person's life and to enable them to expect more for themselves. There still remains however at least one generation for whom the support offered by programmes like Sure Start and the Children's Fund was not in place. This includes the participants of the *Tile Hill Uncovered* project. There are also some young people's whose circumstances will change. The sense that interventions by this age are 'too late' can lead to the default option for dealing with 'problem' teenagers being in the form of interventions from the criminal justice system.

We still have to do right by those who have already missed out. They too need regular provision of engaging services. The sense of making up for lost time with this age group and tackling entrenched problems may hold less appeal than a fresh start with younger children but the task is no less important.

### What role for parenting support?

The focus on early years work and intervention is married with some willingness on the part of the state to get involved in the parenting role. Initially tentative steps were taken to provide parenting classes and advice for parents of young children. Programmes like Sure Start can provide a supportive environment in which parenting advice is more likely to be seen as enabling and helpful rather than heavy handed and interfering. Positive progress is being made by Sure Start in Tile Hill although they are only just about to open a permanent base.

This remains however, sensitive territory and many will still subscribe to the view that parenting is exclusively the job of the parent. Yet there is a need to be more up front about the pressures of parenting and the extent to which it can be a difficult job to get right – not just for parents in poor, rundown areas but for all parents. Parenting is down to the parent but wider society also has a role to play. The dilemma was recently captured by Richard Reeves in the *New Statesman*. He described the negative impact of the 'privatisation of parenting':

> *The insulation of children from broader society reflects and accentuates the detachment of broader society from child rearing. Raising children is being privatised into the hands of their parents; it is seen as a job only for them, not for all of us. This erosion of collective responsibility for children represents perhaps the gravest threat of all to our hopes for a space for childhood.*
> (Reeves 2003)

Part of the difficulty is that parenting support is most readily available in particular types of areas, notably those that are poorest and most disadvantaged. There is real danger that state intervention in parenting is only considered appropriate and necessary for those

who live in such areas rather than being seen as a universally needed and available resource.

Parenting support and advice is also only gaining ground with parents of younger children. The issue of what role there is for parenting support for parents of older children and teens is not resolved. Interventions tend to be punitive rather than supportive by this age. The recent high profile example of a London mother being taken to court for her child's non-attendance at school is evidence of this more punitive approach. The Government also recently announced plans to intro-duce on-the-spot fines for parents who allow their children to skip school[20]. Fixed penalty notices of between £25 and £100 would be imposed by council offi-cials, head teachers and police as an alternative to taking parents to court.

There needs to be more on offer to these parents than sticks to beat them when they do a 'bad' job. What form this support might take and how it should be framed requires further investigation. As a starting point there should be a focus on involving parents in youth provision for teenagers in the same way that there is when providing services for young children through programmes like Sure Start and the Children's Fund. Those providing services and support for teens may view the parents as the cause of the problem and as a result exclude them by offering an alternative rather than an additional form of support. Engaging parents with teenagers in a positive way must be a priority. This is new ground to be explored but first steps need to be taken.

There may be some hope in the new Parenting Fund announced in the 2002 Spending Review. But it is unclear whether it will be bold in offering parenting support for those with teenagers – and indeed whether there is an appetite for such support. The fund is worth £25 million and will go directly to the voluntary and community sector to support parenting and parenting organi-sations. Its objectives are to strengthen the capacity and size of those organisations delivering parenting support and reach those who have least access to support currently. The focus needs to be on enabling and not instructive forms of support and advice. Equipping parents with skills and know-how rather than lecturing them or providing them prescriptions for 'good' parenting is the key.

## 5. Involving young people

The final and perhaps most important lesson that can be learned from Tile Hill is the importance of implicating young people themselves in the successful provision of services for young people. Young people need to feel part of their community, to have a clear sense of the part they play in it and own and take responsibility for its problems as well its assets.

Young people in Tile Hill felt that the community would be boring without them. But they felt that others typified them as a problem, a nuisance, or simply not a priority. This may not be the reality of how other residents and service providers view young people but the perception runs deep. Young people in Tile Hill also had little sense of their

capacity to improve their lot. They looked to service providers to take the lead and saw themselves as playing a lobbying role rather than a delivery role. Some examples of more engagement with young people in developing better services were evident. A number of young people for example had worked with the local area-co-ordination team to develop funding bids for activities such as paint balling and day trips. This was the exception rather than the rule however and there was no single route in for young people to play a more active role in developing services.

The importance of giving greater voice to young people and recognising the role and contribution they can play in society is gaining ground. At national level the Children and Young People Unit have established core principles for the participation of children and young people and place a requirement on all government departments to show how they will fulfil them in their area of work (CYPU 2001). There is a growing movement of active Youth Councils at local authority level and a range of programmes seeking to network young people nationally in policy debates and decision-making, not least the UK Youth Parliament. Coventry itself has a Youth Service run Democracy Project aimed at involving young people in decision-making and citizenship programmes.

Such initiatives to involve young people are gaining momentum for a number of reasons. There are fears that young people are apathetic and need to be encouraged to participate in politics and, later in life, voting. There is a growing awareness and commitment the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, including pressure from some MPs and peers to incorporate it into British law. More simply there is a pragmatic recognition that the delivery of public services works best when service users are engaged in shaping how those services can best meet their needs. The Department of Health Quality Protects guidance for example requires local councils to listen to and involve looked after young people in the development of services. The Connexions service has also put considerable emphasis on engaging young people in the development of services. Young people, for example, have sat on interview boards for regional chief executives and personal advisers and each partnership has a young people's reference group.

There is a proliferation of requirements and guidance now emerging on the participation of young people in policy and decision-making and in shaping services. In Tile Hill this does not appear to be translating into something visibly different on the ground. Young people tend to feel on the peripheries of decision-making and the receivers rather than the shapers of services. At times their opinions and ideas are clearly at odds with those of local service providers. The most obvious example is the mismatch between young people's accounts of their behaviour and the way that they felt that the police respond to anti-social behaviour such as street drinking and gathering in-groups. Rather than young people and the police talking at cross-purposes there is a need to create spaces where they can talk openly and honestly and agree a definition of what problem behaviour is and

how the police working with young people can best tackle it. This conversation needs to happen at national as well as local level. A number of national children's charities[21] have suggested that there is a danger that the current focus of the debate on anti-social behaviour, whether it is taking place locally in communities like Tile Hill or nationally, targets young people as the key perpetrators. The reality is that the majority of young people do not commit crime and are more likely to be the victims of crime than the cause of it. A dialogue across generations on this issue could be the starting point for a different type of relationship between young people and the police in Tile Hill.

There is scope for much more, particularly in involving young people in creating the activities and places for young people to meet, interact and develop that the residents of Tile Hill are crying out for. There is good practice in this area and projects that should inspire others. The challenge is in creating mechanisms to enable young people to develop, manage and lead their own youth provision and initiatives, including developing bids for locally available pots of money and deciding how services can best meet their needs and ambitions. This requires strong support and a local champion who will encourage and support young people's participation work. To instil in young people a real sense of ownership also requires some risk taking on the part of adult service providers who may have their own ideas about what will work best.

There are different models of engaging young people in shaping and delivering services and giving them a sense that they have the capacity to change things in their area. Below are three models for involving young people in communities and examples of how they are used in practice.

### Young people shaping, overseeing and managing services

The best initiatives do not just consult young people about what they want, but let them influence how a local service is provided. Their involvement might relate to the development of a new youth centre or rethinking a drug strategy that isn't working, for example. Young people can help to identify and define the problem and gain responsibility for developing solutions and putting them into practice. To do this young people may form part of a governing body, steering group or managing body, overseeing all aspects of a service. There is also a strong argument for young representatives on many statutory bodies, including school-governing bodies.

This way of working demands a high level of commitment from the young participants and from service providers. Service providers may be reluctant to involve young people in setting priorities and allocating budgets for local services. Schools for example tend to be guilty of giving school councils autonomy over only small budgets. It is important that young people are supported in their role and given space and resources to develop confidence and skills. Young members of steering groups and management committees also need to be able to reflect and represent the views of their peers in the wider community and attention needs to be

paid to engaging with those who are 'hard to reach'. There should be opportunities for other young people to have their say and for new recruits to come on board at regular intervals.

*Case study:*
***The Parallel, Bolton Primary Care Trust***

**The idea for this young people's sexual health centre emerged from consultation with more than a hundred local young people on how to deal with high teenage pregnancy rates. The young people consulted were invited to join a steering group to make the centre a reality. Fourteen young members have worked together over the past year, helping architects to design the look and layout of the centre, and interviewing all staff, from GPs to caretakers. They chose the name and designed the logo and posters. All records are confidential to ensure that young people feel safe discussing very personal issues and there are large rooms for group sessions and discussion. The young people's steering group gives young people ownership of the centre. It is run for young people, by young people, a factor that looks set to make it a success.**

*Case study:*
***Lambeth Youth Council***

**Lambeth Youth Council was set up in February 2002 to involve young people in improving Council services and policy. The majority of its members come from black and ethnic minority communities. There are now over 100 young people working with the Youth Council on projects ranging from teenage pregnancy to police Stop and Search practices. They have trained more than fifty 16-19 year olds as peer educators to go into schools to talk to students about teenage pregnancy. They are now working on a lesson plan for primary schools. Stop and Search is also a big issue for young people in the area. The Youth Council developed new guidelines and trained a group of newly trained police officers on how to conduct Stop and Search more sensitively. They are currently producing a video showing interviews with senior police officers and young people about the issue. The Youth Council is expanding to form Town Centre Youth Forums in different parts of the borough. Members are supported as school governors and on the Community Police Consultative Group. Lambeth Youth Council won the Young People's Award in the IPPR/Guardian Public Involvement Award 2002.**

### Young people as fundraisers and grant givers

Involving young people in fundraising, grant giving and managing budgets gives them real ownership of initiatives. There has recently been an increase in the number of grants that young people can apply for themselves and a growing proportion of funding for youth projects demands that young people are meaningfully involved in deciding how the money is spent. Giving greater emphasis to 'Children's Voices' is one of the four priorities of the £80m Local Network Fund, for example. The Government has also launched a £0.5m Consultation Fund specifically aimed at projects that allow under 19s to have their say.

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**YouthBank UK is a collection of young people's grant making organisations. Local YouthBanks provide small grants to projects led by young people who have ideas for projects to improve their communities. It is young people themselves who make decisions about how local YouthBanks are managed and run and they decide which projects to fund. Each YouthBank decides its own funding criteria and application process, but many make it accessible by allowing applications by video or storyboard. So far, more than £250,000 has been awarded in grants in the UK. Projects awarded grants are varied: £1000 was given to a young people's group in Northern Ireland to make a peace-building documentary video and £5000 to a Salford youth club based in a special needs school to support a theatre training programme for example.**

*Case study:*
***YouthBank UK***

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**The Interchill project is an internet and drop in centre for young people in Liverpool. Young people raised the money needed over a period of 5 years. They have benefited from several lottery grants and in total have raised over £250,000. They own the building in which the centre is housed and they employ the workers in the centre. The centre offers access to an Internet suite with 20 PCs and a drop in centre for young people with two full time workers. They have recently opened to the public and offer a range of courses for young people using the centre.**

*Case study:*
***Interchill, Internet drop-in centre in Liverpool***

### Young people as volunteers

Young people can be involved as volunteers, playing an active role in changing their communities for the better. Volunteering has many potential benefits, both for young people and for those they are helping. They are likely to develop new skills and an increased sense of responsibility and understanding. They may mix with new people they might not normally encounter and strengthen links between generations within a community. Volunteering can empower young people and demonstrate to them and others that they can make a difference.

The value of volunteering has been long established through schemes such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and The Prince's Trust. However, there is scope for extending the opportunities available to young people and expanding the definition of volunteering to encompass a broader notion of 'civic service'. Volunteering could be linked, for example, to financial incentives and education. IPPR has previously suggested that higher education students could be paid to act as student teaching assistants in local schools. (Piatt 2002).

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*Case study:*
***Millennium***
***Volunteers***

**There has been recent interest from the Government in encouraging and formalising volunteering through schemes such as Millennium Volunteers. Millennium Volunteers is a nationally recognised scheme which young people can include on their CVs. They gain an Award of Excellence if they complete more than 200 hours of service. 20,000 young people are currently involved. Projects range from website design to sports coaching to helping the homeless.**

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*Case study:*
***Young***
***Volunteer***
***Challenge***

**The Department for Education and Skills is piloting the Young Volunteer Challenge to allow young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to take part in a 'Gap' year style volunteering experience. It is targeting those for whom financial hardship is the main barrier to volunteering and will pay £45 living expenses per week as well as a £750 cash award at the end of the 9-month period. At present 60 volunteers are participating. The scheme is expanding and may well be a precursor for a much more expansive programme.**

# Conclusion

**There is some way to go in developing policies and services that add up to a serious commitment to young people, not just in their early years but well into their teens. The choice between earlier or later intervention is a false one.**

Too much current provision is dependent on short-term and project based funding. There is a lack of investment in building capacity to deliver good quality youth work and support services in terms of developing modern youth spaces and attracting committed staff. Youth Service budgets have increased, but not enough and youth services may still slip off the agenda at local level. A national audit and evaluation of services for teenagers is needed.

This report highlights the need to link up the goals of education, diversion and support that currently segment different approaches to work with young people. Services are not yet good enough at meeting young people's needs in the round. This means recognising that different young people need different levels and types of support. For those who need most support, interventions appear fragmented and often only kick in when it is too late.

Funding needs to start adding up. Service providers need to share a common sense of what the needs and issues affecting the young people in their area are. It is inevitable that funding will be available for different things but the onus is on local partners to work successfully together to deliver. The new Children's Trusts, combining health, education and social care services, may go some way in achieving this. But the extent to which their focus will be on teenagers and whether the Youth Service and programmes like Positive Activities for Young People will be incorporated is not clear.

There is potential to develop a Sure Start for teenagers: a 'Sure Futures' or 'Sure Progress' programme. This would recognise the range of services and support and teenagers, and their parents, might need to access and would bring them together within a single programme.

The vision for youth services should be of integrated services and youth workers who are able to respond to different range of needs rather than channelling young people into a single intervention route. Joining up services is not the only thing that is important. New types of workers are needed too, similar to the 'social educator' profession that is used on the continent. The Connexions service needs to prove that it is can be the rounded service that it set out to be. Targets driving personal advisers should more fully reflect the notion of meeting young people's needs as a whole and not prioritise education, training and work to the exclusion of other positive outcomes. These new targets must be meaningful, challenging and linked to hard outcomes. They might include for example: a percentage reduction in drug and alcohol use among young people; a measured decline in the number of young people saying that they are bullied; or a demonstrable increase in young people's understanding of how to ensure good sexual health. This type of target is necessary to avoid reverting to old-style youth work where evidence of success is anecdotal rather than evidence-based. The shortage of qualified youth workers must also be addressed. A starting point may be more work at community level to attract and develop youth workers who will commit to an area over time.

Young people need to own both the assets and the problems in their community – and be part of the solution in tackling them. Young people described how they were not respected by others and talked about their behaviour at times as a response to what they perceived as negative perceptions towards them. Service providers may well argue the reverse – that young people don't gain respect because their behaviour is often disrupting and they don't take responsibility for their actions. The issue of anti-social behaviour, how to tackle it and how to work with young people to reduce it has potential to kick start a new type of dialogue between young people, the police and others working on the issue in communities like Tile Hill. Good practice and innovation also exists in enabling young people to get involved in shaping and delivering excellent youth provision.

Most importantly there is a need for a story about young people that is not just about young people at risk, young people in education or preparing for work or young people being diverted from anti-social or criminal behaviour. The story of young people must add up to something more positive. It must convey that we are interested in young people not just because they will be adults one day in the future but because it is important to do right by them now.

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1  MORI, Quality of Life Indicators survey conducted on behalf of the Audit Commission, 2002. 43% of respondents chose Activities for Teenagers as one of the most important things to improve in their area, compared to 16% choosing health services and 7% choosing education provision. The next 3 important things to improve were crime, road and pavement repairs and public transport.

2  Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, *Survey of English Housing 2002-2003*, August 2003

3  In previous research for IPPR's communities programme, Canley (which neighbours Tile Hill), Hillfields and Earlsdon were used as case studies.

4  Frontline AV is a youth arts organisation based in Coventry that runs programmes of activity and events with young people including DJ-in workshops, singing groups, graffiti, break dance projects, video and photo projects.

5  Only 16% of 11-15 year olds buy alcohol from off-licences, a decrease from 26% in 1996.

   48% said that they never buy alcohol, and 17% buy it from friends and relatives. Department of Health Survey 2002

6  Tile Hill is not eligible for Neighbourhood Renewal Funding, European Social Funding or Single Regeneration Budget funding.

7  The Positive Activities for Young People programme is the most obvious example here.

8  *Transforming Youth Work: resourcing excellent youth services* (DfES, Connexions, 2002)

9  This point is highlighted by the National Youth Agency in *An Adequate and sufficient youth service: the duties of local authorities* Spotlight, Issue 10, January 2003, NYA

10  *Investment for Reform*, which set out education commitments following the Spending Review 2002 settlement, said that extended

schools would be created in the most deprived areas, and support local delivery of extended services in many other schools.

11  *Connexions Customer Satisfaction Survey: Phase 1 Partnerships, Research Report 463* (DfES 2003)

12  For discussion of the need to develop more diverse and good quality jobs in the regions see Adams, Robinson and Vigor, *A new regional policy for the UK* (IPPR 2003)

13  *Transforming youth work.* See above.

14  See *From victims of change to agents of change: the future of the teaching profession* (Johnson and Hallgarten, IPPR 2002) for further discussion of

the development of teaching and related professions

15  See *Connexions Satisfaction Survey.* See above

16  *Targets for the Connexions Service 2003-2004, Self-Assessment Schedule, 2003/2004* (DfES 2003)

17  National Youth Agency in *Guardian*, January 2003

18  Home Office 2003

20  'Parents of truants risk spot fines', *Guardian*, 4th October 2003

21  see for example the National Children's Bureau and Children's Society

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