

# city centre project



## annual report

1979 - 80

AFTER THE FIRE - The past year and the future Anne Pugh  
Pete Philippson

Shortly after putting the finishing touches to our Annual Report last March, some of what we'd written became history. The office, Shades itself, went up in flames. The fire brigade reported it as caused by electrical faults. This, in fact, did not surprise us, since we had previously protested to our landlords via our solicitor about the state of the building. One of the young people who came to us, homeless, wrote this about the condition of our office: "The half derelict building did not dispel my prophetic pessimism. It gave me the impression of being a hide-away, an official help group that needed help itself. As I walked the dark and musty staircase I couldn't help feeling guilty at adding to their problems..."

We knew the office was depressing and dirty. Everyone else had left the large building apart from us and a few rats, but we couldn't find another office and the office work was an important part of our service. I'd often thought that the time spent repairing the office, door locks, smashed toilets, no water, etc., could be more usefully spent finding a new office (little did I know how long it would take to find one). Incidentally, such was the repair job done on our front door, courtesy of Ian Wyn and Steve Evans, that the fire brigade found it easier to cut through the wall than to break the door down. So, in the end the fire took the decision for us and we abandoned the old Shades at 14 Piccadilly.

The fire happened the weekend when we were all away at the Keele Detached Youth Work conference. When news of the fire reached us, the reaction of the two remaining workers was not, understandably, one of dismay and despondency. So there we

were, April 1979, and the Project was down to two workers and minus an office.

Back in 1978-9, we'd thought it desirable to get a decent office to work in, and a worker had spent a considerable amount of time trying to find somewhere for Shades to move to. He reported back that it was impossible. Undaunted (?), we were determined to find somewhere, especially as we now had to since the demise of the previous office!

April came and went, and I realised that contacting estate agents on the phone wasn't doing any good. It was more a matter of making a personal approach so that our requirements registered in their minds in the event of something coming onto their books that might be suitable. Throughout May I visited the estate agents regularly, reminding them of what we were looking for. Evening opening was our biggest problem. If it hadn't been for this, we could have found somewhere relatively easily, but all the buildings shut at about 6p.m. and they certainly were not going to want to be open to the public until 9p.m. to coincide with our opening hours. Evidently, we needed somewhere with independent access or we needed to alter the nature of our service, which we were loathe to do. We had an offer of an office where we could have a front door key and could let people in and out, but this arrangement was hardly ideal.

The City of Manchester Industrial and Commercial Property Register, available from the City of Manchester Industrial development Unit, was very useful, as were the officers of the Unit. The Register comes out quarterly and lists the Property to let. Unfortunately, there was nothing suitable in it for us.

By July, I had actually viewed and enquired after 34 strong possibilities, all to no avail. They included such gems as sharing facilities with a Martial Arts Centre and a basement with entrance through a goods shute. Our management insisted that not all homeless people were that small or agile, and besides which, how would they get out again? One of the more viable options was renting a railway arch from British Rail, but, despite our desperation, we had a feeling this was well tried and tested in the homelessness field. Anyway, the only ones available were in the more secluded spots of the City.

While all this was going on, we were putting the pressure on our former landlords via their agents, who were able to soak up that pressure like a dry sponge. Our grievances have yet to be redressed, but that is largely in the hands of our solicitor. We had sympathetic noises from them that they might try to find us alternative accommodation, but they obviously thought better of it.

We persistently pestered our own network of friends and agencies to see if they knew of any office accommodation in the City Centre. This was similar to the grapevine system we use for hearing about flats that are about to come vacant for the young people we work with. Unfortunately, the grapevine for office accommodation wasn't so productive. Perhaps some agencies were none too happy about having us as immediate neighbours, believing us to be some sort of inherent security risk in our presence. We actually came across very little prejudice against us as an organisation working with the homeless.

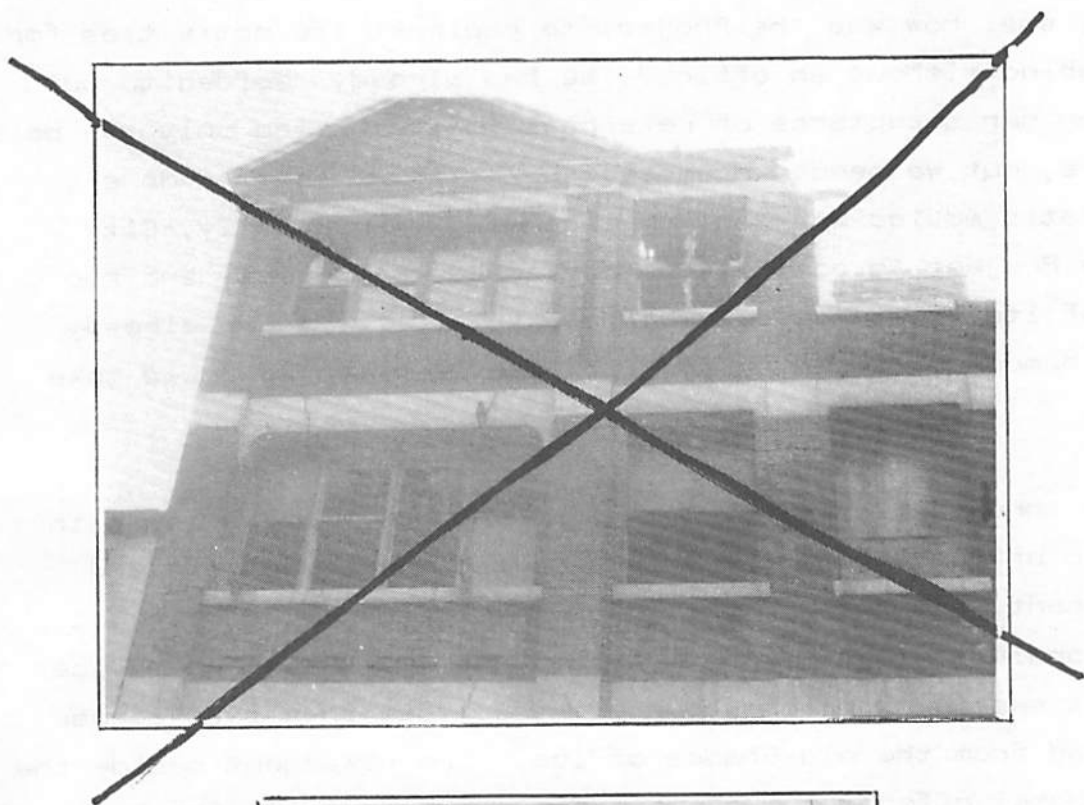
During July and August we systematically combed certain more likely areas of the City Centre, noting down all the empty property and To Let signs, and then following them up. The area of town around Oldham Street was our favourite area. With the coming of the Arndale Centre the centre of town has

shifted away from Piccadilly, leaving an array of closing down shops, particularly on Oldham Street. We discovered that the landlords preferred empty property to lowering the rents, and the rents were too high for us. In any event, even if we could have afforded the rent, it is unlikely that the City Council would have favoured giving us planning permission for change of usage, since they are trying to maintain the area as a shopping centre. They would have preferred a retail let. We had a similar experience with a very small shop front on Tib Street which, in the end, the agents, City Estates, were able to let as a shop.

By now things were looking grim. We had a few applications pending, including one for the Manchester Area Resource Centre basement, when suddenly we hit the jackpot after months of time-consuming searching. After yet another wild goose chase, Frank Westbrooks' Estate Agents listened to what we were, in fact looking for, and, as it turned out, they have some empty office accommodation with its own access. It was more or less just what we were looking for. Contracts were drawn up, extensive repairs were carried out and in December we were in to decorate, ready for opening on January 2nd 1980, hoping to be one of the first steps in the revitalisation of an area of town (by the old Fish Market) which has been neglected and left to decay.

We have spent considerable amounts of time on the office, both in finding one and then in decoration and furnishings, but we now have a very useful resource and a pleasant environment to work in and where we can welcome in the young people, without fear of depressing them further by our gloomy surroundings.

Anne Pugh



The most immediate question facing us, on our return from Keele, was: how was the Project to redirect its activities for the period without an office? We had already decided to cut back on our acceptance of referrals due to having only two paid workers, but we needed a contact point if we were to do any systematic advice work on homelessness. Fortunately, City Centre Project is not just an office-based project, and for much of its existence did not have an office, so we already had a number of links in the City Centre which we could take up on.

Within three days, we had both wound up our association with the old office [getting electricity and phones cut off and bills sent, redirecting mail, and moving out files, etc. to the Coordinator's office - thanks Steve!], AND set up advice/contact sessions for one hour every weekday in a cafe across the road from the old Shades office. The newsagent beside the Grand Hotel offered to act as a distribution point for Survival Guides. And so the pattern was set for the next however many months.

As we expected, having no office, our opportunities for detached work and work with individuals increased greatly, opening up new directions for the Project as a whole, as you will see in the next section. Also as expected, our advice work suffered, as we had no telephone in the cafe, and agencies took a very long time to even begin to consider that any useful purpose could be served by referring homeless young people to a cafe table! Often, an alternative has been for them to phone workers' homes, the Youth Development Trust administrative office, Manchester Area Resource Centre, or Social Services to try and get us there: a practice we tried to discourage.

However, the people who did turn up for advice found that in some ways its quality had improved, since the cafe sessions did not double as a day-centre, and also once the hour was up, workers had time to go out flat-hunting or arranging a council flat with a homeless person.

'The road goes ever on and on' [Written Dec. 1979]

It is now over 6 months since the fire, and we are close to opening another office. As it became apparent that finding another office would not be just a matter of a month or so, our approach became less makeshift, and more geared to a long period as a purely detached project with an advice role inasfar as the cafe made this possible. The extra time spent with individuals showed that in individual work as well as in the office, our former approach had been encouraging over-dependence on the office, and that people had grown to the extent that, if pushed, they could establish their own lives without relying on us. The extra time spent in detached work showed that entirely new groups of young people were using the City Centre, groups with which the Project had little or no contact due to overcommitment to older groups. As one worker put it: "We have confused consistency of approach [good] with consistency of people [bad]".

In July, we were fortunate enough to get a STEP grant for 3 extra workers, and with a team of 5 we were able to consolidate these gains. At the time of writing, the areas in which we are working are:

- a) Advice work, now from day and evening sessions in cafes (Mon - Fri, evening only on Sunday), liaising with emergency overnight 'crashpad' accommodation for under-25's (organised by Community Action Projects) six nights a week, receiving referrals from Social Services, Manchester Night Shelter, Methodist Mission, as well as from our contacts in the City Centre comm-



unity.

- b) Continuing work with regulars in the all-night cafe, including arranging council accommodation or Social Security payments, and counselling work. Emphasis on the problems of young women, as a previously neglected area.
- c) Work with young prostitutes, mainly male: this is a growing feature in the City Centre.
- d) Work with young people round the shopping centres: problems of harassment, lack of opportunity, some homelessness.
- e) Preparing to open a new office.
- f) Long-term work: now mainly geared towards encouraging self-reliance; involves counselling, decorating, accommodation-seeking.
- g) Some work in first-aid therapeutic situations, e.g. with intending suicides or those who have totally given up trying to affect the course of their lives; here we are fortunate in being able to call on the YDT Community Mental Health Project [42nd Street] when the immediate crisis is past, and their expertise becomes vital.
- h) Written work: several pieces of written work are at present envisaged or started, including reports on c), d) and e) above.

To this list must be added training, since the Project offers both internal and external training opportunities in areas as disparate as self-defence and sociology.

As you can see from the above, the Project has maintained and extended its tradition of approaching its brief (homeless and drifting young people in Manchester City Centre) in many different ways, centring on the needs of the person or group we're working with rather than on a commitment to any one discipline, whether it be advice work, youth work, referral work or psycho-therapeutic work. This need to respond individually and effectively to the actual situation before us also contributes to

real personal growth among the workers, as we are ourselves challenged by the situation, rather than staying uninvolved and treating the situation as a one-way challenge to 'a client.'

Now and in the future      [Written March 1980]

The new office has now been open for 2 months. The internal work is done, and people and agencies are finding us - helped on by a most successful Open Day which we held for agency workers. In fact, the number of new young homeless people in February this year [27] is up on the same month last year [21]. This increase is in fact worrying us: if so many young people are becoming homeless this early in the year, and the number of young people becoming homeless increases with youth unemployment as in the past, this summer - when young people leave schools and colleges and are more likely to leave home - the numbers we shall have to deal with will become impossibly large - in August 1978, we had 97 new people come into the office, mainly homeless!

We seem to have avoided the over-dependency problems associated with the old office, and are able to devote our attention to the newly homeless. We are also able to broaden our activities away from work in the office: we are at present returning to our detached work commitments and revising the Survival Guide, and are preparing to reintroduce women's activities as a particular focus.

Our area of detached work has widened, with one new arcade already opened and two more on the way.

Community Action Projects is about to open a third house as a crashpad, which will increase our capacities in that area.

Forward planning is made more difficult, since we have not

been told whether our application for Inner Cities funding for 4 workers has been approved - a month before the grant is due to begin!

To sum up, in the future there will be lots of possibilities and lots of demands on us, which we hope we will continue to be in a position to take up.

N.B....N.B....N.B....N.B....N.B....N.B....N.B....N.B....N.B.

A decision was made that this Annual Report would primarily take the form of an impressionistic account of the workers' experience over the last 12 months. This was seen to be a more honest description of the work without an office. However, Shades remains concerned about the deteriorating situation among young people with whom we are working. These involve issues of changing City Centre policing, changes in the accommodation market, and the Local Authority's interpretation of existing legislation.

As far as the Project is concerned, we will be evaluating our experience over the last 12 months, regarding the changing role of the PMC, its use of volunteers, the search for accommodation. The Project will be producing reports on these aspects of our work.

The Project is managed by a Project Management Committee (PMC) involving workers and lay members. Its role is vital, involving training, interviewing, evaluation, etc. Over the year, its composition has changed, so:

Farewell Alistair Cox, Gary Worrell

Hello Pauline Edwards, Tony Baldwinson, Paul Fairweather

This year, instead of detailed office figures which do not apply, the three STEP workers and the student on placement from the Polytechnic have written their impressions of the work.

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### MARK EDGINGTON

Previously I'd worked at the Night Shelter, helping people move out if and when they/we found other accommodation; and also at a small co-operatively run bakery, where we'd each done a bit of everything.

The Shades advert attracted me as it was a chance to work with the young homeless people we'd been turning away at the Night Shelter in increasing numbers, and also to work in an informal set-up 'doing a bit of everything'. The day I started the job I realised my problems were just beginning. (What's he doing going on about his problems you may ask - I hope so, as I'm going to carry on!) It dawned on me that as the last office had burned down, I wasn't going to be an office based youth worker, I was going to have to do "detached work". Fearful of my own inadequacies, I regressed to my early adolescent belief that all knowledge was available in books, and started devouring such as "The Unattached" and "Making contact with unreached youth" - and finding from my initial forays into the City Centre that I seemed to be the only one "unattached" or "unreached"! I had so much freedom of action (and such a confusion of thoughts and ideas) that I didn't know what to do. It wasn't just that I was confused as to what my role was supposed to be (friend/helper/social worker/'agent of control') - I discovered that I was unreachable and would have to do something about it.

In the sense that I have had to confront major inconsistencies

in my view of the world [if a jumble of various liberal-theoretical stances can in honesty be called 'a view'] - and overcome such obvious obstacles as shyness; and my own preoccupation with trying to present a coherent identity to an impossibly wide variety of people; - I would say that being a worker at Shades has greatly contributed to my own growth (and even usefulness!)

Coming a little better to understand how self-confidence and reliance can 'occur', I regret that I've so little time left at Shades, and realise that my feelings that I've accomplished so little (apart from work on the office/advisory side of directly being of use to somebody) are not totally justified.

Which is all very well for me, but what about the young people - "to work with drifting and homeless young people" as the Shades brief is put. It would seem that for an increasing number of young people, external pressures are conspiring to push them into this category: the decline in the amount of private rented accommodation available, and the consequent price increases/the unwillingness of the DHSS to pay for essential furnishings even if a young person does succeed in getting a council flat/the growing rate of unemployment - particularly affecting young people without (and even with) marketable skills. It doesn't take a prophet to see how inexorably, in every field (housing, jobs, education, police harassment) things are getting worse. It's all very well young people being expected to become self-reliant, self-respecting, law-abiding consumers; but in a society that is reinforcing the opposite message - we've no use for you and whenever you try and exist we will harass you for being what we helped you become - it's not surprising that young people will quickly adapt to survive - or become 'delinquent' as many of our elders (and betters?) would label them.

I was looking for some way of finishing this piece off when

my eye fell upon an article in New Society by Jeremy Seabrook (a pity I can't put it all in!) about how we'll avoid doing what needs doing (on every level from the most personal to the most political):

"The poor are always with us...A convenient confusion between existential truths about our morality and quite alterable phenomena like poverty, acts as a refuge for our lack of will to attack the root of things that could be changed...What are interpreted as personal problems, the afflictions of individuals, stem from a long series of socially determined forfeits, a horrible sense of redundancy that has implications far beyond the decaying industrial function of the working class. All this has nothing to do with rising expectations or improved living standards. It is a measure of the imposition of a new and more general kind of poverty than that of scarcity. It is an aspect of that measureless damage to people, caused by the preservation of an economic system - that same system which kept so many of us in a state of severe material want until the recent past."

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#### "All in a night's work?"

Been in the Arcade, losing a lot of money to the one-armed bandits and talking to John and his mates (several of whom look like two-armed ones) - thinks - is this relevant, I'm supposed to be working with 'drifting and homeless young people' and John isn't young or homeless (though the Night Shelter could hardly be described as a 'home'). He is hard to get away from though; as hard as it is to believe some of what he tells me (do they let men of 5'2" fight at heavyweight?). Still, I'm not always honest either, I tell him I've got to meet somebody (little do I know!) and rush off to the "Golden Crummet" which Shades is using instead of the burnt-out office (though we're hoping the management don't notice and

charge us accordingly).

Stepping inside, I scan the tables to see who's in; The cleaning ladies' night out (or in?) at the corner table, the gaggle of chefs/waitresses and assorted hangers-on as far away from the customers as they can get (though not as far away as they'd like to be).

Suddenly I notice somebody looking intently at me as I timidly place the nauseous yellow 'Survival Guide' that indicates my vocation, and in a trice I'm surrounded; two young people and an even younger one (the waitress' little brother, telling me there's no apple pie or milk, but I can have a black tea and a dry tea-cake).

A young couple, thwarted in their romantic intentions by 3 unsympathetic Yorkshire parents have run away to Manchester. So far they've stayed in a nice hotel (£13 a night) - just missed getting jobs - the manager's so nice he's let them stay another 2 nights (which they now owe him for). They've checked out of there and booked into —'s, only £41 a week for Bed and Breakfast and evening meal, but they don't get on with the other people there and the person in charge told them they'd have to pay for 4 nights in advance and the DHSS haven't paid up yet so they can't go back, can they? So tonight they're broke, homeless, luggageless (they'll get it back when they pay the nice hotel man), and surprisingly, not too depressed. (Oh to be young and in love, and never to have run away from home before).

I'll be glad when we've got an office, I think, as I spend 34p (all in 2p's) to see if they can go back to —'s tonight (the proprietor is out and the guy says he can't do anything till s/he gets back); then trying Homeless Families (if only she were pregnant, we agree, they might be able to help, but childless couples usually get sent to —'s!) and finally we end up at one of the crashpads, where as they're about to

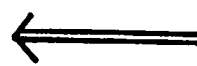
settle down for the night, I think I'll give —'s another try. "Of course they can come back tonight, I didn't give them a note for the DHSS for them to leave before their cash comes through!" Off they go towards —'s in a taxi (all part of the Shades service?) and I walk home in the rain because I've no money left, but relieved that they've somewhere to stay.

A week later I'm standing outside the 'Golden Crumpet' waiting to meet a friend (and then go to a cheaper cafe to have lunch!) - I see them eating inside - they come out and tell me everything is OK; they've got in touch with their parents, they've been back to pick up their last week's wages and recovered their luggage. The DHSS have come through and they've found a better Bed and Breakfast to stay in (it's also cheaper). With a warm 'Have a nice Christmas' they move off - they're going to have a look at a flat (these two are really together I tell myself, hoping it'll rub off on me!) - only £8,000 he says!

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START 1	"To travel hopefully is better than to arrive?"
2	STAYING WITH FRIENDS....
3	"Sorry, can't put you up any more, pal."
4	"A friend in need..."
5	"But you a note Land-"
6	

"OK, COME BACK TO MY FLAP."	"So what am I supposed to do?"
"What you do is your business."	"You should have thought of that before!"
"But you a note Land-"	

"So what am I supposed to do?"	"What you do is your business."
"You should have thought of that before!"	"We've r I I to

FINISH - A Save up enough for flat. THROW 1 TO FINISH.	Run out of ideas.	MOVE INTO BACK TO 6	INVITED TO SHARE TEN-ANCY WITH FRIENDS - GO TO FINISH
PERMANENT HOME!!			

TO MOVE, THROW DICE:  
 FOLLOW ARROWS  
 NO EXTRA GO FOR THROWING 6;  
 I.E. NO EXTRA CHANCES!

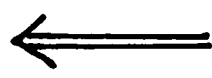
28 27 26 25 24 23

THE  
 VICI  
 GIRL

	7	8	9	10	11
	IVING IN HOSTEL	"Can't stick the hostel any more ..."	"So I'm going on the Council listin ..."	"...But I want a flat in Didsbury" BACK TO 6!	"I'll go anywhere (=Hulme)."
					JCINT TENANCY : : IN HULME
	eed ... "If you get money from the I'll give you rd."	"But you got Social Security 3 days ago."			Flat-mates move out-you can't afford rent on your own.
<b>E OUS CLE</b>		"That'll be 4 weeks in advance and ..."			
		"All full up."			IN HULME
	"No address - no Social Security!"	"You can't expect something for nothing!"			Electricity bill arrives - £70!!
NY RENIS Q	"No money for tea? - OJT!"	Kicked out IN ALL-NIGHT CAFE	MOVE WITH	IN LOVER	Try prostitution NEXT TURN - ON TO 23



12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18



22      21      20      19



### ALIMA SONNÉ

#### Personal experiences of a Youth Worker

To write this report is for me a confusing task, the outcome of which can only be confused. In order to clarify my position in Shades, I feel it is necessary to draw from my earlier experiences as a youth worker for other organisations. I began youth work at the age of 18 as the confused and directionless "unwed" mother of 2 small children living in overcrowded housing conditions in my parents' home in that most middle-class of areas - Colleyhurst.

My career in youth work began as an accident. The youth worker at the Youth Club I attended out of pity for the fact that

I was confined at home with two small children suggested I begin part-time work which would not only be socially useful but which would also serve the purpose of releasing me for a while from the prison of home.

After a short time I began to feel that I had found a way out of that pattern of early pregnancy and then nothing which characterised the lives of many of the young women of Colleyhurst estate. I felt that I by example could show the young girls who attended the Youth Club with their own babies for want of somewhere else to go that life does not end prematurely just for the sake of having children prematurely. In retrospect, I recognise this to be a very patronising attitude but at the time it was the single motivating force behind my job as a youth worker in Colleyhurst. It was not an attitude, however, which lasted a long time. I was forced to lose it by the verbal attacks of the young girls with whom I worked and who I proposed to set on the straight and narrow path of life. Their responses to my attempts to set a guiding example varied from that classic put-down "Who the fuck do you think you are, coming from Colleyhurst flats the same as us?" to less extreme remarks such as "This bloody job has gone to her head." After 2 years in this particular Youth Club I was sacked by another youth leader for reasons which I do not feel are relevant to this report. On reflection however, it is clear to me that this is the best thing that ever happened to me in my career as a youth worker.

In the interval between getting the sack and starting a new job I suffered great feelings of inadequacy. I felt that I had failed abysmally both as a youth worker and as a person. However, this period and the feelings it generated made me ask myself some very pertinent questions:

- 1) Was I going to function as a typical youth worker in this slum

area? Starting out with the assumption that nothing could help these kids anyway, they saw their function as custodians responsible for ensuring that the Youth Club was used "constructively", by their values, of course, not those of the kids. They were in effect simply "policing" the Youth Club with no more awareness of the real needs of the kids and the reasons why they behaved as they did than your average probation officer or University trained middle-class Social Worker. The answer to this question was a decisive NO. In addition, I was forced to realise that I could not merely limit my attention to young girls as a separate category, but must see "the kids" as a whole. So what type of youth worker was I going to attempt to become? That question I believe I had already answered in my role as youth worker in Colleyhurst, but it was an answer which did not suit my employer.

I believe that because my experiences of life have been more or less the same as the kids I work with that I have a certain amount of insight into the nature of their problems and life-styles generally, and feel that this removes many of the barriers youth workers without similar experiences may meet in communicating with the kids. Communication for me is the real point of youth work. It is a willingness to sit with kids whoever they are, whatever they are doing, to try to become an accepted fixture in their environment, one that in no way represents any authority other than myself and my relationship with these kids.

I have rejected the role of "police officer" or warden in favour of the role of confidante. There is no denying that this is a time-consuming process which puts the youth worker in the firing line of attacks from those who accuse him/her of inertia or lack of enthusiasm or just being plain lazy. Yet it is the only way that I feel a youth worker can operate effectively as a liaison between the adult world and the world the kids inhabit.

Since this period I have done many other jobs in youth work, including detached work which I do best and with the most confidence since it provides the scope for me to form relationships with kids who are not immediately alienated from me because of having seen me as the youth worker from the Youth Club which they do not like and got nothing out of using.

This will be seen as arrogance on my part, but I feel false modesty to be a waste of time in a youth worker whose job is to offer a sympathetic ear to kids who may never have known such. To be effective I feel it is necessary to have confidence in myself and in the usefulness of my job. I do not conceive of myself as a substitute parent, Social Worker, or teacher, but as a reasonably neutral figure in the sense that I represent no agency, carry the badge of no agency which might put the kids off.

With regard to my work for Shades, I can draw few conclusions owing to the fact that for the initial six months that I was involved with the Project I worked on a detached basis - no office being yet available. Thus it was in many ways a continuation of previous experience as a detached worker. Most of the administration of the project and office hunting was left to Anne and Pete who had the unenviable task of finding suitable premises from which we could operate and had to cope with all the associated problems. For the past two months we have had an office, and though I am happy to be a part of the office team, I feel that my real contribution is to be made in the field of detached work.

I have successfully cultivated a relationship with the kids in the Arndale Centre - an environment which can only be described as an open invitation to kids to take what they need, whether it be jeans, baby clothes, food if they are truanting, without paying for it, because it is all open plan. Then

security guards and police wonder what motivates these bored, out of work/out of school kids to theive. It is the ease of access to the goods the kids are taught by flashy advertising to want, but who are not provided with the resources to buy them legitimately, that is partially responsible for the high rates of theiving amongst the kids who go in the Centre. In my opinion, the Arndale is a total disaster for kids.

To date, my experience of homeless kids is quite limited, and I have still a lot to learn about the legal aspects of lomelessness, but this will come with time and additional experience.

### CATHERINE ARNOLD

When it came time to do the Annual Report, I didn't know what to write that wouldn't be repeating what other people have already said. However, I finally decided on something that would highlight the very different styles of work that Shades and its individual workers use.

### Loneliness and Listening with Street Credibility

It's 7.30 on a winter's evening. I enter the bright City Centre cafe; glance around at the other customers and sit down at the table that offers the optimum view.

This week it's my turn to work evenings; so Monday to Fricay I'm here 7.30-8.30p.m., waiting to see if a 'crasher' turns up. A crasher is one who makes use of Community Action Projects 'crashpad' service, a scheme by which people can have a bed for the night, and someone to talk to, if by tomorrow they'll be in a better position, or they need time to make a decision. They may be deciding whether to stay here in Manchester, with no home and job and the huge problems implicit in that. Shades is the agency which makes referrals for the crashpads, and accompanies the person to the crashpad. It seems a little strange, as Shades has no office, and hence no phone, a communications system the crash-houses sadly lack.

This situation has necessitated a complex rota system of telephone contacts, and we must attempt to ring the contact marginally before the crash-house does.

C.A.P. at present is fortunate in having two houses and people willing to live in them. Previously, just before our old office was burnt out, the Council had reclaimed the one house as they are short-term properties, we had many potential crashers but no crash-house. At this time, the situation is almost reversed. Strangers in town only discover Shades either through the grapevine, the network of people who inhabit the City Centre, or by being contacted by a worker. The majority of other agencies seem somewhat reluctant to send people to us. Surely we couldn't function from a cafe? How would we recognise each other anyway?!

It's just before Christmas, and the cafe looks onto the main bus station, so its fairly busy tonight, almost half full. It's a good cafe to hang around in, it's central, warm, has a phone and OK food, and, most importantly, no-one is at all concerned if you spend an hour over a coffee. Despite this, and maybe because it's not the cheapest, it's not the type of place one would do detached youth work in. The clientele want a quick meal, a hot drink whilst waiting for a bus or just a place to keep warm whilst waiting for a date.

The guy sitting at the table diagonally opposite me approaches and asks for a light. He sits down. He's not wanting a crashpad, no-one in here is. He looks lonely, late twenties, early 30's, quite well-dressed. He starts telling me the story of his life. How he's always been around Manchester till he joined the Navy, that is, his experiences around the world, coming home to Manchester. How bored he is now. He doesn't work



in the winter, he doesn't need to, he tells me. He owns several monkeys, and travels with them to holiday resorts all over the country, stay only a day or two at a time, photographing holidaymakers. His circuit takes in all the big events, from the Blackpool Illuminations to the Chelsea Flower Show. He asks me if I come here often. That's a difficult question. I'm here every night for a week, then not for a month. Stating that could demand a lengthy explanation which would involve exploring the intricacies of detached youth work. I attempt being vague, I seem to spend a lot of time explaining and justifying my job at present. I reply that I'm sometimes here a lot, sometimes not for ages. That satisfies him, and we talk about cafes and clubs in town, recalling ones that are no longer, and by reminiscing, highlighting our differences in age and culture.

He then tells me about his nice house and this very expensive club he'd like to take me to that I haven't visited. I say I probably wouldn't like it and anyway I work a lot of nights and I'm busy studying too, so have little enough time left over for my boyfriend. I feel they're lame excuses but that I want to be gentle in my rejection of him. He accepts that, and I make further excuses and phone calls and leave, shivering in the frosty air, not so much at the cold, but at all the loneliness and the thoughts of the 16 flights of unlit stairs leading to my deck access council flat in Moss Side.

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Two young girls, nervous and shy, waiting for me to open the office. I make us some coffee and ask what they want. It's a flat and a job. They left home, a large town about 50 miles away, 3 days ago. They supposedly went for a Sunday afternoon walk and they haven't either returned or contacted home since. They've been staying with friends and this morning arrived in Manchester, swinging city, full of golden opportunities for young ladies like themselves. Slowly, gently, teasing each

bit of information from them, I start putting together the jig-saw. I do this by alternating asking questions with role playing, taking the view of their parents. One of the first things I establish is their age, both are within weeks of their 18th birthday, yet, after they've relaxed a little, I discover they're frightened of being put into care. They believe they could be picked up by the police at any moment as they assume their parents have reported them as missing people. I allay this fear and relief fills the room, the atmosphere relaxes; and in a playful, jolly manner we explore together the possibilities of flats and jobs and money necessary for flats, both here and in their home town, assessing if there is a difference between the two towns, both in availability and money required in advance, as well as the actual rent, besides the initial outlay necessary for bedding, pots and pans etc. We also talked about parental fears. Very real fears of missing children and children leaving home, and what this means to parents. That's not to say we dwelt on psychological fears, but the mundane everyday ones, of all-night parties and boyfriends and associated fears, like pregnancy or "living in sin", or in other words, "sex and drugs and rock and roll". I learn to be open with them and say I did this and my parents reacted in that way, which is very different to my friend and her parents. They say that they intend returning home. I ask if they would like to ring their parents, or me to ring just to say they are safe and well. They prefer to face them tomorrow, unprepared, seeing as they've left it so long. I don't argue and indicate my admiration for making sure they have money for fares and food, saying very few people do, by the time they get to us. They express surprise at a place like Shades existing. We talk about Shades for a while and then we go to the crashpad and I introduce them to Tom and Tom asks them about themselves. They relate their tale, laughing at the frivolity of taking

such a huge step without any prior thought, which is contradictory to their seemingly firm belief that they could make out, earlier in the day. They are still determined to get a flat, but to become friends with their parents, not rebel against their authority. Sometimes some people have to act out their fantasies as a first step towards realizing them.

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Go down the all-night cafe to see who's around. Couple of girls that I know, both have been around the Project for a long time. One is always around the City Centre, the other was married, had a baby about a year ago, who's now in care. She's going to court tomorrow to see if she can have her baby back. There's little chance of that, which is depressing her, but she doesn't really accept it.

Go down a gay pub. Have a chat to Danny. I was with him a year ago when him and a mate got picked up on a drunk and disorderly charge. I'd been with them both and Danny was teetotal at the time and hadn't had a drink. When I protested, and tried using my youth worker status, I was threatened with arrest too. 2 hours and 3 phonecalls later, they were released. Danny decided to go and get fined £10 rather than try pleading innocent, despite my offer of being his witness. Still, they were grateful and he proudly introduces me to several people. I chat a while and see Mike, a 17 year old black kid who often frequents the pub. I hadn't seen him for a while, and so ask him where he's at, I've been worried as I know he had problems paying off his outstanding fine. That's OK, he owes very little now and asks me as usual could I buy him a drink and lend him bus fare home which he always promises to repay but never does. I tell him I've watched him put the money in the video machine, so I won't. Mike endeared himself to me the first time I visited this pub by warning me

it wasn't all it seemed as most of the guys were gay!

I then sit with a group of 7 or 8, chat to one of the women who works in the Market Centre, asking her about what goes on there these days. After a while, I get asked if I'm going to this Mod night they are starting in a club in Manchester. One guy, Paul, repeatedly asks me and I agree, although I nearly didn't make it as I'm wearing trainers and they're not 'smart' enough. Once inside, after and during repeated questioning of why don't I become a Mod?, Paul tells me the problems he has by being bisexual. It doesn't worry him, but it does his mother and girlfriend. It transpires he was a male prostitute for a while, but now he no longer does that, although he still sleeps with men. He appears caught by his sub-culture, all his friends are gay or bi-, his rock hero is Bowie and clothes and music, of a very set style, are the most influential thing to his peer group. He regards me as a punk, a label I refuse to accept, and is considering becoming a Mod, which is why he would like me to be one. His wish appears to be someone older to listen to him and not be outraged or shocked. I fit the bill, and despite there being only a 5-year age gap, the Mod records are all ones I remember from 10 years ago. Eventually I decide to leave and tell Paul I'll be in same pub next week. He suggests that after that we go down to a new gay club which has opened, which I agree to.

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Whilst I was writing the above accounts, the first thing that struck me was the loneliness. It has now become so much a part of my work life that I don't notice it to the extent that I once did. But I can't just accept it. I try to help a person to confront the loneliness to work out what the alternatives to their present life are. Detached Youth Work's main aim is knowing the scene and becoming part of a gang. This simultaneously causes the worker to undergo alienation: sitting

in a cafe, hours at a time, questioning why I'm there in the first place. One could draw a parallel between the "at risk" teenage girl and the detached youth worker. In certain pubs and cafes, a young girl may well be approached and offered large sums of money if she's prepared to work in a 'sauna'. The same man may well ask the youth worker the same question. Whilst this alerts me to the fact that this is going on and the two of us may have a common experience, it exemplifies the alienation of detached youth workers, that is, the worker, at least initially, is not a member of any of the informal groups, and this can lead to the questioning of what I, a woman on her own, am doing hanging around a place like this?

My recent experience of detached work seems to indicate that the majority of people I contact seem to want someone who's prepared to listen to them. They may well have identifiable problems, but most of them feel that they could and should cope with these themselves. What does seem necessary, however, is someone to witness their talking through of ideas and options; putting it into words helps one to play with the reality and make it clear to oneself what the viable alternatives are.

How much of a cultural police person am I or should I be? In the case of the two girls I discussed, should I encourage their independence and autonomy, or should I tell them it was all a silly idea and persuade them to return to their parents? What I attempt to do is give answers to practical questions and honest answers to worries that are expressed, and not make any decisions on anyone else's behalf, but to encourage people to take responsibility for their actions.

Am I actually achieving anything? I very rarely get positive feedback. I now recognise that this means I must have been fairly successful, people only return if things haven't worked

out or have become worse. But this can be depressing, especially when I am doing only detached work. I found it difficult to cope with sitting around, hoping to contact people and whenever I did, wondering whether it came into my brief of "drifting and homeless". A good part of this was influenced by my lack of training, professional or otherwise, in youth work, and in particular skills such as counselling. However, with experience and doing courses which I thought would be helpful, with Management Committee approval, and a better understanding of the below-surface problems, the ones such as loneliness, which isn't as obvious and identifiable as homelessness, but can be a major contributory factor to it, I feel I am now much more effective, and look behind appearances with more confidence.

The new office has helped a great deal. Although contacts made during the purely detached work period are still maintained, dealing with a lot more people with specific [homelessness] problems keeps my morale at the high level necessary for detached work, and also enables us to reach more people with these problems. However, this is not to say we were inefficient prior to the office opening, a good example of efficiency was Pete and I contacting the same drifting young person within a 2 hour space, on a Monday, when he'd only arrived in Manchester on the Saturday evening.



PAUL FAIRWEATHER

Being on placement at Shades for the last 7 weeks has been for me an interesting and useful experience. I feel I have begun to realise some of the problems facing young drifting and homeless people and the specific difficulties attached to attempting to do detached work in the City Centre. I also have an idea of the different functions of Shades, a sense of its rhythm and flexibility and the differing styles and personalities of its workers and callers. I have also acquired a taste for hot Indian curries and a passion for pinball!

For the first few weeks, a lot of effort went into finishing decorating the new office and letting people know where it was. I walked around the City Centre with several workers, trying to find out what if anything was happening where. Because less detached work had been done in the previous 3 weeks, some people seemed to have moved on or changed their haunts. The changing situation in the meeting places in the City Centre can make it difficult to keep aware of what is happening. Patience and determination are needed to be able to make contact with young people and to be accepted into their "scene".

Attempting to make contact by myself with young people has been frustrating in many ways. Hours spent playing pinball machines and wondering how to approach someone, and thinking why do I get paid for this, what good does it do? Yet there have been moments when I have felt that there is potential here, a smile from a regular, an easy conversation with the person on the next machine, no dramatic rescue of a desperate homeless person, but the feeling that this is what it is like doing detached work, often tedious and uneventful, but with time the possibility of being accepted as part of the group,

being seen as someone reliable, who will listen and offer thoughts and practical help.

Working in the office, especially in the last few weeks when we have been busier, has shown the great variety of people who contact us and the limited options available to many of them. For example, a gay 20 year old just out of prison, thrown out of his home and beaten up by his family for bringing back his boyfriend - we can give him a bed for the night, but what can we do when his giro is stolen and he has no friends or prospect of work.

OR 2 young women just arrived from Preston, they have very little money and have just chucked their jobs. They're looking for adventure, seem to expect a job somewhere to live, they're nervous, cheerful, optimistic, they don't want to go home to their hostile families, yet home they go, as they have no real choice.

2 junkies come in regularly for a chat, they talk endlessly about health, overdosing and the joys of the sixties. I feel there is nothing I can say or do, just listen to them, stop them falling over!

But for many people there are concrete things you (or they) can do: provide support in their hassles with the DHSS, council, etc., or simply the use of a phone or somewhere warm(?) to sit. And finally there is the way Shades is prepared to plead with people, encouraging them to find extra room, extra money, more time - the "Jim'll Fix It" approach, which more formal agencies would find it difficult to operate.

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CITY CENTRE PROJECT IS A PROJECT OF THE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT TRUST

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#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the following in particular:

Steve Evans, the Programme Coordinator, for smoothing our path.

The members of the Project and Trust Management Committees, for their support.

Manchester Polytechnic for the use of Paul Fairweather.

The administrators of the Urban Aid and STEP programmes.

42nd Street for the use of their typewriter for this Report.



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