



## Bingham 2005







## REFLECTIVE THOUGHTS

This report is primarily concerned with exploring young people's perceptions of their views whilst living, playing and being a vital part of community development within the Bingham area. Therefore, the report will focus mainly on young people aged between 12-16.

Additionally, the project has a second strand whereby Oot N Aboot recognised that there was a need to work with adults and community organisations in the hope of people articulating their thoughts and desires in an attempt to create social change within this community. Consequently, as a whole the Bingham consultation process is underpinned by acknowledging that people have the potential to make positive contributions to the wider community, thus becoming active experiential community developers as well as potential partners in taking action and developing together.

The project therefore set out a few main aims:

- To work with young people to identify their views on youth related issues.
- To prioritise work with people who may be currently excluded from engaging with community activism.
- To provide a platform for people to participate alongside other partners and agencies in tackling local problems and issues.

These overall aims hope to encapsulate that although Oot N Aboot has a youth work remit, we recognise that the consultation process has a wider community responsibility than just working with young people.

## GENERAL BACKGROUND

In June 2005 Café K's detached youth work service (Oot N Aboot) were approached by the Lismore Parents Action Group through the Capacity Building Project. The group were hoping to further young peoples views on the services, which were or were not available to them within the Bingham community. After negotiating the proposed work the group agreed that a 3-month consultation process would take place with funding assistance from Edinburgh Council Community Safety Unit and Café Ks core funding.

After discussions with interested parties, it was felt that in order to obtain a broader overview of what was happening realistically in Bingham, the project would incorporate a detached youth work model of working alongside young people. Against this backdrop, detached youth work was chosen as a model of working with young people precisely because this method enabled access to young people who spend time hanging around their environments within their communities.

## ENGAGING WITH THE UNENGAGED

The purpose of detached youth work is to work alongside young people who may not utilise youth work services for one reason or another. Moreover, this method of youth work practice begins where young people are in terms of their values, attitudes, issues and ambitions and is concerned with their personal and social development. Furthermore, over time, detached youth work has become perceived as possibly the key method by which workers are able to target 'marginal' and 'unengaged' youth. Indeed, this strand of youth work means that detached youth workers engage with young people in their territory, for example on pavements and park benches, listening and encouraging action on what certain groups articulate. Thus implementing educational interventions with young people away from the conventional centre based provision.

## DETACHED YOUTH WORK STAGES

Using our experience, it was suggested that this detached youth work process could be characterised as a succession of phases.

### PHASE 1: MAPPING

Oot N About carried out a 2 week mapping process whereby workers got to know the area and services, which were on offer to young people. Additionally, the mapping process enabled detached youth workers to identify key spaces where young people hang around. Furthermore, this stage also allowed young people and other interested parties to overcome their initial suspicions and to get to know workers faces.

### PHASE 2: WELL KENT FACES

Once relationships were established and everyone got over their initial fears and expectations, they were invited to talk about their lived experiences in a more constructive manner. During this time, numerous methods and exercises were used to prompt and generate discussions about the area, exploring their hopes, fears and expectations of what they as young people would like in their community.

### PHASE 3: ENERGISING FOR ACTION

This involves harnessing young peoples expectations, passion and commitment to bring about change with realistic expectations. Despite engaging with numerous young people, it became apparent that young people with the Bingham community are quite a transient group. Indeed, detached workers identified that whilst they worked with a high level of young people, there was never a consistent group to take forward action plans. In so far as to say, not having continuity from groups made it difficult to maintain any momentum of the work.

## UNENGAGED WITH A CAPACITY TO BE CRITICAL

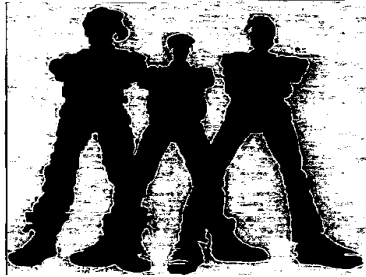
*'Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Willing is not enough we must do'*

(Goethe)

Action, Procedural and Experiential learning theories (including Kolb's learning cycle) informed the process and the subsequent methods were developed as an application of such theories into practice. Against this backdrop, the progression was underpinned by active experiential learning, indeed, by utilising a variety of groupwork tools which were aimed at contributing to active participation within this informal education programme, young people were encouraged to identify then express their hopes and concerns. Additionally, this inclusive model enabled staff to promote and assist 'learning by doing' as opposed to 'being done to'. Visual aids, multimedia methods and interactive quizzes stimulated young people to write young peoples ideas and thoughts in their own words rather than a third party who may distort what young people had actually articulated. As well as listening to young people workers acted on their identified concerns, indeed, active consultation and feedback enabled groups to identify and develop the curriculum content alongside critical and reflective thoughts.



Throughout the duration of this detached youth work process, a model of practice whereby session plans, critical recordings and evaluative techniques solidified educational work. In so far as to say, after each session the intervention was reflected upon, recorded and any action points taken forward.



*'Some people think we are all bad when we are not'  
'Some people treat us like outsiders'*

## COMMUNITY MATRIX

To focus any piece of research on one geographical area or neighbourhood raises many differing and competing issues. Indeed, to paint a picture we must first start with a blank canvass, unfortunately, this does not always exist whilst working in communities. For the project to be in some way successful this 3 month process would unpeel the layers of community structures, unpacking concerns and constraints as we worked with the community.

To this end, concerning ourselves that however much lip service may be paid to the idea of engaging and listening to the excluded in the hope of challenging the accepted dominant direction of the community, there is an underlying complacency that these dominant values are, in themselves, absolute and beyond challenge. Arguably, there can no longer be an underlying consensus about all the issues, which face this community. Indeed, as one young person succinctly put their involvement in community issues stating 'young people may get their say but they don't have the last word'.

## ACTIVE COMMUNITY DEVELOPERS

As stated previously, Oot N About recognised that a community development model underpinned this process, in so far as to say, development is not only concerned with individual/group growth but also about public, private and voluntary agencies working collectively and more effectively to provide good-quality public services.

To this end the United Nations document (1981: 5) defined community participation in a developmental aspect as:

*'The creation of opportunities to enable all members of a community to actively contribute to and influence the development process and to share equitably in the fruits of development'.*

Or as one adult who resides with in the Bingham community expresses  
'we all have to work together as a community'

## THE HARD FACTS

Against the backdrop of creating new learning opportunities, Oot N About carried out not only a detached youth work service to engage with young people but also a consultation process with adults and service providers. Indeed, the process was implemented at the beginning of July until the middle of September 2005.

## YOUNG PEOPLE

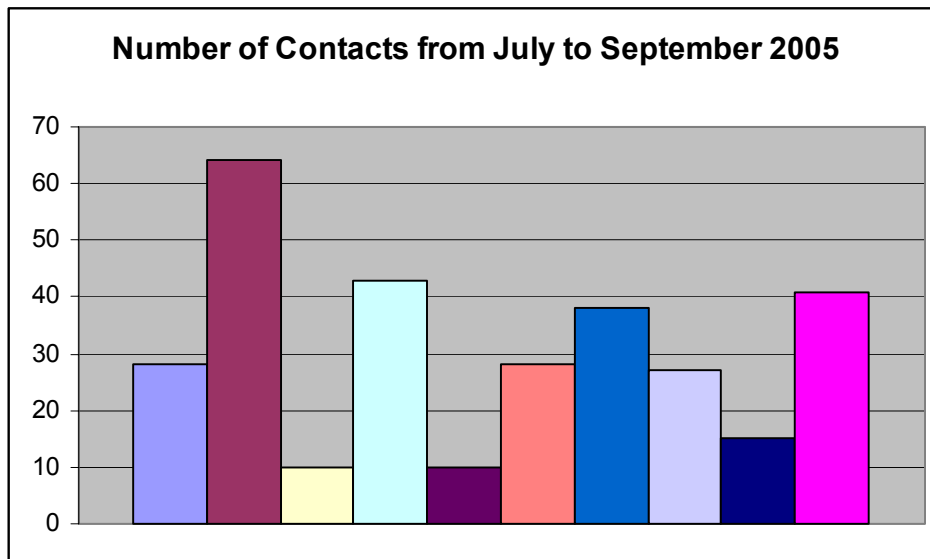
Overall, within the detached youth work element of this process a team of two workers conducted work in Bingham on a Monday and Wednesday evening between 6pm and 9pm. Indeed,

- 7 mapping sessions were completed
- 22 street work shifts were completed
- 66 hours contact time
- 120 staff hours
- 136 young people identified during mapping phase
- Oot N About had contact with 440 young people some of whom were repeat contacts.

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United Nations (1981) *Popular Participation as a Strategy for Planning Community Level Action and National Development*, New York: United Nations.

Noted below is the number of young people over the set period with the age and gender breakdown listed.

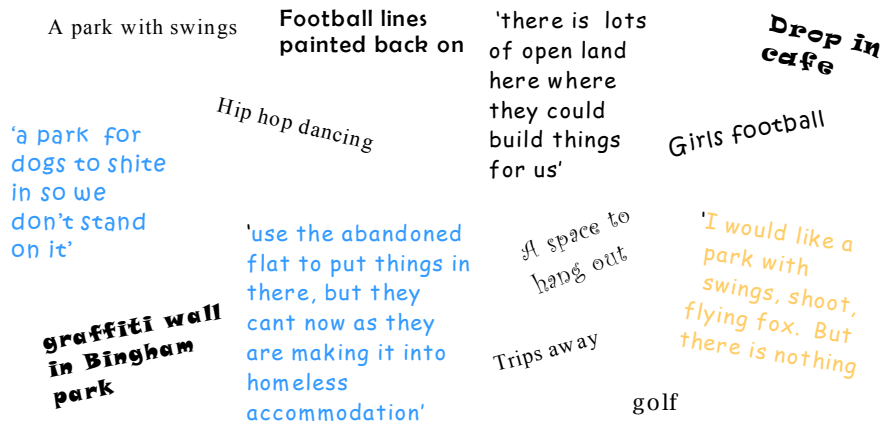


<i>Age and Gender breakdown:</i>			
<b>Total</b>	<b>11-13</b>	<b>14-16</b>	<b>17-18</b>
<b>Male: 124</b>	14	68	42
<b>Female: 90</b>	45	40	5

The table above does not take in to account the 136 young people who were identified during the mapping process. Indeed, taking these figures in to account street work sessions had an average of 36 contacts a week (18 per session). Within the figures we can see that 124 were males, whilst 90 were females.

Identified below are some of the suggestions from young people who engaged with this process.

## What we think should happen



Whilst there are only some comments from young people with regards to their community, the workers found groups to be interested in developing these issues further. Indeed, we found that given time, resources and interested people who will listen and hear their thoughts and ideas, young people want to be involved in making certain dreams become a reality. In fact,

- Young people we talked to about the project have been enthusiastic and motivated to bring about change.
- Young people have engaged positively with the process showing their commitment by meeting and engaging with the Oot N About team.
- Young people have also demonstrated a maturity and complexity in their thoughts and reflections on issues, which affect them.

However, during our educational interventions with young people a reoccurring theme became apparent whereby young people articulated that there was nothing to do in the area. Indeed, many young people did say that they took part in ongoing activities outwith the Bingham community.

## USUAL SUSPECTS AND ACTIVE ACTIVISTS

Community consultation is at times an uneasy process involving competing interests and relationships and whilst adult consultation and involvement is an essential element of this initiative, Oot N Aboot were concerned to hear not only from the usual suspects but also from other interested parties. Against this backdrop, this strand of the consultation process involved firstly leaflet dropping over 600 households in the Bingham community then questioning over 20 adults and service providers. The adult consultation was carried out

- To obtain qualitative research.
- To challenge negative perceptions of young people.
- To assist building relationships and understanding between two groups.
- To encourage community responsibility for issues concerning young people.

Consultation was done on a very informal scale with some short notes being taken to get direct quotes from people but mainly through direct conversation.

<u>Questionnaire for Local Residents</u>		
<u>Confidentiality: all information used for the public consultation will be anonymous and only used for the purposes of this project:</u>		
Age:		
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Gender:		
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="radio"/> How long have you lived in the Bingham area?		
<input type="radio"/> Did you grow up here?		
<input type="radio"/> What did you get up to as a young person?		
<input type="radio"/> Were there any clubs?		
<input type="radio"/> Where did you hang about?		
<input type="radio"/> Where there just 2 or 3 or a big group of you?		
<input type="radio"/> What did you do?		
<input type="radio"/> Were you into sporty stuff? What sports facilities were there?		
<input type="radio"/> What were the local adults like?		
<input type="radio"/> Where the men different to the women?		
<input type="radio"/> What do you think is different about being a young person today?		
<input type="radio"/> What do you think is the same?		
<input type="radio"/> What do you think could make life harder or easier today?		
<input type="radio"/> What services would you like to see in the area to help young people?		
<input type="radio"/> How many young people do you know in the area?		
<input type="radio"/> How well do you know them?		
<input type="radio"/> Would you like to get involved with young people in the community?		
<input type="radio"/> What kinds of things would you like to do?		

During the adult consultation there seemed to be a strong undercurrent that identified the conflict between the old and the new Bingham and that building new facilities does not necessarily enhance community links. As one adult resident put it when *Old Bingham* was knocked down

*'the community was killed stone dead'* and  
*'that the community spirit in Bingham has gone'*.

Identified below are some comments and action points from adults:

‘...has anyone really, really spoken to them and explained things?’

‘...give respect to bairns and they will respect you’.

‘the park is dirty’

‘Problems came about due to the breakdown of the residents association’

*‘we used to be loud..and play rounders in the street but there was more room then..’* She said that *‘you forget what we used to be like and where you came from’* when young people are making noise on the street.

*‘young people don’t get taught anything valuable...kids left to get on with it’*

‘Young people are being turned away from the centre and that no flyers had been received about any clubs. The people running the club were perhaps inviting people they knew along to the trips and excluding other community members, especially young people’.

However, some adults within the community were less than complimentary towards young people suggesting that they should use a *‘machine gun’* on the young people’. Going on to state that:

*‘young people are a waste of space’*



## CASUALTIES OF COMMUNITY CONFLICT

Against this conflicting climate, where are young people in Bingham situated. Arguably, is the term community being used to in some harmonise relationships within a geographical area or does the term set up a mystification whereby power relation's conflict and compete on a daily basis. Undeniably, the term 'young people' opens the door too many differing interpretations, unfortunately for some the term conjures images of rebellious people undermining society for others given time, resources and space, young people can be/are active social actors, willing and passionate about creating social change. Within the community arena, differing and competing agencies and interested parties skirmish around the edges each questioning who's implementing the appropriate services for young people. However, at this time there are still young people out in the streets of Bingham who are wishing to see change happening. In fact it is these young people who are the ones who are still waiting arguably becoming the casualties in this community conflict.

Questionably, until groups begin meaningful discussions the mystification will still remain. It is not until people learn from one another and meaningful dialogue takes place that the blame culture may begin to disappear. Unquestionably, this concurs with the ethos of the process that working with young people alone was not enough to ensure the success of this consultation process in Bingham and that more direct engagement with adults, young people and other agencies and public servants would also have been beneficial.



## **RAMPANT RECCOMENDATIONS**

DEVELOP AN APPROPRIATE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY WITH THE BINGHAM COMMUNITY

- 1. Multi agency approach, which will collate and implement a needs analysis of young peoples desires for youth services.**
  - New Bingham Forum to be lead mechanism
- 2. Monthly youth related open action meetings to be held with interested parties.**
  - Bingham forum to co-ordinate
- 3. Ensure relevant literature i.e club programmes are widely circulated and are accessible.**
  - Each relevant organisation/interested parties to take ownership of information releases
  - Intranet web sites such as Edinburgh Councils *My Edinburgh* to be utilised
  - Relevant schools to become involved
- 4. Continuous mechanism/s implemented to feedback communications to a wider youth audience**
  - As above
- 5. Develop an ethos of inclusiveness, openness and dialogue.**
  - Bingham forum to be pro active in promoting this open culture

DEVELOP AN APPROPRIATE YOUTH STRATEGY FOR YOUTH RELATED WORK WITHIN THE BINGHAM COMMUNITY

- 1. Interested young people to be at the heart of needs led youth strategy.**
  - Bingham Forum to drive process forward alongside interested young people
- 2. Lead organisations must ensure that identified individuals who will drive work forward must fully participate in all aspects of work i.e attend meetings and implement tasks.**
- 3. Strategical purpose to be exposed and clarified at offset.**
  - Short term working groups to explore identified priorities
- 4. Identify gaps in youth service provision**
  - Bingham Forum to drive process forward alongside interested young people
- 5. Agreed and achievable short, medium and long term goals.**
  - Bingham Forum to drive process forward alongside interested young people
  - Short term working group
- 6. Clear pathways as to roles and responsibilities.**
  - Bingham Forum to drive process forward alongside interested young people
  - Short term working group

## DEVELOP AN APPROPRIATE AND FLEXIBLE APPROACH TO WORKING ALONGSIDE YOUNG PEOPLE

- 1. Good policy and practice guidelines to be implemented when working alongside young people.**
  - Bingham forum to drive policy and practice structure forward
- 2. Support structures in place for youth workers**
  - Monthly support and supervision
  - Extra time for reflection and recording each session
  - Lead person to co-ordinate support
- 3. Relevant training opportunities to be implemented for volunteers; youth work staff or interested parties.**
  - Paid monthly training sessions
  - Specialised training based on youth workers identified needs
- 4. A wide range of youth services to stimulate young peoples needs.**
  - Oot N Aboot to continue at least one night a week within Bingham.
  - Extra Youth and Children's activities incorporated within youth organisations in Bingham.
  - Tap in to Youth and Children's activities which take place within a close proximity and further afield

In some respects the report, its contents and the recommendations may not provide all the answers wanted by some sections of the community, however the process must be viewed as a reflexive development. Indeed, if you require any clarification or would like to explore the content of this report further feel free to contact Café K at the Jack Kane Community Centre or telephone 657-1595