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*‘Do traditional youth work organisations hold the key to sustainability for twenty-first century youth provision? Lessons from The Guide Association.’*

GILL, WENDY,VICTORIA

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## **Abstract**

Organisational sustainability within the contemporary voluntary youth sector in the UK is a widely debated topic, resulting from the impact of economic austerity policies and the continued decline in youth work. Whilst there is a gap in academic and sector literature, discussion is predominately focused on economic stability connected to neo-liberal values of efficiency, competition, universal quantification, and comparison. Against this backdrop, some youth organisations, such as The Guide Association, have expanded and continue to see growth in demand for their provision. The focus of this research is on the value-based youth work model of The Guide Association (GA) and its ability to evolve, informed by the socio-political context of girls and women. This thesis examines the GA as a potential model for a sustainable twenty-first century youth work organisation. Founded in 1909 to work with girls and young women, it continues today, with a membership of approximately 800,000.

The research is framed within an investigative qualitative paradigm, employing ethnographic methods of participant observation in a Guide Unit, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, archival studies of GA records and a small peer-researched participatory action research project.

The research identifies elements of the Guide Association model which engender sustainability and draws out implications for contemporary youth provision. The research findings highlight sustainability within a value-based organisational model of youth work. New theoretical insights are offered on the methodological, dynamic praxis of youth work understood as a set of informed values contained within a neo-liberal framework, the impact on organisations to symbiotically evolve aligned with the socio-political position of young people and the overall loss of youth

work and experience from the sector. The thesis concludes it is essential for contemporary youth work to reframe and reclaim itself as a value-based praxis in order to maintain sustainability.

**'Do traditional youth work organisations hold the key to sustainability for  
twenty-first century youth provision? Lessons from The Guide Association.'**

Wendy Victoria Gill

PhD Thesis

Department of Sociology,

Durham University,

2023

# Table of Contents

<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Table of Contents.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Declaration.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Glossary.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Chapter 1.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Rationale of the thesis .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Journey of the thesis.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Collaboration with Youth Focus North East.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Scope of the thesis.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Outline of the thesis.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Gaps in knowledge.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Positionality.....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Impact.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Research context .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Chapter and thesis structure .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Chapter 2.....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Brief overview of youth work: Literature review.....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Introduction. ....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>The Development of Youth Work. ....</b>	<b>40</b>
Defining the fluid complexity of praxis: the nature of youth work.....	40
<b>A brief overview of the development of youth work: 19th – 21st centuries.....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Origins in Nineteenth-Century philanthropy and voluntarism.....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>State intervention and the growth of the Youth Service. ....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Stagnant service to Thatcherite policies.....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Enter New Labour. ....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Youth work under economic austerity.....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Feminist Youth Work .....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Anti-oppressive practice in youth work.....</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>Sustainability within a neoliberal context .....</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>The visibility of the ‘new-old ’youth work model?.....</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Chapter 3.....</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>The Guide Association: Literature review .....</b>	<b>79</b>

The Guide Association to Girlguiding. A Brief history.....	79
Guiding Values.....	80
'Tomorrow's Guide 'The Working Party 1964 - 66.....	88
Organisational Structure .....	91
The Guiding Method .....	93
Rebellious Sisters: Girl Only!.....	95
Contemporary Guiding.....	97
Current Organisational Structure.....	98
Twenty-first Century Guiding .....	100
Sharing commitment and a common standard: The Promise & The Law .....	101
Programme.....	103
Impact .....	104
Volunteers.....	108
Girl Only: 2022 .....	111
Same Sex or Same Gender? .....	115
<b>Chapter 4.....</b>	<b>119</b>
<b>Methodology.....</b>	<b>119</b>
Introduction to Methodological Considerations and Chosen Methods.....	119
Qualitative Research .....	122
Ontology and Epistemology.....	124
Critical Realism and Feminist Research Philosophies .....	125
Research Site .....	127
Trustworthiness of Qualitative Research .....	130
Validity .....	132
Case Study.....	133
Archival Research.....	137
Participant Observation .....	140
Semi-structured Interviews .....	144
Positionality.....	148
Ethics.....	152
Anonymity, confidentiality, and data protection .....	152
Ethics as a relational, egalitarian social justice process .....	156
Data Analysis .....	157
Transcribing .....	158
Summary .....	161
<b>Chapter 5.....</b>	<b>162</b>
<b>Participatory Action Research (PAR).....</b>	<b>162</b>
Introduction .....	162

PAR as a Methodology .....	162
Rationale, motivation, and ‘voice’ .....	165
Peer research.....	168
Peer research group.....	169
Limitations and Challenges of PAR.....	170
Validity.....	172
Ethics and PAR.....	175
Beginnings: Communicative Space and Identity .....	178
Research Design and Process.....	182
Step 1: Starting with training.....	183
Step 2: Decision-making: Exploring, practicing, reflecting to bring our own data together .....	183
Step 3: Strategy, data collection and data generation.....	185
Step 4: Critical thematic analysis and quality checks .....	188
<b><i>Compare notes/thoughts/emotions through discussion.....</i></b>	<b>189</b>
<b><i>Identify themes .....</i></b>	<b>189</b>
<b><i>Collectively critically reflect, review and summarise .....</i></b>	<b>189</b>
<b><i>Collaborative analysis.....</i></b>	<b>189</b>
<b><i>Individual dynamic reading/thinking .....</i></b>	<b>189</b>
Step 5: Findings, dissemination, action, and impact.....	189
Step 6: Closure.....	201
PAR and Informal Education.....	202
Practitioner/Researcher reflections.....	204
Summary.....	206
<b>Chapter 6.....</b>	<b>208</b>
Research Findings: Introduction .....	208
<b><i>Research Findings: Youth Work.....</i></b>	<b>211</b>
Perspectives on the values and ethos of youth work.....	211
Youth Work: A value-based process.....	212
Contemporary Youth Work: Instability in a neoliberal frame and deficit model. ....	215
Driven by Funding.....	220
Inexperienced Workforce.....	221
Youth work or working with young people?.....	224
Conclusion: Summary of findings relating to contemporary youth work .....	228
<b>Chapter 7.....</b>	<b>236</b>
<b><i>Research Findings: Girl Guiding.....</i></b>	<b>236</b>
Introduction .....	236
Traditional Youth Work Values, Principles and Ethos in the Guide Association.....	237

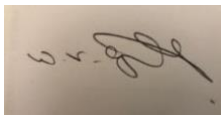
<b>A methodology of informal, experiential, collective education .....</b>	<b>241</b>
<b>Contextual informal education .....</b>	<b>242</b>
<b>Experiential learning .....</b>	<b>249</b>
<b>Impact: Knowledge and Skills for life .....</b>	<b>257</b>
Opportunities.....	264
Group work.....	267
Fun!.....	272
<b>Association .....</b>	<b>273</b>
Being and becoming .....	274
Community Links .....	276
<b>Guiding as Community .....</b>	<b>278</b>
<b>Guiding in the Community.....</b>	<b>283</b>
<b>Voluntary participation .....</b>	<b>288</b>
<b>The subversion of power: Independence, responsibility, and egalitarianism. ....</b>	<b>289</b>
<b>Values through ‘osmosis’ .....</b>	<b>292</b>
<b>Safe space.....</b>	<b>301</b>
<b>Respected and trusting relationships.....</b>	<b>302</b>
<b>Shifting from the context of women .....</b>	<b>308</b>
<b>Summary of findings relating to the Guide Association .....</b>	<b>309</b>
<b><i>Chapter 8.....</i></b>	<b><i>314</i></b>
<b><i>Summary and Research Conclusions.....</i></b>	<b><i>314</i></b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>314</b>
<b>Lessons for the future .....</b>	<b>317</b>
Knowledge creation: Methodological .....	317
Knowledge creation: Practice-based.....	320
Implications for neo-liberal work with young people .....	322
<b>21<sup>st</sup> Century Organisational Sustainability.....</b>	<b>326</b>
<b>Stability embedded in the values and principles of informal education and youth work: The Guide Association .....</b>	<b>329</b>
<b>The value of feminist youth work and anti-oppressive practice .....</b>	<b>334</b>
<b>Sustainability.....</b>	<b>337</b>
<b><i>Recommendations .....</i></b>	<b><i>340</i></b>
National Recommendations .....	341
NE Youth provision recommendations.....	345
GA Recommendations .....	347
Academic recommendations.....	349
<b>Practical and Action Recommendations .....</b>	<b>350</b>
<b>Research Limitations.....</b>	<b>351</b>
<b>Critical Reflections .....</b>	<b>353</b>
<b><i>Appendices.....</i></b>	<b><i>359</i></b>



<b>Institutional ethics documents .....</b>	<b>359</b>
Research and risk assessment form: Peer Researcher Training.....	369
Research and risk assessment form: Participant Observation.....	381
<b>Research Information documents.....</b>	<b>392</b>
General Research Information .....	392
Semi-Structured Interviews.....	393
Participant Observation.....	394
Parents/Carers of Peer Researchers.....	395
Peer Co-researchers .....	397
Trefoil Guild .....	397
<b>Organisational Agreement Form.....</b>	<b>398</b>
<b>Consent Forms: .....</b>	<b>399</b>
Participant Observation Consent Form.....	399
Peer Researcher Consent Form. (Parent/Carer) .....	399
<b>Semi structured interviews.....</b>	<b>400</b>
<b>Demographic Information Sheet: Semi – Structured Interviews.....</b>	<b>401</b>
<b>Collated Demographic information.....</b>	<b>402</b>
<b><i>Participatory Action Research Documents.....</i></b>	<b><i>404</i></b>
<b>Peer research training documents .....</b>	<b>404</b>
Training Day Letter. ....	404
Training Session 1. ....	405
Notes from training day 1. (17.4.19) .....	408
Training Session 2: In Guide session.....	411
Group agreement .....	411
Practicing Research Methods: Photovoice.....	413
Practice Interviewing .....	413
Peer Researcher Interview Schedule/Guidelines.....	414
<b>Interview Guide .....</b>	<b>418</b>
Completed Peer Researcher Evaluations. ....	419
Peer Research Power Point Presentation of Findings .....	425
Peer Research: Findings Word Cloud .....	421
<b>Interview Themes, Prompts and Questions.....</b>	<b>422</b>
Questions: Adults who are and have been involved with the Guide Association. ....	422
Questions: Youth Workers (including those who have or still have involvement with the GA).....	425
Questions: Parents/Carers of Daughters involved with Guides.....	426
<b>NVivo: Thematic analysis.....</b>	<b>429</b>
<b>References.....</b>	<b>431</b>

## **Declaration**

I, Wendy Gill, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own, no part of the material presented in this thesis has been previously submitted by me or any other person for a degree in this or any other university. In all cases, where it is relevant, material from the work of others has been acknowledged. The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation from it should be published without prior written consent and information from it should be acknowledged.

A small, rectangular image showing a handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature is cursive and appears to read 'W. Gill'.

Signed: 28.9.22

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to begin by thanking my supervisors Sarah Banks and Hannah King who provided me with continuous support throughout my whole thesis, support which began before the official thesis journey, in helping me formulate my ideas and access funding, and support which has remained unwavering, constructive, and holistic throughout. Their encouragement extended out of the thesis process as they offered me career progression opportunities linked to their own work and passions which I know helped me to gain experience, skills, and employment in the field of higher education. Fantastic women!

Secondly, to all of the participants who took part in this research. The GA members and colleagues who welcomed me and took an active interest in my work, my youth work colleagues who were candid, political and impassioned (as it should be!), and most especially to the young women who conducted the PAR project, some of whom have now started their own higher education journey and others who are on the brink, it was and is a privilege to know and work with you.

To Tony Jeffs who has been an integral part of my practice and of all my higher education; as one of my BSc(hons) and MA lecturers, as a tutor and trainer, and now especially close to this research as an 'unofficial' supervisor, sounding board and co-sausage sandwich consumer. Hats off to the only lecturer I have had who left the seminar room because as we the students, had not done the reading any attempt at informed dialogue was negligible. After our initial shock, we learned a valuable lesson!

To my family and friends who have been so supportive and understanding, especially during my writing up period where I was absent from a few events, we have much to catch up with. With special thanks to the '32 Old Elvet Attic group,' I loved our 'sorting the world out' debates and cultural eating out sessions. I know I have made some lifelong friends from across the globe and close by.

I would like to acknowledge the support and encouragement I received from Leon Mextor, who sadly passed away during the process of this research. I am grateful to him for the opportunity to work in collaboration with Youth Focus North East, the organisation of which he was C.E.O, and for the regular debates and discussions we have had together throughout our careers working in the youth sector.

Finally, I am extremely grateful that my research was funded by The Northern Ireland and North East Doctoral Training Partnership (NINE DTP). The support, and training offered, opened up so many opportunities to enhance my skills, learning and research which would have been otherwise unobtainable.

## Glossary

Agnus Baden-Powell	ABP
British Youth Council	BYC
Centre for Social Justice and Community Action	CSJCA
Centre for Youth Impact	CYI
Children & Young People Now	CYPN
Chief Executive Officer	CEO
Delivering Differently for Young People	DDfYP
Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport	DCMS
Disclose and Baring Service	DBS
District Commissioner	Dis. C
Division Commissioner	Div. C
Department for Communities and Local Government	DCLG
Joint Negotiating Committee	JNC
National Occupational Standards	NOS
National Youth Agency	NYA
North East Regional Impact Network	NERIN
Northern Ireland and North East Doctoral Training Programme	NINE DTP
North East Youth Alliance	NEYA
Our Chalet	WAGGGS World Centre in Switzerland
Participatory Action Research	PAR
Resourcing Excellent Youth Services	REYS
Robert Baden-Powell	RBP
The Guide Association	GA
Trefoil Guild	TG
World Association of Girls Guides and Girl Scouts	WAGGGS
Youth Focus North East	YFNE

# **Chapter 1.**

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this introductory chapter is to 'set the scene' to my research. It explains the background and context of this thesis and includes my research rationale, theoretical framing, the literature which informed this work and demonstrates what this thesis hopes to add to pre-existing academic and professional knowledge. I also explain my personal motivation for conducting this research which is firmly rooted in my professional role and 30-year career in the field of community and youth work in the North East of England. I conclude this chapter outlining the structure and layout of my work and provide a brief overview of each chapter.

## **Rationale of the thesis**

I have been involved in community and youth work, in some shape or form, for over 40 years. As a girl and young woman accessing youth provision in my leisure time and as an adult, practicing youth work as a profession. Initially, the rationale behind this research came, I thought, directly as a result of experiencing the decimation of youth services at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, as community and youth workers do, reflecting during and on my research journey I began to consider how much this work is also connected to my own childhood, 'youth' and young adulthood. My initial exposure to youth work had not been considered by me for a very long time and I think this was because I did not actually realise it as youth work. Memories of what I now see to be the start of this connection began to surface as my

research progressed, most specifically during interviews, and surprisingly they were of being a Brownie, in fact a 'Sixer' in the Elf Six (group) at seven years old. I recall the games, the responsibility and the expectation Brown Owl, Snowy Owl and Tawney Owl had for us all.

My next contact with youth work was, however, very clear to me. As a young person I attended the local youth club on Monday and Wednesday evenings, homework permitting, but especially looked forward to the Friday night disco. The next contact was moving into the world of youth work as a profession as a 21-year-old club helper at my 'old' youth club, where my role was to 'police' activities, such as the nightly five- a side tournament in the sports hall, serve hot dogs during the summer holiday playschemes, and keep the young people quietly occupied while the Youth Worker watched Coronation Street.

Whilst I was at university as an undergraduate and wishing to add experience to my curriculum vitae, I volunteered with a Barnardo's organisation. This role entailed working with one Youth Worker and approximately eight young people and every weekend we would all pile into a transit van, drive to the lake district to walk, (the highlight of the trip being the youth worker allowing the young people to sit on the van roof whilst moving). Having an issue with this practice, (although at the time I just knew 'it did not feel right') and aiming to eventually go and work with young people in the criminal justice system, I decided to swap the weekend hikes and volunteer for a newly established youth project supporting young people on the periphery of the Criminal Justice System to discover and engage in leisure time activities. The original delivery model was flawed, with no young people coming on to

the project, however with a change in management and the model adjusted, my volunteer status shifted, and I became a paid sessional youth worker.

As my career progressed, I moved from practitioner to management in a local authority setting, from having policy applied to my work to implementing policy on the work of others. From these positions and the experiences, they afforded me, I saw how youth policy affected young people and their communities and the gradual repositioning of them through a deficit lens. I became aware of how the language of youth work would change, framed by new policy rhetoric, and how Ofsted inspections would place value and rate provision against political rubrics. From inside this value-based occupation, framed within constant political change, I began to see youth workers, myself included, look for a space in which we could consolidate each new policy shift with the values of our practice. Each time it became more difficult to find the space amid labels, curriculums, and targets. As an area manager I lost count of the number of session evaluations which would state the curriculum 'healthy eating' target had been met during a youth work session as youth workers had placed a bowl of fruit on a table. In reality the workers strived to maintain and include young people-led group work under the guise of some loosely related curriculum target which provided access to funding and resources.

I remain involved in the youth sector, having worked with young people and colleagues across the statutory, voluntary, and private sectors. Reflecting on this time I have become aware that it was the colleagues who had started their career in community and youth work a decade or two before me who became the greatest influences on my personal/professional development. These workers believed in the



values of their profession which was continually demonstrated as they lived and acted upon them in their work and private lives. They were unashamedly political, challenged inequality and social injustice and championed campaigns and causes. They were the consistent questioners, challengers and includers. It was working with them, being included in their practice, that I learned the art and value of youth work.



Image 1: Wendy in Brownie Uniform, aged 7.

### **Journey of the thesis**

This research is rooted in my experience as a youth worker practicing in the North East of England and is therefore emergent from my position as a research practitioner. Predominately working in a local authority service but also within the

voluntary sector, I have worked with numerous policies leading to shifts and changes in youth services and witnessed the impact on the ideology of youth work practice. Reflecting back on my career, each policy shift seemed to 'shave a slice off' the values of youth work and informal education, each time reducing it or reshaping it to fit a prescribed policy vision of young people.

As a result of economic austerity, my final years as a practitioner in a local authority service contained an annual restructure. Beginning in 2009 and ending in 2016, it resulted in the dismantling of the youth service as each annual cycle systematically closed provision and made youth workers redundant. By 2014, the governmental steer was to 'deliver more for less' in the Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition's efficiency programme of 2010 - 2015 encouraging models of youth service delivery which were not solely operated or led by local authorities. By the end of 2019 the youth service had financially lost approximately £400.3 million, 4500 youth worker jobs and over 760 youth centres closed.

In an attempt to re-model the youth voluntary and statutory service a successful application acquired £50,000 from the then Department for Communities and Local Government's 'Delivering Differently for Young People' fund. This saw the Cabinet Office procure 'expert bespoke technical, legal and consultancy' (DCLG, 2014, p. 3) to explore a range of youth service delivery models to 'build long term sustainability' (DCLG, 2014.p.3). Suggested models included Community Interest Companies, mutuals and local authority and voluntary combined enterprises. The expert consultancy procured by the Cabinet Office for the local authority was a partnership between a voluntary regional youth service organisation and a community interest

company which supported the setting up of companies, charities, mutuals and trusts. This partnership provided the knowledge and understanding of youth work, the sector and construction of organisational models for delivery.

After a year of consultation and active participation by local authority and voluntary sector youth organisations, the process resulted in the creation of a fragmented, scared, untrusting and uncooperative group of separate organisations resisting any proposed model. During the process the procured partnership organisations publicly disagreed with each other about the 'best model', as one favoured a partnership model protecting employees' employment, terms, and conditions and the other the creation of a 'new entity,' concerned with a 'Theory of Change,' outcomes, outputs and a team employed outside of JNC terms and conditions. This rift resulted in their partnership breaking before the process ended.

It is here, from this context, I question the possible sustainability of youth work set within a neo-liberal business model. It is not in the interests of a neo-liberal model to sustain youth work as a value-based practice, as it does not produce a measurable commodity. Attending regional networking meetings set up to address sustainability in the NE youth sector, conversations offering solutions to finding this measurable commodity leaned towards programmes set in a curriculum with a focus on producing evidence of impact attached to 'cost per head'. The values underpinning the youth work process began to be side-lined or re-defined in the conversations as youth work language became replaced by market driven descriptors. Voluntary participation came to mean the choice between what was predefined and provided or not participating at all. Participation itself began to be re-defined through controlled

youth forums, committees, and councils where a small, targeted group of young people replicated formal democratic systems and structures to become the 'voice' of all young people.

However, looking wider I saw youth organisations, such as sea Cadets, boxing clubs, Scouts and Guides across the region continuing to work with young people. Some of these groups attended the inaugural 'Delivering Differently' conference. They thanked us for the invite but had no need to continue attending. I began wondering what it was they 'had' or did to remain independent and popular. Preliminary 'light' research combined with peer discussions led me to The Guide Association (GA) who, using the same value-based model as it started with in 1909, (unlike The Scouts who in 1976 officially decided to allow girls and young women to join), which continues to be one of the largest youth organisations today.

Reflecting back on my thesis journey I note it has been complex and intertwined on so many levels. Maintaining involvement with the youth sector created access channels to continuing and new discussions and debates, which continued to inform my research. The dynamic nature of youth work combined with paying active attention to ethical practice and having an interest in the voice of those who have informed and continue to shape the GA and the profession of youth work, implied the approach would be non-linear. In respect of this eclectic landscape, I adopted the use of multiple research methods over a longitudinal time frame as I concluded they met the specific objectives of this study. Using multiple methods in itself is a strength in that the data produced is rich, layered and aids understanding of compound issues. It presents different data and a 'different perspective on the phenomenon'

(Morse, 2011.p.207), collectively providing a comprehensive picture. Maintaining clarity was important to uphold equivalence across methods, however created dilemmas in where to position some of the data collected. In particular the archival data sat comfortably within both the literature review and also as findings data. As a result, the range of information provides a thorough literature review and findings informed by an assortment of mediums and sources.

### **Collaboration with Youth Focus North East**

The research for the PhD was funded through a collaborative studentship awarded by the Northern Ireland and North East Doctoral Training Programme. As the aim of the research was to inform the youth work sector of its findings, especially those linked with values, principles and sustainability, the research was supported by Youth Focus North East (YFNE) as a collaborative partner. Established in 1989, YFNE (formerly the NE Regional Youth Work Unit) is a regional hub connecting young people and the organisations and professionals who support them. YFNE hosts the North East Regional Impact Network (NERIN) comprising of a range of organisations from the public, voluntary and private youth sectors with an interest in evaluating the impact of youth work and improving youth provision across the NE region.

As part of a national initiative, one of the aims of NERIN is to examine impact measurement in particular thematic areas of work with young people – for example, faith-based provision, or social action. The PhD research fits with the aims of this network, contributing to work in a thematic area that has been identified as of interest – namely ‘traditional youth organisations’ (e.g., Guides, Scouts, Cadets, Duke of

Edinburgh Awards). Having worked with the Guide Association in the past, YFNE regards it as a good example of a traditional youth organisation, with the added dimension of single gender work. The research aimed to provide an opportunity to explore the value-based process of traditional youth work within GA and connections to organisational stability. It also studied why single gender youth work still has a place, in the context of a drive towards mixed gender work.

As an organisation with longevity, the GA offers a successful and distinctive model of youth work, which has survived through turbulent times, especially in the current climate of large-scale change in the sector. It is from this standpoint that YFNE was interested in exploring the effectiveness and long-term positive outcomes for young people participating in these traditional organisations. In addition, the organisation is interested in reasons behind why parents seem to value some forms of youth provision, such as the GA, over others and why they both support and encourage their children to attend. The research was advised by members of the NERIN and the late Leon Mexter, YFNE Chief Executive Officer, advising on policy, networks, and practice relevance. The NERIN provides a space for members to explore how the work with young people in the region can be presented in different forms to demonstrate impact. This includes research with and on young people as well as methods used to elucidate the voice of young people. This research will contribute to debates about the sustainability and impact of youth organisations, providing evidence to inform decision-making. The collaboration with YFNE, links to the NE youth sector through the NERIN meetings and quarterly supervision began alongside the research process and continued until September 2019, ending as a result of the untimely death of Leon Mexter.

I met with Kevin Franks who became and is the current CEO of YFNE and we agreed to honour the research collaboration. However, as the direction of sector shifted, a new partnership was established, NE Youth Alliance, (a partnership between YFNE and another voluntary sector youth organisation NE Youth), and joint supervision along with the NERIN ceased. My involvement with the sector discussion and debate continued moving in line with this shift. I attended and participated in NE Youth Alliance events including, workshops, roadshows, and consultations. The impact of the network shift resulted in the collaborative nature of the research becoming less informed by YFNE and the invited members of the NERIN towards involvement in national and local conferences and roadshows exploring youth work within a neo-liberal context and participating in dialogue with 'organisations that work with young people.'

### **Scope of the thesis**

The thesis is born from and sits within the contemporary context of youth work. It acknowledges the demise of youth work in England due to the impact of economic austerity policies. It sits within my personal and professional positionality, as well as with the aims and objectives of one voluntary youth sector organisation, Youth Focus North East, a voluntary sector independent charity concerned with improving the lives of young people. The then C.E.O wanted to extend the debate of sustainability and youth work outside of the dominant, neo-liberal, financially framed narrative and was also interested in the rise of popularity and increased membership of uniformed youth organisations. Keen to explore other possibilities of organisational

sustainability we worked in collaboration which was supported by The Northern Ireland and North East Doctoral Training Partnership (NINE DTP).

The thesis recognises the impact of the deficit positioning of young people as having behaviours which need to be modified and measured against a pre-established framework. It acknowledges the loss of experienced workers, of JNC terms and conditions, of poor pay and of the knowledge held by each generation of youth workers and of grass roots youth work. The study recognises a generation of workers who are able to 'do to' rather than 'with' and a generation of young people who, when consulted, cannot request, when consulted, open access youth provision as they have little or no knowledge of it.

### **Outline of the thesis**

This thesis aims to contribute to knowledge within the field of youth work by examining reasons for the sustainability of The Guide Association (GA) and evaluating its role in the context of changing youth policy, financial austerity, and reorganisation of UK youth provision. The research critically examines the GA's organisational and practice model, with a view to evaluating reasons for its sustainability and drawing lessons for the broader youth sector. It evaluates the informal education model of youth work adopted by GA (purposes, values, activities, impact), identifying sustainability within the traditional values and principles of youth work at a time when youth work seems unable to return from its decline. The research considers the extent to which the GA is a feminist youth organisation, why it is so attractive to young women and what impact, if any, it has on their lives.



Using thematic analysis of data, the study considers what youth workers recognise as a set of traditional, universal characteristics located in a dynamic process of informal education. In addition, the study identifies these characteristics of youth work as being located within a contextual process in which knowledge is applied, defined, and reconceptualised across time. The research data is used to determine if a distinction or differentiation exists between 'what is youth work' and what is working with young people, and it explores how interviewees practice contemporary youth work in a neo- liberal framework.

In addition, the research studies the values and informal education process within the organisation of The Guide Association (GA) as recognised by its members. It focuses on the process of guiding (*as a verb*) and how it embeds those traditional values of youth work and informal education into its organisational structure and by doing so, build and preserve stability and relevance as a result of learning, acting, and evolving in context. Drawing from the organisational model of The GA the thesis concludes with the argument that the values and principles of youth work both introduce and consolidate sustainability into the organisational model. It recognises that adopted values become embedded in structure through member action. Members inform the organisation from their perspective, one which is embedded in current social context. Through a process which is constant, dynamic, and repeatedly informed, this information impacts and shifts the organisational context to meet the current needs and expectations of girls and women. In this, the process is evolutionary rather than of change.

## **Gaps in knowledge**

The fundamental aim of this thesis is to add to and participate in the current debate about sustainability in the field of youth work and to address gaps in current academic and practice-based knowledge. It aims to elucidate an alternative narrative to adapting and changing according to a market economy and to refocus on the possibility of organisational sustainability rooted within the traditional evolutionary process of informal education.

The thesis extends from my practice and also my participation in the regional voluntary youth sector network which aims, through sector discussions and projects, to act as a conduit to connect and inform the delivery of youth services across the youth sector in the North East of England. From this position my research objectives were to:

- Develop a detailed understanding of the current state of UK youth work in the context of historical and contemporary youth policy and theoretical literature on young people, informal education, gender, and feminism.
- Understand the historical development of the GA, with specific reference to informal education, feminist characteristics, and organisational model.
- Identify key features of the organisational model contributing to GA's sustainability; understand how the organisation operates today.
- Engage key stakeholders, including young people and adults, in reflecting on their engagement and learning within GA.

- Assess GA's effectiveness, including its relevance for, and impact on, young people.
- Support young researchers to engage in a specific piece of participatory research, co-designing and undertaking interviews/other activities and contributing to data analysis, interpretation, and dissemination.
- Contribute to developing new thinking/models of youth work and disseminate findings.

### **Positionality**

To ethically meet the research aims and objectives, it was important that I actively acknowledged my immersion in the topic and the practice values. As a practitioner it was important to me that I began volunteering at a Guide Unit, (the case study), not only as a research method (participant observation) to develop my understanding of the organisation, the role of organisational values and how they are disseminated and understood by organisational members but also to uphold my professional values. In addition to this, working in collaboration with a voluntary sector organisation was important as it acted as a direct link from the sector to the research, maintaining sector relevance in the thesis. In this respect, the research process had to be dynamic in order to remain connected to fluctuating contextual debate and issues.

As a youth work practitioner and researcher, I was interested in the voices of the young women being present in my research and aware of the value of subversion of power to elicit hidden meaning, therefore it would have been unethical from both perspectives to adopt a methodology and method which allowed me to parachute in,

retrieve data, leave, and analyse data so producing research 'on' young people. To ethically elicit 'voice' I used my skills as a practitioner and researcher on a discrete PAR project to work with a group of young women who became peer-researchers and generated their own data and findings. These were combined with my own to add the perspectives and views of the young women of the organisation gathered through interviews with former and lifelong GA members. In addition, the 'voice' I wanted to capture and include in the research was not constrained to those in the present, but my interest also lay in voices of the past found within the archival sources of the GA.

In addition, whilst adhering to the values and principles of informal education and youth work, I wanted to develop an element of the research which was directly beneficial to the Guide Unit my research was connected to, over and above my role as a volunteer. Working to this end and recognising the importance of developing a co-researcher relationship in the PAR project, I was aware that my commitment would be long-term and my involvement with the organisation and its members would begin before data generation. Prior to starting to volunteer with the GA I knew I would remain with the organisation after the research had concluded therefore it was important that my position, relationship, and integrity were not compromised. To these ends, adopting an ethical and inclusive methodological approach which aligned with the values of informal education and youth work was important. My methodological approach, which used ethnographic multi methods, allowed me to immerse myself in the historical and current positions of the organisation. Epistemologically, the methods have a direct link to youth work and informal education, aiming to be emancipatory and ethical.

## **Impact**

From the outset of this research, the aim has been to add to the contemporary conversations and work of the youth work sector. The intention of this research is to inform and affect change from collaborative, sector-based learning. The impact generated by this research can be informative on different levels. It has the potential to inform organisational models, to influence policy and inform representative youth work national bodies and youth work practice, which in turn will impact on the lives of young people and those who work with them.

This work contributes to the qualitative research and knowledge exchange between youth work and academia. It also demonstrates the value of participatory action methodology or 'orientation' which, as it mirrors the values of youth work, contributes knowledge produced in context. The methodology centres the voice of those people involved in youth work, supporting them to tell their own stories and providing space in which they are able to reflect upon their own practice and experiences of the values they work with and within.

## **Research context**

I conducted my research in the North East region of England as it is this area I originate from and have practiced youth work in. I decided to choose a case study for my research from the specific geographical area of Hebburn, a town in the North East region, for two reasons. Firstly, it is classed as being an area of having multiple indices of deprivation which is often used to identify the need for youth provision. The town has one youth club which is run in partnership with the local authority and

a community association, (it is also the youth club I used to attend as a young person and work in as an adult). Secondly, Hebburn is the town I am from. I understand its historical and cultural characteristics and I have a strong personal and professional connection to the area, the people, and its characteristics.

Context is crucial to 'voice' in this research as the subjective interpretations of those involved create knowledge. As the knowledge created is contextual it leads to plausible, culturally embedded recommendations, which when applied make an impact. Context is vital to the framing of value-based youth work, understanding that it is the milieu of those involved which frame both personal and collective learning.

As previously stated, my positionality within the research was important to me as a practitioner and researcher. In the year prior to my research beginning, I began volunteering with the case study organisation. The decision to do this was two-fold. As a practitioner I hold the traditional values of community and youth work therefore ethically I wished to build a reciprocal relationship which was mutually beneficial as opposed to that of a researcher who enters the research, gathers data and leaves. As a researcher conducting Participant Observation, I wanted to understand how organisational values are transmitted and acted upon/out therefore in this year I immersed myself into the organisational structure and operational systems and trained to be a Guide Leader.

Throughout the second year of my research, once I was ready to generate data through semi-structured interviews and the PAR project, I switched between the

roles of researcher and Guide Leader, as did the peer researchers, who wore University departmental t-shirts as an agreed visible demarcation when they were working on the PAR project. As a reflective practitioner I was continually aware of my positionality and the possibility of the blurring of my roles as youth worker, Guide Leader, and researcher as my connection to this research accommodates the dynamic positions of 'insider' and 'outsider' (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009; Peshkin, 1988).

In recognition that this research has origins and is rooted in youth work and to me as a practitioner with the aim of exploring the importance of the values and principles of youth work and organisational stability, it was important that the research itself be steeped in these values and principles. To do this it was fundamental that I adopt a methodological approach which supported these aims and aligned with the values of the profession. I researched from an interpretivist position, understanding and valuing knowledge from the perspective of those involved which was underpinned by the ontological belief and relativist paradigm that understands reality as contextual, relative, and dynamic, recognising subjectivity in concepts of truth and reality (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Epistemologically, the research was conducted through a critical realist and constructionist lens accepting that knowledge is located and formed through interactions in society. In understanding the influence and importance of social interactions on the lives of people, especially in conjunction with past and present knowledge, this position recognises the ability to construct future knowledge within these interactions.

The ontological and epistemological position of this research parallels the emancipatory ethos of informal education and the dialogical methods of youth work practice. In addition to this and to recognise the importance of youth work's methodological position of creating knowledge through informal, collective experiential learning, the PAR project played a central role to this youth work praxis, by supporting research with, rather than on, young people and producing new contextual knowledge which holds meaning to those involved and is acted upon. Methodologically the qualitative methods used to induct knowledge were archival research, participant observation and semi-structured interviews. This was exercised within a theoretical framework, an ethical, reflexive process based upon the values and principles of informal education and youth work. This process recognised reciprocity and my learning and knowledge creation alongside that of the peer researchers.

In recognition of my 'situational subjectivity' (Peshkin,1988.p.18) and 'insider knowledge' (Batsleer, 2010) I used my own reflections to inform my practice as a researcher and youth worker as well as data being generated solely for research purposes. My reflective diary/journal enabled me to critically reflect, across time, in and on the research and allowed me to understand my positionality in relation to power and personal bias. My thoughts and reflections as a participant observer also shaped this research and in this, I acknowledge that the concept, research design and outcomes are embedded in my position as a youth work practitioner. In this, my ontological and epistemological stance, combined with methodologies and ethically informed processes, supported me in viewing myself through a critical lens, to question myself and my assumptions, and the power I held in the research process.



My research used a range of ethnographic methods: archival research, semi-structured interviews, participant observation and a discrete PAR project. My approach to these methods was reflexive (Braun and Clarke, 2013), in that they were dynamic in response to the context and situation. I was directed by the flow of the process and availability of participants. These methods provided a lot of data, in varied forms, including drawings, my reflective field notes/journal, observations, photos and diaries, which I analysed during and after the fieldwork process. I analysed the data by identifying themes and sub-themes, links across the data and patterns within it until I reached a point of saturation.

## **Chapter and thesis structure**

This chapter, (Chapter 1) outlines the rationale behind this thesis. It provides context, and presents its origins, journey and aims, the research and the process in relation to the contemporary field of youth work. In addition, it demonstrates the ethos underpinning the research and of the methodological choices made to uphold and embed this.

Chapter two provides key literature about the values and principles of youth work, acknowledging it as a contested concept. It explores youth work as fluid, located within a process informed by a set of features which define its character. The literature points to youth work being a methodology, a praxis, which enables and supports the work to be dynamic and ever evolving. The chapter also identifies the contemporary position of youth work, its issues and the dilemmas facing the voluntary youth work sector.

The chapter briefly presents the development of youth work within historical and political contexts from philanthropic character building, through to state interventions and professionalisation, arid policy years and the glut of youth work policies of the New Labour government era. The chapter moves forward exploring contemporary youth work in a neoliberal context and its concerns with deficit models of young people and concepts of labelling and targeting. It notes a shift in youth work from collectivism to individual responsibility. The chapter reviews the impact of a continuing economic austerity policy on youth work and youth workers recognising the impact on and continuing shift away from those traditional youth work

characteristics. Along with academic literature, this section also considers contemporary information found within sources such as youth sector conferences content and networking groups which allowed me to identify current debates.

The next section of this literature chapter focuses briefly on critical, radical feminist youth work and its praxis, tracing its trajectory from a visible and valued method of youth work creating emancipatory space for girls and young women through to the neoliberal, 'post-feminist' (Cullen, 2013.p.29) girls work where funding criteria requires them to be 'fixed.' Expanding further and continuing with the theme of radical pedagogies, it discusses anti-oppressive practice and its ability to inform change as it challenges power relations. It explores the inequalities experienced by young people today, the lack of socio-politically informed youth work and the need to create space to create alternative narratives and empower through critical consciousness raising.

This is then linked to financial sustainability demonstrating restrictions placed by a neoliberal context on the ability of the sector to work with those traditional emancipatory youth work characteristics. The literature also demonstrates how some youth work organisations have become implicit in perpetuating this neo liberal framing of young people, seeing them as the 'raw materials' which can be 'fixed' and produced through a 'change' process. The chapter concludes recognising the 'quiet' continuation and growth of some traditional youth organisations which are starting to become more visible to policy makers and government officials.

Studying the literature concerned with youth work characteristics and its historical and political development allowed me to identify gaps in current knowledge concerning traditional and contemporary youth work. The gaps identified, especially the vacuum of knowledge on sustainability linked to the traditional characteristics of youth work, have confirmed the viability of my research. Conducting this literature review enabled me to identify the initial themes which informed my data collection concerning the values and principles of youth work. The themes included, does youth work have recognisable traits and what are they? How is 'good' youth work recognised? Is the GA a youth work organisation and does feminist youth work have a role in it? What is the current climate and context of youth work and what are its challenges and finally what are the factors which lead to organisational longevity and sustainability. (Appendix: Themes, prompts, and questions. p.422).

My third chapter presents key literature and information about the origins, structure, and evolution of The Guide Association and draws information from a wide source of material including archived personal diaries and writings, organisational documents, such as minutes and pamphlets. It charts the beginnings of the GA movement identifying that it was informed by and rooted in the contextual needs of girls and young women, and its organisational growth in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It focuses on organisational learning through the application of the values and principles of informal education and youth work, seeing The GA evolve according to the needs of women and girls and their socio-political position in society and focusing on the importance of being a girl only space. The chapter demonstrates feminist practice in

the method of guiding, the importance of the role of the Leader and their relationship with the Guide.

Moving through to discuss guiding in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the chapter identifies the continual evolutionary process of guiding underpinned by youth work values, which introduces stability to its structure. It further recognises the importance of the volunteering role, in that it is multi-faceted and fluid, and when aligned with the life course of the women occupying these roles, further adds to organisational stability. In maintaining relevance, the organisation continues to have a purpose, fulfilling the motivational needs of those who engage with it. The final section of this chapter discusses the organisation being 'girl only' and how this space supports collective action which challenges inequalities in society. It highlights the continued positive impact of feminist practice within a neoliberal context, suggesting feminist youth work practice is a platform from which to critically study sex-gender ideologies.

My fourth chapter details the methodological approaches and considerations which frame my research and were adopted to explore the identified research themes. This chapter explains how I conducted my research in relation to discovering the reasons for the sustainability of the GA and evaluating its role in the context of contemporary youth provision. The chapter explains my methodological use of an investigative paradigm, consisting of ethnographic methods to study the historical development and contemporary positions of youth work and the GA. Adopting a longitudinal, multi-method approach and immersing myself in a natural setting to understand symbolic meaning, the theory inductively generated aligned with my professional practice

(Adams and McCullough. 2003). It continues on to explain that the methods adopted when combined with the educative process of participatory action research enabled me to engage with subjective knowledge, locating significance and elucidating hidden meaning in context (Fals-Borda and Rahman, 1991).

The fifth chapter explains my rationale for using participatory action research (PAR). The aim of creating a discrete PAR project was to recognise the agency of the young women I was working with, acknowledging their right to be heard and respecting their views and freedom of expression, (articles 12 and 13 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child). Methodologically it aligns with the traditional values of youth work and informal education as it ontologically recognises multiple realities and the multiplicity of knowledge. It is concerned with power and subversion as it recognises those who can be affected and impacted by research should be the ones who do it, (Banks *et al.* 2018). In this chapter I also consider and acknowledge the impact of my positionality on the research and the limitations of each method, and I explain how I aimed to mitigate them.

The following two chapters, (Chapters five and six), document my findings. Using data from interviews, the findings from the PAR project, archival sources and my reflective/fieldwork journal the chapters detail the central research findings. From the research findings, chapter five looks at how youth workers identify youth work as a dynamic and ethical process, located within traditional values and principles. It continues to explore youth work in a contemporary setting and the impact economic austerity policies have had on the amount of provision, documenting the demise of youth work and experienced practitioners and the growth of 'working with young

people.’ It considers the position of the youth sector today and its growing acceptance of neoliberal values.

The findings in chapter seven discuss the characteristics of the Guide Association and its ability to evolve. It explores sustainability in the organisational ability to maintain relevance by actively embracing the dynamic and contextual position of girls and young women. The chapter explains the methods used and how the values are framed to support individual growth in collective action. It identifies ‘belonging’ through a shared identity and how it extends into the community networks of those who use it.

Chapter eight resolves the thesis by presenting the research conclusions. It also includes implications for practice, methodological contributions, recommendations, and identifies the limitations within this research. It concludes with a critical reflection on the journey and process of the thesis.

## **Chapter 2.**

### **Brief overview of youth work: Literature review**

#### **Introduction.**

This chapter presents the historical development of youth work in the U.K and discusses youth work's contested nature, recognising it as a complex and fluid process, which makes it a difficult occupation to define. This provides the context for considering the development of Girl Guiding and its relationship with youth work. Chronologically addressing significant points within the historical timeline of youth work in England, I use historical and contemporary literature to present and demonstrate the fluctuating nature of youth work and its practice, understanding it as a dynamic process that shapes and adapts concerning social, economic, and political contexts. This section argues that an understanding of youth work is found within the commonalities of this process using them to contextualise the research categories and themes connected: the ethos, values, and principles of youth work.

The third chapter, a literature review of the GA, will argue the model of the Guide Association (GA), represents the values and principles of youth work and it is within this dynamic process that organisational stability is located. It will also address the political and emancipatory process of youth work when working with girls and young women.



## **The Development of Youth Work.**

### **Defining the fluid complexity of praxis: the nature of youth work.**

The variety of methods and practices positioned and defined under the encompassing banner of 'Youth Work' (Brew, 1957; Jeffs, 1998) makes it an often contested and broad concept, one which is difficult to define using one, static term. Despite this the urge to define the practices of youth work using a succinct statement is long-standing and regularly reignited as the implementation of policies and political agendas, habitually force the youth work sector to redefine to accommodate shifts in policy, practice, and funding. As a practitioner of over 25 years, I have attended many workshops and training events which begin with the 'obligatory' exercise requiring attendees to answer the question 'what is youth work?' where, amid groans of dismay and voices of resistance, participants are 'facilitated' in identifying youth work within contemporary political policy language.

Consistent revisiting of 'What is youth work?' uncovers a myriad of fluctuating definitions resulting in more complexity to the identification. Even the self-proclaimed 'national body for youth work,' (2022) the National Youth Agency (NYA) have across time and policy redefined youth work. Today, the NYA explains youth work as 'a distinct educational process adapted across a variety of settings to support a young person's personal, social and educational development.' A markedly different definition from a previous (2020) explanation in which the NYA stated youth work is underpinned by the 'clear' values of young people choosing to take part, utilising their view of the world, treating young people with respect, seeking to develop their skills and attitudes rather than remedy 'problem behaviours', helping young people develop stronger relationships and collective identities, respecting and valuing

differences and promoting the voice of young people. The NYA (2019) has also categorised youth work as ‘a science housed in a complex series of professional principles, practices and methods.’ This contradicted the 2014 session where youth work was described as a ‘set of beliefs within an ‘educational process,’ and in 2004 where the then C.E.O saw youth work as ‘informed by a set of beliefs,’ (Wylie, 2004, p. 3). Further adding to the complexity and continual shift, other leading youth organisations also present their understanding of youth work, framing it through their lens. In its most recent strategy, ‘Unlocking Youth Work 2025,’ UK Youth describes youth work as ‘an educational discipline,’ ‘a catalyst for change,’ using ‘techniques’ which develop in young people resulting in ‘the self-empowering agency required to lead a fulfilling, productive life.’(UK. Youth, 2022).

Whilst many of the definitions house similarities, the differences in emphasis and phrasing have positioned youth work as a ‘profession that is misunderstood and ‘under-appreciated,’ as youth workers have an ‘intrinsic lack of ability, to explain the role’ (Trimmer-Platman, 2014, p. 34). This an opinion arguably re-enforced by the capacities of chief executives of leading youth work organisations who, according to Jeffs (2011) were ‘woefully’ and ‘inadequately,’ unable to make ‘the case for youth work before a Parliamentary Committee’ in 2011.

The assumption that a universal definition or description would benefit dialogue both inside and outside the profession seems plausible in that it may elucidate the ‘value’ of youth work and its influence on the lives of young people and position the work in quantifiable frameworks. However, Cooper suggests the ability to understand youth work does not lie in a static definition but within the fluidity and location of its

practice. It may be characterised by employing a set of *features* (Banks, 2010, p. 7) not all of which are always relevant but would provide an ideal type or set of standards. This position is adopted by The Institute of Youth Work (IYW), which aims, as a strategic priority, to rectify misconceptions by creating an understanding for 'policymakers, commentators, funders and the public' by actively promoting 'the values and ethics of youth work' (IYW, 2022). For the process of youth work to be happening these characteristic features should be present:

1. Be a process led by negotiation which is conducted in a respected and trusted relationship and focused on the potential of a young person.
2. Voluntary participation.
3. Young people can exercise power in these relationships and in the provision and service they participate in.
4. Methodology of informal, collective, and experiential learning,(in the here and now) starting from the interests and the enjoyment of young people and creating opportunities.
5. Clearly defined, and intentional boundaries where challenge, stimulation and support are catalysts for gaining new skills and insight.
6. 'Being' not just 'becoming'.
7. Respect and embrace wider cultures and concerns.
8. Housed within an ethical framework.

(Davies, 2008a, p. 86)

If we accept, that certain features of Youth Work define its character, we can find meaning and understanding located in its 'nature', in the 'traditions' which describe it. Understanding is located in the ethical practice of acting upon and within informal, experiential, participative and universal aims (Bradford and Cullen, 2014). These are to be recognised as of fundamental importance to what it is.

Therefore, informal education of youth work is 'both the process and purpose' (Banks, 1999, p. 7), its clarity is characterised not by a single, universal definition but by the specific elements which enable informal education encyclopaedia, 1988). This praxis enables youth work to be located within a variety of settings, to be educationally organic, with no predetermined goals. Operating within variable time structures where participation is voluntary, engagement is in responsive dialogue and experiential learning, and is rooted in familiar cultural forms and social systems.

This process-led negotiation, born from critical pedagogy, (Freire, 1972) strives towards informal education through an ethical methodology, rooted in equality, and challenging power structures through the use of a shared experience via a range of methods. Within this active context youth work is found within an 'ambient space' (Batsleer, 2010), formed in and alongside a dynamic process, and located through the distinct 'patterns' or 'traditions' (Jeffer, 1998; Smith, 1988), which are found within its practice and ideology. The association youth work has with changing social circumstances, links to social context and cultural adaptations, making it dynamic,

(Batsleer and Davies, 2010, p. 212), in that it is continually changing and 'unfinished' (Davies, 2008a, p. 3), being in a state of ever-evolving 'flux' (Jeffer, 2018, p. 37).

Through this dynamic process, the characteristics, or values themselves become encapsulated and flow through practice, becoming reabsorbed and reintroduced back into youth work, as a 'praxis' methodology as opposed to a linear or developmental progression. This praxis results in a cognitive map (Smith, 1988, p. 51) captured in a framework of permeable boundaries (Jeffer, 2018, p. 29). It is these characteristics, these values, each distinct in their motivation, which enable the evolution of youth work as a collective and corporeal understanding.

Furthermore, conversation is used by an 'attentive' worker to challenge and motivate; support and empower thus enabling young people to reach their full potential (Jeffer and Smith, 1996; Batsleer, 2007; Banks, 2010). Through dialogue, conversation is extended and further explored by the conceptualisation of opportunities practiced, where in this process of informal education learning is contextualised, embedded, and developed in everyday life. To this end, the young person becomes the 'owner' or 'director' of themselves, and their lives and relationships formed in conversation are respectful and enacted within a flexible framework which is to be challenged, relocated, and explored.

In accepting and promoting the praxis of informal education, youth work becomes a 'moral craft' (Jeffer and Smith, 1996) framed within a set of values supporting interaction. Smith identifies this set of values or 'traditions' (Smith, 1988; Smith,

2013) which are found amid the differences in youth work as ‘a distinctive educational practice founded on a voluntary relationship with young people and shaped by their agendas’ (In Defence of Youth Work, 2022). The National Occupational Standards (NOS), (2019) recognise these values, (participation; equality, diversity, and inclusion; partnership; personal, social, and political development) as being at the core of youth work, which should be ‘placed within a local, social and political context’ (pp. 4 - 5). In a bid to recognise multiplicity within values, The European Centre for Youth Policy 2009 (EKCYP), described youth work as ‘polyvalent’ occupying an ‘ambivalent position between private aspirations and public expectations,’ (Lauritzen, 2022). Extending the pluralistic nature of youth work, Cooper (2018) acknowledges shared values within a core set of transnational values and practices which are:

1. A focus on young people’s lives and their concerns;
2. Attending to the social connection in young people’s lives;
3. Positive regard and processes for working through supportive and friendly relationships;
4. A holistic approach to young people that includes a commitment to:
  - I. Informal education;
  - II. An ethic of care and concern for the flourishing of young people;
  - III. Facilitation of youth participation, rights, and social justice;
5. Acting with integrity.

(Cooper, 2018, p. 14)

As the 'conduit' or facilitator of youth work, youth workers play an important role in the process of informal education. Through dialogue, they challenge and 'prod' by giving conversations 'a little twist' (Brew, 1957, p. 111). Wylie (2010) suggests these challenging and conditional conversations add to further frame the youth work process, rendering the rationale and advocacy of youth workers important. The roles undertaken by youth workers can be sought or imposed upon them (Jefferies and Smith, 1987), they are significant as they feed into their approaches and application of youth work.

As 'informal educators' youth workers maintain the capacity to choose how they work with young people. However, what is important and unique about their role is that the activity they do is not the end, but the means to an educational end. The content is not incidental as the conversation is used to create educational experiences placing youth work as an association within the dialogue and without any guarantees.

Wylie suggests youth workers fall into three categories: First he describes 'romantics,' who through the process of youth work support, 'individuals in difficult circumstances' helping them 'put their lives back on track' by 'offering them new experiences in order to escape the limiting contours and low expectations of their neighbourhoods' (Wylie, 2010, p. 3). Second are the 'technocratic' workers who embrace a target-driven, managerial ideology in the hope that youth work and organisations survive service re- structuring, reframing, and financial stringency. Finally came the 'principled pragmatists' who draw from youth work values and

believe youth work should be expressed in the broader goals of contemporary social policy and are concerned with ethical parameters when practicing youth work.

When the process of youth work is applied from the perspective of the youth worker, we see the values of youth work represented in a wide range of ventures, methods, and tools. For example, the technocratic, democratically configured participation of Local Youth Councils, Forums and Cabinets, endorsed by the DCMS and the British Youth Council (2020), aims to involve young people in influencing public decision-making at a local and national level. They have at their disposal a 'self-assessment tool kit' and checklist to assist in 'measuring the impact and success of your youth voice vehicle' using frameworks, such as 'Hear by Right (2020b), and 'indicators' as self-assessment resources to measure participation and allocate awards demonstrating 'success.'



## **A brief overview of the development of youth work: 19th – 21st centuries.**

### **Origins in Nineteenth-Century philanthropy and voluntarism.**

The development of youth work in the U.K has roots in the historical, political, social, and economic conditions of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Industrialisation and globalisation brought changes in labour demands (Jeffer, 1979) producing elements of uncertainty within society (Davies, 2008). When combined with the impact of poverty, the rise of anti-social behaviour, minimal state intervention and the newly recognised 'storm and stress' (Hall, 1904) phase of adolescence, 'moral dangers' emerged which sparked concern for the welfare of young people. The social conscience of the 'leisured and educated classes' (Brew, 1957, p. 117) produced a 'philosophical and intellectual revolution' (Jeffer, 2018, p. 33) resulting in a swathe of philanthropy which produced, what Davies (2008) and Johnson (1970) classify as 'emergent forms of youth work', driven by the binary 'child saving' rationale, viewing young people as either good citizens or delinquents (Davies, 1999, p. 8).

Founded with altruistic intentions, the 'Youth Leadership' movement (Davies, 2008) consisting of volunteers operating in small, local groups (Jeffer, 2015), worked with young people for various reasons. Some were motivated by charitable actions such as improving the lives of young people through the development of personal skills; others operated through a political lens ensuring the working class did not collectivise and rise through Trade Union organisations; while others wished to save young people from capitalist employers (Davies, 2008b).

Upon these foundations, youth work continued to develop in accordance, with a growing concern to control the working class through education. Wishing to educate and 'raise a new race of working people...in worthy of citizenship' (Johnson, 1970, p. 119); a shift occurred in the move away from individual grass-roots youth groups towards providing education 'to' the working class through institutions, such as Robert Raikes Sunday School movement of 1780 (Stanton, 2013).

This early period in the history of youth work saw continued growth and development moving towards membership organisations such as the 'network of local independent boys' and girls' clubs,' which included Baden-Powell's Boy Scouts and Girl Guides (Davies, 2008a). Supported by a range of federations, these organisations thrived and drew upon the needs of young people, using friendship groups as a medium through which work, and based on fundamental principles of learning by doing, voluntary 50 attendance, education through leisure time activities, a focus on an individual, personalised, and participatory relationships. This form or practice of youth work in this period is characterised as a process of informal education, aiming to support and empower young people to reach their full potential (Jefferies and Smith, 1996; Batsleer, 2007; Banks, 2010).

### **State intervention and the growth of the Youth Service.**

In the 1930s, surfacing from the fear of impending War, questions arose about the patriotism and 'readiness' of the younger generation. Consequently, a shift occurred towards the state taking a role in the 'governance' of young people by granting local authorities the power to provide youth facilities. A series of circulars were produced

of which Davies (2008a) suggests Circular 14/86 'The Service of Youth' to be the first explicit indication that informal education for young people was valued, requiring those aged 16/17 years to (optionally) register with the 'Youth Service.'

Furthermore, post second world war, saw the social construction of the 'teenager' alongside a narrative and public perception of rising 'youth delinquency' coinciding with the end of National Service, collectively adding to apprehension about young people and their future. Pressure groups lobbied the Government resulting in the Albermarle Report (Ministry of Education, 1960), a review with recommendations for a new youth service. Concluding the 'language' of the youth service no longer resonated with young people, it worked on reframing core features. Keeping voluntary participation, social education, self-determination, and working with peer relations to deliver (Smith and Doyle, 2002), the educative element expanded to include training and challenges which could only be accomplished through recreational activity.

The Albermarle Report recommended a vast building and funding plan, including the expansion of the number of professional leaders via an emergency training programme. This professionalisation of Youth Leaders was underpinned by a commitment to improving salaries and conditions under the administration of a negotiating committee.

Parallel to the professionalisation of the role of the youth worker, the report acknowledged the value and motivation behind those volunteer youth workers as,

‘no less important.... we are struck by the real concern for young people and the desire to help them at whatever cost, which characterizes these voluntary workers.’

(Ministry of Education. Committee on Youth Service in England and Wales, 1960, p. 10)

As a result, the report created a ‘two-tier’ profession: that of the trained professional and the helpful ‘amateur.’ Power relations shifted away from those who volunteered to those newly professionalised workers as well as in motivation, from the philanthropic charitable individuals to the monetary motivated universal state workers. This shift further established the dominance of the professionalisation of the service and bureaucratisation of youth work.

While this report is often thought of as a ‘coming of age’ for youth work, in that it sought to reform the image, style and philosophy (Davies, 1986), it is also noticeably the beginning of a firm state of intervention in the next two decades.

### **Stagnant service to Thatcherite policies.**

The 1970s saw a surge in the numbers of young people attending clubs, although the largest group attending was from the lower end of the age scale. However, this diminishing state funding was combined with a growth in home entertainment and private venture activities, which impacted attendance as it gradually lessened and running costs were becoming increasingly difficult to meet.

Despite the economic and cultural shifts, the Youth Service remained overwhelmingly static, continuing with the Albemarle recommendations. Despite accommodating a variety of provisions, the Youth Service had no clear objective (Jefferies, 1970) resulting in fragmentation, lack of purpose and a feeling of instability. Existing in a 'policy vacuum' youth work had become 'perplexed, insecure, threatened, divided and devoid of goals' (Ewen, 1975, p. 72).

Additionally, the ethos of the Service and those working in it were at odds with the public. The Service questioned the type of society desired and positioned young people as having potential, in contrast to the general perception of the 'problem of youth.'

Reviews of the service by two committees did not strengthen the position of the Service. The Fairbairn Committee recommended the Youth Service be fully located in schools whereas the Milson (Chair) Committee judged that this repositioning would not represent the full range of community interests. These tensions led to unhelpful and contradictory proposals presented in the concluding report (Department of Education and Science, 1969).

Nevertheless, in a bid to remain contextually relevant, community development as a model to frame and underpin youth work was introduced aiming to facilitate a dynamic culture, 'The Active Society' which was hoped to remain in a state of

constant adaptation, embracing technological advancements and actively acknowledging the transient sections of society.

‘Our commitment is to a society in which every member can be publicly active; for only in this way can society become positively responsive to them, and, in the constant renewal of itself, reflecting their values.’

(Department of Education and Science, 1969, pp. 59-60)

The inclusion of youth work was a ‘radical rethinking of the position of young people in society’ (Davies, 1999, p. 126) and a reinforcement of the value base of youth work as a dynamic, non-linear process which can define itself ‘as in motion’ (Ord, 2020). The impact and legacy this positioning left youth work was that it influenced and enabled the context to embrace ‘issue based’ youth work, from the policy positioning of young people as ‘unemployed’, ‘homeless’, ‘deprived’ (Davies, 2008); values encouraged it to be influenced by equality and diversity campaigns as well as top- down government targeting of specific groups, which saw youth work move away from solely mixed work and projects in a conscious and determined attempt to address power and inequality. This ‘targeting from below’ (Davies, 1999) led to interest and identity groups of young people, (sometimes ‘closed’ in identify), exploring ‘who’ they were and ‘how’ they experienced life.

The 1980s saw a fundamental change impacting directly the universal, community-based, open access youth provision as Thatcher’s 1979 conservative government imposed financial restraints on local authorities, introducing systematic, targeted

interventions to address perceived concerns of the unaffected, unemployed youth. In turn, the focus of youth work dramatically shifted from a self-determining perspective to one of individual responsibility (King, 2016). State-funded youth work redefined itself, creating 'specialist' teams within by inflexible boundaries and dismissive of individual intersectionality. Targeting steered youth work away from the Active Society perspective one of control and management. This shift restricted work within democratic traditional youth work values creating what Gutfreund (2000) describes as a 'chasm' between the 'traditional' values of the profession, such as entering into a voluntary relationship and the youth worker as a 'professional' fixed on the aims of the service.

### **Enter New Labour.**

Embracing a 'social integrationist discourse' of social inclusion linked to labour market participation (Levitas, 2005), the policies of New Labour had a deep and dramatic impact on the traditional values and principles of youth work. Value was realised through economic accountability and 'joining up' services to establish 'seamless provision' (Davies, 2008), where 'successful interventions' were found in the analysis of young people against pre-determined measurable outcomes, scrutinised within micro-management systems. This period of time 'constituted a significant change in the culture of youth work, provoking concern over privacy, surveillance and bureaucracy' (de St Croix, 2009).

A glut of policies 'modernised' the youth service. Framed within 'Resourcing Excellent Youth Services' (DfES, 2002), 'Transforming Youth Work' (DfEE, 2001) created the 'Youth Support Service,' measured by common standards and statistical

targets. 'Youth Matters' (DfES, 2005) focused youth work on tackling anti-social behaviour, reducing teenage pregnancy and subversion from being 'at risk'. The young people and youth work were framed in a 'deficit' model, where 'blame' and interventions were apportioned to counteract possible future outcomes (King, 2016) and set alongside pre-determined 'hard' and 'soft' performance indicators. Formulas, housed in neo-liberal language, were applied to 'contacts' enabling success to be calculated through 'reach,' 'engagement' and 'participation' against the 'Every Child Matters' (DfES, 2003) curriculum.

The impact of these policies steered youth work towards a broad 'services for young people' banner, creating another step away from the traditional values and principles of youth work as it focused on structured programmes, predetermined outcomes, and the redefinition of 'voluntary engagement' rendering it a basic imposed dichotomous choice of being a participant in the static provision offered or not. Workers struggled to find the space and time to enter into and nourish trusting relationships based on the interest and self-identified needs of the young person as these values were not considered economically viable nor a pre-determined outcome within 'curriculum as product' (Ord, 2020).

Additionally, the influence of the New Labour youth policy impacted the voluntary youth work sector as it was expanded and redefined as the 'third sector' to include private organisations. This opened access to state funding, extending surveillance through predetermined funding criteria. A specific 'REY' strand of funding allowed third sector and state sector workers to 'train' and professionalise as they embarked on the 'Improving Youth Work Management' programme embedding neoliberal



definitions, methods, and language reaffirming state-led and informed youth provision across all sectors.

Whilst the youth service saw a large financial investment under New Labour, the policy flurry saw the traditional values of youth work repositioned and redefined in a neoliberal context. Participation was reduced to consultation, conducted outside the democratic youth work process, resulting in tokenistic projects, such as 'Young Mayor' and 'Youth Councils. Legislative compliance was not surpassed but merely mirrored local, authoritative political models. Workers strived to find an oasis to utilise resources and work with young people, however the relationship was compromised; no longer reciprocal or negotiated, its purpose being to move a young person to 'become' as they progressed through curriculum stages and not to 'be.'

### **Youth work under economic austerity**

The introduction of economic austerity measured in 2010 saw the rapid dismantling of local authority youth provision resulting in £40 million removed from youth work, with the loss of more than 4,500 youth work jobs, and since 2012, the closure of over 760 youth centres (Unison, 2018). According to the government's figures, by as early as 2013-14 the majority of the local authority youth services budgets had tipped significantly towards 'targeted' programmes, with the proportion spent on 'universal' provision falling from 55.25% to 47.5% (Davies 2019).

Accommodating economic cuts under the political strapline 'more for less.' organisations were encouraged to seek alternative and cheaper models of delivery. In her report 'Facing Forward. How small and medium-sized charities can adapt to

survive,' Ravenscroft (2017) advocates of smaller charities must work in collaboration to survive and maximise potential, with large charities in allegiance with smaller ones in 'the voluntary sector ecosystem' and to 'move away from larger ones exploiting unfair competitive advantages that prevent smaller charities from competing fair' (p. 53).

Suggesting infrastructure organisations need to accelerate new partnerships and enable better sharing of learning, approaches and resources, financially incentivised government-led programmes, such as 'Delivering Differently for Young People' (DDfYP), (2014) emerged. It offered £50,000 to fund consultation to identify alternative as well as cheaper delivery models. Successful in its application, the borough of North Tyneside Council, emerged from DDfYP consultative process with a seated mistrust across the sector.

In Newcastle (2012) the delivery model applied saw the formation of a newly established voluntary sector consortium, led by Barnardo's national charity, win a large financial contract from the City Council to deliver targeted youth services. However, not all voluntary sector organisations were consortium members and were therefore excluded from the funding stream which led to strained relationships. The tensions were further impacted within the first year, as the consortium was unable to deliver the contract. As a result, it sub-contracted out to those organisations initially excluded from the process. The report, 'Surviving or Thriving in Newcastle,' (Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service, 2012) identified that agreed commissioning processes were ignored and inappropriate timeframes applied which further added to the breakdown in trust and communication. The report also

identified a disconnect between commissioned services and local areas, the latter expressing a need for universal, open access youth provision as opposed to targeted interventions. The model increased organisational competition for a targeted pool of 'service users' as well as access to funding available in the region. Sub-contracting led to less money being available to spend on face-to-face youth work and the lack of effective partnership working saw successful contractors, new to delivering services, experience recruitment delays 'whilst the existing youth groups were making staff redundant.' Amid the continued local authority economic cuts, 2011 saw the creation and funding of the new National Citizen Service. Costs the equivalent of 90% of the national youth service budget when launched it was billed as the 'country's fastest-growing youth movement', offering 'a rite of passage' and restoring values to young people (NCS, 2019). However, despite an additional, '£1.3bn of government funding in 10 years', (Cohen, 2021) the 'NCS is the behemoth of the youth sector, crowding out others... yet it fails to meet Whitehall's key performance targets' and with a 'one size fits all' approach the House of Commons Committee for Public Accounts (2017) identified that the NCS approach does not work.

New Labour's neoliberal policy and the legacy of economic austerity has resulted in a noticeable shift in youth work from open access to targeted within widespread commissioning models resulting in 'increased sector competitiveness' (NYA & Network of Regional Youth Work Units, 2014).

No longer having a common form of youth service across England and functioning within a distinct absence of youth policy, (any anticipated youth policy plans were

declined in 2017 and have not yet been reignited), both youth work and social action have become a feature of a wider civil society strategy.

The combination of only funding targeted work and a lack of commonality have contributed to the shift away from informal education and youth work as a value-driven process. It has moved towards non-formal interpretations leading to current debates about the nature, effectiveness, and sustainability of 'youth work' (Mckee 2011), and the NYA suggesting youth work is untenable. Prioritising targeted work, increased competition and ill-informed commissioning has further fragmented the service as small organisations lack the skills and capacity to apply for larger contracts as larger services monopolise conversation with funders, redefine geographical areas and introduce moral panics and 'issues.'

Economic cuts and increased emphasis on bidding for short-term pots of money have seen some youth charities close and others change how they operate to access money, (Hayes, 2020). In addition, Jones (2014) suggests the 'demand for quick results linked to particular short-term funding streams' (p. 220) mark a tension between 'traditional youth work values' and youth work ethics, as organisations in receipt of short-term, target-driven funding attempt 'to stay faithful' to traditional youth work values by employing methods which corresponded with their 'traditional professional skills, values, and knowledge, despite the imperative to meet ambitious targets' (p. 226).

Voluntary sector organisations identified an ‘urgent need for charities to secure alternative funding sources if they are to survive,’ (Ravenscroft, 2017), as funders continue to require ‘applicants to demonstrate their organisation’s long-term viability and impact, while often providing only short-term project funding.’ This ideological shift then limits learning as short-term, temporary programmes inhibit the ability to work within traditional youth work characteristics and ‘build continuity and sustainability,’ (Jones, 2014) as ‘policies concerning aspects of education require years rather than months to generate measurable impacts’ (Jones, 2012, p. 167).

### **Feminist Youth Work**

Culturally embedded rationales, such as those based upon gender analysis, are limiting when working with young people as they differentiate ‘giving priority to what is still often treated as ‘the second sex’ (Hanbury, Lee, Batsleer, 2010.p. 118). However, feminist youth work is juxtaposed to this position in that it values equality and as such, requires a foundation of critical enquiry and questioning. Criticality is fundamental to feminist youth work as the methods employed dispute the legitimacy of gender stereotypes. It takes professional, political, and personal contexts and critically analyses each sphere, connection, and intersectionality. It is therefore found in praxis, using experiential learning to challenge inequality on a formal and informal basis to realise emancipation. It is these feminist pedagogic methods which should be adopted within informal education settings (Cullen, 2013. p.24) as they provide ‘a space which is ripe for analysis and exploration.’

With origins in the Girls’ Club Movement (Spence 2006), the Women’s Liberation movement and influenced by the dialogic critical pedagogy of Freire (1972), youth

work in the 1970's saw the second wave of feminism 'strongly' shape (Cullen, 2013.p.27) work with girls and young women. This period saw the rise of 'radical' (Cullen. 2013) practice concerned with political education (Batsleer, 2011) and social justice combined with feminist organising in youth work. It created networks and strategies, making of the 'social' as a gender- neutral space' (Batsleer, 2021.p.6). With it, youth work saw the emergence of feminist youth workers, who using creative and innovative methods, such as manual trade workshops, self-defence training, sports and outward bound residential, and issue-based groupwork (Batsleer 2006; Spence 2006), actively working to challenge gender stereotypes.

Fundamental to this work was the creation of 'space,' safe and accessible to girls and young women, who are supported by skilled youth workers who have an 'illuminating' aspect to their role' (Batsleer, 2010b, p.225). These workers, through the art of conversation, build relationships in which to learn together. These skills and methods, together with conversation, allowed the spaces created and used to be questioned and even, 'momentarily 'queered' (Cullen, 2013. p.32), allowing gender deconstruction.

In addition, Hanbury Lee, and Batsleer, (2010) argue the importance of the gender of the worker and of the work occurring in a single gender space, suggesting the issue is not 'straightforward' (p.8). Workers may have to find and commandeer contextual space, which for some young women's groups, may be found in the absence of young men and for others, who are guided by culture or faith, may be the 'only possible form for youth work' (p.8) they can access. Spence (2006, p.258) argues youth work from a critical feminist lens has positioned girls work as 'specialist,' an

extension rather than a fundamental aspect of generic youth work. In this positioning, work with girls and young women is reduced to attending to 'moral panics' (Cullen, 2013.p.26) and 'reinforcing gender 'norms.' A lack of critical dialogue on women and society, sees practice in 'tension with growing demands for an instrumental practice' (Bradford, 2011, 103). This position is reinforced as state and external funding began to focus on transitions and prevention, an example being New Labour's dogmatic commissioning models, which along with curriculum based, pre-identified accredited outcomes, introduced competition for funding and placed value in quantitative outputs. This stance shifted the focus away from creative methods in which to challenge dominant norms to framing work with young women around pregnancy and relationships.

This position continues as contemporary youth work remains output focused, and funding driven, adopting a neo-liberal frame to promote work. Youth work has become policy driven, concerned with 'at risk' (Cullen, 2013. P.27) groups of young people which maintains youth work starts from a male domain (Batsleer 2006) as it accepts and reinforces gender stereotypes. Funders are concerned with anti-social behaviour, mainly targeting young men, whilst creating 'moral panics' (Cullen, 2013. P.27) presenting young women's behaviour within the frames of sexuality, body image and eating disorders.

The erosion of single sex work with girls and young women and of politically active youth work within a feminist frame can be seen in the generalisation of the equalities and diversity agenda, (Cullen, 2013. p.33). Whilst sex-based organisations such as the Girls' Friendly Society continue working with girls and young women, they too are

subject to and shift their work towards funding targets shaped by neo-liberal policy. Cullen (2013) suggests this has resulted in controlled 'post-feminist' (p.29) girls work aiming 'to 'fix' girls and young women who lack, self-confidence, self-esteem, are not resilient.

The next section expands upon the importance of and need for radical pedagogies in anti-oppressive youth work as conduits to challenge the rapidly increasing inequalities within contemporary society.

### **Anti-oppressive practice in youth work**

The characteristics of traditional youth work, especially those adopting radical pedagogies embracing feminist ideologies, enable it to be attentive to social issues and political actions whilst committing to empower those who engage with it. Anti-oppressive practice is central to this requiring an understanding of power, reflection, and critical analysis to inform change (Chouhan, 2009). The theoretical framework of critical youth work challenges power relations, refocusing anti-oppressive practice on to the impact of 'the class system and of patterns of racism and sexism' (Batsleer, 2021. p.1). In this social democracy, power and oppression are analysed, and every transaction questioned using a 'sociocultural lens, with attention to the power in the relationship, and the contextual and historical power that exists' (Ramsey and Lawford, 2018. p 586). It is from these perspectives that 'voices of particular movements' (Shukra, 2008.p.232), are represented. These voices are often heard from the perspective of closed communities and have an emphasis on social justice. In understanding this, marginalised or oppressed voices foster collectivism, creating and using space, not only to explore but to be active and bring about change.



In the current political and economic climate, poverty continues to extend deeper across society. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation reported in 2022 that 4.3 million children currently live in poverty in the U.K, a figure which continues to rise and includes more children who live in families with working parents/carers. The North East of England is one of two areas hardest hit by poverty, seeing an increase of 3% since 2005/06 (JRF, 2022).

However, the current climate positions youth work in a dichotomy. It sits within a spectrum where at one end it engages with 'youth development', recognising young people through a deficit lens, where its role is to identify issues and behaviour to be challenged and rectified. The opposite end of the spectrum sees youth work persuading young people to manufacture social action projects. Nevertheless, both positions place youth work outside of socio-political conditions. Young people are 'passive recipients of service' (Ramsey and Lawford, 2018. p 583), and in maintaining that position, remain disempowered. Shukra (2008) argues that the participation agenda of mainstream youth work is played out in the duplication of the democratic structure of youth councils, forums, and parliaments. This positioning is juxtaposition to the ethical and political characteristics of anti-oppressive practice, a term Batsleer suggests 'as a site of struggle,' (2021. p. 3) and concerned with social control, in opposition to youth work practices of social democracy.

Whilst inequalities experienced by young people continue to grow, the current shift towards maintaining neoliberalism has given rise to new deficit narratives. To

counter this stance, Bowler, *et.al* (2021, p.2) argue a compelling need for 'anti-oppressive practice as a way of 'doing' youth work, where the empowerment of young people is more than a theme in youth work language but is concerned with collectivism and challenging divisive norms in the achievement of social need. This perspective sees anti-oppressive youth work practice as participative, characterised by the use of social networks, affirming efficacy and awareness through a dynamic solution focused approach. In this space, workers engage in critical dialogue to reach a level of consciousness to understand lived experiences and the impact of structural inequalities. Through this awareness, youth workers are in a unique position to challenge discrimination and inequalities by creating 'alternative discourses' (Chouhan, 2009. p. 14), engaging in dialogue with young people and their communities, to both enable and achieve a level of critical consciousness to challenge oppression.

Batsleer (2017) suggests a resurgence of movements concerned with oppression, including the forms of sexism faced by young women today. Findings from case study research found young women continue to challenge and rebuff injustice. Four themes were emergent . Firstly, young women wanting equality of access and activity, the ability to choose and recognition of the limitations connected to sexuality in shaping experience. Secondly, through collectivism and 'successful caring femininity' (Batsleer, 2017, para. 5) the ability to exercise values of citizenship. Thirdly using space to challenge dominant discourses and moral panics about young women, creating alternative narratives and finally, arguing meanings and experiences attributed to being the 'second sex' (para. 12) are still prevalent today.

### **Sustainability within a neoliberal context**

Depending upon political ideology, sustainability in the field of youth work can have different meanings as it is informed by knowledge, values, and philosophies (Smith, 2008). It can be applied to economic factors, workforce and to the sustainability of community groups or a locality. However, most often in contemporary youth work, sustainability is attributed to economic longevity and rarely includes sustainability connected to and identified by young people.

Sustainability has become an increasingly common term in the language of the contemporary youth work sector and is predominantly used to refer to economic and political development, more specifically the ability to develop financial models which function within the current climate of short-term funding.

The social inclusion policies of New Labour focused on targeting certain groups within society which has had a continued impact on youth work and the work with girls and young women. Policies required youth work and youth workers to engage in surveillance whilst moulding them into the model citizen (Davies, 2008) whilst simultaneously labelling and 'othering' those who did not fit the model. 'Transforming Youth Work' (DfES, 2001), 'Resourcing Excellent Youth Services' (DfES, 2002) and 'Youth Matters' (DfES, 2005) introduced the measurement of outcomes and whilst open access and group work occurred, they did so whilst delivering programmes and activities which promoted social policies such as the prevention of teenage pregnancy.

Kuhlman and Farrington (2010) suggest sustainability should be more than ascertaining financial resources or a goal to maintain productive capacity, it should include the social aspects of 'human aspirations for a better life: welfare, well-being, development' (p.3439). They also suggest that the impact measurement of sustainability based solely on socio-economic dimensions and well-being 'is not helpful and often impossible to make in practice' (p.3444).

A U.K Youth report (2000) aligns youth work and sustainability with the development of new business models (Hayes, 2016. n.p) suggesting economic sustainability for the youth sector can be attained through diverse 'social investment, local partnerships' and 'winning local authority tenders to provide statutory services.' It is suggested that model is underpinned by training youth workers in business skills to work and implement these models. However, the irony of this proposed model is as it is forged in competitive, and often short-term tendering, it is in itself precarious. Competitive, short-term funding across the sector, along with the creation of ill matched partnerships and consortiums which introduce fundamental changes to organisational operational models have continued maintain the status quo of a sector witnessing the decline of youth centres, youth workers, and open access provision (Hayes, 2020. n.p). Parallel to this decline, Government policy backed funding, such as the Early Intervention Youth Fund and the Youth Endowment Fund accessed by youth organisations, has seen an increase in targeted youth provision.

As a response to sector instability, and to find a localised solution in the North East of England, The North East Youth Alliance was formed. Funded by The National Lottery Community Fund, after receiving an amount of £993,950 for a five-year

period, the NEYA operational model is based on one of 'allies' who can contribute to The Alliance. It suggests a 'culture shift' is required within the sector towards one where people think and work differently. The NEYA has an overall outcome of 'increased sustainability of services and support for and with young people' and it identifies the solution for sector instability as increased capacity, collaboration, and co-ordination which they suggest will lead to improved provision (<http://neya.org.uk/>), yet it does not state how sustainability will be increased within this provision.

Arguably, contemporary youth work is currently amid and is perpetuating a neoliberal ideology, trapped within a self-fulfilling prophecy. Its traditional values are no longer intact, as they are indiscriminately selected and deselected to suit external influences and demands. Its language has been distorted, using economic descriptors to denote value as it continues to steer value-based youth work practice further from its traditional ethical frame of informal education toward neoliberal non-formal 'services for young people.' The term 'youth work' is now regularly used to describe any work with young people.

In a bid to survive in the highly competitive world of short-term funding, organisations align with funding criteria, simultaneously embracing, and embedding the perspective of the funder into their organisational framework. As funders and funding come and go, the frame is shifted and altered to both accommodate and re-present the next funding perspective. As these perspectives remain concerned with behaviour modification, the surveillance of young people along with 'reductive' critical thinking (Taylor *et al.*, 2018, p. 85) so too has youth work has become increasingly focused on interventions in the lives of young people, some of which are labelled as

vulnerable or 'at risk of' (Jefferis & Smith, 2002; Spence, 2004). Engagement with the 'at risk' agenda undermines the concept of agency and the longstanding position of youth work, where young people are viewed as having potential and the ability to make positive life choices. Concerned with 'at risk of' radicalization and extremism, a lack of resilience, increased loneliness, isolation, and poor mental health and with an unwillingness or inability to embrace anti-oppressive practice, the solution to these 'issues' for youth work organisations lie in modelling certain groups of young people as deficit and presenting pre-identified solutions which 'plug the gap,' or 'fix' through their engagement in social action projects. The '#iwill' state-initiated movement, which aims to make social action 'part of life for 10 - 20 year-olds', offers a 'safe journey' where young people build 'confidence, teamwork skills, resilience and character – key attributes for young people to succeed in employment and life' (#iwill, 2022). Measuring impact, it provides quantitative-based examples organisations can use to demonstrate impact and success. Specific to the North East of England, the #iwill programme encourages organisations to identify young people as belonging to 'the top 10% deprived areas of the North East BAME', 'those who are parents, offenders, homeless' or 'young people with a disability up to the age of 25' ('POWER: Five Ways to Embed Youth Social Action,' 2020). Labelling and 'othering' groups of young people reflects the dominant neoliberal ideology and further extends it by 'creating and maintaining that reality' (Thompson, 2011).

Despite being diametrically opposed to the traditional values and ethics of youth work, youth organisations adopting this ideology gradually see neoliberal language and methods internalised as they move further away from the values of democratic youth work. In the North East, a spokesperson for the Regional Network endorsed a

shift from the language of anti-oppressive egalitarian youth work towards one recognised by economic sectors, suggesting an 'obvious need' for a common language as it will 'better enable commissioner and funders to understand what youth work is and support them to invest,' enabling small organisations 'to be better able to articulate their value.' (Franks, 2018).

Taylor *et al* (2018) suggest this shift places youth work in the domain of non-formal work with young people, moving away from the traditional characteristics located with a contested ideological and pedagogical arena. This shift places youth work as time limited. The values and methods of youth work, especially the domains of detached, single-sex and open access youth work, have become casualties of the neo-liberal privatisation market (Mason, 2015). The dominance of youth development work creates a stagnant vacuum, with no socio-political context or challenge to inequalities. Young people are exposed to participation mimicking the democratic status quo, youth workers aim to 'inspire' whilst teaching social conformity and social action creating a short or void legacy.

For the past decade 'youth development' has, through planned interventions and pre-written programmes, taught young people skills such as employability or budgeting programmes, on behalf of private companies such as Barclays Bank and their 'Barclays Money Skills,' ([www.barclayslifeskills.com](http://www.barclayslifeskills.com)). Practice in this context, has created a generation of workers who have never experienced open access, same sex or detached youth work, a sad realisation quickly uncovered during the pandemic lockdown, where meeting young people outside was the only face-to-face (non-virtual) option and the request for detached youth work training rose. To meet

this need, the sector called for experienced youth workers to come forward, fill the skills gaps and to deliver training.

Neoliberal impact and evaluation processes used in youth work identify success through measurement against a predetermined deficit and a return on investment (de St. Croix, 2020). In a bid to introduce financial stability into the youth sector landscape some organisations, including the NYA and Centre for Youth Impact endorse using 'The Theory of Change' (TOC) model. It is suggested this model is used to 'capture common features,' be used as a 'communication tool' with funders to demonstrate 'measurement for evaluation' and as a 'quality assurance framework'(CYI, 2021. pp 3- 4). Specifically, the NYA advocates data collection as a means for survival (Jozwiak, 2013, p. 41), encouraging organisations to use a TOC model to develop 'outcomes for young people across their personal and social development' as well as 'giving them a voice' (NYA, 2020a). It has developed tools, such as The Youth Work Curriculum (NYA, 2020b) to assist with identification of outcomes which are supported by 'supply chain expertise' and 'infrastructure management' (NYA, 2020c). Connell and Kubisch (1998) acknowledge the difficulties community initiatives have in finding appropriate evaluation stratagems, especially those which highlight organisational mid- and long- term outcomes and how these were met. A TOC model can be inclusive of formative and summative evaluation and in this has the ability demonstrate how, why and whether activities have produced the desired effects.

However, the TOC model is not without limitations. The development of such model requires specific time and political capital to be invested by stakeholders. In addition,



it needs information through continuous and consistent vigilance and action to establish connections between activities and outcomes uncovering 'espoused theories and program implementation' (Mulgan, 2016. np). Mulgan argues that this is not a theory, it is a method, reliant upon on tools to measure outcomes and suggests the phrase itself is problematic and misleading as it does not offer a theory or theories but offers a singular explanation or example. For those organisations concerned with 'complex social phenomena' (Mulgan, 2016.np) a TOC model is often too linear and narrow, informed by the assumption that inputs lead to out puts and vice versa. This linear approach risks alienating a 'space of learning' (Mulgan, 2016. np). With no space in the model to make connections across complexities, it is unable to identify where 'strength of knowledge' lies, power sources or elucidate information within complexities which are arguably of importance to organisations embracing a dynamic, value-based process.

At its 2018 conference, 'Funding Change: Making impact measurement work for funders and providers of youth services conference,' it was stated to capture the value of youth work in cost-benefit ratios, outcomes should be evidenced, and asset-based approaches developed, with the caveat, whilst the current climate acknowledged reductive and inductive 'truth', it should be impact measured and 'kept away' from practice (Franks, 2018). The Centre for Youth Impact, in recognition of a 'severe lack of critical reflection' and lack of structure in the sector, suggests the solution lies in 'test, learn, and build momentum through demonstrating and measuring impact.'

However, measuring impact this way is crude. It discounts youth work as and in process, preventing contextual visibility, disables criticality, negating the need and learning when a young person is empowered to 'be' and not just become. Assuming numbers and hours of delivery attached to the labelling of young people hold worth, places value solely on an individual predetermined linear trajectory the current focus on qualitative data, supported by prompting young people to write case studies, aiming to evidence and 'authenticate' voice places learning outside of any relationship, context, or participatory action process. In this frame, the focus is no longer collectivism, education or addressing the need of young people. It negates human agency, collective endeavour, political awareness, and conscious activity. Arguably, the meaning of outcomes can only be understood in relation to the complexities and socio/political context of the individual, and not attributed to one single source or one period in time.

In an attempt to link the traditional values with measuring impact, 2019 saw the NYA deliver a series of 'roadshows' launching a 'National Youth Work Curriculum,' in an attempt to shed light on the 'seemingly disparate and varied activities' of youth work (@LeighNYA, 2020). It promotes using a flexible framework to identify what youth work is and how to apply its core principles and values to evaluative measurement. Acknowledging the current incongruent understanding of youth work, both inside and out of the sector, the NYA curriculum suggests pre-identification of what young people need and 'the type of provision they seek to procure.' In this it aims to address the 'understanding of youth work among policymakers and commissioners at local authorities.' However, as the NYA curriculum is constructed around pre-determined knowledge it was contested as 'paradoxical' (Ord, 2020), (and qualified

as such by attendees at the NYA Curriculum Roadshow event at York University), as it ignores the value of the youth work process which assimilates and fosters mutual respect and concern for others whilst recognising and understanding serious and meaningful change. It lacks the ability to engage with the 'social and political circumstances underpinning young people's lives,' (Taylor *et al.*, 2018, p. 89). As a tool, it has been difficult to implement across the sector. When asked which organisations used the curriculum, of the 150+ attendees at the North East Youth Alliance conference (2022) '#Youth Starts Here,' four attendees raised their hands.

The North East Youth Alliance (NEYA), on receipt of £993,950 from The National Lottery Community Fund, was recently created to address support, development, and sustainability at a regional level. Identifying ineffective partnership work, lack of capacity and the impact of austerity as impacting on organisational stability, the NEYA aims to support a culture shift through the application of a five-year programme to increase sector sustainability through effective collaborative work and an equitable partnership rooted in local communities. In an inaugural virtual information session in July 2020, the NEYA was introduced as having a supporting role in encouraging the youth sector 'to think differently' in its bid to collaborate.

However, it has been argued that the creation of the NEYA has further deepened the sector splits which originally emerged from the creation of consortiums and the commissioning of local authority services. In discussion with three senior youth work practitioners (30+yrs experience each in youth work) working in small youth work organisations in the region suggest the NEYA duplicates the work of pre-existing youth work organisations and to a lesser standard. The main issue for the sector was

a reduction in the competitive funding pot, as one worker stated, 'million pounds taken from the ever-reducing pot of money the lottery has to give to organisations, which has been used to create something which was not needed.'

The shift towards embracing neoliberal ideology as the dominant discourse in youth work has seen the youth worker move from social educator to attempting to become a player in the capitalist marketplace. In this, the landscape provides precarious employment, as individual posts are underpinned by multiple short-term funders, unsynchronised time frames and a distinct lack of JNC terms and conditions. Many workers move regularly from job to job, in and out of competitive organisational cultures as their funding streams change. Staffing restructures are regular occurrences as are competitive cultures within the workplace. Workers are pitted against each other as their performance and employment are directly linked to specific funding and tied to impact measurement to performance. It is a landscape where it is in no worker's best interest to support young people's independence and moving them away from the organisation. In this, young people are encouraged to follow workers from one project or programme to another, amassing 'impact' and certificates as they proceed.

### **The visibility of the 'new-old' youth work model?**

Jefferies (2022) states the position of contemporary youth services as having 'lost their original core functions,' with occasional exceptions such as 'segments of the uniformed sector'. Youth work is no longer a 'social construct whose creation has to be understood in the context of the wider political, economic and social conditions in which it developed' (Davies, 2008, p. 3). The balance framing youth work today has

been tipped, often very firmly, towards its role as a societally integrating resource as the ongoing policy vacuum for youth work continues. Aided by the acceptance of the deficit neoliberal framing of young people, aligning, and reinforcing it within financial tendering processes, procurement of services, and the 'charitable' funding bodies, youth work is no longer the agent of social change but perpetuates the status quo. Despite being it being 'vital we shall not segregate our young people into yet another body of people seeking refuge from the wider community...' (Brew, 1957, p. 7), this deficit model has rehashed moral panics resetting them in contemporary contexts: organisations tackle 'loneliness', address mental health concerns, and 'build resilience' as they steer young people as they 'transition to adulthood.'

Economic survival for youth work organisations has become intrinsically linked to the continual refocusing of the economic lens from which young people are seen and from which funding is allocated. This state of constant (and arguably cyclical) adaptation has resulted in a vast range of short-term 'interventions' and a diversity of approaches delivered and measured by varied providers, adding to a 'muddied' understanding of youth work, masking the clarity within the 'imprecise practice' of Youth Work (Bradford and Cullen, 2014).

This multi-faceted backdrop conceals youth work. It is no longer emergent from or visible in the community. It has deliberately moved to towns and front streets, working from business premises within a business model. Privately funded commercial business, such as 'hubs' or Youth Zones, became a feature of planned regeneration, often with no historical community links, therefore severing access to the past and community context. As a result, youth work can no longer be identified

through a common approach but is represented through a 'patchwork of different approaches' (Hayes, 2020b).

In opposition to the neoliberal framing of youth work, the social movement 'In Defence of Youth Work,' (IDYW, 2009) widely disseminated its account of a more 'authentic' youth work. Outlined in an open letter circulated in 2009 it categorically and unashamedly places the understanding of youth work as dynamic and organic, within its historical traditions and origins. For IDYW, it is a 'distinctive educational practice founded on a voluntary relationship with young people and shaped by their agendas,' born from and remaining 'a part of civil society' (Jefferies and Smith, 2010). In recognition, that this description is mostly at odds with much that passes for youth work today (2020), IDYW aims 'to reaffirm our belief in an emancipatory and democratic Youth Work' commenting that contemporary youth work is very close to abandoning this commitment. Doherty and de St. Croix (2020) add to the impact discourse and suggest a 'democratic grassroots approach' arguing for a practice that augments quality in the 'development of evaluation processes that enhance practice, are anti-oppressive, build trust and is not reductive of the complexity and subtlety of what happens in youth work settings.'

One of the main issues cited by the voluntary youth sector which impacts on sustainability is a lack of accessible funding. However, not subject to state intervention, many church and uniformed youth groups were not as harshly impacted upon by austerity. Using value-based organisational models executed by volunteers they continued to provide, and as with the Guides, did so with a waiting list of young people wishing to join.

Jeffs and Smith (2008) suggest a possible factor in the decline of the youth service being the exclusion of the volunteer, 'once the lifeblood of the old Youth Service,' which has contributed to the inability of the service to survive. With a majority of volunteer workforce, since 2008 the Scouts have continued to grow. Over 1280 new 'packs' established with 222 new groups in 'the poorest 10% of areas defined by income, employment, schooling, health, crime, housing and environment' (Booth, 2020). Packs have grown from grassroots, as a result of children and young people unable to access youth provision as they were not considered 'targeted' and additionally as they had become priced out of limited leisure provision. This setting, combined with a successful recruitment campaign, 2021 saw the Scouts recruit parents and community members to volunteer and create new Scout groups in their community.

The next chapter provides a literature review which explores the context for considering the development of Girl Guiding and its relationship with youth work. It identifies the elements of value-based youth work within its structure and traces its longevity through to the present day.

## Chapter 3

### The Guide Association: Literature review

#### The Guide Association to Girlguiding. A Brief history

This second literature chapter explores the model of the Guide Association (GA), representing the values and principles of youth work, and it is within this process that organisational stability is located. Youth work's political and emancipatory process when working with girls and young women is addressed.

In 1909, the first rally of the Boy Scout movement (an informal citizenship youth training scheme for boys) was held in Crystal Palace, London. To the surprise of the founder, Robert Baden-Powell (RBP), a small group of girls was in attendance. When asked who they were, they replied, 'Girl Scouts' (Maloney. A, 2009, p. 8), and when the existence of this position was challenged, they requested 'something for the girls' (Maloney. A, 2009, p. 8). Unwittingly, this request, combined with their unofficial attendance and makeshift attire, sparked the movement that became Girlguiding (Proctor, 2009).

These girls and many more like them had been organising themselves as the Girl Scouts, borrowing Scouting manuals or joining the movement under an alias. Their noticeable attendance at the rally and request for their own youth movement triggered a debate in Edwardian society. Some labelled a youth movement for young women as 'foolish and pernicious,' concerned that training akin to Scouting would lead to 'manly qualities' and 'the negation of womanliness' (Maloney. A, 2009, p. 7).



Others were more pragmatic, as one clergyman stated, 'Will it make the girls tomboys? Well, the girls about here are already that.' (The Scout Association, 1909, p. 13).

RBP had previously considered a movement for girls. The unofficial 'Girl Scouts' were already utilizing *Scouting for Boys* (the official handbook) and effectively 'performing the same practices and activities as the Boy Scouts (Mills S, 2011, p. 548). These practices and activities, combined with the girls' request and the need to resolve public criticism and fears, he accepted the need for a girl-only organisation. He tasked his sister, Agnus Baden-Powell (ABP), to create a movement for young women, acceptable to society and in which 'girls learn to be true women, not imitation men' (Baden-Powell. A, 1911a, p. 923). The Boy Scout headquarters held 6000 existing applications from girls requesting to join the Scouts, while 'A *Suggestion for Character Training for Girls*' (Kerr. R, 1976, p. 25) was deliberated. As a result, the Guide Association (GA) was officially formed in 1910.

Arguably, the actions of these self-organised young women, who created a grassroots movement, demonstrated a need. They were the beginning of the Guide Association, a fact which RBP often stated when asked of the origins, 'they started themselves' when they attended the Crystal Palace Rally, (Hampton, 2010, p. 4).

### **Guiding Values**

While the need for a youth movement for girls was established, a wider societal debate framed such a scheme in a dichotomy to the Boy Scouts, or the male position

in society in general. Moral education would combat spiritual and physical decadence to create 'good' citizens for both boys and girls. However, for girls, society considered there to be an issue of 'a great waste of their life among women of every class' and suggested any scheme for girls should be framed within a male lens and encourage them to be 'partners and comrades, rather than dolls' (Hampton, 2010, p. 6). This stance understood access to knowledge was needed to undertake these roles, especially for working-class girls, who 'from want of proper training preventable misery exists among a very large class' (Lord Baden-Powell Of Gilwell, 1918, p. 177).

In addition, RBP's concern was the character, understanding it as being 'formed more by the environment outside the school walls than by instruction within them' (Lord Baden-Powell Of Gilwell, 1918, p. 177) Identifying the use of 'old' methods to teach contemporary issues as a 'weak point,' he concluded 'good' character was influenced by the mother, the 'environment and training, and as children progressed through life, they would build upon this foundation through experience (Lord Baden-Powell Of Gilwell, 1918, p. 176). RBP concluded that the object of Girlguiding 'is to give our girls, whatever may be their circumstances, a series of healthy, jolly activities which, while delighting them, will afford them a course of education outside the school....' (Lord Baden-Powell Of Gilwell, 1918, p. 9).

Emergent from the 'organic youth' (Smith, 1988, p. 57) traditions of the time, the values of informal education and youth work underpinned the scheme as a 'course of Instruction not Education' where girls are led to learn through their own aspiration as they gain knowledge and learning from 'play and recreation' (Lord Baden-Powell Of

Gilwell, 1918, p. 178). Concerned with reaching across the class spectrum, the scheme was made to be accessible and 'easily applicable, even by untrained leaders, to all kinds of girls, whether in town or country, at home or overseas' and to be as 'unlike a school syllabus...in order to give it novelty and freshness' (Lord Baden-Powell Of Gilwell, 1918, p. 10). This flexibility within a localised context was important as the model of the scheme was intentionally created to be inclusive in that it starts from the point at which the young woman identifies her need, 'By this method, every girl, of whatever class, may be instructed' (The Scout Association, 1909, p. 12).

Two organisational information pamphlets framed the scheme. 'Pamphlet A' served as recruiting literature outlining basic rules, with 'B' suggesting activities such as first aid, signalling and bike parade. Guide companies interpreted guiding within the framework to be comprised of Pamphlets A & B and The Promise:

1. To be loyal the God and the King;
2. To try and do daily good turns to other people;
3. To obey the Law of the Guides.

(Kerr. R, 1976, p. 68)

...and The Guide Law:

1. A Guide's honour is to be trusted.
2. A Guide is loyal.
3. A Guide's duty is to be useful and to help others.
4. A Guide is a friend to all and a sister to every other Guide, no matter the creed, country, or class.
5. A Guide is courteous.
6. A Guide is a friend to animals.
7. A Guide obeys orders.
8. A Guide smiles and sings.
9. A Guide is thrifty.
10. Guide keeps herself pure in thought, word, and deed.

(Lord Baden-Powell Of Gilwell, 1918, p. 62-3)

However, the information in the pamphlets was framed within a contextual social construct of a woman, with the aim that the training would result in young women being able 'to make themselves of practical use in case of invasion' and to acquire 'useful occupations and handiwork' while retaining 'womanliness' (Alexander K, 2017, p. 28). In 1912, the pamphlets were replaced by *The Handbook for Girl Guides: How Girls Can Help to Build Up the Empire*. Pryke (2001, p. 199) suggests that this framework continued in the handbook, rooting the scheme in 'Womanliness,'

requiring girls and young women 'to 'BE PREPARED for doing the greatest duty in life – to bring up good citizens for your country.

The handbook itself was a minimal adaptation of *Scouting For Boys*, in so much as women's stories replaced men's, and activities such as stalking, tracking, signalling and camping remained the same in content but were renamed using the more 'nurturing' category of 'Finding the Injured' (Kerr. R, 1976, p. 68).

Magyarody (2016) argues that the womanliness framed in these early forms of guiding provided space for 'growing sideways' because the scheme's application relied on volunteer girls and women from different backgrounds, which enabled contextual interpretation. 'Be Prepared,' within this space would be to 'be prepared' to organise and challenge the dominant norm; to 'Be Prepared' not to marry, but to have a career and to be independent of fathers and brothers' (p. 239) and celebrating that 'a girl is no more unwomanly because she can swim in a skirt and boots...' (Baden-Powell. A, 1911b, p. 924).

Alongside the opportunities to learn skills needed to care for a home and children, the scheme also offered experiences such as carpentry and mechanics, supporting lifestyle choice, independence, and proficiency. Girls were encouraged to pursue employment as 'translators, pharmacists and stockbrokers' (Hampton, 2010, p. 6). Emphasis was placed on outdoor activities and nature: self-sacrifice, volunteerism, and thrift. Guides were asked to 'look wide' (Alexander K, 2017, p. 37) and explore beyond their 'world.' Durham County Minutes (1929) noted having sent 'three parties

abroad to Belgium, France and Holland, and two parties visited the Jamboree at Arrowe Park' (Dillon. N. G, 1927-1938). In essence, Guiding provided a space for non- conformist where rebellious sisters could use independent skills in their lives.

The organisation saw continual growth in the 1920–30s. Affiliation to the Young Women's Christian Association saw the GA learn how to administer, and its membership surpassed that of the Scouts due to efficient enrolment (Proctor, 1998). The Northeast was no exception, with Durham County annual reports recording regular annual growth in members,

Year	Guides	Guiders
1927	5197	519
1928	5842	605
1929	5840	666
1930	6263	749
1931	6585	820
1932	6585	820
1933	7081	940

Table 1 : Durham County Membership (1927 – 33)

This period also saw the global expansion of the organisation. In 1919, The Imperial Council, which later (1928) became The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS), was formed to maintain contact with 32 GA member nations. In 1924, the first world camp was attended by 1700 girls, with 600 being from countries other than the UK.

National expansion continued along a needs-led, grassroots basis. For those unable to access local branches, specific companies were formed due to a request by a paralysed girl who 'longed to be a Guide' (Maloney. A, 2009, p. 32). The Post Guide scheme enabled membership for girls who were unable to leave their homes, hospitalised or living in rural locations, as communication by letter forged connections and replaced meetings. An entry in the minutes of the Durham County Annual Meeting of 1929 highlights this impact and demand, 'Children who have been discharged from the Stannington Sanatorium have formed the nucleus of the Post Company Pack. One great need is more Post Guiders.' In 1910, a company for girls with hearing and speech issues was formed; following in 1914, was a unit in a school for the blind and one in Newcastle for girls with disabilities.

This expansion was also facilitated by a society becoming more accepting of a girl's youth movement as the value of membership providing access to learning began to be noted and championed. A medical professional commented that participation had not only made his patient happier but had impacted positively on her general health (Maloney. A, 2009). In response to this shift and to support developing companies, the GA formed 'The Extension Branch' (Kerr. R, 1976, p. 153) to officially support units within institutions – industrial schools, penitentiaries, borstal, reformatory

schools, orphanages, poor law schools and Rescue Homes (Liddell A, 1976; Maloney. A, 2009; Hampton, 2010).

As the companies grew, so too did the visibility and integration in society. Undertaking non-military roles during WW1, the Guides helped in soup kitchens and acted as first aiders and hospital volunteers. After the Boy Scouts proved to be 'very troublesome' messengers for MI5 (Hampton, 2010, p. 12), they were replaced by Girl Guide couriers, dispatching 'secret counter-espionage memoranda and reports'. Such actions openly demonstrated the young women and girls' ability to perform roles outside of domesticity, shifting public perception to being 'reliable members of society' (Hampton, 2010, p. 13). This shift further alleviated any remaining hostility towards the movement, presenting it as having the characteristics of honesty, loyalty, and trust. By the end of the 1930s, there were over 1.5 million guides worldwide.

Girlguiding continued having an active role in World War II, however, this time with dual perspectives. They enthusiastically supported the war effort through volunteering in precaution, factory, and hospital work and by raising £50,000 while in tandem holding an organisational 'Pax Ting', a Parliament of Peace, in 1939, Gödöllő, Hungary to foster notions of inclusion and acceptance. A passage written by a Durham County Commissioner in a meeting minute book highlighting continuing popularity, values and the organisational role at the time stated:

'This increase in our numbers will, I know, be as great encouragement to the Commissioners and Guiders, to whose good work it is due, as it is to me. I



believe that our standard of Guiding continues to improve and that we are not sacrificing quality for quantity. The national crisis through which we pass this year has shown us that Guiding is living up to its motto, 'Be-Prepared'. In our county... *(members are)* already trained as the V.A.D's, *(Voluntary Aid Detachment)*, as warden's, drivers, and in other A.R.P. (Air Raid Precaution) work.'

(Durham County Commissioner, Dillon. N, 1938)

After the War, the GA continued to expand on a needs-led basis, taking its cue from societal change and the position of its members. When the New Towns Act of 1946 saw people relocated to new homes, the geographical location of membership shifted. Durham County saw that a 'decrease in numbers this year is partly due to guides having moved from the slum areas to the new housing estates where, as yet, there are no halls or meeting places of any sort' (Dillon N. G, 1938). In response, the GA created a dedicated role, the Travelling Commissioner, to help set up new companies in new communities and to start enrolling girls.

### **'Tomorrow's Guide 'The Working Party 1964 - 66**

By the 1960s, the political and intellectual climate was more radicalised than the decades before. It saw a shift in how youth organisations viewed young people, moving away from 'character building' and looking towards 'healthy leisure pursuits, towards "consciousness raising" based upon local and class identity' (Spence, 2006, p. 244). This led some to question whether the GA movement was becoming outdated. While remaining the largest youth organisation at the time, maintaining a continued increase in both Leader and Guide members, it noted a reduction in the 12–13-year- old membership. It seemed the next generation was no longer waiting to

join, and public perception of the 'character building' reinforced stereotypical gender views.

As a response, the GA formed a committee to assess organisational impact. In line with its policy of 'continuous modernisation' (The Girl Guides Association, 1966, p. 3), a working party conducted a large-scale review (1,344 equating to 57.9% response) to identify impact and recommendations. Based on the basic principles of Guiding and acknowledging that young women were 'living in an entirely different world' (The Girl Guides Association, 1966, p. 8) to their 1909 contemporaries, women, and girls inside and outside the association participated. Findings were published in the 1968 report, *'Tomorrow's Guide'*, concluding that the original methods and guiding principles 'are alive', but a radical new scheme or programme was needed to return to the original pioneering feel of the work. The working party identified a weakness in that the original principles were not present in every company/unit, so they need to be embedded, not changed, adapted, or removed, to further prevent drift and to reinvigorate and attract new members.

The new 8-point scheme or programme used signposts (categories) from the old method, cementing a link to original principles and context through new contemporary activities, while the updated handbook continued to offer guidance and maintained a flexible application requiring minimal adaptation. Ultimately the 8-point programme restated the original principles in a contemporary context. It saw young women as social agents, refocusing the programme towards personal development 'to provide opportunities for the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual development' (The Girl Guides Association, 1966, p. 130). The individual agency ran

throughout the programme with badges undertaken through individual choice instead of applying a 'strict rubric' (Gledhill. J, 2013, p. 69). Much administration was removed, allowing leaders to make decisions based on their unique units ensuring contextual relevance and visibility in their community.

The review identified that respondents valued and recognised the importance of 'belonging', symbolised in The Promise and Law, but their outdated terminology led to ridicule. The Committee responded by reducing The Law from ten to eight points, replacing duty, pure, smiles and sings with the introduction of 'self-control' (The Girl Guides Association, 1966. P.14).

The recommendations from 'Tomorrow's Guide' successfully facilitated growth and broadened appeal across classes. By 1970, the GA was the largest uniformed organisation in Britain, with a UK membership of 800,000 with 6 million worldwide by 1976. Gledhill (2013) argues this success lies with the GA's ability to integrate a reform process, which examined, evaluated, and then integrated the predominant social values of young women, thus re-establishing its relevance.

The timing of this review and resulting repositioning of the GA was fortunate. After the 1960 Albermarle Review, the GA established relationships with local authorities while maintaining its independent and relevant position in the voluntary youth sector and preserving 'its credibility' with parents (Gledhill. J, 2013, p. 67). From this sector position, this successful model of embedding values in a contemporary context has

become the model by which the GA continues to date to maintain relevance, its aim and ultimately, its sustainability.

### **Organisational Structure**

The 1918 Handbook briefly outlines the structure of the GA. In effect, once a Local Association is formed, an Executive Committee supports it, enabling a company (of no more than 36 people or the group becomes too large) to form. Companies split into smaller groups, 'Patrols,' and a Guide selected to be Patrol Leader and trained by the adult leader, 'Captain,' accepts responsibility for supervising the Patrol.

Initially, while not obligatory to wear a uniform, it was and remains important in that it creates a collective identity, embodying pride and responsibility while symbolising membership and characterising the guiding ideology. RBP saw a uniform as hiding differences as it 'makes for equality....all feel they are members of one organisation' (Maloney. A, 2009, p. 30). Initially, while it was not determined by the organisation, but decided upon by the Company, the caveat was whatever was chosen could be matched by all members. Early members created a do-it-yourself, makeshift adaptation of Boy Scout uniforms. Once the GA became an official organisation, the uniform, still made by the members, had to follow guidelines – a blue, long skirt, a blouse with pockets, a tie, and a wide-brimmed hat. Arguably, as the first uniform was based on The Scouts, femininity in the attire was not present. 1917 saw an official uniform supplied by an outlet, with minor adaptations throughout the years, such as a shorter skirt in line with trends and material availability, until 1946, when a trefoil badge replaced a hat. In 1960 the uniform was commercially marketed and represented marketable feminine characteristics' (Gledhill, 2013, p. 9). For RBP

belonging, rooted in Patrol is akin to, ‘...fraternity gangs among jolly comrades... it gives them smart dress and equipment, it appeals to their imagination...’(Lord Baden-Powell Of Gilwell, 1918, p. 186).

Collective identity and recognised need were the important characteristics at this time, with roles within the structure advised on, as were the ‘indications’ for “playing the game” (Lord Baden-Powell Of Gilwell, 1918, p. 182) The only stipulation or ‘form of discipline we ask for is the sisterhood.’(Lord Baden-Powell Of Gilwell, 1918, p. 182)

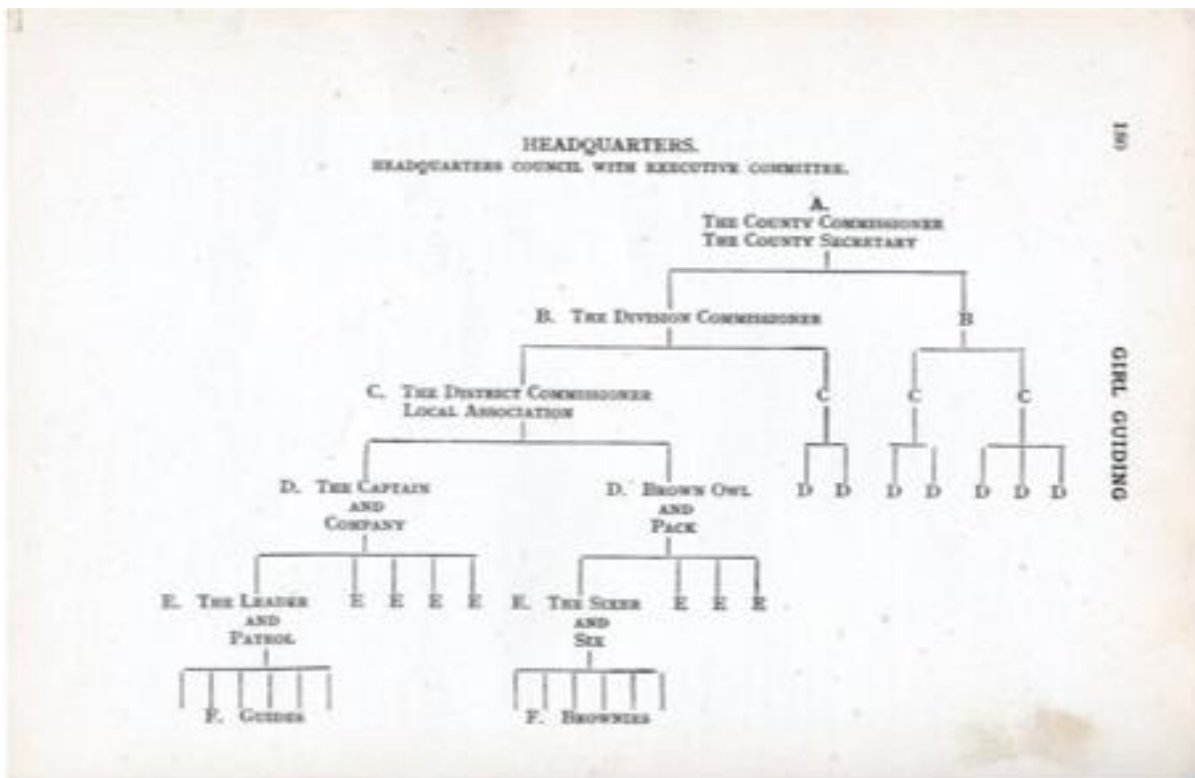


Image 2: Organisational Structure 1918

## **The Guiding Method**

Girlguiding aimed to create a space desirable to girls and young women, so they willingly attended. Using methods 'to educate from within rather to instruct from without', it aimed for 'girls to have a general intelligence and capacity to live a free, prosperous and happy life' (Lord Baden-Powell Of Gilwell, 1918, p. 182). Learning was identified as being of value when in the process of guiding, the method of experiential learning found and understood that in doing it yourself as opposed to being supplied, 'How you do this is to understand the meaning underlying rather than "have" the statement' (Lord Baden-Powell Of Gilwell, 1918, p. 176).

Concerned with inclusion and the education of working-class young women, Girlguiding aimed to 'give equal chances to all and to give most help to the least fortunate', (Lord Baden-Powell Of Gilwell, 1918, p. 186), actively seeking to work with 'the worst (*who after all are those gifted with most character*),' (Lord Baden-Powell Of Gilwell, 1918, p. 176). To train this group in independent skills, they needed access to the organisation, and as a solution to an economic barrier, financial support was offered when needed. An example provided in the Durham County Minutes of 1935 shows financial support was used to provide learning and skills, which had a direct impact on the Guide's learning, skills, and independence:

'An Extension Scholarship was awarded in April by Guide Headquarters to Sunderland Post-Guide. This scholarship pays for the experts to teach the Guide (who is bedridden) handicrafts of various kinds. She has made great progress in some of her work, which includes knitting and weaving, and was exhibited in

connection with Sunderland Education week. The scholarship has been a great help to this girl who has no father, and it is in very poor circumstances. She's already been able to sell some of her work locally'. (Durham County Commissioner, Dillon. N, 1929)

Just as important for the application of the scheme being left to the Leader and her 'ingenuity' (Lord Baden-Powell Of Gilwell, 1918, p. 183), the relationship between Leader and Guide was also essential for the guiding method to work. RBP suggested the Leader 'study the girl herself' (Lord Baden-Powell Of Gilwell, 1918, p. 183) to learn what she enjoyed and identify her strengths and limitations to assist her in her personal development through guiding. The leadership role is one of 'elder sister,' who joins in and is respected within 'comradeship' while keeping 'a friendly eye on their young charges, at the same time entering with zest into all their varied pursuits' (Baden- Powell. A, 1911a, p. 923). In this, Girlguiding has a double meaning. To some, it means the fun of playing the games of Girlguiding; to others, it is the fun of 'playing the game' (Lord Baden-Powell Of Gilwell, 1918, p. 9). Arguably, the 'ideal of sisterhood,' especially in the early days of guiding, could be seen as an acceptance by middle and upper-class women 'into the lives of working-class girls and women' (Spence, 2006, p. 252). Yet it could also be aspirational across class, within the realm of a same-sex role model and supporter. One former Guide, writing about her Guide Leader, described her as:

'A woman before her time. She was the only woman who was driving a car. She was the only woman who could see the value of this; she wanted girls to have this. She didn't want women to be downtrodden; she wanted them to have

strength and courage, and it all came out through her teaching in Guiding. I'm positive of it!' (Former 1930's Guide, Durham South Girlguiding, 2014, p. 24)

Based on an understanding of support and advocacy, the importance of this reciprocal relationship framed the guiding method, keeping it rooted in the lives of the women experiencing it.

### **Rebellious Sisters: Girl Only!**

When tasked to create a scheme for girls using the Scouting framework, Agnus Baden-Powell (ABP) was concerned it was 'administered with greater discrimination; you do not want to make tomboys of refined girls, yet you want to attract and thus raise the slum girl from the gutter' (The Scout Association, 1909). However, in applying the Scouting methodology, the scheme challenged in a space created for girls enabling them to explore who they are and would like to be. Magyarody argues early Guiding used a 'double-tonged rhetoric' (2016, p. 238) supporting 'womanliness' while promoting independence through the knowledge and acquisition of the skills attributed to Edwardian masculinity found in Scouting. Pamphlets A and B encouraged girls to be a creator and a leader rather than an imitator. This concept continued in *How Girls Can Help to Build Up the Empire* (Baden-Powell and Baden-Powell, 1912). Female role models such as Grace Darling, Laura Secord (frontier women) and Marie Curie were represented when encouraging girls to see themselves occupying several roles outside of the domestic frame, to 'CHOOSE A CAREER....STICK TO IT' and 'try to learn something of a second trade, in case the first one fails you at any time' (Baden-Powell and Baden-Powell, 1912, p. 394). Careers suggested were in the fields of health and education (nursing and teaching),



technical positions (colouring photographs and bookkeeping), crafts (bookbinding and carving) and ‘...translating, dispensing to a doctor or in a hospital, as stockbrokers, house decorators, or agents, managers of laundries, accountants, or architects’ (Baden-Powell and Baden-Powell, 1912, pp. 393-394).

This space allowed a divergent sisterhood to grow and collectively demonstrate, explore, and experience a ‘variety of talents that do not fit the impetus of maternity and domesticity’ (Magyarody, 2016, p. 255). Working as collective sisters, with elder sisters ‘guiding’ the younger ones, they learn from and with each other, especially regarding transitional points in their lives.

The front cover of the 1918 Handbook symbolises the importance of being a girl-only organisation and the significance placed on the lives of women and girls. Women are depicted as a connected female community, representing women from ‘child to nurturer’ (Magyarody, 2016, p. 256). The Badge system arguably enables participants to expand the constraints of the female identity as at the time, 14 of the 22 badges were the same as Scout badges: laundress & laundry man, dairy maid & dairy man, while other badges, such as ‘electrician,’ were not available to the Scouts.

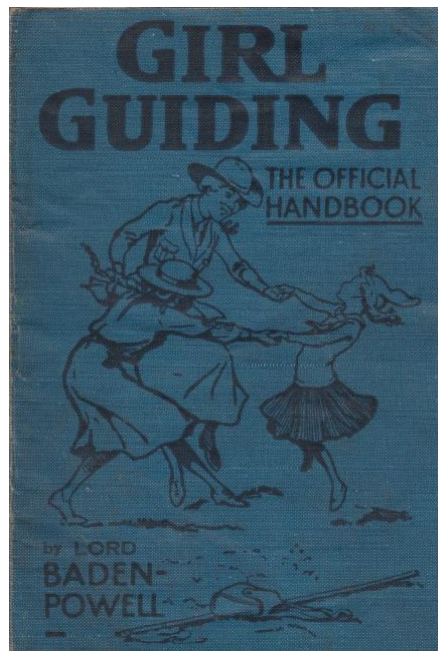


Image 3 : Girl Guiding. A Handbook for Brownie, Guides, Rangers and Guiders. (1918) Lord Baden-Powell of Gilwell.

### **Contemporary Guiding**

Today Girlguiding (the operating name of The Guide Association) is a registered charity incorporated and governed by a Royal Charter. Claiming to be the 'leading UK charity for girls and young women,' with over 240,000 members (and over 50,000 girls on its waiting list), it champions 'an equal world, where all girls can make a positive difference, be happy, safe and fulfil their potential' (Girlguiding, 2016, p. 11).

Girlguiding distinguishes itself from other youth organisations as 'special' in that it offers 'girl only' space with opportunities for girls to thrive and be themselves (Girlguiding, 2022d), where through empowerment, girls have 'space to grow....no matter what their background or ability' (Girlguiding, 2022a).

The current GA strategic plan 'Today, tomorrow, together' was informed through consultation with 50,000 members during 2018-19. Three key themes emerged: create exceptional experiences, develop a rewarding volunteer experience and be more inclusive and make a bigger impact. Concerned with empowering girls to lead the way in and out of Girlguiding, it states their 'views and opinions will lead our decisions and make sure everything we do puts girls first' (Girlguiding, 2022d).

The Girlguiding framework is still set out in the Promise and Law and continues to support the development of personal values through the guiding structure and method. As the views and actions of girls and young women steer the path of the organisation, the Laws and Promise continue to evolve. Currently, the Laws and Promise 'recognise the involvement of members of all faiths and none in guiding' (The Guide Association, 2013), encouraging members to 'develop positive personal values and the self- awareness, self-respect, and self-confidence to make their own decisions' (Girlguiding, 2016, pp. 31-35).

### **Current Organisational Structure**

Today the organisational model of Girlguiding is supported by a Board of Trustees, the majority (80%) being volunteers and members, and The Council, a membership forum that consults at a local level and feeds into the Board.

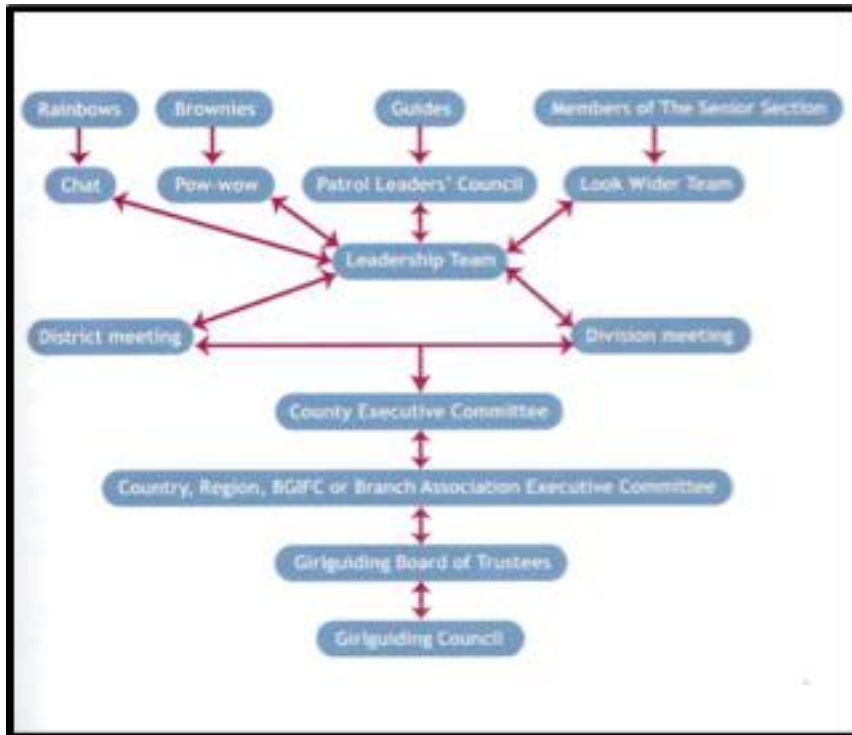


Image 4: Girlguiding Structure. (Girlguiding, 2016, p. 17)

As Girlguiding is such a large organisation, the model separates into geographical areas making administration manageable. Geographical distinctions are named Districts, Divisions, Counties, all of which can be used, discarded, and reinstated as the members in that area fluctuate and the structure reforms to meet the need.

England's northeast region comprises 17 counties and has 56,000 members. It is managed by two executive groups: The Trustee Group and The County Commissioner Group, responsible for the efficient running of the region. They ensure all activity aligns with charity legislation, policies, and the Regional Strategic Plan. One of the 17 counties in this region is Durham North, consisting of nine Division areas, including Jarrow, which is the Division in which the Case Study is situated. Collectively Durham North has 3490 members.

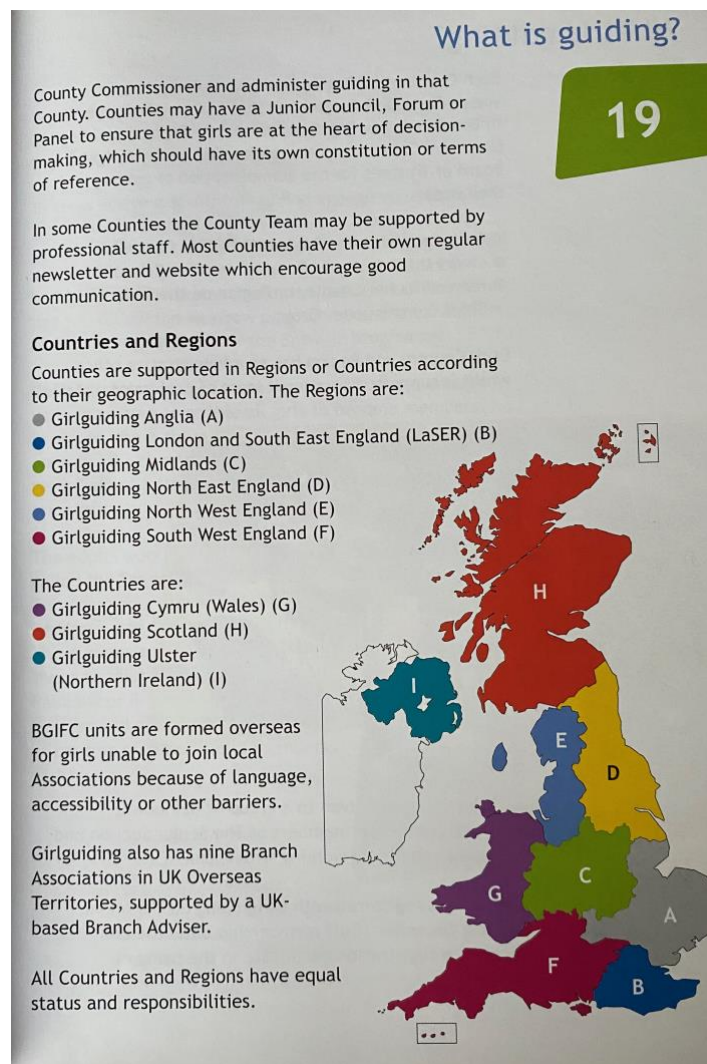


Image 5: Counties and Regions.  
The Guiding Handbook (2016)

## Twenty-first Century Guiding

The model of guiding today remains rooted in the original values. It continues to be deliberately flexible to meet the need and is regularly informed by research and conversation. Maintaining the aim to consolidate the association of members and the organisation by asking girls and young women about their everyday lives, the pressures they face and the issues they care about, its evolution continues. This contextual data informs and shapes the informal education programme resulting in

meeting members' needs and reinforcing organisational values through this engagement.

Methods are experiential, valuing learning by doing, where participants are aware they are active learners. It does this by applying 'Five Essentials': working in small groups (Patrols), self-governance and decision making (with an awareness that their perspectives may differ from yours), engaging in a balanced and varied programme, which is girl-led, caring for the individual and sharing a commitment to a common standard (through The Promise). The Girlguiding handbook (2016) explains that 'good' Guiding connects to girls and young women 'through their interests and the challenges and opportunities they face'.

### **Sharing commitment and a common standard: The Promise & The Law**

The Promise and the Law continue to give a purpose to Girlguiding, and as with early Guiding, they house the common standards. They support collective commitment and identity and encapsulate the 'ideals and spirit of guiding' (Girlguiding, 2016, p. 31). Together they provide members with a moral framework and a set of values: honesty, responsibility, integrity, loyalty, respect, tolerance, and self-awareness.

The Promise has changed 12 times since the organisation began; however, change has been evolutionary, informed by women and the context they are in. The process of making 'your' Promise requires a commitment to this ethos which requires careful consideration. It is made in the time frame of the Guide, when she is ready, as it

needs to be understood, not recited. Understanding is important as they are not taken at literal 'face value.' They are explored and expanded upon. Serving the reigning UK Monarch in The Promise has evolved to represent a spectrum. At a minimum, a Guide is 'pledging to obey the laws of the land' and, at a deeper level, actively seeking to be a 'good and active citizen'(Girlguiding, 2022a).

The Promise aims to bring everyone together, despite differences in culture, language, and beliefs, and all Girlguiding members make its:

### The Promise.

'I promise that I will do my best, to be true to myself and develop my beliefs, to serve the Queen and my community, to help other people and to keep the Guide Law.' <https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/about-us/what-makes-guiding-special/the-promise/>

### The Law

1. A Guide is honest, reliable and can be trusted.
2. A Guide is helpful and uses her time and abilities wisely.
3. A Guide faces challenges and learns from her experiences
4. A Guide is a good friend and a sister to all Guides.
5. A Guide is polite and considerate.
6. A Guide respects all living things and takes care of the world around her.

<https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/about-us/what-makes-guiding-special/the-promise/>

Complex meanings are symbolised through the wearing of the uniform. It continues to symbolise the commitment to the common standards and ethos, and it continues to provide a 'sense of belonging and pride,'(Girlguiding, 2022a). In addition, it identifies membership, collective identity, participation in service and citizenship, as well as holding individual personal meaning. Ultimately it aims to instill pride solidifying allegiance to the guiding ideology. The current uniform is flexible and is chosen from a range of practical clothes to wear at meetings and participate in activities, with uniform tops worn with any bottoms that suit the occasion or activity. It is intended to be mix-and-match, consisting of a polo shirt, dress, hoodie, skirt, and a long-sleeved top. The uniform is bought directly from the organisation, which keeps the profits and uses them for members' benefit.

### **Programme**

As a result of over three years of consultation and testing, the current Girlguiding programme aims to have something which appeals to everyone. Designed by members, its goal is to be challenging for the oldest to the youngest member. The programme structure 'demonstrates a clear developmental journey which "grows" along theme-based categories' (Girlguiding, 2022a). The programme is negotiated between adults and young women within local, national, and global spaces and contexts, therefore is accessible to girls with 'vastly different identities and life experience (Alexander, 2012b, p. 133).

Set within an educational framework, it provides opportunities to practice and acquire skills for life following a path of individual choice. The guiding method explores six areas of development: spiritual, social, emotional, physical, moral, and intellectual.



The programme is a 'part regulatory project and part liberating adventure... offering a combination of freedom and control' (Alexander, 2012), encouraging members to learn about themselves, be empowered to speak out and take risks.



Image 6 : Girlguiding Programme 2022

### Impact

Contemporary youth work is concerned with demonstrating learning and value through 'impact' measurement. Suggesting this is 'best understood in terms of social and emotional learning,' the Centre for Youth Impact states there is a 'need and desire for organisations to access new and emerging evidence, analysis, critique and knowledge on the social purpose and impact of youth work' (CYI, 2021). The CYI

advises evidence can be categorised as value-based and outcomes-based, (McNeil and Stuart, 2022), which can be pre-determined to identify achievement.

The GA has impact built into its model. Evidence, analysis, and critique are located within the ethos, structure and method and are identified in many ways. The value of achievement is, unlike pre-determined or prescribed outcomes, determined by the participant, by their aims and standards. Not only does it place learning totally within the context of the individual at that time and place, but it also acknowledges the multiplicity of impact or learning. The impact of one activity can be compound and complex, which become re-explored and built upon over time. On a basic quantitative level, the GA can show the impact by the numbers of members, badges and programme activities completed in a unit, as well as the number of roles and training the individuals undertake. For example, 2019 saw 28,861 volunteers trained in safeguarding. The Girlguiding database holds quantifiable data enabling mapping across Unit, Division, District, etc., for instance, the impact of one person to be identified and tracked across their membership period, which can be over 80+ years. Girlguiding's most renowned tradition of 'badge work,' is ultimately a method that can track impact and learning on an individual and organisational level. Some badges have remained relevant since 1909, for example, 'first aid,' while others maintain core criteria yet change terminology. An example is the 1910 'signaller' and 'telegraphist' badges that are today the 'communicator' badge, and the 1957 'hostess' badge is now the 'party planner.' Any shift in badge work is analysed and informed by the girls' attitude surveys, maintaining contextual relevance for members while informing the organisation and documenting the trajectory of women's interests and societal roles.

However, what is distinctive about the GA is its ability to understand and demonstrate impact on a longitudinal, personal level as it has been applied and identified by the individual. Thus, the impact is not pre-determined or linear as learning from inside and outside of Guiding is identified and attributed, having depth and value. Learning is revisited, and 'hidden' learning is uncovered. This impact is creatively measured, identified, and explored by members as they locate learning through their own experiences analysed in the activities and conversation. Tangible evidence is produced in the form of badges supported by qualitative, creative routes during the process of achieving the badge, such as personal journals, documents, photographs, models, and events.

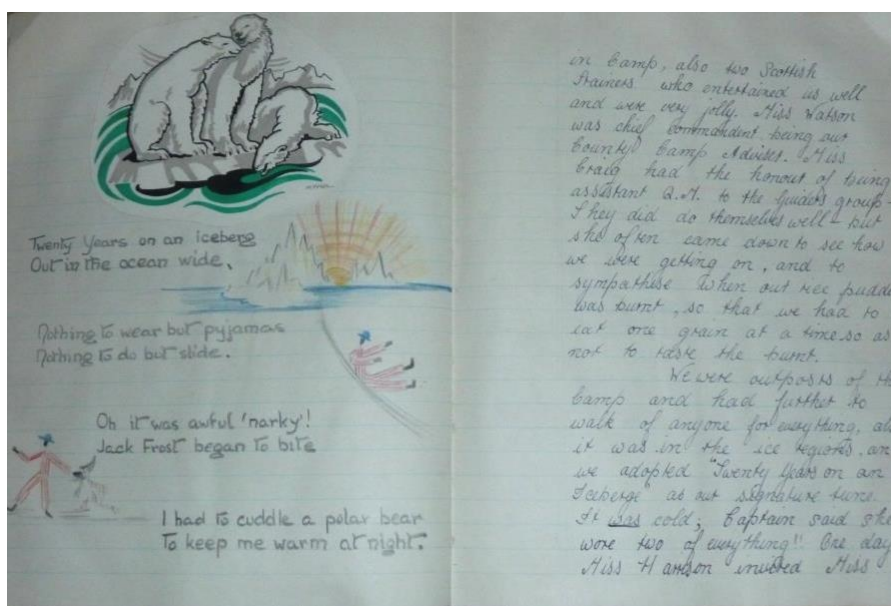


Image 7 : 1<sup>st</sup> Shotley Bridge Guide Company Journal 1926

The longevity of the organisation and its ability to retain members over a long period or to track their intermittent engagement over time enables it to demonstrate lifelong and reflectively informed impact. It has a wealth of quantitative and qualitative

evidence housed in local and national archives drawing upon it to show deep and rich impact. In 2010, the year of Girlguiding's centenary, it collected and published on its website personal histories (written or dictated by the individuals) from past and present members, many demonstrating the impact guiding had(s) on and throughout their lives. Similar localised projects were conducted, collating stories, memorabilia, and photographs. Girlguiding Durham South collated a resource, '*All Our Stories*' (2014), in partnership with ISIS Arts and Newcastle University to demonstrate their impact,

'Guiding has made a huge difference to communities everywhere – through two world wars and in peacetime. It has influenced the status of women throughout the world. We wanted to reflect this and so we follow through with stories of Guiders/Leaders (some deceased) to the present day.' (All Our Stories. 2014, p.6)

Participants described the impact guiding has had on their lives, in their own words, attributing and placing value on it themselves, 'I did it because it was valuable to me, and it had useful things in it, for all your life' (Durham South Girlguiding, 2014, p. 24)

One Guide Leader learned from the opportunities presented,

'I know that if I wasn't a Guide, I wouldn't have been to Mexico or Kenya and wouldn't have enjoyed my time in Austria as much as I did if I hadn't been involved in Guiding there. I wouldn't have abseiled in the mountains or built a campfire in

the snow. I can't imagine Guiding not being a part of my life.' (Graham, 2014, p.111).

In an article in The Guardian entitled 'A Letter to....my Guide Leader' (Anonymous, 2019), a 50-year-old mother recalls her first aid badge experience, remembering she was not careful with the live 'dummy,' making them cry in the process of practicing. Moving forward 30 years, when her own baby stopped breathing and was turning blue, she 'knew exactly what to do, and by the time the ambulance arrived, he was breathing again'. Despite the gap in time, she immediately recalled her first aid training, writing the letter acknowledging her personal and lifelong learning. Many voices captured in the myriad of evidence within the organisation identify lifelong learning and the impact guiding had on individual lives, which they can self-identify and attribute directly to their own guiding experience.

## **Volunteers**

A traditional understanding of volunteering consists of three elements: time commitment, free choice to participate and lack of payment (Jarvis and King, 1997). Currently, Girlguiding has 80,000 volunteers undertaking numerous tasks and roles. These included weekly consultation with girls to plan and run weekly meetings, arranging events, managing budgets, sourcing equipment, administrative tasks, communicating with parents and attending regular local meetings and training events. Research (Clary *et al.*, 1998) exploring the roles, needs and recruitment of Girlguiding volunteers revealed an individual spent an average of 4.25 hours per week (*per individual*) volunteering, identifying they spent the majority of their time facilitating activities, administration, meetings, and travel. Compared with the

national average, the amount of time spent volunteering with Guides and Scouts was slightly higher. Volunteers with these organisations could adapt their roles to align with their life phases and commitments. This flexibility also enabled them to maintain a volunteering commitment for a long time, with 49.6% of volunteers remaining in the Guide movement for ten or more years. The ability to preserve volunteers over an extended period benefits the organisation. Investment in training sees a return, networks and connections remain intact and the relationships between the young women, girls and Leaders have time to establish and grow.

The act of volunteering meets different needs in different ways. These needs are linked to dynamic, motivational factors, which often interlink, including socialisation, value-based incentive, career orientation and self-worth. In return, it offers rewards such as enrichment, skill development, self-actualisation, self-expression, and social rewards such as friendships, group accomplishment and fun.

For organisations reliant on volunteers, recruitment and retention are important factors. Once volunteers begin working, it is crucial to maintain them. Therefore, the volunteering role must be flexible, meeting individual current, long-term, and future needs. Girlguiding finds stability within the flexibility and dynamism of volunteering and can draw from within and outside its organisational parameters. Those having experience with the organisation, recognition of personal learning and the impact as a young member continue to work within the guiding values as they have become personal ones, too. This knowledge, experience and ethos allow a smooth transition into a volunteering role as a Young Leader or Ranger. Once volunteering, roles and levels of contact can be varied and accessed when needed, enabling a commitment

to continue through life stages. Externally, parents, carers and extended family also find volunteering roles through organisational contact due to a child's membership. This contact can be in the form of 'one-time' roles such as assisting at events, unit meetings and taking on administrative or fundraising functions. Volunteering can also ensure the child member they are linked with can move from section to section through the organisation. Often if there is no unit to progress to, a parent will undertake the role initially because it meets the need of their child, and they remain once their child moves on.

The ability to draw volunteers from many areas of society provides Girlguiding access to women in numerous contexts. In addition, the occupations, careers, personal beliefs, and experiences are woven into their work, adding nuance to the organisational understanding of women in society. Having many women occupying different spheres also provides varied role models and experiences, showing Guides more than one trait of what it is to be female.

When personal motivations are met, volunteering can become a 'lifetime commitment' as volunteers use the skills they learn while undertaking roles 'to guide others along the same path' (World Association of Girl Guides/Girl Scouts, 1990, p. 24). In guiding, it is a role that reinforces organisational values through action and commitment, demonstrating them to those they are working with. An adult volunteer who joined Girlguiding as a Rainbow at six (Rayers, 2021) describes her involvement as 'a labour of love.' Citing 'so many rewards,' she explains it provides 'great female role models.... to show them they can be whatever they want to be.'

## **Girl Only: 2022**

Emerging as a youth movement alongside the first wave of feminism, guiding challenged societal gender norms by providing a platform and space for women and girls to demonstrate their skills and worth.

The second wave of feminism (the 1960s) saw intellectual radicalism combined with opportunities from the Albermarle Report to create conditions for feminist youth work to emerge, where women youth workers undertook consciousness-raising within girl-only spaces (Spence, 2006). At this time, membership of uninformed groups, including Girlguiding, began to fall (Gledhill, 2013). As a proactive response, the GA consulted with members resulting in redesigning its programme, shifting the focus to personal development on the basis and recognition that young people are 'individual social agents' (Gledhill, 2013, p. 79).

Spence (2010, p. 160) argues that 'the creative energy of feminist youth work has been largely erased from the memory of contemporary youth work.' By the time of Albemarle, graduation erosion saw it survive 'only within the uniformed organisations such as the Girl Guides' (Spence 2010, p. 163). By the 1940s, the feminist practice was predominately located within a community rather than a youth work context (Spence, 2006, p. 245). Despite the formation of a Girls' Work Unit in 1981 aimed at actively encouraging girls' participation, the erosion continued seeing work with girls and young placed within a dichotomy of targeted youth work based on behaviour or culture and feminised pursuits such as nail art.



Currently, Girlguiding states it is a 'girl-only charity, led by girls and young women' (Girlguiding, 2022b), a position it has claimed since conception and outlined in its Royal Charter. The 'primary objective (*The Guide Association Royal Charter and Bye-Laws*, 1922, p. 2) is to educate girls and young women, to help them develop emotionally, mentally, physically and spiritually so that they can make a positive contribution to their community and the wider world.' Ongoing organisational research continually finds members value a girl-only space. Former Girlguiding C.E.O. Julie Bentley explained:

'One of the things we consistently hear from our members is that they value the fact we are girl-only. Just last week, I was visiting a guide group on the Kent coast, and they were invited to tell me one thing that they wanted to stay the same in Guiding. It was unanimous – girls only, please.' (Martinson, 2013, *The Guardian*)

Autonomous youth work with girls has happened in different youth workspaces; a girl-only space as with Girlguiding, girl-only evenings or groups in universal settings and targeted groups such as young mothers and the women, all away from the 'male gaze' (Spence, 2006, p. 247). The single-sex space supports 'consciousness-raising...under the rubric of confidence-building' (Spence, 2006, p. 247). Within these spaces, the position of women and girls in society is analysed, deriving knowledge, and understanding from experience.

Feminist practice in youth work acknowledges intersections and social divisions, critically and creatively examining and exploring to challenge the limits and barriers placed on young people.

Bentley states Girlguiding is 'the ultimate feminist organisation' (Martinson, 2012b); historically and contemporarily, it is theoretically and politically feminist at its core, 'formed because a group of girls crashed a Scouts meeting in Crystal Palace.... If that isn't ultimate feminism, then I don't know what is' (Griggs, 2013).

Members are supported in actively identifying, exploring, and challenging issues impacting them as girls and young women which has resulted in campaigns targeting better sex education, an end to airbrushing women's bodies in the media without consent or disclosure and No More Page 3!, a campaign to challenge The Sun newspaper to stop publishing photos of topless women (Martinson, 2012b). These ideas and campaigns are additionally supported and facilitated by the programme and badge work, such as the badge 'campaigning and activism.' In turn, these issues and challenges and the contextual work undertaken in engaging with the topics all feed into the organisation and broader society impacting the individual, the guiding collective, and women.

Cullen (2013) argues in engaging with 'contemporary issue-orientated social education'(p. 33 ), those traditional single-sex organisations such as the Girl Guides are engaging in forms of girls work which are simultaneously framed as 'explicitly feminist *and* post-feminist' (p.33).

Feminist practice is concerned with emancipation and social justice for all 'women,' a category which houses complex and 'significant' (Batsleer, 2013, p. 4) differences. In informal education, it is underpinned by these dynamic characteristics such as a commitment to autonomy and openness; collective negotiation and evaluation; a connection to other women; informed by a flexible process using social group and collective action methods (Batsleer, 2013) supporting knowledge production in dialogue. Feminist practice is distinct because it creates knowledge by holistically analysing connections and considering the person and their ecosystem. The practitioner is 'conscious' in their 'use of self to other' (Batsleer, 2013, p. 183) and connections to a collective history.

Since its beginning, the GA has worked towards 'social, political and economic participation between men and women' (Martinson, 2012a). Flexibility has enabled it to adapt and evolve, resulting in its ability to continue to attract generations of girls by reflecting changing gender norms and performances across time and place (Halls, Uprichard and Jackson, 2018). Contextual adaptations are built into the organisation informed by girls and women. The 2007 results from the 'Girls Shout Out' survey identified that 81% of girls would not depend on a partner financially. 2008 saw an increase in young women wanting to be involved in politics. However, they felt they were distant from and not heard by politicians. And in 2009, stopping domestic violence was identified as the most important issue.

If Girlguiding has evolved with the contexts of girls and young women on a surface level and incorporating activities based around 'Girl Power,' Cullen (2013) argues the expressive descriptions connected to the work with young women are 'less explicitly feminist' (p. 37), and in that, reinforce and reproduce conflicting feminist discourse. By embracing neo-liberal contexts in order to appeal to girls and young women, such as adopting web-based interfaces and social media platforms, Girlguiding risks producing 'dominant 'raced' and classed norms of heterosexual aesthetic desirability' (Cullen, 2013. p.36).

It is from this position Cullen identifies 'a new (post) feminist approach' (p.36). Rooted in traditional youth work values, Cullen sees the 'collective action and mutuality' (p.36) of young women choosing to attend, as opposed to being included because of a deficit label, 'at risk of or needing 'protection' or 'intervention,' as the basis of feminist girls and young women's work. Being universal and undertaking group work, the model it is employing is one which enables space for subversion, to challenge 'gender inequality and provide a site for feminist education' (p.36) which could be a catalyst for the reinvigoration of feminist youth work practice across youth work as a whole.

### **Same Sex or Same Gender?**

Since its beginning, Girlguiding has offered a single-sex space, sex being a legally protected characteristic – a biological characteristic. However, in response to a Girlguiding survey, which found that 86% of girls and young women aged 11-21 believed people should not be discriminated against because they are transgender, Girlguiding, supported by Stonewall and Gendered Intelligence, altered its Equality

and Diversity policy in 2018. No longer offering a safe 'single-sex' space but a 'single- gender' space, it wishes to support 'the way a person self-identifies – a person's inner sense of self' (Girlguiding, 2022b), where 'any child or young person who self-identifies as a girl or young woman aged from five to 25 years can now become a member regardless of the sex they were assigned at birth' (Girlguiding, 2022e).

The change of wording and subsequent meaning was challenged by a group of Guide Leaders as being 'muddled' and no longer meeting the needs of all members. Claiming the policy contradicted others, such as those concerned with inclusion and consent, they felt the policy disregarded the historical single-sex position of the organisation and the political frame of a single-sex space, placing gender identity ahead of biological sex and undermining the ability to combat gender stereotypes (Fair Play For Women, 2022).

After publicly raising their concerns, the GA expelled these Leaders for breaching organisational social media guidelines. One of the excluded Guiders, Alcock (2019), explained her objection in line with gender critical beliefs, understanding gender as a system of stereotypes, meaning 'a person who transitions as an adult from a man to a woman has not had to experience the inherent and latent societal sexism.'

Stock (2021) opposes the contemporary institutionalisation of the concept that gender identity is paramount and suggests this view is becoming one that society cannot challenge or debate. Despite this view, Alcock initiated legal proceedings

against Girlguiding, stating the policy was against the Equality Act of 2010, which allows only for single-sex organisations, not organisations based on gender identity. She said the policy excludes girls and women from religious backgrounds who need a single-sex environment due to their faith beliefs. In addition, the act of exclusion from the GA was challenged as, Alcock explains, ‘Girlguiding is not supposed to exclude women who hold any other beliefs – religious or political – but it has given no explanation as to why Gender Critical Beliefs are incompatible with Guiding.’

After four years, Girlguiding settled the legal case stating,

‘Girlguiding recognises that gender-critical beliefs are protected under the Equality Act and that there are girls and volunteers who hold gender-critical beliefs within our membership. We respect and value their right to do so and to express those beliefs. Girlguiding is also, and shall remain, a home for trans people. Whatever their protected characteristics, all our young members and adult volunteers are welcome within Girlguiding.’ (Girlguiding Settlement Statement, Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2022)

Alcock was invited to re-apply to become a member as Girlguiding values the ‘bravery of women speaking up, which is aligned with Girlguiding’s purpose in empowering girls and young women (Girlguiding, 2022c).

This contemporary debate, set within spaces provided by youth organisations such as The Guide Association, are able to build upon feminist pedagogy in supporting

women and girls to think differently about sex and gender. Cullen (2013) believes there is a need to uncover and 'reimagine' (p.38) feminist youth work, arguing it being a 'helpful springboard' from which to begin exploring third-wave feminism and queer theories.

## Chapter 4

### Methodology

#### Introduction to Methodological Considerations and Chosen Methods

This chapter identifies the rationale behind choosing an investigative qualitative paradigm and employing strategies of ethnographic inquiry, archival studies, and a participatory action research (PAR) project to study the historical development, longevity, and current position of the Guide Association. With a focus on traditional youth work values and principles, informal education and feminist characteristics, this chapter outlines the aims of the research, the epistemological position and the chosen research methods clarifying a direct link to value-based youth work. The complete details of the PAR project have been provided in Chapter 6.

The decision to embed a PAR project conducted with a group of young women within this research is important in that it recognises the agency of young people (Groundwater-Smith, Dockett and Bottrell, 2015) and their right of freedom to express ideas, views, and opinions (*The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*, 1990). Furthermore, PAR aligns with my youth work practitioner values, enabling the inclusion of an informal education process, thereby reflecting the inherent values and principles of youth work; democracy, negotiation through dialogue, experiential learning, and subversion of power. Framed within the context of mutual respect, the values enable young people to exercise power in the provision of services in which they participate (Jeffs, 1979; Spence, 2006; Batsleer, 2007; Davies, 2008; Ord, 2020; APPG, 2019). As the 'orientation' of PAR actively



acknowledges and addresses power relations, my aim was to co-produce knowledge by means of research conducted ‘with’ rather than ‘on’ (Heron and Reason, 2001) those involved in the study.

In undertaking longitudinal research using multiple methods I was able to immerse myself in organisational systems and distinctive social groups within the research. Whilst this required both emotional investment and time commitment, ensuring proximity to social groups to understand their distinctiveness is a ‘good way to learn...to submit oneself in the company of the members’ (Goffman, 1961, pp. ix-x). Located within the natural setting, I was able to study behaviour and understanding found in the ‘symbolic world’. Direct observation of events and analysis of historical and current documents became an introspective and empathic lens with which the perspective of group members could be viewed *in process*, referred to by Weber as ‘verstehen’ (in Gilbert, 2001, p. 148).

The table below summarises the progress of the empirical research conducted between 2018-2020.

	2018	2019	2020
January		Participant Observation began. Identify participants of the peer-researcher group.	Enrolled in ‘The Key ’to access funding to buy resources for research dissemination sessions.
February		Attended first of GA (Guide Association) Division meetings, (quarterly cycle). Senior Leader training completed.	Resilient Communities: The Young Foundation & Cumberland Lodge Conference/workshop event.
March		Attended first GA District meeting, (quarterly cycle).	COVID PANDEMIC LOCKDOWN: All GA face-to face sessions cancelled

<b>April</b>	Institute For Local Governance: Improving partnerships, knowledge, and outcomes workshop.	Peer-researcher group research and research methods training at Durham University. GA Senior Leader training completed. GA safe Space level 4 training completed.	
<b>May</b>		Peer-researcher exploratory research methods weekly sessions begin.	
<b>June</b>		Practice and further explore research methods sessions concluded end June.	
<b>July</b>	Girlguiding North East Archive research (York archive).	Peer-researcher research design completed. Interviews created, practiced, amended. Research consent and confidentiality forms distributed, and consent gained.	
<b>August</b>	Girlguiding North East Archive research (York Beamish Museum Resource Centre).	GA Unit close for summer.	
<b>September</b>	Regional Impact Network Meeting (YFNE)	Practice recording interviews. peer-researched interviews conducted.	
<b>October</b>	GA Safe Space training: levels 1-3 completed.	Peer-researcher peer interviews undertaken during annual camp. Peer-research group thematic analysis and coding sessions.	
<b>November</b>	GA Mentoring training completed. Girlguiding North East Archive research (York Beamish Museum Resource Centre).	YIF Sustainability: Enterprise & Social Investment event. Peer-researcher findings & recommendations discussion. Put findings and recommendations into power point	
<b>December</b>	Institutional Ethical review Research review completed. Consent forms and information distributed. Enhanced DBS completed.	Creation of Rangers section: Peer-research group become Rangers. Plan dissemination session to Leaders and peers (Guides)	

Table 2 : Research timetable.

## **Qualitative Research**

As the values and principles of youth work and the informal educative process it embodies are central and 'homologous' to my research, choosing an inductive and 'theory generating' qualitative research paradigm was paramount. In aligning 'equivalencies' between research and professional practice (Adams and McCullough, 2003) the methods selected are mutually supportive and purposeful in conducting an in-depth investigation and examination into the sustainability of the Guide Association by identifying findings located within the specified context. Adopting ethnographic fieldwork with a 'blending of methodological techniques' (Denzin, 1981), I incorporated an 'open-endedness' (McCall and Simmonds, 1969) into the research design to actively engage in unrestricted but framed dynamic fluidity. Employing narratives created using qualitative methods in combination with the empowering, educative process of PAR enabled engagement with the subjectivity of personal perspectives on topics familiar to participants, which are located within the cultural values of the organisation.

Collectively, these methods support the creation of knowledge through a dynamic, fluid, and iterative process, placing value within contextual impact and cultural interpretation (Bergold and Thomas, 2012). In doing this, the dominant discourse is challenged and 'hidden voices' are elucidated through the 'representation of experience' (Ragan and Amoroso, 2011, p. 114) thereby unearthing the significance and nature of practices from meanings encapsulated within. Conducted at a 'grassroots level,' which is 'young person centred' and 'rooted in neighbourhoods, social identities, or shared interests' (De St. Croix, 2016), the 'voice' of young people

within the research incorporates 'association' fostered through relationships and interaction (Batsleer and Davies, 2010; Jeffs and Smith, 2010).

Meaning and understanding are extracted from action, behaviour and thinking then elucidated through process and reflexivity. It is within this 'natural setting' that contextual, rich, 'analytical' and 'thick' descriptions (Brewer, 2000; Hammersley, 1992; Guba and Lincoln, 1989) are identified from the observed social processes. This process supports the construction of understanding within interactions, communication, and dialogue, where the identification and selection of information can result in the creation of additional knowledge (Ragan and Amoroso, 2011). This contextual 'voice' situated inside '*verstehen*' (Cuff *et al.*, 2016) is an empathetic entity aiding the identification of understanding through the perception of participants. Located within the experiential and critical construction process of qualitative research, it simultaneously challenges and sometimes subverts any power and authority between the researcher and the 'researched'. By deconstructing dominant perspectives, inequality and injustice are challenged allowing the recognition and validation of this multi-faceted knowledge, thus revealing the significance of human action embedded in and resembling 'real life' (Braun and Clarke, 2013). By interpreting cultural and historical phenomena (Ragan and Amoroso, 2011) and supporting the subjectivity of truth, we find that multiple complex and hidden meanings are uncovered through the reflexivity prevalent within this critical research process. Exploring how events affect the understanding of 'self' and cultural interpretation (Bergold and Thomas, 2012), the process of knowledge creation becomes dynamic in providing a voice to those who are often silent. Consequently the 'representation of experience' (Ragan and Amoroso, 2011, p. 114)

is improved enabling theory to be further advanced. Here theory is generated out of description formed from the values and purposes of different phenomena, both within and from a process which is iterative and inductivist as it dynamically evolves.

### **Ontology and Epistemology**

The methodological position of my research is interpretivist in that it values knowledge produced by exploring and understanding the social world from the perspective of those being studied. This approach is underpinned by an ontological position which considers that reality is multiple and relative. The research methods reveal and acknowledge significance in socially constructed meaning and the interpretations placed in and on the lives of those involved. The production of knowledge is understood as having been derived from an 'authentic', contextual reality, and it is subjective with the ability to affect action and possibly make a difference. Additionally, this position enables me, as a researcher, to take a dynamic stance *inside* the research by being receptive, fluid, accommodating and responding to any change within the process. The transition of data analysis back and forth between emerging theory generation and existing literature (Blakie, 2007; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007) enables the detection of contextual complexity. The iterative process generates theory by substantiating understanding from the perspective of, and relationship with, participants.

Epistemologically, the researcher position I occupied necessitated that I jointly created knowledge emerging from interactions and relationships within the research, as an active creator who is 'intrinsically in it from beginning to end' (Carter and Little, 2007, p. 1319). The strength of this ethnography is its multi-modality, which creates

a 'verity of theoretical packages' (Atkinson, 2015, p. 38) with an ability to do justice to the symbolic meaning, artifacts, personal narratives, and spatial and temporal frames of reference.

Being an iterative and dynamic process, data flow is underpinned by a critical realist and constructionist epistemology, framing the research as 'eclectic' and 'transcendental' (Easton, 2010). Knowledge is not absolute but understood as 'pockets' of cultural data (Fals-Borda and Rahman, 1991), as it is generated in the subjectivity of culture, society, and history by social groups.

Evolving and transitioning, multiple knowledge forms exist when cited within the boundaries of time and space (Ortner, 2006), thereby allowing reflection on and back on events. It is this reflexivity in process that parallels the informal educative process within youth work; an 'emancipatory axiology' (Easton, 2010) where the phenomena studied, and the immersed researcher are not separate from the political, historical, and embodied sociocultural contexts (Crabtree and Miller, 1992) but are active contributors and meaning makers in the 'symbolic world' (Gilbert, 2001).

### **Critical Realism and Feminist Research Philosophies**

Some critical realist and feminist philosophies assume a transcendental reality existing independently of observers which is socially constructed through the meanings derived from the behaviours and actions of 'daily life' (Bryman, 2016). Understanding gained from external description and from within social phenomena is established within dialogue, interaction, and human formation (Christians, 2008, p.

151). Knowledge found in and produced by research should be considered 'fallible and theory laden' (Sayer, 1992), therefore by engaging in an iterative process of recording and analysing associated events with participants, I explore both the present and the past, while incorporating and being interested in the recollection of, and reflection on, memories. This research process makes it suitable for complex, but structured organisations, such as the Guide Association.

Being an immersed researcher and a youth work practitioner with 'insider knowledge' (Batsleer, 2010), I am committed to active participation, which goes beyond just being as it encapsulates a willingness to observe, 'listen', 'learn' and 'imitate' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 35). Goffman (1961) acknowledges this as 'a good way to learn' about multiple worlds, as immersion allows researchers to become 'encultured' (Atkinson, 2015) to the minutia associated with social settings and how they are sustained by members. Engagement in a community of practice becomes an 'analytic resource' attending to and simultaneously making systematic connections to the generation of ideas. As this systematic, 'intellectual' (Ortner, 2006) stance is located in time and space, the researcher must be wholly immersed (Bryman, 2016) to understand meanings in the 'symbolic world' and participants' patterns.

From a feminist perspective, qualitative methods enable narration through the validity of 'experiences', which are perceived as legitimate or 'true' in themselves, thereby enabling truth to be heard (Stanley, 1993). The methodology and methods of this research are compatible with feminist ethnographic principles, in that the aim is to validate women's experiences through 'empowerment' (Gilbert, 2001) and

elucidate 'voice' through co-production and reciprocity within the existing process. The exploration of different shared meanings enables the ascertaining of different realities, as knowledge becomes authentic and rooted within indigenous meanings of the real world. The collective process and shared knowledge are interconnected with emancipatory values and respect for humanity aiming to affect actions and implement change. As a female practitioner influenced by feminism, I aim to embrace the 'messy intersections' (Behar, 1996; McLeod, 2009) between my roles while acknowledging position and subjectivity within the study.

### **Research Site**

The research 'site' for the empirical research in this study includes, but is not wholly limited to, a geographical locality. In this case the research site is not simply a place where research is carried out, but also acknowledges the fluidity of relationships and networks of the people involved. The research site is a 'methodological construction' (Clifford, 1997 in Eichhorn, 2001. p. 554), based on an understanding that people come from extended localities and create meaning in their communities and cultural spaces. Having a dynamic research site recognises reciprocity and relationships between people and the organisation, and the rights of those linked to and creating the research. Gerson and Horowitz (2002) attest that participant observation provides opportunities to research a 'site', involving observing groups or organizations that have a 'specific substantive interest' for the study, Therefore, my research site is a community group bound by membership of the GA and the places and spaces members create and occupy. In addition, my research site is emergent, developing from my personal and professional links to youth work in the North East



region of England and my wish for the research to be informed by practice and in turn to inform practice.

The research site includes a case study organisation, 1<sup>st</sup> Hebburn (St. John's) Guide Unit, which identifies with the geographical region of Hebburn, a small town located on the south bank of the River Tyne. It is classed as an area of multiple deprivation, based on criteria often used to identify and justify the need for youth provision as well as measure its impact. Hebburn has a population of approximately 19,000. Its socio-economic make up is summarized in Table 3:

Socio-economic category	Socio-economic descriptor	Percentage of the population of Hebburn	Percentage of the population in England
L1, L2, L3	Higher managerial, administrative, and professional occupations	10.1	13.2
L4, L5, L6	Lower managerial, administrative, and professional occupations	19.6	19.9
L7	Intermediate occupations	14.9	11.4
L8 and L9	Small employers and own account workers	6.4	10.6
L10 and L11	Lower supervisory and technical occupations	6.9	5.3
L12	Semi-routine occupations	13.5	11.3
L14.1 and L14.2	Never worked and long-term unemployed	10.0	8.5
L15	Full-time students	4.8	7.7

Table 3: Socio-economic 2021 Census data, Hebburn North and South

The demographics of the population of Hebburn are shown in Table 4.

Description	Percentage
Female	51.1%
Male	48.9%
Young people aged between 10 – 14 years old	6%
In employment	58%
White (remainder identifying as Asian, Black, or mixed/multiple)	96.8%
Single family household	64.4%
Gaining level 4 and above qualifications	8.6%
No qualifications	17%

Table 4: Demographic 2021 Census data, Hebburn North and South

Economically the town of Hebburn was historically involved with coal mining, ship building and ship yards, (all of which are no longer operating) and a Short-Circuit Testing Station which is now Siemens Limited, a technology company. It hosts amenities, which include a football club (Hebburn FC), park, cemetery, fire station, leisure 'hub' (incorporating a library), a small shopping centre, Buddhist temple, Catholic and Protestant churches, primary and secondary schools (including one specific to pupils with severe learning difficulties, complex or profound needs) and care homes. The town has one youth club which is run in partnership with the local authority and a community association, (it is also the youth club I used to attend as a young person and work in as an adult).

As my research interest lies in the cultural texts within the case study organisation, 1<sup>st</sup> Hebburn (St. John's) Guide Unit, it is concerned with the places and spaces it inhabits. This does not exclude physical spaces defined by boundaries, as this Guide Unit meets weekly in St. John's Church, where on a Thursday evening the whole building, including vestry, kitchen, mezzanine, church hall and grounds, are all available to be used by the Guide Unit. Places and spaces also include buildings out of the geographical area, such as Waddow Hall Activity Centre in Lancashire, Moorhouse Adventure Centre, Houghton le Spring and organisational events, such as The Big Gig at Wembley Arena.

Locating my research site in a community which identifies with and functions within a geographical area considered marginal to the economic and cultural mainstream, the research site aligns with policy drivers of targeted youth work in relation to locality and population.

An addition, as Hebburn is the area from which I originate and where I spent my formative years, I have some understanding of its historical and cultural characteristics, and a strong personal connection to the area and people. My closeness to the research site and the people within link to my ontological and epistemological positionality, recognising the importance of space and place occupied by people, with histories, stories, and perspectives of their own.

### **Trustworthiness of Qualitative Research**

Generalisation of findings in qualitative research can be perceived as a difficult endeavour as the aim of the research is not concerned with representative samples,

comparison, deduction or 'localised descriptions' (Atkinson, 2015). Whilst this research is concerned with one organisational case study, it is 'generalizable to theoretical propositions' (Yin, 1989) in that it aims to expand theory through the processes within context. In the context of this qualitative study, generalisability pertains to the process of developing understanding by examining the rich details and the 'thickness' (Geertz, 1973) found within 'a network of cross references, inter-textual relations, and common conceptual apparatus' (Atkinson, 2015, p. 38) located in cultural norms that support and influence actions and interactions. Morse (2015) suggests that rigour and the assessment of generalisation within qualitative research comprises of validity and reliability, which are intertwined and located in the process and strategies used for data collection and analysis. The outcome of generalisability cannot be predicted but an environment conducive to its cultivation can be created. Lincoln and Guba (1985) identify that the following elements are needed to create an environment that is able to nurture 'trustworthiness':

*Dependability or Reliability:* This captures the consistency of descriptions formed and assigned to the same category by one or more participants and on different occasions (Hammersley, 1992). My research uses 'naturalistic' (Stake, 1995) or 'representational' (Lewis, 2014) generalisability by identifying the familiarity of experiences and settings.

*Credibility:* Confidence is established within the research process as those involved can and do contribute to the creation of knowledge by providing plausible data. Subsequently, this is iteratively re-applied to the interpretation of original views to ascertain plausibility.

*Transferability:* The process of identifying and facilitating situational 'overlap.' Which entails assessing the extent and ease by which participants' situation can be transferred to other contexts or settings with other respondents (Lewis, 2014).

*Confirmability:* This involves clarifying the interpretations of the findings and of participants, concurring that they unmistakably originated from the data.

*Reflexivity:* Knowledge is subjective and contingent to the process.

To ensure that this research inherently locates the researcher, I adopted the practice of critical self-reflection by maintaining a reflective journal in conjunction with regular reflective supervision. This process or practice facilitates active engagement through continued reflexivity of knowing 'in' action, reflecting in action and highlighting 'on' action (Schön, 2016). This facilitates the exploration and study of power, bias and hidden assumptions possibly located within the research allowing them to be unearthed. Furthermore, the practice facilitates clarity in meaning and is educative in that it informs personal and professional research, academic and practice-based skills and understanding.

### **Validity**

For qualitative research findings to be trustworthy and demonstrate authenticity (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018), validation is relative to and dependent on the perspectives of those involved in the research. From a critical realist epistemology

perspective, validity assumes 'no direct knowledge of the objects of our accounts and thus no independent entity with which to compare' (Maxwell, 1992; Hammersley, 1992). In light of this, Payne and Williams (2005) suggest that a process of 'external validity' is integrated into research design to strengthen credibility. This entails accepting that the knowledge created is influenced by cultural and historical nuances (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Therefore, validity is found in the writing and reporting of data as a component of the analytical process within the subjectivity and meaning attributed to actions and events identified in the research (Spradley, 1979).

The discovery of the authentic and distinctive shape of 'reality' in qualitative research requires a 'thick description' of the fieldwork in order to demonstrate 'consistency' and 'dependency' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). By converging evidence gathered from intensive long-term field work, validation relies on the production of 'rich data' and repeated observations thereby increasingly leading to a 'stronger' (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2002) in-depth understanding of concepts, contexts, and meanings. The methods employed in this research can help in strategically identifying participant reactions and corroborating field patterns using multi-source triangulation.

### **Case Study**

At the heart of this research is a case study. A case study is an 'intensive' research method (Easton, 2010) with a focus on the complexity and the particularities of a case (Stake, 1995). By asking exploratory 'how' and 'why' questions and observing 'operational links' (Yin, 1989) the researcher adopts an *idiographic* (Bryman, 2016) approach aiming to elucidate unique features. This endeavour is completed over a specified time-period, which enables the exploration of complexities and informal

reality by 'getting under the skin' and researching processes from the perspectives of those involved in the case (Gillham, 2013). Using different research methods, I was able to gather multiple types of evidence to investigate a single phenomenon, thereby uncovering varied, deep, rich, and complex data.

The challenges of a case study lie in ensuring rigour, the ability to follow systematic procedures and generalising findings. The aim here is to conduct an intensive examination and generate theory (Yin, 2014). Specifically, using participant observation, semi-structured interviews and a small PAR project allowed me to investigate several features of the case study, thereby enabling different aspects and information to emerge and facilitating an intensive examination of this single case. Whilst this is not possible to replicate and generalise, it is advantageous in that a large amount of rich detail found in practices and processes are understood in relation to the social context.

Triangulation by cross referencing of data from different methods further increased validity as internal and external aspects capture multiple 'truths' producing a fuller richer, contextual data story. Furthermore, in seeking to uncover inferential meaning in context, using descriptions of what is said, done, produced, and shown, 'illuminate issues and explanations' (Gillham, 2000, p. 10), thus informing the narrative 'chain of evidence' (Yin, 2014, p. 237) and strengthening the reliability of the research methods used.

The 'case' in this research is a youth group, 1<sup>st</sup> Hebburn (St. John's) Guide Unit, which holds a current active registration with Girlguiding U.K. Within Girlguiding a 'Unit' is the descriptive term given to a group defined by age. Age then denotes the title of the group; 'Rainbows', 'Brownies', 'Guides' or 'Rangers.' In this case study the Guides in the group are in the age category of 10 – 14/16 years old.

Founded in 2014, this Unit has the maximum capacity to work with 25 young women at any one time. At the time of the research, it consisted of 23 young women (Guides), and three adult women volunteers (Leaders). Currently the Unit is one of four Units that make up the youth provision under the 1<sup>st</sup> Hebburn (St. John's) heading, comprising of Rainbows founded in 2014 (5–7.5-year-old age range), Brownies founded in 1991 (7–11yrs), Guides founded 2014 (10 to between 14/16 yrs) and Rangers founded in 2019 (14–19). The Guide Unit meets between 18.00 and 20.00 at St. John's church one evening a week, term time only. It also provides a minimum of two off-site residential weekends and three off-site regional activities per year.

The town of Hebburn is located within the Borough of South Tyneside with 5.6 per cent of its population comprising 10 to 14-year-olds. The 2011 Census identifies Hebburn as having a high level of residents with either no or low educational attainment and with an unemployment rate that is higher than the national average (*LivehereUK*, 2021). Most Guides attending this Unit either live within, have extended family living in and/or attend a school in Hebburn.



Hebburn was chosen for several reasons. It is statistically considered an 'area of multiple deprivation' (*English indices of deprivation, 2019*), therefore is 'targeted' to provide regular youth provision which is currently offered through a voluntary organisation and local authority partnership. Hebburn is from where I originate and lived until my 20s, therefore I have an intrinsic and contextual understanding of its history and community. Finally, wishing to maintain my involvement in the NE youth sector and incorporate reciprocal and relational appreciation, I volunteered with Hebburn St. John's Guide Unit.

Prior to starting the formal PhD process, I joined Girlguiding UK in 2017 volunteering with this Unit to familiarise myself with the organisation and prepare to plan my research design. I underwent organisational training to become a Guide Leader, therefore it is from this position in combination with my youth work profession that I embarked on this research. My research attempts to understand the 'real world' pertinent to this case, as well as important contextual conditions' (Yin, 2014). The unique complexities and the construction of the organisation through interactions place the knowledge produced as a foundation for the application of ideas and extension of methods. Locating these assisted me in understanding organisational survival within the current climate of funding restraints, precarious voluntary sector sustainability and decimation of local authority youth provision. Furthermore, a case study situated within the current youth work context makes the research and findings relevant, enabling it to be understood by and accessible to current youth work contexts and concerns (Roberts, 2004).

I studied this case longitudinally. My role as a participant observer ran for two and a half years which permitted access to the organisational annual 'life cycle' and to support structures that are not public facing. Being inside the case allowed me to continually build and reframe knowledge over time. Collecting data from this position and in conjunction with archival documents, I constructed a research link between the past and present to serve as a catalytic informing the research.

### **Archival Research**

Archives contain an assemblage of primary and secondary sources of historical and cultural significance which enable the researcher to establish proximity to a past event. By using data created during the event and reflecting the tellers' retrospective perspectives, layers of data are created which when studied, help identify relationships and transactions between them. In order to make tangential connections and cultural understanding within and across each unique archive, the approach taken is not linear but flexible (Gale and Featherstone, 2011), allowing contextualisation to make the invisible work of historical research visible. This approach acknowledges that the history of childhood has predominately been documented within the confines of historical and contemporary power relations and predominately by (mostly male) adults. In these conventional texts, young women's actions and choices are less visible (Alexander, 2012).

Whilst Girlguiding has a central archival resource this was inaccessible due to ongoing relocation. However, as the focus of my research was North East England I was granted access to the regional archival resources located at Beamish Open-Air

Museum and York Regional Girlguiding base and supported by organisational volunteer archivists.

My archival research focused on national, regional, and county Girlguiding archives from primary and secondary institutional and 'outside' sources, consisting of official documents (minute books, manuscripts, account ledgers and annuals), photographs, maps, drawings, newsletters, leaflets, information sheets, personal journals, CDs, DVDs, research, and symbolic artifacts such as uniforms, badges, and pennants.

The inclusion of archival research as a qualitative method within this study provided access to written, oral and image data spanning the entire 111 years of the organisation. The range of archival material enabled an understanding of the economic, political, personal, legal, instrumental, symbolic, and cultural reasons for documenting and archiving material. It also positioned the data and organisation within the context of significant social and political phenomena such as the Women's Movement and youth work policy. Additionally, personal written and oral records and individual accounts describing events and experiences conveyed personal emotions, providing a unique perspective that included insights derived from information not officially or formally documented. Often visual records accompanied personal narratives, capturing a particular moment in time, and conveying information about everyday life and behaviour, often communicated through trends such as hair and clothing styles.



Image 8 : Personal Journal 1926. First Shotley Bridge Guide Company

The use of a variety of materials contributed to the validity of the process making it possible for resources to independently provide limited or biased information. An image may have been deliberately constructed to represent an ideal. The evaluation of the variety of archival documents in conjunction with other sources increases the reliability of suggestive rather than definitive data to determine meaning within the wider context of an event. Studying this variety of material further expanded my knowledge of the organisation and allowed me to identify research themes and triangulate alongside data gathered from my other research methods.

## **Participant Observation**

Participant observation (PO) provides the researcher with access to social settings by allowing them to learn through exposure and active involvement. It is advantageous in that the researcher is situated internally, providing opportunities for viewing and participating in 'backstage culture' and engaging in usual practice and unscheduled events (Kawulich, 2005). It goes beyond observation using a particular skill set to explore the topic through a critical lens that is non-judgmental, involving active listening and interpretation of non-verbal communication.

The unique position of the researcher/practitioner coupled with the longevity of the study also has limitations. 'Immersion' within the field can blur boundaries, making it difficult to maintain distance between oneself and the organisational culture. Furthermore, if it becomes familiar or usual then it can result in a failure to notice or explore. To guard against this, it is important to maintain a holistic understanding and remain grounded in the academic community. To uphold researcher independence the ability to engage in discussions with other researchers (Sandberg and Wallo, 2013) provides space to be as critical as possible and appraise issues in practice.

Familiarity linked to researcher positionality can also lead to participants feeling comfortable thereby making it less likely for them to alter their behaviour. However, it may also create an awareness of being observed, encouraging some to present what they think is acceptable to the research/er rather than what would be their norm. Further limitations of PO include the subjective bias of the researcher as the instrument for data collection, therefore it is important that the researcher

understands how gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class, and theoretical approach may affect observation, analysis, and interpretation (Kawulich, 2005).

As an immersed, flexible, and resourceful participant observer, one who 'fits-in' (Walsh, 2009), I explored and interpreted informal practices, such as individual application of the guiding programme to gradually build a comprehensive understanding of how others viewed their world. By uncovering meanings of action, events, rules, and norms gained from understanding verbal and non-verbal communication, I collected rich, detailed, and conceptual descriptions which were collected in a fieldwork or reflective journal. Using these methods, the meaning of routines and behaviours were revealed, and the study began to unveil how time in the organisation is spent. Continued redefining contributed to the development of a 'holistic understanding' (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2002).

Longevity provided the time and space to immerse myself in the culture of the organisation and build a deep understanding. Additionally, it enabled me to experience and observe the organisational infrastructure, how volunteers came to know operational requirements and organisational values and principles. It afforded me time and opportunities to form and build relationships, to consolidate trust and rapport, to gain and maintain acceptance and access, and in this validate my understanding. Through this familiarity I comprehended organisational language and formed a connection with members adding to my understanding of meaning and intimate knowledge. As many aspects of social milieu are only visible to insiders therefore by understanding the rules, symbols, language, and cultural norms governing interactions, I was able to engage in reciprocal dialogue and gain further

access to information. Using this knowledge, I clarified meaning, expanded my knowledge, and framed my research methods in a common vocabulary. The trust afforded to me and position as a Guide Leader permitted me access beyond public-facing interactions and meanings, granting admission into 'non-public' situations and information (Zahle, 2017). This provided unique access to views, perspectives and experiences which may not have been so readily available to an 'outside' researcher. Because of this positionality, it was important to be precise, transparent, and clear about the time span of my research role(s) and the research, as I intended to continue volunteering with the organisation after completion of this research and thesis.

Being a 'complete participant' (Spradley, 2016) in the role of Guide Leader, I worked with the transparent 'here and now'. In my role as researcher or 'outsider', I was presented with opportunities to uncover tacit cultural rules and the shared meanings attributed to them. By utilising these roles simultaneously, I was able to study the subject from a wide observational stance, placing emphasis on meanings, behaviours and actions that are usually 'blocked out' (Spradley, 2016) of independent roles.

The strength of PO is direct data validation by witnessing actions as they happen. In this the positionality of the researcher is ethically significant. Depending upon context and information, my roles would fluctuate therefore require clarity and transparency. When attending a meeting that a Guide Leader would usually not attend, I adopted a non-participatory observational role, seeking to reduce possible researcher influence in the process. However, when in a participatory role I engaged in questioning and

challenging to understand subtleties, extending inquiry through dialogue to lead to deeper and more informed understanding of meaning.

The importance of active clarity and understanding of my role(s) was important, as familiarity and research longevity can lead to participants 'forgetting' that I am in the role of the researcher. To ensure understanding, contextualise clarity and maintain full informed consent with participants, I adopted various methods to demarcate and define my roles. I regularly used oral and visual prompts, such as announcements and directly asking if people were willing for me to continue in my role as a researcher or note taking to create a visual awareness of data collection. I aimed for transparency and prevention of privacy invasions as people actively choose to participate in context, grant me access and determine the extent to which they shared their views and experiences.

When engaging in 'practitioner/researcher' positionality I was aware of my own actions, interactions, and behaviour as well as the subjectivity surrounding them and from where they emerge. The introspection of my own mental and emotional processes was an important part of the research and data collection. I engaged in reflective practice methods (supervision and a personal journal/extended field notes) to record information and explore subjective perspectives. Engagement in reflective practice requires space and time after the event to contemplate what is evident, understood, and implicit in behaviour. It allows one to draw upon previous experience and understandings, further question meaning and generate ideas linked to actions, events, and practices. In doing this, the journal acted as a data collection tool and catalyst for reflection 'on the action' (Schön, 2016). The position of



practitioner/researcher was advantageous as reflection afford me a value-based space with which to revisit, reframe and critically explore key experiences and observations. When practised purposefully, this position can capture the complexity of context and process while informing professional development from within and during the process (Hamilton, 2013).

### **Semi-structured Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews are 'ideally suited' (Braun and Clarke, 2013) to investigative qualitative research. Adopting fluid questioning in a contextual framework, the researcher explores themes, allowing interviewee emphasis to define meaning and understanding. Concerned with studying the experience, this method invites people to construct understanding and perception about a topic with which they are familiar by exploring their interactions and experiences. This process is within a 'conversation' that follows particular interests, creating data through intervention (Silverman, 2006). Kelly *et al.* (1994) consider semi-structured interviewing as a prominent and paradigmatic feminist method, as it values rapport and reciprocity. It also aims to be non-hierarchical and emancipatory, as dilemmas and understanding within the dialogue are addressed as researcher and interviewee both ask and answer questions (Oakley, 1981).

I constructed an interview framework using pre-identified themes emergent from my literature review, archive documents, data collected from my reflective fieldwork journal and my knowledge as a Guide/youth work practitioner. Unlike standardised interviews that have a pre-arranged schedule of set questions, the questions prepared were open-ended and linked to prompts, building versatility into the

framework. Considering Kvale's (1996) criteria, I constructed introductory, follow-up, probing, specific and ethical questions, deciding how and when they were asked in each individual interview to incorporate fluidity and responsiveness into the interaction. The ability to adapt, be responsive and flexible (Bryman, 2016) are strengths of semi-structured interviews, as they allow more information to be elicited by fostering conversation, exploring opinions, seeking clarity, and uncovering cultural meaning.

My decision to be physically present with interviewees added to the depth of information gathered, as I was able to read and elucidate any non-verbal communication or cues, seeking clarity whenever participants' words and behaviours seemed at 'odds,' or their tone of voice placed emphasis. I was also able to adapt questioning and my language to meet interviewee comprehension, again enhancing clarity and uncovering contextual meaning, social understanding, and complexities.

I was particularly conscious of creating an effective interview design which offered the space to motivate and engage at a personal, face-to-face level, whether it be 'in person' or when using a virtual platform. This is crucial and conducive to conversation when inviting people to talk about what is important to them. Physicality, which is non-threatening, welcoming and meets the degree of privacy required, is essential to 'develop a community' (Cicourel, 1964a, p. 75) in which data collection occurs. Therefore, I consciously created an environment conducive to optimal verbal and non-verbal communication which were private, accessible, and comfortable. I went to the place chosen by participants, at a time convenient for them. Within this space, I engaged in 'active listening' (Dempsey *et al.*, 2016), asking

probing questions to identify and clarify verbal and non-verbal cues. Using these skills and the space, I followed the path of the participant, enabling the development of personal meaning as people told their own stories in their own words (Rabionet, 2011). Presenting language and words back to the participants not only clarified meaning but also created a non- hierarchical relationship based on reciprocity. This accelerated 'sharing personal stories' (Dempsey *et al.*, 2016), building rapport whilst maintaining space for discussion. The acknowledgement of my role as being located inside the research further enhanced reciprocity, thereby reinforcing my inclusion as a community member playing an important part in co-constructing meaning. However, I was actively conscious of myself in the moment as this positionality can be limiting if a researcher becomes too involved or controlling in the interview. This can affect interviewees, leading to the subjectivity of the knowledge being compromised if respondents answer 'what the interviewer wants to hear' rendering the validity and reliability of data questionable (Hofisi, Hofisi and Mago, 2014).

Participants were recruited from a targeted group of key stakeholders linked to and involved regionally and nationally in the GA and youth work sector, including CEOs, voluntary and salaried GA and youth workers plus adult youth workers who were GA members when they were children. The recruited sample 'snowballed' to include significant others, for instance, those who were referenced on a regular basis across individual interviews or those with a unique experience, such maintaining active GA membership for 90+ years. By following recommendations and maintaining fluidity of dialogue within the semi-structured interviews, I widened and gained access to diverse and extended networks, which provided additional data.

The primary interview themes explored understanding of organisational values, vision and implementation, members' opinions of organisational development and changes they had experienced. Themes also included personal motivation for involvement, the volunteering role, understanding why women who have remained, withdrawn, or been expelled from the organisation. (Appendices: Interview schedules, pp. 423-429).

I interviewed 48 participants, of which 29 were adults and 19 were Guides interviewed by peer researchers (see *PAR section*). I recruited participants by attending and presenting to GA organisational meetings and through professional youth work networks. Prior to each interview, I sought participants' verbal and written consent, discussed the aims and objectives of the research, answered questions, and provided written documentation outlining the research scope and confidentiality. The interviews were captured using audio recordings and written notes. Recording the interviews allowed me to focus on the person with whom I was engaging and to actively listen and concentrate on the words spoken, language used, silences and tone of voice. I was also able to evaluate mood and respond to non-verbal communication by identifying cues and moving with the discourse further enhancing data (Cicourel, 1964b). Semi-structured interviews demand dedicated time from both the researchers and interviewees. Active listening is mentally tiring, so timely planning of interviews was important to maintain mental focus and facilitate contextual dialogue.

Seeking to confirm or unearth differences in my understanding of meaning, I transcribed recordings within one day of the interview taking place. As the

interactions were recent, I reflected 'on' meaning as I understood it both during and after the interviews. Additionally, interest in the manner of interviewees speech was captured in recordings ensuring meaning in phraseology or colloquialisms were not lost (Bryman, 2016). This allowed me to repeatedly examine responses to uncover cues, such as silences and sentence structures linked to colloquial accent, aspects I may not have 'heard' during the interview. The attention I paid to cues helped in identifying questions of understanding, which I quickly posed to interviewees and sought clarifications when the original conversation was still 'fresh' and relevant.

### **Positionality**

Research positionality is established from the researcher's perspective of the world – specifically, from the beliefs, competencies, and ethical values they hold. It touches and influences the entire research process and, therefore should be overtly acknowledged. My initial interest in sustainability linked to values comes directly from being a youth work practitioner, specifically from my experience of the impact of austerity and economic cuts on the sector. Rather than trying to neutralise my positionality, I acknowledged that my positional subjective knowledge is 'intrinsically imprinted' on my research 'from beginning to end' (Carter and Little, 2007. p.1319). I entered the research process with prior knowledge and lived experience of working with young people in the youth sector. I aimed to understand and acknowledge any influence this presented by adopting a reflexive approach throughout the course of the research, which was beneficial as at times I found it difficult to conceptualise myself as anything other than a practitioner especially when directly working with the young women involved in the PAR project. Reflexive practice enabled me to reground.

Maintaining a professional relationship within the NE youth sector, the GA and the young women involved in the PAR project required transparency in recognising the professional values and principles I hold and used to frame this research. The way we view the world and our position within it allows us to perceive only parts of the whole. Therefore, adopting a hermeneutic understanding through dialogue and critical reflection challenges perspectives and widens realisation.

Critical reflection placed my positionality as dynamic throughout the research process as opposed to rigidly maintaining binary positions of insiders or outsiders. I engaged in multiple roles, sometimes simultaneously within a spectrum, as boundaries blurred and interchanged, layered, and crossed each other (Banks and Brydon-Miller, 2019, p. 56). This fluidity added complexity to the research process. Maintaining an informed and reflexive awareness was paramount to 'contextualise' data interpretation and the 'experience of the research process' (Heath, 2018, p. 73). A clear reflexive practitioner/researcher strategy was identified and woven through the research process:

- A reflective journal (additional to the notes taken during and after PO) as a form of 'praxis' (Freire, 1972).
- Academic or practitioner reflective formal supervision.
- External professional, practitioner, or peer researcher reflective informal supervision.

Within this space I embraced the fluidity and subjectivity of my positions, explored dilemmas created from my dynamic positionality and engaged motivational and interpersonal skills to clarify and maintain pedagogical dialogue. The open acknowledgement of multiple positionalities and related ethical considerations were important to address research integrity, especially during the PAR project, as boundaries between academic space and youth work practice with the peer-research group intentionally became less defined as relationships developed. As a result, they were never totally separate from the research (Guta, 2019).

Understanding of roles within positionality is crucial when recognising the power hierarchies that are inherent when working with young people and the organisational spaces they occupy, as asymmetries of power attached to roles (Groundwater-Smith, Dockett and Bottrell, 2015) cannot be completely eradicated. The pedagogical role of 'researcher as facilitator' interlaced with 'researcher as expert' enabled the facilitation of 'child initiated, shared decisions with adults' (Hart, 1979, p. 8) and supported learning through 'cognitive instruments to capture and apply meaning' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013, p. 241). Engagement in group reflexivity and exploring positional power encouraged the peer-research group to focus on social justice and respect by challenging and negotiating dominant and aspirational power dynamics (Cahill, 2007). The values and norms attributed to the group of young women as organisational members began to be challenged and questioned as the identity of the research group emerged. Dialogue began to explore perceived values of research, individual life skills and experiences alongside other group affiliations, which questioned the existing group relationship. As both PAR and Youth Work have a commitment to working collectively from a social justice premise (Groot and Abma,

2019), my role gradually morphed into that of a facilitator as I assisted the developmental process of group identity and collective belonging, working towards group affiliation (Leighton, 1972). By facilitating and guiding the group with 'care, respect and reflexivity' (Groundwater- Smith, Dockett and Bottrell, 2015, p. 90), we brought together our knowledge, pushing boundaries to invite new knowledge. In this way we analysed agency and power and explored ownership of the process and project. The role of facilitator drew upon my youth work practitioner skills in supporting the group through training, the research process and critical dialogue.

As a practitioner/researcher I have 'insider knowledge' (Batsleer, 2010) and experience of facilitating youth groups through and in developmental stages; 'storming, forming, norming, and performing' (Tuckerman, 1965). As certain roles have legislative and organisational guidelines attached to them, it can prove challenging to balance the rules of research in the context of group belonging. Adopting Harding's 1992 contemporary feminist 'standpoint epistemology' (Wigginton and Lafrance, 2019), I explicitly shared the power of my positionality and representations constructed from each standpoint through a commitment to honest and transparent dialogue. Using this process, together we addressed power through association, acknowledged agency within the group was situated and contingent with social power relations and recognised values and norms. This enabled us to reframe vulnerability and powerlessness as positions that do not imply the lack of capacity to challenge oppression (Archard, 1993).



## **Ethics**

### **Anonymity, confidentiality, and data protection**

I was granted institutional ethical approval by Durham University's Department of Sociology Ethics Committee. My research plan and schedule considered everyday ethical decisions and risk-averse strategies which were embedded throughout my research. The process and information required by the ethics committee was predominately concerned with the more traditional research ethical position, concerns associated with consent, research benefits, researcher integrity, 'the rights of participants to information, privacy, anonymity' (CSJCA, 2012, p. 6) and the beneficence principle of '*do no harm*' (Ragan and Amoroso, 2011, p. 89) rather than risks associated to relational issues. In response to these ethical considerations, I ensured all the data I collected from and about participants was anonymised by allocating numerical indicators to each participant. When in the process of gathering and generating data I always explained that participants had the right to withdraw from the data generation process as well as their right to withdraw their permission for their data to be used within the research and overarching thesis.

It was also important that I denoted my positionality in and out of the research for those participants linked to The GA. This allowed these research participants to fully understand the framing of our interaction when I was engaging with them for research purposes. As they initially knew me as a volunteer for the GA, therefore by visibly wearing the GA organisational uniform in my role as Guide Leader and my own clothes when in the role of researcher, participants were able to clearly understand my position. In addition to this I verbally stated when I was in the role of researcher at the beginning of each interview or work with peer-researchers. This

differentiation allowed participants to make an informed choice within the research process.

In addition, for those participants who were practicing youth workers, I ensured no data or material would be included in the thesis, such as the name of a youth work organisation, which could allow participants to be recognised.

As I was recording interviews with participants, I clarified at the beginning of the recording that consent information had been received, understood, and signed. Once the interview had been concluded I transcribed the information within two days and deleted the recording from the Dictaphone.

Hard copies of data, consent forms, participant details were stored in a locked cupboard in Durham University and electronic information stored in Durham Universities passworded cloud.

All participants received a copy of the research general and method specific information and consent forms which I discussed when we met face to face. This also ensured the topic of consent based in understanding was embedded in the research process.

'The data collected will be analysed and used within my PhD research paper. The information gathered may also be used for research training, reports, and teaching

purposes. Any data collected, in both written and digital formats, will be securely stored in either a locked cabinet or in Durham University cloud and password protected. This will be destroyed no later than 10 years after the conclusion of the project. For further information about the University's data protection and retention policy please see:

[www.dur.ac.uk/research.innovation/governance/ethics/considerations/people/consent/privacynotice/](http://www.dur.ac.uk/research.innovation/governance/ethics/considerations/people/consent/privacynotice/)

Institutional ethical procedure also required supporting documents outlining research information, methods and consent forms accompanying the research strategy, (Appendices: Institutional ethical forms. pp. 359-402). Jones (2004, p. 113) argues that adult authority should be exercised to recognise power and inequality using negotiation to illuminate rights as research responsibility lies with academic institutions. From this perspective, consent is sought within institutional and legal frameworks, which favour adult agency, and in doing so disempower participants who are legally classified as 'minors' based on age rather than the capacity to understand. However, ethnographic studies may present issues as the process is not linear or binary. Guidelines and systems cannot foresee every eventuality therefore a degree of dynamic risk assessment may be needed.

Organisational consent was initially gained from the Unit Leader followed by individual Guide consent followed. I held an information Q & A session which was attended by the young women and parents and carers. Those who expressed an interest in participating in the research received supporting documentation including

preference of anonymity and consent forms. Consent was confirmed through adult/guardian signature however I verbally discussed and verified consent with participants in each research session. I was guided by organisational policy and paperwork pertaining to photographic consent, which is completed by parents electronically when registering their daughter as a member. However, as a research group we decided that this too would be discussed, and decisions made at the time. Adopting agreed protocols ensured decisions were made directly by the young women and in context to their current motivations. This allowed judgements concerning 'privacy', involvement, and information to fluctuate (Spicker, 2007), continually revisiting involvement in this research as process which paralleled individuals' provocations.

Aligning this research with youth work values 'the opportunity to give voice, in their own voice and in their own names, to knowledge which is of such value to the researcher' (Batsleer, 2010, p. 187), the peer-research group decided they wanted to be individually named within the research. Reasons such as the personal recognition of achievement and pride, along with the involvement in the production of evidence to demonstrate impact, were provided. To allow for fluctuation in membership and involvement in the research, the Guides decided to use their collective group title (Hebburn First St. John's Guide Unit) on any research associated paperwork.

At GA and youth sector meetings both written and verbal consent were obtained. From people with whom impromptu conversations were initiated on a case-by-case basis, I also sought both written verbal consent. However, if this was not possible, I would strive to gain verbal consent and written consent after the interaction.

Data was collected using a Dictaphone and uploaded to the password-protected Durham University storage the same day as they were collected. The recording was transcribed and deleted from the device within two days of the interview. Physical data documents (including photographs) were responsibly stored in a locked cabinet.

### **Ethics as a relational, egalitarian social justice process**

Conducting ethical research requires more than progression through a legislatively framed linear process. Human care should be central in moral decision-making (Noddings, 1986) as identity is constructed through social realism. What is 'good' or ethical can only be ascertained through the nurturing of humans (Christians, 2008) and in mutually held conclusions within complex views of moral judgements (Christians, 2008). Ethical concern in research begins at inception. It is a dynamic process underpinning the rigour and responsibilities of the researchers as they continually question principles and values of morality in order to guide, strengthen and safeguard integrity within the research process (Head, 2009; CSJCA, 2012).

Ethical principles and practices should be concerned with more than the static position of doing no harm by avoiding risks and positively contributing (Batsleer, 2010) to the 'flourishing of humans and/or the whole ecosystem' (CSJCA, 2012). The diversity and intersectionality of participants can cause ethical issues which arise and are altered during the research process. Whilst the researcher has a moral responsibility to make sure all voices are heard; the practitioner follows professional ethical frameworks. At times they may contest each other.

Ultimately the aim is to protect against harm from participation in the research. Therefore, merely obtaining consent from participants does not in itself mitigate harm, especially the abuse of power relationships implicit in research and the knowledge produced. However, engagement in a dialogical, exploratory informal education process embedded in the research enabled our actions to be informed and, in turn, voluntary. We produced a dynamic, collective working agreement while maintaining ethical principles. Together we steered the research, which was meaningful in that it avoided disconnect as it was created by the participants, using their language, and aligned with their needs.

### **Data Analysis**

As my research consisted of different types of qualitative data, rather than work systematically through a linear analytical process, I conducted thematic analysis due to its inherent flexibility. The thematic 'analytic sensibility' (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p. 201) of reading, reflecting, and interpreting incorporated within an iterative and cyclical process produces key insights and meaning beyond the surface level. This allowed me to identify and classify themes across the varying types of qualitative data. The process is creative, yet the data is ordered and structured with meaning applied. By using interpretive skills of convergent and divergent thinking to process information and identify themes, I remained 'open to the ambiguity of emergent themes and patterns' (Gorman and Clayton, 2004, p. 205) uncovered from the dynamic process.

My thematic analysis began from the moment I engaged with the research (Gorman and Clayton, 2004, p. 106). Using my fieldwork/reflective journal and data from images, symbolic objects, and documents from my archival research I began to identify and note general themes, characteristics, and attributes, linked to my research question. I was conscious of my positionality and possible bias and aware that these 'noticings' (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p. 205) were based within my position, interest, and the research question. It is necessary to avoid imposing researchers' own ideas and attitudes on the analysis and deal with data in a sensitive and meaningful way during the interpretation (Mason, 2002). Notes were compiled with the awareness that how we categorise data can reflect our own backgrounds, and rather than view this as a bias or a challenge, I used it as a starting point of 'insider/practitioner' knowledge to enable further, more detailed, analytic development.

### **Transcribing**

I transcribed 29 interviews of the adults I interviewed and 19 interviews that the peer-researcher Guides had undertaken (See Chapter 5: PAR). As the age of participants spanned seven decades, and they originated from varied geographical locations, the language and words used were diverse. I wanted to acknowledge and include language complexities, so I transcribed the interviews *verbatim*, including colloquial terminology, phrases, and word fillers such as 'um' and 'like'. I also recorded how certain words were delivered and if they were whispered or in raised tones, using *in vivo* transcription. This allowed the inclusion of expressed experiences, thoughts, or feelings (Barbour, 2017, p. 502). Including implications is important (Roulson, 2017) in producing a more nuanced interpretation.

Once the data was collected, I conducted thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2013) both manually and using NVivo (qualitative data analysis software). The use of software assisted this process by forcing organisation of data and maintaining a focus on analysis. The transition from paper-based to electronic methods allowed easier access and management of the vast amount of data collected. It enhanced my ability to quickly reorganise data using different methods which encouraged systematic work, supported increased rigour and comprehensiveness, and provided an audit trail.

I used NVivo to sort and code data by assigning simultaneous themes, sub themes and cross references, as well as editing notes, storing, and retrieving data, displaying, and mapping data and identifying possible anomalies. As the process of transcribing was conducted both during and after field work, I continued to uncover knowledge created through the fluidity of the process, uncovering meaningful information located within patterns, difference, commonalities, and hidden data. This occurred as the amount of data gathered was large, contextual, and unique making the process of transcription complex and lengthy. The use of NVivo software assisted in framing and managing the fluidity of the analytical process whilst retaining the dynamic nature of the data. Representing data using different forms of visualisation, I uncovered new aspects of the analysis, became more familiar and immersed in the understanding of the data while simultaneously standing back and reflecting on meaning.



Data reduction as a part of an analytic, dialectic, and iterative process includes 'selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming the data' (Miles and Huberman, 2014, p. 10). Through this process I drew out and further developed inferred themes across the entire data set. By complete coding I identified relevant or of interest data to my research question before moving on to become more selective, creating derived codes based on semantic understanding of the data. Each small data set was allocated a descriptive title or code and brought back together. Through this process, themes and patterns emerged, shaping, giving order to, directing, and uncovering meaning to the study setting. In NVivo each theme and sub theme were categorised as a 'hierarchical node' and each participant or image as a 'case.' This allowed analysis incorporating demographic information and node data. The process of generating themes was dynamic in that some were clearly distinctive, some connected while others were found in frequency and patterns. This process included critically reflecting on my own interpretation to further explore subtleties enabling me to identify data located in the outlying patterns and themes by utilising a 'bottom up' and 'top down' data-driven method.

Data reduction conducted in a 'deliberate and self-consciously artful creation' (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p. 249) allows data synthesis. Connecting and reconnecting data to uncover meaning develops plausibility of arguments which can be illuminated using extracts to identify what is interesting about the data. However, as qualitative data analysis is never really complete, data are 'subject to analysis from a different theoretical perspective or focus on a different aspect' (Roulson, 2017, p. 307). Once I had a complete understanding of my data and findings through saturation from this process, I ended my data analysis.

## **Summary**

This chapter has provided an account of why I designed my research and selected specific methods to gain a rich and detailed understanding of the meaning and culture of the GA against the backdrop of egalitarian youth work values and principles including 'voice.' I considered crucial issues of positionality, subjectivity, and bias, including how my fluctuating insider–outsider status impacted the research process and how engagement in critically reflective practice supported the chosen qualitative methods. I explored the complex and dynamic process of egalitarian ethics when aiming to make a positive contribution to all participants and the wider environment.

Archival research provided the opportunity to discover the journey and history of the organisation and uncover a century of members' 'voices'. Participant observation provided direct engagement with the organisation and in-depth semi-structured interviews captured and elucidated the views and thoughts from people involved in the GA and youth work sector. Finally, the PAR project created space for young women to express and explore their opinions and have a direct impact on their organisation. Simultaneously by including their findings in my research, they also have a direct influence on the youth sector through the inclusion of contemporary voice. Chapter 5 discusses the details of the PAR methodology and findings.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Participatory Action Research (PAR)**

#### **Introduction**

My study incorporated a small Participatory Action Research (PAR) project co-produced with a group of six young women who were members of the case study, Hebburn First St. Johns' Guide Unit. The PAR project was a discrete venture, rooted in group identity and linked to the case study, which contributed data to the wider research.

In this chapter I explain my motivation behind choosing to include a PAR project in my research and explore the relational characteristics PAR shares with youth work and informal education. The chapter considers and acknowledges the strengths and limitations of conducting PAR, the challenges faced and the ethical considerations underpinning the democratic and egalitarian process. The second part of this chapter is concerned with the process undertaken by the peer-research group of the PAR project to design their research project, including data collection, generation of data, data analysis, dissemination, and action from the findings.

#### **PAR as a Methodology**

The methodological positions of PAR align with the informal education process of Youth Work, making it 'very different to conventional research' (Heron and Reason, 2001, p. 180), yet relevant to contextual, empowering learning and knowledge production. Ontologically it assumes a plurality of socially constructed knowledge or realities, reflecting the supposition that people are dynamic and reflexive – that they

can 'grow' and change. Located within a radical or 'extended' epistemology (Heron and Reason, 2001), knowledge is co-produced through collective experiences and understanding, using the deep knowledge people hold about their own lives. This process of co-producing new knowledge affords learning and empowering skills to those involved. Emergent from social justice movements (Tzibazi, 2013, p. 157) and rooted in Freire's concept of liberation through 'committed involvement' (Freire, 1972, p. 43), the democratic process of co-production in PAR enables positive action, as it creates an 'authentic' and 'recognisable' account (Banks and Brydon-Miller, 2019), that challenges and democratises the research process (Cahill, 2004).

PAR entails more than just using 'participatory' methods aiming to merely extract information. It is an orientation to the world that is concerned with power and control (Heron and Reason, 2001; Kindon, Pain and Kesby, 2007), underpinned by a set of values that seek to engage those directly affected by the issues being studied in that *they do* the research (Banks *et al.*, 2018; Kindon, Pain and Kesby, 2007; Bennett, Cieslik and Miles, 2003).

Being a collective praxis of critical pedagogy (Cahill, 2007) positioned in scientific inquiry, the inclusion of PAR within the context of my research was important. Being mutually congruent with youth work principles of participation, empowerment, action, and local value based in trusting relationships (Banks, 2010; Batsleer, 2010), it questions 'whose interest' is served through analysis (Batsleer, 2010, p. 179). These shared principles and values are recognised in the creation of new contextual knowledge and are transformative being rooted in everyday life (Dickens, 2017; Batsleer, 2010). The social and political learning gained from collective management

of the project democratises the process further, reinforcing it through applied experiences. Adams and McCulloch (2003) argue that research is a fundamental element within the cyclical informal education process of youth work, which requires collective involvement and constant 'checking things out' by those involved. As this project was set within a specific cultural environment the process uncovers and holds 'real' and contextual meaning. Pre-conceived ideas and understanding are not pre- imposed, allowing 'contextual structuredness of meaning and the dynamism inherent' (Bergold and Thomas, 2012) to create new knowledge.

The political intent to question 'truths' asserts a radical methodology that parallels feminist youth work. PAR is distinctive in that emphasis is placed on process, participation, questioning and power relations (Spence, 1990). Social constructs and constraints can be challenged by exploring influence on the lives of the young women involved and uncovering contextual mechanisms for change. Acknowledging the GA offer of 'a safe, welcoming girl-only space', the inclusion of a PAR project within this research allows exploration in line with characteristics of feminist practice and organisational values – a commitment to autonomy, openness, learning through the process of 'doing', negotiation and group work whilst connecting with other women (Batsleer, 1996; Girlguiding, 2021a). PAR recognises the ideology of girls' and young women's youth work, centrally placing gender and power in the construction and framing of public and private contextual knowledge. Foucault (Foucault, Morris, and Patton, 1979) and Bourdieu (Swartz, 1997) suggest power exists when it is exercised, where actors and institutions operate a cultural field bound by power relations in the form of interchangeable symbolic and cultural capital. The detailed social capital of lived knowledge held by the young women

peer-researchers as members of the GA, allowed this research to study power relations as they were experienced therefore recognising that young women are neither apart from nor immune to outside influences from the world they inhabit. Taking account of these power relations, PAR acts as a catalyst for social change by conducting research 'with' rather than 'on' people (Heron and Reason, 2001), whilst simultaneously shaping the participatory and emancipatory process. Although they are not power-free, the principles of equality and democracy are central to the process (Banks *et al.*, 2018), challenging power through collaboration (Bergold and Thomas, 2012; Cook, 2009) wherein those involved democratically learn together. The knowledge produced is practical, based on local realities, framed within social context, and provides a 'grass roots' voice.

Action research grounded in a participatory world view holds:

'a respect for people and for the knowledge and experience they bring to the research process, a belief in the ability of democratic processes to achieve positive social change and a commitment to social action' (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood and Maguire, 2003, p. 15)

### **Rationale, motivation, and 'voice'**

The use of PAR as the sole approach for my research was not feasible due to time and resource limitations. Geography, legal education requirements and travel restrictions would have inhibited the dynamic process of group formation, making it difficult for participants to regularly commit to involvement in a large-scale research

project. Research participants had already committed some of their free time to volunteering with the GA, therefore expecting commitment to a lengthy, time-consuming project was not practical, realistic, or ethical.

As 'childhood' and 'youth' are social constructs that influence how we treat young people, I embedded my engagement with the peer-researchers within the fundamental values of emancipatory and democratic youth work (Taylor, 2009) by which 'young people play the fullest part in making decisions about anything affecting them.'

Contemporary youth policy, such as 'youth voice' (British Youth Council, BYC, 2021) acknowledges young people have their own agency, a view that is legislatively embodied in The United Nations Convention Rights of the Child (The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1990) Articles 5, 12 and 13. This recognises that young people have agency and capacity to make their own choices and the ability to express their own views and opinions. The current British Youth Council (BYC) and the Department for Culture, Media, and Sport's (DCMS) 'Youth Voice' contract supports young people in England to influence public decision-making at local and national levels (BYC, 2021). Additionally, The Participation Charter (2006) advocates participation as a right, noting young people are the best authority on their lives and able to exercise power within their relationships with services. Feminist research argues that autonomy is linked to contexts and conditions where social actions are embedded in the practices of community. Girlguiding aims to reflect this in its commitment to recognising, valuing, and acting upon the voice of its members

at the local level, endeavouring to become a 'truly girl-centred organisation' where girls are 'truly in the lead' (Girlguiding, 2021b).

Cahill (2004, p. 298) suggests participatory processes are already in use by youth workers and when rooted in PAR, they further enable young people to be active in the creation and application of knowledge and importantly, to resist forms of knowledge others may create about them. In this context, learning becomes a form of political action rooted in social change, and in historical and social contexts. Here communities are invested in their own well-being as those involved are able to exercise power within the relationships and the services in which they participate.

The holistic nature of PAR embraces and embeds the emotions and feelings of young people (Moon, 2004) in the research through the use of collective dialogue, discussion, and reflection. Valuing benevolence, justice, and the re-distribution of agency to support rights and strive toward social change, the inclusion of a distinct PAR project enabled the young women to influence and promote service changes informed by service users (Chabot *et al.*, 2012). As the research was conducted by 'insiders', it was more rigorous and produced 'better' data, as insiders 'simply know things outsiders don't' (Cahill, 2007, p. 308). These authorities enable access to important data through shared characteristics, namely age, common language, shared experiences, knowing 'friends', local allegiances, and the ability to broach 'taboo' topics (Kirby and Bryson, 1999). By refusing neutrality or participation through adult initiation, the strategic valuing of young people's research skills positions them outside a deficit model. The process of negotiation within an ethical and emancipatory praxis enables the participation or 'voice' of young women to be heard



at service provision and youth sector levels as well as located in the wider research supporting to develop new thinking within youth work. The inclusion of a peer project in my research supports my existing professional values and principles, acknowledging meaningful participation in that it should not only be considered for legislative, organisation or funding criteria reasons but because its 'the right thing to do' (Nind, 2011).

### **Peer research**

The peer-research group chose and conducted peer research as the method to collect data for their study. Unlike traditional research, which is often based on propositional knowledge based upon universal causal principles or what exists, peer research recognises and begins with the lived experiences of those involved. It places value on the agency of the researchers and peers, their knowledge of the issues studied and the ability of their research to bring about positive change in their own communities. It has the advantage of access to existing networks, where young people are familiar and can become the trusted 'face' of the research (MacFarlane and Roche, 2019, p. 62). Familiarity stimulates collective responsibility and accessibility, enabling young people to immerse themselves in the research process (Nairn and Smith, 2003). The knowledge created is enhanced by the richness and nuance of the collective peer-led inquiry. It does not need translation as it is formed within the purview of collective meaning. Engagement with the peer research process allowed the peer-researchers and peers to tangibly recognise the value of their participation and the different forms of knowledge they produced (Heron and Reason, 2001), using them to affect change at their point of contact with the GA.

### **Peer research group**

The six young women who made up the peer researcher group from 1<sup>st</sup> Hebburn (St. John's) Guide Unit were aged between 13 – 14 years. They were all located at the upper end of the Guide age range of 10 – 14 years old and were the oldest girls in the Unit with over two thirds being 12 years or under.

Four of the peer researchers lived in Hebburn with two living in similar towns within a six-mile radius. All peer researchers were white British with five identifying as straight and one gay. Three attended the local comprehensive school, two attended a local Roman Catholic academy and one attended a private 'Christian character' college, (partly funded by and managed by business donors) in another town. Whilst some of the peer research group attended the same educational institution, as they were in different academic years they did not socialise in school. All of the group had been involved in the GA as a Rainbow or Brownie or both before attending Guides and all, but one, engaged in leisure activities external to the GA, such as swimming, music, and a youth council.

At the beginning of the research, and the start of my participant observation role, these particular young women were a distinct and noticeable peer group within the Guide Unit in that they were at least two years older than the majority of the girls and were visibly demarcating themselves through a collective presentation of lack of enthusiasm, 'eye-rolling' and monosyllabic retorts to questions. From a youth work practitioner and GA volunteer perspective, I could see this group were not fully engaged with the activities provided and were communicating this through their behaviour. Having listened to their conversations I identified activities linked to their interests of the time: education, specifically GCSE exams, relationships, and the

need to have their own space to talk. I agreed with the Guide Leaders, that after the start of the session I would take this group off to another space, provide an activity linked to their interests and enable them to 'be'. It was in this space and from group discussions it became apparent that the research opportunity for a PAR project would meet their current, contextual needs as well as my research needs.

Whilst the prospect of conducting peer-research as presented to the whole Guide Unit during an information session held within a Case Study Unit meeting, it was this group of six young women who expressed an interest, possibly as it met their needs at the time and our relationship was establishing but in addition, the age gap and existing demarcation of their group may have been barriers to other Guides wishing to participate. However, reflecting on this possibility, I felt the Leaders, peer researchers and Guides all recognised benefits from this group becoming the peer researchers of the PAR project. The peer researchers had their group, space, and challenging activities which they had linked to their wider aspirations whilst the Leaders and rest of the Guides in the Unit were able to be in a space free from a foreboding presence of unwilling participants to and enjoy their time. It was felt the PAR project would also be transitional in that it would provide opportunity for the two groups to reconnect.

### **Limitations and Challenges of PAR**

The practice of PAR requires a unique understanding to successfully facilitate the processes. It is important that collective planning and navigating knowledge production are rooted within egalitarian principles to mitigate harm to participants, therefore collaborative engagement should be in the form of a fluid and reactive

process. This process is both time consuming and resource intensive as it requires a high degree of personal investment to establish, develop and maintain meaningful relationships and dialogue through small group work. Elevated levels of emotional intelligence and an in-depth understanding of the varied roles occupied is needed; to know which, when and how to employ them alongside reflective practice and learning. In this context, Mackenzie *et al.* (2012) suggests that the 'researcher' plays the role of the facilitator of the learning process, particularly when eliciting and documenting values and knowledge held by participants. This 'diminishes the extent to which the contribution to research activity is able to meet traditional requirements of academic scholarship,' (p. 20). However, engagement in meaningful and full participation at all stages counteracts this claim, supporting validity by championing community knowledge. Differences in understanding what constitutes research 'successes can lead to tensions linked to power and relative power. Collectively we considered the possibility that our findings may uncover unfavourable or negative information or do not warrant action (Stuttaford and Coe, 2008). By exploring and eliminating tensions through collective understanding, we agreed to establish research goals within the process and with relevance to the PAR project.

The challenge of engaging in 'Faux PAR,' the creation of a process with the illusion of immersed participation in which there is little real power sharing or ownership of the knowledge created, can lead to misrepresentation and a paradox in power redistribution. Hart's (1979) ladder of participation which is adopted by many youth organisations is often used as a typology or measurement tool. When applied in the form of a linear progression through incremental stages can withhold power and reaffirm dominant narratives. Young people are regularly asked to include their

'voice' or be 'consulted' within a social context that often blames them for its problems (Cahill, 2004). A deficit theoretical youth work model when applied often curtails agency as the adults involved remove it (Shamrova and Cummings, 2017) in response to the target-driven need to 'fix' young people.

PAR challenges these dominant contexts recognising young people as experts in their field (Bagnoli and Clark, 2010), capable architects of research (Cahill, 2004, p. 298) able to construct research questions, map research designs and embrace fluidity and uncertainty (Kindon, Pain and Kesby, 2007). It acknowledges young people as agents proficient in recognising and implementing change. As this PAR project included peer research with young women exploring aspects of each other's lives, ethical standards, and peer-researcher abilities (Guta, 2019) were considered. Being relationally close to each other the collaborative agreed ethics rebuked having a set of 'ground rules', creating a dynamic and ethical value base to support and guide fluidity of thinking. This was encapsulated within a clear statement of confidentiality, legislative safeguarding and child protection requirements derived from GA organisational policies and was drawn upon when dilemmas arose.

### **Validity**

PAR has a strong political dimension with no accepted simple definition or means to synthesise data across studies. The level of objectivity, rigour and validity can be disputed in its ability to create 'subjugated as 'generalisable' knowledge' (Grant, Nelson and Mitchell, 2008) as opposed to accepting and crediting accounts of the experiences of people and the facilitation of action as credible scientific knowledge.

The validity and rigour of PAR are embedded within its democratic, participative, and reflective process. Reality is located within the dynamic notions that shape its practice (Reason and Bradbury, 2008). As data and information are produced in and of the process they are continually gathered and reflected upon. The knowledge created is accumulated along with the participants' ability to take effective action. The International Collaboration for Participatory Health Research (2021) has developed a set of criteria to enhance validity as follows:

Participatory Validity: The extent to which stakeholders actively participate in the research process.

Intersubjective Validity: The extent to which the research is viewed as being credible and meaningful by the stakeholders from a variety of perspectives.

Contextual Validity: The extent to which the research relates to the local situation.

Catalytic Validity: The extent to which the research is useful in presenting new possibilities for social action.

Ethical Validity: The extent to which the research outcomes and the changes exerted on people by the research are sound and just.

Empathic Validity: The extent to which the research has increased empathy among the participants.

(ICFPHR, 2021)

The process of PAR is not linear, it is not a pre-planned, incrementally staged research process, as the decisions and actions made during the process also shape

it. This can make the process seem unclear and pitted with frequent messy areas in which understandings are challenged and changed, being 'the interface between the known and the nearly known, between knowledge in use and tacit knowledge as yet to be useful' (Cook, 2009, p. 277).

Cook (2009, p. 288) argues that it is within 'mess' that rigour can be built in to the method through systematic inclusion within contested interpretations. Conversations within the communicative spaces from those experiencing the phenomena validate knowledge by extending, altering, and reaffirming through reflective cycles. Engagement in critical reflection is a 'precursor' of PAR (Jones, 2004, p. 113), as validation is increased through empathic dialogue and active listening, as it probes and checks understanding of language and meaning (Cahill, 2004). Integral to knowledge creation, 'messy' conversation is cyclically reframed and reconstructed during 'reflection in and about action'. This enables change and diverse forms of knowledge to emerge as they are adapted and altered throughout the reflective process. (Schön, 2016). This 'catalytic validity' (Lather, 1986; Nind, 2011) is located in the engagement with data and of the reorientation of the many forms knowledge can take.

As the reflective learning process is iterative and rooted in contextual dialogue and negotiation (Kindon, Pain and Kesby, 2007; Cahill, 2007), the interpretation of values and beliefs as understood by the participants, recognises new understandings emergent from the process. By seriously considering the views of the young women in this research and validating them through messy dialogue and communicative

space, the knowledge created was open to change and informed through the development of flexible methodologies (Johnson, 1998).

### **Ethics and PAR**

Despite PAR being characterised by the egalitarian ideals of justice, equality, inclusion and participation, as institutional ethical approval in a preconceived process was needed before embarking on any work with young people, full participation (Nairn and Smith, 2003) and the rights of young women were ironically compromised. As this was a funding and institutional requirement, I submitted the ethics forms (to Durham University's Department of Sociology's Ethics Committee) on behalf of the prospective peer-research group. The groups were nonchalant about their exclusion, showing negligible interest and stressing that this was not something on which they wished to spend time. It was made clear to me that 'form filling' was not 'for them', demonstrating their ability to exercise power and make decisions about what they did and did not wish to do (Kay *et al.*, 2009).

Whilst not a prerequisite of institutional ethics, I took the professional and ethical step to ensure I had a current and enhanced 'Disclosure and Barring Service' certificate that is required to work alone with young people and vulnerable adults. Additionally, I became trained and practiced in the GA organisational child protection, safeguarding and risk assessment policy and procedures to support the work.



Aware of the boundaries between my roles, (academic, youth worker and adult responsible for 'duty of care') being redefined within process, clarity was required to ensure the integrity of the research, relationships, and action (Banks and Brydon-Miller, 2019). Roles, power, and group identity were openly and honestly addressed within our communicative space and considered within our agreed values. As young people may perceive power differently to adults, the desire to have power and feeling the need to act because you have it can produce both positive and negative consequences. As harm means different things to different people, and young people often take a lead from adult cues (Kay *et al.*, 2009), it was important to have an informed and shared understanding of consent as an explicit and negotiable act with the option to be withdrawn.

The dynamic process of PAR alongside new knowledge production is empowering but challenging in that it may contradict social rules and norms which have been constant in the lives of the young people. As an experienced youth worker qualified in counselling skills, I am professionally adept at supporting individuals and groups within processes that can potentially spark challenging experiences. When conducting collaborative research with young people, ethical dilemmas or questions arise from imbalances in power relations linked to practical and political challenges. By adopting a 'pedological research' process, I aimed to mitigate these by focussing on establishing partnerships within the research, paying attention to power distribution and control. I was aware that nurturing an existing relationship with the young women within the framework of the GA required active repositioning, challenging of power and development of our relationship. This presented challenges as peer-researchers experienced moments of inclusion and exclusion as our

relationship and roles developed and 'norms' and trust were reviewed and rebuilt throughout the process (Banks *et al.*, 2013). I used creative research methods suitable for PAR in the informal education process of youth work to explore repositioning of power and practice in our relationships before embarking on research design.

In the context of repositioning the roles of the young women, we discussed the possibility of offering payment as an acknowledgement of peer-researcher labour and time as opposed to offering enticement 'carrots' (Batsleer, 2010, p. 186) for involvement. The peer-researchers discussed monetary reimbursement based upon hours contributed but decided against it as the ability to participate could be affected by external forces, (family, school). However, they wished to validate their contributions, not through altruistic participation, but recognised through the GA badge programme, a university sociology department t shirt, and a set price shopping voucher for each participant to be received on project completion.

As the findings of the peer research project would be used to directly inform the unit and comprise an integral element of my thesis, ownership of findings and dissemination of data and publications were discussed. The dissemination of findings and recommendations could involve multiple organisations and channels, and it could be considered in two separate ways – stand-alone peer research and as an element of my study. We decided that due to time constraints and 'best interests served', the peer research team would be responsible for direct dissemination of information to their Regional Division and Guide Unit, and any other research dissemination would be my responsibility with a clear distinction made, in the spirit of

ethical reflexivity (Bowden and Ennew, 1997) and ownership, whenever I communicated the views, interpretations and experiences from their research.

### **Beginnings: Communicative Space and Identity**

I initially introduced the prospect of conducting peer-research to the Guides during an information session held within a Case Study Unit meeting. Six young women expressed an interest, so we agreed I would present my research to them (Jones, 2014) and be guided by the subsequent discussion. Emergent discussion topics concerned the current position of the young women within the Unit at that time. Located at the upper end of the age range for Guides (10 – 14 years), they discussed having limited time to remain members, as there was no Ranger Unit to progress to (unless they went to another unit in another town). They reminisced about their time spent together in the organisation and spoke of the impending loss of a space where they could connect with each other and share experiences and, in the case of one Guide, this loss signified the end of her only leisure time activity of the week. The weekly communicative space began to produce characteristics of the research design, linked to past and current experiences in the GA. Ultimately, they concluded that they felt separate from the rest of the Guides as a group. They enjoyed going to Guide meetings, as it entailed time being spent with friends. However, the activities themselves were repetitive, uninteresting, and described as 'boring...childish...repetitive. Every year I do the same thing at the same time,' (GG – 18). They also felt the two-year age gap between themselves, and the rest of the Guides exacerbated their position, as they... 'had nothing in common with them,' (GG8 and peer researcher, age14). The discussions along with their experiences as Guides would initially inform their study.

These feelings existed alongside, yet in opposition to, the exciting prospect of engaging in research. Participation in the research project was framed as a positive step towards accessing higher education. As two Guides commented:

GG8 and peer researcher (age 14) - 'It will make you stand out on your C.V'

GG18 peer researcher and (age 13) - 'Yeah, be good for your C.V coz no one else will have it'.

During unit meeting activities, planned to facilitate negotiation, we entered an exploratory inquiry phase, allowing our insights and ideas and ultimately our design to emerge (Burns, 2007; 2014). The time and space given to this stage of the research design was important to organically shape future thinking and decisions which begins the moment we started 'making' (Banks *et al.*, 2018, p. 116). The research design benefitted from a collaborative approach, as it incorporated the interests and enjoyment of the young women, enabled identification of research beneficiaries, and acknowledged 'whose agendas are being served' (Batsleer, 2010, p. 183). By asset mapping our capabilities, we identified cultural knowledge, practical and technological skills, and useful networks. This further reinforced inclusivity, as peer-researchers felt valued for who they were as individuals and group members. Involvement in research 'requires young people's participation in ethical and political reasoning' (Batsleer, 2010, p. 184), therefore it was important for us to realistically decide on the extent of participation the young women could and wanted to commit,

considering, and mitigating for possible external impact such as changes in personal circumstances and priorities.

The peer-researchers were keen to access new knowledge and skills, which they identified as being needed to conduct 'proper research' and requested training to equip themselves for their task. This did not comprise an acknowledgement of a lack of status but an identified barrier and learning opportunity, in that the acquisition of the 'correct tools to complete the task' were needed to do a good job (Kellet *et al.*, 2004).

As a group, we allocated an extensive amount of time to the research project. Using the time Unit meetings were held we had a year to complete the research during. As this time was already allocated in each family's weekly plan, no additional arrangements were needed as the space and time was already in place. The research project met the immediate needs of the peer-researchers in that they would be embarking on something new during the Guide meetings. With this realisation, research group identity began to emerge, as thoughts and ideas were negotiated, and actions agreed upon:

- The 'space' used to work on the research would be separate from the space used by the rest of the Guides.
- The peer-researchers were clearly identifiable as a group (DU Sociology t shirts).

- The research project would mark a final year transition to the next stage of guiding – on completion they would form a new Rangers section.
- Work connected to the research project would be used as evidence for GA programme awards and badges.
- Their research would add to the experience of future Guides.

The negotiation within 'communicative spaces' (Kemmis, 2006) developed our shared experience, understanding and meaning. Additionally, as young people are not separate from the space they inhabit (Jones, 2004), it was not only the research with which they engaged but also the exploration of issues emerging from the experience, producing collective knowledge from 'pockets of cultural data' (Fals-Borda and Rahman, 1991, p. 146). Having access to a separate physical space (*newly built mezzanine*) and a distinctive visual group identity (*t-shirts – arguably an alternative uniform*), the peer-researchers as a collective emerged alongside research ideas from within a space where they were able to exist in and 'be' in 'a safe space for honest dialogue to occur' (Cahill, 2007, p. 302).



Image 9: Durham University Sociology t-shirts: Visually demarcating and creating Peer Researcher group identity.

### **Research Design and Process**

'Voice' is one of four themes identified in Girlguiding's five-year plan, through which the organisation pledges to 'listen to girls and promote their voice'. It is underpinned by the following three aims:

- Girls will be empowered to take action in their community,
- Girls' voices will be heard in guiding and beyond.
- We will be experts in what girls think.

*(Being Our Best 'Voice', 2020)*

The peer research group designed and conducted their research under this theme with the aim of sharing the knowledge they created with the organisation to inform services.

**Step 1: Starting with training.**

The training day was planned to allow us to share existing knowledge (Shamrova and Cummings, 2017) and uncover information and skills that peer-researchers had identified as needed to conduct research. We explored methods, tools, and skills, framed our research, and further clarified our roles and interests within it. (Appendix: p. 404). The training day aimed to explore 'qualitative research skills' and agree a research time scale. peer-researchers also debated payment for participants in their research project. Acknowledging that a payment or gift for participating is a start to equalise an uneven power of relationships that exist within the research, they decided due to the number of Guides participating, it would not be viable as it would be too expensive. They agreed to offer refreshments during the interviews which they would purchase using some of the camp budget.

**Step 2: Decision-making: Exploring, practicing, reflecting to bring our own data together**

A variety of research methods were experienced and considered by the peer-research group, which served to complete the following activities:

1. further build relationships and consolidate group identify
2. understand through 'doing'
3. deciding which method(s) would best meet the research needs and inform our design.

By recapping and reflecting on the methods collectively experienced (Bagnoli and Clark, 2010), the peer-researchers agreed that creative research methods provided



the most informative responses and were fun to engage in. They also considered the time available, and cost attributed to the resources required for creative methods, ultimately deciding to use using a semi-structured, thematic interview approach. Their decision was rooted in their personal positionality outside of the group and in their experiences of research; the drive to add to their CVs and engage in a research method that 'looks like you are doing research' and 'that everyone would know what it is and so that people will know we are doing it,' (peer-research group). Placing value on the symbolism attached to research regalia, the clip board, list of questions and Dictaphone, they felt would denote and reinforce a position of power and importance within the research. I facilitated further conversation about the strengths of creative methods mirroring their experiences back to them, however they concluded the following:

GG6 and peer researcher (age 13) – 'I would feel stupid saying we are going to do research and then doing that.'

GG15 and peer researcher (age 14) - 'When you say 'research' no one thinks of that, and you want something they know to make them feel at ease.'

Positionality was important to them as it was linked to establishing power:

GG 8 and peer researcher (age 14) - 'I want a Dictaphone and questions so I look like I am doing research and they will take me seriously. '

GG 10 and peer researcher (age 14) – 'We know the others are better and you are going to talk about 'power' but that's the group decision.'

The choice to use a traditionally recognised method made them feel secure (Abma, 2019), allowed the group to stay connected to their common view about scientific research and reinforced their need to demonstrate power and symbolise the Guide attribute of 'taking the lead'. From my position as practitioner/researcher, I wanted to adopt a more egalitarian approach based within youth work values, and on reflection, I 'held' the peer-research group static at this point in the process by requesting we revisit 'power' within the scope of research and relationships. The young women remained steadfast while explaining that overt power was acceptable, as peers would feel less at ease when expressing themselves creatively in front of them. Furthermore, an interview was more universally recognised, as it would command respect and, therefore, hold value for their peers through engagement. Feminist research argues that theory and methods should not be disconnected, placing importance on methods fitting the needs of the research and the young people involved (Jones, 2004, p. 120). Maintaining this connection sustains critical reflective practice and practical applications. Reflecting on my own power and agenda within the group, I ceased from labouring the point and we moved forward as a group to design our research.

### **Step 3: Strategy, data collection and data generation**

When experiencing and exploring different research methods the group collaboratively concept mapped their research design. The overall topic remained connected with the past, present, and future positions of the peer-researchers and the GA, as they decided to explore what it means to be a GA member and how involvement and experience could be improved. Based on thematic categories

emergent from collaborative learning, the peer-research group created questions and prompts that they would write down for reference and use to initiate conversation with peers, encouraging them to talk about their own feelings, opinions, experiences, and ideas. As the research questions were designed by peers, they were constructed and delivered using a shared language and understanding that suited the age and cognitive processing of the interviewees (Jardine and James, 2012).

Compiling an interview guide, they wrote their own confidentiality and consent statement, which was written at the top of the sheet and read aloud verbatim to each interviewee. This statement was the only element of the interview that the peer-research group decided would be 'word for word', so all Guides received the same information. Written consent was gained prior to Camp, and again at the start of the interviews when verbal consent was obtained and recorded on Dictaphones.

Due to the transient membership of the Guide Unit, a decision was taken that any written acknowledgment of involvement in the research would be under the Unit name rather than the names of individual members, as gaining individual preferences could take up a lot of time. Data would be anonymised, and individuals would not be named on any reports, presentations or recommendations that might result from the research. The peer-research group also decided that they would conduct the research within the framework of the existing consent and confidentiality GA policy and guidelines, as these were already known to the participants and incorporated individual preferences linked to publicity and photography. As this

information is stored in the GA database, it was agreed that this would be my domain.

The research took place at the annual Camp, as it afforded more time and space to complete the research as opposed to a Unit meeting and also, they were able to manage the time and space themselves. In addition, the peer-researchers identified that camp time and space were familiar and welcomed as a 'fun' space.



Image 10: Interviews at Camp

Interviews were conducted during free time on the first evening at camp and were planned to span across the weekend. However, as they were conducted well into the early hours of the morning, all interviews were completed in the first night along with a short debrief. The following morning, the peer-research group held an in-depth reflection on the experience, deciding that if future unprompted conversations occurred in relation to the research during the weekend, then they would ask if they could include them in their data.

#### **Step 4: Critical thematic analysis and quality checks**

Prior to camp it was agreed that due to time, access to the appropriate technology, General Data Protection Regulation (2018) and confidentiality, I would transcribe and anonymise the interviews. I would format transcriptions as complete individual interviews and as an amalgamation of answers to each question. This task would be completed before the first Unit meeting held on return from Camp to maintain momentum and initiate data analysis by the peer-researchers.

Data analysis was iterative and embedded in the process. One specific peer-researcher was eager to share her pre-existing knowledge of conducting thematic analysis with the rest of the group. Using coloured highlighters, she practically demonstrated how to identify thematic groups and then conducted a practice exercise with the group. It was agreed this approach would be used to analyse the collected data.

Analysis consisted of two parallel and sometimes interwoven aspects – thematic coding and reflection upon and from the coding process. By studying their personal experiences and peers' experiences, the peer-researchers engaged in the processes of social theorising, looking at similarities, difference and patterns while seeking collective clarity to ensure understanding. The process was informative and therapeutic, as they sought new information from the written word that they had not heard at the time of the interviews. Credibility and meaning were established through group conversation, thereby making sense of the knowledge they had created through a fluid, reflexive, enabling and empowering process (Nind, 2011).

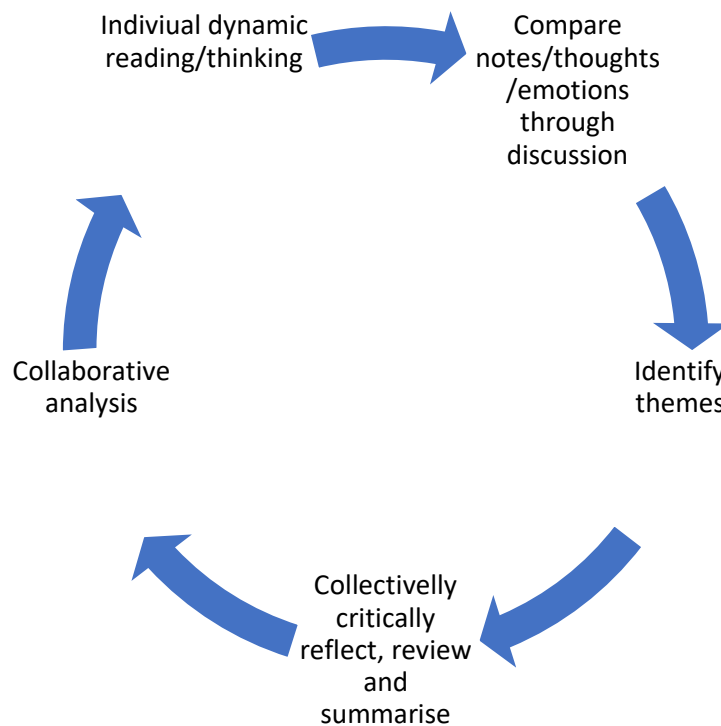


Image 11: Group reflective and analysis process

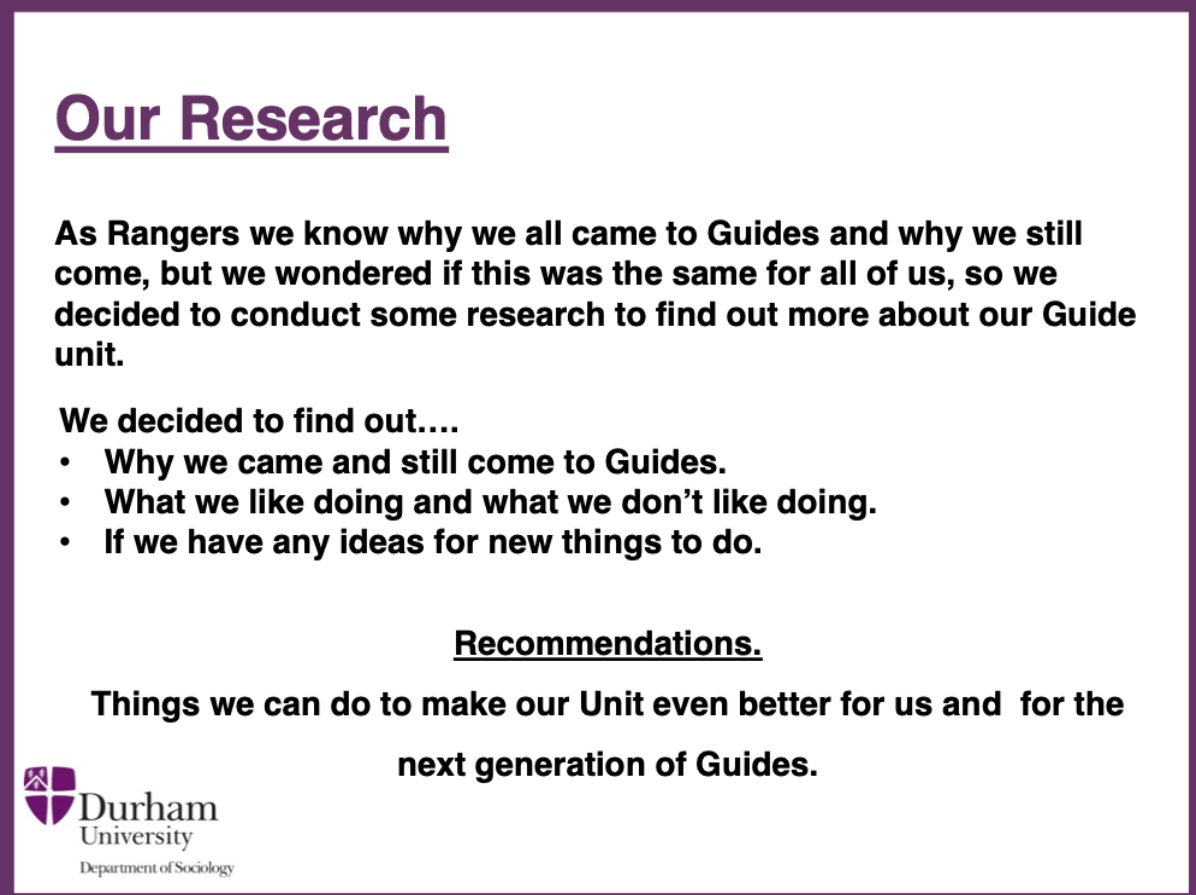
At each stage of their reflective process, my role was that of a ‘critical friend’, reflecting thoughts and discussions back into the group and presenting alternative perspectives to deepen conversations and facilitate the production of rich data. Validity was established in this process and our roles were reinforced within it, thereby advancing knowledge, and understanding. Rigour was introduced through this systematic and transparent approach, and the knowledge produced was defensible and added clarity to the interpretation on which credible and plausible findings were founded (Spencer, 2003).

### **Step 5: Findings, dissemination, action, and impact**

The findings from the PAR project were drawn from the data analysis conducted by the peer researchers. The end of the research saw the peer researchers transfer from being Guides to Rangers and as part of this transition the peer researchers

analysed their findings, collated them and created a presentation to inform their peers and Unit Leaders. (PowerPoint slides: pp.190 – 198).

The PAR research questions focused on why this group of girls and young women came to Guides, what they liked and disliked, what qualities they felt made a ‘good’ leader and how they could ensure their Unit improved for those involved.



**Our Research**

**As Rangers we know why we all came to Guides and why we still come, but we wondered if this was the same for all of us, so we decided to conduct some research to find out more about our Guide unit.**

**We decided to find out....**

- **Why we came and still come to Guides.**
- **What we like doing and what we don't like doing.**
- **If we have any ideas for new things to do.**

**Recommendations.**

**Things we can do to make our Unit even better for us and for the next generation of Guides.**


 **Durham**  
University  
Department of Sociology

Image 12: Peer Researcher Presentation Slide – Overview

To begin with the peer researchers used the PAR findings to identify what being a Guide meant to those in St. John's Hebburn Unit. The findings were consolidated into a statement by the peer researchers,

‘A Guide is someone who goes to a place, and they meet new friends and communicate with each other and do badge work. Communication, trust, and honesty are Guide skills.’ (Hebburn 1<sup>st</sup> St. John’s Guide Unit. 2019)

After reaching an agreement with the whole Guide Unit as being a true representation, the peer researchers then further analysed the statement and found ‘communication’ featured very strongly in their collective understanding and important on both an individual and group level.

The research explored the reasons why the current Guides initially joined the Unit with the peer researchers finding and identifying four areas; a natural progression from a Brownie, to socialise, on a parents request or because a friend attended.



## Research Findings

### Main reasons why we joined...

My parents/carers thought it would be good for me to come

*I wanted to come because my friend came*

*I was at Brownies first then I decided to move up. I could see the things they did*

*I kind of had nothing to do and I was kind of bored and I thought it would be fun and I thought I would enjoy it and we thought I would make new friends and I have.*

Image 13: Peer Researcher Presentation Slide – Research Findings

The PAR findings also identified the motivations behind becoming a member, attending Unit meetings, and additional events. The predominant finding was that motivation was concerned with the opportunities presented to socialise.

## Why we keep coming back

“You socialise with people, and it gets me out of the house”

“I enjoy it and we do things that I find interesting”

“It is fun and I like it and I have got loads of friends here that I don’t get to see at school”

“I think Yes! every week, I enjoy coming as I said its just seeing different people and the activities are fun”



Image 14: Peer Researcher Presentation Slide – Findings

Underpinning the value of opportunities to socialise lay two sub-themes. Firstly, Guides engaged in learning during Unit meetings and events. The activities and their associated responsibilities provided learning opportunities which Guides felt were both interesting and useful to their lives. Secondly, organisational membership enabled the formation and support of strong friendships, outside of school and of their other leisure activities.

The peer researchers discovered that whilst socialisation was the main reason for attending, the preferred way to socialise was whilst doing an activity. No specific activities were identified as to which were the best in supporting socialisation and the

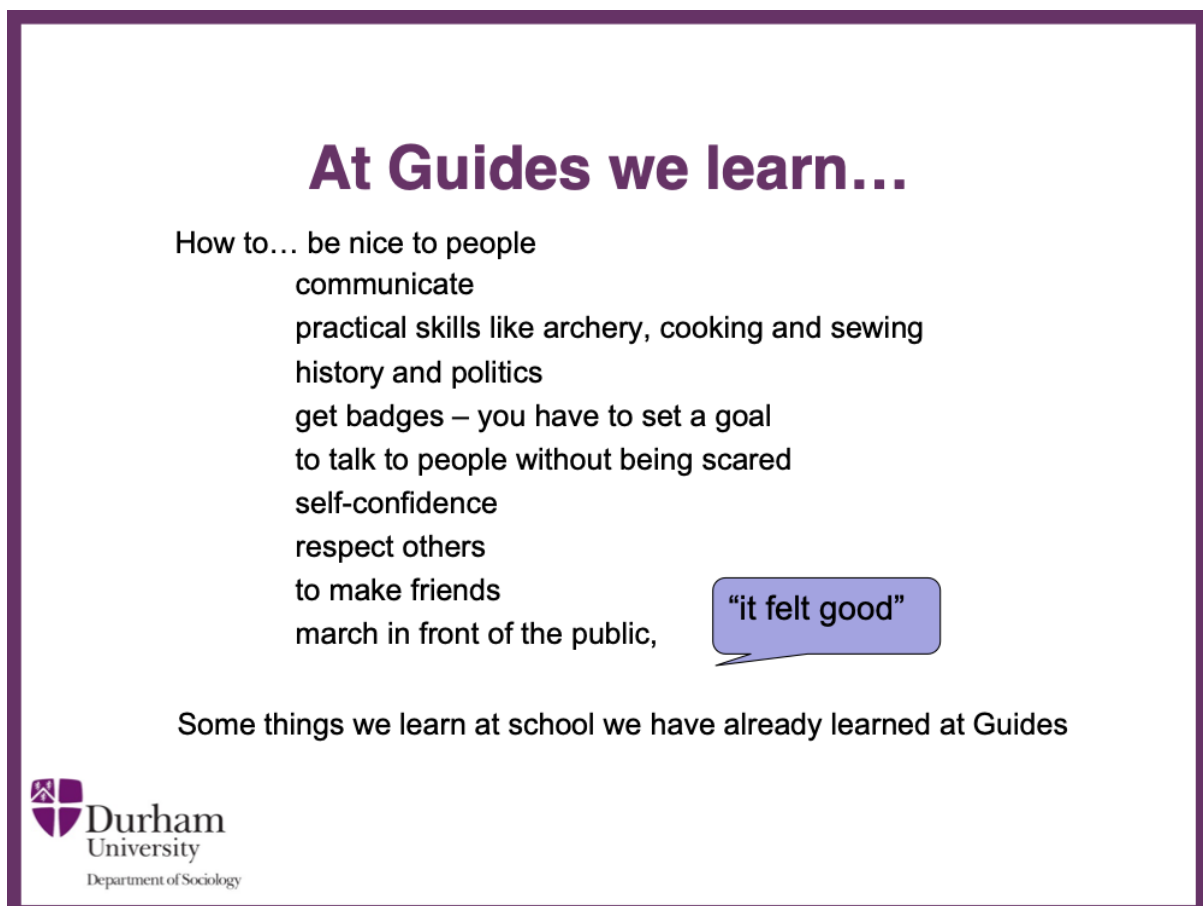
findings concluded that the type of activity was also not important as long as the activity was well planned. Guides preferred to plan activities at the start of a term and were therefore clear about what they would be doing each week. In addition, prior knowledge of the activity did not affect attendance, if an individual liked or disliked a particular activity was of lesser importance than having the space to socialise.

The PAR research findings identified that the skills and 'learning' the Guides felt they gained from attending and participating in group activities was an important aspect as it provided space to create new knowledge or add depth to existing knowledge. As the Unit is made up of Guides who attend different schools, the findings uncovered that in engaging in dialogue with each other they uncovered knowledge about school curriculum areas before they covered them at school. The ability to discuss an unknown or little-known topic with peers enabled understanding within their own language and meaning. They also discovered new knowledge which became further enriched through engaging with varied perspectives from one another.

The research findings showed the variety and range of opportunities offered to the Guides. Events, activities, and issues covered throughout one year were identified as were those which were valued, those which were not as valued and the reasons why. Annual events which were considered major, such as Camp, Remembrance Parade, and the Christmas outing, were perceived as enjoyable 'milestones' which symbolised individual experience. Respect was attached to the number of events attended, the more events equated to the more experience and therefore commanded more respect. However, Guides who had been members for more than

a year and had completed the annual event cycle a few times, found some of the activities less challenging or engaging.

The Unit meeting structure was identified as a key factor with respect to participation and inclusion. It was important for Guides to plan what they wanted to do as was adherence to the plans. When carrying out their plans Guides preferred to do so in small groups but also requested group membership to be regularly changed, allowing them to further expand their friendship groups and new opportunities through dialogue and connections.



**At Guides we learn...**

- How to... be nice to people
- communicate
- practical skills like archery, cooking and sewing
- history and politics
- get badges – you have to set a goal
- to talk to people without being scared
- self-confidence
- respect others
- to make friends
- march in front of the public,

“it felt good”

Some things we learn at school we have already learned at Guides


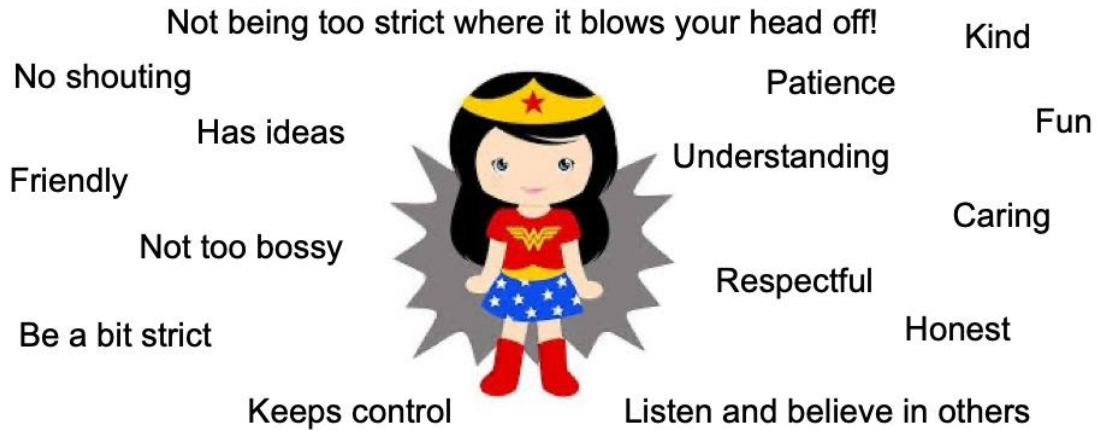
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Image 15: Peer Researcher Presentation Slide – Informal education

When analysing what the Guides thought made a 'good' Guide Leader the PAR research findings identified a variety of traits, all which came with a caveat of having the ability to take control and manage situations when needed. Guides wanted to have independence within a space which they could explore and push boundaries however, the space also had to feel and be safe. Whilst many skills and qualities identifying good leadership were offered, all Guides held the same single, overarching stipulation – the ability to 'be strict', 'abide by the rules' and 'keep control'. Probing questions identified that this stipulation was connected to a feeling of 'being safe' and being in environment that allowed personal expression and freedom. However, if one person's freedom oppressed another's, the expectation from the Guides was that the Leader would take control and manage the situation in a fair and just manner. To this end, the Guides identified they wanted the management or facilitation of their space to be in the domain of the adult.

## What we think makes a good Guide Leader?



***”A good leader is someone who is independent, who can take charge. Someone who is kind and considerate to others but also has the ability to be strict and stick by the rules”***

Image 16: Peer Researcher Presentation Slide – Leadership characteristics

The recommendations from the PAR findings identified that rather than change what they were already engaged in and offered, the Guides wanted to either consolidate or expand on what they already did. They wanted to go to new and different places and also to have those conversations about topics which were not explored in school. In addition, for this cohort of Guides, whilst they liked to work in small groups at some parts of the evening they also liked to come out of their groups and mix with all of the other Guides in the Unit.

After thematically analysing the generated data the peer researchers identified the predominant findings of the PAR project which they felt should be presented

combined with recommendations to the Unit Guides and Leaders. In summary the findings were; the importance of communication as a skill to gain and practice, working as a collective to do activities, the need for variation of opportunities, topical discussions from different perspectives, and a Leader able to create a safe environment and at times, take control. These were converted to recommendations (below) which were for all to implement, apart from a planned specific project for the Rangers group which was to utilise external funding to support their recommendations.

## Recommendations

We discovered we enjoy all of the activities we already do at Guides (some more than others ) but if we could we would like to do more ....


- Camping – go to different places
- Outings/trips/places
- Games
- Finding out about – Stonewall riots/what our school does not tell us

We like it when we work with different people when we do activities so...

**keep mixing us up!**

To help us go on more trips, our Rangers group is starting a project called The Key. If we plan and organize the trips ourselves, with only a little help from the Leaders, The Key will give us up to £2000 to go on the trip we plan.

**IDEAS NEEDED PLEASE**



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Department of Sociology

Image 17: Peer Researcher Presentation Slide – Recommendations

Decisions regarding which knowledge would be disseminated, to whom and how were considered by the peer-research group. It was agreed findings and

recommendations would be written into a PowerPoint presentation on the basis that all participants felt comfortable using this application and it could be used by the Unit as badge evidence. Consideration was given to the ability and power of those able to support and action the recommendations from the research. The peer researchers decided to present to initially to the Guide Unit and Leaders involved in the research and then to the wider regional GA at their AGM, thinking that these groups would be the most interested and engaged with their work and also have the power to action recommendations.

Framing the research process and findings within the GA achievement system and organisational values contextualised it within a shared language of understanding and meaning. It gave access to outcomes for the community, individuals, and the organisation through respectful dialogue between young people and adults (Shamrova and Cummings, 2017). As a result of engagement in participation methods conducive to dialogue, expression, experience and imagination, the peer-researchers and peers produced knowledge of direct use to the participants or the community from which it emerges (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013; Nieuwenhuys, 2004).

The 'change' or recommendations of the peer research involved institutional learning and organisational transformation were collectively identified by those involved and is aimed to initiate change in the organisational system rather than only reinforcing status quo. This is different from traditional research where the type of expected change is determined and assessed by others external to the lived experiences.



The sharing and fostering of change from the knowledge created and produced supported empowerment of the peer-researchers. Dissemination and subsequent research discussion positioned the peer-researchers as powerful, in that they 'spoke to' their research through their understanding and ownership, without the need for adult intervention or support. Power is exercised through ownership, understanding and action from the research, and is enacted regardless of my presence or absence.

Research impact is sensitive to context, language, and culture. In this instance, it is both individual and collective, both different and yet overlapping (Banks, Herrington and Carter, 2017). Collaborative impact uses findings to change or influence policy, attitudes, and cultures. In this case, it brings about the improvement of member experience and strengthens organisational structures. It is continuous and located in the process, wherein everyone is involved, and can continue after completion. Participatory impact is derived from direct experience in the research and the new skills and insights gained by peer-researchers during the process (Fals-Borda and Rahman, 1991).

Sadly, the week during which the peer-researchers began to rehearse their presentation, the UK went into COVID-19 lockdown and the GA cancelled all face-to-face unit meetings. Therefore, dissemination through their presentation has not been performed by the peer-research group but is planned to be undertaken once lockdown is lifted.

## Step 6: Closure

Closure is important when working with groups of people. An 'ending' to the research project was collectively discussed, agreed on and built into the research design, making it clear from the beginning that the research process was time limited. As a youth work practitioner, I considered the research group's process and dynamics, and facilitated the planning of an ending that considered collective and individual group membership, inclusive of project evaluation:

1. Closure of the peer-researcher research group: This involved summarization of group content, achievements, and process through reflection on group experience, thereby leading to the realistic evaluation and identification of tangible results. Appraisals of collective learning outcomes, unfinished business and moving on (Brown, 1994) were considered. This included the research as transition, ending Guides and becoming Rangers. To physically and symbolically mark the end of the research project and to recognise transition, a celebratory meal was chosen, a 'ritual' (Brown, 1994) that is often selected to demarcate endings.
2. Closure for individuals: This comprised of individual reflection on the acknowledgement of skills, time, and commitment each young woman brought to the process. This also involved the use of individual learning to demonstrate evidence criteria against GA badges or awards.

## **PAR and Informal Education**

Overall, the peer-researchers found the research project experience to be a positive learning opportunity. Practically its outcomes met group and individual identified needs, as it was a credible addition to CVs and created a progression route to Rangers.

The informal education and the learning unintentionally discovered through dialogue and taking action from within the participatory process was identified as being the most valued element of their collective and individual learning. The space and time dedicated to reflection, in turn became the activity that the young women looked forward to, fully engaging in reflection in an intentional, thoughtful, and meaningful way. During the PAR process, the young women especially enjoyed reflecting on why and how they joined the GA, their shared experiences, enjoyment, and new learning. They identified friendships they had forged, many being the longest they have maintained, as being the overarching reason behind their continued GA attendance. The pedagogical benefit of participatory research was found in their reflections ,and insights, generating feelings of self-discovery, social identity, personal development, and a sense of responsibility towards the self and others.

The practical experience of conducting interviews placed the peer-researchers near the younger Guide members – a position from which they initially actively distanced themselves from. Reflective conversations focused on discoveries located within interviews which connected them to the interviewees, noticing those Guides who seemed vulnerable, nervous, or excited to be working with them. Reflection inspired discussion about the power attributed to them by the younger members and the

confidence emitted by themselves based on familiarity with activities, the programme and people involved. Reflection then focused on past interactions, reframing them in a new empathic understanding, for example, previously reading non-communication by younger Guides as ignorant came to be understood as a fearful or an uncomfortable reaction or when a Guide shadowed and was seemingly confrontational was reframed as an expression of admiration and the desire for more interaction.

This learning, being fresh, was immediately used the following day during camp activities. GG8 and peer-researcher (age 14) deliberately joined a team with a Guide, who she had earlier considered to be 'a pain, getting on my nerves coz she is cheeky and disrespectful and always following me', and worked with her as a pair. By the end of camp, GG8 and peer researcher (age 14) concluded 'she is like my mini-me! So funny and wanting to be like me I think'.

Furthermore, during one interview, GG14 and peer researcher (age 13) connected with a nervous Guide who rarely spoke or made eye contact with anyone. By finding a quiet space and filling it with glitter, nail polish, face masks and Haribos, data was collected without eye contact, through conversation, whilst applying the 'resources. This space, dialogue and activity allowed the formation of an empathic bond.

The peer-researchers were empowered by the knowledge they had gained from the process, space, research activity and reflective dialogue. They were confident in challenging my drive to use creative methods and transitioning their learning from

reflection into action. Through this process, they demonstrated a sense of responsibility, decision-making, confidence, self-esteem, and independence. The autonomy and development through opportunities are features of feminist practice in informal education (Batsleer, 2013, p. 27) and support the development of a heightened awareness of democracy, social justice, and equity (Kirby and Bryson, 1999), which the peer-researchers demonstrated in their reflections and actions.

### **Practitioner/Researcher reflections**

During a discussion whilst walking to our training space, I became consciously aware of my positionality, my role as a Youth Worker as ‘a walking resource’ (Batsleer, 2013, p. 67) and of the mutuality of our evolving relationship. The discussion unearthed the varied levels of knowledge and understanding they collectively held about their educational goals of securing a place at university:

‘I know which college I want to go to; my Dad went to John’s; my sister is in Ustinov. I want to go to Castle!’

*GG10 and peer researcher (age 14)*

‘I will have at least 12 GCSEs; I have fast tracked two already. My school is obsessed with going to Uni, so they look good...and so is my Dad.’

*GG18 and peer researcher (age 13)*

'My teacher says I am going to go to Uni, but how do you actually get here?'

*GG15 and peer researcher (age 14)*

'What happens? What do you do? You *live* here! I don't know anything about it, no one talks about it. I just know if you want to get on in life you have to go.'

*GG6 and peer researcher (age 13)*

(On seeing 'Castle College) 'Do you sleep here, are you allowed to go home?

Who would want to live in a drafty old building, it will stink?'

*GG8 and peer researcher (age 14)*

'Eeee can you study Sport at university? I would like to do that, or is it for those who are no good at science, English or maths?'

*GG8 and peer researcher (age 14)*

In the conversation I became aware, 'knowing in action' (Schön, 2016) that all group members aspired to going to higher education but had differing understanding of what it was, how to achieve it and what it would entail. By 'reflecting in action', I realised I had the same questions, at a similar age, which had perplexed me and were not resolved so I dismissed this goal at the time.

I was conscious that a Youth Worker would continue along this conversational path working from the position of the young person, however as a 'time restrained

researcher', I needed to remain on plan with training. This conversation became the one of continual reflection. Initially, I wanted to actively make space and time for further exploration but became aware that the conversation was naturally present throughout the research, as it was intrinsically connected.

My personal reflections were rooted in class realising young women from the same town as me, sharing similar backgrounds had the same aspiration housed in limited and limiting information, making the concept and goal complex. The fluidity of the PAR process had provided a 'nuanced insight' (Banks and Brydon-Miller, 2019, p. 63), wherein the dialogue required me to draw 'on personal resource and political analysis' (Batsleer, 2013, p. 181). As a woman educator, engaging in and reflecting on my professional/researcher positionality is feminist practice (Batsleer, 2013), requiring me to work across a number of boundaries, address ethical dilemmas and my own interests while maintaining the best interests of participants as my focus.

### **Summary**

For this research the strengths of PAR lie in its similar ethical ethos to the process of value-based youth work. It finds knowledge and meaning in collaboration within a fluid and sometimes messy, reactive process, recognising agency of those involved. The role of the researcher is akin to youth worker in that it is one of facilitation. The dialogue within process challenges dominant discourses, subverting the norm, and in doing so the young people are recognised as expert in their field.

As much as the PAR process of iterative learning in contextual dialogue elucidates hidden meaning, it can also be a limitation. The researcher must have skills as a facilitator to enable not lead the process and as the empowering practice can challenge existing knowledge which can be lifechanging, the researcher must also have skills to support emotions entwined with new knowledge.



## Chapter 6

### **Research Findings: Introduction**

This research aimed to critically examine the values and ethos underpinning The GA's organisational and practice model, with a view to evaluating reasons for its sustainability and apply relevant knowledge to the voluntary sector youth service. In the following chapters I present the research findings which emerged from data generated over a period of two and a half years. The multi-method approach allowed me to focus on the past as well as the present and identify connections and reconnections between them. The research methods used to do this were archival research, semi-structured interviews, participant observation and the incorporation of the findings from a peer-researched PAR project.

The iterative research process was conducted with myself fully immersed in this cyclical course and actively recognising my positions as researcher and practitioner. As the research concept emerged from my position as a practitioner, I began the process using my own position and knowledge to analytically develop themes. The primary, and subsequently sub-themes, were generated through the triangulation of the data generated from the research methods. Through a simplifying and reductive process of reading, reflecting, and interpreting (Braun and Clarke, 2013), data were transformed (Miles and Huberman, 2014) allowing patterns, irregularities, and themes to emerge (Gorman and Clayton, 2004), which synthesised and framed the data allowing meaning to be applied. The chapter findings are structured within this frame.

and use the emergent data themes to locate the debate.

Emergent from the literature review and discussions from NERIN meetings and YFNE supervision meetings, the research was designed to consider the following topics,

#### Youth Work:

What are the traits and characteristics of youth work?

Views on the contemporary position of youth work.

What issues face young people today?

Factors which create and support sustainability in youth work organisational models.

Feminism and youth work.

Participant views on why young people attend youth provision.

#### The GA:

Personal individual and group experiences in the GA.

Personal and group expectations from participating in the GA.

What does the organisation expect from members overall and in specific roles?

What volunteer members expect from the organisation.

Participant views on the current popularity of the GA. Is it popular and why?

Why do participants think the organisation has continued to operate for over 110 years? What has enabled it to do so?

Participant views on organisational strengths and weaknesses.

Participant views on traditional and contemporary youth work.

Participant views on feminism and the GA.

Each of these topics had a clear 'focus, scope and purpose' (Braun and Clarke, 2013 .p. 249) within permeable boundaries, enabling data to be emergent and relational. The interviews were structured to cover the topics of which the findings, along with those from my participant observer field work notes, archive data, and data gathered from the PAR peer research project were used to define specific themes. I used NVivo 12 to assist in theme identification and to uncover links, patterns, and emergent code by viewing the data from different perspectives, i.e.) text form, word clouds and maps (Appendix:p.421 ). The use of software enabled the management and review of an extremely large and complex data set, especially data coded in more than one way, and to reduce the vast amount of data into practicable chunks (Bryman, 2004. p. 409).

From this process nine dominant overarching themes emerged (nodes) which were linked by many interconnected sub-themes. The main themes identified were as follows:

- What is considered to be youth work and how this is determined
- Organisation models
- Activities to meet the needs of organisations and young people
- Characteristics of Leaders
- Feminism and youth work
- Informal education

- Self-identification of values and worth
- What it is to be a member of a youth organisation
- Relationships
- Youth work in and as community.

## **Research Findings: Youth Work**

### **Perspectives on the values and ethos of youth work**

This chapter explores the theme of 'youth work' as understood from the perspective of interviewees previously and currently employed as youth work practitioners and managers in statutory and voluntary sector settings. The purpose of these interviews is to set the current practice of the Guide Association in the context of contemporary youth work. As described in Chapter four, I interviewed seven practitioners. Their experience includes; occupying the roles of C.E.O, management, and face-to-face youth workers within regional and national charitable youth work organisations. Whilst some interviewees work directly with young people, others hold positions able to influence national policy. All participants hold a JNC professional qualification, ranging from Level 3 Youth Work Practice through to postgraduate Master's degree qualifications, and span an age range of 18 to 80+ years. Collectively their educational and practice-based experience reflects over 50 years of UK youth policy.

The findings in this chapter see the interviewees identify youth work as a set of universal traditional characteristics located in a dynamic process of informal education. They recognise a contextual process which is applied, defined, and

reconceptualised across a lifetime. Using this description, they argue, a distinct difference exists between youth work and working with young people, seeing contemporary youth work framed within a deficit model of young people where success is measured against pre-determined outcomes or themes, driven by economics framed within neo-liberal ideals. The shift in the sector to work within this model aligns organisational values with those of an 'other,' such as a funding body, media or constructed moral panic. Additionally, the shift has impacted on the workforce. The North East has a distinct lack of experienced youth workers, leaving a generation of workers unable and uncomfortable to work within a dynamic process of informal education. Being inexperienced in work outside of a controlled environment, such as in detached or open access youth groups, they comply with and add to the shift from value-based youth work through the predetermination of outcomes through the application of stereotypes and labelling.

### **Youth Work: A value-based process**

When asked to define 'youth work' none of the participants were able or wanted to offer a universal definition. Choosing to describe rather than define youth work, they used characteristics they believed to be inherent, which must be present for work with young people to be labelled 'youth work'. Cooper (2018, p. 4) acknowledges this trait, stating youth workers describe youth work using conceptual models which support 'essential features of practice,' (de St. Croix, 2016, p. 4) representing core values across different areas yet framed within a 'coherent approach.' As a C.E.O commented:

‘We all have a different understanding of what is youth work and what youth clubs are. In youth work, it’s that diversity of the types of work with young people and with different types of people. But at the core, it’s the youth work values.’

*(Male, JNC qualified level 6, Youth Worker age 40s)*

In acknowledging the pluralistic nature of youth work and describing the traditions or characteristics inherent in a coherent process, the youth workers identified a set of core values which collectively denote an informal educational value-based process. This concept aligns with Smith’s understanding of traits which have remained associated with youth work for over a century (1988, p. 48). Youth Work is characterised by a process of experiential learning; shared objectives which are deliberately and purposefully conducted; voluntary engagement of participants; and a practice of contextual and critical dialogue, responsive to and owned by those involved (Smith, 1988, pp. 126-131). As two respondents stated,

‘It is young person-centred, providing the opportunity for young people to choose and to access opportunities, engagement, and relationships.’

*(Female, JNC level 7 qualified Youth Worker, aged 50’s)*

‘Youth work is that relationship with young people, the voluntary aspect of it, in an informal environment is where it starts. It is where a young person’s needs and interests start and end and works from there out.’

*(Male, JNC level 6 qualified Youth Worker, aged 40’s)*

Despite the level of formal education or qualification held by the interviewees, all were clear that learning was at the core of youth work. Informal education should hold relevance and meaning to the young people involved, and to ensure connected significance, youth work should be rooted in and start from the position of the young people and their communities. It should start from where they are, and follow their agenda, as this youth worker stated,

‘It’s the informal education through group work. Even when we have sat there and we have a plan and an agenda, it’s when it just goes off and you start talking. You know, that to me is their agenda.’

*(Female, JNC qualified level 6 Youth Worker, age 40’s)*

Interviewees expressed the view that locating informal education within relevant social contexts enabled and supported young people to exercise power and control things which impact their lives. In support of this, youth workers required their work to be framed within a safe environment which challenged and ensured equality and access. The approach adopted to support these requirements was identified as not needing to be situated or circumscribed within physical boundaries, as one youth worker commented, ‘I’ve done some of my best youth work on detached [youth work].’ Additionally, other youth workers stressed, ‘nor should it be conducted within predetermined, outcome-led, off the shelf programmes or curriculums made up by other people which become ‘tick box targets,’ but should be fostered within trusting,

respectful and reciprocal relationships, built within dialogue negotiated between young people and their youth worker.’ As these three youth workers explained,

‘I think the relationship is the key to it. You have to spend time building that up and then it’s about working with young people over a period of time. Getting to know them, getting to see what they like, what they don’t like.’

*(Female, JNC qualified level 7 Youth Worker, age 40’s)*

‘You should be talking to young people. If I am not talking to the young people, then I am not doing it.’

*(Female, JNC qualified level 6 Youth Worker, age 40’s)*

‘I said to the young women, “I was supposed to be supporting you in realising who you were, what were the best things about you, what did you want to carry forward.” Not what the school wanted, just because they wanted to get people to be ‘good’. But that’s not what I was focused on as a youth worker, I wanted them to identify what they wanted and what was good for them.’

*(Female, JNC qualified level 6 Youth Worker, age 40’s)*

### **Contemporary Youth Work: Instability in a neoliberal frame and deficit model.**

Youth worker interviewees placed importance on the impact youth work can have on the lives of young people, acknowledging that this was not always an immediate product of interaction or learning. All the youth workers recognised learning can be



realised much later, through reflection, often on a critical or significant incident. They spoke in relation to the current sector perspective, where impact is measured and used as an indicator toward pre-determined goals identified by others to demonstrate organisational success. The Centre for Youth Impact (CYI) defines the impact of Youth Work as the acquisition of 'positive outcomes' identified through applied measurement (CYI, 2021). However, interviewees stressed defining impact; determined and measured within a linear, time-bound process, as flawed and problematic, especially when connected to the dynamic process of informal education, as learning may occur and be reaffirmed at any point in a person's life.

For them learning is located with a cyclical, dynamic process, applied to lived experience and whilst it can be practiced within youth work it can also occur, be evaluated, and reaffirmed outside young people's engagement with youth work within any area of their lives. Additionally, learning in the 'here and now' may not be a fully conscious affirmation, and recognition of impact may occur after a process of critical cognitive thinking, after which learning is realised and embedded,

'I think with a lot of young people they don't realise that they have been on that journey for years and years and years, which is always the challenge for services in demonstrating impact.'

*(Male, JNC qualified level 6 Youth Worker, age 40's)*

Interviewees highlighted they were required by organisations to work within a deficit model of young people, identifying a lack in skills, knowledge, or development, with their role being to fill the gap and make the young person whole,

‘There are tools and ways of doing that, they are crude as you are always trying to measure the negative.’

*(Female, JNC qualified level 6 Youth Worker, age 50s)*

This practice, along with the assumption that a benchmark is required to measure against, was presented by the interviewees as creating conflict, when attempting to work within the core values of youth work. For them it removed the foundation of the informal education process away from the position of the individual, aligning it with the perspective of ‘other’ in a model in which an ideal is located. By benchmarking an archetype, the youth work sector defines and labels those young people who are deficient in pre-determined criteria as being ‘in need,’ or ‘at risk’ so removing agency. In enacting labelling, youth workers are required to ‘target’ particular young people and impose interventions which address their perceived ‘shortfall’. The youth workers found this model limiting and hostile to their professional values of sharing deliberate and purposefully negotiated objectives, recognising ownership and agency, and alienating learning to be found in ‘being’ and not just becoming. Maintaining focus through a deficit development perspective requires labelling and segregation against an exemplar framework of a ‘well-rounded’ young person which, as two youth workers commented, disempowers both the young person and the youth worker,

'When it is targeted, it's focused on behaviour, on 'hot spotting'. That will take much longer to build that up because people don't want to be worked with. You have to meet people halfway.'

*(Female, JNC qualified level 7 Youth Worker, age 50s)*

'It becomes channelled, too targeted rather than let it develop. It seems to get channelled in, "you have to do this, and you have to do that" bearing in mind as a worker or volunteer you are having to hit these things (*targets*). And do you really?'

*(Female, JNC qualified level 3 Youth Worker, age 50s)*

Interviewees further expressed concerns that this model resided within the funding of youth work. Funding criteria required predetermined outcomes linked to moral panics created and influenced by mainstream media. Additionally, it necessitated young people being categorised and 'targeted', involving the delivery of pre-created programmes and outcomes which, when attached to a financial cycle, produced a symbiotic, perpetuating relationship surviving upon mutual maintenance of young people in crisis,

'Some of the bigger national funders are guilty of focusing on the issues the media portrays.'

*(Female, JNC qualified level 3 Youth Worker, age 20s)*

'Youth work does things to keep the numbers up and you put on activities the kids don't really want to do.'

*(Female, JNC qualified level 6 Youth Worker, age 50s)*

Youth work within this frame made the interviewees feel their professional standing and role were reduced to processing young people in, along and out of one linear procedure and then enrolling them in another. They expressed concern that this placed no significance or value on encouraging and allowing young people to 'be' themselves, at any given moment, across time and through lived experience. One youth worker explained their role was to facilitate significance and 'being' within 'opportunities to broaden their horizons, to get to know people and help them think about where they fit within the world', stating 'I think there is still a need for a place for people to go and just 'be', take part in stuff and have fun.' This point was echoed by another youth worker who reflected on her childhood experience of attending a youth club:

'It was where we were just allowed to 'be'. You know, there was no one saying you have to go and do this, or you have to do that. There was no *'have to.'*

*(Female, JNC qualified level 7 Youth Worker, age 50s)*

## **Driven by Funding**

When discussing contemporary youth provision, the youth workers interviewed focused on the challenges currently facing the youth work sector. Those presently employed in youth work expressed concern for the stability of their respective organisations. Funding and finance were major factors affecting long-term sustainability impacting jobs, youth organisations and the sector. This was paralleled with apprehensive acknowledgement of the erosion of those traditional youth work values which, because of UK youth policy and 10+ years of economic austerity, saw the decimation of local authority provision and the decline in the voluntary sector. They saw youth work as currently located within a highly competitive pool of limited funding, subject to the ability to provide, as one youth worker explained, 'innovative' ways of working and providing 'more for less.' This perspective is supported in a recent *Children and Young People Now* article (Heyes, October 2020) citing the ongoing decline in youth service funding as the key factor behind the continued reduction in youth provision since 2010. As a youth worker commented:

'Money is a challenge for youth organisations today. You cannot do anything unless you have the money to do it. You cannot build capacity unless you have money, and we are exactly in that position.'

*(Male, JNC qualified level 6 Youth Worker, age 40s)*

One voluntary sector C.E.O discussed the difficulty of accessing and securing funding for youth work in line with organisational values which also covered 'core

costs' and supported the development and growth of the self-identified, needs-led practice, a perspective echoed by another youth worker,

'Organisational challenges will always be funding, applying and being successful with the right sources of funding. Being led by funding can get you into difficult positions so it is about identifying the rights pots of funding that will allow you to focus on your own values and your own mission, the types of programmes you want to run as an organisation.'

*(Male, JNC qualified level 3 Youth Worker, age 40s)*

Interviewees spoke of organisations altering, redefining, and shifting their value base to align with funding criteria. They also noted organisations stepping away from professional language and adopting business models including language and ethos. One youth worker voiced disdained towards this shift, explaining it has resulted in a gradual but real disconnect from the values and mission of their organisation, casting them 'adrift', making them 'constantly re-invent' their practice and feeling like they were 'selling The Emperor's New Clothes' every year.'

### **Inexperienced Workforce**

The constant necessity to bid for time-limited funding and offer more for less has added to the inability of organisations to offer substantive permanent contracts on JNC terms and conditions. One youth worker with experience working in the public sector explained many of the experienced, qualified co-workers who were made redundant from local authorities as they closed their youth services, gained

employment utilising their skills outside the sector and will not return as the current terms and conditions are 'not JNC and are poor.' The impact of this has seen a decline in the quality of youth work, of quality training available within the sector, and the ability to 'in-house mentor' and learn through reflective practice resulting in the practice of keeping a young person in crisis as they are informed participation on an 'employability' project will equip them with the skills they need for life and in doing so targets are met. Two youth workers provided examples of their work,

'We work with the same young people but on different projects. So, the team say, 12 young people on 4 projects, that's 48 contacts.'

*(Female, JNC qualified level 3 Youth Worker, age 20s)*

'We have two young apprentices, just starting their journey. What we don't have in the team is some of those older, experienced heads, who can guide them, because those people have disappeared from the sector.'

*(Female, JNC qualified level 3 Youth Worker, age 40s)*

The NYA (National Youth Agency) echoes this view, adding that the lack of funding has not only resulted in a shortage of JNC qualified youth workers but also a reduction in funded JNC recognised youth work courses. This produces a lack of experienced and available JNC qualified workers able to offer placements and supervise students and youth work within open access youth provision. One youth worker discussed being the only team member not to 'fear' open access youth

provision, commenting that co-workers would 'do anything so as not to do it. Some have never done it, never will, or detached [youth work]'. This worker continued:

'In (*Council borough*) there is absolutely nothing in youth work, there is literally me on a Tuesday evening. The fact [is] that we have not got one youth club and the youth clubs that I see popping up pay people crap money and they are not trained properly.'

*(Female, JNC qualified level 6 Youth Worker, , age 40s)*

The knowledge, understanding and experience that the interviewees thought JNC qualified youth workers brought with them from practicing youth work across a range of organisations and under different government policy guidance was identified as being important in its absence. It highlighted a major concern in that many current youth practitioners have a distinct lack of knowledge or understanding of the theoretical philosophies and characteristics underpinning youth work practice. This, when coupled with a lack of experience and the contextual history of the profession, interviewees felt further added to the demise in the quality of youth work but also the values. One CEO stated that the biggest issue for their organisation is, 'having good, quality staff to deliver good quality youth work' and another felt the lack of training impacted the quality of provision and ability of youth workers, commenting: 'Seventy-five per cent of the adults working with young people in youth settings have no training, not even safeguarding training, that's thousands and thousands of adults who don't have the training.'



Deterioration of the amount and quality of youth provision was noted not only by youth work interviewees, but also by other adults interviewed in this research. The opinion was that many organisations currently receiving the money to work with young people provide poor, badly resourced, mundane provision working only with targeted groups, one parent described it as ‘the same old, same old.’ A comment by a County Adviser reinforced this opinion,

‘My nieces did D of E with a private company, and they had an awful time. They cost their Mam over £250 each. The company did it for the money. They did not have the correct food, and poor calorific intake. The equipment was poor and not right for the job. The staff did not have a clue. I was going to write to Prince Phillip.’

*(Female, GA County Adviser. Member of the GA since 7 years old, age 70s)*

### **Youth work or working with young people?**

Six of the youth workers interviewed, felt strongly that the accumulation of loss over time within the sector is now at the point where the work provided is no longer youth work based on traditional values and characteristics. One C.E.O acknowledged: ‘some of the key elements of youth work are there, but it is not traditional youth work,’ and a Youth Worker explained that sometimes their co-workers were uncomfortable and ‘afraid’, especially in situations they had not pre-organised, being fearful and concerned only with losing power and control in an open access setting: As two youth workers commented,

‘They make excuses, won’t work in a situation they are not in control of. Shit scared of looking like they are not in control. They dig their feet in and won’t budge saying that you cannot do youth work because you don’t know the young people. But it’s about them. It’s about their fear and lack of experience and lack of understanding. They cannot put theory to practice because all they know is doing what the funders want them to and calling it youth work.’

*(Female, JNC qualified level 7 Youth Worker, age 50s)*

‘I just think how can we expect decent youth workers who give a monkey’s and go the extra mile, (and I don’t mean to blow my own trumpet, but I do because I love it). But if you just pay someone minimum wage you cannot expect them to care, you can expect them to come in and do their job to the best of their ability but the minute they have clocked out, that’s it.’

*(Female, JNC qualified level 7 Youth Worker, age 40s)*

One youth worker reflected on this theme, stating a generation of young people have never experienced youth clubs and due to this, when asked what they want or are consulted to ‘shape a service’, they are unable to articulate the worth of traditional value-based youth work to funders, organisations, and peers as they have not seen or experienced it. The North East Youth Alliance champions listening to young people and ‘would like young people’s voices to be at the heart of everything they do.’ However as one interviewee pointed out, the young people, having no experience of traditional youth work are ‘an echo chamber reflecting the status quo’. Another youth worker commented,

'I think it's the lack of having any universal provision, so kids don't know what the Youth Service is, it does not exist. It's only been gone a few years, but you are only a teenager for a few years. I think to get it back I think we are going to have to go back to open access youth clubs.'

*(Female, JNC qualified level 7 Youth Worker, age 40s)*

The NYA is calling for more youth services to be located on high streets (Hayes, 2020) and for there to be a virtual option for those young people who cannot access them. This was in opposition to the view of the youth workers interviewed, which placed value on having and maintaining a long-term and 'grassroots' link to young people's communities, as opposed to a geographical or virtual space where access is reliant on transport and technological infrastructures. The need to be 'where the young people are' was discussed in conjunction with affording time. Time is needed to build relationships amid the communities, networks, and cultures the young people occupy and embed provision in association. Youth work should grow from the area and the community, this involves much more than just relocating a service to a new area, or moving the office, as these interviewees commented:

'We have lost the community link; it is not part of the community anymore. Youth work has completely lost it, especially in the last twenty years.' Youth worker

'We are currently parachuting staff in one night a week and that is a challenge.

Staffing, the environment, 'dosage' - we need to be in those communities and see those young people more than once a week.'

*(Male, JNC qualified level 6 Youth Worker, age 40s)*

'I have been really lucky to have worked in areas over a long period and I think that's the key. This is the missing trick, to short-termism, short-term funded, so it does not give you a chance to build it up and reap it. It's like cultivating a field, I think it's like that. Get to know people and build it up. It's about the area.'

*(Female, JNC qualified level 6 Youth Worker, age 50s)*

'My second full-time job was as a Development Worker in a traditional youth and community centre where you had the time and the capacity to go and build relationships, it was your full-time role. You were not just being parachuted in during a recession, you had the time to go and find where the young people were and collaborate with them.'

*(Male, JNC qualified level 6 Youth Worker, age 40s)*

Reflecting on career paths, all of the youth work interviewees acknowledged a clear disparity between what they considered to be archetypal traditional youth work or what Weber (1978) calls an 'ideal type' (Banks, 2010, p. 7), as opposed to what they

classified as government policy-driven 'work with young people, which they identified as targeted, set within pre-determined outcome frameworks.

'The difference was that they started to try and formalize it rather than being informal. Where I work now, their values are very much person-centred, whereas youth work went on to becoming evidence based.'

*(Female, JNC qualified level 7 Youth Worker, age 50s)*

'Remember 'Every Child Matters? Well, some young people mattered more than others.'

*(Female, Trefoil Guild member and JNC qualified level 3 Youth Worker, age 70s)*

'I fought battles here to not do bums on seat accreditation. Could they not just do some voluntary work, some community work, things that make them feel like they are worth their place in society?'

*(Female, JNC qualified level 6 Youth Worker, age 40s)*

### **Conclusion: Summary of findings relating to contemporary youth work**

This chapter draws upon the knowledge and experiences of youth work practitioners within the North East of England, who argue that much of contemporary youth work is not what they describe and 'know' as youth work. It is pre-determined work with

young people, which is financially driven. For them, the deficit framework they work in, roots their work in the perspective of others, not associated with young people and their communities. Concerns lie and are depicted within media and business models, with a neoliberal focus on capacity building and numbers, creating a need to hold young people in a status quo. In addition to this, the lack of experienced workers to serve as mentors to new staff, along with their inexperience in youth work, has created a generation of workers who practice from positions that are not young person centered, resulting in young people never having attended a youth club or experienced value- based youth work.

Six themes and sub-themes emerged from the findings; participant perspectives on the values and ethics of youth work, youth work as a value-based process, the instability of a neoliberal frame and the deficit youth work model, the impact of working in a funding-driven sector, the creation of an inexperienced workforce and 'working with' young people.

In considering the nature of youth work, the findings identified all of the youth workers interviewed were clear they understood youth work as being located within a distinct set of characteristics, a process led by negotiation, voluntary participation, concerned with subverting power relations, starting from the position of the young person, and conducted within a trusting relationship with clear boundaries. For them the uniqueness found in these traits supported and presented challenges for those involved, which led to the discovery of new knowledge and skills. Participants were clear that youth work is about supporting a young person to understand who they are, enabling them to 'be' and not be solely focused on 'becoming.' Methodologically

it was identified as being informal, collective, and experiential (Davies, 2008.p.66) with a focus on dialogue and conversation contained within an ethical framework.

In a bid to be clear, all participants provided their description and understanding of what youth work is against a backdrop of what it is not. They stressed its distinctiveness in the characteristics which ultimately distinguish it from a more generic 'working with young people' or 'youth development' work.

The characteristics were seen to be a 'set' which, when taken together, create a dynamic practice in which informal education occurs. Recognised as a non-linear process, located with the person rather than within a time frame, participants understood context as being historically, socially, and politically important in the process of informal education. Context is important as it informs the process driven by need and therefore leads to appropriate and accessible solutions.

Another distinct pattern across youth worker responses related to their own current work. By providing examples of policy-informed youth work in the past, connected to a sector which included local authority youth work, they described and compared what they considered to be a value-based process, distinguishing this from their current work. All participants acknowledged that in their current work only some of the characteristics of youth work were ever present. In this they agreed that they were not doing youth work, but elements of it, describing their current work as working with young people or youth development work.

Participants were clear that despite the inability to conduct value-based youth work in their current practice they were constantly seeking space in which to try and apply and locate it. Not content with utilising only some of its characteristics, they talked about having maverick small projects within larger, specifically targeted funded programmes, where they created space for small group work in which they attempted to adopt value-based youth work to explore concepts identified by the young people.

'Good' youth work was recognised by all of the participants as experiential learning shaped and directed by a young person's agency. Participant examples of good practice included the acknowledgement of young people's agency within the value-based youth work process. It is the learner, through a relationship with a youth worker, who recognises their own learning both during and after it has taken place. This occurs within a reflective and experience-based process requiring differing and overlapping time frames for it to occur. From this perspective, learning was seen as a lifelong endeavour to which the skills acquired through experiential, informal education are applied, reapplied, and built upon throughout life. The findings suggested participants did not find value or learning in aiming for pre-identified outcomes, seeing them purely as necessities for funding and firmly sitting outside of youth work.

When considering the current climate and context of youth work, the findings identified multiple challenges and issues for the profession of youth work, the youth sector and youth work practice. Most were recognised as a result of youth work practised within a neoliberal frame.



Predominately short-term funding was seen to reinforce neoliberal ideologies and maintain the status quo, which was considered both inhibiting and detrimental to value-based youth work. Combined with preidentified outcomes and tied to a deficit model of young people, participant practitioners felt they were required to adopt a neoliberal ideology model and associated measures in order to access funding. Working with a deficit model required youth workers to label and categorise young people and then, in response to their classification, attempt to modify behaviour or fill a deficit. Participants felt a certain pressure to maintain a discourse that 'young people needed to be fixed' whilst understanding framing a young person within the narrative of 'another' disabled the process of value-based youth work. For the participants, working within a neoliberal frame rendered their practice as 'working with young people' as opposed to a praxis of self-realisation.

In order to realise a deficit behaviour or characteristic has been modified, contemporary youth work is required to measure and demonstrate 'success' or impact. Concerned with impact-driven targets and outcomes, participants spoke of the removal of contextual, needs-led learning within value-based youth work resulting in a shift from being a self-defined process to being outcome-driven.

Participants identified an emergent practice of working with the same young person on one issue-based programme or project after another. This practice model of 're-using' young people maintains a constant supply of outcomes from a small pool of eligible, targeted young people. As organisations found themselves accessing

numerous funding streams, all requiring different targets and issues for young people to be met, this practice placated the urgency and need to constantly find new young people from a competitive, small regional pool. Participants did maintain that young people remained with this process in order to access the maverick pockets or space workers identified for value-based youth work.

Participants spoke of some attempts being made to introduce qualitative based 'case studies' in place of, or alongside quantitative measurements. However, participants felt the qualitative content remained static being used only to demonstrate 'voice'. In this, participants' felt agency was removed or overlooked, maintaining organisational or funder power, especially when case studies were required at a time determined by 'others' and not the young person.

Findings identified short term funding produced unstable employment conditions or opportunities further adding to the precariousness of contemporary youth work. Participants who were not C.E.O.s spoke of contracts and positions made-up of two or more funding streams, filled with unqualified and inexperienced workers, with full-time posts being predominately management positions. The professional dilemmas presented by the participants were two-fold. Whilst youth workers want to work with the value-based process of youth work, the need to maintain employment is connected to the requirement to provide successful outcomes within a specific time period. Not conducive to the 'messy' methodology of informal education through collective experiential learning, participants engaged in a linear approach to maintain high outcomes and security of funding to maintain employment.

Secondly, employment conditions of low pay and a lack of JNC qualification recognition, has seen those experienced workers move out of the sector, utilising their skills in alternative employment. Whilst the sector, deficit of some skills, calls for their input, a gap of experienced workers has been firmly established, and with it a diminished quality of practice and loss of youth work methods.

Findings identified the beginnings of growth in the development of training and courses in the sector in a bid to address workforce development. However, the findings also identified the courses had a lack of opportunity to learn as participants spoke of a lack of space for workers to understand themselves as practitioners and critically reflect on the interactions they have with young people, their communities, and of the power and impact they have.

Finally, findings identified that short term funding impacted directly on to the culture of organisations as staff become consistently concerned with maintaining a certain level of contractual hours. As funding streams fall away, return, or are replaced, the situation is one of constant fluctuating hours and wages. Findings uncovered that some participants had experienced in-house competition for the limited resources or found it difficult to live with the constant worry that their hours and wages could reduce or totally diminish. Culturally, this uncertainty creates an insecure workforce as workers compete for limited resources rather than collaborate. Those with experience of this stressed they were working within an organisation in constant turmoil and change and regularly looked for alternative employment.

In conclusion, the findings connected to youth work and the contemporary youth sector identified those factors participants felt lead to organisational longevity and sustainability as well as those which created or added to instability. Short-term funding, based in a neoliberal frame, maintains the status quo. Unable to evolve, the work remains in a state of flux, changing according to political rather than social or cultural need. The findings showed work with young people as linear and 'complete' with no space to veer 'off course' for any length of time. Whilst pockets of value-based 'resistance' occurred they were not prioritised positioning value-based youth work as precarious in maverick spaces of pedagogical discomfort.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Research Findings: Girl Guiding**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter is structured using the emergent research themes resulting from the data generated through interviews, peer-research findings, archival research, my reflective fieldwork journal, and participant observation. Using the research themes, I explore how the values and principles of the informal educative methods within the organisational model of The GA enable it to continuously reframe its work, so maintaining relevance to generations of women and girls. Drawing upon the experiences and understanding of those girls and women who have been and are still involved in the organisation, I use themes emergent from the research data analysis to explore how the values of informal education are embedded within the culture of the organisation. I argue that this 'organic' value-based frame pays attention to contextual relevance and in doing so roots the organisation in to the lives and communities of its members. I explain how the methods used are framed within an ethos which supports reciprocal transference by 'doing' between organisation and individual and I explore how the knowledge gained is known by participants and how the ethos and values become to frame their lives as a whole.

To do this I researched the motivations behind individual membership to The GA. I explored member understanding of experiences, of the GA organisational model, of past and present roles, expectations of the organisation and what the organisation expected from members. Additionally, I studied how participants comprehended the

ethos of the organisation and why they think the organisation has had such longevity.

Operating as a girls' and young women's youth organisation, the values, principles, and characteristics of the GA have continuously re-framed its work whilst simultaneously remaining contextually dynamic. The ability to maintain a value-based framework and engage with contemporary issues is arguably the mainstay of its organisational sustainability. This chapter will elucidate how the informal education process and characteristics of youth work (association, voluntary participation, and dialogue within a democratic process) are organisational values of the GA embedded in its model and embraced and applied by its members.

### **Traditional Youth Work Values, Principles and Ethos in the Guide Association**

*'Great fun, great fun! Guiding works because it is fun. Yes, it's just fun.... well...  
and ...you could just be you'.*

#### **Joined as a 7-year-old Guide in the 1950s**

Today the values and shared commitments of the GA are to care, challenge, empower, and inspire whilst having fun and to build upon its 'long history of empowering girls and young women to be their best' (Girlguiding, 2021a). They are embedded in the GA programme and reinforced by the method Guiding refers to as the 'five essentials',

- Working together in small groups
- Encouraging self-government and decision making
- A balanced and varied programme
- Caring for the individual
- Sharing a commitment to a common standard

(Girlguiding, 2016, p. 12)

Encapsulating its values and principles in *The Guide Law*, one Guide Leader described the *Law* she learned as a Guide, as 'ethical standards' which a Guide would strive to maintain in all aspects of life. She explained 'My honour means that I can be trusted to be truthful and honest. Obeying the Guide Laws was your moral code'. This is represented pictorially by a Guide in her patrol journal from an archive source.

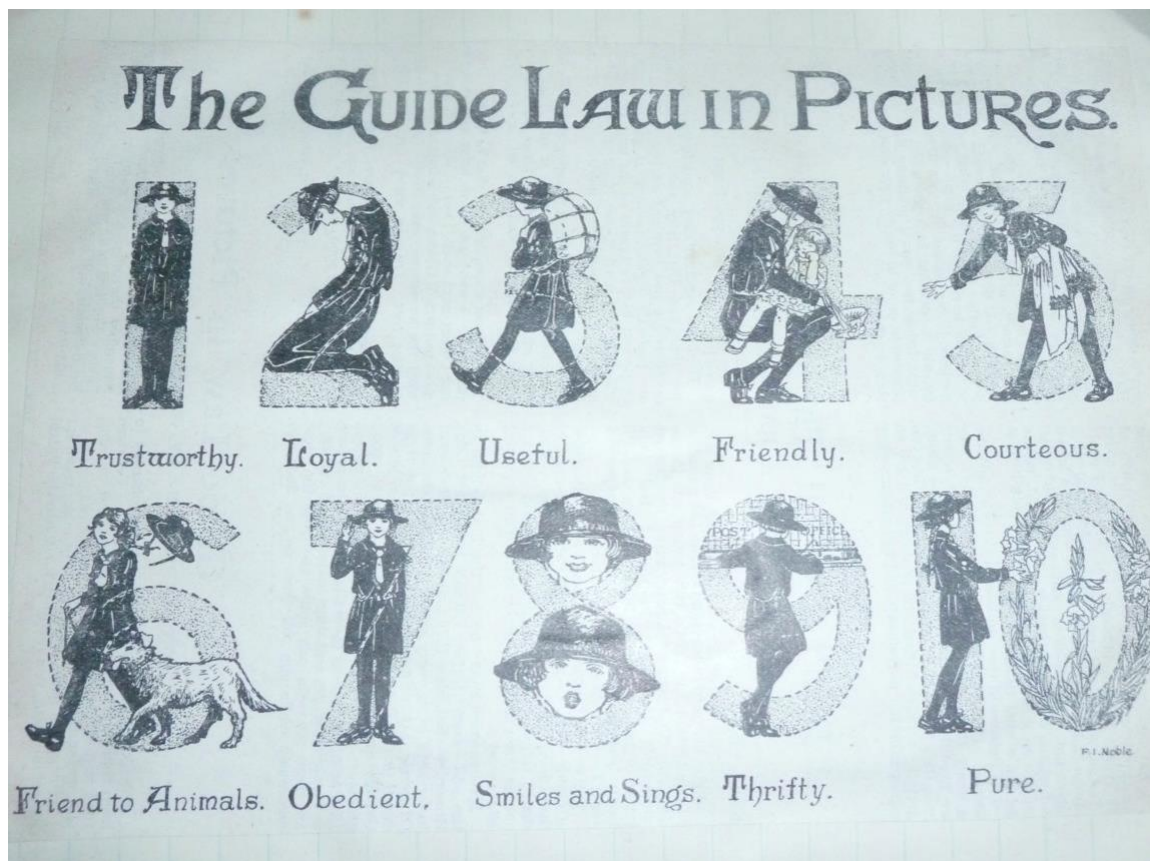


Image 18 :Journal 1926, 1st Shotley Bridge Company

Today, this moral code is encapsulated in six Laws, stating 'A Guide...

is honest, reliable and can be trusted.

is helpful and uses her time and abilities wisely

faces challenges and learns from her experiences

is a good friend and a sister to all Guides

is polite and considerate

respects all living things and takes care of the world around her

(Girlguiding, 2016, p. 34).



All the interviewees involved in guiding were able to reference a mixture of past and present Laws and added personal interpretations. An archive source saw a 2021 Guide citing 'trust, honesty and never being mean'; a 1970s Guide as 'being loyal to your pack'; and a 1950s Guide as displaying 'loyalty, commitment and quality.' Many interviewees framed the *Laws* as values encouraging young women to take personal and social responsibility. One parent reflected that her daughter's Unit 'is very much youth work, because of the values and the ethos.'

The 'Guiding method' (Girlguiding, 2016, p. 25) consisting of small group work, self-governance, collective commitment, and decision making, conducted within the 'flexible guiding' (p. 22) framework and ethical structure of Laws, collectively becomes the contextual informal education process of learning through voluntary engagement, democratic process, and experiential learning. The importance of participating in a value-based organisation was explained by a current Young Leader, 'if it is just like a social club for young people then you are not instilling those values which come through **doing** Guiding'. A parent recognised the skills her daughters gained from participation in a democratic, informal education process, commenting that 'they get confidence from going and self-esteem, from being part of a group. Also, from giving them (*Guides*) their own responsibility to come up with things, come up with ideas.'

## **A methodology of informal, experiential, collective education**

**‘The average girl (if there is such a thing as an average girl) does not want to sit down and passively receive theoretical instruction. She wants to be up and actually doing things in practice.’**

**(Lord Baden-Powell of Gilwell, 1918, p. 183)**

Baden-Powell’s depiction of young women as active participants is echoed by Fryer (1921) who stated, ‘girls will not sit down and listen quietly to lectures, they must be ‘up and doing.’ This is reinforced by a current Guide who reported liking ‘going out and actually doing stuff’ and by a parent whose daughter ‘likes doing things. She is always busy, she is always “doing”, so it (*Guides*) gives her structure for that’. These comments acknowledge the need for, and enjoyment of, the practical application of knowledge to learn.

The skills and knowledge acquired from active participation are developed in group activities, experiences, and dialogue, that are realised after a process of reflection and passage of time. However, learning is not dependent on the length of membership, as a Youth Worker and former Guide reflected, ‘With me, it’s probably what it sparked, what it led on to. I was probably used to working with people, by being in Guides, wanting to do stuff in the community or doing things for people.’

## **Contextual informal education**

**‘...this superb and special programme, this character training programme...’**

**Olave Baden-Powell (Girlguiding, 2009)**

Whilst the content of the Programme has evolved, the framework in which it operates has maintained fundamental characteristics in which flexibility and accessibility lie. Initially a set of training themes categorised by age and carried out individually, it required few resources and could be applied in any location aiming to ‘give equal chances to all and to give the most help to the least fortunate’ (Baden-Powell, 1918, p. 186). Engagement with the programme could result in the acquisition of badges (if wanted), acknowledging learning in process and context as opposed to a pre-determined end product; noted in a Durham County Commissioners meeting, (May 1943), ‘awarded for knowledge which could be put to use at any moment and not for something which had been accomplished.’ This sentiment was echoed by a TG member who explained, ‘badges were important, as they represented taking part and having a task set to achieve, showing what you had learned and looking towards something.’

Members demonstrated their learning through ‘tests’, did not have a prescribed format or set of outcomes but were administered and assessed by a local ‘expert’. One County Adviser recalled ‘going to somebody else’s house when I was doing a badge. We did something with birds, and there were three of us who went, and they asked us questions about all sorts of birds we had seen and then they would contact the Leader and say if we had done well.’

In addition to individual programme accomplishments, collective belonging and learning were and remain linked to routes and roles of responsibility. A County Adviser explained when she moved from being a 'Recruit' and up a stage, 'There were certain things you had to do and when you had done all of those things and had attended for 6 months, then you made your promise, and you became a Guide. It's called becoming a Tenderfoot.'

The adults interviewed, who joined the organisation as girls, reflected on their experience of the programme they were involved in, concluding they allowed them to work with what they as an individual were interested in at any given time. A County Adviser spoke of 'an 8-point programme. Every year you had to do something from each theme, or point, but it did not say what you had to do, it could be anything.' Another Guide Leader recalled:

'When the new programme came out, that was fantastic, I still have mine. This new book had all the badges in it. You had trefoil badges, yellow, green, and red. Yellow was first, for doing so many challenges over the year and you progressed till you had the four colours.'

*(Female, Guide Leader, GA member since 10 years old, age 60s)*

Many interviewees spoke with aspiration, achievement, pride, and happiness when remembering their badges. Two Youth Workers who were Guides in the 1970s explained,

'It was the badges. I used to be dead envious of people who had loads. I don't know if you still do it, then you had these little circular badges. You used to get a booklet and you used to look through it and see what badge you wanted to do. I used to love mine because I had a mixture of colours. I did accident prevention one (a big red triangle).'

*(Female, Guide from 10 – 14 years old, JNC qualified level 6 Youth Worker, age 50s)*

'I loved badges. I loved doing badges. I loved doing something where you achieved something. I remember doing cookery, I remember doing needlework. I was absolutely really good at doing that, I am quite a good needleworker. There were all sorts of badges, I remember my sleeve... my sleeve was full of badges. I was so proud of my badges and, my Mam she could not sew, I had to sew them on myself.'

*(Female, Guide from 10 – 14 years old, JNC qualified level 6 Youth Worker, age 40s)*

Similarly, the parent of a current Guide also spoke of the importance, of the badges for her daughter,

'She was, and still is super keen on the badges. Sometimes they do things, like her and her friend that she goes with, they did their Mixology Badge. She loves the badges even though she is 12 now. She is 'Most likely to get through all the

badges in the badge book' award. She is obsessed. I think she puts them on her t-shirt. I think to myself, 'when you outgrow that t-shirt, you are going to be really cross.'

*(Female, parent of current Guide, age 30's)*

The ability for each programme to be maintained within a framework which allows individuality and flexibility yet adapts to the context of women at a certain period in time, is what one former Guide and Youth Worker regarded as a conduit for individual autonomy. She was able to navigate her own pathway, 'It was the *(hand)*book which encouraged young people to be good citizens on their own. It was not about a Leader telling them what to do, it was about being able to use the handbook for you.'

The current programme continues to work within a flexible framework, supporting individual growth through interest and personal responsibility. Maintaining the fundamentals of the original programme, 'the core skills are still there... the camping. It is fun and a lot of Guiding has kept the fun element in, and it has also progressed. The skills you learn are more up to date, like technology.'

A Division Commissioner discussed the breadth of the current programme which offers, 'loads of opportunities, enough to pick and choose, and the girls seem to be happy enough, otherwise they would not come back. People buy into the programme and keep it going.' Others reported feeling that the programme continues to enable self-governance and relevance in all aspects of a Guide's life,

‘A lot of the programmes you can do at home, and they come with pages full of work, and they (Guides) are really interested in what they are doing.’

*(Female, JNC qualified level 3 Youth Worker and GA Young Leader, age 20’s)*

‘You have girls doing more personal values now, your own well-being, which you did not use to get.’

*(Female, Guide Leader and parent of Guide, age 50’s)*

However, some adults feel the most recent programme, compared with the original and the 1968 version, has become too rigid, formal, and bureaucratic and is moving away from the aim of ‘CHARACTER BUILDING TOWARDS HAPPY CITIZENSHIP *through natural rather than artificial means*’ (Baden-Powell, 1918, p. 8).

One former Guide leader commented she felt the programme was becoming ‘artificial’ explained that she understood, ‘Girl guiding wants to have a more consistent programme, to make sure that every girl gets the best experience, but that has meant the programme becomes quite prescriptive with ‘skills builders’ and ‘interest badges,’ lots of tick boxing, lots of assessment, so I think if you are going to follow the programme exactly then your autonomy is reduced.’ A TG Member agreed, commenting on her own experience:

‘When we used to give the Guides choices of things to do, they did not want to do all of the new programme stuff because this is what they did at school. They wanted to come to do the old stuff, you know cooking or craft or plays. Mine was obsessed with acting, things like that. They did not want to do the new stuff as they said, ‘this is what we do at school, we don’t want to come to Guides and do that, we want to come to Guides and have fun.’

*(Female, Trefoil Guild member and GA member since 10 years old, age 50’s)*

The ‘essence’ of guiding, from observing and participating in a range of unit activities, was identified by a Leader, when reflecting on her own transition from a Guide to a Leader, as the ability to adapt, to take and include what is relevant and meaningful to the individual Unit:

‘By experiencing what they (*another unit*) did I decided “No I am doing my own”. I looked at one delivery and thought, that is not how I want to do it. It was too old-fashioned. I do agree with some of the traditions and the sharing of history, I like that part, so I kept that and added things that expand these girls’ imaginations, to think differently, to think outside of the world that they were in. To me, that’s what Guiding is about.’

*(Female, Trefoil Guild member and GA member since 10 years old, age 50’s)*

Insights based on my own experience of volunteering with the guides as a participant observer is relevant here. I was trained on how to deliver the recently launched 2017 programme. Based on ‘recipe’ style activity cards, categorised by age range allowing



for small overlap and intended for the young women to do themselves, the group I worked with found the activities easy to achieve, unengaging and not challenging for them.

Achievement is recorded against an individual on an online database. It is disempowering as the individual does not have access and is not able to amend or record themselves, unlike recording in Guide handbooks. In another shift, moving away from the community 'expert' and exploring learning through conversation, Guides provide evidence, which is often a photograph or a product on the completion of a task and present it to the Leader, who then endorses completion by recording online. A Leader is assigned to record progress and relies on individual access to technology, technological literacy, and time to spend time at home inputting data. This shift mirrors my experience of providing a curriculum-based evidence trail as a Local Authority youth worker, focusing on the measurement of young people against preconceived themes and outcomes as opposed to the learning process, recognised, understood, and conceptualised by the individual.

The findings of this research identified past, and present GA members had found value and enjoyment in the contextual process of learning over the achievement of an outcome or product. Badges were and are viewed as an acknowledgement, representation of individual achievement and personal agency. Arguably, the shift towards a more formal, curriculum-based programme, where individual autonomy and agency are reduced or removed, reduces the fun and risks of replication.

## **Experiential learning**

Today guiding offers a balanced and varied programme providing opportunities to acquire skills and learn 'by doing' (Girlguiding, 2016, p. 28), mainly aimed at nurturing individual interest towards a desire for the knowledge attained through collective experiences and belonging. 'Badge work' and the handbook both symbolise and guide the learning process of acknowledging skills and developing expertise. Of the adults interviewed all could recall learning within this structure, with many of them gaining numerous badges throughout their membership,

'I became a Badge collector, I had 36 Guide badges, I got my Queens Guide,'  
*(Female, Division Commissioner, GA member since 7 years old, age 50's)*

'I used to be dead envious of people who had loads. You used to get a booklet and you used to look through it and see what badge you wanted to do. I used to love mine because I had a mixture of colours. I did my entertainers' badge, and it had a lovely yellow face that matched my red triangle, the first aid one. I've still got them. And my thrush badge, I was a thrush and it had dodgy legs.'

*(Female, JNC level 6 qualified Youth Worker and former Guide from 10 – 14 years old, age 50's)*

For those Guides interviewed by peers, the recognition of learning from participation in activities fell into three areas. These are listed below, followed by examples given by the interviewees.

1. Gaining practical skills

'How to bake.' GG3 (age 10)

'How to make fires when you are at camp.' GG7 (age 12)

'How to practice archery.' GG12 (age 11)

2. The acquisition of knowledge

'We learn a lot about stuff that's happened in the past, especially the Girl Guides and women, and how it has come to where it is now.' GG2 (11)

'We learn about the history and what's influenced us, like Stonewall, and I can apply it to some of my lessons at school and it has helped to improve my grades.' GG13 (age 12)

3. Social Skills

'I learned how to communicate more with people.' GG4 (age 11)

'We learn how to respect people and life skills.' GG5 (age 12)

'I have gained the confidence to talk to other people and also make new friends with people in different schools.' GG9 (age 10)

'I learn to listen to others and make new friends.' GG12 (age 11)

'I learn how to be nice to people.' GG8 and peer researcher (age 14)

In addition to learning, Guides also recognised enjoyment within the methods used. One Guide explained enjoying dialogical collaboration within small groups, as she learned from exposure to different perspectives and concrete experiences, 'I love questioning the world around us and the ethics. What's right and what's wrong with the World? I hear different things than I hear from the school.'

However, the experiences interviewees recalled learning, were those which were new, posed a challenge and were fun. One Young Leader explains:

'We encourage and not force them to do something they don't want to. I love it when they get challenged and it's successful. Their faces are so happy and that's part of growing up and becoming the adult you are going to become, and you never forget that feeling, that 'WoooAAAH.'

*(Female, Young Leader, GA member since 5 years old, age, 18)*

Interviewees acknowledged subjectivity in challenges, positioning learning as contextual to themselves, whilst simultaneously occurring within the groups. A TG member recalled a Guide in her childhood unit who 'had never had baked beans until she had them at camp. Things like that you take so much for granted.' A parent commented that her daughter 'absolutely loved the independence, when she went for her first meal with the Guides.'

Of all the learning experiences reflected upon, participation in camping held the most memories and made learning fun for all interviewees. All acknowledged the activity which provided the most opportunities for challenges and growth.

Two TG members spoke of fond and everlasting memories made during camping, recalling the joy of their experiences,

'I went camping when you rode on a back of a lorry. There was no toilet and you had to use the latrines that you dug out. The only running water you had, was to go and get from the farmer because it was just a farmers' field and to get washed there was a stream running at the bottom of the field and that's what you had to get washed in. We had a great time.'

*(Female, Trefoil Guild member, GA member since 10 years old, age 70's)*

'These are the things you remember, that stay with you, the fun things. We stayed in bunks, and they were four high as they had been used for the soldiers for their training. The war was finished, and I met a girl called Leila and I thought 'Oh!'

what a lovely name as I had never heard it before. We were all mixed and about 10 or 11 and it was lovely, and we would all sing. But that day just stands out and for all, we were wet, yet we were still laughing. We clomped in the mud.'

*(Female, Trefoil Guild member, GA member since 10 years old, former Youth Worker, age 70's)*

Some identified camp as currently providing opportunities to do new things:

'At camp, we do loads of different activities. We do rock climbing, shooting, and archery. We sleep here, we eat food, we do the stuff. That is my favorite thing.'

*GG1 (age 11)*

'I think the learning things and the opportunities they get at camp like climbing, archery; there is so many they get to do, in a controlled manner.'

*(Female, Trefoil Guild member, joined GA as an adult volunteer, age 60's)*

One County Adviser explained in guiding, 'Guides, not Leaders' are responsible for running camp and it is here that they find challenges which they must surmount as and for the collective group. She continued,

'They did their own breakfast. They had to get themselves up, get ready have their breakfast in their own little area and as long as they were ready by 10.30 in the

morning, it did not matter what time they got up or how they did it. They learned by doing things, new things and making mistakes.'

*(Female, County Adviser, joined GA as an adult volunteer, aged 70's)*

As a guide commented:

'I have done camp and I like it because it is fun, and it is something different. It's an opportunity to get away from all the busy streets and be in an open space. Camp is good as you get a chance to do things you have not done before, and you get a chance to be with other people. We wanted to stay up one night, all night. X said okay, but we had to prepare some food for everyone for the next day. We made cakes and washed up but were too tired so went to bed.'

*GG9 (age 10)*

While this County Adviser and Trainer offered another perspective,

'Guiders camps were all very popular. We always had loads coming to us as well. They might have already got camping qualifications, but they came along as a patrol and stayed for the fun of it. The camping was definitely a draw. Whenever we meet any old Guides, they always talk about camp, 'we did this and we did that'. They never talk about getting a badge or what they did in the unit, it is always about camping.'

*(Female, County Adviser, GA member since 7 years old, age 70's)*

For some, international residential have provided new experiences within an unfamiliar context and opportunities which are extended to both Guides and adult members.

'I have spent three weeks in Mexico as an adult doing voluntary service, and community work and stayed at 'Our Cabana'. We actually saw Mexico; we did not see the tourist resorts. We worked with children and young people and the elderly from the community that were there celebrating the Festival of the Dead. We got to go into their homes, which to me was an absolute eye-opener! Their water and their electricity, everything you would usually do in a house were outside. I saw it for what it is, and not just the tourist part. The Festival of the Dead is seen as a celebration of the return of the spirit of their loved one, so there is a day when they invite everybody into their home. On the second day, you go into the cemetery and decorate everything with orange and yellow chrysanthemums and candles. It is a big family fun day and then on the third day, it was family time and that was quite an experience. We were representing Girl Guiding UK and there were about 100 people or more, there were people from America, France, the Philippines, and the UK so I met international people as well and got out and about in the local community.'

*(Female, Guide Leader, GA member since 7 years old, age 50's)*

The informal education programme of guiding recognises opportunities for learning, are not only found in Unit meetings or camp but within all aspects of a member's life



and is therefore structured to include experiences both in and outside of guiding. One parent reflected on how her daughter had embedded the guiding process and informal education in different elements of her life,

‘She and her friend, who is also Guide, do badges together. We quite often get together with a group of families and when everyone was at our house, they did their mixology badge, cocktails, and everyone had a little taste.’

*(Female, parent of current Guide, aged 30’s)*

The parent also recognised that her daughter transposes her learning across situations:

‘She was doing a recycling badge, so she was making things for that, and we had gone to see an art gallery where they were making proggy mat pictures, so then she has linked the two together. It’s going to take the rest of her life I think, but she has started making a little carpet, by reusing materials.’

*(Female, parent of current Guide, aged 30’s)*

## **Impact: Knowledge and Skills for life**

**‘Things that are just embedded in me, like dropping litter; I wouldn’t do that. Looking after nature, saying please and thank you, having the skills to talk to people, is all things I learned through guiding. I have said on many occasions everything I was, am, and all the skills I learned, became useful for me at school (*as a teacher*) which I learned from the Guides. If I had not been a member of the Guide Association I don’t know where I would have learned them.’**

**County Adviser**

Guiding asserts that participation in its activities and roles affords opportunities to gain valuable experience which, as a Leader explains, ‘will stay with them and provide for their interest in the future.’

One Youth Worker and former Guide explained, ‘You always had to have your bit of string and your diary, so it taught you to be prepared, organised and responsible, and then you sort of bring that into other areas in your life. I did.’ Similarly, one Leader exemplified her learning of the Guide motto, ‘Be Prepared’:

‘Things you should carry in your pocket: pencil, paper, string, safety pin, your money for the phone. You laid them out and you got points for your patrol and if your knot at the back of your tie was not a reef knot, you lost a point. If there were not three fingers space from your tie to your belt, you lost a point. That totally

disciplined you without you realising it, and it was a good discipline which follows you through life. Someone's button came off at the clubhouse last week and they asked for a safety pin, and I had one.'

*(Female, Guide Leader, GA member since 10 years old, age 60's)*

Additionally, interviewees recognised themselves as active learners within these opportunities. Both the adult and current Guide interviewees were all aware of the contextual relevance of their informal education through guiding's value-based ethos:

'I learnt life lessons a bit. They help us. They are called life lessons for a reason; they are **actual** things.' GG16 (age 10)

'You learn how to talk to people normally instead of being scared and you learn how to communicate and the practical stuff as well, like cooking and sewing, however hard it might be.' GG8 (age 10)

'The Guides help a lot of young people be who they want to be, and I think it's a really useful thing to have in the country, and the World.' GG18 and peer researcher (age 13)

'I think it teaches to get on or not to get on with people. I think it helps you become an individual really.'

*(Female, JNC qualified level 3 Youth Worker, former Guide, age 50's)*

Country Advisers explained their adult involvement in the organisation continues to build upon and further enhance their learning and skills. They have learned how to:

‘Get on with people, talk to people, resolve conflict because you have to come to agreements. You never hear people yelling and shouting at each other at a Guide meeting. They might have different opinions, but you do conflict resolution without thinking about it. You learn tolerance. I mean I have been with some very awful people, people I would not even choose to be with, but they were Guiders, and you were with them.’

A County Adviser explained that speakers regularly attend their meetings, ‘At our last meeting there was a Lady from Chester-le Street, she was good and lively, and she was telling us about the archives’ and a TG member highlighted her personal learning continued as a Guider, as she ‘did do things that I would never have done, like abseiling down a building, because I don’t like heights. I learned a lot.’

In addition, the father of a current Guide recognises his daughter learning from guiding, ‘She has learned how to work with other people, about political events that are occurring in the world and also skills that can help you in everyday life.’ Others said their daughters ‘get confidence from going (*to Guides*) and self-esteem’ and ‘It gives the girls an outlook, they may not necessarily have had. It was socially for X; it helped X; it promoted her independence.’

Reflections from my fieldwork journal identified that learning within the value-based framework was continual. Some interviewees, reflecting during the interview, identified further learning from their guiding experience as relevant to their 'here and now.' One former Guide recalled learning The Country Code, (which she is still able to recite) which she abides by today when rambling. A Youth Worker and former Guide recalled how to relay information effectively and speedily, '20 steps running then 20 steps walking and that's how you would relay a message,' as well as the practicalities of 'how to pack a suitcase. I can always remember how you fold your socks around in your suitcase. I still do both.'

One Guide Leader considered skills learned and practiced in guiding may influence important life decisions, 'it might be whatever they have learned can contribute to them making a decision about their chosen career path,' a concept supported by adult interviewees, who during their interviews reflected on learning they have carried into their occupations. A Youth Worker recalled when on her first trip with a group of young people 'organising my little group into smaller ones, it was easier. Maybe because I had been a Sixer. Maybe I just picked that type of stuff up and went along with it.' Whilst a TG was fully aware of the learning she has embedded in all aspects of her life, 'What I have learned through Guiding I have carried forward in my job and everyday life.' Another Youth Worker and former Guide reflected that the social skills she acquired as a Guide underpinned her choice of career, 'Probably with me it's what sparked my interest, what it led on to. I was used to working with people, wanting to do stuff in the community,' and a former teacher explained 'I learned leadership skills, and I would not have learned those through teaching college. They (*teaching college*) taught me how to teach. They gave you an

academic background and then they let you go and practice, but they didn't give you other skills, they did not give you people skills, leadership skills.' Elaborating, she recalled how much learning from guiding had transferred into her work:

'Strangely enough a lot of things in the way Guiding was run, I would use. We used to take children away to various field study centres, and when you were there, you had to wash up. I used to run it just like a Guide camp. We did not call them patrols but we had various groups doing things and we used to have awards for the tidiest dormitory and the quietest dorm and the 'parrot'. You got the parrot if you were in the noisiest dorm. They were all the sort of things that we had at Guide camp and that spilt over into my professional life. I knew that was successful in Guide camp, that when you took the children away it was better than just going away and just saying 'you six do that' because they knew where they were at with their own group. They just liked it because children like to know what they have to do, they like structure.'

*(Female, JNC level 7 qualified Youth Worker and former Guide from 10 – 14 years old, age 50's)*

Others recognised passing on and applying the skills learned in guiding into their work. As a former Court Usher explained, 'The skills that we obtain through guiding can go on to your work life, loads of skills I have got from Guiding I have taken to the Courts when I have suggested things, people have said 'what a good idea, and then adopted them.'

Interestingly during the interview, Youth Workers and former guides reflected upon the lack of opportunities available now to acquire life skills within contemporary youth work, especially when working from a deficit model. One explained, 'working in targeted services, where I am now, I am working with people who don't know how to tidy a room, who don't know how to do anything for themselves and won't learn these skills. If they won't or can't do it, someone else does it for them.'

Interviewees also identified adopting and living the guiding values as their personal ethos. One Leader describes herself as 'a very independent person. It made you independent. They would say "Go and do that!" and you would think well I will, and you just did it,' and another explains her love for organisation and discipline in her life stems from her participation in guides, 'Even when there was no inspection you polished your shoes, it was good discipline you have for life. I still polish my shoes, a lot of people don't.' Similarly, a Youth Worker identified, her adult volunteering activities as rooted in her own experience of the guiding ethos,

'Yeah, it's really weird, you never think to yourself, I was a volunteer, but I probably was in a way I did not recognise. In a way, you just did stuff for and with people because you did that in Guides.'

*(Female, JNC level 6 qualified Youth Worker and former Guide from 10 – 14 years old, age 50's)*

Others spoke of the values of guiding, explained by a Young Leader, as 'remaining with them throughout their lives. I have learned a lot from Guiding, that it is not about just being a good citizen or learning leadership skills. It's about learning to be comfortable in your own skin, even if you don't know it' and a County Adviser summarising, 'well...you could just be you. It teaches you that.'

At a simple level, impact as an outcome of guiding can be identified through the number and types of badges acquired by the number of members. However, due to the longevity of the organisation, member retention and their connections, it can identify the impact on the lives of individuals as well as itself.

Member retention is central to organisational strategy, structure, and operation. Many of its members stay or return in adulthood. As guiding is exercised in context, organisational links are forged and maintained through personal as well as structural relationships. Links to these relationships, with both past and current members, allow for transition throughout lives, whilst preserving a two-way process of information exchange of and between women in context. In this way, organisational impact, its strengths, and weaknesses are both identified and acted upon. Interviewees provided examples of people they worked with who through conversation and community links, identified the impact in their lives:

'You do meet some girls later on and they say, 'I remember this' or 'I remember doing that.'

*(Female, Trefoil Guild member, GA member since 10 years old, age 50's)*



'One parent, whose daughter is about 30, shouted to me when I was shopping, "The tin-can cooking, they are still doing it! They still love to do it and now her grandchildren do too." These little things are in their mind and the girls remember it and they show their children and their grandchildren.'

*(Female, Guide Leader, GA member since 10 years old, age 60's)*

'One of the loveliest things I have ever had was, I was at a Guider's meeting and this Guider came up to me and said 'You probably don't remember me but I remember you because on my first camp, when I was about 11, I was really homesick and you let me come and peel the potatoes with you and it helped' I don't remember her, but it's nice to hear I helped.' T.G member.

*(Female, Trefoil Guild member, GA member since 10 years old, age 50's)*

### **Opportunities**

The capacity of the GA to provide new and challenging opportunities for members to engage in 'doing' whilst learning was commented upon by every ex/member interviewee. All recalled participating in at least one enjoyable experience and learning from the conversations within. A TG member recalled a trip to Denmark being her most memorable learning experience, 'It was my birthday when we were there, and it cost £48.00 for the fortnight. We absolutely had a fantastic opportunity, learned lots, and had lots of happy memories.' Another TG member recalled being

chosen to be 'the Chief Guide for Princess Margaret.' For the current Guide it was 'The Big Gig last October, it was really good and enjoyable to watch all of these other Guide Units from all across the country, come to one place and celebrate. I know how the Tube works now.'

The Guide who enjoyed her trip to Denmark, on becoming a Leader later provided a similar opportunity for her Guide Unit:

'We took our Guides to London. We stopped at the Guide HQ and organized it so we spoke to our MP who was Hilary Armstrong at the time. We got all of them (*Guides*) round the Palace of Westminster and because she got more than she was allowed to have, she got Mo Molam to help. We saw a show and we shopped and took them to Harrods and all the sites, and on Sunday morning we went to Buckingham Palace and went through the gates for the Changing of the Guard and stood on parade for that. Some of the girls, when I see them, they remember. They remember the sort of things that are quite big. That gives me satisfaction.'

*(Female, Trefoil Guild member, GA member since 10 years old, age 60's)*

Opportunities were also provided at a local level. A Youth Worker and former Guide recalled her most exciting adventure occurring in the next town to hers, 'I did something in Jarrow, in a big hall. I don't recall doing outside or international camp, but I definitely did stay overnight in some old hall that Jarrow Guides used. There were loads of us and I loved it. It was mint!'

Opportunities were also afforded to individuals in recognition of personal achievement. One Country Adviser recalled the opportunity for three of her Guides, who:

‘...got their Queens Guide Award and went down to London to get it awarded by Princess Margaret. They went to Princess Margaret’s flat in Kensington Palace and she (*Princess Margaret*) started to talk to them about the garden because they were looking out of the window at the beautiful gardens. Well, they lived in terraced houses, so they only had back yards. So, you know, Guiding gave these girls an exciting adventure to London and to meet Royalty.’

*(Female, Country Adviser, GA member since 7 years old, age 70’s)*

Many of the international opportunities provided are accessible through the five GA World Centres. After training, a Leader is permitted to take her Unit abroad, which for many Leaders, becomes a regular aspect of their programme. One Leader recalls ‘We went to Switzerland about six or seven times, Austria once. It gives the girls the opportunity to go to ‘Our Chalet’ [one of the five World Centres of WAGGS]. ATG member recalls as a Guide she ‘camped abroad with Guides in India, Mexico, Switzerland. I have been to four World Centres,’ revisiting as a Leader when she ‘took a North East regional group of Young Leaders to India, we went for Christmas and New Year.’ The international opportunities are not just open to members when linked to the GA programme, membership affords access on an individual level, as a TG member explained ‘six of us went to Mexico for a birthday. Guiding has given me

great opportunities and some good laughs. I have met new and interesting people along the way, I have had the occasion to go abroad and to the UK.'

### **Group work**

Collaborative learning in the GA is often located in small group work. These groups (Patrols) or 'fraternity gangs' (Baden-Powell, 1918, p. 186), consist of six to eight young women, inclusive of two specific leadership roles, under a collective identity. Here girls 'find themselves needed, trusted, employed and often in positions of leadership,' (Fryer,1921). Within unit meetings Guides work within patrol groups experiencing and learning together, as one TG member recalls;

'We used to have three-quarters of an hour where we worked in small groups, where we had different roles. There is always someone there to support you, and you help each other. You learn from each other. You bring people along with you,' another TG found 'you to play different people's strengths.'

*(Female, Trefoil Guild member, joined the GA as an adult volunteer, age 70's)*

Additional to collective learning, interviewees experienced a feeling of shared identity, as explained by a parent, 'it's 'belonging to it' that's good,' this point was echoed by a County Adviser, 'it is wanting to belong, you want to be a part of the Guide movement you want to belong to.' The benefits of belonging to a small group were identified by a parent, who as a Guide herself concluded that working in groups enabled people to 'get confidence from each other and self-esteem I think, from just being part of a group.'

The importance of belonging was highlighted by a Youth Worker and former Guide who always felt that she was a bit different, commenting that ‘Belonging under an identity of a patrol emblem, organisational uniform and responsibility of roles made you feel included, a part of a larger entity.’ A County Adviser explains this importance by linking identity to the visual acknowledgement of collective identity by wearing a uniform, ‘I mean the uniform was meant to make people feel a part, so they should be uniformed. The girls are at an age where identity is important.’

Of the Youth Workers interviewed who had been Guides, all identified the uniform as a significant symbol representing and evoking identity and belonging:

‘It was just smart, and you felt like you belonged. That sounds really ridiculous now, as an older person, I now know my place in the world, and I am quite happy with it. But then I had no idea, and I was somewhere where I belonged.’

*(Female, JNC qualified level 6 Youth Worker, former Guide, age 40’s)*

‘The girls are at an age where identity is important. I was a Thrush...I had a thrush badge. I was a Seconder because I wasn’t the Leader of the little group, so I got the two stripes. Some of them used to look lovely in their uniform, it was all pristine, and I wanted to be like that as I was always like a bloody unmade bed.’

*(Female, JNC qualified level 3 Youth Worker, former Guide, age 50’s)*

'I remember me Gran bought my uniform which I loved. It was a blue shirt, an air force blue shirt, I cannot remember what skirt, I am sure it was a proper skirt you had to wear... Ahh, it was a navy skirt and the tie which crossed over at the front then you put your badge on... and a hat... Oh my goodness a hat! Loved it!'

*(Female, JNC qualified level 6 Youth Worker, former Guide, age 40's)*

A current Leader summarised the importance of a sense of belonging to her identity-based group (*patrol*). She described it as having:

'a closeness about it, you were special, you were in this uniformed organisation. You did not realise it then you just went to Guides and had a great time. Belonging creates a feel-good factor and you belong to something. I mean we are the biggest uniformed organisation.'

*(Female, Guide Leader, GA member since 10 years old, age 60's)*

The current Guides, interviewed by their peers also placed significance on the uniform as symbolic and igniting a sense of belonging:

'Wearing a uniform feels like I know I am a part of it, and I am not just like another person.' GG4 (*age 11*)

All the parents interviewed confirmed their daughters enjoyed wearing the uniform with one saying, 'she runs home from school, gets changed into her uniform and waits well over an hour for it to be time to leave,' and another who reported, 'she loved the uniform, thought it was cracking!'

One Youth Worker reflected on her current organisation who would 'say they don't have a uniform' but have clothing which symbolises organisational identity. Going on to describe clothing similar to the current Guide uniform, 'polo shirts and hoodies' adorning an 'organisational logo', she wondered, as she was speaking, if this was actually a uniform. Another Youth Worker explained, 'We don't do uniforms, but when we have events, we have crew shirts and if you turn up without a crew shirt you get one because people need to know who you are, why you are there and what your role is. Because then everyone knows what's happening.'

The same attire may be a uniform in one context and not in another. The GA adults interviewed felt the current Guide uniform still fosters identity but diminishes opportunities for learning through collective responsibility and identity as the practices attached to its maintenance or representation no longer exists. It can be mix-matched and does not need ironing or polishing:

'If you look at (*traditional uniform*) Guiding there's none. I love the polo shirts and the hoodies, don't get me wrong, the uniform is still good, but we have lost elements attached to it. Those that needed a little work were removed.'

(*Female, Guide Leader, GA member since 10 years old, age 50's*)

'I think the uniform now has gone a bit too far, we don't want the formal uniforms we used to have, but now they look a mess.'

*(Female, Guide Leader, joined the GA as an adult volunteer, age 50's)*

'When I was a Guide, my uniform meant a lot to me because I was very proud as it was very smart, but as the uniform has evolved it's become a mis-match and became Ragamuffin.'

*(Female, County Adviser, GA member since 7 years old, age 70's)*

For one Leader the importance of belonging through collective identity has diminished in line with the physical adaptations of the uniform:

'I am a great believer in uniform. As well as coming from a police background, I also come from a military background, and I think the *(Guide)* uniform does not go far enough. It is not a uniform as such now, it's just like a PPE, just wear something you can get dirty and is easily washed. You don't actually have to take care of it, and it does not stand out from other organisations. For example, when we were at the Remembrance Parade, we marched past a group of women who said, 'Oh who are they' and when someone said they are the Girl Guides she said, 'I did not think they were still around', and I thought how bad is that? No one recognises it. Girls liked the uniform inspection, as when you have an inspection you get praise and kids love praise, it lets them show pride in their group, trusting each other, and to be honest I don't think they get enough praise.'



*(Female, Guide Leader, joined the GA as an adult volunteer, age 50's)*

## **Fun!**

Interviewees cited 'fun' as the element which needed to be present in learning opportunities. Fun was the connector, the enabler of learning. Current and former members of the GA all referred to fun, leading to happy memories and an important element needed to embed learning. This often emerged from the most basic of activities, but all needed to be a shared experience, within trusted relationships which made it fun:

'I used to love the Guides because we used to go to Cleadon Hills and roast potatoes, but they were still raw and we ate them (laugh), you did daft things, but you did not care.'

*(Female, Trefoil Guild member, GA member since 10 years old, former Youth Worker, age 70's)*

'I enjoyed the Guides, you did a lot of fun things, I remember on one trip X had her bra on the washing line so we had this thing where we would pull it and put ice in it and put it in the fridge and harden it.'

*(Female, Trefoil Guild member, GA member since 7 years old, age 50's)*

'Fun, great fun! Guiding works because it is fun, yes, it's just fun.'

*(Female, County Adviser, GA member since 10 years old, age 70's)*

'We do like fun activities. Now we are at Moorhouse, and some have done BBQ, sports, cooking, baking and all sorts of things like that. And scaring the others in the night!' GG1 (*age11*)

'In Guides we make stuff, we laugh and do challenges sometimes, we once tried to make a chair out of balloons and did the chubby bunny challenge.' GG16 (*age 10*)

## **Association**

**'Your first step is to study the girl herself; to recognise her likes and dislikes.'**

**(Lord Baden-Powell Of Gilwell, 1918, p. 183)**

This section looks at the multi relational association members have with guiding and how these relationships enable them to 'be' and to 'become' as they manoeuvre in the communities they function in. Association is considered a fundamental characteristic of informal education and as stated in the Albemarle Report (1960), a primary aim of the youth service, (Smith, 2012). The importance of association, of the educative power of collectively working, is not set in a predetermined, linear form of stages, but within the consciousness of relationships, in this case the relationships with an organisation and the people in it. Informal education is found within this association, in the process of running organisations, participating in them and the connecting relationships.

### **Being and becoming**

Unit connections to the lives of young women is set in multiple pathways, with dialogue and reciprocity holding a central position. During my PO I regularly witnessed 2collective and individual decision-making and connectivity within conversation. One Guide Leader explained as a 'Unit Guide' they all engage in a collective process of creating a time-framed plan of activities:

'We sit down with the girls and ask them what they want to do. Last term we got them to write a list of the things they had always wanted to do and while some of them were ridiculous, like sky diving, some were ice skating, and crafts and things. We look through the programme and fit our list in.'

*(Female, Guide Leader, GA member since 7 years old, age 50's)*

Individual and collective association was explained by a Leader as 'interlaced, they all choose an individual activity' which are then combined in a programme activity which 'fit into the badges, not the other way round.' The ability to include and encourage individual and collective input both maintains interest and actualises need, firmly rooting the work in contextual association. One Leader explained, 'It is almost like shaping them, helping them to take their thoughts and ideas forward, which helps to make them the person they are and want to be.'

The importance of acknowledging association was explained by a Leader who said, 'We then say 'right this week we are doing such and such activity, who chose this? They are so happy saying 'Oh that was me!' so they know we are doing their activity

and that we have not just asked them to pick and then forgotten about them. We are actually seeing it through.'

Additionally, I frequently witnessed individual learning and connectivity between peers. It was informative and motivational as many 'sharing sessions' were linked to 'transitional points' common to the lives of the girls and young women. One Young Leader regularly shared her life experiences and transitional milestones with younger girls explaining this process as 'I can kind of pass on my skills, what I have learned from Guiding opportunities, being at Uni, from doing my A levels to doing my GCSEs, so it's like shared knowledge which goes down to each level.'

The ethos framing knowledge creation and sharing is transient across all members, as one Leader explained:

'We all cannot be good at everything. I think it is girls seeing us as women who are good at different things and not good at everything. They see us being open about it, saying 'To be honest with you, I don't really like doing that, but I will do it' it makes them feel that they don't have to do everything well and if they really, really don't want to do it well that is fine, they can do something else. I think that's what Guiding should be about.'

*(Female, Guide leader, Joined the GA as an adult volunteer, age 50's)*

## Community Links

Delanty, (2009) argues contemporary community, rather than be understood through a descriptive meaning such as culture or geographical location, is based upon new kinds of belonging where individuals simultaneously occupy multiple communities. I argue it is in this sense, Guiding has roots in the communities it emerges from. This can be seen both strategically and operationally in the structure of the organisation. Associative links are maintained and sustained between communities making them distinct and intrinsic, reinforcing belonging and identity, as a TG member explained:

‘In 1963 when I was 22. I lived round the corner (*from the Guide meeting venue*), just a street away. When I got married, I was in the next street so they (*Brownies*) used to come knocking on the door and say, ‘Is Brown Owl coming out?’ and my husband would say ‘she will be there in 2 minutes’ and I would say, “just let them wait in the passage.”

*(Female, Trefoil Guild member, GA member since 10 years old, former Youth Worker, age 70’s)*

One former Guide reflected on these strong connections, ‘It was more or less for the immediate community, everyone went,’ which in turn made membership a community tradition, as a Division Commissioner recalls ‘I went because everyone else who was seven, lived near me and was a girl, went as well.’

Findings from the interviews demonstrated many Leaders had existing links to the communities their Unit was connected to, enabling new relationships to form within

these networks of existing knowledge and understanding. A TG member recalled her Leader was also the community midwife who had delivered many of the Guides in her Unit, 'one night she (*Leader*) got the Guides in a circle and pointed out all the Guides she had brought into the World. She remembered everything about each of us. She said I was knee-deep in the snow because I was born in January.'

The adult members who were and had been Leaders saw their relationship with communities as being motivational and reciprocal. For some it was gratification, as one Commissioner explained, 'Giving something back to your own community, you know, that feeling. I get a level of satisfaction' and for a County Adviser 'it was my social life.' Another's the decision to join was politically informed, 'Thatcher destroyed communities, she broke it down and we are still going through it. It is still going on, with all 'I' and 'me,' whilst for another, it was to extend her positive experience to others, 'I got a lot from guiding, I want to share what I got. To put something back and have a good time.'

## Guiding as Community

**‘The great friendliness of Guides is also an enormous help, especially in the case of the girl who is alone in the world,’  
(Fryer, 1921, p.10) .**

Guiding represents community which it is ‘communicative’ (Delanty. 2009, p. 54), in that it is ‘formed in collective action’. Data from my research suggests guiding is a community where members feel a sense of identity, belonging, value and inclusion, for building personal identities which Delanty (2009) suggests there is an ‘urgent’ need for in in a flexible, neoliberal economy. One reason for this is the familial and friendship links connected through guiding. Of the three sections in the Unit I was directly involved with, five of the seven adult volunteers had been Guides as girls and another joined as a result of her daughter’s involvement. A Commissioner explained this was the dominant model for most Units:

‘X is nearly 50 and she was a Guide. She left, but her daughters joined and are now both Leaders and when they came back to lead Rainbows/Guides she got roped in again to help, and then her niece joined. So now her, her daughters and her niece all get their long service awards at the same time.’

*(Female, County Commissioner, GA members since 7 years old, age 50’s)*

She expanded on these connections explaining the ability of the organisation to retain members as many adults end up working alongside their childhood Guide Leader, so transitioning their relationship:

‘I had spent so much time (*as a child*), particularly with C and H who was like 12 and 20 years older than me, it naturally becomes a firm relationship.’

*(Female, County Commissioner, GA members since 7 years old, age 50’s)*

A TG member described this dynamic connection as, natural. ‘I might not see them for a year or two, yet we can sit down together, and you would think we had met up just yesterday.’

The organisational structure enables connections to form, grow and transition by providing space and opportunity to continue to make and re-affirm associations. One TG member provides the example:

‘It was at the Gala in X and there were people from all over. I was talking to a lady who I had previously met when I was a newly qualified Young Leader and I was asked to go to Scarborough, and she was there. I had never seen her since then. She recognised and remembered me at the meeting, we picked up where we left off.’

*(Female, Trefoil Guild member, joined the GA as an adult volunteer, aged 60’s)*



Similarly, another TG member and archivist describe opportunities which enabled connections across time and positions in the organisation:

'I was in the (*news*)paper shop and there were some Guide photographs in the paper, and I said I was in this paper. I am pointing at me in the photograph, looking at it over the counter and who should come in but X (*fellow TG member*). I explained that I was looking at myself in the photograph, and do you know, X was in the same photograph! I had no idea that X had been to the same thing as me and then I should come across her all these years later.'

*(Female, Trefoil Guild member, GA member since 10 years old, age 70's)*

'X, she is now 94. We were at camp together 60 years ago. I met her again just recently when I was involved with Beamish (*Museum*) in the Summer. When I met her first at camp, she was taller than me and now she is a little, very, very tiny. She can only be four foot six. I did not recognise her till she asked me what I had done and asked if I was at camp and if I lived in Durham. Then I recognised her. It is funny because MB, who is also in a camp photograph, whenever we saw each other, she used to say to me 'can you remember the name of that person that we shared the dormitory with? And now I can say "Yes I have met her again."

*(Female, Regional Archivist, Joined the GA as an adult volunteer, 80's)*

Opportunities to connect and expand further than the local geographical community and Unit are also provided and maintained, as explained by two County Advisers, who remain longstanding friends after meeting at camp. They spoke about the

international friendships forged and the ease of connection within the guiding community:

‘We have met people, who became friends, from America. I was a Deputy Leader of an international party in 1980 who went to Australia for the 60th anniversary of Guiding, and you know you just make friends. We organised an international camp in 1988 in our own County and from that, we have friends all over the World. I only met them through Guiding,’

*(Female, Country Adviser, GA member since 7 years old, age 70’s)*

This perspective was echoed by a Leader who recalled whilst being on a train journey:

‘There was a girl sitting on her own and she asked something about the station, and she happened to say something, and I said, ‘Oh are you a Guide?’ She said ‘Yes’ and straight away I thought I have a friend! We just started talking about Guiding, by the time we came to get off the train, we were friends.’

*(Female, Guide Leader, GA member since 10 years old, age 60’s)*

It is these opportunities which, according to a Commissioner, makes the organisation both appealing and different:

'I think what is different (*from youth clubs*) is what you do... Camping is an example. The people you camp with you get to know more than anything else. Tent camping is more intensive, so you **really** get to know people. X won't do anything before she has had a cup of coffee, but she will be up before 6 o'clock. Whereas X and me like to lie in so we would look after the kids till midnight.'

*(Female, County Commissioner, GA member since 7 years old, age 50's)*

One parent named diversity in 'friendship groups' as the motivation behind her daughter attending, 'There is something good about having different friends in different places, you learn from them, and it helps you in the future,' a perspective echoed by another parent who feels her daughter 'comes back a different person after having someone else's input. She found out she could make friends outside of the U.K and she could actually speak to somebody new.'

Friendship and companionship forged in guiding were exemplified as supportive as a TG member commented, 'When you have other things on in your life, and when you go to the Guides you are yourself. That's how I feel about it anyway. We always cheer each other up.' This was echoed by a parent who recognised, 'When things get a little bit fraught in school with friendship issues, it's nice for my daughter to go and be with a slightly different group of people, it's a different, more supportive atmosphere.'

One Leader spoke in particular about gaining a lifelong friend from guiding, 'She was my Captain and after Guides, we would go to her house and have a bit of chat about

Guides. We became friends, but she died two years ago. She was a lifelong friend, a Brownie, a Guide, she had a great Guiding history.’ A Leader, who was no longer a member, demonstrated the strength of friends she made in guiding which in her experience, surpassed the organisation, ‘I left (*guiding*) but I never left them.’

### **Guiding in the Community**

The Units involved in my research were grass-roots youth organisations, contextually informed by their community, or neighbourhood in which they found sustainability. Connections to institutions and community organisations were visible and in that, they demonstrated the value of guiding. Visibility made guiding seem familiar and relatable resulting in further connections being extended and made, perpetuating the reinforcement of the Unit as a valid community element. Through these connections, out of and across Units, associations are further enhanced reaffirming community validity and value.

During my PO, the most visible link I experienced was with the family. This occurred directly through supporting Guide engagement with the programme. One father explained how the whole family was ‘roped in’ to badge work during a cycling trip producing route maps as ‘proof’ towards a badge. A mother repeated that they, with her friends, became ‘tasters’ supporting her daughter in achieving the ‘mocktail’ badge. One Leader explained, ‘Parents love to get involved. They capture evidence for badges by photographing them (*Guides*) doing Interest badges.’

This support extends to the wider family. One grandparent was able to support her granddaughter's guiding experience despite living far away. A parent explained she (*Granny*) would 'go to the Guide shop in Edinburgh. She loves to come back with a treasure she has found. She has bought all sorts, cups, teddy bears, and books bags. She (*daughter*) has a Brownie bear she was desperate for, so when she survived her SATS that was her reward from Granny.'

Community association extends from the family through their personal and professional connections and networks. Leaders spoke of involving people because of their specific knowledge, skill base, profession, or position. One Young Leader recalled, 'We were doing town planning and (*the Leader*) worked at the Council and she had one of the Officers come in and talk to us about different ways you could do it. That was quite a good thing.' Leaders regularly used connections to introduce Guides to different experiences, conversations, and perspectives. One Leader invited 'the Council Safety Officer and she brought a whole load of stuff like the lollipop, the hat and the coat and a plastic zebra crossing, and the girls had to be the car and the pedestrians,' another 'brought the dental school in,' another a vet and another invited University students to engage in a Q & A session. This practice has been a constant and evolving element of guiding, as a TG member recalls 'somebody in the village used to be a badge tester, one for needlework, one for cookery. Whoever was good at it or who worked at it.' Another explained that as a Guide 'three of us went to someone's house and they asked us questions about all sorts of birds we have seen and then they would contact the Leader and say if we had done well.'

Utilising connections unmask guiding to an audience it has no direct contact with, thus making it tangible and recognised. This increases the understanding of guiding and becomes an additional conduit to promote it, reinforcing organisational presence and value within the community. I experienced this connection during my PO when a Guide was awarded a place on an international jamboree. To attend she had to fundraise the participation fee. The Guide, Unit and family planned fund-raising events with the main one being a 'Christmas Fashion Show'. Working with local businesses, schools, parents and their connections, a large community event was created. Local businesses both publicised the event through organisational channels, including media channels and donated prizes, such as driving lessons. Being well attended this one event raised all the money needed.

Connections between Units, businesses and other community organisations have been longstanding. Many use community buildings as their meeting venue, such as churches, community centres and schools, often entering a mutually supportive relationship rather than a financial exchange. A Commissioner explained they 'did not pay for the church. We used to fundraise and give the money to the church as a "thank you". We would do a couple of stalls, summer and winter fairs, raffles, jumble sales.' This reciprocal relationship enabled both organisations to meet their objectives, share resources as well as reach people in communities with whom they do not readily engage. A Leader experienced one such relationship, 'In the past, we have had some girls who were with foster parents and the church would pay for them. The church used to say if you have anybody like that just tell us and we can support you financially. We never contacted national Guiding for things like that. We did it ourselves.'

By fostering links to the wider community, based on value, and understanding, Units also received support from individuals who had no direct links to the organisation. Interviewees recalled people fundraising through activities such as making toys, selling them, and donating the raised funds to their Units. One County Adviser explained a neighbour of the Unit, requested Guides pick fruit for her to make jam and sell on their behalf, 'we did not see any (*jam*) we just picked the fruit, and she would make it and sell it. To who? I have no idea. She just handed over the money.'

During my PO, one of the most visible and meaningful participatory events to embed community links through participation and identity was the annual Remembrance Parade in the town. Utilising the skills and experience of a Leader who had served in the British Army, the Unit learned how to march, dress, and understand commands in order to fully participate. Guides with previous experience of 'the Parade' recounted the reverence of participation to their peers, using statements of exasperation through satisfaction and pride, as one of the peer-researchers explained, 'Oh God, we start practicing marching in September. X is rubbish every year. But at the end, you get a feeling of pride.'

Comments made by the interviewees included:

'I do it every year, the Remembrance Day. It is quite fun, it is a good thing to do, as it is showing respect,' GG14 and peer researcher (*age 13*)

'I enjoy learning to march', GG12 (*age 11*)

'The Parade was fun, it was accomplishing,' GG19 (*age 11*)

'It's important, everyone is there, watching us. I carry the banner because I am tall,' GG15 and peer researcher (*age14*)

'My dad likes us doing it, he was in the Army,' GG2 and (*age 11*)

Participation in this local event extends association with a town through its historical and contemporary community identities. It creates a link to the past whilst creating a visible link to the present and is further reinforced during and after through community conversations. In 2018 a conversation occurred on the town social media page which served to publicise and further embed the Unit in town identity:

'Who were the girls in blue? They were good.'

'They were the Guides, meet on a Thursday and do games and things.'





Image 19: Remembrance Parade 2018

### **Voluntary participation**

Guiding, as experienced through my PO, worked with voluntary participation as a value base, extending across age, roles, and organisational structure. The dichotomous position of 'attend youth provision or not' did not define membership or create frameworks of choice-limiting, predetermined criteria. My research findings uncovered voluntary participation was not only in the domain of the young women accessing the provision but also of the adult women involved throughout the organisational structure.

The adult interviewees cited personal benefits such as 'companionship' and 'friendship,' as reasons for maintaining their volunteering and membership. This was

also true of the girls, as demonstrated in the word cloud created by the peer researchers and informed by their data collection and analysis.

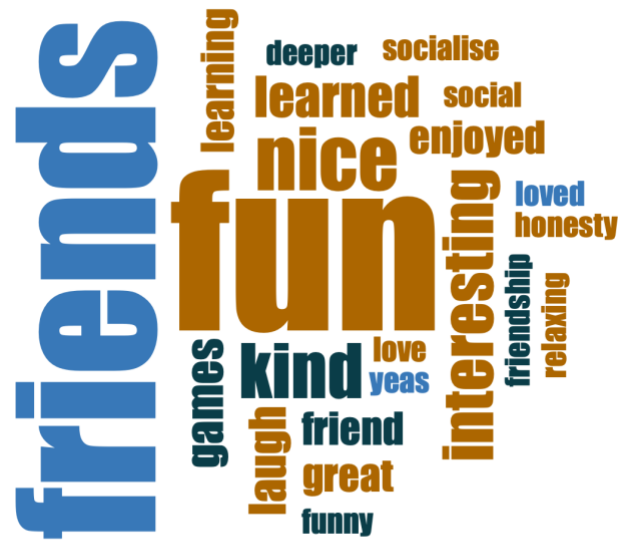


Image 20: Peer-researcher Word Cloud. Why I come to Guides.

**The subversion of power: Independence, responsibility, and egalitarianism.**

The ability to support and facilitate the subversion of power can be difficult to action especially when external factors, such as funding criteria or performance-based indicators, are the drivers for funding. By its very nature, subversion of power in youth work enables and empowers young people to make informed choices, which may include moving away from youth work. This creates a service dilemma between meeting funding criteria, therefore retaining a young person, or supporting their empowerment which may mean exercising their informed choice to leave.

In guiding, empowerment is supported through a programme of 'fun, friendship, challenge and adventure' (Girlguiding, 2021b) providing opportunities for leadership, ownership, and responsibility. Rooted in the interest of the individual and supported through the collective, girls can practice and exercise power, commitment, and decision-making, within a safe environment.

In an archive source, Fryer (1921, p.10) understands, 'The girls thoroughly enjoy their activities. They grow a new dignity as they find themselves needed, trusted, employed and often in positions of leadership.' Opportunities to practice and engage with skills supporting the subversion of power have always been embedded in the guiding programme. A Young Leader explained that for her these opportunities were unique to her life at the time:

'The way we did Sixers and Seconders in Brownies, Patrol leaders in the Guides. It was as you got older you got more responsibility, so you were learning. Responsibility for others from 7, 8, 9, and 10 years old. I don't really think you get that experience from anywhere else at that time in your life.'

*(Female, Young Leader, member of the GA since 5 years old, age 18)*

Opportunities of responsibility, enacted within respected and trusted relationships allow individuals to focus on their own, sometimes hidden, potential. As one County Adviser reflected, 'I was Country Outdoor Activities Adviser and I was only in my late 20's. Somebody believed in me, that I had leadership skills. Now how would anyone

have known I had leadership skills? I didn't know I had them. I don't think you do know, do you? It's other people who nurture them.'

In the guiding structure, the opportunity for responsibility lies within roles and their associated tasks. They are undertaken by Guides and witnessed by peers, as explained by a current Youth Worker and former Guide who recalled, after meeting with her patrol leader, desperately wanting to carry out the same role, which was:

'Helping each other when they talked about stuff within our little Six, our little group. You had older lasses there, so when you went in as a ten- or eleven-year-old, you think these people who are two years older than you are really grown up and responsible. You felt "I want to do that!"

*(Female, JNC qualified level 6 Youth Worker, former Guide, age 50's)*

She continued, that at that time, the concept of having responsibility was alien to her and that this was a 'different way of going on. It's the whole exposing you to that... responsibility. That's the difference. Rather than exposing you to the same, you can be the same *(as the patrol leader)* when you get older.'

The acquisition of knowledge and skills through responsibility is further affirmed through engagement with the programme. Accessing experiences which support 'self- governance and decision making' (Girlguiding, 2021b) are applied to 'everyday life,' an important aspect for one Youth Worker and former Guide who explained, 'It was the *(hand)*book which encouraged young people to be good citizens on their

own. It was not about a Leader telling them what to do, it was about the handbook,' which 'taught personal responsibility.'

Opportunities for self-governance and responsibility were constantly presented throughout my experience with the Guide Unit, especially so during a trip to London. The Leader announced to each group of girls, that they were able to go off and explore without an adult and return to a specific site at a set time. On her announcement, I witnessed a combination of excitement, apprehension, hesitation, and fear in each group. No one sought clarification from the Leader, but each group immediately held an extremely short chat before they set off. The rationale for this from the Leader's perspective was 'They come once a week and do activities that they enjoy. They are happy, they meet with friends, and in this, they feel safe. They enjoy what they do **because** they are challenged, and then they develop. I want them to become Young Leaders and make logical decisions for themselves.'

### **Values through 'osmosis '**

The sustainability of the GA is reliant on its members as volunteers to both run and attend the service it provides. As financial gain is not the reward or incentive, the organisation needs to connect and maintain a viable link to volunteers to ensure reliability and commitment to the services provided. It does this by connecting through shared and reciprocal values and principles. Members are supported to adopt and function within organisational values and principles, through the programme, systems and processes which support the communication and knowledge production of these ideals.

As members work with and within these systems and processes, they absorb information, create knowledge, and elucidate their voice, which they can act upon through the decision-making roles they occupy, their interactions and the service they provide. Information is both relayed and created through processes which enhance and support conversations between members acting as conduits to transmit organisational values, principles and objectives and anchoring them contextually. This process was described by a Division Commissioner as 'knowledge filtering through osmosis', a communication sequence or chain, where information and new knowledge are contextually formed, compounded, and built upon as it passes and is enacted through process. This process of gaining, absorbing and contextualising information was recognised by a Young Leader described as:

'It is kind of the 'old to new'. I can pass on to the older ones my skills, what I have learned from being at Guides, it's like shared knowledge.'

*(Female, Young Leader, GA member since 5 years old, age 18)*

The process of collective information sharing, and experiential learning in guiding was deliberate and rooted in traditional youth work principles of informal, experiential learning and reciprocity. The Leader was required to have 'a grasp' of organisational rules but a 'free hand' (Baden-Powell, 1918) in how her group ran. They were to be an 'elder sister', who 'on terms of comradeship, joins in activities' and leads by example rather than 'pointing the way.'

For the older interviewees, emphasis was placed on learning with a mentor, someone doing the position or role you wanted to learn about, and you practically carried out the role with them. For example, the Leader in training, would attend a Unit other than their own, and carry out the role they were training for:

‘You had a little card and you had to go to another Unit for six months so you lost the connection with your own Unit, it meant when you came back, they would treat you more like a new Leader.’

*(Female, Guide Leader, GA members since 10 years old, age 70’s)*

‘I had the most beautiful Guider (*trainer*), she was lovely. It was strange, at 16 years old going to a new unit, I felt out of my depth but then as the months went by you got to know the girls. You learned with the guidance of your Guider. She would tick off things you had done as a record. It just followed on ... you became a *Leader*,’

*(Female Guide Leader, GA member since 10 years old, age 60s)*

‘The training you got was on-the-job training, you were working alongside other people and seeing what they did.’

*(Female, Trefoil Guild member, GA member since 10 years old, 50’s)*

‘I learned by just observing really. I think in the booklet there is a lot of stuff that you get directed to read through that. There are passages in there that explain

what you are doing and why you are doing it, by being there watching and listening,'

*(Female, Young Leader and JNC qualified level 3 Youth Worker, age 19)*

Guides who became Leaders explained any formal training received was minimal, as the focus was on practicalities, such as running a camp and learning skills by working in another Unit. One TG member recalls, 'There was some training, not as much as there is now, just a couple of training to go to, you used to just do it in the Unit, about a year in the Unit and got experience,' a practice which also served as a physical demarcation of the transitional period from one role (*Guide*) to another (*Leader*). A Division Commissioner explained of her transition that she fully understood guiding as:

'By that point, it was so ingrained in me anyway you just did it. I knew how it was supposed to be. You had your handbook, you had your patrols, you had your events that came up now and then and you just would go with the flow'.

*(Female, Division Commissioner, GA member since 7 years old, age 50's)*

However, one adult interviewee, never having been a Guide, spoke of receiving no leadership training when starting out, 'I wrote to the Guide Headquarters in London to ask them for any information or a book because I had never been one (*a Guide*). They sent me a little information and that was it. I was in and doing it.'



Training relating to issues affecting the lives of the young women or activities was often identified and provided locally, utilising the existing membership skill base, their contacts, and communities:

‘Divisions had to send requests for training and we, as a group of Trainers, would get together. We would sit down as a group of trainers and say who can go to Jarrow and do such-in-such?’

*(Female, County Adviser, GA member since 7 years old, age 70’s)*

As with youth work values, learning lies in collective experiences and activities, whether it be formal leadership or camp training, a mentor is allocated, and you learn by doing. At times, large collective, events provided the frame for the learning to take place:

‘We used to have training quite regularly, they were big events, not like they are now. They started having people join up with each other to make the numbers bigger. We used to have a bus to put everybody in.’

*(Female, Regional Archivist, joined GA as an adult volunteer, aged 80’s)*

‘Guiders themselves went on a camp to learn camping skills, we had this training every year and we just had a fun time.’

*(Female, County Adviser, joined GA as an adult volunteer, 70’s)*

Currently, the formal Leadership training programme is carried out at a local level. All volunteers must complete the appropriate level of training required by the position they want to undertake, irrelevant of existing qualifications, skills, or experience. One Youth Worker and Leader explained she had to do 'First Aid through Guides and Safeguarding, Senior Section and Leadership' despite being a JNC qualified Youth Worker and up to date with her youth work organisation's safeguarding and first aid training. Those who have completed or been involved with mentoring on the formal Leadership training commented that it was extremely time-consuming, and despite being implemented at a local level was more concerned with a national rather than local frame, set within a more bureaucratic system which does not cater for prior learning, existing knowledge, or skills:

'There is a lot more red tape.'

*(Female, Guide Leader, GA member since 10 years old, age 60's)*

'I felt sorry for this unit as apart from the lady that is just training, and I have to say she is very experienced but has had three attempts at finishing her leadership qualification, it's too long.'

*(Female, County Adviser, GA member since 7 years old, age 70's)*

One Youth Worker and Leader felt the focus nationally was on the number of people trained rather than expanding on discussion, understanding or relevance to work with the young women:

‘When I went to safeguarding training one woman was talking about how there was a transgender girl in her unit, I think they were transitioning to a male and they were wanting to wear a suit for one of the activities they were doing, and she (*Leader*) was going on about it not being civil and nor a role model for the girls. I had to literally get up and leave as I could feel myself getting angrier and angrier as they are so old-fashioned.’

*(Female, Young Leader and JNC qualified level 3 Youth Worker, age 19)*

One newly qualified Guide Leader shared her experience of completing Leadership training highlighting the time commitment both she and her mentor invested to complete the training, in addition to planning, preparing, and running the weekly Unit meeting, was far too much as a volunteer:

‘She would come in about once a month and check how I was doing and explain the modules a little bit more and make suggestions of how to complete it, like a gentle reminder of ‘come on – finish it’. It took me about three years to complete it.’

*(Female, Young Leader and JNC qualified level 3 Youth Worker, age 19)*

My own experience supports these views as the labour intensity linked to amassing evidence was intense and not always compatible with planned Unit programmes and activities. Special activities or actions would be planned solely to gain evidence for me to complete the Leadership qualification, and despite this it still took me over a year to complete. In my journal I reflected that the process of gaining the qualification

was clearly focused on gathering evidence. My learning or understanding was not considered in the training booklet, only the evidence gathered. An act reinforced by colleagues who informed me to 'Keep that for your file as evidence' referring to pieces of organisational paperwork such as minutes of meetings or letters to parents. As with my predecessors, most of my learning of organisational values and ethos underpinning the work, was gained from the experience of working with others. Leaders who had been in the organisation for a long time would offer suggestions, advice, and information. I became an element of their continual learning as they did mine by including me in an informal education process based in experiential learning, embedding my learning, often accompanied with the phrase 'just do it!'

The current Leadership Qualification has shifted from a dynamic framework allowing contextual, experiential, collaborative learning to a generic set of targets encapsulated in evidence. It becomes further removed from the members as it fails to incorporate individual pre-existing knowledge and skills. It is detached from the knowledge and expertise from within the community at a local level, which on many occasions that I witnessed were current and substantially more informed than the training offered. One Leader, who works in a child sexual exploitation and modern slavery role within Northumbria Police, offered to support the planning and delivery of safeguarding training and be a local safeguarding lead. Whilst her offer was acknowledged with an agreement to 'pass it up,' (on more than one occasion), she received no information back. I was a participant in two training sessions where this occurred and interestingly, during the training, the trainers drew heavily on this Leader's knowledge and experience. Additionally, the knowledge relevant to the experiences of the Leaders on the course was elucidated and discussed with this

Leader during informal discussions, outside of the formal training forum, by both attendees and trainers.

Whilst the knowledge and experience held by this Leader was acknowledged on an individual level, the half-hearted attention it was given at a national level exhibited flaws in its complacency:

‘They said, that because of my expertise and my role as a serving police officer, as an expert in safeguarding, I don’t necessarily need to do it (*Safe Space training*), but nobody has told me what I would need to sign or what I would need to do to prove my competency. I mean I could just say that. I could be a Traffic Cop, they don’t know.’

*(Female, Guide Leader, joined GA as an adult volunteer, age 50’s)*

From my time as a PO, the role of having a Local Safeguarding Officer was informally operational on a local level. This Leader was the starting point for members and parents/carers to speak to with queries. Her familiarity and community connections rendered a feeling of having a safe space to discuss and fully understand with a person they felt equipped was to understand complexities.

Learning the values and principles underpinning guiding through ‘osmosis’ is embedded in the organisational structure through conversation from learning, from ‘doing’ and doing ‘with’. However, this structure seems, in parts, to operate outside of the national structure. Arguably, the more training becomes removed from the

context of the women and their communities, and shifts focus from collective understanding evidence of numbers and certificates, arguably the more the fissure between national and local will grow.

### **Safe space**

As seen in the findings Guides equated safety with trust in the Leader, requiring them to be characteristically strict, within an agreed frame but also fair. During my PO fieldwork, I witnessed a situation which the Guides in the Unit felt exemplified these characteristics. Reports began to emerge from Guides and parents/carers that one Guide was bullying peers outside Unit meetings. Although this behaviour did not occur during meetings, Guides did not feel comfortable working in a group with the 'bully'. The Leader directly addressed the collective and outlined the terms of voluntary participation for that Unit, stressing membership would be revoked if actions, in or out of the Unit meeting, were contradictory to the organisational structure, The Law and The Promise. The following week the Guide had not acted, her behaviour continued, therefore after a discussion between her and the Leader, her membership was immediately revoked. The following week the remaining Guides commented that the external situation had improved, and they no longer felt anxious in or out of Unit meetings. I reflected on the situation as it developed, recalling the actions of youth workers in similar situations, where the concept of excluding a person and not working with them because of their behaviour was unacceptable, (how can you work with them if you have excluded them?), often resulting in a 'bully' being asked to leave a session, reflect on their actions or words, but never be excluded. On reflection this procedure often prolonged the state of anxiousness and feeling of a lack of safety for the wider group. This made me reflect

and question if the actions of youth workers in this situation were considered less trustworthy than those of the Guide Leader? Did the wider group consider the youth workers unable to support their needs or the needs of all group members?

### **Respected and trusting relationships.**

Baden-Powell understood the relationship between Leader and Guide as the former being an 'elder sister', (Baden-Powell, 1918), who led by embracing characteristics of respect, reciprocity, and teaching by example. In informing the relationship, these characteristics become fundamentally important, as they can reinforce or disconnect relationships with the organisation. A County Commissioner agreed 'personalities make a real difference,' a sentiment borne out by a Guide who explained, 'I would not come if it was different Leaders,' (GG.8) and another who felt 'The whole Guide thing could change if they (*Leaders*) were different,' (GG.6). This sentiment was echoed by a parent, 'It's definitely the Leaders that make them want to go, like X. My daughter loved her,' and reinforced by a Young Leader, 'if it is led by the right kind of people then you can do anything.'

The peer research findings identified those characteristics all the Guides interviewed identified as required to be a 'good' leader: honesty, kindness, and respect, framed within behaviour supporting communication to educate and regulate, 'She is someone who listens to other people, who has ideas, is not too bossy but can keep control,' (GG.5). Additionally, a County Adviser presented an example of a specific Leader she felt was good 'everyone revered her (*Leader*) and was in awe of her, but she had a rapport with people, she was not frightened at all.'

One voluntary sector C.E.O noted, 'The skills Girl Guiding Leaders use, their behaviours and the way they operate aligns with youth work principles and practice.' However, unlike a team of youth workers, under the umbrella of one profession and framed in a common language, the group of women I worked with represented a variety of professions, (police officer, engineer, court administrator, playworker, property developer, civil servant, student), and did not communicate using one professional language. Within this variety lay the different and numerous skills, knowledge, and experience, utilised by the Unit as well as demonstrating possibilities and connections to similar interests between Leader and Guide. As a Leader said,

'The fact that Leaders bring their interests to Guides is a good thing. It makes it a positive Unit as it does challenge stereotypes. It always comes back to the Leaders.'

*(Female, Guide Leader, Joined GA as an adult volunteer, age 50's)*

The parents identified these distinctions and individual characteristics as providing varied 'role models':

'The Leaders are role models, what they do has an impact. I think it is good for them (*Guides*) to see the difference in people.'

*(Female, parent of current Guide and Brownie, age 30s)*

'She is a role model! She is doing something right. For them all to be so into it.'



*(Female, parent of current Guide, age 40's)*

The ability to motivate through Leader individuality and a shared interest was described by a parent as, 'Leaders being aspirational,' and further expanded by another who thought, 'the unit mix makes them [the young women] feel they can do anything and that they should do anything.' A Young Leader (age 18) emphasised the importance of relationships when describing her Leader as a 'motivating figure. You would just go because you would just want to see her.'

For one Leader, actualising ambition was something she was passionate about and actively aimed to foster within her Unit:

'It's not about fitting in and everybody doing the same thing, it is about you as an individual. What do you like? What do you want to do? What do you want to expand on? What are your career aspirations?'

*(Female, Young Leader, GA member since 5 years old, age 18)*

The positive relationships established and experienced between Guide and Leader were reflected upon during the interviews, a TG Member recounted mutual admiration, 'I know my Guide Leader was very proud I had gone back in *(to guiding)*. If she knew I went to the Trefoil that she started she would be really proud.'

A relationship based upon trust and respect was not exclusive to the Guide and Leader but found within the parent/Leader connection. A former Guide Leader felt the organisation expects this relationship to be actively sought, as she was expected to 'build good relationships with the parents and community and run a safe, effective unit. To follow the policies, don't do anything stupid, make sure the girls are having fun and have a good rapport with their parents.' For one parent the ability for her to trust a Leader was significant, 'The Leaders are massively important. I will tell you without hesitancy, to be able to trust people that your daughter is with, is really important.'

The weight of establishing and maintaining a trusting relationship was consciously recognised by one Leader who actively worked to establish and maintain trust,

'I think the parents trust me. I have a good relationship with my parents. If they have any questions they can come and ask me, if there is something they are not happy with, come and ask and if they have any concerns, come, and ask me.'

*(Female, Guide Leader, joined GA as an adult volunteer, age 50's)*

Further clarifying her point, she explained her deliberate actions 'give confidence to the parents. If there is something they are not happy with I will deal with it and I will not just sweep it under the carpet. I will act. Parents talk to one another, it may be in a forum I am not involved with, but word gets around and you are only as good as your last job.'

However, the reciprocal 'elder sister' relationships are not guaranteed. One TG member recalled how a 'new' Leader gradually lost a lot of members as 'she was really a nice person, but she was a bit sharp,' with an inability to relinquish power and seek collective engagement, 'it became a risk to Unit sustainability as members relocated to another nearby Unit'. Additionally, diversity reflected in the individual implementation of the programme can lead to fundamental disagreements among Leaders. During a training session, one Leader expressed shock and disappointment at the actions, words, and attitudes of her peers, which make her reflect:

'You are no role model! As a parent, would I want my child to go to a unit run by you? Are you a role model for my daughter? I think you are not! I am not just talking about how they look. It is about being in the training and listening to them, listening to their experiences, listening to what they do, and I think, No!'

*(Female, Guide Leader, joined GA as an adult volunteer, age 50's)*

Interestingly, some girls forged relationships with Leaders, not from reciprocity, trust, motivation, admiration, or aspiration but from fear and a willingness to please. A County Adviser recalled maintaining a relationship with a Leader from a position of, 'Being terrified made you do it. You wanted to win their approval. I was terrified of Mrs X,' and a Youth Worker and former guide recalled, 'There is no way I had a relationship with her (*Leader*). She was intimidating, there were no two ways about it, she was intimidating!'

The risk to member engagement when values of respect, reciprocity and learning through shared interest are not present is impacted through choices and decisions members make. One parent moved her daughter from one Unit to another within the same locality as the Leader 'was horrible to the kids; I don't know why they went. If you want kids to respect you it's a two-way process, there was no respect at all and it was dreadful, it was awful. The Leaders there were so unbelievable, there was no communication, it was very hierarchical.'

Additionally, risk lies within relational ties within an exclusive relationship, as one Leader recalled witnessed when another showed 'favouritism to certain people. They got more opportunities than other children, which was something I did not like.' Furthermore, the risk to the retention of members lies within exclusion of collective choice and a focus on Leader interests or moral stances. Acknowledging and attempting to mitigate this risk another Leader spoke of actively selecting a leadership team which reflected diverse opinions, skills, and knowledge:

'A lot of Leaders run their unit doing what they like to do, not necessarily doing what the girls want to do. I thought I have these skills and abilities, but I lack these other ones, so I will try and get other people in who have the other ones.'

*(Female, Guide Leader, joined GA as an adult volunteer, age 50's)*

A Youth Worker and younger Guide Leader identified risk attached to lack of leadership diversity, explaining it can hinder the formation of a reciprocal

generational relationship. Recalling a discussion with older Leaders, she reflected that she was not 'heard' when in their company, that her opinions were dismissed, 'There is no point in arguing with them. I always dread going to Guide training as all the women have so many backward morals and attitudes.' This position was supported by another Youth Worker and former Guide who recalled her Leader 'was proper old school, probably been in the War. She used to rule it like a rod of iron really, she had done things in the War, and she was dead tough.'

### **Shifting from the context of women**

Throughout the research some of the participants touched on aspects of their personal experiences with the organisation which they viewed as negative, yet they did not necessarily result in an overall distain for the organisation or their desire to remain involved. One youth worker and former Guide recalled being expelled from her Guide Unit despite not 'doing anything wrong,' however when asked who did it 'wouldn't grass [friend's name] up,' as her friend would have 'got knacked off her Mam, 'a value- based decision which she feels was actually attune with the ethos of the organisation. The research identified issues and disparity emerged when actions and decisions were taken by the organisation outside of the context of women. One former youth worker, guide leader and current trefoil member explained her resentment resulting from being asked to leave at 65 years of age, a rule imposed on members without consultation and an expelled Guide and Leader who challenged the 'complete bollocks of a woman being understood as a self-identified person's sense of inner self...I mean what is a gender identity?' Along with other Leaders the ex-Leader spoke with the C.E.O of guiding and The Chief Guide who asked why 'there was no consultation on this issue? You (*The GA*) consulted on uniform change

and changes to the programme, the promise, so why not this one? She replied, “we don’t consult on legal matters, and we are not going to consult membership on whether on how we are following the law.”

### **Summary of findings relating to the Guide Association**

This chapter has discussed how, for the research participants the characteristics of traditional youth work values are present within the organisational model and ethos of guiding. The research critically examined the GA’s organisational and practice model, evaluating it in relation to organisational sustainability and the traditional values and principles of youth work.

The research findings identified eight emergent themes: the traditional youth work values; principles and ethos located in the GA; its methodological approach of informal, experiential collective education; voluntary participation; the subversion of power and its contextual positioning and association to women.

Volunteers and members felt informed and supported by the organisation to actively engage with the values of youth work through all of their participatory roles. Within this, case study members at all levels and in all roles, entered a mutually reciprocal relationship with organisational systems in which they became active agents. This interaction both shapes and reforms the organisation as roles are enacted within context, simultaneously fostering learning and opportunities through process.

For these participants the guiding programme supported 'bespoke' learning opportunities which encouraged individuals to 'be' themselves. They found themselves located in a safe space, time and collective of women and girls which both supported and enabled each individual to explore and consolidate who they are or wanted to be.

The findings recognised that the GA emerged from the position and context of young women, from the needs they identified and acted upon by attending a Scout rally and requesting a youth organisation for themselves. Its development has maintained contextual connection and it has evolved using traditional youth work values and methodology woven into the organisational model. As women across a wide age spectrum engage with it, the organisation is continually reformed to support and address the wants, needs and position of women in society. The process, rather than being reactive or a one of change, is flexible, with learning informing practice through 'osmosis' to create an evolutionary status. Findings discovered for the participants the ethos of the organisation, based on the organisational model, enabled individual and collective experiential learning to seamlessly occur. This contextual learning, when acted upon, informs the organisation which grows through a constant evolutionary process. As it is informed and led by members, it maintains relevance and meaning to the context and lives of women and girls. In recognition of what it gives/gave to members who have absorbed the organisational values, they support the GA at an organisational or community level. The process of informed development becomes the evolutionary process which provides sustainability through traditional value-based informal education.

The evolutionary process within the organisational structure of the GA both houses and informs its ethos, as member interaction reinvests and reinforms systems and knowledge, perpetuating and re-embedding values in context. This research has identified when one or more of the values are disregarded, altered, taken out of context or partially enacted, the organisation begins to move away from the needs and understanding of its members and women in society and risks realigning its mission with 'another.' In doing this it shifts further away from being an informed, young person, needs-led organisation, producing superfluous or unappealing opportunities which need to be 'sold' in order to engage with young people and fill places. Members 'vote with their feet' and leave.

More specifically, the findings identified the ideology of the organisation and the methods used to support it encourage learning through experience whilst simultaneously creating an ethos which is lived out in the actions of the members and within the small group work carried out. Power is subverted within the small groups, or patrols, where groups members share identity, responsibility and decision making. A sense of belonging and identity is forged through a sisterhood which is symbolically represented in the Guide Law, Promise and uniform. Through this collective identity, the GA itself becomes community as network and relationships are made through connections, which surpass organisational associations reaching into the personal lives of members.

The findings identified that the programme is aspirational, focused on a young women's potential and based upon opportunities and possibilities rather than what is lost or missing. In supporting this, opportunities for experiential learning were found



when the need for growth was identified by a Guide, where she is collectively supported in reaching her goal as members support individual opportunities as a collective knowing the action is reciprocated. Organisational ideology is visible as it is adopted and lived by members who are fully aware of the role they play and of their actions. Knowledge and learning are located within these opportunities, roles and actions and are identified by the individual learner. In this GA members are able to apply and reply learning, creating new knowledge expanding meaning each time it is used and built upon. As the breadth and depth of learning is managed and driven by the learner it allows for time to 'be' and consolidate learning before moving away or extending from it. This creates space to be comfortable in who you are, to be yourself and not maintaining a continuous focus on 'becoming.'

As knowledge is created by and within the context of members, it is reintroduced to the organisation through the roles they undertake, maintaining significance for its members and their socio-political contexts. In turn the organisation benefits from knowledge and skills members learn outside of the organisation which they introduce through the roles they undertake supporting the running and development of the organisation.

Findings revealed community context was important. The organisation, especially at a Unit level, emerges from community and largely depicts its identity through the networks and connections it creates. Being continually repositioned, they forge a complex but visible relationship. If a unit shifts too far from the contextual needs of the women and community, it no longer meets need and becomes obsolete and the unit closes, not always forever as units are often reinstated when the need arises.

Organisational survival is linked to the contextual relationship of women and community, through making and maintaining meaningful connections and allowing need to be identified and addressed. In this value is noted within connected communities and support is given at a grass roots level so completing the 'loop' of understanding in context.

However, what was noticeable from the research findings was the distinct lack of criticality from the GA participants about the organisation, a stance echoed by those youth worker participants outside of the GA. When speaking about the organisation members made a clear distinction between aspects of the GA which they did not agree with, such as HQ being remote, but were keen to stress a clear distinction between them and the elements they liked or agreed with. In line with this, criticality from the participant who had been expelled from the organisation for challenging policy, did not lie with the programme, volunteers, or youth work but with actions being taken outside of the value-based process. In addition, youth work participants, a mixture of people who had and had not been involved with the organisation or any uniformed organisation as a child, again offered little criticality, content in the knowledge that any organisation was doing value-based youth work within the sector.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Summary and Research Conclusions**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter briefly revisits and reviews the research journey. It identifies and addresses the critical findings of the research, possible implications, and extracts those which could inform youth work and the youth sector, suggesting appropriate recommendations. In addition, the chapter reflects upon the thesis journey, recognising areas and aspects of the study which could be explored by further research. Finally, the chapter reflects on the thesis journey from my personal perspective of a research practitioner.

Amid a time when traditional value-based youth work seems unable to return from the impact of 13 years of economic austerity policies and seeing a continued decline, this thesis adds to theoretical perspectives and debates about traditional value-based youth work and organisational sustainability, contributing to methodological research insights and practice.

Current models of sustainability in youth work sit within a neoliberal frame and ideology, attempting to squeeze, adapt or mould the characteristics of value-based youth work into its boundaries and explaining its value through neo-liberal language. Combined with the impact of austerity, this model is not able to halt, reverse or reinvigorate the decline of youth work and the loss of experienced and skilled youth workers across the sector.

The significance of this research initially emerged from my personal experience in the contemporary field of youth work. It was further expanded in conversation with the collaborative partner YFNE, and again further extended in the literature reviews, namely chapters two and three of this thesis. Chapter two begins with the historical development of youth work in the UK. It goes on to highlight the impact of conducting youth work within a neoliberal ideology and how this contributes to the decline of value-based youth work whilst increasing instability within the sector. Chapter three highlights the development of the GA in the UK identifying the importance of the characteristics of traditional value-based youth work in organisational stability. It suggests organisational stability evolves *from* and *in* context, informed by the knowledge produced in the experiential, egalitarian process of informal education in value-based youth work.

The research used multiple methods, including participant observation, semi-structured interviews, archival research, and a PAR project to study the research question, 'Do traditional youth work organisations hold the key to sustainability for 21<sup>st</sup> century youth provision? Lessons from The Guide Association.' In undertaking this research, I studied the current state of UK youth work in the context of historical and contemporary youth policy and theoretical literature on young people and informal education. In addition, I studied the historical development of GA paying specific attention to value-based youth work, informal education, feminist characteristics, and the organisational model. To maintain relevance to the current debates within the NE youth sector and also to the context of young people, I worked

in collaboration with YFNE and incorporated a PAR project with a group of young women.

The empirical research was spanned a two-year time frame, which alongside the combination of research methods adopted, supported a process uncovering deep, rich, contextual data and hidden meaning. The data generated from these methods, including the peer-led PAR project, was thematically analysed to uncover themes and sub-themes which were then further investigated to establish findings, implications, and recommendations.

By researching the informal education of youth work the thesis revealed that youth work was categorically identified and understood as a dynamic value-based process, informed by a set of specific features. Linking to literature, the research acknowledges value-based youth work as emergent from critical pedagogy (Freire, 1972) and a process of contextual negotiation which makes it dynamic (Davies, 2008; Batsleer and Davies, 2010, p. 212) and ever evolving (Jeffer, 2018). The thesis revealed that the features which define youth work are accepted as being within its 'nature' where process and purpose both contribute to learning (Banks, 1999, p.7).

Using the data generated from this research I have argued that youth work is found within a set of characteristics, located in a dynamic process and egalitarian ideology which include; a need-led process within a trusted relationship which is focused on the potential of a young person, voluntary participation, the subversion of power, a methodology of informal education through collective experiential learning which

starts from the point of young people, set within clear ethical boundaries conducive to challenge and stimulation (Davies, 2008). When all characteristics are present they lend themselves to organisational sustainability as contextual informal education and learning produce nuanced knowledge which informs and is absorbed by the organisation through the relationships and connections to the people involved.

This chapter, as the conclusion of the thesis, begins by identifying new methodological knowledge uncovered. It then progresses to identify implications for neoliberal youth work policy and practice and offers clear recommendations informed by the research. It discusses the limitations of the research and finally concludes with critical reflections from a practitioner/researcher perspective.

## **Lessons for the future**

### **Knowledge creation: Methodological**

It has been argued that the value-based, informal education process of youth work is itself research (Adams and McCulloch, 2003), therefore the methodology and use of mixed methods in this thesis further creates knowledge which supports this view. The thesis has contributed methodologically to successfully combining qualitative research and professional practice processes and methods. More specifically the value-based process of youth work and PAR, being reciprocal in their ethos and orientation, enables this thesis to extend knowledge in both disciplines.

By adopting an inductive, theory-generating paradigm the methods selected contributed to an in-depth study of value-based youth work and the GA (Adams and

McCullough, 2003). I was able to research and study the topic through the narratives of participants, past (in the form of archival sources) and present, whilst reflecting on my own observations and interpretations. This combination created a research space free from limitations of a pre-imposed theoretical framework. The freedom from this, combined with the longevity of the study, allowed me to document points of interest over an annual organisational and youth sector cycle, twice! As points of interest occurred, I was able to reflect upon them, both in and on action (Schön, 2016) uncovering meaning and understanding. It allowed me to experience and understand the contexts data was generated in and from learning cultural traditions and language as well as the meanings attached to them.

The methodological approach used in this research was complex as well as time consuming. Using a mixed methods approach, combined with working in collaboration with a youth sector organisation (YFNE) and a group of young women, along with the inclusion of my practitioner knowledge, skills, and experience, has methodologically contributed to knowledge within the field of youth work, PAR, The GA (on a specific Unit), and research with young people and youth organisations. Maintaining connections to the youth sector throughout the research, as a participant observer in the GA and an active participant in the wider sector attending networking groups, events, and conferences, has ensured the research has a reciprocal connection to the field and in that, is of relevance and of use.

The practice/research collaboration recognised the agency of those involved and mutually extended it through participation and action. The research acknowledged power, and therefore positions those involved as experts in their own lives.

Knowledge created in collaboration and within mutual relationships (Heron and Reason, 2001) democratises the research process (Cahill, 2004). Specifically, PAR is concerned with 'doing', making it an orientation which supports feminist youth work practice as it has a commitment to the subversion of power and construction of knowledge in context.

The use of mixed qualitative methods created descriptions which when combined with the educative and empowering process of PAR collectively challenged dominant narratives by elucidating 'hidden voices' through their own experiences (Ragan and Amoroso, 2011.p.114), especially in this research, the voices of young people. This created a distinctive contribution to both the theory and practice of value-based youth work and sustainability within the youth sector through youth participation. In addition, by drawing upon on the principal findings of the PAR project and combining them with the rest of the research findings, my understanding of value-based youth work as a researcher and practitioner has become more informed.

Finally, the institutional ethical process of this research sat explicitly outside of the value-based research process and ethos of the thesis. Institutional concern lay with ensuring no harm was done to the institution and participants by gathering written information from my perspective alone. However, as a practitioner ethical work is paramount and surpasses a linear information gathering process. The peer researchers could have been involved in the completion of the ethical application process; however, they had made it clear which aspects of the overall research they wished to be involved in and this was not one of them. In addition, inclusion in the process would have been extremely time consuming and not rooted in a participant



'needs-led' start point or productive use of their Guide meeting time. As the institutional ethical framework was not geared up to take account of the role young people as peer researchers, this was an element of the thesis I was cognisant that participant agency was absent from.

As a research/practitioner I extended and deepened the ethical context of my research by adopting and working within the organisational safeguarding and child protection policies and undertaking the organisations 'Safe Space' training. In line with 'good practice' I ensured a safe and welcoming environment, conducive to learning and ownership, was created which extended ethical concern to pass the position of only preventing harm (Head, 2009; CSJCA, 2012). In addition, I completed my own enhanced DBS check in my role as researcher as well as an organisational enhanced DBS check for the role of GA Leader.

#### **Knowledge creation: Practice-based**

The role of value-based youth work was central within this research. The participant observer role linked to practice as did the participatory action project, along with my continued involvement in the wider youth sector. The PAR project saw value-based youth work supporting young peer-researchers to engage in a specific piece of research; to co-design it, undertake interviews and connected research activities, complete data analysis and interpretation, identifying recommendations and disseminating findings. As a research practitioner I scaffolded the informal educational learning process of the peer researchers, which consequently informed both my practitioner and researcher roles, the individual and collective peer-researchers, and the research itself. By embedding the PAR findings into the

overarching research both 'voice' and agency of young people were incorporated. This is an important methodological contribution, as the practitioner/researcher has to be consciously aware of and challenge barriers to young people's agency and use practitioner skills to support engagement. In this, the value of participation and informal education in new knowledge creation is recognised and embedded into the research as a whole.

The combination and inclusion of data from youth work practice, contemporary youth sector dialogue, qualitative methods, and the PAR project has identified 'voice', both in the 'here and now' and from across time. Whilst this collaborative and eclectic methodology fits well into the process of youth work, it is also understood through the neo liberal language of contemporary youth work, as the 'voice' of young people is elucidated within in a social science setting which is accepted as 'valid' by external funders and policy makers. Adopting this approach requires no adaptation or disregard for value-based youth work as youth work is a praxis methodology (Smith, 1988, p.51) which is ever evolving through the production, absorption, and reproduction of knowledge. Methodologically this informs the practice of youth work and participation, extending it into the realm of research, adding validity through voice and experience (Morse, 2015; Denzin and Lincoln, 2018) entwined with the process of democratic, solution seeking youth work.

The research had a direct impact on practice as areas of improvement and development were identified in the findings from the PAR peer research project. Whilst they were incorporated into my research, most importantly they stood

independently as findings specific and informative to the case study of 1<sup>st</sup> Hebburn St. John's Guide Unit. The findings from the PAR project identified specific recommendations for action which were able to be understood and implemented by the case study. In this, the voice of young people directly impacted their youth provision, guiding its evolution to meet their wants and needs. In addition, those young people directly involved with the PAR project, the peer researchers, learned much from participation in their own research process. An evaluation identified the peer researchers gained new practical and scientific research skills as well as social skills, many which in practice uncovered understanding linked to power and its role in communication, (Appendix.p.419).

#### **Implications for neo-liberal work with young people**

The impact of the loss of value-based youth provision, experienced youth workers and their replacement with unqualified, inexperienced workers on short term contracts, delivering youth development to targeted groups of young people is already noted in this thesis. Extending from this, the current Government focus on specific youth organisations, such as The Duke of Edinburgh Awards Scheme and uniformed youth organisations, considers them able to address the lack of youth provision and the issue of there being 'nothing for young people to do.' To this end, the Government has identified funding for non-military, uniformed youth organisations (including the GA) who will benefit from 'a transformative £22 million total injection' to 'tackle waiting lists' creating an additional 24,000 organisational places 'so no one is turned away' (DDCMS, 2022).

The implications of this for the wider youth sector can be seen in the assumed lack of value or worth connected to social and cultural capital that both young people and the wider population attach to this provision. The existence of 'waiting lists' for some youth organisations and the absence of them for others, assumes value in there being 'something worth waiting for.' Holland (2009) identifies that parents believe education is important for their children to increase their life chances whilst recognising children are 'instrumental in generating their own social capital networks' (p. 12). Placing friendship as a 'valuable source of social capital' (p.14), through 'socially connective practice' in communities, places contextually connected organisations such as the GA, at an advantage as their value and worth is noticed and connected to the communities and networks of young people. Allan and Catts (2014) conclude it is vitally important that young people are given the skills to develop and nurture social capital in community settings to in order to 'extend bridging networks' (p.227). Those youth organisations who position young people as deficit and broken, 'parachuting' workers into communities to fix specific groups of young people, hold very little social capital valued by social systems and those within them.

In addition, organisations that frame young people in a neo-liberal deficit model produce the inevitable outcome of attaching a negative label on their members and in turn their connected networks. Arguably, such organisations restrict access to social and cultural capital for young people as both young people and their parent/carers who recognise and seek social and cultural capital as conduits to 'become,' do not necessarily wish to connect to those labelled and deemed lacking in accepted societal norms or behaviours. This in turn becomes a barrier as access

to the social and cultural opportunities many young people seek are thought to only exist in traditional youth work organisations such as the GA.

The disconnect between young people and their communities through targeted youth development decontextualises youth work. Targeting a small and ever decreasing pool of young people who need to be fixed (ever shrinking as once they are fixed there is no further need for participation) maintains the position of the organisation being in a perpetual state of instability and unsettlement. With the inclusion of measurable impact and outcomes, the model negates the need for long term funding, as once fixed and impact measured to demonstrate an outcome, the need for this work is no longer there for that specific individual. In turn, the model creates organisational regional competition, both for young people and funding, as organisations continually seeking new funding streams and create new raw material by adding another deficit and more labels to the development of young people in a bid to maintain market relevance.

Agency and understanding of young people are negated as concern lies with the production of measured, pre-identified outcomes in receipt for funding. The implications of this to the practice of youth work is twofold. Firstly, despite youth work being located in a neoliberal frame, the thesis identified that workers recognise the importance and value of experiential learning and informal education and therefore seek space in which to engage with value-based youth work in a bid to meet the needs of young people. In an attempt to engage in the process, they subvert space and rename their practice to find a place where value-based youth work is

accommodated. Sometimes space is located under the guise of targeted, issue-based work in order to access funding, or it is as a small, peripheral sub-project within a main project, syphoning a minor amount of funding which could be assumed as or subsumed as an element of the fully funded targeted work. However, youth work in a marginal space becomes overlooked and undervalued as learning from within this space is either not recognised as important by organisations or assumed/subsumed within the youth development model, reinforcing it as being 'successful.'

Secondly, this ancillary space is unable to support all of the characteristics of value-based youth work as funding criteria is often time bound placing limitations around learning. The inclusion of evidence gathering to meet targets squeezed into this time frame, dilutes, and inhibits the fluidity of learning as traditional characteristics are constrained and unable to collectively inform. In these situations, value-based youth work continues to be side-lined.

The research identified that the philosophy and practice of value-based youth work were considered to be at odds with the contemporary, neo-liberal and dominant practice of targeted youth work, youth development work or 'work with young people'. Working in and adopting a neoliberal ideology, detaches youth work from communities, as funding drivers and the positioning of young people are not contextually connected. Assuming young people require access to informal education within a designated age frame or only in a youth work session, does not support continual personal development or transitioning (Allen and Catts, 2014. p. 224). Unlike the GA, which is able to 'grow their own' youth workers, contemporary

youth work practice is unable to offer a value-based process which supports transition from young person to adult and allows the continuation of learning within an organisation able to meet their continuing and developing needs.

By embracing neoliberal ideology, contemporary youth work in its attempt to marketise, succeeds in weakening the educative and holistic process of value-based traditional youth work. Process becomes linear, supported by a programme of predetermined outcomes and measured behaviour modification. The adoption of neo-liberal terminology further weakens this critical pedagogy, shifting the focus from the context of young people to one of market force. Current youth sector training include opportunities to participate in 'communication and marketing workshops', 'understanding a growth mindset versus mixed mindset' whilst utilising hashtags (#), 'local celebrities', 'sports people', and 'influencers' to establish a 'brand' <https://neya.org.uk/workforce-development/>.

This research suggests continuation along a neoliberal marketised pathway only serves to maintain unsustainability, insecurity and the gradual erosion of value-based youth work, a loss of skills and experience and continued erosion of praxis.

### **21<sup>st</sup> Century Organisational Sustainability**

Organisational sustainability remains a central theme of current debates in the field of contemporary youth work and non-traditional youth organisations. The dominant model for organisational stability focuses on measurement and impact against financial worth as a means to demonstrate success and therefore worthiness of the organisation to continue being funded. A recent NYA Regional Roadshow, (20.9.22)

reemphasised this focus as youth organisations sent their finance officers as opposed to youth workers with the aim of gaining access to the 'Youth Investment Fund' (YIF). Two finance officers commented they were not interested in, nor did they have time for sector networking or discussion, but only required information on how to access the YIF. In addition, the roundtable discussions uncovered the main concern for organisations was their continued reliance on small but highly competitive funding streams and the lack of organisational trust, transparency, and collective goals across the sector.

This continued shift towards a neoliberal ideology, away from value-based process youth work to outcome-based work with young people has resulted in many adaptations in practice. The implication of this transition is stealth-like in its ideological shift. Each small transition feels insignificant, but the impact is noticeable in the demise of skills, knowledge and the number of youth organisations practicing value-based youth work and employing qualified youth workers. Short term, time bound funding requiring pre-defined criteria and outcomes, requires youth work to start from the position of the funder and often from a targeted descriptor of young people, for example young people who are 'at risk of...' or have been 'left behind from...'. The geographical pool from which to access these groups of young people becomes more competitive and smaller as young people who attend projects are 'fixed' which has resulted in a sector practice of viewing the work through the wider lens of trade and competition, constantly creating a consumer market, and buying into moral panics. Organisational success has become linked to impact measurement and the number of outcomes collated within a competitive tendering process or small funding pool, embracing a 'more for less' policy agenda. Due to a



lack of transparency or collective goals, many organisations within the same locality bid within the same funding pool, provide the same 'youth offer' and select from the same pool of young people, further increasing competition and ability to survive.

Through competition and non-cooperation, neo-liberalism fails to acknowledge young people as active citizens as they are recycled across organisational projects, through the application of new labels or deficits. Labels are easily attributed to young people; they are allocated based upon an action or behaviour which *possibly* may occur. In addition, labels are also attributed to young people as if they are one homogenous group as organisations identify which collective deficits, such as 'lack of resilience', need to be filled or prevented in order to make a young person complete, fulfil their potential or become a worthy citizen. This process is reconfirmed as organisations capture this homogenous 'voice' to support their worth. Organisations hold young people in a cycle of labelling, with youth workers maintaining young people in a state of need until they are no longer of benefit to accessing funding.

Embracing a market-led ideology, contemporary youth work has had a direct impact on the decline of the characteristics or traits of value-based youth work. As success is measured by outcomes a pedagogical emancipatory process is not conducive to the hegemonic domination of ideas and norms which prevents the creation of contextual knowledge and understanding. The literature, with which the research concurs, revealed the competitive landscape of 'more for less' has not only resulted in young people being identified as a homogenous group and a decline in value-based youth work, but also sees collateral damage in the decline and loss of certain

methods of working with young people, such as open access youth clubs, detached work and girls work and of the experienced and skilled youth workers able to facilitate them (Hayes, 2020).

The decline in value-based youth work and of skilled and experienced workers has resulted in many of the current workers having never experienced working in a space conducive to value-based youth work or its process incorporating methodologies. This practice has become the domain of a few smaller organisations in the wider voluntary sector and of uniformed/'volunteer led' youth organisations.

In addition, offering poor pay and conditions and short-term contracts, the sector is unable to entice those skilled and experienced workers back who are able to reinstate these practices and methods. This has an additional impact in the lack of suitable practice placements and supervisors for community and youth work students and grassroots 'grow your own' volunteers in experientially learning youth work practice. In this, there is a distinct lack of space to propagate the next generation of value-based youth workers in the art of experiential and reflective praxis.

### **Stability embedded in the values and principles of informal education and youth work: The Guide Association**

This thesis uncovers that the values and principles of the GA organisational model are those of traditional value-based youth work which originate and have been maintained since organisational inception in 1909. As a response to the request of young women, the organisation was created from and was informed by the socio-

political context of women at that time. Arguably, its longevity has and continues to be tied the context of women and girls in society as its organisational model instinctively incorporates and maintains relevance and meaning to the lives of women. Ultimately it is informed by, meets the needs of and is practiced by women.

In looking beyond a financial or economic model to support organisational sustainability, the established value-based model of The GA was explored. The research findings uncovered how those characteristics or traits of informal education and value-based traditional youth work provide organisational sustainability which forges and nurtures a relationship between the organisation and its members. Looking at the historical context of the GA the research identified organisational stability wavered when one or more of the traditional characteristics of value-based youth work were omitted. With omission the balance shifts and relational connections stretched or severed resulting in a contextual disconnect of this relationship, causing disruption to sustainability.

Through praxis the organisation absorbs contextual information via the volunteer roles, young women, and their actions. Those who inform also enact, applying learning and creating a dynamic and relational flow between organisation and member. Within this relational exchange the organisation is ever evolving, always listening, always adapting to meet the needs of girls and young women. The relationship within this process, is not only reciprocal but also symbiotic. The requirements and motivations of members are being met, therefore there is a need for the organisation to exist. If a disconnect occurs and the organisation is not contextually connected to the lives of current and prospective participants, it begins

to look elsewhere and find information from other sources. The impact of this is that the organisation works towards or is led by an assumed need. In this, actual need is not met and the motivation for members to join, remain or have any input, wanes. Once the membership declines so do the Units and in turn organisational stability.

As women are active agents in this contextualizing process, they are happy to identify with the organisation as an extension of their own value base. The ideology of collectivism underpins individual learning in the GA as Guides are encouraged to 'be themselves' and access opportunities to support this, whether it be financial or otherwise, safe in the knowledge that each individual's aspiration will be collectively supported.

The ability to meet individual need through collective responsibility adds further opportunity to create social and cultural capital as well as the ability to 'be', to consolidate and understand who you are as you become who you want to be. Learning about yourself whilst being a member of a collective is practiced and qualified through experiential learning. Power is subverted in patrols, through the sharing of an identity, collective responsibility, decision making and action.

The thesis found that the girls, young women, and adults were supportive, accepting and actively encouraging of individuals exploring who they are and wish to become. This was especially seen in the eclectic range of skills and experiences of the members utilised in actions. Adult role models were vastly varied, and young women

were able to see many possibilities, skills, opinions, attitudes, and action amid this group.

The PAR findings demonstrated the presence and importance of collectivism and individual interest as they identified Guides participate in all Unit activities despite individual likes or dislikes. In this, whilst activities could be both fun and unappealing, depending upon an individual perspective, the importance of the activity lay with the collective support and belonging, as the individual right to be who you want to be is cherished and accepted in the knowledge these values are afforded to all.

This 'sisterhood' (Lord Baden- Powell of Gilwell, 1918, p. 9) purposefully adopts this ethos as we see the values lived out in friendships and actions across the organisation, extending into the personal sphere of the women's lives. The collective action and the symbolism within the organisation creates a sense of belonging. A collective identity is created and developed and symbolically represented in the Guide Law, Promise and uniform. Through this collective identity, the GA becomes community as members connect through a vast network, building relationships which extend through and beyond the organisation. Organisational values become lived and reinvested through membership roles, enabling its continued existence as it extends into and through the personal community networks of its members, continuing to absorb and consolidate need and value in context. The social and cultural capital found within these networks both support the individual and the organisation.

The stability of the GA organisational model allows it to maintain independence from the wider youth sector and external funders, especially at a grass roots Unit level. Financially the 'subs', paid by members, are a fund, a 'kitty' which is used at the behest of members who decide on its use, whilst a small annual levy is paid to the GA for Unit membership and administrative support.

At an organisational level, a lack of financial reliance or need for policy direction or defining from external or government sources allows the GA to maintain its independence. Rather than practice from a financial or governmental policy position, the GA is able to address and work with the implications governmental policy or societal norms have on the lives of women. In this, it is aware of and working to address the impact and context of socio-political changes on the lives of members and their communities as opposed to the wider youth sector who are often directed and financed to implement policy changes.

However, this does not mean the GA has not and does not participate in government youth policy and the wider youth sector. Historically, for example after the Albermarle Review, the GA worked with local authorities to inform training programmes and implementation of recommendations. Currently the GA is a member of the National Youth Sector Advisory Board, a forum which aims to inform policy, practice, and strategic direction for the youth sector through shared understanding. Today, as with historical involvement, the organisational stability of the GA enables it to maintain independence whilst advocating and adding the 'voice' of its members to national debate and discussion.

### **The value of feminist youth work and anti-oppressive practice**

The GA focuses on the importance of being a girl only space. Within this space the traditional value-based youth work process enables girls and young women to highlight, explore and challenge issues which are important to them and impact on their lives. This space subverts dominant ideologies and narratives, and challenges inequalities through collective action as the characteristics of traditional value-based youth work, along with radical pedagogies such as feminism, enable challenge and change (Chouhan, 2009).

Whilst the organisation formed in a period of time when the majority of traditional assumptions were based on gender, (Batsleer, 2008) the thesis found feminist youth work did exist and still does. At a time when the socio-political context of women included distinct gender roles, suffrage, and the right for women to vote, the ideology of a 'sisterhood' provided women with mutual support in a space which excluded male dominance, a space to become leaders of their own destiny. Having the vision and aim of a sisterhood values the resources of the 'woman educator' (Batsleer, 2013. p. 181). In this leading and educative role, elder sisters support and teach the younger generation, drawing upon their personal experiences and knowledge from their own socio-political examination. The thesis revealed a particular strength of the GA was its ability to engage a range of women members from different backgrounds, careers, and political perspectives within the organisation. In this lies many strengths; the skill base of the volunteers is eclectic, it has depth, it informs and is accessible to the organisation, the range of volunteers offers a vast assortment of

possible role models and educators who are able to both demonstrate attainable possibilities and support girls in obtaining them.

Most importantly, the wide-ranging mix of members enables the GA to create and maintain a safe space for exploration. In particular the findings of this thesis identified that those GA women members recognised, valued, and understood difference through acceptance and support. Magyarody (2016) suggests the organisational structures of the GA hold double meanings allowing the recognition and acceptance of difference within its membership whilst simultaneously seeing 'women' as a collective but not a homogenous group.

Within the context of youth work in a neoliberal frame, girls and young women's youth work is negligible. The needs of girls and young women are regularly placed or shifted to the periphery. Seen as needing to be 'protected' from themselves and/or being offered depoliticizing activities such as nail art, the needs of girls and young women are located within young people as a homogenous group set inside a patriarchal society.

The neo-liberal definition of 'empowerment' attributed to individual endeavour, excludes any connectedness so weakening collective, feminist action as it becomes difficult to find space to agitate through informal education. Projects targeting young women are predominately funded to work at an individual level focusing on topics such as obesity and teenage pregnancy, measuring individual progress against a societal 'norm'. This approach makes these topics become issues for the individual



person if they are not compliant with societal norms, whilst the inequalities within the wider society actually creating the issues or barriers to access go unchallenged. Rather than collectively acting to challenge discrimination and barriers to access, girls and young women are required to become individually resilient.

Whilst the sector has seen a huge decline in feminist youth work, there remains pockets of resistance providing space for girls and young women to be and become. As with the GA, these 'movements against neoliberalism' (Batsleer, 2017. para. 1) aim to support girls and young women to challenge injustice and work for equality. Along with contextualization, collectivism has enabled the GA to maintain relevance as well as challenge and break barriers to access for women and girls. A collective ethos, developed in context, has the ability to critique and resist through lived experience, with such an impact positive change can be obtained. For the GA, campaigns such as 'No More Page 3!' and 'end period poverty' gained national recognition and success.

When considering if the GA provides feminist youth work, the thesis found this to be a fluctuating practice. Feminist youth work requires the woman as educator to be self-aware of her history and agenda which is drawn on to inform collective knowing. Utilising these resources, the personal is reintegrated into the professional and political and the interaction with young women mutually informed. The thesis recognises the woman as educator plays a crucial role in practice, exemplified in the PAR findings which were clear the role of Guide Leader was important in the ability to learn in action and dialogue. Whilst the overarching organisation can elicit voice and support collective campaigns and challenges, how this is translated to a Unit

level is carried in dialogue. If the distinctiveness of feminist practice lies in the ability to critically connect the personal and the political, the GA is feminist in that the structures and ethos support this practice. However, as the role of the educator is crucial in feminist youth work, the ability to facilitate learning and action within the process, linked to the personal and political is not always present. Interestingly, a caveat to this uncovered by this research which spanned across all generations involved, is the story of how the organisation began. This narrative was powerful in that it was a mainstay of the descriptions given about the GA, the pride in women collectively taking action was regularly retold to me as a feminist accomplishment and in that positions the organisation in feminist discourse.

### **Sustainability**

Currently in the field of youth work, attempts to address organisational models of stability are rarely linked to the context of those involved. The dominant narratives maintain an economic focus which is difficult to uphold in practice for a community focused venture, (Kuhlman and Farrington, 2010). In a bid to introduce stability to the youth sector landscape, the application of models which use 'measurement for evaluation' (CYI, 2021. pp 3-4) are promoted and supported. This results in the introduction of individual measurement into funding bids and subsequent reintroduction in funding criteria. Sustainability within a neoliberal ideology and practice of working with young people creates a dichotomy with the traditional value-based process of youth work. Primarily focused on fiscal austerity and laissez-faire economics it is less concerned with social or welfare responsibilities and in this has less reason to connect to or wish to understand the context of its users.

This thesis has located sustainability for the GA within the dynamic, contextual value-based youth work process of informal education which is intrinsic to its history, model, and existence. Organisational ability to support and encourage growth, knowledge creation and learning informs practice and perspective maintaining evolution aligned and within the context of women. In doing this, it is an organisation that has remained relevant, been informed by, and informed the lives of girls and women for over 100 years.

Whilst exploring the sustainability of the GA, the thesis revealed times when the GA departed from the socio-political context of women, which were arguably the times when its organisational stability was threatened. The socio-economic position of young people in society in the 1960s represented a period of disconnect for the GA to the lives of young women. The wider youth sector became concerned with consciousness-raising whilst the GA maintained a focus on character building within leisure pursuits as their purpose, which resulted in the organisation being seen as outdated and a decline in membership. Learning from this episode, and reconnecting to the context of girls and women, positive action from the GA in the form of the 'Tomorrow's Guide' report, which had listened and acted on the wants and needs of girls and women, enabled the organisation to contextually reconnect, repositioning the organisation back in line with need and seeing membership grow again.

In addition, the introduction of what is known by participants as 'the 65-year rule', required members who were still involved in face-to-face Unit meeting activities with girls and young women, to step down from this role if they were 65 years of age or older. This met with fierce resistance and anger as the imposition of the rule without

consultation displaced lots of leaders and in turn Units. Not only did this initiate a rapid decline of Leaders it also discarded knowledge and experience they brought with them. Membership opposition saw the 'rule' rescinded as the organisation realigned with member need, however, some members refused to take up their face-to-face position again focusing their volunteering, as one participant did, in a role in Trefoil Guild.

Most recently and in line with a wider societal debate, the GA is attempting to find, maintain, and understand both 'old and new' contextual ties, a position which is currently being challenged by some GA members. Concerned with the GA altering its position as a single sex organisation to one based on gender identity, some Guide Leaders are challenging this from the socio-political position of women. The GA policy has been altered and now currently recognises:

'all girls and young women, including trans girls and young women, should feel accepted. Non-binary people assigned female at birth and trans boys as new young members based on their sex should also feel welcome'. (Girlguiding, 2022).

Members who attempted to challenge the trajectory of the policy making process had their membership to the GA revoked by the organisation on the basis that their personal perspective of identity was based on 'sex' rather than of gender. Because of the organisational shift, the perspective of these women is in opposition to the new GA definition of membership identity through gender. Legal proceedings ensued and after a four-year dispute those excluded members saw the GA settle out of court,

offering to reinstate the women as members accepting they could not be excluded from the organisation on this basis, as 'sex', under the Equality Act 2010 is a protected characteristic.

## **Recommendations**

This research identifies organisational stability evolves *from* and *in* the context of young people and their communities. It is found within the knowledge produced in the experiential, egalitarian process of informal education in traditional value-based youth work. The shift in the youth sector from being a contextual, educative process has gradually enabled the erosion of traditional youth work and in places redefined it, reducing it to a privately funded, individually centred, outcome focused conduit for the consolidation and acceptance of societal norms and behaviours. Organisational sustainability is recognised in evidence gathering linked to moral panics and predetermined outcomes as justification of value and worth.

Alongside this dominant narrative we are currently seeing uniformed organisations, including The Guide Association, playing a more visible role in the national development and delivery of contemporary youth work. Their presence within the sector is gradually but increasingly becoming noticeable in that organisations, such as the GA are specifically mentioned in discussions and debates within the wider voluntary youth sector. At a NEYA Regional Conference (7.6.22) the C.E.O of the NYA commented on the current membership demand for Guide and Scout organisations, highlighting huge numbers of young people on waiting lists, waiting for their turn to join. The example was used to suggest a current demand coming from

young people for youth work provision, however, this thesis suggests that the demand and the waiting lists are not for access to those neoliberal youth projects but for admission to the desired social and cultural capital located within traditional value-based youth work.

From this research the thesis has identified specific recommendations to inform organisational stability and youth work, all of which centre around the re-instigation of traditional value-based youth work as a democratic and emancipatory process.

### **National Recommendations**

To introduce and embed sustainability in to youth work provision, nationally the youth sector needs to reassert its conviction in the process of traditional value-based youth work, refocusing on critical pedagogy and a transformative informal educational process, whilst actively desisting from embracing and adopting a neoliberal ideology. Youth work located in praxis would be the aim and the learning and knowledge created from within used to continue to inform practice and locate value.

As this research demonstrated, youth work can be a form of research as well as a conduit for social and cultural capital gain, providing it is located in the context of young people. The 'findings' from value-based youth work, if acted upon, will continually inform a contextual and therefore sustainable working model. When linked to the socio-political context of young people and their communities, needs are met and relevance maintained which become characteristics embedded in the model of sustainability.

As part of this reassertion, the NYA as a 'national body for youth work' should support a sector refocus, shifting from the current narrative of curriculum based, impact measured, local 'offers,' and a deficit model of young people, to reconnecting with the value-based characteristics of traditional youth work. As the value of those traditional youth work, non-military, uniformed youth organisations has already been noticed by the government, the 'door' to this process, as a tried and tested solution to the lack of youth provision, is already 'open.'

In this recommendation I am not suggesting those non-military uniformed youth organisations be taken under the wing of the NYA or become government suppliers of youth work, in fact the opposite. They are already meeting a need, thriving, and surviving, and in this, they should be left. I am recommending the traditional values they use to underpin their work with young people and embed in their organisational model be reintroduced and understood by the wider youth sector. The replication of youth work values in the creation of an organisational network of difference within a homogenous group, is recommended to become a communication channel. Here, the role of the NYA would be as facilitator, working within the values of the youth work process to support the emergent and contextually informed actions.

In addition, the network could support direct communication between the NYA and grass roots organisations. Currently the creation and positioning of a few organisations which serve as communication, or rather dissemination conduits and gatekeepers, have added to the deepening of mistrust and competition within the

sector. A direct reciprocal relationship between the NYA and grass roots organisations would enable context to be understood and recognised resulting in the voice of communities incorporated into the wider youth work external structure. Within this relationship, communication with and support informed by those existing small pockets of resistant youth work and traditional youth work organisations, become exemplars of possibility and sustainability models of difference within homogeneity.

In these recommendations I include the importance of reclaiming the political language of youth work's egalitarian, collective and democratic process. Challenging the current language of deficit models of young people whilst embracing models which focus on the potential of a young person, the dialogue within the process will support young people to 'be' and not just become or 'transition.' The language will allow youth work to be in a supported space, where youth workers are social educators and not 'social entrepreneurs' (IDYW, 2009) empowered to engage in philosophical inquiry through 'conversation' with young people, starting from their interests and fostered in the association of trusted relationships.

A vital aspect of traditional value-based youth work as a sustainable model would be the reintroduction of the lost experience and skills of the social educator. Whilst organisations such as the GA are not reliant on JNC professionally qualified workers, those volunteers and workers they do have hold many readily available skills within the eclectic workforce. The current youth sector is limited in that it has few skilled and experienced social educators in a vast and increasing pool of workers who are limited in praxis. I suggest that whilst some praxis skills remain accessible to the



sector as a valuable and needed resource, the introduction of and reconnection to these workers is important. In this reintroduction, the informal education process is replenished, modelled, and understood through praxis, which in time, becomes an embedded cyclical, educational process within the sector as a whole. The emergent result will be the retention of knowledge and skills informing practice as future generations of youth workers learn through application and modelling of the value-based, informal educative process they work within. In this action, stability is reaffirmed through the role of the youth worker as social educator, where power can be subverted and injustice challenged through collective action.

The research identifies the importance of single sex youth work and single sex space and therefore recommends embracing the political, professional, and personal aspects of critical pedagogies, such as feminist youth work and the methods employed to challenge the legitimacy of stereotypes. The feminist pedagogue plays an important role in the empowerment of girls and young women, acting both as a role model and educator to shift the focus and positioning of young women currently seen as problematic, to being one of value and potential.

Girls and young women's youth work and the knowledge creating, empowering space it resides in, is an area which remains in demand yet its importance overlooked as it continues to be an 'aside' or non-existent in the contemporary setting. Therefore, in the understanding youth work should be contextually embedded a recommendation would be to actively recognise the importance of identity, open access, detached and interest based youth work.

### **NE Youth provision recommendations**

Despite the creation of the NE Youth Alliance aiming to ‘support the development and sustainability of the people and organisations...across the region’ and ‘get the people in the youth and community sector thinking and working differently’ (<https://neya.org.uk/>), the situation of sustainability remains precarious for many youth organisations. Housed in the same economic austerity policy and neoliberal context which saw the decimation of the sector, the NE Youth Alliance is starting from a position which requires market forces and competition to survive. Working from within this framework, the aim to create a common purpose through being ‘backbone support’ is not located in the traditional value-based characteristic of informal educative youth work and has not therefore managed to quash the feeling or perspective of sector fragmentation but conversely increased it through its (alleged) competition for funding and young people as resources.

In a bid to inform the sector, a recommendation would be to produce a short, two-page policy and practice briefing paper to appraise a regional seminar where the findings of the research would reframe discussion and debate within youth work as a value-based process. This repositioning would enable dialogue to emerge from an educative position as opposed to debate rooted in funding streams and impact measurement evidence. In doing this, organisational ‘evidence of worth’ could be placed firmly within the lives of young people through cyclical re-application and extended learning producing and reaffirming social and cultural capital. Whilst this reframing would eradicate the need for measured impact or organisational quality marks it would open space to understand, recognise and not underestimate the importance of social capital and the agency of young people to create their own

social links. Through community connection, participants will, as they say in youth work, 'vote with their feet' and walk towards the provision.

Discussion from within an egalitarian, emancipatory, transformational educative frame would remove the deficit model of youth work and young people. It would remove gatekeeping to the discussion and create a transparent space in which to learn. In this dialogue would be the support and ability to challenge those externally created moral panics and funding targeting specific groups of young people, for example funding to tackle 'loneliness' or make young people 'resilient,' by shifting the premise of young people as deficit to potential and issues placed in the domain of the individual to the concern of the collective.

This research has shown, it is important that any youth work organisation is involved in an active, reciprocal relationship rooted in and born from the communities of young people they work with. The dynamic process of value-based youth work will embed context, meaning and relevance into the work. By meeting need in accordance with socio-political context, sustainability will be located within recognition by young people and their communities who acknowledge connection, relevance and worth.

Arguably the evidence to date of regional support in the guise of an organisation has not negated the feeling of mistrust nor has it introduced a culture of transparency within the region. It could be argued that such an organisation is possibly not needed at all. As with Guide Units, those community rooted youth organisations providing opportunities to socialise within a value-based process of informal education learn

from within their community context, meet need and enable young people to reposition as active social agents and citizens. Support from a national body such as a repositioned NYA would enable these youth organisations to collectively address barriers and injustice impacting on the lives and communities of young people.

### **GA Recommendations**

Recommendations for the GA identified from this research lie in three distinct areas.

Firstly, the importance of the continuation of connection to the context of girls and women should be maintained and understood as vital in reaffirming the basis of the youth work provided. Separation from this connection to context opens the organisation up to drift, moving away from member need towards external agendas, which in turn impacts on membership and a decline of volunteers at every level of the organisation.

In this recommendation I include the need to positively acknowledge the relationship between the women at the 'grass roots' level of the organisation and 'HQ'. In places, organisational success is considered to occur despite of or instead of HQ involvement. Whilst these 'disconnects' seem to be infrequent; they are nonetheless precarious to maintaining relevance and community connectivity. The extensive time, commitment, and funding individual volunteers provide, is directly associated to context and community connectivity which if severed will result in the loss of skills, experience, and organisational values which impact on the organisational ability to function and maintain relevance.

Secondly, strong findings from the research, especially from the PAR project, demonstrated the importance of having single sex space and place. As girls and young women's youth work within the youth sector was defunded long before austerity measures, the GA is one of the few organisations providing and politicising space through its work with young women and collective social action. In this the recommendation is, again, to maintain connected and listen to the dialogue and debates within a socio-political context to understand the positionality of women. Championing and supporting difference within a homogenous group enables an eclectic myriad of female role models too emerge and support. Starting from the position of the girl with potential who knows and is supported in being and becoming who she wants to be enables wider discourse and the challenging of dominant ideologies.

The third recommendation is that the GA continues to play an informative role in national policy, practice, and the strategic direction of the wider youth sector. As with its historical development and involvement, the longevity of the organisation and knowledge gained from this position can offer insight and serve as an exemplar of an organisation which has and continues to be stable within a dynamic social setting. From its stable position, the GA should be able to participate in sector dialogue whilst maintaining an independent stance.

In summary, the findings of this research attest the continued neoliberal trajectory of youth work as one which offers no sustainability and is in fact one which is a catalyst for instability. Therefore, on a national and local level the overarching recommendation of this research is the need for an immediate recognition that

organisational sustainability requires a total shift in the theoretical framing of youth work. This shift should be toward the speedy reintroduction of traditional value-based youth work within and across the sector. However, as this research identified, the knowledge and experience of traditional value-based process driven youth work are sparse and therefore a continually marginalised voice within discussion. In this, I recommend the findings of this research be used as a resource to support, frame, and enable discussion and debate about the re-instigation of youth work from a value-base perspective. In this, the research findings can be considered a focal point, a 'hook' with which to hang further debate, exploration, and action. It will support and champion discussion from a value-based perspective as opposed to starting from the assumption that this trajectory be regressive and therefore shutdown or become palatably re-packaged and stuffed back into a neoliberal frame.

### **Academic recommendations**

The process of this research, the academic and practical experiences and knowledge gained have enabled me to develop a more profound understanding of the role a value-based process of informal education plays in the stability of an organisation. However, there are still areas and issues which require further investigation. I chose to study the GA due to its organisational longevity as a girl only youth organisation, yet this is only one specific model. Within the current youth sector there remains sporadic small community based, value-led youth projects and identity focused projects. Emergent from the research is the importance and scope for further exploration into youth work organisational sustainability, specifically with these small community-based youth work organisations. Often functioning outside a membership model yet embedded and active in their community, the impact of

value-based youth work is noted and therefore makes them worthy of community support. In order to build upon and further understand the connection of traditional value-based youth work and sustainability, repeating this research in these organisations may identify commonalities within organisational models or uncover alternatives.

In addition, the ethnographic elements of this research and my role as a researcher/practitioner presented a vast amount of data which can be analysed as a piece of research in itself and further add to the methodological knowledge contribution. I therefore aim to write a publication piece which draws upon the ethnographic data gathered and my reflective accounts of the research specific to the PAR project and the work with the young women/peer researchers.

Furthermore, the research demonstrated the importance of knowledge creation for both the disciplines of academia and youth work practice. The learning from this strengthens the position of both, and therefore a recommendation is for more collaborative work to be undertaken on national, regional, and organisational levels. This collaborative work would further contextualise data and add qualitative scientific validity to demonstrate the value of youth work.

### **Practical Action Recommendations**

Below I identify my personal and intended actions taken from the research recommendations:

- Produce a short, two-page policy and practice briefing paper for regional youth sector dissemination and discussion.
- Produce a short, two-page policy and practice briefing paper for the GA both regionally and nationally.
- To present my research to the regional Annual General Meeting of the North East GA.
- To present my research at the University of Sunderland Centre for Applied Social Science (CASS) Public Lecture Series.
- To conduct research into contemporary girls and young women's' feminist youth work.
- To write a publication which draws upon the ethnographic data and reflective accounts within this research.

### **Research Limitations**

This research has made contributions to the field of youth work, furthering understanding of organisational sustainability and value-based youth work. However, it is not without limitations which could be further addressed, researched, and built upon.

The research was undertaken with the context of the regional youth work sector in the North East of England, specifically using one case study from one organisation in one geographical location. In this it contains distinct cultural and contextual foundations which whilst they are unique cannot be considered to be replicated or generalised. The themes which emerged from the research were predominately



from white women who had continued ties to the GA organisation. Research conducted with other youth organisations in different geographical locations could uncover different themes and knowledge.

The initial aim of the research was to inform YFNE and the wider youth sector of the research findings. The collaborative nature of the research process aimed for it to be informed by the experience and understanding of the sector. In this, the research was at times directed by the flow, context, and positionality of these conduits. Immersed within a neoliberal context, whilst there was a willingness to embrace and consider traditional youth work values linked to sustainability within the research, the notion of single sex youth work over mixed provision, was not of interest and considered a regressive rather than progressive step. In this, areas of interest connected to girls and young women's work and feminist youth work, were placed on my 'to do after the thesis' list and is an area of research I consider important and intend to pursue in future.

In addition, the collaborative relationship with YFNE altered as the organisation restructured and partnered with another organisation to form the NE Youth Alliance. At the beginning of the research this was not a considered pathway for YFNE. The change in organisational perspective enabled this collaboration which resulted in a change in sector communication channels. This change shifted and repositioned my research/practitioner links to the sector. Whilst data and information continued to be gathered for this research, the change presented alternative discussion forums and distribution outlets than those initially identified.

Finally, depending upon perspective the researcher/practitioner position I adopted had a direct impact on the case study. When I began my participant observation the young women who would become the peer researchers had been becoming bored with the GA weekly Unit meetings. The opportunity to engage in the research offered a new opportunity which they willingly took, resulting in this group staying and maintaining their membership with the GA and becoming the first Rangers Unit in 1<sup>st</sup> Hebburn St. Johns. This possibly maintained their membership of the organisation and their participation longer than if I and the opportunity of the PAR research project had not crossed their paths.

### **Critical Reflections**

I conclude this chapter by reflecting upon the research process as a whole, from its conception to conclusion, considering the limitations of my work, my own dilemmas and reflections arising from the research.

Throughout the study I faced some research and professional challenges. Immersing myself into the research process required a vast commitment of time on my behalf. I worked directly with the case study one evening a week and also on weekend residentials and longer trips to events such as 'The Big Gig' in London. In addition, I attended training, district and division meetings and fundraising events. As some of the participants stated, the time commitment to the organisation is far more than the two – three-hour Unit meetings with the girls and young women, and as I am sure all youth workers and GA volunteers know, supporting the unit meetings includes the

time for planning, gathering resources, risk assessing and evaluation. Two-three hours is only ever the minimum of commitment per week.

During the research process the area I spent most time reflecting upon and which I felt I needed the most ethical consideration, and my continued consciousness was my practitioner/research role. The use of youth work methods within the research especially with the PAR project and my role as PO, saw me actively try and build reciprocal relationships with the girls and young women I worked with. I used my skills as a youth work practitioner and my knowledge of the theory underpinning practice or 'insider knowledge' (Batsleer, 2010) to create a relationship on which to support an informal educative process. This required me to create and maintain a meaningful and reciprocal relationship, which as the research determined, is value driven rather than methodological. In actively engaging with the young women from the position they identified, fostering association within a negotiated space, I was required to be more than a researcher. In adopting this approach, I was fully aware that I would not leave my position as a volunteer once the research had ended. As the research stemmed from my profession, a profession within an ethical framework and process, it would provide me with the next stage in my youth work role/career.

I also developed meaningful relationships with the women I worked alongside in the GA. One of the entries in my fieldwork/reflective journal noted my feelings of 'being put on the spot' when I was asked, very plainly and abruptly, if I would leave the GA once the research was complete. I was aware the question contained a judgement as would my answer, but it did afford me the space to publicly proclaim my position and answer. A negative answer could have made the relationships I had formed

seem contrived, based on a self-serving agenda, where as a positive response reinforced my commitment as valid.

Spending a long time in the field and with participants in their space, I could have become to be seen as a colleague first and foremost, rather than a researcher. To prevent this, I constantly reminded participants of my role and purpose and clearly clarified and sought verbal consent for comments I could use in the research.

The use of multiple research methods was a constant source of discussion and deliberation within my academic supervision team as the information obtained was suitable for both the literature review and as research data. One of the methods used in the GA to demonstrate its contribution, is to capture voice directly from members using their own words. One data base held over 200 statements from women aged 90+ years through to current Guides. Those elder contributors were able to demonstrate exactly how the informal education from their involvement in the GA and a girl had impacted throughout their lives, in some instances over eight decades. The non-linear nature of the thesis combined multiple research methods proved challenging and complex as data and information became dynamic and, at times, unmanageable within the linear structure of the thesis.

These ethical challenges during the research process led to much reflection and deliberation on and about my position as a professional youth work practitioner and the quality standards the profession demands. Early in my participant observation role my reflective journal/fieldwork notes often refer to occasions I felt 'bad practice'

emerged. On these occasions the dilemmas were concerned with biased perspectives and conversations adults had with the young women and the words they used. As my role as participant observer was newly established, I decided to observe and listen and maintain a distinct boundary between my motivation as a researcher in that situation and as a practitioner.

During the research process, when working with the young women on the PAR peer-research project, we visited Durham University as a group to work and plan the PAR project. During the visit I became aware through conversations that attaining acceptance into a university was a collective goal and this visit was the first time they had closely experienced a university and its setting. The peer researchers had gathered varying degrees of knowledge about the university experience which they began to share, and through questions sought more knowledge. The questions they asked, such as 'Oooo, You live here! Do they ever allow you to go home, or do you have to be here for three years?' not only identified gaps in their knowledge but demonstrated an interest and willingness to fill them. As a practitioner this is where I naturally wanted to be, in conversation with the needs and starting point of the young women I was working with, however I was also aware our roles at that time were concerned with research and as we had a limited amount of time to complete our tasks a diversion in to youth work would knock us off track.

During my field work practice as a participant observer in the GA, my position, as viewed by others, was multiple; a researcher, a Guide Leader, and a youth worker. When working directly with the peer-researchers and working in small groups I felt very much the 'youth worker' whilst they saw me as a Guide Leader. However, for

me mentally the boundaries were permeable as one position seemed to inform the other and vice versa.

I became aware my practitioner knowledge and experience brought new ideas and perspectives to the Unit meetings. In addition, I wondered if in working directly with the peer research group on the PAR project, who were the older girls in the Unit, if this had impacted on their decision to become Rangers and remain with the Unit once they finished as Guides. I could see when I started working with the case study that this group of older young women were slightly removed from the wider group, gradually drifting as they considered they had completed all of the activities and tasks numerous times over their years of membership. Involvement in the research project could have also impacted on their decision to remain with the organisation on multiple levels; it met a need as it was new and therefore sparked interest, the position of peer- researcher held status as it demarcated them as separate from the rest of the Guides and it met their need for 'looking good' and 'standing out' on a C.V.

To help me navigate through the research dilemmas, especially in those situations related to positionality where I felt my role as a youth worker did or should have dominated, I engaged in reflective supervision. Utilising reflective supervision and my support network of professional colleagues helped me explore methodological and ethical challenges this research presented. In addition, employing methods other than my fieldwork/reflective journal, I sought space for self-reflection where I engaged with contemporary literature and discussions with my supervisors and long-

standing colleagues, who throughout this process enabled me to uncover meaningful points in the thesis journey.

My position within the research was constantly dynamic however, it was born from my role as a practitioner, in a field of work in which I am comfortable and hold knowledge about. I was determined, from the outset, that the research would have some impact on the contemporary position of youth work, such as introducing a new informed perspective to the narrative about sustainability. On one level it has, as four of the peer-research group are now embarking on their university education whilst the others remain involved with the organisation as Young Leaders. I continue to volunteer with the GA, in particular with St. John's Guide Unit, for much of the reasons provided by the participants. It meets my need as a practitioner, colleague, sister and friend to the women and girls I work with.

# Appendices

## Institutional ethics documents



Shaped by the past, creating the future

### **RESEARCH ETHICS AND RISK ASSESSMENT FORM, MAY 2015** **(SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS)**

#### **SECTION A: INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION**

This application seeks approval for one element, semi-structured interviews, of the empirical research relating to a larger project. Two other forms are being submitted: one for training relating to a participatory action research element involving young women as co-researchers, and another for participant observation with key stakeholders in the Guide Association. All three forms are an element of one research project.

<b>A.1. Name of researcher(s):</b>	<b>Wendy Gill</b>
<b>A.2. Email Address(es) of researcher(s):</b>	
<b>A.3. Project Title:</b>	<b>Do traditional youth work organisations hold the key to sustainability for 21<sup>st</sup> century youth provision? Lessons from The Guide Association.</b>
<b>A.4. Project Funder (where appropriate):</b>	<b>ESRC NINE DTP</b>
<b>A.5. When do you intend to start data collection?</b>	<b>January 2019</b>
<b>A.6. When will the project finish?</b>	<b>March 2020</b>
<b>A.7. For students only:</b> Student ID:	<b>Wendy Gill</b> <b>PhD Research Year 1</b>
Degree, year, and module:	<b>Prof Sarah Banks</b>



Supervisor:

**A.8. Brief summary of the research questions:**

**I aim to address the following questions in the research project as a whole:**

- 1).....  
**he purpose of the Guiding Association. What are the values of the organisation and what do they mean to those involved?**
- 2).....  
**ow do organisational boundaries shape individual Guide units and those involved with the units?**
- 3).....  
**ow are the organisational aims and values built into practice, do national perspectives and understanding extend to each unit? What are the activities offered?**
- 4).....  
**hat is the nature and motivation of the voluntary element within the organisation?**
- 5).....  
**s the organisation feminist and why was/is it attractive to young women?**

**A.9. What data collection method/s are you intending you use, and why?**

**Semi Structured Interviews:**

I am intending to use Semi-structured interviews, within a flexible framework, to interview adults in and connected to the Guiding Association. The interview questions will be informed by the emergent themes from my completed literature and historical reviews and participant observations.

Semi-structured interviews will allow for self-interpretation and definition of topics and themes whilst maintaining a structure which is relevant to the research design and data collection. The nature of theme based semi-structured interviews allows for open answers sited within the perspective of the interviewee assisting in the maintenance of the research being rooted within the context of those involved so enabling the data to be rich, detailed and relate to personal experiences, feelings, and opinions. This method will allow me to identify how people construct and interpret social interactions and meanings and also understand views and opinions within a context.

The semi-structured nature of the research will enable interviewees to use the space to convey data using their own descriptive language as well as present unplanned areas of interest and ideas that I may not have previously identified or have knowledge of. This will enable unpredicted data to be discovered and allow further exploration of these areas.

The questioning within the semi-structured interviews will be flexible and open ended in order to facilitate expansion of topics and discussion and allow further probing to explore areas of interest. It will also allow comparison to be made between participants and frame knowledge within language, communication, and a community context.

**SECTION B: ETHICS CHECKLIST**

While all subsequent sections of this form should be completed for all studies, this checklist is designed to identify those areas where more detailed information should be given. Please note: It is better to identify an area where ethical or safety issues may arise and then explain how these will be dealt with, than to ignore potential risks to participants and/or the researchers.

	Yes	No
a). Does the study involve participants who are <i>potentially vulnerable</i> ?		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b). Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge/consent (e.g., covert observation of people in non-public places)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	x
c). Could the study cause harm, discomfort, stress, anxiety, or any other negative consequence beyond the risks encountered in normal life?	<input type="checkbox"/>	x
d) Does the research address a <i>potentially sensitive topic</i> ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	x
e). Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	x
f). Are steps being taken to protect anonymity and confidentiality?	x	<input type="checkbox"/>
g). Are there potential risks to the researchers' health, safety, and wellbeing in conducting this research beyond those experienced in the researchers' everyday life?		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### **SECTION C: METHODS AND DATA COLLECTION**

C.1. Who will be your research participants?

The research participants will be adults who hold and have held positions within North East Guide Units, the County support network and those who have previously been involved with the Guiding Association as young women, volunteers, and Leaders. From a national perspective I also aim to interview past and present members of the organisation including C.E. O's, Board of Trustees and Council.

C.2. How will you recruit your participants and how will they be selected or sampled?

The sample will be selected to represent adults with past and present connections to the organisation models and positions within it: Approx 20. Snowballing will be used to identify further individuals relevant to the research if necessary.

I will disseminate generic information about my research through the regional Guiding Communications network, (electronically and in a quarterly newsletter).

I will aim to select individuals that represent different positions in and out of the organisation and initially write to them requesting a meeting to further discuss my research, sending them the information sheet. At the meeting I will give the participants a hard copy of the information and interview sheet and request a consent form is signed.

C.3. How will you explain the research to the participants and gain their consent? (If consent will not be obtained, please explain why.)

On a regional level I will submit a general written piece to be circulated through existing Guiding Association communication channels.

I have requested to attend the next Regional Commissioners meeting to explain and present my research (verbally and in written form), inviting questions and answers from the Commissioners in attendance. From this meeting and from the information I have gained through participant observation and document reviews I will identify and contact individuals who each represent various roles within the organisation. I will contact each potential participant and briefly outline the research and arrange to meet with them. At the meeting we will further discuss the research and I will provide them with the information sheet and gain written consent.

C.4. What procedures are in place to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of your participants and their responses?

All of the participants will be anonymous, and I will explain this to them both verbally during our discussion and also in written form, i.e) the information sheet. We will discuss individual context such as to what extent their job roles should be described, so that they are not identifiable if they do not wish to be.

Each interview will be recorded either digitally and/or in written form. Written documents will be stored in a locked cabinet and audio material will be stored in the Durham University cloud and password protected. These forms of data will be destroyed no later than 10 years after the conclusion of the project and in accordance with Durham University data protection and retention policy. This is located at:

[www.dur.ac.uk/research.innovation/governance/ethics/considerations/people/consent/privacynotice/](http://www.dur.ac.uk/research.innovation/governance/ethics/considerations/people/consent/privacynotice/)

All participants will have the opportunity to withdraw from any element of this research. This will be explained both in writing (information sheet) and also verbally prior to the start of individual interviews. If they wish to withdraw from the interview at any point I will discuss and negotiate what, if any, information will/will not be included in the research. Similarly, if during the interview process a participant requests that some areas of the information, they have presented be excluded from the research I will discuss and clarify their request and agree a course of action with them.

C.5. Are there any circumstances in which there would be a limit or exclusion to the anonymity/confidentiality offered to participants? If so, please explain further.

No - although it may be more difficult to ensure senior people with specific roles are not identifiable and so how to handle this will be negotiated with each participant.

C.6. You must attach a **participant information sheet or summary explanation** that will be given to potential participants in your research.

<b>Within this, have you explained (in a way that is accessible to the participants):</b>	Yes	No
a). What the research is about?	x	<input type="checkbox"/>
b). Why the participants have been chosen to take part and what they will be asked to do?	x	<input type="checkbox"/>
c). Any potential benefits and/or risks involved in their participation?	x	<input type="checkbox"/>

d) What levels of anonymity and confidentiality will apply to the information that they share, and if there are any exceptions to these?	x	<input type="checkbox"/>
e). What the data will be used for?	x	<input type="checkbox"/>
f). How the data will be stored securely?	x	<input type="checkbox"/>
g). How they can withdraw from the project?	x	<input type="checkbox"/>
h). Who the researchers are, and how they can be contacted?	x	<input type="checkbox"/>

**SECTION D: POTENTIAL RISKS TO PARTICIPANTS**

You should think carefully about the risks that participating in your research poses to participants. Be aware that some subjects can be sensitive for participants even if they are not dealing explicitly with a 'sensitive' topic. Please complete this section as fully as possible and continue on additional pages if necessary.

What risks to participants may arise from participating in your research?	How likely is it that these risks will actually happen?	How much harm would be caused if this risk did occur?	What measures are you putting in place to ensure this does not happen (or that if it does, the impact on participants is reduced)?
1.  Recollection of past events or questioning may trigger a variety of emotions.	Low	Minimum – Emotions may be positive.  Maximum – Negative emotions may have been processed are being revisited.  Disclosures will be addressed and acted upon within policy guidelines.	Acknowledgement of emotions.  Referral and support.  Ability to withdraw at anytime
2.			
3.			

**SECTION E: POTENTIAL RISKS TO RESEARCHERS**

You should think carefully about any hazards or risks to you as a researcher that will be present because of you conducting this research. Please complete this section as fully as possible and continue on additional pages if necessary. Please include an assessment of any health conditions, injuries, allergies, or intolerances that may present a risk to you taking part in the proposed research activities (including any related medication used to control these), or any reasonable adjustments that may be required where a disability might otherwise prevent you from participating fully within the research.

1. Where will the research be conducted/what will be the research site?

What hazards or risks to you as a researcher may arise from conducting this research?	How likely is it that these risks will actually happen?	How much harm would be caused if this risk did happen?	What measures are being put in place to ensure this does not happen (or that if it does, the impact on researchers is reduced)?
1. Unfamiliar venue may lead to inability to leave rapidly if the need arises.	Low	Need could result from violence/threats from the interviewee  Most interviewees will be involved with	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ..... Research the venue prior to attending – be familiar with exit routes and public facilities/transport. R</li> <li>• ..... Try not to meet in a private residence. T</li> <li>• ..... Identify an emergency contact – a person who will trigger action if the researcher has not contacted them within an agreed time frame/answered a phone call. I</li> <li>• ..... Have the emergency contact on an ‘unlockable’ app on a smart phone screen. H</li> </ul>

		the Guiding Association and will therefore have undergone an enhanced DBS check risk of violence towards the researcher will be low.	
2.			
3.			

**SECTION F: OTHER APPROVALS**

	Yes, document attached	Yes, documents to follow	No
a). Does the research require ethical approval from the NHS or a Social Services Authority? If so, please attach a copy of the draft form that you intend to submit, together with any accompanying documentation.	<input type="checkbox"/>		x
b). Might the proposed research meet the definition of a <i>clinical trial</i> ? (If yes, a copy of this form must be sent to the University's Insurance Officer, Tel. 0191 334 9266, for approval, and evidence of approval must be attached before the project can start).	<input type="checkbox"/>		x
c). Does the research involve working data, staff or offenders connected with the National Offender Management Service? If so, please see the guidance at <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/national-offender-management-service/about/research">https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/national-offender-management-service/about/research</a> and submit a copy of your proposed application to the NOMS Integrated Application System with your form.	<input type="checkbox"/>		x
d). Does the project involve activities that may take place within Colleges of Durham University, including recruitment of participants via associated networks (e.g., social media)? (If so, approval from the Head of the College/s concerned will be required after departmental approval has been granted – see guidance notes for further details)		<input type="checkbox"/>	x <input type="checkbox"/>
e). Will you be required to undertake a Disclosure and Barring Service (criminal records) check to undertake the research?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x
f) I confirm that travel approval has or will be sought via the online approval system at <a href="http://apps.dur.ac.uk/travel.forms">http://apps.dur.ac.uk/travel.forms</a> for all trips during this research which meet the following criteria: For Students travelling away from the University, this applies where travel is not to their home and involves an overnight stay. For Staff travelling away from the University, this applies only when travelling to an overseas destination.	Yes x <input type="checkbox"/>		No <input type="checkbox"/>



## **SECTION G: SUBMISSION CHECKLIST AND SIGNATURES**

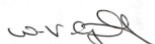
When submitting your ethics application, you should also submit supporting documentation as follows:

Supporting Documents	Included (tick)
Fully Completed Research Ethics and Risk Assessment Form	✓
Interview Guide (if using interviews)	✓
Focus Group Topic Guide (if using focus groups)	
Questionnaire (if using questionnaires)	
Participant Information Sheet or Equivalent	
Consent Form (if appropriate)	✓
<i>For students only:</i> Written/email confirmation from all agencies involved that they agree to participate, also stating whether they require a DBS check. If confirmation is not yet available, please attach a copy of the letter that you propose to send to request this; proof of organisational consent must be forwarded to your Programme Secretary before any data is collected.	✓

Please indicate the reason if any documents cannot be included at this stage:  
(Please note that any ethics applications submitted without sufficient supporting documentation will not be able to be assessed.)

### **Signatures**

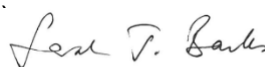
Researcher's Signature:



Date: 4.12.18

Supervisor's Signature (PGR students only)

Date: 27.11.18



**Please keep a copy of your approved ethics application for your records.**  
**If you decide to change your research significantly after receiving ethics approval, you must submit a revised ethics form along with updated supporting documentation before you can implement these changes.**

**PART F: OUTCOME OF THE APPLICATION**

<p><u>Reject</u> The application is incomplete and/or cannot be assessed in its current format. Please complete the application fully.</p>	
<p><u>Revise and Resubmit</u> The application cannot be approved in its current format. Please revise the application as per the comments below. Please complete the application fully.</p>	
<p><u>Approved, with Set Date for Review</u> The application is approved, and you may begin data collection.  A date for further review of the project as it develops has been set to take place on: _____  The anticipated nominated reviewer will be: _____</p>	
<p><u>Approved</u> The application is approved, and you may begin data collection.</p>	x

Research and risk assessment form: Peer Researcher Training

**RESEARCH ETHICS AND RISK ASSESSMENT FORM**  
**PEER RESEARCHER TRAINING SESSION.**

**SECTION A: INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION.**

This application seeks approval for one element, training relating to participatory action research involving young women as co-researchers, of empirical research relating to a larger project. Two other forms are being submitted: one for, participant observation and another for interviews with key stakeholders in the Guide Association. All three forms are an element of one research project.

A.1. Name of researcher(s):	Wendy Gill
A.2. Email Address(es) of researcher(s):	
A.3. Project Title:	Do traditional youth work organisations hold the key to sustainability for 21 <sup>st</sup> century youth provision? Lessons from The Guide Association.
A.4. Project Funder (where appropriate):	ESRC NINE DTP
A.5. When do you intend to start data collection?	January 2019

A.6. When will the project finish?	March 2020
A.7. <i>For students only:</i> Student ID:  Degree, year, and module:  Supervisor:	Wendy Gill  PhD Research Year 1  Prof Sarah Banks
A.8. Brief summary of the research questions:  I aim to address the following questions in the research programme as a whole:  6)..... <b>he purpose of the Guiding Association. What are the values of the organisation and what do they mean to those involved?</b>  7)..... <b>ow do organisational boundaries shape individual Guide units and those involved with the units?</b>  8)..... <b>ow are the organisational aims and values built into practice, do national perspectives and understanding extend to each unit? What are the activities offered?</b>  9)..... <b>hat is the nature and motivation of the voluntary element within the organisation?</b>  10)..... <b>s the organisation feminist and why was/is it attractive to young women?</b>	
A.9. What data collection method/s are you intending you use, and why?  One element of my research will involve Participatory Action Research with a group of approximately 6-8 young women aged between 11 – 14 years old from 1 <sup>st</sup> Hebburn (St. John's) Guide Unit of which I am currently a Guide Leader.  PAR will be used as an approach to the research as it affords flexibility and is not restricted to one particular method: it is 'bespoke' at every stage and therefore the knowledge produced is not constrained.  PAR is also democratic and non-hierarchical in its process. Being driven by participants	

who are recognised as experts having an interest a particular area, they take a lead role in the production and use of knowledge which is constructed collaboratively and collectively by pooling skills and resources and working together.

When working with young people PAR methodologically and philosophically creates agency where the experiences and perspectives are theirs and participants have the opportunity of empowerment by exploring new skills and expanding knowledge in an area in which they are already invested.

My research is in collaboration with Youth Focus North East, a regional, voluntary youth sector charity with the aim of influencing and informing youth policy, practice, and the sector. The principles and practice of PAR are similar to those of youth work therefore any knowledge developed will be housed in terms that are consistent with the values of youth work and of the young women involved and therefore likely to be acknowledged and adopted by practitioners and the organisations they are involved with.

The principles and practice of PAR and Youth Work include:

- Starting where the young people are, how they view the world and, in their space, /community.
- Both are founded on relationships and respect and function within an association, challenging and subverting power relations.
- Recognizing equality, diversity & inclusion as values therefore moving beyond legislative compliance.
- Learning happens in a safe and supportive environment, and it encompasses personal, emotional, social, and political development – it is challenging, fun and empowering.

In order to maximise informed participation and inclusion I aim to hold a training session for the young women volunteers who would like to be involved as Peer Co-researchers.

### **TRAINING**

This will be presented in the form of an informal, youth work educational training session held at XXXX

Training Session length of time:2 x 3 hours

YFNE is a voluntary sector project working with and for young people therefore the venue is well suited to the needs of the training with this group of young women. It is in a central location and is accessible.

I will use a specific Training Room which is already equipped with training resources such as IT equipment, wifi, flip chart, and youth work tools to help facilitate learning.

I have previously worked with YFNE staff and also held both training and open access youth sessions in the building with groups of young people therefore I am aware of the policies, procedures and 'housekeeping' of the space, organisation, and profession. Prior to

delivering the training session I will meet with Leon Mexter, (C.E.O), to clarify my role, aims and the use of the facilities and to re familiarise myself with policy and procedure. The training will begin during February 2019 half term: w/c 15<sup>th</sup> Feb. A YFNE youth worker will be allocated as my co-worker so I will not be in a position of lone working. If a situation arises, such as, one group member needing attention and needing to remove themselves from the rest of the group I will be able to attend to that need and my co-worker will be available to support the remainder of the group. I am personally a qualified Youth Worker with over 26 years' experience working in this and related fields.

**ETHICAL APPROVAL WILL BE FURTHER SOUGHT FOR THE RESEARCH METHOD COLLECTIVELY IDENTIFIED USING PARTICIAPTORY ACTION RESEARCH.**

**SECTION B: ETHICS CHECKLIST**

While all subsequent sections of this form should be completed for all studies, this checklist is designed to identify those areas where more detailed information should be given. Please note: It is better to identify an area where ethical or safety issues may arise and then explain how these will be dealt with, than to ignore potential risks to participants and/or the researchers.

	Yes	No
a). Does the study involve participants who are <i>potentially vulnerable</i> ?	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
b). Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge/consent (e.g., covert observation of people in non-public places)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	x
c). Could the study cause harm, discomfort, stress, anxiety, or any other negative consequence beyond the risks encountered in normal life?	<input type="checkbox"/>	x
d) Does the research address a <i>potentially sensitive topic</i> ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	x
e). Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	x
f). Are steps being taken to protect anonymity and confidentiality?	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
g). Are there potential risks to the researchers' health, safety, and wellbeing in conducting this research beyond those experienced in the researchers' everyday life?		<input type="checkbox"/> x

**SECTION C: METHODS AND DATA COLLECTION**

C.1. Who will be your research participants?

The research participants will be young women aged between 11 – 14 years old from 1<sup>st</sup> Hebburn, (St. John's) Guide Unit. I am a Unit Leader for this Guide Unit and work with this group on a weekly basis therefore already have an established relationship with the young women.

C.2. How will you recruit your participants and how will they be selected or sampled? (Selection of the training and the research group)

The group will be selected by the young women volunteering into the project. I will present the opportunity to participate to the whole Guide Unit during a Guide session, explaining what the research is about and what I envisage the participatory element to entail. Those who are interested will take a Training Information sheet and consent form to discuss with their parents/carers and return the following week with the consent form signed. I will be available on return of the form to answer any questions the adults may have, and I will also provide my contact details in case parents/carers wish to contact me on an individual basis.

C.3. How will you explain the research to the participants and gain their consent? (If consent will not be obtained, please explain why.)

Using youth work informal education processes and skills the training will include the explanation of the research.

**Training Content:**

Research & working together

(1.5 hours)

Housekeeping & understanding Confidentiality, (Child Protection and Safeguarding policy and actions).

Research context – Background to the research question and where PAR is positioned within it.

What is research & why we do it?

Research methods – Information/knowledge we get from different methods.

Methods available to use – Thinking about who the research will be with and where it will be carried out, plus the data wanting to be collected. Trying different methods.

(1.5 hours)

Group Agreement – how we will work together, ethics behind our engagement, confidentiality, understanding roles, responsibilities, and commitment.

Research design

(1.5 hours)

Recap subject knowledge/confidentiality

Identify research method to use

Work out the logistics or using the method

Data collection/analysis/storage

(1.5 hours)

Identify and understand the ethics linked to using this method

Safeguarding, confidentiality & child protection

Identifying the guide units and the researcher roles, making contact, and arranging the visits.

Documentation –compiling the information used to inform the guide units and request their participation.

Once training is concluded, and the research design is identified the team of researchers will create a specific research information and consent sheet and also complete 'Research Ethics and Risk Assessment Form' to be submitted for approval. On approval consent will be sought from participants who will undertake data collection and analysis.

C.4. What procedures are in place to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of your participants and their responses?

Information from the Training Session consent form will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in YFNE office. On completion of the research project the information will be destroyed. Any digital information, (audio or written) will be stored in Durham University cloud and will be password protected and again destroyed once my research has concluded. These forms of data will be destroyed no later than 10 years after the conclusion of the project and in accordance with the University's data protection and retention policy: located at: <https://www.dur.ac.uk/ig/dp/www.dur.ac.uk/research.innovation/governance/ethics/considerations/people/consent/privacynotice/>

The young women will have the opportunity to withdraw from any element of the research, including the training. This will be explained both in writing (information sheet) and also verbally prior to the training starting. If a participant decides to withdraw, I will negotiate with them to reach an agreement as to what if any data relating to their direct involvement will be in/excluded from the research. Similarly, if a participant remains in the research but request that areas of data pertaining to them are excluded from the research this will also be discussed and agreed together.

C.5. Are there any circumstances in which there would be a limit or exclusion to the anonymity/confidentiality offered to participants? If so, please explain further.

Child Protection and Safeguarding circumstances would limit or exclude the anonymity/confidentiality offered to participants if the situation or information was deemed to fall under these descriptors. Working within the policies and procedures of YFNE I would already have had a conversation with the young women involved and ensured they had an understanding of the policy and concepts. Any disclosure or area of concern will be addressed through the policy and acted upon accordingly.

C.6. You must attach a **participant information sheet or summary explanation** that will be given to potential participants in your research.

<b>Within this, have you explained (in a way that is accessible to the participants):</b>	Yes	No
a). What the research is about?	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
b). Why the participants have been chosen to take part and what they will be asked to do?	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
c). Any potential benefits and/or risks involved in their participation?	X	<input type="checkbox"/>

d) What levels of anonymity and confidentiality will apply to the information that they share, and if there are any exceptions to these?	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
e). What the data will be used for?	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
f). How the data will be stored securely?	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
g). How they can withdraw from the project?	x	<input type="checkbox"/>
h). Who the researchers are, and how they can be contacted?	X	<input type="checkbox"/>



### **SECTION D: POTENTIAL RISKS TO PARTICIPANTS**

You should think carefully about the risks that participating in your research poses to participants. Be aware that some subjects can be sensitive for participants even if they are not dealing explicitly with a 'sensitive' topic. Please complete this section as fully as possible and continue on additional pages if necessary.

What risks to participants may arise from participating in your research? <b><u>TRAINING</u></b>	How likely is it that these risks will actually happen?	How much harm would be caused if this risk did occur?	What measures are you putting in place to ensure this does not happen (or that if it does, the impact on participants is reduced)?
1. Physical accidents, slips, trips etc	Low	Minimal	Completion of a YFNE risk assessment form and applying any actions arising from it.
2. Having to leave the group to attend to an individual	Low	Minimal	Identification of a co-worker within the building so they are able to attend to the wider group.
3. Disclosure: Child protection & Safeguarding	Low	Minimal	Ability to have the space and time to talk and address the disclosure: Utilising the co-worker to continue facilitating the wider group.

### **SECTION E: POTENTIAL RISKS TO RESEARCHERS**

You should think carefully about any hazards or risks to you as a researcher that will be present because of you conducting this research. Please complete this section as fully as possible and continue on additional pages if necessary. Please include an assessment of any health conditions, injuries, allergies, or intolerances that may present a risk to you taking part in the proposed research activities (including any related medication used to control these), or any reasonable adjustments that may be required where a disability might otherwise prevent you from participating fully within the research.

1. Where will the research be conducted/what will be the research site?

What hazards or risks to you as a researcher may arise from conducting this research? <b><u>TRAINING</u></b>	How likely is it that these risks will actually happen?	How much harm would be caused if this risk did happen?	What measures are being put in place to ensure this does not happen (or that if it does, the impact on researchers is reduced)?
1.  Physical accident (Slips, trips, falls). Unexpected illness	Low	Minimal	Completion of a YFNE Risk Assessment form/process.  Contact identified responsible adult
2.  Threats & violence	Low	Minimal	I already have a positive existing relationship with the Peer Co-researchers. Creation of group rules/values and understanding including repercussions.
3.			

**SECTION F: OTHER APPROVALS**

	Yes, document attached	Yes, documents to follow	No
a). Does the research require ethical approval from the NHS or a Social Services Authority? If so, please attach a copy of the draft form that you intend to submit, together with any accompanying documentation.	<input type="checkbox"/>		x
b). Might the proposed research meet the definition of a <i>clinical trial</i> ? (If yes, a copy of this form must be sent to the University's Insurance Officer, Tel. 0191 334 9266, for approval, and evidence of approval must be attached before the project can start).	<input type="checkbox"/>		x
c). Does the research involve working data, staff or offenders connected with the National Offender Management Service? If so, please see the guidance at <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/national-offender-management-service/about/research">https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/national-offender-management-service/about/research</a> and submit a copy of your proposed application to the NOMS Integrated Application System with your form.	<input type="checkbox"/>		x
d). Does the project involve activities that may take place within Colleges of Durham University, including recruitment of participants via associated networks (e.g., social media)? (If so, approval from the Head of the College/s concerned will be required after departmental approval has been granted – see guidance notes for further details)		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> x
e). Will you be required to undertake a Disclosure and Barring Service (criminal records) check to undertake the research?	<input type="checkbox"/> x	<input type="checkbox"/>	
f) I confirm that travel approval has or will be sought via the online approval system at <a href="http://apps.dur.ac.uk/travel.forms">http://apps.dur.ac.uk/travel.forms</a> for all trips during this research which meet the following criteria: For Students travelling away from the University, this applies where travel is not to their home and involves an overnight stay. For Staff travelling away from the University, this applies only when travelling to an overseas destination.	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		No <input type="checkbox"/>

## **SECTION G: SUBMISSION CHECKLIST AND SIGNATURES**

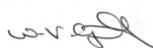
When submitting your ethics application, you should also submit supporting documentation as follows:

Supporting Documents	Included (tick)
Fully Completed Research Ethics and Risk Assessment Form	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Interview Guide (if using interviews)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Focus Group Topic Guide (if using focus groups)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Questionnaire (if using questionnaires)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participant Information Sheet or Equivalent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Consent Form (if appropriate)	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>For students only:</i> Written/email confirmation from all agencies involved that they agree to participate, also stating whether they require a DBS check. If confirmation is not yet available, please attach a copy of the letter that you propose to send to request this; proof of organisational consent must be forwarded to your Programme Secretary before any data is collected.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>


Please indicate the reason if any documents cannot be included at this stage:  
(Please note that any ethics applications submitted without sufficient supporting documentation will not be able to be assessed.)

### **Signatures**

Researcher's Signature:



Date: 4.12.18

Supervisor's Signature (PGR students only) 

Date: 27.11.18

**Please keep a copy of your approved ethics application for your records.**  
**If you decide to change your research significantly after receiving ethics approval, you must submit a revised ethics form along with updated supporting documentation before you can implement these changes.**

**PART F: OUTCOME OF THE APPLICATION**

<p><u>Reject</u> The application is incomplete and/or cannot be assessed in its current format. Please complete the application fully.</p>	
<p><u>Revise and Resubmit</u> The application cannot be approved in its current format. Please revise the application as per the comments below. Please complete the application fully.</p>	
<p><u>Approved, with Set Date for Review</u> The application is approved, and you may begin data collection.</p> <p>A date for further review of the project as it develops has been set to take place on: _____</p> <p>The anticipated nominated reviewer will be: _____</p>	
<p><u>Approved</u> The application is approved, and you may begin data collection.</p>	X

Research and risk assessment form: Participant Observation

**RESEARCH ETHICS AND RISK ASSESSMENT FORM, MAY 2015**  
**(PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION)**

**SECTION A: INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION.**

This application seeks approval for one element, participant observation, of the empirical research relating to a larger project. Two other forms are being submitted: one for training relating to a participatory action research element involving young women as co-researchers, and another for interviews with key stakeholders in the Guide Association. All three forms are an element of one research project.

A.1. Name of researcher(s):	Wendy Gill
A.2. Email Address(es) of researcher(s):	
A.3. Project Title:	Do traditional youth work organisations hold the key to sustainability for 21 <sup>st</sup> century youth provision? Lessons from The Guide Association.
A.4. Project Funder (where appropriate):	ESRC NINE DTP
A.5. When do you intend to start data collection?	January 2019
A.6. When will the project finish?	March 2020
A.7. <i>For students only:</i> Student ID: Degree, year, and module: Supervisor:	Wendy Gill Research PhD, Year 1. Prof Sarah Banks
A.8. Brief summary of the research questions:	
I aim to address the following questions in the research project as a whole:	
11).....	
<b>he purpose of the Guiding Association. What are the values of the organisation and what do they mean to those involved?</b>	

12).....  
**ow do organisational boundaries shape individual Guide units and those involved with the units?**

13).....  
**ow are the organisational aims and values built into practice, do national perspectives and understanding extend to each unit? What are the activities offered?**

14).....  
**hat is the nature and motivation of the voluntary element within the organisation?**

15).....  
**s the organisation feminist and why was/is it attractive to young women?**

**A.9. What data collection method/s are you intending you use, and why?**

**Participant Observation:**

Using my existing role as Guide Leader in 1<sup>st</sup> Hebburn (St. Johns) Guide Unit I will undertake participant-observation, (this has already been agreed with the Unit, but this role will also be discussed and negotiated with participants before commencing). This research method will allow me to experience and understand the structural and working model of the Guiding Association, its framework, implementation, and interpretation from those directly involved. Utilising this existing role will allow me to build on already established relationships and therefore reduce the risk of participant behaviour altering. Participant observation will allow me to understand the wider community of the organisation and the smaller communities within and peripheral to it. I will observe the roles, actions and behaviours of individual adult volunteers and young women members linked to the organisation and explore interactions, interpretations and meaning placed on them.

Participant-observation will allow me to immerse myself in the cultural setting of the organisation for an extended period of time in order to further build relationships, engage in dialogue and personally experience impact of the framework and model. I will also observe and participate in 'every day practices' such as organisational training, events and meetings and gather documents relating to the organisation. Overall, participant-observation will afford me the opportunity to develop an understanding of organisational culture, the role people play within this and insight into contextual behaviour. It will enable me to identify topics I may not have previously identified and also topics or themes I wish to further explore.

**SECTION B: ETHICS CHECKLIST**

While all subsequent sections of this form should be completed for all studies, this checklist is designed to identify those areas where more detailed information should be given. Please note: It is better to identify an area where ethical or safety issues may arise and then explain how these will be dealt with, than to ignore potential risks to participants and/or the researchers.

	Yes	No
a). Does the study involve participants who are <i>potentially vulnerable</i> ?		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b). Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge/consent (e.g., covert observation of people in non-public places)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	x
c). Could the study cause harm, discomfort, stress, anxiety, or any other negative consequence beyond the risks encountered in normal life?	<input type="checkbox"/>	x
d) Does the research address a <i>potentially sensitive topic</i> ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	x
e). Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	x
f). Are steps being taken to protect anonymity and confidentiality?	x	<input type="checkbox"/>
g). Are there potential risks to the researchers' health, safety, and wellbeing in conducting this research beyond those experienced in the researchers' everyday life?		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**SECTION C: METHODS AND DATA COLLECTION**

C.1. Who will be your research participants?

My research participants will be young and adult women linked to and involved within the Guiding Association. The main focus will be in the North East region (Durham South, Newcastle, and North Tyneside), with 1<sup>st</sup> Hebburn (St. Johns) Guide Unit, where I am a Guide Leader, being the main focal point then extending out from this Unit to organisational support groups i.e) County and regional support networks.

C.2. How will you recruit your participants and how will they be selected or sampled?

Participants will be those attending the Guide Unit under study and key local and regional events and meetings, and will include:

- .....  
embers who attend and volunteer within 1<sup>st</sup> Hebburn (St. John's) Guide Unit and other N.E. Units.
- .....  
tendees and facilitators of training programmes and organisational events.
- .....  
embers of supporting Regional and County networks.



C.3. How will you explain the research to the participants and gain their consent? (If consent will not be obtained, please explain why.)

1<sup>st</sup> Hebburn (St. John's) Guide Unit, (Leaders and Guides) are already aware of the research. I held discussions with them prior to submitting paperwork which allowed me access to the PhD research at Durham University. These discussions covered my role as a PhD student in the Unit and also their involvement in the research. The discussions have been ongoing and informative throughout the progress and stages of my research.

Information about my research was formally discussed and agreed with the main Guide Leader of 1<sup>st</sup> Hebburn (St. John's) Unit prior to gaining PhD acceptance by Durham University and NINE DTP funding. The leader of the unit signed an agreement form prior to me starting the research. This outlined my role a student and the Guide Unit inclusion.

I will attend a County Commissioners meeting to provide a short presentation about my research and role within it, pass on an information sheet about the research and also answer and questions they may have regarding the research and my role.

I have also sought permission from the County Administrator to disseminate the information throughout the organisation by utilising the communication networks already in existence, (electronically and via the quarterly newsletter which is sent to every individual member).

Consent will be sought prior to each meeting/training/interaction with new Unit by submitting an information sheet and discussing my research with those involved.

C.4. What procedures are in place to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of your participants and their responses?

I will anonymise all participants throughout my research to minimise identification now or in the future. I will discuss the anonymization with each person, as if the Unit is named, then key people holding certain roles within it may be identifiable

All documentation, including my notes and reflective journals, will be stored in a locked cabinet, and destroyed once they have been utilised. Any digital information, (audio or written) will be stored in Durham University cloud and will be password protected and again destroyed once my research has concluded. These forms of data will be destroyed no later than 10 years after the conclusion of the project and in accordance with the University's data protection and retention policy: located at: [www.dur.ac.uk/research.innovation/governance/ethics/considerations/people/consent/privacynotice/](http://www.dur.ac.uk/research.innovation/governance/ethics/considerations/people/consent/privacynotice/)

All participants will have the opportunity to withdraw from any element of this research. This will be explained both in writing (information sheet) and also verbally prior to meetings/events and termly for Unit sessions.

If a participant decides to withdraw, I will negotiate with them to reach an agreement as to what, if any, data relating to their direct involvement will be in/excluded from the research. Similarly, if a participant remains in the research but request that areas of data pertaining to them are excluded from the research this will also be discussed and agreed together.

If some participants within a group 'PO' meeting/training/event/Guide Unit session decide they do not wish to be included in the research, but others do, I will not include any data directly pertaining to them in the research.

C.5. Are there any circumstances in which there would be a limit or exclusion to the anonymity/confidentiality offered to participants? If so, please explain further.

No

C.6. You must attach a **participant information sheet or summary explanation** that will be given to potential participants in your research.

<b>Within this, have you explained (in a way that is accessible to the participants):</b>	Yes	No
a). What the research is about?	x	<input type="checkbox"/>
b). Why the participants have been chosen to take part and what they will be asked to do?	x	<input type="checkbox"/>
c). Any potential benefits and/or risks involved in their participation?	x	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) What levels of anonymity and confidentiality will apply to the information that they share, and if there are any exceptions to these?	x	<input type="checkbox"/>
e). What the data will be used for?	x	<input type="checkbox"/>
f). How the data will be stored securely?	x	<input type="checkbox"/>
g). How they can withdraw from the project?	x	<input type="checkbox"/>
h). Who the researchers are, and how they can be contacted?	x	<input type="checkbox"/>

**SECTION D: POTENTIAL RISKS TO PARTICIPANTS**

You should think carefully about the risks that participating in your research poses to participants. Be aware that some subjects can be sensitive for participants even if they are not dealing explicitly with a 'sensitive' topic. Please complete this section as fully as possible and continue on additional pages if necessary.

What risks to participants may arise from participating in your research?	How likely is it that these risks will actually happen?	How much harm would be caused if this risk did occur?	What measures are you putting in place to ensure this does not happen (or that if it does, the impact on participants is reduced)?
1. Participants may become uncomfortable at the	Low	The harm would be minimal as it could be addressed either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•.....                          prior to the observation beginning by reassuring and alleviating fears.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• .....                          ritten and verbal information about the research and role of the observer and participant.</li> <li>• .....                          pace and time for questions and answers before the</li> </ul>

<p>thought or experience of being observed which may trigger feelings of anxiety/unhappiness.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•..... t any time during the observation</li> <li>•..... participants withdraws from the research.</li> </ul>	<p>discussion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•..... participants are aware and reminded they are able to withdraw from the research at any time.</li> </ul>
<p>2.</p>			
<p>3.</p>			

**SECTION E: POTENTIAL RISKS TO RESEARCHERS**

You should think carefully about any hazards or risks to you as a researcher that will be present because of you conducting this research. Please complete this section as fully as possible and continue on additional pages if necessary. Please include an assessment of any health conditions, injuries, allergies, or intolerances that may present a risk to you taking part in the proposed research activities (including any related medication used to control these), or any reasonable adjustments that may be required where a disability might otherwise prevent you from participating fully within the research.

1. Where will the research be conducted/what will be the research site?

What hazards or risks to you as a researcher may arise from conducting this research?	How likely is it that these risks will actually happen?	How much harm would be caused if this risk did happen?	What measures are being put in place to ensure this does not happen (or that if it does, the impact on researchers is reduced)?
1. Participants become upset at the thought of being	Low	Minimal – The situation can be prevented from escalating by	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ..... W ritten and verbal information about the research and role of the observer and participant.</li> <li>• ..... Sp ace and time for questions and answers before the discussion.</li> <li>• ..... Pa</li> </ul>

<p>observed and react negatively towards the researcher .</p>		<p>renegotiating the position of the participant in the research. They</p>	<p>participants are aware and reminded they are able to withdraw from the research at any time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ..... The researcher understands health and well-being of participants and self is of paramount importance.</li> <li>• ..... The researcher removes self from the situation or halts observing.</li> </ul>
<p>2.</p>			
<p>3.</p>			

## SECTION F: OTHER APPROVALS

	Yes, document attached	Yes, documents to follow	No
a). Does the research require ethical approval from the NHS or a Social Services Authority? If so, please attach a copy of the draft form that you intend to submit, together with any accompanying documentation.	<input type="checkbox"/>		x
b). Might the proposed research meet the definition of a <i>clinical trial</i> ? (If yes, a copy of this form must be sent to the University's Insurance Officer, Tel. 0191 334 9266, for approval, and evidence of approval must be attached before the project can start).	<input type="checkbox"/>		x
c). Does the research involve working data, staff or offenders connected with the National Offender Management Service? If so, please see the guidance at <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/national-offender-management-service/about/research">https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/national-offender-management-service/about/research</a> and submit a copy of your proposed application to the NOMS Integrated Application System with your form.	<input type="checkbox"/>		x
d). Does the project involve activities that may take place within Colleges of Durham University, including recruitment of participants via associated networks (e.g., social media)? (If so, approval from the Head of the College/s concerned will be required after departmental approval has been granted – see guidance notes for further details)		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e). Will you be required to undertake a Disclosure and Barring Service (criminal records) check to undertake the research?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x
f) I confirm that travel approval has or will be sought via the online approval system at <a href="http://apps.dur.ac.uk/travel.forms">http://apps.dur.ac.uk/travel.forms</a> for all trips during this research which meet the following criteria: For Students travelling away from the University, this applies where travel is not to their home and involves an overnight stay. For Staff travelling away from the University, this applies only when travelling to an overseas destination.	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		No <input type="checkbox"/>

## SECTION G: SUBMISSION CHECKLIST AND SIGNATURES

When submitting your ethics application, you should also submit supporting documentation as follows:

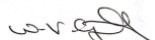
Supporting Documents	Included (tick)
----------------------	-----------------

Fully Completed Research Ethics and Risk Assessment Form	✓
Interview Guide (if using interviews)	
Focus Group Topic Guide (if using focus groups)	
Questionnaire (if using questionnaires)	
Participant Information Sheet or Equivalent	✓
Consent Form (if appropriate)	✓
<i>For students only:</i> Written/email confirmation from all agencies involved that they agree to participate, also stating whether they require a DBS check. If confirmation is not yet available, please attach a copy of the letter that you propose to send to request this; proof of organisational consent must be forwarded to your Programme Secretary before any data is collected.	✓

Please indicate the reason if any documents cannot be included at this stage:  
(Please note that any ethics applications submitted without sufficient supporting documentation will not be able to be assessed.)

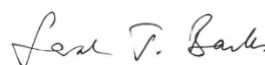
**Signatures**

Researcher's Signature:



Date: 4.12.18

Supervisor's Signature (PGR students only):



Date: 27.11.18

**Please keep a copy of your approved ethics application for your records.**



## **PART F: OUTCOME OF THE APPLICATION**

<p><u>Reject</u> The application is incomplete and/or cannot be assessed in its current format. Please complete the application fully.</p>	
<p><u>Revise and Resubmit</u> The application cannot be approved in its current format. Please revise the application as per the comments below. Please complete the application fully.</p>	
<p><u>Approved, with Set Date for Review</u> The application is approved, and you may begin data collection.</p> <p>A date for further review of the project as it develops has been set to take place on: _____</p> <p>The anticipated nominated reviewer will be: _____</p>	
<p><u>Approved</u> The application is approved, and you may begin data collection.</p>	x

### **Research Information documents**

#### **General Research Information**



**Do traditional Youth Work organisations hold the key to sustainability for 21<sup>st</sup> century youth provision? Lessons from the Guide Association.**

### **General Research Information Sheet.**

My name is Wendy Gill and I have been funded by the Economic & Social Research Council in conjunction with Durham University Sociology Department to undertake research exploring the characteristics of Girl Guiding and why it has maintained popularity as a young women's youth organisation for over a century.

The research will explore the historical and current context of the organisation, how it works, why adult and young women are involved and what it is they enjoy and gain from their experiences.

The research will be undertaken by myself, who will be participating and observing as a Leader in a Guide unit, as well as interviewing adults and volunteers involved in the Guiding Association. I will also be working alongside a team of co-researchers which will be made up from Guides from 1<sup>st</sup> Hebburn (St. John's) Unit, who will be trained by myself to conduct research and collect data from their peers.

The data collected will be analysed and used within my PhD research paper. The information gathered may also be used for research training, reports and teaching purposes. Any data collected, in both written and digital formats, will be securely stored in either a locked cabinet or in Durham University cloud and password protected. This will be destroyed no later than 10 years after the conclusion of the project. For further information about the University's data protection and retention policy please see:

[www.dur.ac.uk/research.innovation/governance/ethics/considerations/people/consent/privacynotice/](http://www.dur.ac.uk/research.innovation/governance/ethics/considerations/people/consent/privacynotice/)

If you would like further information about any aspect of my research, please contact me. My contact email is: XXX

THANK YOU  
Wendy Gill

### **Semi-Structured Interviews**

#### **Research Information Sheet.** **Semi-Structured Interviews.**

My name is Wendy Gill and I have been funded by the Economic & Social Research Council in conjunction with Durham University Sociology Department to undertake research exploring the characteristics of Girl Guiding and why it has maintained its popularity as a young women's youth organisation for over a century. The research will explore the historical and current context of the organisation, how it works, why adult and young women are involved and what it is they enjoy and gain from their experiences.

The research will be undertaken by myself, who will be observing, and interviewing adults and volunteers involved in Guiding, as well as working with a team of Co-researchers, made up of Guides from Hebburn 1<sup>st</sup> (St. John's) Unit, who will be gathering data from their peers.

#### **Being interviewed for the research.**

I would like to invite you to give an interview about your involvement in Guiding, why you became involved, your experiences and the things you have learned. You will be

interviewed by myself and our discussion will be recorded, (either digitally and/or written notes) and stored securely. Your interview will then be transcribed, and extracts may be used to inform my PhD research, write reports, used for teaching or research training. My written PhD work may also include quotations from your interview. All data, both written and recorded, will be destroyed no later than 10 years after the conclusion of the project.

If you would like further information regarding the data protection and retention policy of Durham University this can be found at:

[www.dur.ac.uk/research.innovation/governance/ethics/considerations/people/consent/privacynotice/](http://www.dur.ac.uk/research.innovation/governance/ethics/considerations/people/consent/privacynotice/)

When we meet, I will discuss with you if you wish to remain anonymous or if you are happy for your comments to be attributed to you and I will also answer any questions you may have before we begin the interview. You are free to withdraw from this process at any time and are free to refuse to answer any of the questions. If you decide to withdraw from the research, we will discuss what, if any, information attributed to yourself will be included in the research. Also, if you do participate in the research and there are particular things that you do not wish to be included, you can let me know and I will not refer to these when I write up the research.

If you require further information or wish to discuss anything with me, please get in touch.

My contact email is: XXX

Thank you,  
Wendy Gill

## **Participant Observation**

### **Research Information Sheet.** **Adult Participant Observation.**

My name is Wendy Gill and I have been funded by the Economic & Social Research Council in conjunction with Durham University Sociology Department to undertake research exploring the characteristics of Girl Guiding and why it has maintained popularity as a young women's youth organisation for over a century.

The research will explore the historical and current context of the organisation, how it works, why adult and young women are involved and what it is they enjoy and gain from their involvement.

The research will be undertaken by myself and I will be participating and observing as a Leader in a Guide unit, as well as interviewing adults and volunteers involved in the Guiding Association.

I will also be working alongside a team of co-researchers, made up from Guides from 1<sup>st</sup> Hebburn (St. John's) Unit, who will be trained by myself to conduct research and collect data from their peers.

#### Participant Observation.

For this part of my research, I would like to observe your meetings/training/event. I will be taking notes and/or digitally recording the meetings/training/event in order to collect data.

Any individual is free not to be included in the research or to withdraw from it at any time. In either of these cases I will not use any notes pertaining to the individual in any of my research. If you participate in the research but there is information you wish not to be included in the research if you let me know and I will not include or refer to these when I write up the research. Once the data is collected it will be stored securely in a locked cabinet or digitally in the Durham University cloud which is password protected. I will transcribe and analyse the data gathered and extracts may be used to inform my PhD research, write reports, used for teaching and research training. My written PhD work may also include quotations from the meetings/ training/event, but all participants will remain anonymous throughout, that is, I will not attribute any views or comments to you by name. All data, both written and recorded, will be destroyed no later than 10 years after the conclusion of the project in line with the data protection and retention policy of Durham University which can be found at:

[www.dur.ac.uk/research.innovation/governance/ethics/considerations/people/consent/privacynotice/](http://www.dur.ac.uk/research.innovation/governance/ethics/considerations/people/consent/privacynotice/)

I would like you to know that there are different possible levels of involvement. You can choose to be involved in all of the research, parts of it or not at all, all of which I am happy to further discuss and agree details with you. If you change your mind part way through, and wish to withdraw from the research, any notes which have already been taken we will discuss and agree what, if anything, is included in the research.

You can also choose whether or not you would like to be listed as a contributor to the research in a list of acknowledgements in the PhD thesis or other publications.

If you would like further information, please contact me.

XXX

Thank you,  
Wendy Gill.

**Parents/Carers of Peer Researchers.**

### **Research Information Sheet for the Parents/Carers of Peer Co-Researchers.**

My name is Wendy Gill and I am a PhD student at Durham University, (I am also a volunteer Guide Leader at Hebburn 1<sup>st</sup> St. John's Guide Unit where *name*..... attends). I have been funded by the Economic & Social Research Council in conjunction with Durham University, Sociology

Department to undertake research exploring the characteristics of Girl Guiding, identifying why young women attend and what they gain from doing so.

My research will explore the historical and current context of the organisation, how it works, why adult and young women are involved and what it is they enjoy and gain from their experiences. The research will be undertaken by myself, where I will be interviewing adults and volunteers involved in Guiding and also undertaking participant observation in weekly Guide Unit sessions. I will also be working with a team of young co-researchers, who will be made up from Hebburn 1<sup>st</sup> (St. John's) Guide Unit. This group of co-researchers, supported by me, will be gathering data for the research by working with other Guides from their Unit and other Units in the North East region.

### **Peer Co-researchers**

Name..... has expressed an interest to be involved as a co-researcher with myself and other Guides from the Unit. The role of co-researcher involves participating in the areas of training, data collection and analysis. These involve:

Training: 2 – 3-hour training session where we will look at why we are doing the research and how we will do it.

Data collection: Undertaking research with peers from the Guide Unit and possibly other Units in the locality.

Analysis: Looking at the data we have collected and identifying why girls come to the Guides and what they enjoy about it.

Once we have identified the team of Peer Co-researchers, we will agree a time and date convenient to meet and undertake the training and later the data analysis.

These sessions will be held at:

St Chads College, 18 North Bailey, Durham. DH1 3RH

[www.stchads.ac.uk](http://www.stchads.ac.uk)

It is expected that the training will take place early in 2019 and will be held during the daytime on either a week-end or school holiday in order for all those who are interested to be able to take part.

The data collection from other Guide Units will take place at a time when and where those units usually meet. Due to this and with an understanding that the co-researchers will have other commitments, it is expected that not every co-researcher will be able to attend each data collection session therefore we will identify who is able to do which tasks when we meet for the training.

Travel arrangements and costs will be met by the funding bodies as will the cost of any lunch provided during the training and analysis sessions.

On completion of the co-research those involved will receive a £25.00 gift token as a 'thank you' for the time and work they have given to the research and also written confirmation from Durham University acknowledging their contribution in the research and a celebratory meal. The findings from the co-research will be combined with information from interviews I will have conducted and may be used in my PhD thesis, reports, teaching and research training.

Any data collected, in both written and digital formats, will be securely stored in either a locked cabinet or in Durham University cloud and password protected. This

will be destroyed no later than 10 years after the conclusion of the project. For further information about the University's data protection and retention policy please see:

[www.dur.ac.uk/research.innovation/governance/ethics/considerations/people/consent/privacynotice/](http://www.dur.ac.uk/research.innovation/governance/ethics/considerations/people/consent/privacynotice/)

If your daughter wishes to leave the research at any time, I will not use any notes directly pertaining to her in any aspect of my research. Also, if they wish to participate in the research but there are certain pieces of information they do not wish to be included if they let me know I will not refer to them when I write up the research.

Further information will be given at each stage of the process along with consent requests but in the meantime if you have any questions please speak to me at Thursday evening Guide meetings or e mail me XXXXX

If you agree to *name*.....participating in this research as a co researcher. Please fill in the consent form below and return it to me.

Thank you  
Wendy Gill.

#### **Peer Co-researchers**

##### **Trefoil Guild**

My name is Wendy Gill, and I am a Durham University PhD student in the department of Sociology. My professional career has been within the field of Community and Youth Work, which I have been involved in for over 27 years. I am also a Guide Leader based in a Unit in South Tyneside and I am currently training to be a Ranger Leader.

My research stems from the current climate and the dilemmas facing charitable and voluntary youth organisations, many finding themselves unable to operate due to issues such as financial constraints and lack of volunteers. With this in mind my research is exploring what has enabled the Guide Association to remain relevant and functioning for over 100 years, with the aim being to identify factors which could inform the youth sector as a whole.

My research is made up from conducting archival research, (Beamish and York archives), participation from the young women in my Ranger Unit and interviews with adults who are or have been involved in Guiding.

##### Interviews.

I would be interested in interviewing adults who are and have been involved in Guiding in any capacity. This can range from direct involvement in units as a leader, helper or as a young person through to wider roles such as training, administration and Trefoil, in fact any role that has enabled and supported the Guide Association to function.

Ideally, I would like to interview individuals or small groups, (maximum of 3). The interviews are semi-structured with topics to discuss rather than specific questions to answer. I aim to 'have a conversation' so people have the time and space to talk and draw upon their own experiences. Interviews usually last 1 – 2 hours and will be

recorded. I am able to come to wherever is convenient at any time, including evenings and weekends.

The interview topics cover areas such as:

- How people became involved in the organisation.
- The roles they have/had and what they have entailed.
- Experiences of how the organisation is/was ran from a unit/regional and national level.
- The values and ethos of Guiding.
- Reasons for the longevity of the organisation.

For those who would like to be involved but are not able to meet with me, I am able to provide a short questionnaire to gather information or conduct the interview via a telephone conversation.

I look forward to hearing from you,  
Wendy Gill

## **Organisational Agreement Form**

### **Organisational Agreement Research Form.**

#### Research Information.

My name is Wendy Gill and I have been funded by the Economic & Social Research Council in conjunction with Durham University Sociology Department to undertake research exploring the characteristics of Girl Guiding and why it has maintained popularity as a young women's youth organisation for over a century.

The research will explore the historical and current context of the organisation, how it works, why adult and young women are involved and what it is they enjoy and gain from their experiences.

The research will be undertaken by myself, who will be participating and observing as a Leader in a Guide unit, as well as interviewing adults and volunteers involved in the Guiding Association.

I will also be working alongside a team of co-researchers which will be made up from Guides from 1<sup>st</sup> Hebburn (St. John's) Unit, who will be trained by myself to conduct research and collect data from their peers.

The data collected will be analysed and used within my PhD research paper. The information gathered may also be used for research training, reports and teaching purposes.

#### Agreement.

I have read and understand the above research information and I, on behalf of 1<sup>st</sup> Hebburn (St. John's) Guide Unit, agree to participation in the research.

I am aware that Wendy Gill currently has an enhanced DBS clearance accepted by the Guide Association and therefore does not need to acquire another one to conduct this research.

Print Name:

Signature:

Position in Organisation:

Date:

**Consent Forms:**

**Participant Observation Consent Form.**

I would be grateful if you would complete this consent form prior to me observing your meetings/training/event, thank you.

- I have read and understood the information sheet. YES/NO
- I agree to written notes being taken and/or audio recorded. YES/NO
- I understand that the recording will be stored securely and will not be used for any other purposes without my consent. YES/NO
- I am willing for the meeting/training/event to be transcribed and extracts used in this research and in other materials such as reports and teaching. YES/NO
- I understand that I will not be named when the research is written up, and no views or comments will be directly attributed to me. YES/NO
- I would like my name to be listed in the acknowledgements section of any publications as a contributor to this research. YES/NO

Name.....

Signature.....

Date.....

Address.....

.....

.....

.....

Contact number.....

E mail.....

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

**Peer Researcher Consent Form. (Parent/Carer)**

I would be grateful if you would complete this consent and return it to me at 1<sup>st</sup> Hebburn (St. John's) Guide Unit, Thursday evening.

I (Guide name) .....would like to be involved in the research as a 'Peer Researcher'

Signed.....Date.....

Parent/Carer:



I have read the information sheet and I give consent for (Name)  
.....to be involved as a Peer  
Co-researcher.

Parent/Carer

Name.....

Relationship to Co Researcher.....

Address.....

.....

.....

Contact number.....

E mail.....

Signature.....Date

THANK YOU.

## **Semi structured interviews**

### **Interview Consent Form.**

I would be grateful if you would complete this consent form prior to being interviewed, thank you.

- I have read and understood the information sheet. YES/NO
- I agree to being interviewed and it being audio recorded. YES/NO
- I understand that the recording will be stored securely and will not be used for any other purposes without my consent. YES/NO
- I am willing for the interview to be transcribed and extracts used in this research and in other materials such as reports and teaching. YES/NO
- I wish to remain anonymous (that is, no views or comments will be attributed directly to me by name or job role or not) YES/NO.
- If 'yes' to the above, I am happy for views or comments to be attributed directly to me by name YES/NO, or job role YES/NO
- I would like my name will be listed as a contributor to this research in the acknowledgments section of the PhD thesis or any other publications. YES/NO

Name.....

Signature.....

Date.....

Address.....  
.....  
.....

Contact number.....

E mail.....

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

### Demographic Information Sheet: Semi – Structured Interviews



**Do traditional Youth Work organisations hold the key to sustainability for 21<sup>st</sup> century youth provision? Lessons from the Guide Association.**

**Age.** Which age group do you belong to? – (please tick)

- 11 – 19 years old
- 20 – 29 years old
- 30 – 39 years old
- 40 – 49 years old

- 50 – 59 years old
- 60 – 69 years old
- 70 – 79 years old
- 80+ years old

**Sex.** Are you...?(Please tick)

- Male
- Female
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to say

**Ethnicity.** Which best describes you? (please tick)

- White British
- White Other
- Asian
- Traveler
- Prefer not to say
- Black British
- Black Other
- Dual Heritage
- Other ethnic group \_\_\_\_\_

**Where do you live** (Please provide name or postcode) \_\_\_\_\_

**Education.**

What is the highest qualification you have obtained or are currently working towards?

\_\_\_\_\_

**Employment.** Are you currently ...? (Please tick)

Full time employed  
Self-employed  
Unemployed

Part time employed  
Full-time education  
Retired

**Collated Demographic information**

(Yellow highlight denotes co-researcher)

No.	Age	Sex	Current Role	Description
1	11-19	F	Guide	Joined as a Rainbow (5ys), became a Brownie (7yrs) then Guide (10yrs)
2	11-19	F	Guide	Joined as a Guide (10yrs)
3	11-19	F	Guide	Joined as a Guide (10yrs)
4	11-19	F	Guide	Joined as a Rainbow (5ys), became a Brownie (7yrs) then Guide (10yrs)
5	11-19	F	Guide	Joined as a Guide (10yrs)
6	11-19	F	Guide	Joined as a Brownie (7yrs) then became a Guide (10yrs)
7	11-19	F	Guide	Joined as a Guide (10yrs)
8	11-19	F	Guide	Joined as a Brownie (7yrs) then became a Guide (10yrs)
9	11-19	F	Guide	Joined as a Guide (10yrs)
10	11-19	F	Guide	Joined as a Guide (10yrs)
11	11-19	F	Guide	Joined as a Guide (10yrs)
12	11-19	F	Guide	Joined as a Rainbow (5ys), became a Brownie (7yrs) then Guide (10yrs)
13	11-19	F	Guide	Joined as a Rainbow (5ys), became a Brownie (7yrs) then Guide (10yrs)
14	11-19	F	Guide	Joined as a Guide (10yrs)
15	11-19	F	Guide	Joined as a Rainbow (5ys), became a Brownie (7yrs) then Guide (10yrs)
16	11-19	F	Guide	Joined as a Brownie (7yrs) then became a Guide (10yrs)
17	11-19	F	Guide	Joined as a Brownie (7yrs) then became a Guide (10yrs)
18	11-19	F	Guide	Joined as a Brownie (7yrs) then became a Guide (10yrs)
19	11-19	F	Guide	Joined as a Rainbow (5ys), became a Brownie (7yrs) then Guide (10yrs)
20	11-19	F	Full time student	Started as Rainbow and progressed through the units to become a Young Leader (16yrs)
21	20-29	F	Youth Worker & Guide Leader	Aiming to become a Youth Worker started volunteering at a Brownie Unit for experience. Later volunteered in a Youth Work Project and as well as taking Guide Leader qualification and run their own Guide Unit. Employed as a Youth Worker.
22	30-39	F	Ex Guide Leader	Joined Brownies as a child stayed as a Guide and Young Leader. Left to accommodate career and geographical move but returned as Leader of a Brownie Unit. Expelled by GA for challenging the Equality Policy.
23	30-36	F	Parent/Carer	Parent of a Guide and a Ranger/co-researcher.

24	40-49	M	C.E.O of Voluntary Youth Organisation	Attended youth organisations as a child. JNC qualified and experienced Youth worker in both Local Authority and voluntary sector youth work organisations.
25	40-49	F	Parent/Carer	Parent of Ranger/Co-researcher. Unqualified Youth Worker.
26	40-49	F	Parent/Carer	Parent of Guide
27	40-49	F	Parent/Carer	Parent of a Ranger/Co-researcher. Attended GA as a child.
28	40-49	M	C.E.O National Youth Organisation	JNC Qualified Youth Worker.
29	50-59	F	Youth Worker	JNC qualified Youth Worker with experience in Local Authority and voluntary youth work organisations. A GA member as a child.
30	50-59	F	Guide Leader	Qualified Brownie, Guide and rainbow Leader. Member of the GA as a child and remained a member. Profession as a Playworker. Held District and Division roles in the GA organisation.
31	50-59	F	Youth Worker	JNC qualified Youth Worker. Local Authority experience. A member of the GA as a child.
32	50-59	F	Division Commissioner	Qualified Guide and Brownie Leader. Held Division and District positions in the organisation. Joined as a child.
33	50-59	F	Youth Worker	Unqualified Youth Worker with a career in voluntary sector Youth Work. Joined GA as a child.
34	50-59	F	Trefoil	Joined GA as a child and remained until adult hood moving from unit to unit.
35	50-59	F	Guide leader	Joined when daughter wanted to progress to the next level but no existing member was available to run a unit therefore volunteered to become a Leader.
36	50-59	F	Trefoil	Attempted to join as a child but left quickly. Re-joined Trefoil as an adult.
37	60-69	F	Trefoil	Joined as a child and remained into adult hood. Held many positions in the organisation.
38	60-69	F	Leadership Mentor & Guide leader	Joined as a child and remained into adult hood. Held many positions in the organisation.
39	70-79	F	Trefoil	Joined as a child and remained into adult hood. Held many positions in the organisation.
40	70-79	F	Trefoil	Joined as a child and remained into adult hood. Held many positions in the organisation.
41	70-79	F	Trefoil	Joined as a child and remained into adult hood. Youth worker for Local Authority before retirement. Was a Leader before joining Trefoil.
42	70-79	F	Trefoil	Joined as a child and remained into adult hood. Held many positions in the organisation.
43	70-79	F	Trefoil	Joined as a child and remained into adult hood. Held many positions in the organisation.
44	70-79	F	Trefoil	Joined GA as a child. Left to have own family and returned to have contact with other women as an adult.

				Guide Leader and Trefoil member.
45	80+	F	Chair of Trefoil	Joined as a child as mother ran the Guide Unit from their home and continues to use same room in the same house to hold Trefoil meetings. Remained in the organisation to present day. Held many positions in the organisation. Holds Trefoil meetings in the same home as her Mother ran the Guides.
46	80+	F	Trefoil	Was not a member as a child but when moved to the village was encouraged to join Trefoil to make friends.
47	80+	F	Trefoil	JNC Qualified youth worker experience in Local Authority youth work. Joined as a child and remained into adulthood.
48	80+	F	Archivist	Joined as an adult to run the Unit her daughter attended as the Leader at her time wanted to leave. Remained doing many different roles.

## Participatory Action Research Documents

### Peer research training documents

#### Training Day Letter.

Dear Peer Research Group,

Thank you for expressing an interest in being part of the Peer Research Group which will be researching why the Guides are important to young women today. The research training will take place on

**Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> April 2019** and will be held at **Durham University Sociology Department.**

#### Travel Inventory

##### Outward Journey

- 9.00 Meet at Hebburn Metro station.
- 9.07 Metro to Central Station
- 9.42 Train to Durham

##### Return Journey

- 4.17 Train from Durham to Newcastle Central Station
- 4.40 Metro at Newcastle Central Station
- 5.00 (approx.) Arrive at Hebburn Metro Station

You will not need to bring anything with you as the cost of travel, lunch, snacks and stationery will be provided.

If you need any further information, please call or e mail me on: XXXXXXXXXXXX

I am really pleased you will be joining the co-research team and look forward to us all working together.

Thank you,  
Wendy Gill.

### Training Session 1.

Content	ACTIVITY	Resources & Notes	Mins	TIME
	ARRIVE AT SOC.DEPT. Housekeeping Give out work packs Toilets Breaks Phones - Off Photos			10.00 - 10.15
Introduction	Explain Running order of the day CONFIDENTIALITY		05	10.15 - 10.20
	Activity: Shout out what is Sociology & Social research	<b>Marx</b> – Division of Labour and inequality <b>Durkheim</b> – Suicide and low social interaction <b>Weber</b> – People’s actions and why they do things <b>Mills</b> – Democracy and wealth <b>Goffman</b> – actors and wanting a win - win situation <b>Foucault</b> – Power/control/institutions – free school dinners <b>Bourdieu</b> – why people think u/c is better than m/c etc	05	10.20 - 10.25
Open group discussion:	What is youth work? Name youth organisations that do youth work. What is Youth Work for? What does it do?	Flip chart & Pens <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>History</b> – no formal education, how do people improve their lives, people did it got different reasons – philanthropy</li> </ul> People were also stating to become upset and vocal – women’s movement, Trade Union movement. Fought in a war but returned to awful conditions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Govt</b> – involvement, needed willing people to</li> </ul>	10	10.25 - 10.35

		<p>fight, you can influence if involved. Move to building programme etc</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted &amp; universal (at risk or in need) what do people want – universal.</li> <li>• Moral Panics – political agenda, car crime, knife crime. NCS</li> </ul>		
Video clips			15	10.35 – 10.50
History & contemporary Guides	Discussion: do we recognise similarities?	Open discussion You can see the influence of the women’s movement Is the org feminist? Is our group feminist? Promote it?	05	10.50 – 10.55
Introduction of research question and methods	Wendy - overview	THE SCIENCE BIT. We will be producing data Methodology – theory behind the research.	15	10.55 – 11.10
Qualitative research methods	Qualitative methods What they are Why they are relevant What data is gathered CASE STUDY	Not numbers, not counting Words, feelings, experiences, Voice A CASE STUDY & PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION – me inside, not in secret, ethics and gathering information.	“	“
Archive	Looking in to the past Hear voices from the past Using what sources – pics, drawings, diaries, minutes Looking back on today – texts, Instagram, Facebook			
Semi-Structured Interviews	Adult Why they are doing it Is it a feminist org? Why do they send their daughters & pay What do they get out of being involved	Themes & open questions Allows people to talk and use their own words. It is more than just having a conversation – it is SYSTEMATIC & MEANINGFUL		
Par – Co research	Describe this element and why it is in the research.	Easier to speak to peers, more comfortable You will know a better way of doing this than me Skills needed – communication	5	11.10 – 11.15

		and understanding people and culture/ situation they are in.		
Research skills: Observation & speaking	1. Observation: watch a group of people, from a window/through glass. When we get back to the room describe what you saw in as much detail as possible	Flip chart pens	30	11.15 – 11.45
	2.Communication: interviews – interviewer/ interviewee/observer	Each take on a role Describe what it felt like in each role	20	11.45 – 12.05
Research skills: Listening	3.Ladybird drawing	Paper, pencils, template	10	12.05 – 12.15
	<b>LUNCH</b>			<b>12.30 – 13.30</b>
What information do we want to discover?	Discuss possible questions, things we want to find out	Flip chart, pens	10	13.30 – 13.40
Discussion about each possible method we can use	What will be the best for us to use and why- Discussion about each point	Flip Chart, pens	10	13.40 – 13.50
Barriers	What will stop us from getting the information Time of interview, place, fear	Post it	10	13.50 – 14.00
Participants (Our Unit)	Open discussion: what do we know already, what we don't know	Flip chart, pens	10	14.00 – 14.20
Practicalities	Think about barriers, solutions	Flip chart and pens	5	14.20 – 14.25
Possible methods	Wendy - overview		10	14.25 – 14.35
	In pairs look at the pros & cons of 3 methods: survey & Questionnaire, Interviews, focus groups & feedback	Post it notes	10	14.35 - 14.45
Role of the facilitator	Open discussion: what is the role?	Flip chart and pens	5	14.45 - 14.50
Research Planning & Design (Including creative and visual	Collective discussion: Identify the method: Use the morning's work to inform design	Flip chart and pens	30	15.20



methods)				
Next steps			5	15.20 – 15.25
	CLOSE & TIDY		5	15.25 – 15.30
	TRAIN			16.17

**Notes from training day 1. (17.4.19)**

Co-Research Group

Reasons for becoming a Guide – group discussion:

- Prevent me from being naughty; )
- Parents wanted her to go but not know why.
- Knew a leader who suggested to parents that she went.
- Looks good for Uni.
- Baden Powell Award looks good on C.V
- Came from Brownies and is now routine so would feel weird to stop.
- I was forced to attend Rainbows.... Should I say persuaded? I needed to learn social skills due to my anxiety. I get stressed in new situations, I cried every time I was left at Brownies and would not speak to people.
- I went to one Guides because a friend went but I left because there were no tables and I did not want to sit on the floor, so Mam found this one.
- It's part of my weekly routine, we just do it.
- I joined because I never left the house and I still never would leave the house if it was not for Guides. A person at school mentioned it so I asked if I could go. It's the only time I get to see friends.
- Parents
- None of the co-research group attend the same school or meet outside of Guides).

Why do you still attend?

- See friends I have made who don't go to my school
- Routine for all the family
- Uni/C.V – to stand out from the crowd on paper
- Continue to work on anxiety
- Still keep out of trouble

Started as a Rainbow (5 yrs)	Started as a Brownie (7 yrs)	Attend Guides (10 yrs)	Will become Rangers (14 yrs)	Attend other youth provision
5	1	6	6	1 GYC 1 Youth Club 1 Scouts

We would want to discover.....

1. Why they come to Guides
  - How they came to Guides
  - Why they came to Guides, is there one particular reason they come to Guides?
  - Whose decision was it? Were they involved in the decision?
  - Could they leave if they wanted to?
  
2. What do you like about Guides and why?
  - Activities
  - People
  - Getting out of the house/break in routine
  - They don't like coming
  
3. What would you change and why?
  
4. What would you keep and why?
  
5. Do you learn anything?
  - What do you learn?
  - Do you know what you have learned at the time or later on in another situation?
  
6. What the Leaders are like
  - Describe them
  - Good/bad points
  
7. What other youth provision do you do?
  - What clubs
  - Hobbies/sports

How would we engage the Guides in the research and get the best data we can possibly get?

- Glitter and sparkly things
- How we treat them is important
- Be careful how we plan things
- They may be more comfortable in groups, but they could also be embarrassed to say things in front of other people.
- No recordings

US /Group Dynamics/Our Positioning /who we are.

- They want us to speak for them
- They don't like SMC – SMC face does not help matters
- They look up to us
- They want to follow us
- We need to understand and remember what we were like
- We need to build bridges

- We need to reposition – walk a mile in my shoes – they are in awe/interested/frightened
  - We need to be nice, inclusive
  - We need to think – age gap, where we all are in life
- What are the things we know about each other in our unit – the things people openly share



- Each situation holds another set of ‘things’ like feeling different, feeling scared.
- Some people’s lives may be hard and different to ours
- Do we think about this when we think we don’t like each other?
- Do we need to think about these things when we are doing the research?  
“Yes, people may not have a Mam”
- “Someone is deaf, so we need to make sure we communicate properly” “They need to feel they can tell us things and we won’t judge or tell people”.

### SKILLS:

We will practice...

Listening skills – Unit session week 1 & 2

Observations skills – Unit session week 1 & 2

Communicating – Unit session week 2 & 3

Understanding self and others – Unit session week 3 & 4

Belonging to a group – Unit session week 4

Planning interview – Unit session week 5

FOLLOWING TERM: Collect and analyze data

### Pros and Cons

1 -1 Interviews	Focus group/more than one interviewee
You get lots of words	People might not like it – feel

<p>You get lots of information  You can notice body language  It is easier to explain if people don't understand  They can ask questions - clarify  They can ask questions – clarify  People might not like it – feel uncomfortable  Some people may not like the interviewer  You can record the data how they want like using a video or Dictaphone</p>	<p>uncomfortable  Embarrassed if we do it in groups  It will be harder to hear people in groups  Some people may talk over others  Some people may not talk in front of others  Not everyone may agree about how the session should be recorded.</p>
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### Training Session 2: In Guide session

DESCRIPTION	ACTIVITY	RESOURCES	MINUTES	TIME
Developing the actual research	Recap over Session 1 decisions and discussion points		10	18.15 - 18.25
	Create the questions	Paper/pens	30	18.25 – 18.55
Personalities & Activity	Activity: In pairs interview each other and test our questions. Try again with one persona taking on a different/challenging personality		30	18.55 – 19.25
Ethics	Discussion		5	19.30
Schedule	Plan our schedule Decide when we will carry out the research	Flip chart and pens	15	19.30 – 19.45
Next steps	Brief discussion		5	19.45 – 19.50
	END			

### Group agreement

#### **Peer Researcher Group Agreement (It can change all the time)**

- No rules - we talk about things, about what we want and reach an agreement
- Listen, don't roll eyes, have respect
- Every session 🕒 we decide if we want to do that session 🕒 if we are going to take photos, who wants their photo taken, who wants their words recorded, if we will carry on with the research.
- Be in our space and fill it with talking
- Go with the flow – if we want to talk about school, World AIDS Day, whatever we to we can.

## **Research Methods Practiced**

Surveys

Scrapbook/arts/collage

Photovoice

Poetry

Interviews

Mapping

Modroc

Origami

## Practicing Research Methods: Photovoice



### Practice Interviewing

#### Observer

**Watch** and **listen** to the interview taking place.

Make notes so you can feed back – what was good and what needed improved.  
 Was eye contact there, did the interviewer look interested?  
 Was the interviewer able to keep the discussion on track?  
 Was enough time given by the interviewer to get an answer?  
 Could the interviewer manage the conversation?  
 Was the interviewee able to answer the questions – did they understand them?

**Interviewer**

You are interested in finding out if your interviewee has ever been in trouble at school, you need to ask questions that get descriptive answers not one-word answers.

You may want to find out about

- Their school rules/punishments
- What they did which got them in to trouble
- Why they did what they did?
- How did they feel?
- Do they think getting into trouble was justified?
- Are the rules in school fair?
- What rules and punishments they would administer?

Remember: ask secondary questions to illicit lots of information.

**Interviewee**

You are being interviewed.

What did it feel like?

Were the questions easy or hard to answer?

Did you need time to think about the replies?

How did the interviewer seem – were they interested?

Did you feel you said everything you wanted to say?

Did the interviewer give you enough time to think and answer?

Did the interviewer seem interested – how could you tell?

**Peer Researcher Interview Schedule/Guidelines**

**Interview – Young Woman/Guide.**

Question	Secondary
1. When did you start? Did you start as a Rainbow, Brownie, Guide?	Can you remember the first time you went, tell me about it?
2. Who had the idea for you to start with the R/B/G and why did they want you to come?	Parents Them Friends (what was the conversation about joining/ what did they say to you?)
3. Why did you stay?	What did you enjoy, get from being a member?
4. Have you moved from one section to another?	How did you do this? Who decided you could move? Why did you want to move up?

5. Have you ever wanted to leave & why?	Why did you decide to stay? When do you think you will leave?
6. If I had never heard about the Guides how would you explain it to me?	<i>Girls only, activities, badges, trips, friends</i>
7. What sort of things do you do?	Favorite and least favorite activity and why?
8. Do you learn anything?	Do you think these are skills you can use in other areas of your life; can you think about when you have done this?
9. Tell me about your uniform	Do you like it, why? What do you feel when you are wearing it?
10. Thinking about your Guide Leaders what makes them good leaders?	What would things would make a person not be a good Leader?
11. Do you do any other leisure activities other than Guides?	
12. Can you sum up the Guides in one word?	
The end of the questions, is there anything else you would like to say/add?	Thank You.

### **Questions: Guides (Peer Researcher Group).**

TOPIC	QUESTIONS	PROBES
Introduction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To begin with would you tell me how and why you became to be involved with Guiding?</li> <li>2. Why did you choose Guides rather than another organisation?</li> <li>3. Were the first in your family/friends to be involved in Guiding?</li> <li>4. What were you expecting and was it what you expected?</li> </ol>	<i>For themselves or another person, Length of time they have been involved. Friendships To gain something To address something</i>
Model	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Can you describe your unit to me, how many members does it have, where are they from, how long has it been running, where is it</li> </ol>	<i>Where is it/ what is the area like  Participation</i>



	<p>held, how is it structured?</p> <p>2. Do you have a say in how your Unit is run?</p>	
Unit activities	<p>1. What sort of things do you do?</p> <p>2. What can you tell me about the Guide programme? What do you think of it?</p> <p>3. Do you know how to get badges/awards? Do you like this part of Guides – why?</p>	<p><i>Programme/activities/badges/awards</i> <i>Is it prescriptive or allows freedom to move with the unit &amp; individuals?</i></p> <p><i>Impact measurement, evidence</i> <i>Evidence that it works</i></p>
Values and Ethos	<p>1. What do you think the aim of Guides is?</p> <p>2. Does this happen, what makes it happen?</p> <p>3. Do you think coming to Guides makes you a better citizen, why?</p> <p>4. Is there anything that you would change about the Guides? (Strengths/weaknesses)</p> <p>5. What could be improved on/alterer/discarded?</p> <p>6. What can you tell me about the Guide promise and Law?</p>	<p><i>Empowerment, resilience, skills, fun, learning</i> <i>All of us, Leaders</i></p> <p><i>Citizenship?</i></p> <p><i>Boys?</i></p> <p><i>Does this represent a good citizen</i></p>
Gains/Rewards	<p>1. What do you think are the benefits/gains for you, the organisation, the young women, and the community?</p> <p>2. Why do your parents</p>	<p><i>Learning/challenging/molding/citizenship</i></p> <p><i>Personal development, additional to learning at school, c.vv</i></p>

	support you in attending?	
Longevity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Why do you think the Guides are still popular/relevant today?</li> <li>2. What makes it special? Is it different from other youth organisations?</li> <li>3. What do you think the girls who come to your Unit get out of attending, what impact does it have on their lives?</li> </ol>	<p><i>Changes with need</i></p> <p><i>Organised, membership, progression route, history and proven track record,</i></p> <p><i>Empowerment, skills, fun, friendship</i></p>
Feminism	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. You told me what you thought were the benefits of coming to Guides do you think you can get these elsewhere?</li> <li>2. Is it important that it is a Girl only space? What is good/bad about this?</li> <li>1. It has been said that the organisation is feminist, do you agree and why?</li> </ol> <p>ADDITIONAL: The organisation is inclusive of Transgender identifying as female – do you have a view on this?</p>	<p><i>Space to be and explore themselves</i></p>
Conclude	<p>Thank you</p> <p>I think that I have covered everything I wanted to ask you, is there anything you would like to add or recap on what has already been said?</p>	

## Interview Guide

### Introduction

Hello my name is.....

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview which will be asking questions about your involvement in the Guides. It will help us make sure that our Guides will be the best it can be.

The interview will last about 30 minutes and I will be recording it so I don't miss any of your answers.

Everything you tell me will be anonymous which means we will not include your name with the answers to the questions so no one will be able to tell who said what.

Also, if you don't want to answer any questions or you no longer want to do the interview you can stop at any time.

Do you understand?

1	(a) Who had the idea for you to come here?  (b) Did you start as a Rainbow/Brownie/Guide?	If it was their parents why did their parents want them to go? If it was their friends what did their friends tell them about it? If they went to rainbows/brownies what did they think about Guides and why did they want to move 'up'?
2	Why did they/you want to come.	To make friends, learn new skills, have fun
3	Is that still the reason you come to Guides?	
4	(a) Have you ever wanted to leave? (b) Why? (c) Why did you stay?	
5	Tell me about what you do in Guides?	Can you explain a little further? Can you give me an example? At an evening and also the camp/trips etc
6	What do you like doing in the Guides?	Why?
7	What is your least favorite thing ?	
8	Have you taken part in Big Gig Camp Remembrance parade	Tell me about them? Why did you participate? What was good/bad about them?
9	Imagine that your friend never knew what a Guide was, how would you explain: (a) A Guide (b) What a Guide does	
10	Do you think you learn anything at guides?	What? Has it helped you outside of Guides?

		How has this helped you in your life?
11	What do you think would make a good Guide Leader?	<b>Don't worry we will not be telling them who said what.</b>
12	If you were running a Guide Unit what would you do differently?	
13	Do you like wearing the uniform? Explain your answer	
14	Do you do any other leisure activities?	Sports/music/youth group/church
15	If you had to describe Guides in 1 word what is the word?	
16	Is there anything else you would like to add that you think we may have not spoken about already?	

Thank you for taking part in the interviews.

Next we will look at all of the answers and see what people have said.

We will also report the results back and act on any of the suggestions that people have made to hopefully make our Guide Unit welcoming to everyone.

### **Completed Peer Researcher Evaluations.**

#### **Q1. Tell me about the training day we had at Durham, what did you...**

##### **Like?**

Spending time with my friends, seeing the university and Durham in general since I've only been a couple of times, I also loved my Greggs cos I love food.

I thoroughly enjoyed getting to go around Durham and seeing the sociology building. I enjoyed looking at new ways to find research and what guides actually meant to different people.

##### **Learn?**

Things about Wendy's university and sociology.

I learned the different methods we could use to do research. I also learnt the importance of understanding each person we interviewed's opinion on Guides.

**All the things you remember doing?**

Working as a team doing tasks, going for lunch.

We looked at power-points of what we have done at guides over the past few years and looked at what sort of questions we could ask the guides. By understanding why we go and started going to guides we could work out how to ask others.

**Anything else?**

It was very exciting to see the part we would play in the research.

**Q2. Tell me about doing the research with the Guides, What did it feel like when you were doing it?**

I felt really intelligent to be honest and also like I was a leader and it felt like I was gaining stronger closer friendships throughout it.

The interviews were great fun and I loved seeing what the younger guides really thought about the places we visit and the activities we do each week.

**What do you think the Guides thought about it and about you doing it? Do you think they preferred someone near their own age interviewing them rather than someone older?**

I felt like they were a little intimidated but that's normal when there's someone older than you in teenage years interviewing you, I would be intimidated if I was their age, not because we are nasty people, we are all really nice and kind, just because of the age difference.

I think the guides were nervous at the fact of being interviewed but once we started they began to answer the questions more openly. The guides would have felt more pressured to say certain things if an older more authoritative person asked the question but because we were closer to their age they felt they could answer more openly.

**Did you learn anything from doing it, (about the other Guides and about yourself)?**

I learnt who is confident speaking out loud and their voice being recorded, I found out that it's easy to interview someone .

I learnt that I enjoy asking people the questions that allow them to understand why they do actually come to guides. It was useful to learn that guides is a big part of so many people's lives across the world and that the friendship and life lessons learnt in guides can help many people.

**What did you think about recording the interviews and listening to them?**

I thought they were really good but we could've asked them more questions to dig deeper.

I think it was a useful the way in which we conducted and recorded the interviews because it gave us a great way to record the answers from the guides with a more personal touch.

**Q 3. What surprised you about the findings? (Starting at slide 6 on the power point presentation).**

Nothing really surprised me about the findings because the answers is exactly how I feel as well especially the ‘ I wanted to come because my friend came’.

I was surprised why so many of them keep coming. It is the friendships that allow the guides to have the desire to keep returning to guides and that is the most useful lesson that we and the guides can learn.

**Were things that you thought would be mentioned not in the findings?**

Sometimes people are forced to go instead of sitting in their room all day and the people who are forced to go find out that they actually love it and stick to it

I thought there may be some disliking to some of the activities that are out of the guides room which we do on a yearly basis. I thought some of the guides might be bored by doing the same activities but lots of them said they continued to enjoy Guides.

**Any other comments – things you think are interesting and that I may have missed.**

The research was a great experience to find out more about the guides I’ve been with for so long but never actually talked to in detail.

**Peer Research: Findings Word Cloud**



### Interview Themes, Prompts and Questions.

Personal and group experiences from participation in the GA.	<i>Girl only space</i>
Personal and Group expectations (hopes) of participation in the GA.	<i>Why they joined Why they kept attending</i>
Personal and group learning.	<i>How the learning was realised</i>
What the organisation expects from participants/volunteers (Role)	<i>Training Meetings Gaining information Commitment</i>
What participants/volunteers expect from the organisation.	<i>Training Meetings Gaining information Commitment</i>
What do they get from the organisation? (Skills)	<i>Skills Empowerment Learning Friendship</i>
Views on why Guiding is popular & why has it lasted through time?	<i>Membership Progression route Familiar language</i>
Views on the strengths and weaknesses of the GA.	<i>Values Ethos</i>
Feminism and the GA.	<i>Is it recognized Visible</i>
Traditional Youth Work:	<i>Voluntary participation, informal education, reflexive cyclical process, starting where the young person is at, age range, diversity and equality, relationship with young person and adult</i>

### Questions: Adults who are and have been involved with the Guide Association.

TOPIC	QUESTIONS	PROBES
Introduction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To begin with would you tell me how and why you became to be involved with Guiding?</li> <li>2. Why did you choose Guides rather than another organisation?</li> <li>3. Were you the first in your family/friends to be involved in Guiding?</li> <li>4. If you had a daughter, did she become</li> </ol>	<i>History, language used, was the journey intermittent, progressive, new, was it to benefit / engaging eg. For themselves or another person, length of time they have been involved.</i>

	involved with Guiding? What as and how?	
Role in organisation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is your current role and what does it entail?</li> <li>2. What other roles have held and how did you get them?</li> </ol>	<p><i>Explore other roles if the journey was layered/progressive</i>  <i>Is it what was expected?</i>  <i>Has it altered over time?</i>  <i>Is there a clear aim?</i></p>
Motivation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Why do you do your role, what is expected of you?</li> <li>2. What do you expect in return?</li> <li>3. What motivates you to do it?</li> </ol>	<p><i>Personal learning/ friendships/belonging</i>  <i>What, if any, is the reward on a personal, unit, community level?</i></p>
Organisation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Can you explain to me how Guiding is run?</li> <li>2. What level of contact do you have with the organisation, what do they expect from you and you of them?</li> <li>3. What are the structures and the roles they play? What is your experience of them? How are you involved with them?</li> </ol>	<p><i>Explore the relationship/level/contact/personal investment/reciprocity</i></p> <p><i>Meetings, training,</i></p>
Model	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Can you describe your unit to me, how many members does it have, where are they from, how long has it been running, where is it held, how is it structured?</li> <li>2. How do you run it? Is it like other Units? How did you know what running a Unit entailed?</li> <li>3. How do you find out things/run things according to the overarching organisation?</li> <li>4. How much autonomy do you have over your unit?</li> </ol>	<p><i>Where is it/ what is the area like</i></p> <p><i>Staff/cost</i>  <i>Membership</i>  <i>Progression</i>  <i>Values &amp; ethos</i>  <i>Network of people?</i>  <i>Is it made up of individuals or peer groups?</i>  <i>How do they join/find out?</i></p>
Unit activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What sort of things do you do?</li> <li>2. What do you think of the programme? What do the Guides think of it?</li> </ol>	<p><i>Programme/activities/badges/awards</i>  <i>Is it prescriptive or allows freedom to move with the unit &amp; individuals?</i></p>



Values and Ethos	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What do you think the aim of the Guide Association is?</li> <li>2. Does it work &amp; why?</li> <li>3. Do you think Guiding produces better citizens?</li> <li>4. Is there anything that you would change about the Guides? (Strengths/weaknesses)</li> <li>5. What do you think is special about the Guides?</li> <li>6. What could be improved on/alterd/discarded?</li> </ol>	<p><i>Empowerment, resilience, skills.</i></p> <p><i>Citizenship?</i></p> <p><i>Evidence that it works</i></p>
Gains/Rewards	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What do you think are the benefits/gains for you, the organisation, the young women, and the community?</li> </ol>	<p><i>Learning/challenging/molding/citizenship</i></p>
Longevity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Why do you think the Guides are still popular/relevant today?</li> <li>2. What makes it special? Is it different from other youth organisations?</li> <li>3. What do you think the girls get out of attending, what impact does it have on their lives?</li> <li>4. Do you have much contact/discussion with parents? When, in what form?</li> <li>5. Why do you think the send their daughter(s)? Do they inform you why?</li> </ol>	<p><i>Changes with need</i></p> <p><i>Organised, membership, progression route, history and proven track record,</i></p> <p><i>Empowerment, skills,</i></p> <p><i>Volunteer, attend camp etc</i></p> <p><i>CV, World Wide recognition</i></p>
Feminism	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. What do you think are the benefits for the young women involved? Could they get this elsewhere?</li> <li>3. Is it important that it is a Girl only space?</li> <li>4. It has been said that the organisation is feminist, do you agree and why?</li> </ol> <p>ADDITIONAL: The organisation is inclusive of Transgender identifying as female – do you have a view on this?</p>	<p><i>Space to be and explore themselves</i></p>

Conclude	Thank you  I think that I have covered everything I wanted to ask you, is there anything you would like to add or recap on what has already been said?	
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**Questions: Youth Workers (including those who have or still have involvement with the GA).**

TOPIC	QUESTIONS	PROBES
Introduction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To begin with would you tell me how and why you became to be involved with Guiding?</li> <li>2. Why did you choose Guides rather than another organisation?</li> <li>3. Were you the first in your family/friends to be involved in Guiding?</li> </ol>	<p><i>Was it for self/ daughter/ career?</i>  <i>History, language used, was the journey intermittent, progressive, new, was it to benefit to engaging eg. For themselves or another person, length of time they have been involved.</i></p>
	<p><b>IF THEY ARE STILL INVOLVED WITH GUIDEDS ASK QUESTIONS FOR ADULTS WHO ARE STILL INVOLVED THEN MOVE TO THE TOPICS BELOW, IF NOT INVOLVED MOVE STRAIGHT TO THE QUESTIONS BELOW.</b></p>	
Youth Work	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What do you recognize as the traits of a youth work?</li> <li>2. What is the aim of good youth work and how do you know it is good?</li> <li>3. Would you see the Guide Association as falling into your definition? Why/Not?</li> </ol>	<p><i>Vol participation, reflexive, cyclical, starting where yp are at, age. Needs led Measurement, impact, skills, empowerment etc.</i></p>
Climate and context of Youth Work today.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Thinking about youth provision today, what do you think are the challenges they face on a day to day level and on an organizational level?</li> </ol>	<p><i>Funding, sustainability</i></p>
21 <sup>st</sup> Century issues	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are the issues that face young people today and the challenges they face?</li> <li>2. Is it the place of youth work to help address these issues?</li> </ol>	<p><i>Moral panics, knife crime, snowflakes</i></p>
Longevity and Sustainability	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What do you think are important factors which create sustainability in a youth organisation? Do you have these in</li> </ol>	<p><i>Organized, membership, progression route,</i></p>

	<p>your organisation?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Guides have lasted for over 110 years, why do you think they are still popular today?</li> <li>During my research it seems that parents 'send' their girls to Guides, why do you think they do this?</li> <li>Who do you think makes the decision for a young person to attend a youth club?</li> </ol>	<p><i>history and proven track record,</i></p> <p><i>Empowerment, skills, CV, World Wide recognition</i></p>
Feminism	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Guides offers a 'girl only' space, do you think this is important and why?</li> <li>Does your organisation offer this, why?</li> <li>What is the difference if any between the Guides and other young women only youth organisations/sessions/projects?</li> <li>What do you think are the benefits for the young women involved? Could they get this elsewhere?</li> <li>It has been said that the organisation is feminist, do you agree and why?</li> </ol> <p>ADDITIONAL: The organisation is inclusive of Transgender identifying as female – do you have a view on this?</p>	
Conclude	<p>Thank you</p> <p>I think that I have covered everything I wanted to ask you, is there anything you would like to add or recap on what has already been said?</p>	

**Questions: Parents/Carers of Daughters involved with Guides.**

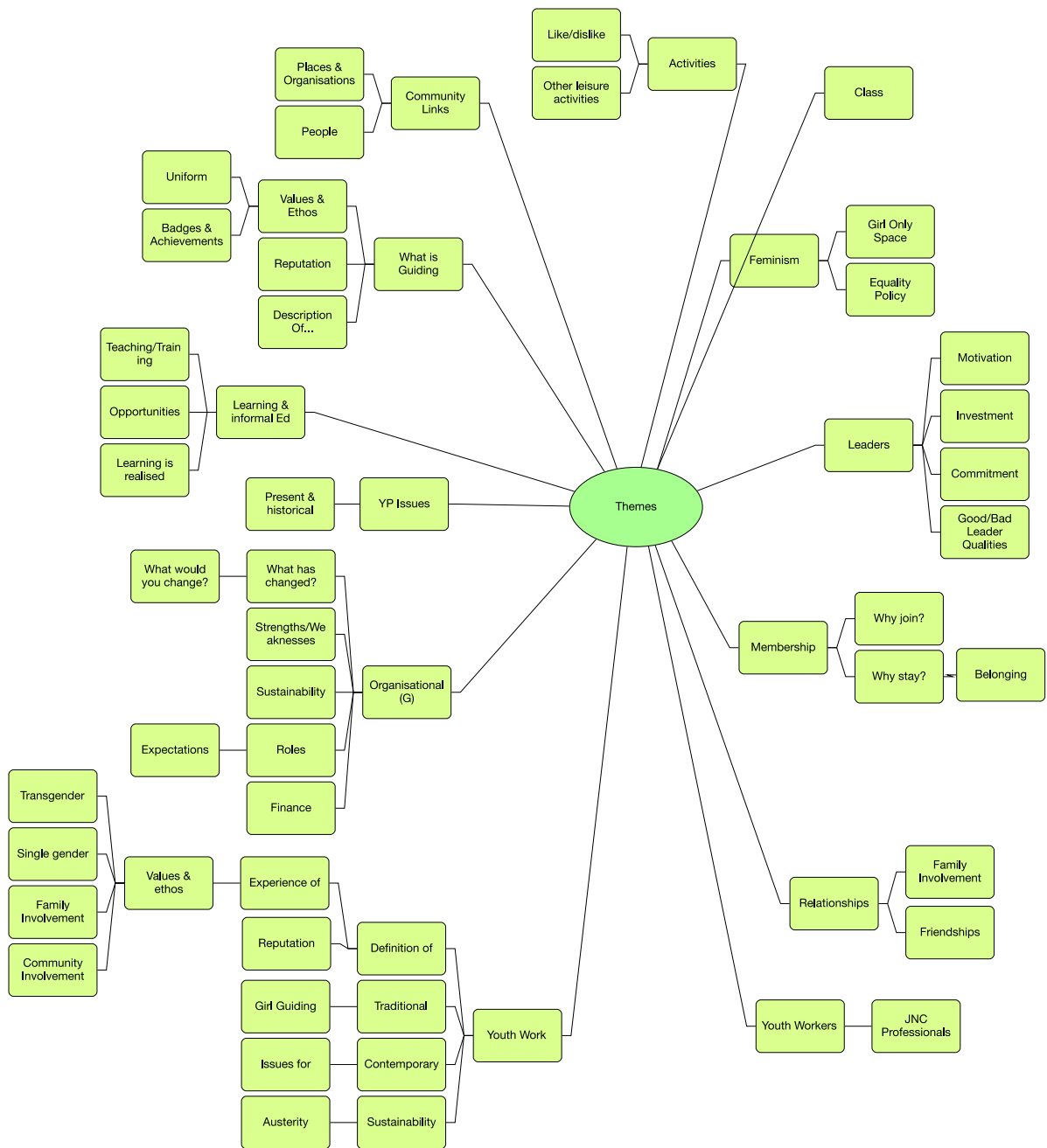
TOPIC	QUESTION	PROBE
Introduction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To begin with would you tell me how and why your daughter became to be involved with Guiding?</li> <li>Why did you choose</li> </ol>	<p><i>Whose idea was it?</i></p> <p><i>Leisure time</i></p> <p><i>Gain skills</i></p> <p><i>Address a personal issue</i></p> <p><i>Friends</i></p> <p><i>Parent had attended</i></p> <p><i>Organisational reputation</i></p>

	<p>Guides rather than another organisation?</p> <p>3. Was your daughter the first in your family/friends to be involved in Guiding?</p>	
Role in organisation	<p>1. Are you involved in any way with the Unit your daughter attends?</p> <p>2. How did this come about?</p> <p>3. Why do you do it and what do you get from participating.</p>	<p><i>Volunteer Helper Is it what was expected? Has it altered over time? Is there a clear aim? Achievement Get an understanding of why and how it works.</i></p>
Organisation	<p>1. Do you have any contact with the organisation other than with the Unit your daughter attends?</p>	<p><i>Wider understanding of the organisation.</i></p>
Unit activities	<p>1. What sort of things does your daughter do at Guides?</p> <p>2. What does she say she likes and dislikes, why?</p> <p>3. What do you think of the programme and how the Unit is run?</p>	<p><i>Programme/activities/badges/awards</i></p>
Values and Ethos	<p>1. What do you think the aim of the Guide Association is?</p> <p>2. Is it what you expected?</p> <p>3. Does it work &amp; why?</p> <p>4. Do you think Guiding produces better</p>	<p><i>Empowerment, resilience, skills. Citizenship? Evidence that it works</i></p>

	citizens?	
Gains/Rewards	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do you think attending a youth organisation like the Guides helps yp become better citizens?</li> <li>2. Does she attend any other youth clubs or groups?</li> </ol>	<i>Learning/challenging/molding/citizenship</i>
Longevity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Why do you think the Guides are still popular/relevant today?</li> <li>2. What makes it special? Is it different from other youth organisations?</li> <li>3. What do you think the girls get out of attending, what impact does it have on their lives?</li> </ol>	<p><i>Changes with need</i></p> <p><i>Organised, membership, progression route, history and proven track record,</i></p> <p><i>Empowerment, skills,</i></p>
Feminism	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What do you think are the benefits for the young women involved? Could they get this elsewhere?</li> <li>2. Is it important that it is a Girl only space?</li> <li>3. It has been said that the organisation is feminist, do you agree and why?</li> <li>5. Would you say that the Unit your daughter attends encourages her to explore new things and challenges gender stereotypes?</li> </ol> <p>ADDITIONAL: The organisation is inclusive of Transgender identifying as female – do you have a view</p>	<i>Space to be and explore themselves</i>

	on this?	
Conclude	Thank you  I think that I have covered everything I wanted to ask you, is there anything you would like to add or recap on what has already been said?	

**NVivo: Thematic analysis**



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