

**YOUTH
WORK &
SPIRITUALITY**

**Youth Work and Spiritual
Development in the North
and South of Ireland:
old ideas, new twists and
losing apprehension**

Written by **Stephen Dallas**

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Stephen Dallas
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Introduction

The aim of this research was to explore the theme of spiritual development amongst youth workers from faith and non-faith based agencies across Ireland. This report seeks to contribute to general discussions in the non-formal and informal youth work sector regarding how it can connect with spiritual development.

A sample group was identified from youth work agencies across Ireland with equal representation on each side of the border. The interviewees represented faith groups, statutory services, voluntary groups and Universities who conduct training. Faith groups were limited to Christian and Muslim due to time constraints. Thirty-eight interviews were carried out between July and October 2008.

Description	Northern Ireland	Republic of Ireland	Total
Faith groups	12 (target 13)	12 (target 13)	24
State services, voluntary groups and Universities	7 (target 8)	7 (target 8)	14
Total	19	19	38

The interviews focused on three themes: defining spirituality, the purpose of spiritual development and how workers seek to do spiritual development. All interviews were recorded and analyzed. Further information on this process is documented in the research method section.

In this report you will find:

- A model for spiritual development
- Five themes that describe spiritual development in non-formal and informal youth work and how the sector can improve practice in this area
- A range of conclusions for the sector to consider

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Research Method

The epistemological position of this research is interpretive. It is an inductive study as no clear theory was outlined at the outset. The research falls within the hermeneutic-phenomenological tradition as the method used sought to derive meanings about spiritual development from practicing youth workers. Using semi-structured interviews I was able to enter into these meanings. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and the content analyzed using QSR N6 software, which was used to assist in the discovery of theory.

There were five parts to the research process:

- 1. Forming questions** - I spoke with several people involved in non-formal and informal youth work. I entered into general conversations about the connections between youth work and spirituality. It was during this process I started to note questions that would be worth exploring.
- 2. Developing a research paper** - This document outlined how this subject would be explored and was a helpful reference point during the process. This was circulated to get further feedback and ideas. It was in this document that the research aim was settled upon:

The aim of this research is to explore the theme of spiritual development among youth workers, from faith and non-faith based agencies across Ireland.

In this paper a comprehensive sample group was identified that outlined representatives from both faith and non-faith groups across Ireland. This list of interviewees is available in the appendices.

- 3. Data collection** - A sample group of forty-two agencies was identified with an equal amount on each side of the border. Using the support of others and personal networks relevant groups were identified. The interviewees comprised of representatives from twenty-six faith groups (thirteen in Northern Ireland and thirteen in the Republic of Ireland) and sixteen state services, voluntary groups or Universities that deliver youth work training (eight in Northern Ireland and eight in the Republic of Ireland). In the end thirty-eight interviews were carried out between July and October 2008. On the interview list it is possible to identify those who were not interviewed, but had been originally identified.

Due to time constraints the faith groups were limited to Christian and Muslim. Focus was given to representing faith viewpoints within traditions. This is the reason faith group's represent almost 65% of the interviewees in this research.

The sample group consisted solely of youth workers or managers and not young people themselves. Again the reason for this was time constraints. Those I interviewed had at least five years experience and were competent to speak personally and as part of an organisation.

Interviews were conducted following a semi-structure interview technique in which three questions were focused on:

- a. How do you define spiritual development?
- b. What do you think is the purpose of spiritual development?
- c. How do you try and 'do' spiritual development?

The interview framework is available in the appendices as each question had other prompts to use if necessary. These questions opened up interesting discussions and at times only the first question was focused on. Each interview was recorded and transcripts were prepared for analysis. The duration of each interview was between thirty and fifty minutes.

4. Interpretation - Interviews were loaded on to QSR N6 software and the data was analysed by searching for common themes. This enabled theory to emerge from the data and could be validated by others. As part of building validity two focus groups were planned to triangulate the theory emerging from the interviews (one in Belfast and one in Dublin). This was not possible in Belfast due to time constraints. In Dublin the findings were shared with some of the member groups of the National Youth Council of Ireland at a half-day conference held in November 2008. This feedback was noted and useful in further analysis.

In order to build further validity an initial report was drafted and put into the non-formal and informal youth work sector through several networks. It was also shared with those who were interviewed. This allowed several individuals to make comments that were helpful in this final draft.

5. Explanation - This final report is an attempt to bring together all parts of this process in a coherent and user-friendly manner. It is certainly not the final word on the role of spiritual development in non-formal and informal youth work but hopefully a useful contribution.



What is youth work?

Youth work is a combination of non-formal and informal education approaches which gives rise to various different methods. Rather than being centrally agreed and absolutely understood youth work has become a kaleidoscope of trends.

There has been a range of practice varying from youth work occurring within schools, career development, probation services, while others have maintained a hugely informal and non-directive approach. With this variety it could be argued that non-formal and informal youth work is without a conceptual base. That would be utterly incorrect. Doyle & Smith (2002) identify some key dimensions that have been present to differing degrees in the central discourses of practice since the early 1900s:

1. Focusing on young people
2. Emphasising voluntary participation and relationship
3. Committing to association
4. Being friendly and informal, and acting with integrity
5. Being concerned with the education and, more broadly, the welfare of young people

Historically the sector can trace these values to the post World War Two writings of Josephine Macalister Brew, one of the most influential writers about non-formal and informal youth work. She writes that when working with young people there should be:

1. A commitment to community, citizenship and co-operation
2. A clear focus on process
3. Recognition of the social and emotional needs of young people
4. A championing of popular culture as a site for intervention
5. A recognition of the economic and social context in which work takes place

(See Smith 2002)

Comparing Doyle & Smith with Brew shows that the central concepts of youth work in non-formal and informal contexts have always been very clear - a person centered approach. It is simply that practice has become varied. Youth work in non-formal and informal contexts has always sought to promote a culture of valuing young people for their inherent value. It has a strong emphasis on relationship and equality. The youth worker is not seen as an educator that seeks to transfer information into the minds of young people. In the 1940's Macalister Brew perfectly defined the role of a youth worker:

Only by the slow and tactful method of inserting yourself unassumingly into the life of the club, not by talking to your club members, but by hanging about and learning from their conversation and occasionally, very occasionally, giving it that twist which leads it to your goal, is it possible to open up a new avenue of thought to them (1943: 16)

Recently, statutory policy across the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, has endeavored to re-state the purpose and role of youth work. In 2001 the Youth Work Act provided the Republic of Ireland a broad definition of youth work that was the basis for the National Development Plan for Ireland 2003-2007:

Youth Work means a planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young person's through their voluntary participation, and which is -

- a. *Complementary to their formal, academic or vocational education and training; and*
- b. *Provided primarily by voluntary youth work organisations. (2002: 13)*

This is reflected in the 2005-2008 Youth Work Strategy for Northern Ireland:

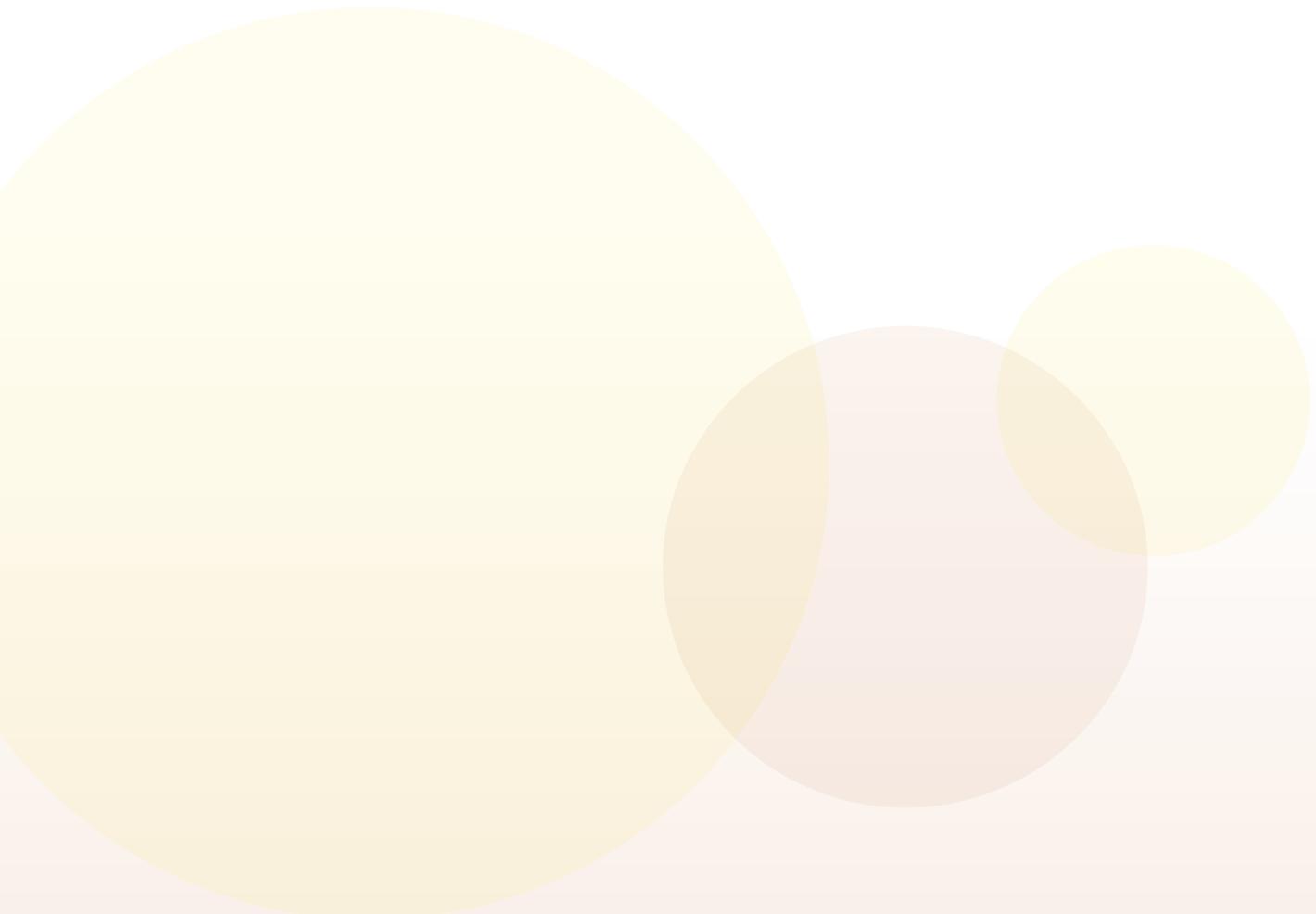
Youth Work is distinctly educational and involves constructive interventions with young people in non-formal settings. Youth work is primarily concerned with personal and social education, and is characterised by the voluntary engagement of young people. As an educational activity it is most effective when it is planned and delivered with clear objectives and informed through continuous monitoring, evaluation and critical reflection on the processes and practices employed. (2004: 13)

Recently the New Occupational Standards for Youth Work (NOS) (2008), which apply across the UK, have offered another broad description.

[Youth work should] Enable young people to develop holistically, working with them to facilitate their personal, social and educational development, to enable them to develop their voice, influence and place in society and to reach their full potential (2008: 3)

The NOS Standards continue that personal, social and educational development can include physical, political and spiritual development. Relating spiritual development to holistic development is also referred to in the national development plans quoted above. But what is this connection and how is it understood?

It is useful to look at how spiritual development is defined by others as it may help to see the connection with non-formal and informal youth work.



What is Spiritual Development?

"The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand in rapt awe, is as good as dead: his eyes are closed."

Albert Einstein, *What I Believe*, in Forum (October 1930)

The historical development of the meaning of spiritual development is useful to understand, as it has always been imprecise. This lack of a certainty still shapes present ideas. Hay and Nye (2006) have probably written most succinctly on this. The genesis of the word spiritual, within an educative context in Britain, was during the wording of the 1944 Education Act. The then Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple, needed to find a form of words for the religious elements of the Act that would be acceptable to the Members of the Houses of Parliament. It was felt that spiritual would meet that requirement. Within the context of 1940's Britain it is not difficult to imagine that spiritual could be read as Christianity. But due to modern phenomena, particularly the idea that western Europe is post-Christian, and increasing multi culturalism that is not the case and therefore spirituality is suffering from an identity crises.

In the Republic of Ireland, including post independence in 1949, the Catholic Church was heavily involved in the development of youth services. However since the 1970's, with the decline of Priest's involved in youth work, there has been an increasing expectation that the spiritual content of work with young people would be separated out from general work with young people. This has generated some tensions (Gallagher 2005: 44-45).

These two brief historical notes make it possible to see that across the Republic of Ireland, the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland spiritual development occupies the same conceptual grounds as personal faith or institutional religion. All approaches to spiritual development must be clear about how it relates to or, clearly does not relate to, faith and religion.

The literature on spiritual development responds to this tension and is located within viewing spiritual development as exclusive of religion or including it as part, or even central, to religion.

Yust et. al. (2006) in their work *Nurturing Child and Adolescent Spirituality* note several assumptions that they make about spiritual development. These are helpful in giving a broad understanding of spiritual development:

1. Spirituality is an intrinsic part of humanness
2. Spirituality is related to but not defined by religion and faith
3. Spirituality involves growth and change
4. Spirituality must be an actively nurtured domain of life
5. Spirituality is embedded in relationships and community
6. Spirituality is expressed in ethical behaviour
7. Spirituality necessitates interdisciplinary study (2006: 8-10)

These assumptions about spirituality help to broaden out how we could, or even should, understand spiritual development. The findings in this research document reflect these elements. However it does add one additional part and that is that the human self is an important agent throughout spiritual development. It is the place where facts, knowledge or theory are embedded. Parker Palmer (1998) offers this fantastic image of how the human spirit should be conceived as an important locus of connecting issues that are essential to living:

We separate head from heart. Result: minds that do not know how to feel and hearts that do not know how to think;
We separate facts from feelings. Result: bloodless facts that make the world distant and remote and ignorant emotions that reduce truth to how one feels today;
We separate theory from practice. Result: theories that have little to do with life and practice that is uninformed by understanding;

We separate teaching from learning. Result: teachers who talk but do not listen and students who listen but do not talk; When we think things together, we reclaim the life force in the world, in our students, in ourselves. (1998: 66)

Palmer's position is not religious or secular but it is easy to see how it fits with the end goals of both these persuasions. There is a host of writing that promotes such a broad understanding of spiritual development (King 2008, Hay & Nye 2006, Elkins 1998, and Mott-Thornton 1998). Others clearly argue that spiritual development is the domain of faith, particularly Christian groups. Adrian Thatcher (1996) would be of this position arguing that spiritual development is about the search for God and developing a relationship with that God. What is clearest about these two groups is that they divide between the naturalistic and the transcendent.

Research has helped to clarify how field workers understand spiritual development and bring some illumination. Meehan (2002) conducted a reviews of the literature on this area and argues that:

...it is essential to distinguish 'spiritual development' (an educational aim relevant for all, concerned with sensitising students to issues at the heart and root of human existence) and 'developing spirituality' (a catechetical aim, concerned with nurturing beliefs, values, behaviours and practices of the Christian faith, and therefore inappropriate from some students. (2002: 304)

This is a helpful conceptual framework however Terence Copley argues that it is not logical to think in terms of a spirituality belonging either to non-faith or faith dimensions. Drawing of the public mourning preceding the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, he draws some interesting conclusions. One interesting observation that is particularly relevant is that people create their own spirituality, which all combines to create a *popular spirituality* that is neither secular nor religious. He writes:

Popular spirituality is struggling to come to terms with the failure of reason and as such it is a major alternative and rival both to post-modernity and to religious fundamentalism. (2005: 94)

What is useful about Copley's contribution is that spirituality is not seen as either broad or narrow but simply a human quality that precedes any discussion about its nature.

At the present time spiritual development needs to be conceptualised as nebulous and it is plausible that the current political landscape can easily shape its meaning. If spiritual development is going to be a legitimate part of non-formal and informal youth work practice this is not a satisfactory situation. Einstein's quote at the start of this section does indicate the spirituality that perhaps everyone could sign up to - one that is concerned with the deeper and mysterious parts of our humanity. Hopefully this research will contribute to developing understanding about meaning in the context of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.



Introducing findings

From the interview process it was clear that defining spiritual development in the non-formal and informal youth work sector was going to be difficult. It is probably easier to speak of general features, or in this case themes, that describe spiritual development.

However, from this research five themes emerged about spiritual development and how it can be promoted within the sector:

- 1. Spiritual development is linked to self-formation and personal and social development**
- 2. In the context of youth work spiritual development is inclusive**
- 3. Current youth work values and programme areas cultivate spiritual development**
- 4. The concept of spiritual development should be included within the training and supervision of youth workers**
- 5. Ideas about spiritual development are shaped by personal narratives**

Before explaining each of these themes it is useful to outline the dimensions of spiritual development that arose from the interviews.

As a general note it is important to explain that responses to the interview questions fell largely into two categories. The first category related spiritual development to exploring the questions: Who am I? Why am I here? Who are these other people? Other interviewees used similar language referring to being at ease with oneself or developing personal frameworks from which to operate. Spiritual development in this category was related to exploring personal identity and values.

Those in the second category connected spiritual development with a world beyond the physical. Many faith-based youth workers called this important and communicated this in a variety of ways. Interestingly interviewees who wanted young people to consider a world beyond the physical had different ways of communicating this dimension. Some were overt about explaining things to young people. Others sought to spend time with young people to help them grasp *relating to or connecting* with this dimension.

These categories are important to acknowledge at the start of this section because part of my intention has been to use the best of both perspectives. It is my hope that this model for spiritual development - with its four dimensions and five defining themes - will allow for new types of conversation to arise about the role of spiritual development in informal and non-formal youth work.

Throughout the findings the comments of interviewees have been included as they illuminate the findings with real people who are trying to support young people. All quotes are anonymous.

Dimensions of spiritual development in the non-formal and informal context of youth work

During the interviews these areas were identified as being the dimensions of spiritual development:

- Understanding that we share a common humanity
- Having a concern for the welfare of the earth
- Reflecting on the values of society and understanding cultural undercurrents
- Encouraging thinking about issues beyond the physical world

Spiritual development can occur in one or more of these dimensions. It was held that the centre of this process is the changes that occur within the 'self'. If a non-formal or informal youth worker focuses on any or a combination of these dimensions, they are involved in spiritual development. The following model can be offered to the sector as a way of visualising spiritual development in the context of non-formal and informal youth work:



These dimensions are not intended to be prescriptive but illustrative. What follows is a fuller description of how each dimension was described during the interviews.

Common Humanity

Exploring spiritual development encompasses how we understand relating to others in a way that recognises that we are all equal. This sits within the conceptual base of non-formal and informal youth workers:

A lot of the principles of youth work is very much based on the relationship between the youth worker and young person, developing yourself as a person and how you relate to other people. The principles of equality and diversity and how you treat people, treating people as equals and being the most useful, productive member of society that you can probably be... that's what good youth work is about.

Developing shared thinking about promoting inclusion was particularly apparent within the Northern Ireland context in relation to the Equity Diversity and Interdependence (EDI) principles that are part of the Northern Ireland Youth Work Curriculum.

...I suppose a lot of energies [regarding exploring spirituality] has been put into looking at how we as the two faiths co-exist on the island so I suppose we have looked for maybe areas or issues of commonality and issues of difference as well.

Recognising our common humanity by promoting inclusion and equality are essential ingredients of spiritual development as they get young people to think about values and beliefs and how their values, beliefs and behaviour are perceived by others.

Earth

Some interviewees felt that being in touch with nature should be seen as developing a young person's spiritual capacities:

Now some people make [spiritual development] very vague around you know, appreciating nature and having a sense of awe and wonder and that type of stuff and I sort of subscribe to that and sort of I'm comfortable enough with that definition of it.

This was also reflected in the practice of one agency:

Some of our teenagers refer to... warm and fuzzy moments. It might be that they are on top of a mountain going on a hike and we will take a moment. We have what you'd call 'guide's own' and it is rather than a religious service or going to church, if you have a weekend away or a meeting it's taking a moment to look within yourself and be thankful for whatever the event that's gone on, the people that are with you, the place where you are. Often the girls will make up their own prayers, or pick stories or songs that mean something to them and they create the time and the space and the words to be spiritual. It might be five minutes on top of a mountain but it's taking time to recognise that this is amazing or this is fantastic and just looking around them.

One interviewee made a very helpful observation about how nature nurtures spiritual development:

...if you raise the consciousness on a spiritual level it doesn't have to be about God, it can be about like I [say] to the kids some person goes and meditates and they find that spiritual or someone goes and prays in a church and they find that spiritual and somebody else might be in touch with nature and do a walk and that's spiritual for them and instead of us saying that's wrong and that's wrong and that's right we'll be saying whatever it takes for you to reach that inner strength or peace or serenity that's fine...

In the interviews the idea of the earth, nature or environmental awareness being elements of spiritual development did come up occasionally, but not as much as the other three areas. However other writers in this field have made connections between spiritual development and nature. The reason for this gap in this research is probably due more to the lack of time to meet with other groups who focus on this during the interview process.

Thinking through the beauty of the earth and environmental awareness is useful when exploring spiritual development with young people. But it could be overlooked because it is not seen as spiritual:

...over the last 3 months we've actually undergoing a process in developing our new strategic plan, we have come to the end of a 5 year one and we have developed a new 5 year one and I don't think I've heard [spiritual development] mentioned as something we should be doing or looking at and I have been involved in most of the national discussions and even if it had been in some of the regional discussions I'm sure it would have filtered back but it hasn't. The hot one from young people that we haven't heard before was very much around environmental awareness and a sustainable environment.

The sector should view concerns for the earth as part of a spiritual dimension.

Cultural Undercurrents

Another dimension of spiritual development can be explored by looking at the values, beliefs and practices of the culture we find ourselves in. By doing this we can make decisions about whether we share these values or accept cultural norms.

You would have thought that with the kind of improved social and economic conditions and improved employment conditions with disposable income that you should have had a little more of a happier cohort, been more happier with their lot but the evidence isn't there to support that. I think part of it could be that there is something about a lack of place in society and a lack of direction and a spiritual dimension. It would purely be a personal view and not an organisational view.

These cultural realities in 21st Century Ireland, north and south, and indeed in Europe, make it important to note that we are living in changing times which present young people with increased opportunities and pressures:

...there are maybe more factors reeling against [young people] than ever before in some sense, the decline and fall and counter spirituality if you like, of formal religion, materialism, and the march of telecommunications, and the increasing pressure I think to be insular, to go into yourself and kind of be self obsessed, the pre-occupation of celebrity, image, what trainers you wear, status anxiety, all that stuff seems to me to be layer up on layer of separation between the core need for spirituality.

It is not hard to understand that young people face new pressures in today's modern world. By supporting young people to stop and think about the underlying values of culture they can develop their own responses. Another interviewee expressed that perhaps modern culture was not able to provide young people with support structures when cultural pressure builds:

More and more young people are questioning and challenging, they are shouting at us in different ways that they need to have some kind of spiritualism in their lives, and I do believe that certain things like suicide and depression is because more and more of our society is becoming secular and young people don't have those formative years that they can hold to and understand.

Perhaps this is an idealistic vision of the past, but what is clear is that these experiences require structures that are capable of providing support when it is needed.

Statutory and voluntary provision for young people has provided reasonable levels of support for young people in the north and south, however one interviewee noted:

...the youth service has often been defined by government as being to do with dealing with problems and problem young people, so its not about the informal development of young people its about dealing with problem kids to make them better members of society...but when you look at the reports from government usually the reports are dealing with issues around discipline, controlling, protecting, making people good citizens and at the heart of it - it would've been about them understanding the values of society so that they would fit within society and that's where part of the problem comes from now because society doesn't really know what it is...

Do our present youth work structures really support young people develop a deeper sense of their inner self and to articulate the type of society they would like to live in? This is probably an unending discussion but it is important that young people critique their society and culture in order to find their place in it and change it as they see fit. This also should be recognised as a spiritual process as it gets to issues relating to deep values and beliefs on fundamental life issues that are present throughout society.

When exploring if young people are satisfied with modern realities, the development of secularism, government plans for young people or faith perspectives non-formal and informal youth workers should see themselves as assisting young people to critique society. This is part of spiritual development as it is prompting young people to verbalise deep values and beliefs.

Beyond the Physical World

Even if the interviewees who were not committed to a faith or working in a faith-based context, looking beyond the physical world was seen as an interesting concept that in some way connects with spiritual development.

...for me the whole things about spirituality is that recognition that there is something more, you can take that as an interpretation of there being a God or you can look at it and say it is about man-kind, holistically, all of us together or there could be some other supreme being.

Another interviewee said:

...spirituality is about some sort of deeper sense of your place in the world perhaps, a sense of asking 'who am I? why am I here?' A sense of connection to something bigger, whatever that might be...

These quotes are broad as they do not connect with any specific deity or religious group and does allow scope for thinking to develop around this area. This broadness, in relation to developing spirituality, could be helpful in not locating spiritual development within any one, or indeed any, faith group.

It is accurate to say that when faith groups referred to ideas about the world beyond the physical they mainly used the term 'God' (this would be singular as interview groups had a monotheistic theology). This could make the broad definition of the world beyond the physical quite difficult for faith groups to accept because of the tension between being universalist or being particular. This is because faith groups need to remain distinctive and within their knowledge base. However some interviewees indicated that they could cope with being open to broadly searching out what it means to search for something beyond the physical without losing sight of their own faith story:

...overall I would view spirituality in a very broad sense as that part of a person's make up that recognises another dimension, that life isn't just about the material or current relationships, there is some sort of a need to have meaning and purpose in life and that spirituality is part of ones journey or an exploration of one's meaning and purpose and obviously that's a very very broad definition, but I suppose that's where I would see it. From a Christian point of view obviously I believe in the ultimate recognition of a divine presence, but within the organisation we would have a view of spirituality in its broadest sense and within that I would be comfortable to explore spirituality with young people and staff and with others from a Christian perspective but that would be my starting point.

Another said:

...I guess I see spirituality as connecting with God's spirit, my spirit connecting with God or helping other people to recognise that they are more than just physical and emotional but they are spiritual as well and I guess this is slightly different from faith

Perhaps with spiritual development, in general non-formal and informal youth work circles, concepts like God or gods could be included within exploring the world beyond the physical. This gives opportunity for the themes of faith, non-faith, higher power, god's or the mystical world to be explored in conversation. Where this will prove difficult is when there is only one perspective in these discussions, whether that is in non-faith or faith based settings. That is not to invalidate faith

development with young people, in non-formal and informal youth work settings, but it is important to accept that spiritual development is different from faith development. This issue will be focused on in greater detail throughout this report.

Therefore by looking at the world beyond the physical it is possible for non-formal and informal youth workers to enter into quite a range of topics and themes. This may be too broad for some groups but this will be looked at in more details in the next five aspects that interviewees identified at part of understanding spiritual development.

Summary

This section of the report has outlined the dimensions of spiritual development to inform non-formal and informal youth work practice across the north and south of Ireland. These four dimensions are, understanding common humanity, our connection to the earth, critiquing cultural undercurrents and developing thinking about the world beyond the physical. These four dimensions show four key areas that have emerged from the interviewees. These are the dimensions that define the parameters of spiritual development.



Five themes that describe spiritual development in non-formal and informal youth work and how the sector can improve practice in this area:

During the interviews five core themes emerged about spiritual development and how it can be promoted within the sector. These are:

1. **Spiritual development is linked to self-formation and personal and social development**
2. **In the context of youth work spiritual development is inclusive**
3. **Current youth work values and programme areas cultivate spiritual development**
4. **The concept of spiritual development should be included within the training and supervision of youth workers**
5. **Ideas about spiritual development are shaped by personal narratives**

As in the previous section each area is explained and quotes from the participants have been used in order to highlight particular points. At the end of each section key finding/actions are outlined to clarify meaning.

Spiritual development is linked to self-formation and personal and social development

There was broad agreement that self-formation was significantly related with spiritual development. As one interviewee noted:

There is a friend of mine and his favorite phrase is that there are two best days of your life, and that is the day you're born and the day you find out why. I think if there's anything that encapsulates spirituality, that's it...

Some interviewees noted that spiritual development could be more significant than commonly thought or understood in practice with young people:

...people can have the physical aspects of their lives sorted and they can have their mental status sorted and their emotional wellbeing but there might be something niggling at them to find out how it works or what's my place here or what's my purpose here and I think that is definitely something that we have lacked in youth work...

Another commented:

I suppose I would think of [spirituality] as being part of your make up as emotional, psychological, intellectual and physical but I would think of spirituality as a driving force behind all those.

What was clear in the interviews is that supporting young people to develop their identity by facilitating them to search for meaning, purpose and values is connected with spiritual development. This is not simply related to uncovering some great life mystery or having an epiphany! It relates to finding perspectives on some of the fundamental issues in life. This includes issues like human rights, injustice and poverty as well as discovering personal uniqueness. It is quite useful to note that whether an interviewee was coming from a non-faith based or faith based perspective, this view was common.

Those from a faith-based perspective did have further ideas about spiritual development and self-formation. These included talking with young people about a transcendent power (as my research was limited to Islamic and Christian communities that meant Allah or Christ Jesus) and sacred texts (meaning the Koran or the Bible). Faith based workers had a desire to

explore how ideas and concepts within faith traditions could help in the process of self-formation. Youth workers from faith positions had a range of ideas on how to do this. Some were very clear that by developing spirituality they were developing an understanding of a particular faith:

...a Muslim is a human being, and if he lived a good life in full obedience to his God and be kind to others, he will be like an angel and if he fell into sin he will be like a devil. So this is what spirituality is like for me.

Likewise another interviewee commented:

God has created us for himself and we will be restless until we rest in him right - St Augustine. So different religions provide different answers to that question... I think Christianity has got the right answer.

The quotes above show that some thought it was appropriate to connect the purpose of spiritual development with faith development. Other interviewees were less sure about this connection:

I think there needs to be a very strong distinction about work that's motivated by faith and spiritual concept and work with young people on spirituality.

Others noted that spiritual development could rather be a precursor to faith development:

...for me I guess I see spirituality as connecting with God's spirit, my spirit connecting with God or helping other people to recognise that they are more than just physical and emotional but they are spiritual as well and I guess this is slightly different from faith because that is not necessarily at that stage that someone is going to say well yes I believe and I have a relationship with God but recognises that their life is just more than physical and emotional...

Treating spiritual development as faith development or arguing that they are distinct shows that the meaning about spiritual development is contested. Perspectives and context influence how a youth worker will approach spiritual development. However linking self-formation with spiritual development could create a general appreciation, across groups, of how to support young people in this area.

Of course the above comments assumes that you accept that a higher power is part of the formation of the self. The model outlined in this document does not link itself with any particular deity or faith but encourages youth workers to think through what it means to get young people thinking about a world beyond the physical. This could be addressed within a faith or a non-faith context. Many of the interviewees were not coming from a faith perspective and therefore looked outside of the concept of God. Here is one example:

...you know you can ask those questions [about self formation] in a position of no faith and you can also ask them in a position of faith but the moment you ask 'who am I?' and then you start adding questions like 'why?' and 'what for?' and all those types of questions then you start to go into the realm of the spiritual. So if you want to you can keep your youth work in that 'who am I?' within a non-faith [context] but you can also expand it out beyond that quite naturally and I think for me that's what spiritual youth work is about. It's about pushing the boundary just that little bit further in terms of what you define young peoples' needs...

Under this theme spiritual development is pushing for deeper levels of conversation with young people. Both non-faith and faith positions have something to say about the world beyond the physical and young people should have opportunity to enter into dialogue about these if they so wish.

As a dimension, the world beyond the physical could create new opportunities for faiths, ideas about a God or god's, the mysterious elements of life or non-faith positions to be discussed and understood. The dimension of the world beyond the physical is an attempt at protecting that, which is vital in youth work, namely, assisting young people to become self-governing through conversation and dialogue. It is this that must be placed above agendas that disparage or promote faith.

Of course faith development will still occur but this needs to be understood as a spirituality of specific faith. Faith development can be vital in self-formation but in the context of non-formal and informal youth work the approach needs to be general by exploring the world beyond the physical. This will enable discussion to be placed in the context of open conversation and can be achieved by non-faith or faith based groups.

As a metaphor it is helpful to see spiritual development as a compilation of the greatest hits of the 1990's. This will be broad and numerous genres will be included. People can listen to all the music or skip that which they dislike. Faith development is more specific. It picks a band or songwriter from the 1990's and gets all their albums and becomes slightly biased to that genre of music.

This way of nurturing self-formation may sound too inclusive and general. Interviewees indicated a wide breadth of opinion on this topic but none wanted to stop young people hearing perspectives on faith or non-faith. Therefore this way of viewing spiritual development goes beyond a melting pot approach to inclusion. It asks youth workers to think about how they encourage young people to think about the world beyond the physical without faith position or non-faith becoming bland and sanitised. It seeks to create opportunities for young people to engage passionately in these discussions to assist them in their quest for self-formation.

If spiritual development is to become part of youth work culture in the north and south of Ireland then self-formation, as described above, must be seen as a dynamic part of this process. Current youth work typography can support this conception within Personal and Social Development (PSD) as that clearly links with the process of self-formation. PSD was an aim within the National Youth Work Development Plan 2003-2007 for Ireland and is central in the revised Northern Ireland Youth Work Curriculum. PSD is seen as a need for young people as they make the transition into adulthood. By positing spiritual development as part of PSD it could be easily developed in the non-faith and faith based sector. Here is one example of an interviewee who made this connection:

...another [area I worked on] would have been self image so what sort of image do [young people] have of themselves and getting them to reflect on their image and what they think of themselves and I suppose using those couple of mechanisms we have been able to develop personal development programmes or spiritual development programme by giving young people that sort of space and I connected all of that to spirituality

The only issue about placing spiritual development within PSD is that it is balanced with other development needs like emotional, mental and physical. That means that it is not the dominant need. This is relevant as the dynamics of context are important on defining a hierarchy of needs. Clearly those based in a faith setting could give more emphasis on spiritual development. One interviewee talked about the development of the PSD model in the late 70's and early 80's in Northern Ireland pointing out how context influences:

...when I was working in the statutory board we talked about personal and social development and spirituality was brought in. It did not sit well within the youth work context of rolling out a curriculum, but within the voluntary [sector] it did, so there was a demarcation even though there was this notion, so it was an ideological notion of having this spirituality embedded within the curriculum. But in actual fact I think there was a clear distinction there because when I wore my other hat, which was working in the youth clubs in church, then that was the foci, it was to promote the spiritual wellbeing of young people...

Including spiritual development within PSD will be strongly influenced by context. This is problematic as spiritual development could, if it has not done so already, form dual meanings that are shaped in localised agencies. For some spiritual development will be central to PSD and focus on this while others see spiritual development as only part of PSD, tending not to get around to doing it in practice. Therefore it is possible that faith groups will tend to spend time looking a spiritual development, connecting this with faith, while non-faith groups will put this issue on the long finger. It is clear that if spiritual development occurs within PSD then new ideas need to inform faith based and non-faith based approaches to working with young people. Therefore the choice is between creating exclusive models of PSD which includes spiritual development, that statutory and faith based agencies can develop separately, or forming new collaborative models.

The crux of this issue is deciding if spiritual development is a central focus of PSD or only part of it:

Well I think that from my background in terms of youth work in the first instance the term spirituality was always bandied about in terms of the spiritual growth of young people and in fact whenever we were looking at curriculum for young people we were thinking about how we could encompass this spiritual growth and that was really cased within the framework of trying to be all inclusive...it was cased within ensuring that the primary foci for the church based youth clubs would be able to follow a curriculum that was inclusive to statutory and non voluntary

The model of spiritual development in this document seeks to be inclusive of faith and non-faith based approaches. A range of individuals and agencies will contest this model. However these challenges are across non-faith and faith sectors.

Firstly the dimensions of spiritual development, outlined in this document, will be difficult for statutory youth provision that do not promote any faith position. That is because it gives space to creating more dialogue about faith in terms of looking at the world beyond the physical when looking a self-formation. As one interviewee said the statutory service has traditionally sought to promote development without imposing on young people:

...the youth service has always sought and felt the responsibility, without manipulating, without indoctrinating, to try and somehow allow an environment where they can help young people to discover and to shape what the future looks like through the generation above them passing on their value base...

By encouraging young people to look beyond the physical world statutory services, and many voluntary agencies, would need to be sure that spiritual development is not indoctrinating but genuinely attempting to encourage young people to reflect on the how other faith groups understand the world beyond the physical. This would also need to be balanced with the three other aspects of spiritual development outlined in the model as developing thinking about common humanity, the earth and cultural undercurrents all can support spiritual development.

Secondly an inclusive model of spiritual development will also be difficult for some faith-based groups, as it needs to be inclusive of other spiritualities when it is not working solely focused on faith development:

I think that Protestant young people who explore faith in their own tradition could maybe explore Catholic tradition as they become exposed to it and if they happen to move into wider diversity then they explore their Christian tradition in relation to Muslim tradition or whatever and I think that's, for me that's healthy because my ultimate purpose I think as a youth worker is to see a young person become autonomous and aware and critical of their world...so it's not about [young people] adopting a spirituality or adopting a faith tradition or anything like that I'm not interested in that part of it I'm interested in the young person making a decision for themselves based on the evidence and having as much evidence as they can around them.

This could be a challenge for faith groups but some acknowledged that they are open to facing these difficulties. One interviewee, based in a voluntary group with Christian principles, talked about how they engaged in PSD:

...we are revising what we call our personal, social health module in one of our programmes and we go round everything from self esteem to identity, that sort of stuff so while we have developed some of the materials in it, we are sitting down in the next few weeks to go through and run spirituality over it and look at how does this fit in with our understanding of spirituality...we are presenting this from a uniquely Christian perspective because that's what we are a Christian faith based organisation we have got to have some congruence with that are we providing it in the same way as the statutory [services]...

Faith based agencies are able to accept holistic development and can run PSD programmes but there is a need for them to include their unique faith perspective. If this is not done didactically, but based within the programme and part of the dialogical process then the PSD of young people can perhaps be enhanced.

...we are trying to encourage people whether it's in personal development or whatever programme they are doing we need to be comfortable enough to explore spirituality through the normal curriculum and particularly in that context of challenging the world views that underpin so much of our curricula...

Non-faith and faith based groups should view PSD as an opportunity to support young people to look at the four dimensions of spiritual development outlined in the model within this report. If non-faith and faith groups could work on the challenge of incorporating spiritual development into PSD new possibilities could open up for young people to explore what it means to think about spiritual development.

This is the first of five themes that emerged about spiritual development and how it can be promoted within the sector. It came from the connections that the interviewees made between spiritual development, self-formation and personal and social development (PSD).

Key findings for this theme:

1. Spiritual development will encourage young people to think through meaning and purpose in life. This process of self-formation is a vital part of spiritual development.
2. Spiritual development needs to be understood as broader than faith development. It is also important to think through when spiritual development moves into the domain of faith development.
3. Spiritual development should be seen as inclusive and a concept that promotes discussion on a range of faith and non-faith perspectives.
4. Spiritual development can occur in faith based and non-faith based settings if the focus is on self-formation.
5. Self-formation has clear links with personal and social development.
6. Using personal and social development, as a way to promote practice on spiritual development will require a commitment from statutory and voluntary services to be open to promoting conversations that incorporate looking at the world beyond the physical.
7. Faith based groups need to be open to promote dialogue that is open to critique their ideas about the world beyond the physical.
8. Faith based and non-faith based agencies need to develop further thinking on the connection between spiritual development and personal and social development.
9. Spiritual development will be improved if all dimensions of spiritual development are explored: developing thinking about common humanity, the earth, cultural undercurrents and the world beyond the physical.

In the context of youth work spiritual development is inclusive

Interviewees were asked if they thought spiritual development was the domain of faith groups or anyone who was interested. The responses are insightful:

I think that's an excellent question, I believe it's the domain of everybody personally...we think spirituality initially has something to do with faith and religion, and there is nothing wrong with that either, I come from a faith background myself but that's my automatic incline, to go towards something that's to do with faith when in fact I don't necessarily think it is about that...

Another replied:

...in terms of a knowledge base, which says, that if you have spirituality that's inclusive then that doesn't just take in Christian spirituality, that takes in a whole remit of different spiritualities

The interviewees were open to see some interplay between spiritual development and faith but in the context of non-formal and informal youth work this cannot be done exclusively for any single faith position. If spiritual development is going to probe identity questions, specifically being open to thinking about the world beyond the physical, it needs to be done inclusively through dialogue and in a spirit of enquiry. Therefore it is different from faith development. That said there are three concerns about such an inclusive approach to spirituality:

1. The problem of how the work of faith based groups is perceived
2. A fear that spiritual development will be too broad
3. A suspicion that spiritual development is synonymous with religion

The first issue to be explored about viewing spiritual development as inclusive is the perception of faith-based agencies, particularly their role and understanding about developing faith. This is important as these groups can be classified as developing an exclusive model of spiritual development. Non-formal and informal educators, in faith based settings, were aware about how they are perceived in the sector:

I don't know whether it's popular to be a Christian now to say that you are Christian or to do Christian work without people automatically writing it off by saying that what you are doing is sitting in a room and preaching at people, manipulating them to convert them and I think that's the perception of the church and the church has to acknowledge that for a long time, that's what they did do but that's not at the heart of what our faith should be about, or what the Bible says our faith should be about...

There is a general acceptance from those from a faith perspective, engaged in the non-formal or informal youth work, to think about how they do spiritual development, particularly within the context of the themes outlined in the model of spiritual development. These less rudimentary ideas about spiritual development should be shared with other youth workers in the sector:

...if I am working with a group of young people who have an openness or have expressed an interest or a questioning to do with faith, not even necessarily Christian faith but just have a yearning after God depending on whatever way they express God then I would comfortably use spirituality as a way of saying, I am not talking about religion or a structure or a pattern of belief I'm talking about a soul's yearning after relationship with this being beyond yourself...

However not all faith based agencies share this paradigm about spiritual development. In the interviews with faith based agencies there were a range of opinions about their role in spiritual development. Spiritual development is seen as a large chunk of what faith groups do with some treating spiritual development and faith development interchangeably. An adapted version of Pugh's (1999) model of faith based youth work is very helpful in helping conceptualise this spectrum of opinion:

Youth work with no spiritual content	Youth work with spiritual but necessarily faith content	Youth work based on faith principles focusing on social action approach	Youth work adopting an evangelical approach
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This model accurately portrays what was uncovered in the interview process. Faith based youth workers showed an awareness of their place on this spectrum. Many understood the tension between wanting to be open about their faith commitment, their hope that young people could holistically develop and their desire to see young people making informed decisions about their personal faith. The big challenge for faith groups is creating an inclusive context for this to occur.

Many of the interviewees would affirm that the Christian faith tradition has played a meaningful role in the development of youth work in the north and south of Ireland. But in terms of perception, it is clear that there are deep misgivings that faith traditions should be the dominating voice on spiritual development in youth work. This connects to faith groups searching for young to make personal commitments to follow a life of faith:

I think the problem for me [about faith and spiritual development] is that so often and especially in the Protestant church faith tradition is that their workers are not aware of why they're doing the work and if they are they haven't battled that through in terms of whether that motivation is legitimate or not. You know, 'we're out to convert them'.

This fear could be used as a justification to eliminate the use of the concept of spiritual development because it is too closely associated with making converts. In some cases it was assumed that spiritual development would be particular to a faith tradition rather than being universal. But if there was further discussion around how spiritual development could have a role across all informal and non-formal youth work practice shared meanings would arise. This was very apparent in one interview:

...if you [say] spirituality do you mean either a) evangelical spirituality which we are very frightened of or b) do you mean catholic church, theocratic spirituality which we are also very frightened of...and get to the end and then get people to engage with spirituality as a concept then I think in the main people will say, yeah that's okay because you will as I say find people, and young people who are looking for a language to express this need or this shortfall or this kind of belief that there is something there but they don't quite know how to address it or how to relate to it.

Apprehension about the role of spiritual development in youth work, because of an uncertainty about what faith groups do, should not close down dialogue about the issue, particularly when it is conceived broadly. By conceiving spiritual development inclusively and as widely as the model in this document defines it, clearly linking it with current youth work values and methods, perhaps this could be the basis from which to develop new thinking on spiritual development.

The second issue that was raised in terms of ensuring that spiritual development is inclusive is that it will be too broad. Viewing the dimensions of spiritual development as, understanding our common humanity, our connection to the earth, critiquing culture and considering a world beyond the physical means looking broadly at spiritual development and in some cases that is not apparent, particularly with faith groups:

Spirituality is our faith, our Christian faith. We believe in God we believe in the saving power of Jesus Christ and that's really in a nutshell what spirituality means to us.

This was apparent in another interview:

...you are asking a man who specialises in the religion and so his thinking is always connected with God. So in relation to God, we believe that God grants man his life, his eyesight, how to hear, how to talk, everything, even the spiritual life is also a grant from God. We have been taught from the Koran, and there is a verse in the Koran that relates to this subject, those who believe and do good deeds, God will grant them success in this life and the here and ever after and he will make them happy in this life.

The relationship with God was seen as a central part of spiritual development for many faith groups and moving beyond that was not widely discussed. Of course not all those who work with young people in faith contexts will use the styles and methods of informal and non-formal education. Some will prefer to be clearly focused on telling young people about their faith commitment. As members of a society that promotes equality and the freedom of religion this should be accepted, but the question is does this style step out of the inclusive traditions of informal and non-formal youth work?

Faith groups usually confidently express truth claims and wish to shared these with others:

...my colleagues working here tonight on whatever kind of projects, straight forward youth work, they are not going out praising Jesus or saying do you want to be saved or anything or do you want too come to church on Sunday or whatever, they are just out through presence. Now I come at it from the other end now I am not saying I am fundamentally different but I am strategically different in that if anybody does anything with me they know they are coming to something Catholic...

The question is if these youth workers are entering into dialogue or are they indoctrinating? Following an inclusive model for spiritual development means a faith groups will need to continually reflect on broad definitions of spirituality and have an openness to look beyond their own position:

...I think sometimes in Protestant circles you know, people can get caught up with you know, are you saved, are you not saved? And it's a very narrow definition of spirituality...growing up in a Protestant community it was are you saved you know, are you going to heaven or are you going to hell, it was fairly black and white. Whereas now spirituality I would see it broader probably and I'd see spirituality more in terms of the journey of life and I think, you know spirituality can be seen more broadly...

But as one interviewee observed not all youth workers coming from a faith perspective share these convictions about communicating faith:

[I have seen] faith based organisations getting involved in spiritual development which is basically trying to make clones of its leader whoever has been presenting and that's been at the heart of so much of our analysis of what goes on in faith based organisations sometimes and it's not good practice so we have tried to name that and suggest some ways of moving forward

Another interviewee added further to this:

...we're a Christian [organisation] and do things from a Christian point of view. We believe in personal development but part of that personal development is also spiritual development but that's the personal that is where our focus is and I know a lot of people who do youth work and it's purely evangelism based and is purely trying to explore the spiritual side, whereas we would go the other way maybe the old Salvation Army way...

If the faith based sector could find ways to re-visit this theme workers could be encouraged to reflect on practice and understand the spectrum of faith based youth work that can happen in the sector. It is hard to argue that workers who incorporate faith perspectives in an inclusive way, encouraging young people to think for themselves about the claims of faith are not involved in the spiritual development of young people. From the interviews it seems that a high level of faith groups are comfortable in attempting to bring their faith perspectives within traditional styles and inclusive methods used within non-formal and informal youth work.

...we've really come to appreciate that people are on a journey and that we don't have a responsibility to sort out that journey...it's God's business and what we're doing is, what we really hope to do is to respond to the need that is presenting in our communities, young people, families. To respond to that well, professionally, sensitively and I think we're happy if we, if those of us who are Christians in the organisation believe that we are sharing the love of Christ by doing that, by meeting that need professionally, practically, sensitively without necessarily naming God in it but also being ready to engage in conversations [about faith]...

The final issue that needs addressed in relation to understanding spiritual development as inclusive is the suspicion that spiritual development means no more than religion. In the context of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland religion is a dynamic that effects perceptions of spiritual development. Throughout the interviews the words spirituality, faith and religion were used interchangeably indicating that there are overlaps between these. One interviewee pointed to this:

I do think we all have a spiritual dimension that isn't necessarily tied to or linked into a religious belief or particular religious ethos. Maybe it's a language thing. Maybe that's one of the big debates. If you have a situation it's getting beyond that block because there is that perception out there. Not just from young people but I would say from a lot of the workers in the system as well is that when you mention spirituality, straight away they think religion. I have to be honest and say that the perception of the Catholic Church in Ireland wouldn't be particularly good with young people. The church over the last 10-15 years has taken a hammering and there is quite a negative mindset. When you do begin to mention it, even youth

workers who probably should know better and if they think about it, you mention spirituality and you think oh God spirituality is religion, the kids I work with there is no way I could sit down and do that kind of work with them. I think there is a language and perception issue to get beyond.

The association of spiritual development with religious practice is a perception that needs to be challenged. Many interviewees talked about how spiritual development was outside of the remit of established religion:

My own personal convictions are that somebody can be very spiritual without them being very religious in terms of attending the sacraments or attending mass or whatever. People can be very spiritual, people can be very reflective, people can be very much in touch with their faith without them being religious...

Another interviewee commented that:

...bizarrely spirituality has become separated from established religion which I am sure that if there was clerical here they would be up in arms and arguing the bit out with me, but I am only speaking from my own perspective...

By seeing spiritual development as broader than religion it is possible to see how it could fit within the general non-formal and informal youth work. If associations are made with established religion then it is difficult to see how spiritual development can be used widely in the sector.

Religion was viewed as a divisive subject by interviewees and therefore, if it is associated with spiritual development, it may be ignored:

I think there is a little bit of kind of suspicion about spirituality you know, and I think part of that comes from the country that we live in where there is sometimes a link with church and as soon as you make a link with church there is a lot of negativity around that just because a lot of people in this country have negative experiences of religion...I'm only guessing here I can't back this up but there is part of me thinks as soon as you use the word spiritual it kind of puts barriers up with maybe, maybe some people and they don't want to go there you know, and because it brings in stuff about religion and about church in Northern Ireland and that's a dangerous thing to talk about.

Another interviewee explored the danger that spiritual development could be ignored in the north and south of Ireland, particularly in contested areas, because it is a threat to a belief system that perpetuates partisan feelings:

[the] immediate problem within a contested society in which we live where people make very lucid connections between spirituality and religion...you can be in danger of challenging your own belief systems and that can be damaging for people and they decide 'I'm not getting into that at the moment thank you very much, I don't want to compromise that situation'...

These connections need to be discussed and workers must be challenged to see that they are separate entities and any overlap should not damage the perception that spiritual development is much broader than just faith or religion.

Spiritual development is inclusive of a range of ideas about spirituality. However several issues need to be looked at. First the perception of the faith based work and the types of work faith based workers are engaged in, need to be understood by those not familiar with the sector. Secondly spiritual development needs to be understood broadly but that does not mean faith positions will be diluted but are part of a wealth of understanding about the world beyond the physical that young people should be encouraged to question. The final issue relates to challenging the acceptance that spiritual development is synonymous with religion. The four dimensions of spiritual development, outlined in the model of spiritual development in this report provide a helpful way to explore an inclusive model of spiritual development.

Key findings for this theme:

1. Spiritual development in non-formal and informal youth work should be inclusive of non-faith and faith perspectives.
2. A general acceptance needs to be held that faith positions have distinctive ways of looking at spiritual development but none are to be imposed.
3. Spiritual development should be seen as different from faith development.
4. Dialogue should continue about the tensions between mixing spiritual developing and faith development.
5. The perception that spiritual development is synonymous with established religion should be challenged.
6. The perception that all faith groups only seek to get young people to convert to a faith is not strictly true across all faith based groups. Many have less rudimentary ideas about faith journeys.
7. A broad understanding of spiritual development will allow for a range of faiths and traditions to be explored with young people.

Current youth work values and programme areas cultivate spiritual development

Core youth work values in Northern Ireland focus on testing values and beliefs, preparing for participation and accepting others. In the Republic of Ireland these core values are similar with stress being placed on voluntary participation. Responding to the needs of young people in the context of non-formal and informal youth work is shaped by these values.

Interestingly many of the interviewees felt that values, like volunteerism, already promote spiritual development. One interviewee noted their experience:

...my staff works extremely hard to create ownership at some cost because our funder would be the Health Board and they don't work to that model, you know [people] are clients for a time and they offer something and then they send them away. They offer what they can offer and what they are resourced to offer, whereas we create structures in [agency named] for people, no matter how disadvantaged they are you know. Some of our mum's would be illiterate and left school at eleven or twelve to, just through good youth work principles and practice, these women move very quickly to a place where they can sit on a committee and they can take ownership of families support groups and they plan, they plan these outings which we do, they sit in with the clubs in the afternoon, they are helpers with the clubs and they are in a position of power, actual power to shape the service which they've bought into. Now that's, that is a deeply spiritual experience in a funny way and I think in really doing that it is deeply spiritual as well because it's allowing the person's humanity to thrive...

As well as values there are a range of possible programme areas that can be used in youth work settings. Many of the interviewees referred to these, showing that they are part of creating the context for spiritual development. Here are the range of programme areas that were talked about during the interviews.

Widening horizons and exchanges

Exchanges and overseas residentials have been part of youth work practice for many decades. Taking young people from their current contexts and introducing them to new cultures and experiences is a valuable way to develop new ways of viewing life. One interviewee talked about how one experience enabled a group of young people to spiritually develop:

A while back [a youth worker] asked me if I had ever had a spiritual moment when working with young people. He described how when he was in Germany, Berlin, he took a group of young people to a Mosque and they met with the Imam and he was telling them everything, and he said something just clicked with these kids, they started questioning, they were not being aggressive but they were really trying to understand about his beliefs, they were not putting them down but really trying to understand his beliefs, and not saying oh you do this and we do that, but they really tried to understand and grasp about him and what his inner core was, what his meaning was, his sense of purpose. And for him it was them trying to work out where do I fit...

Widening horizons was also seen as important for the development of a youth worker:

...I certainly have gone through periods where I have been very interested in lots of different aspects about spirituality and I read a lot about Buddhism and I went off to Thailand and different places to do some development work out there and had a real sense of being close at that stage to a spiritual kind of dimension and, but don't feel that now - I don't know where that went, I am hoping that it is still there to be discovered I mean in a sense it probably always is it's just either covered up by life, layers of everything else...

Community involvement

Encouraging young people to get involved in community activities is a positive way of supporting them to develop civic sensibilities. One interviewee from a faith based group talked about their model of getting young people to meet in groups and think about community problems. She told this story:

...one guy in the group was walking home from the chipper and he was eating greasy food and there was nowhere to throw [his paper so he] put it in his pocket and took it home. He was talking to his group the following night and was saying "This is probably going to sound really stupid but..." and told his story. The group said ok well let's get on to the council, and about three or four weeks later there was a knock on his door, "Where do you want your bins?" Ten bins in the local parish - that all came from that young lad saying "there's nowhere to throw my paper".

Another interviewee saw community involvement as part of his method of developing spirituality:

I suppose that the other thing that we would try to do, to make young people more aware, is maybe make people more aware of using development education - maybe make them more aware of the community or the wider community maybe in Ireland or beyond Ireland. That's how we have tried to explore spirituality in the club.

Drugs and alcohol awareness

Challenging values and behaviour regarding alcohol or drug use and developing thinking about consequences are topics in many non-formal and informal youth work relationships. One interviewee from a non-faith based group talked about training he received on these issues:

I remember a guy who did drug education a few years back in East Belfast, Short Strand area. He talked about young people's lives growing up and what was missing...that spirituality was missing from their lives. A lot of young people don't have that inner self, inner core, so they use other things like materialism, things that are easy to get like drugs, alcohol, as a way to try and feed their inner core because they don't know what that is. I remember sitting listening and thinking I have never really thought about it that way.

Drugs and alcohol education can tend to focus on diversion, thinking skills and personal health. These are a vital part of physical and mental development but by probing with more depth about these issue the youth worker may create the context for spiritual development to occur.

Social justice

One organisation that was interviewed implements a process with young people called see-judge-act. Groups are encouraged to share, or see, a problem and make a judgement on it. To inform thinking personal experience is called upon. Traditionally the group would find a passage from the Bible to help their thinking but today other texts can be used to guide the process the judgement. The final part of this process is acting out a solution in solidarity with others. A member of one of these groups explained how he experienced this process.

We had a passage [from the Bible] where this fella was bullying and we were reading it out and then a member said this is actually what's happening to me at this moment in time, I feel exactly like your man. I feel exactly the same, they won't give me a break, they won't leave me alone, what can I do. So we would sit there and discuss what way to handle it. At one time we would have gone around punching the head of them but that's an eye for an eye, that doesn't solve anything that just escalates the violence especially in my estate. What we did was we would go and talk to him and then we'd say would you not go and tell your mother or the teacher in the school. Try and say to someone. He went and talked to his mother and she talked to his teacher and they were separated and it was all worked out. Now I don't know what way it worked in the Bible story, I think it didn't work out, he actually killed him.

Whether it is bullying, racism or sectarianism there is a dynamic that develops spirituality when problems are addressed in solidarity with others. This can be from lobbying on global justice issue or micro issues like bullying.

Dealing with diversity

Several groups talked about meeting up with groups they would not traditionally meet. Dialogue on the theme of diversity and mutual understanding can have an influential impact on shaping spiritual development. One interviewee spoke about spiritual development in Northern Ireland occurring in the area of diversity:

A lot of energies [in spiritual development] has been put into at looking at how we as the two faiths co-exist on the island so I suppose we have looked for maybe areas or issues of commonality and issues of difference as well... we have expanded that concept into our EDI project...

Diversity is a common theme in statutory youth services and in Northern Ireland and a funding stream is specifically geared towards developing good community relations. This engagement was also something that some faith groups were involved in:

We specifically try to do to cross community work, we work with other churches and other traditions and we do a number of joint programmes we don't always necessarily try to highlight the differences rather than sometimes trying to explore what is similar...we have a group here and they go and meet with a group from a Catholic parish and we've been meeting over about a year and we have been talking about things and just exploring different things and just trying to create openness for conversation and experiencing each others traditions...

However such dialogue can be difficult for some faith groups. One interviewee told of her experience in broadening out from her Christian community in an attempt to develop young people's understanding about diversity:

Christian's won't embrace all of spirituality and that's okay because they say 'I'm not doing yoga because it's pagan and therefore I am not getting involved in that' and there is a distinct lack of wanting to learn about the other spirituality's or the other religions as well which is a pity and I think within the Christian community, from my own experience, even having my own past rector saying 'do not bring that Jewish person in to speak to those young people because they might turn to be Jewish'. What! We're not taking them down a Jewish road we want to increase the learning and let them learn about that.

Specific spiritual development programmes

Resources like those designed by the Frontier Youth Trust or the spirituality badge developed by the Irish Guides are some examples of programmes specifically designed for developing spirituality. The Boys Brigade and Girls Brigade also have material geared at developing spirituality, which refer to the Bible. Some interviewees also talked about using religious festivals as a time to look at spirituality, for example Ramadan or Easter.

Key findings for this theme:

1. The current key values of youth work which generally revolve around participation, developing values and equality should be seen as nurturing spiritual development.
2. By considering and reflecting upon current youth work programme areas it is possible to see opportunities to be involved in spiritual development.

The concept of spiritual development should be included within the training and supervision of youth workers

As part of the interview process youth workers were asked about the role of youth work training in developing their capacity to be involved in the spiritual development of young people. The interviews revealed that in some cases professional training did not help them to consider how spiritual development connects with youth work practice.

So like in terms of youth work training and stuff like that there, like I didn't do any part time training or anything like that there in terms of Northern Ireland. I sort of went straight from being a volunteer into university training so [spiritual development] was never explored in relation to my youth work. So I was always looking around trying to reconcile or balance Christian values with youth work values. So it became a discussion around values as opposed to a discussion around what spirituality was, so in that sense in my youth work practice I never really got to the point of trying to work out what I meant by spirituality because it wasn't something that was discussed, it wasn't something that we were encouraged to discuss or it wasn't something that we were encouraged to look at.

Another interviewee from the Republic of Ireland also shared this:

...I do think that for too long the training of a youth worker's spiritual development has been in the domain of the faith based organisations or whoever and I think there is a need for, and certainly in the south, I can't speak about the North, but in the South there is evidence that the pendulum is swinging back to the recognition of that, but I am still not seeing a huge amount of change in some curricula but I know we are certainly in dialogue and have been in dialogue with various providers in raising this...When people come through [training] into a faith based organisation they come ill equipped, they may come very equipped in certain areas but they have never really explored spirituality and therefore feel quite uncomfortable...

There is a shared feeling that in a training context spiritual development is not widely discussed. Several interviewees shared some thoughts about what is missing in the training of youth workers. Here is one example:

...I think that maybe what needs to be done is for people to start to critically reflecting on where they posit spirituality within their curriculum, that is the youth workers and the tutors, trainers of the youth workers and then significant others who are involved with them, colleagues who they are involved with in the workplace wherever that might be whether Christian based or non faith and it's those sorts of questions that people need to start asking - where do we posit spirituality...

Doing spiritual development was seen as a challenge for a lot of workers and one interviewee thought that it would be enough for a youth worker to have an awareness of the spiritual needs of young people.

...if you're being asked to do spiritual development I think that's a big step for an awful lot of people. But if you're being asked to be aware of the spiritual needs of a young person that's a very different thing you can be very aware of the spiritual needs of a young person in very subtle ways and very non obtrusive ways. As a secular worker you know, you can accommodate times of reflection and prayer, you can accommodate them going to worship, you can accommodate you know, so that's a worker being involved in a young person's spiritual development by creating space to allow for that...

In the training context it may well be enough to cultivate an awareness of the spiritual needs of young people. The interviewees indicate that this awareness could positively increase during the process of training and supervising youth workers.

One interviewee commented that when developing training for youth workers he has a suspicion of individuals from a faith groups pushing a specific agenda:

If I am being absolutely honest I would say I wouldn't want to crush anyone's faith, lets be clear about that, equally I wouldn't want [the training I deliver] to be a platform for someone to use to pursue their own, there is a fine line in these things, in the same way I wouldn't want someone from a political party coming onto this course and pushing their political agenda to the rest of the students or staff, I wouldn't want somebody coming and pushing their religious or spiritual beliefs in that way...We have had former priests come on the course...you will occasionally get the priest who is very community orientated, who has been very involved in voluntary work and in many respects is an ideal candidate for us if they leave the baggage at the door in terms of saving souls...

There is a feeling from faith based workers that they would like the opportunity to reflect on their faith and how it connects to the style of youth work practice they wished to adopt. In Ireland this is particularly relevant in the present youth work context. In September 2008 the first cohort of undergraduates started the BA Honours degree in Youth & Community Work and Applied Theology at Belfast Bible College. This has opened up new discussions:

...[we've] got the girl in our church who is basically a detached youth worker...doing a part time degree through the University of Ulster...if she was here today and you asked her which course did you do she would say that one [University of Ulster] because I'm a detached youth worker. Now if you go the other end of the spectrum and you say ok I could bring this church [a] youth pastor, youth minister who basically administers work with young people and maybe uses youth work techniques. Now I say where can they get training, they can't get that training to meet their needs in Jordanstown or Magee because that's not what they offer so then you say to people who offers something that meets those needs, you might say well maybe Belfast Bible College...there is a gap in the market there. So if CYMI [Centre for Youth Ministry in Ireland] were saying let's set a course up to meet the needs of people who work at the youth ministry end of the spectrum then there is no clash there that is not what Magee or the University of Ulster can offer.

This is the fourth of the five key strands regarding how the interviews describe spiritual development in non-formal and informal youth work and how the sector can improve practice in this area. These thoughts show that the context of training, particularly for qualified youth workers, has not allowed people to get to grips with what spiritual development is and the implications it has on practice.

Key findings for this theme:

1. In Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland training has largely been silent on the issue of spiritual development.
2. Youth workers need to critically reflect upon their non-faith or faith positions in training and supervision.
3. There is some suspicion of individuals from a faith based perspective engaging in youth work training.
4. Individuals thinking about youth work training need to make their own minds about the type of youth work they wish to be involved in ie general youth work practice or faith development and choose training accordingly.

Ideas about spiritual development are shaped by personal narratives

The interviewees highlighted that ideas about spiritual development are shaped by the personal motivations of the worker, youth work agencies and statutory youth work policy. What follows is an outline of how interviewees viewed the impact of these three areas.

Personal perspectives

Youth workers need to be open to think through their opinions on spiritual development and how faith and non-faith positions shape them. The model outlined in this document is broad, but in the context of Ireland it seems that ideas about religion will have an influencing factor on how we understand spiritual development and therefore linking it predominantly with faith development:

...[spiritual development] is obviously defined by your experiences, by what you read, how you grow up, how people have influenced you, whether you went to church or not, by how your family defined that as you were growing up. I know as I was growing up spirituality obviously began with a recognition of God first and foremost, that there was somebody other than us here on this planet, of prayer, of togetherness, of going to church, chapel, mass, of the sacraments and all that that involves. And very often the teaching in school is important...that's maybe faith more than spirituality in that these are the doctrines of the faith, obviously the two are mixed up in there.

One interviewee talked about the impact that personal experience had on him, even though he was not comfortable calling his organisation faith based:

I was baptised in a Presbyterian Church as an adult actually which probably was the exception - most Presbyterians are baptised as infants, but I was baptized as an adult and I remember that you know, it was you know, eighteen, twenty years ago now but I still remember it as a significant moment...

These experiences will obviously have a role in shaping practice regarding spiritual development. For workers coming from a faith perspective there can be some genuine struggle between the inclusive and universal values within the non-formal and informal youth work and personal faith commitment. This requires people to enter into uncomfortable doubt and reflection. This personal journey is on going and deeply felt and will play a role in shaping thoughts about spiritual development.

Impact of agency

In order to explore spiritual development the agency must be prepared to ask questions of themselves about how they develop a broad spirituality and if relevant look at the role a range of faiths or non-faiths can play in that process. One interviewee talked about the struggles they had, particularly with volunteers, when their agency moved towards a broad understanding of spirituality:

A huge number of the membership, particularly we'll say the older adult members, had a huge fear initially about us trying to take God away from them and that we were taking the religious [part] away from them [because of looking at spiritual development]. And I suppose because of perhaps the issues between the north and the south and the fact that religion is such a big issue in many people's lives, particularly in older generations, they really were afraid of taking it out of the religious realm. Younger members had no problem with [spiritual development] and as we've worked through that people have actually realised that it is a lot of what we do already. Because of Celtic spirituality with the old traditions that [they] would have been aware of celebrating all the different festivals, so it kind of brought the sacred out in everyday life as opposed to confining it...

Faith based agencies need to understand that a broad definition of spiritual development in a youth work context will include faith discussions that incorporate other faith perspectives. There also needs to be opportunities to critique faith perspective in conversations so that young people are encouraged to develop their own ideas. It is this struggle that the agency needs to grapple with. On the other hand this openness to spiritual development will be a challenge for non-faith based agencies as they will need to be open to the role of developing dialogue around spirituality and at times that may include dialogue about the role and purpose of faith.

By developing a more open view of spiritual development it may be possible to find a way of reintroducing the role of spiritual development in general practice. In some of the interviews people talked about spiritual development not being a pressing concern and this being due to historical associations rather than an absolute rejection of the concept:

Part of the reason, and again it would be my own opinion, is that there is a sense of maybe needing to break with the traditions of the organisation, because it would have kind of grown out of that original diocesan base of the clubs that there was a sense of needing to be seen as more secular for want of a better phrase, that we weren't coming from a particular religious ethos which might have been the perception. Again, there is that fear I'd imagine that if you raise that as an issue are you going to be met with all those kind of perceptions.

In contrast to this one interviewee talked about his desire to work for a faith based agency that openly discussed the tensions of developing faith or developing a broad spirituality, rather than dismissing it. He felt that his present post allowed for this:

I sometimes felt wouldn't it be great to work for an organisation where it was all together, where my Christian faith could impact, you know it was a resource that I could have, however difficult it might be to, integrate at least it could be part of the team you know that you worked with ...[now it is] amazing to be working in an organisation where they're all struggling at least openly about what does it mean to be a Christian? What is youth work? What is Christian social action? All these big questions we're still asking fifteen years later.

The final issue for an agency to consider work in the area of spiritual development was that they must have a physical space to promote reflection. Many agencies provided prayer rooms or chill out areas to accommodate this. It is also important to create space in time for a team, or a staff member, to reflect, discuss or even pray about the direction of agency. Prayer was seen as a way of creating an environment that was conducive to spiritual development:

...our staff pray together you know, there is a closer sense of family in working within an organisation like this where you get to know your colleagues a lot, a lot more closely and you share the ups and downs of life and there is a real sense of calling I suppose almost and I would say there is a spiritual aspect to that...The staff being together in terms of praying for the work in terms of supporting each other, I think helps the overall environment. I think young people actually notice that sort of stuff and how the staff get on with each other you know...

One interviewee agreed with the role of prayer in spiritual development but was honest in acknowledging the difficulties it posed:

...we've tried in various ways over the years to have some kind of a context for prayer be it our standing committee or our board, the early years particularly we used to pray quite often. We tried breakfast prayer meetings and lunchtime prayer meetings and to be honest it filtered out, people lost interest, lost commitment or life got steadily busier for everybody. We've always thought to have prayer as part of our working life, now our staff team for the last couple of years, we would pray, we actually have timetabled it every three months and spend the morning with breakfast and with prayer. It's been fantastic and it's great, it's always very relational, very encouraging because we have breakfast and we move into a prayer time. We tend to pray, we tend to pray for families we work with quite a bit because that's what's on people's hearts you know...But one of the things that we would be aware of is we have a very stylized way of praying and its very much sitting round and people praying extemporaneous prayer which excludes you know, we're terribly aware it excludes its vast percentage of the population or could do but it seems to work with the particular team that we have...

Another interviewee talked about prayer being part of the history of her agency but that it had now developed into something different over the years. This could be useful for agencies that are not coming from a faith perspective:

Now since I came back they don't have prayer time at all or time for that type of space together or to be together you know, it has totally gone to the other side, [now] there is no time in work time where we would have the space, and maybe that is okay sometimes...But now I see it as a lot freer and open, we have some great discussions here, so we don't necessarily have the prayer time here but we have great discussions, and we talk about all faiths, we talk about Catholicism, Protestantism, about the churches. And that is based for me on relationships of trust, on openness, integrity, so we have those conversations. Some people might be coming in for the first time and think I don't want to get involved in that because it seems very heated in there but it is not.

Statutory policy

Over the last number of years spiritual development has appeared on a number of national action plans and curricula in the north and south of Ireland. It was felt that spiritual development in these context could be translated broadly:

We have within our National Youth Work Development Plan a clear statement about, and I think a very progressive definition of spirituality and also the role of youth organisations, to challenge a consumerist, materialistic attitude to life

However there was a concern that these documents left spiritual development rather vague:

I know that spiritual development is in the youth work strategy but it doesn't define what they mean by that, it doesn't say who should or shouldn't be doing it and so I think that we're living and working in a vacuum around what that is and what it can be.

For a long time spiritual development has remained undefined at a policy level. This has probably been suitable for a long time. But further discussion is now required at policy levels on the theme of spiritual development and its connection with young people in non-formal and informal settings. Interestingly one interviewee commented on the role of Education Library Boards being involved in spiritual development:

The other angle I'm coming at in terms of spirituality from the point of view from the education sector, as a whole is the education board was set up the Education and Library Board doesn't include reference to spiritual development...

If statutory authorities can claim to have no jurisdiction on spiritual development then who will develop this theme in the sector? Another interviewee talked about the underlying message that is sent out through the sector through the targets that are attached to resources:

A lot of the funding that now goes [to] youth work is very kind of targeted so you're working with young offenders, on drugs projects, alcohol or sex education so you're taken up with that kind of stuff. The desire might be there to look at something like this [spiritual development] but the time hasn't been given to it.

Perhaps spiritual development, at a statutory or policy level, is not a pressing concern. However that would be disappointing, as the sector is open to starting a new dialogue about this. It only requires the structure to harness opinions and create new policy.

Key findings for this theme:

1. Youth workers require opportunities to consider how non-faith or faith perspectives shape personal views about spiritual development.
2. Training providers need to think through how faith and spirituality are connected for many in the north and south of Ireland and assist future youth workers to understand the overlaps.
3. Some youth workers struggle with the connection of universal youth work values and methods and their particularity of their faith commitment.
4. Agencies need to understand and recognize the helpful or unhelpful role that religion has played in the shaping of the youth work sector.
5. Agencies need to promote inclusive and honest discussions on the connections between youth work, faith development and spiritual development.
6. Agencies need to create spaces, physical or otherwise, of prayer, reflection or discussion on the purpose of the agency. This will benefit staff and young people.
7. There needs to be a clearer sense of what spiritual development means in the non-formal and informal youth work sector.
8. There need to be funding streams that promote spiritual development.

Concluding remarks

This report has sought to give an insight into how youth workers, in the north and south of Ireland, understand the term spiritual development. The first areas that emerged were the four dimensions in which spiritual development can occur. The second areas that emerged were the five themes that describe spiritual development in non-formal and informal youth work. These can be used to inform ideas about how the sector can improve in this area.

With this information it is possible to place these dimensions and themes into the following model for spiritual development:



The four dimensions, outlined at the start of this report, were used to clarify a range of specific contexts in which spiritual development can occur. This indicates that spiritual development is not all about religion or faith, even though in some respects they share common conceptual ground, but that it includes many other areas. It also helps youth workers to have a clear idea of the opportunities that exists in which they can be involved in supporting young people to spiritually develop.

This model is now further developed with the addition of the five themes that emerged during the interview process. Briefly stated these themes are:

- Spiritual development is linked to self-formation and personal and social development - this means that spiritual development is linked to the process of reflecting on deep personal and societal questions such as meaning, identity and purpose.

- In the context of youth work spiritual development is inclusive - this means that spiritual development must be open to inclusive dialogue, particularly in the dimension relating to the world beyond the physical. Groups without a faith perspective must appreciate that open conversations about the world beyond the physical has something to offer spiritual development. Similarly faith groups must develop thinking that appreciates all the dimensions of spiritual development and be able to distinguish when the focus is on faith development and when spiritual development.
- Current youth work values and programme areas cultivate spiritual development - this means that by looking again at some of the values and programme areas of non-formal and informal youth work it is possible to see how youth workers can raise their awareness of how they can promote spiritual development.
- The concept of spiritual development should be included within the training and supervision of youth workers - this means that those involved in non-formal and informal youth work need the opportunity to reflect on their own personal curricula regarding spiritual development. There is an underestimation of how much non-formal and informal youth workers could and do contribute to spiritual development.
- Ideas about spiritual development are shaped by personal narratives - this means that workers and agencies need to understand their own ideas about spiritual development. Those who enter non-formal and informal youth work from a faith perspective at times struggle to understand how their faith and profession connect. This should be addressed in training and supervision. Agencies need to seek to development internal thinking about spiritual development. Agencies that have grown away from religious roots tend to dismiss spiritual development viewing it as religious. This position should be reviewed by such agencies. Statutory policy has had little effect on personal narratives about spiritual development and this is a situation that should be explored in the coming years.

After hearing such a wealth of understanding and insight it is important to make some attempt at defining spiritual development within the non-formal and informal youth work sector. What has been offered to this point is largely descriptive but by contributing a definition it can be used, and if required altered, by the sector to seriously engage with this element that is important for young people. Therefore, using the language of this report, I would contribute this definition:

Spiritual development is an inclusive process that supports young people to ask deep human questions about meaning, purpose and identity. This process can occur when young people construct a concern for the welfare of humanity and the earth, when young people reflect on the values of society and culture and when young people think about issues beyond the physical world.

This definition seeks to incorporate the dimensions and themes that presented themselves most often during the interview process. The focus of this definition is to keep values and meaning at the heart of the non-formal and informal youth work approach to spiritual development.

From this process the following assumptions can be made about spiritual development:

- There are four dimensions in which to promote spiritual development
- Spiritual development supports young people to consider deep questions about identity and purpose
- Faith development is not spiritual development but the development of a particular spirituality
- Spiritual development may, but not necessarily explore faiths
- Without collaboration amongst non-formal and informal youth workers from all sectors a dualistic approach to spiritual development will increase
- Spiritual development should challenge faith based youth workers to be open to create opportunities for young people to hear alternative perspectives
- Spiritual development should challenge non-faith based youth workers to look at all the four dimensions outlined in the model
- Many of the present youth work values and programme areas make a positive contribution to spiritual development
- In training and supervision youth workers need the opportunity to consider their own ideas regarding spiritual development

- Youth workers from a faith perspective, without some level of training, may find spiritual development a challenging concept
- The importance of spiritual development is shaped by personal experience and agency values
- Amongst faith based agencies there are a range of different approaches to youth work - some are involved in faith development while others are engaged in both spiritual and faith development
- Agencies who have faith based roots should be open to this when exploring spiritual development
- To date statutory policy in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, has had a minor role in defining thinking about spiritual development



About the writer

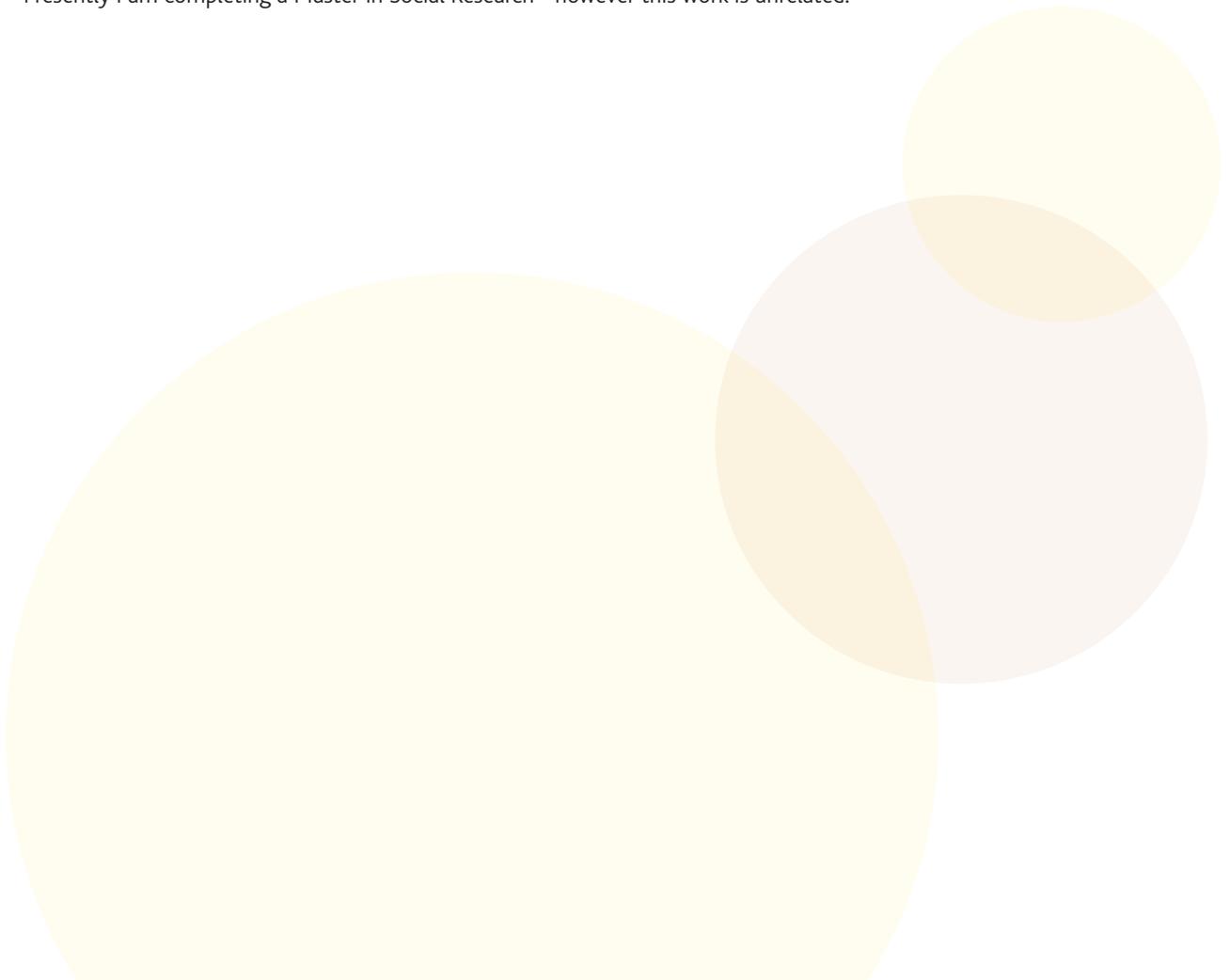
I attended local youth clubs and uniformed youth organisations up until the age of sixteen. Around this age I got involved with a youth group at local church group and eventually got involved in organise activities in the group.

During these years I decided I enjoyed this type of work and signed up to volunteer with the Church of Ireland Youth Department for eighteen months. After this I complete an NVQ Level II programme with Springboard and spent 6 months in a faith-based drop in centre in Ballysillan followed by 2 months working with young people who were sleeping rough in Toronto, Canada. On my return home I decided that I wanted to complete further youth work qualifications.

I was accepted as a Community Youth Work student at the University of Ulster at Jordanstown and in 2001 completed my Dip HE in Community Youth Work. I then took the decision to complete my studies with the YMCA George Williams College and in 2003 completed a BA in Informal and Community Education. During my time studying with the YMCA I was fortunate to get a youth work post with a victims group called WAVE and was based in Belfast and across County Antrim. In 2003 I took a post with the North East Education Library Board in Newtownabbey and was there until 2006 when I took the post of NI Project Officer for the Hard Gospel, a Church of Ireland reconciliation programme.

Since 1999 I have undertaken several other posts with youth clubs and projects across the country engaging in work like advocacy, developing youth forums, working with rural young people, schools work, residential work, training, video production, working with groups to develop publications, evaluations and football coaching. I have also been the chair of a youth work charity in my local community since 2003.

Presently I am completing a Master in Social Research - however this work is unrelated.



Appendices

Interview group

Below I have names the individuals I interviewed. If the individual was not interviewed it is noted.

Statutory, voluntary and academic - North

University of Ulster - Dr. Izy Hawthorn
 Centre for Youth Ministry in Ireland - David Stanfield
 Youth Council NI - David Guilfoyle
 Curriculum Development Unit - Alistair McKinley
 Youth Net - no, due to time constraints on interviewer
 Senior youth worker - Alan Wilson, BELB worker
 Voluntary Groups - Youth Action (Martin McMullan) & Belfast YMCA (Geraldine Stinton)

Statutory, voluntary and academic - South

University of Cork - Dr. Paul Burgess
 University of Maynooth - no
 National Youth Council of Ireland - Maura Weir
 Youth Work Ireland - Fran Bissett
 Youth services - no, due to time constraints
 Voluntary groups - West Dublin YMCA (Brian Murtagh), YMCA Ireland (Ivan McMahon), Irish Guides (Jenny Gannon) and No Name Club (Martin Ryan) - 4 were completed due to lack of statutory services in the Republic of Ireland)

Groups with a faith perspective - North

Islamic - Belfast Islamic Centre (Imam and Mohammed Al-Qaryooti)
 Catholic - Youth Initiatives (Andy Hewitt), CAST (Niall McNally) and St Joseph HS (Louise Pearce)
 Baptist Youth - Dave Ramsey
 Church of Ireland - Lisburn Cathedral (Keith Neill)
 Presbyterian - Knock (Paul Brown)
 Elim - Whitewell Metropolitan (Mark Penney)
 Interdenominational - Wash Basin (Karen Kernohan)
 Youth for Christ - Ballysillan Drop in Centre (Miriam McAlister)
 Methodist - First Step Café (Davy Ferris)
 Quakers - no, due to time constraints
 Uniformed - Girls Brigade (Chloe Hemphill)

Groups with a faith perspective – South

Islamic no, due to time constraints
 Catholic Youth 2000 (Carol Brown), Catholic Youth Care (Gerard Gallagher) and Young Christian Workers (Vicky Rattigan & Larry Joyce)
 Church of Ireland Limerick Diocesan Youth Officer (Vicki Lynch) and 3 Rock (Greg Fromholz)
 Presbyterian Regional Youth and Support Worker - Donegal Presbytery (Ruth Mitchell)
 Elim Youth Alive (Derek Switzer)
 Interdenominational Trinity Church Network (Amanda Cannon)
 Youth for Christ Ireland Coordinator (Suzie Evans)
 Methodist Urban Junction (Simon Kilpatrick)
 Quakers - no, see list on north
 Uniformed - GB Ireland (Joan Nicholl) and BB (Philip Orr)
 Baptist - included in North list

Interview Structure

This is the semi-structured interview format that I used in the interviews.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE SPIRITUALITY?

Subsidiary questions/themes:

- Personal understanding of spirituality? How do you define it?
- Is spiritual concern a secular or sacred? Is it the territory of the faith groups or wider?
- Who should do spiritual development - education or the faith groups?
- Do you differentiate between public expressions of faith (fair trade or environment) or private faith (religious activity or personal principles) for example a spirituality expressed in social justice or contemplation?
- What motivates your vocation - professionalism or sense of calling?
- Is spiritual development a term you use? Is it a motivating idea or non-factor for you?
- Do you try to maintain a spiritual life? How learnt - how maintained?

WHAT DO YOU THINK SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT WILL ACHIEVE?

Subsidiary questions:

- Can you identify differences in approaching spiritual development amongst faith groups? (North/South, traditions, other faiths?)
- Can you identify differences in approaching spiritual development amongst faith, non-faith, voluntary or statutory services?
- How are you aware of the development of the spiritual life of a young person ie existential development?
- What do you feel that universal youth work values, practice, professional standards and policies say about spiritual development?
- Are you aware of legal or policy documents motivate or support ideas around spiritual development? Do they provide motivation?

HOW DO YOU TRY AND 'DO' SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT?

Subsidiary questions:

- Is spiritual development a focus for you in practice?
- Is spiritual development high on your priorities?
- Does it happen informally or formally, in groups or 1 to 1?
- What resources do you use?
- Can you tell me your experience of young people developing faith - or regressing in faith

Contextual

- How do you feel about talking on spiritual development in a post conflict/divided society like NI?
- How do you feel about talking on spiritual development in a multi cultural society like Ireland?
- What are you experience of building partnerships/links with faith groups or non-faith groups... do they pose an opportunity or a threat?

Structural

- What are your experiences of presenting a spiritual development project (or a theme within a larger project) to line manager, management committee or funder?
- Did your training offer the opportunity to explore spiritual development?

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