

## HUMAN FLOURISHING AND THE COMMON GOOD: THE INTENTION AND SHAPE OF FAITH-BASED YOUTH WORK IN THE BIG SOCIETY

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### Abstract or description

#### Abstract

This thesis investigates faith-based youth work – establishing how it operates and what it does – in the context of the Big Society political initiative popularised during the period 2009-2013.

Religion, politics and young people are subjects that promote lively debate, yet literature about faith-based youth work is limited. What is available does little to reveal the complex factors that underpin and portray such work. Whilst a variety of literature about youth work, young people, religion and social policy exists there is no body of work that brings these considerations together.

Using a tripartite mix-of-methods approach, this study has developed an original contribution to knowledge in the form of an explanatory model for faith-based youth work: involving a scoping survey, focus group consultations and four case studies, a contemporary portrayal of such work has been established. Data was collected from faith-based youth workers from a variety of backgrounds and practices to develop the model, which establishes the foundational ethos of faith-based work, the grounding upon which it is developed, the philosophical shape of how it operates and the pedagogical intentions of what it does as it supports transformation in young people.

The findings indicate that faith-based youth work is focused on helping young people flourish in pursuit to the common good; such work relates to the Big Society notion, but this is because of an overlapping consensus regarding mutual aspirations rather than any causal considerations. The place of faith within such work is motivationally foundational, but often not explicitly identifiable, in day-to-day operations.

The investigation concludes that rather than perceiving young people as problems to be fixed, faith-based youth work offers a means of helping young people flourish for the collective good.

Key words: Faith; Youth Work; Big Society; Flourishing; Common Good

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