

Slide 1 – Good morning, my name is Bethany Sexton and today I am going to be talking about Youth Work between 1940 and 1949 and the decade's impact on the young people.

Slide 2 – Firstly, there are three significant events of the 1940's that I have identified. The first one and probably the most important one is the occurrence of World War II from the 1st of September 1939 to the 2nd of September 1945. Secondly, the Labour party were elected due to their strong campaign for social reform in 1945. This election then led to the introduction of Social Security and the National Health Service.

Slide 3 – The effects of the war and post war aftermath had considerable consequences for youth work and the young people in the UK. At the war's outbreak in 1939, 80 percent of young people dropped out of school at age 14, with less than 50 percent being attached to a Youth Service or provision (Powell, 1982). Youth Service Wales were affected by various levels of neglect by local authority. The Youth Service as a whole was abandoned in the post-war economic climate and therefore, there was not much centralised support for the young people. The evacuation process in the war also had a huge impact on young people in the 1940's. Many children and young people became evacuees and it left families broken. Some never saw their biological family or their home again and some could not remember them by the end of the war, and many were adopted by their evacuee families.

Slide 4 – The war and the post war aftermath also caused a great cost to the communities in the UK. Any kind of community struggled massively due to the war, especially in terms of young people, their safety and everyone's safety and well-being. Places for young people to meet were not a priority when society and community was

being rebuilt from what was left from the war. The Youth Service was also not a priority. There was much confusion over the purpose of Youth Work as to whether it was for young people's leisure or for their learning and education. Therefore, the Youth Service was seen as a vulnerability, especially due to its continuing struggle with its public identity. Expenditure was significantly reduced and all of the Youth Service's building projects were ceased.

Slide 5 – In terms of policy development, progress was made in the 1940's. This was initiated by The Service of Youth Circular 1486, also known as HMSO 1939, which was published in 1939 (Roberts, 1939), followed by The Challenge of Youth Circular 1516, published in 1940 (Board of Education, 1940), and Circular 1577, published in 1941 (Board of Education, 1941). Circular 1486 set out the idea of a Youth Service run by both local authority and volunteers, and Circular 1516 and 1577 set out what the jobs of Youth Officers and Organisers were for, which was delegated to the local education officers. In 1944, the Education Act (UK Government, 1944) was published where it first mentioned a Youth Service managed by local authority in the law. This involved every local authority and their responsibility to care for young people of all ages, including young people looking to further education and the young people past compulsory school age, in which the Education Act stated that this was 15. By the start of the 1940's, the popular mindset towards state intervention when it came to young people had changed drastically and this was when the government stepped in. In this time, the links between society, the government and young people were emphasised more than before (Davies, 2024) The government now took responsibility for caring for the welfare of young people (Roberts, 1939).

Slide 6 – Between 1939 and 1960 was when the state first committed to a secure and consistent youth service. There were new ‘open’ clubs that were intended to be accessible for all young people. There were also new civil and recreational clubs opened, regularly 3 or more times a week, and they facilitated activities including ‘drama, arts, crafts, sports and physical recreation’ (Evans, 1965) on a regular basis. Between June 1940 and 1943, one rural area went from having no youth provision to having 25 clubs open regularly. This could have been mostly due to the evacuation process as most children and young people were moved to rural areas where the fighting and bombing attacks were less likely. Youth work was steered more towards leisure than education at this time; this could have been due to the war and the need for relaxation and anxiety relief, especially for young people without their families, many who did not know if their loved ones were safe; although education is important, the wellbeing of young people at this time was vital. Also at this time, all 16 and 17 year olds were required to register with their local office of the Ministry of Labours, so that they could be in contact with the local Youth Service (Smith, 1988) and the government noted how important it was that they cared for the young people in their critical time after leaving school.

Slide 7 - There are a few similarities between then in the 1940's and now in the present. The first point is particularly significant, which is the decreasing funds attributed to the Youth Service going towards the young people because it was seen as a vulnerable and an easy target, with no foreseen threat of it backfiring. We can still see this today in budget cuts and in the funding available for youth work provisions. Another similarity is that there was so much uncertainty for everyone, including young people, in the Second World War. Now we can observe this as uncertainty and fear spreads due to the

Ukraine and Russia conflict and the Israel and Palestine conflict. There were also money and cost issues for everyone during the war due to lack of supplies and we can effectively see a similar situation now in the Cost-of-Living Crisis, as families struggle to feed themselves, to heat their homes and run their cars among many other day-to-day things. Although 1940 was eighty-three years ago, the general struggles of young people have not changed much. The one big difference between then and now is the technological advances and social media but the young people then would have struggled with uncertainty, instability, worry, anxiety, and fear as much as young people today do, if not worse, due to the mass fighting and loss of life. They would have experienced homeschooling and various forms of isolation, similarly to the COVID-19 lockdowns that the young people today have experienced. Therefore, in many ways, our young people in the 2020's, surprisingly, are very much like the young people in the 1940's.

Slide 8 – Thank you for listening.

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