**Special Interest Group (SIG) Young People – Social Pedagogy, Association and Participation**

This will draw upon the philosophy of social pedagogy and promote inclusion and the recognition that young people are resourceful social actors. This means the challenge for adults and professionals is to facilitate their leadership and involvement, by removing barriers and promoting their agency.

The issues faced are situated and contextual, so this is not an attempt to be prescriptive but share experiences and learning.

I offer three challenges by way of example:

1. There is a disconnect between youngsters who are recipients of health, education and social care targeted services and their wider peer group. These divides also exist on the basis of class, race, gender, disability, age and status.
2. A high percentage of young people face exclusion from taking part in everyday leisure and recreational activities, including membership of clubs.
3. Youth provision is increasingly focused on either a universal offer that is predominantly activity based, or involves targeted support. Therefore the wider benefits of association and working with young people as part of their lifeworld are being lost. This tends to be dominated by the idea that young people are sites of risk, investment and socialisation
4. The majority of children and young people’s participation is based upon a rights based approach, that mimics professional forms of consultation and addresses distinct institutional agenda’s (School Councils, Youth Councils, and CICC). This fails not only to engage with young people’s priorities but limits inclusion.

There is a tradition in the UK of Association and Informal Education and the philosophy of social pedagogy, together with conceptual tools such as the Common Third and Life Space , can help reconnect and enrich young people’s provision within statutory and community services. There is a webinar, available on the SPPA website that has been recorded; this provides greater depth to these ideas.

If there is interest in sharing ideas and challenges, please get in touch and I will arrange a digital platform for an initial meeting.

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