

Research Notes

Tim Newburn reports on funding for research into youth issues.

As a social researcher it has often seemed that the amount of public concern that there is about young people is in inverse proportion to the level of funding for research into young people's lives. The ESRC funded the 16-19 initiative in the late 1980s, and the Nuffield Foundation has had a long-standing interest in children and young people. Besides these, there have been precious few initiatives directed at a better understanding of young people's social and individual circumstances.

There are signs that this is changing, however. The Carnegie UK Trust has become increasingly concerned about young people between the ages of 11 and 25. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has set up a new research programme on 'young people and families',

and later this year the ESRC will be advertising for bids for research funding in a new programme entitled, 'youth, citizenship and social change'. The articles in this edition of CJM give some indication of the breadth of the issues to be researched. What then are the concerns of these three programmes?

The Carnegie UK Trust became particularly concerned about youth in 1995. After a conference in 1996 they decided to undertake a long-term and wide-ranging review of the transitions between parenting, education, work, independent living and the achievement of full citizenship. Many bodies are involved in the inquiry - central and local government, voluntary organisations, employers and trade unions, education and the media. Moreover, they are also endeavouring to involve young

people themselves in the review.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has also recently established a new programme of research and development concerning young people. The focus is on people aged, roughly, between 13 and 25 and its early priorities are 'young people in transition', 'patterns of vulnerability and exclusion', and 'young people's perceptions of the world'. The initial round has about £400,000 available, and with bids being invited by 5 September, research should be underway by early 1988.

The largest initiative will be the forthcoming ESRC programme on 'youth, citizenship and social change'. Again, this focuses on a broad age range - 15-25 in this case - and, unlike the others, promises to be comparative; at least one eye will be on Europe. The programme will be organised around four themes: shaping of transitions and biographies (understanding the impact and experience of the now extended set of transitions); vulnerable groups (understanding social marginalisation and exclusion); social construction of identity (understanding youth lifestyles, identities and cultures); and, political and social participation and citizenship (understanding youthful politics, affiliations and participation). Starting in 1988,

with approximately £3 million over five years, and the possibility of further funds from Europe, this programme should make a significant mark.

At the heart of all three programmes of work is the idea of *citizenship*. For two or three decades after the Second World War there was a consensus amongst many social theorists, policy analysts and politicians that citizenship was integral to the 'good life', and moreover, that the role of the state it entailed was one of the most important integrative mechanisms of social life. Much has changed, however. Economic turbulence, demographic, political, ideological, and technological transformations appear to be progressively disenfranchising sections of the population and, indeed, fundamentally challenging the basis of social citizenship. For some time academics (among many others) have suggested that it is young people who are losing out most. The implications for social, educational, economic and criminal justice policy are profound. Funding for rigorous research on such issues could not be more timely.

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