Back in April we postponed our national conference as a number of other broad initiatives were on the go, notably UK Youth with its concept of the Social Journey, the Training Agencies Group 'shaping the future of youth work' and ChooseYouth. We said at the time we hoped our rearranged conference would keep the debate about the future alive and ongoing. In this spirit we are holding our event on Friday, September 30 in Birmingham. Our themes, ‘Blurring the Boundaries?’ and ‘Re-Imagining Youth Work?’ raise questions for In Defence of Youth Work and the youth sector as a whole.

In the morning session Annette Coburn and Sinead Gormally will challenge our emphasis on the voluntary relationship as a cornerstone of youth work’s distinctiveness, suggesting that IDYW’s position is an obstacle to ‘thinking the unthinkable’, to the potential of reinventing youth work across professional boundaries. This challenging critique will be followed, after group discussion, by a report by Paul Fenton of the Training Agencies Group on the major themes arising from its series of conferences on ‘Shaping the Future’, particularly the impact of the changing landscape on the character of professional training.

In the afternoon we will seek to draw on your sense of what is happening on the ground. What sort of youth work are you involved in? What is your perspective on the future? This debate will be catalysed by a couple of inputs from projects such as Aspire Arts, which are charting different ways of keeping youth work alive. We wonder whether this sharing of your experience and your differing work situations might be the first step in mapping the diversity of provision brought about by the dramatic change in the economy of youth work.

In a final panel session involving amongst others, the Institute of Youth Work, ChooseYouth and UK Youth, we will grapple with the dilemmas of how we can cooperate rather than compete and how we can retain our integrity within a political climate, which favours conformity and compliance and funds accordingly.

Further details to follow - confirming programme, speakers etc…

As for lunch, please bring your own as is our tradition.

Conference fee is a minimum of £10 waged, £5 students/unwaged.

To book a place contact Rachel@yasy.co.uk