

**ymca**  
portadown

# DETACHED YOUTH WORK

THE FRAMEWORK FOR DETACHED YOUTH WORK

# INTRODUCTION

Detached youth work involves contact with young people 'where they are at' and where they congregate. Detached youth work has become more popular in Northern Ireland over the past number of years as a number of youth organisations have used these method of engaging young people within their youth work provision.

Detached youth work is described as the following elements to give an in depth analysis of its practice.

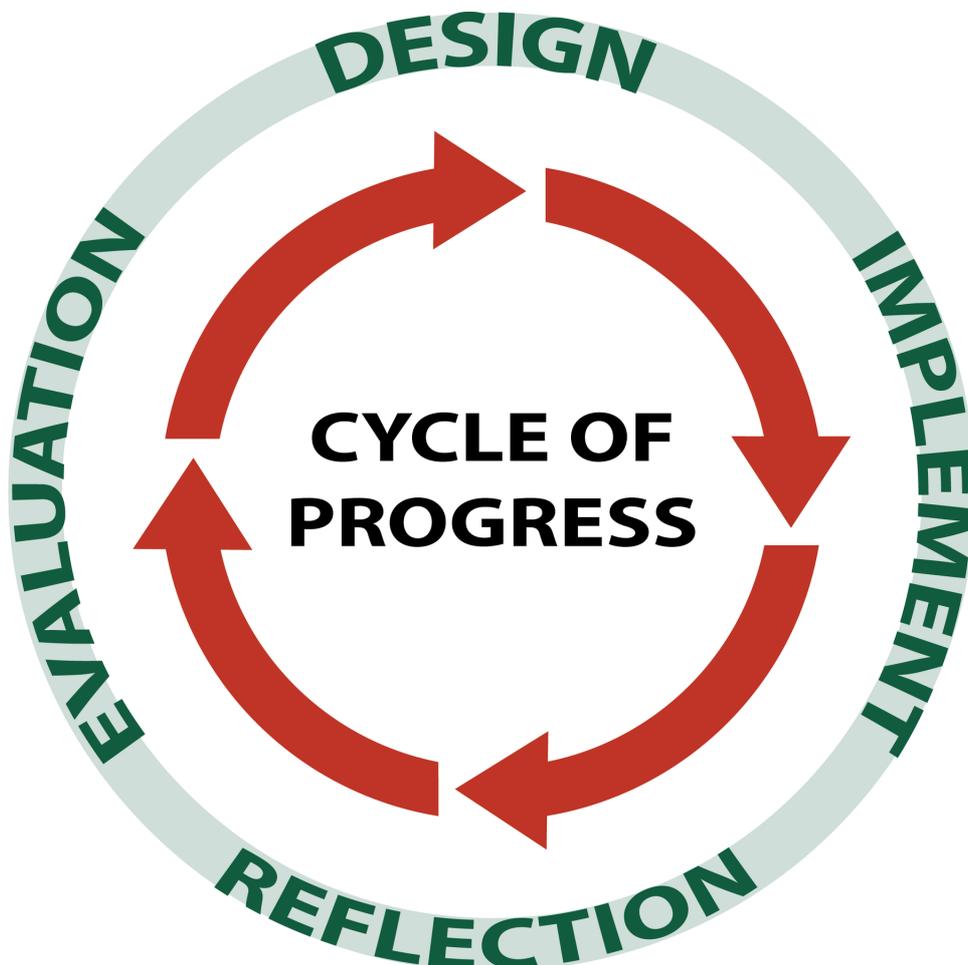
- No responsibility of a youth centre or building.
- Agenda is negotiated by the young people.
- Detached youth work has a flexible approach.
- Requires good support mechanisms to be deliver effectively.

This document has been compiled to aid the development of detached youth work practice within YMCA Portadown. The material gathered will provide guidelines for effective detached youth work practice and provided an outline for training in YMCA Portadown.

# CYCLE OF PROCESS

The following model is used to explain the four phases that are recommended in developing a detached youth work project. It should be noted that detached youth work is a practice that should be continuously progressing and developing as the project is implemented.

## Cycle of Progress



# PHASE ONE: DESIGN

The design or planning of a detached outreach project requires a systematic approach so that a firm foundation for the work can be provided upon which all other phases can be build.

## SUPPORT

Working on the streets for a sustained period of time can produce a perception of isolation unless sufficient support is generated. This should be an essential practice in setting up a detached project.

It is important to form a steering group to design the project and the members of the group should include committed individuals from a range of agencies from the community i.e. PSNI, residents groups. Young people should be involved in the steering group.

The steering group should formulate a plan to address areas such as aims and objective of the project, finance, methods of practice, structures and management roles, recruitment of staff and resources.

## STAFF

Designated staff should be allowed time to develop as a team and to bond as co-workers. An induction process should be identified whereby the team can spend time together. This induction period should create space to allow the team to discuss designing a code of practice relevant to the work, and to discuss any potential dilemmas the work may entail. During the induction, there should be opportunity to discuss the team's training needs. This may include training in the following areas:

- Engagement
- Detached Youth Work
- Group Work
- Recording Methods
- First Aid
- Child Protection Training

## MAPPING | DETACHED

Mapping involves getting to know the area and should be the first step in designing a detached project. Use Google Maps or purchase a physical area map and break down the geographical area into manageable zones. Visit each zone at intervals over a period of time. How do they differ, if at all?

Walk the streets at different times. Is one zone more prosperous/run down than another? Do the same groups of young people stay in one zone or do they move frequently? Are there specific hangouts such as parks, shop fronts, off-licences, pubs, derelict buildings or school premises?

## MAPPING | NETWORK

Network with the community. Find out what provision is already in place in the area for young people. Visit the groups and share information. When are the youth centres or other provisions open? Do they have a list of young people who may be banned or disengaged from youth provision? Be informative, encourage feedback, and get advice.

Contact the police and inform them that you will be on the streets at regular intervals, especially after dark. It is important to build up as many contacts as possible. Be the link between young people and the community so that no-one is left in doubt about what the project is established for.

## MAPPING | OBSERVE

Frequently observe the young people on a general basis. This can be done inconspicuously whilst waiting on a bus, driving around town, out shopping or sitting in a cafe. Do you see any patterns emerging? Are there specific trends - same dress sense, same school? What are the groups' make up, gender, ratio? How do they socialise? What is their behaviour? Are there obvious issues - drugs, alcohol?

## MAPPING | RECORD

Record everything so that a picture can be build up. Evaluate and reflect on these findings with the detached team For example:

'Young people gathering every Saturday night at the Bann River at the bridge.'

'Underage drinking amongst teenagers at Hoys Meadow every Friday night.'

'Large group of young people gather at The Bath each night..'

Evidence will confirm this and give insight into what is happening. As a team, discuss perspective and find out, by sharing information, how to best address these findings and if anyone in the community is already doing this.

## **MAPPING | COMPILE**

Gather all the research and collate it prior to making contact. As a team, agree the way forward. Target groups, gangs and individuals to make contact with. Have a discussion with the steering group and management. With all the findings from the design phase, the approach should consider previous youth work practice, understanding of young people, agreed guidelines/policies and timescales for the project.

With this phase completed, you may not implement the design.

# PHASE TWO: IMPLEMENT

## Code of Conduct

Detached youth workers making contact with young people should have established a code of practice before contact is made. Because of the nature of detached youth work, safety, moral, ethical and legal issues may surface. A code of practice will establish guidelines for workers to adhere to. The following are some points for consideration:

- Be identifiable - wear branded clothing at all times and carry photographic identification.
- Dress appropriately.
- Be contactable - carry a mobile phone.
- Work in teams - you should never go out alone.
- Agree a co-working approach.
- Have a mixed gender of workers.
- Never put yourself at risk or compromise your safety.
- Make use of your personal skills.
- Use appropriate language.
- Withdraw from young people under the influence of alcohol/drugs.
- Be aware of YMCA policies and procedures.
- Carry emergency services' numbers.
- Be friendly and open.
- Use an approach which promotes dialogue.
- Establish explicit boundaries.
- Expect occasional rebuffs from young people/groups.
- Seek parental content when appropriate.
- Adhere to confidentiality when appropriate.

Remember when on the streets, youth workers may be 'invading' young people's space. Do not always expect to be made welcome. Know when to withdraw is important.

## MAKING CONTACT

First contact with young people will invariably involve dialogue, regardless of the dynamics of the group and the places they are hanging out. Walking up and immediately making an introduction as youth workers may have limited success.