



Belfast Education & Library Board
Upper Shankill Area Project

Establishing Detached Youth Work

A Framework for establishing detached youth work projects



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1.

Foreword

It is acknowledged that traditional interventions such as centre based and uniformed youth work are less attractive to a significant number of young people. In addition to the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) an increasing amount of voluntary/community groups are highlighting this issue and advocating work with young people 'where they are at' within their own community.

In recognising the need to develop alternative models of practice outside youth club premises, communities in general are recognising the need for workers to work with young people on the streets. This type of work requires additional skill and expertise to take into account the differing nature in youth work practice.

The Upper Shankill Area Project (USAP) is a partnership of the BELB, Probation Board Northern Ireland (PBNI), local community youth providers and local political representatives. In March 2000 the USAP employed a team of four unqualified youth workers to establish an outreach/detached project. This document has been compiled to aid the development of detached youth work practice and is based upon the result of two years research. The material gathered will provide guidelines for other communities/agencies who may be considering establishing similar projects.

GERRY McGUINNESS
Education Officer (Youth)

2.

Introduction

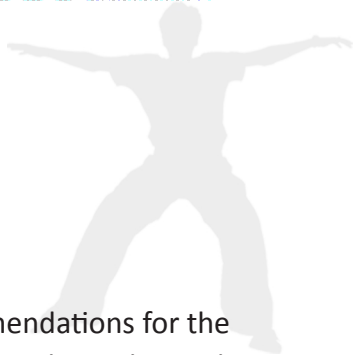
At this point it is necessary to distinguish the difference between outreach and detached. Outreach work has the specific aim of encouraging young people to make use of existing provision. Detached work involves contact with young people in the places they choose to congregate. Any resulting future contact may involve staying in such places but is negotiated between the workers and the young people.

Detached youth work has become more popular over the past few years in Northern Ireland, and has a strong part to play within the informal education system. The term detached and its meaning is often at the centre of debate between youth workers. Some elements listed give a more in-depth description of its practice.

- **No responsibility for a building.**
- **Agenda is negotiated with the young people.**
- **Involves a flexible approach.**
- **Requires good support mechanisms.**

The contents of this document give an insight into detached youth work and how it progresses through different phases from design to evaluation. As detached work involves the community as a whole it is imperative that there is a strong support structure to sustain a good model of practice.





3.

Section 1: Cycle of Progress

A cyclic model (see figure 1) is used to explain in four phases recommendations for the development of a detached project. From the diagram it is evident that the cycle revolves continuously.

Cycle of Progress



Working through each phase produces a sound theoretical model that assists practice.

PHASE ① : DESIGN

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

: Support

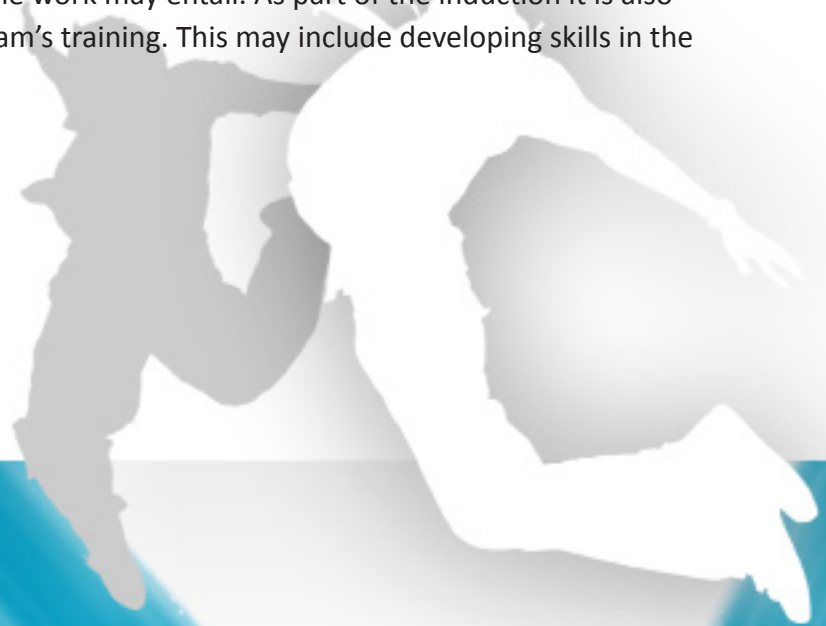
Working on the streets for a sustained period of time can produce a perception of isolation unless sufficient support is generated. This should be an essential practice of the agency involved in setting up a detached project. The formation of a steering group should include committed individuals from a range of agencies within the community.

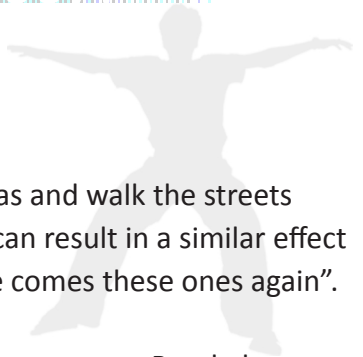
Young people should be included in such a group. From group, proposals should be formulated to address areas such as aims and objectives of the project, finance, methods of working practice, structures and management roles, recruitment of staff and identification of resources.

: Staff

Having selected the staff it is vital that enough time is allocated to allow them to develop as a team and to bond as co-workers. An induction process should be identified whereby the team can spend an extensive period of 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 also discuss any potential dilemmas the work may entail. As part of the induction it is also an ideal opportunity to discuss the team's training. This may include developing skills in the areas of:

- **Engagement**
- **Detached work course**
- **Group work**
- **Recording methods**
- **First aid**
- **Child Protection Training**





: Mapping // 1. Detached

Detached youth workers can be likened to missionaries who visit areas and walk the streets 'spreading the gospel'. Unfortunately too much, too often, too soon can result in a similar effect missionaries often have on the public – in other words – “oh no, here comes these ones again”. With proper research before contact is made this can be avoided.

Mapping involves getting to know the area and is the first step. Purchase a map. 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, shops, off-licences, pubs, derelict houses, schools?

: Mapping // 2. Network

Network with the community. What provision is there in the area for young people? Visit all groups and share information. When are clubs open and who is banned? Be informative, encourage feedback, and get advice. Is there the potential for future partnership? Contact the police. Inform them that you will be on the streets at regular intervals, especially after dark. Generally build up as many contacts as possible. Be the link between the young people and the community so that no-one is left in doubt about what the project is established for:

: Mapping // 3. Observation

Frequently observe the young people on a general basis. This can be done inconspicuously whilst waiting on a bus, standing at the chip shop, sitting in a café. Do patterns emerge? Are there trends – same dress sense, same schools? What are the groups' make-up, gender, ratio? How do they socialise? What is their behaviour? Are there obvious issues – alcohol, drugs? Observe and be observed.

: Mapping // 4. Record

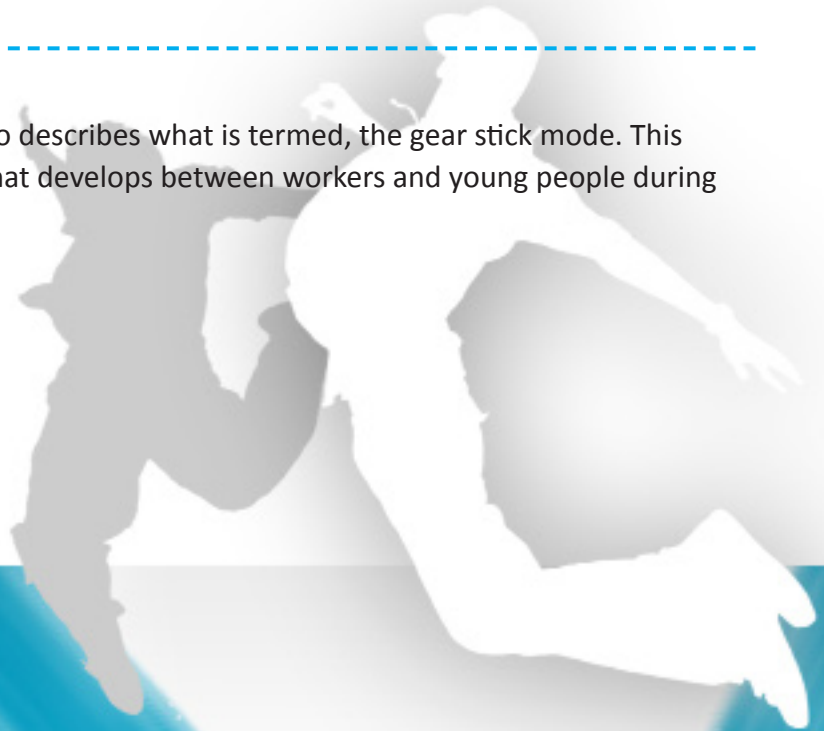
Record all that is learnt. Build up a picture. Evaluate and reflect on this with co-workers. For example “the wine – team are always at the park bandstand on Monday nights”. “Every Friday morning there are remnants of substance abuse behind the shops”. “Every Wednesday lunchtime young males in school uniforms hang about the bookmakers”. Evidence will confirm this and give insight into what is happening. Discuss perspectives and find out, by sharing information, do other activists in the community acknowledge these?

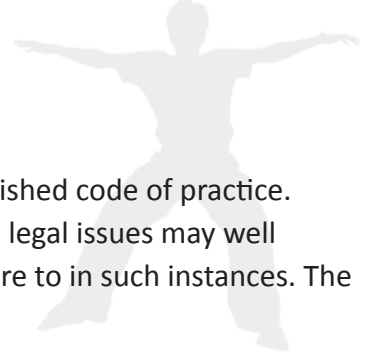
: Mapping // 5. Compile

Collate all the research prior to making contact. Agree as a team the way forward. Target groups, gangs and individuals to make contact with. Discussion with management and steering group should take place. Based on all that has been learnt, during this design phase, the approach should consider previous youth work practice, understanding of young people, agreed guidelines/policies and timescales for projected work. Having completed all this now is the time to implement the design.

PHASE ② : IMPLEMENT

In implementing the work, section two describes what is termed, the gear stick mode. This illustrates the levels of engagement that develops between workers and young people during this implementation phase.





: Code of Conduct

Detached workers making contact, should have at the core an established code of practice. Because of the specific nature of the work: safety, moral, ethical and legal issues may well arise. A code of practice will establish guidelines for workers to adhere to in such instances. The following are some points for consideration, specific to the work.

- **Be identifiable – carry photographic identification**
- **Dress appropriately**
- **Be contactable – carry mobile phone**
- **Work in pairs**
- **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 influence of alcohol/drugs**
- **Be aware of your agency's policies and procedures**
- **Carry emergency services' numbers**
- **Be friendly and open**
- **Use an approach which promotes dialogue**
- **Establish explicit boundaries**
- **Expect occasional rebuff**
- **Seek parental consent when appropriate**
- **Adhere to confidentiality when appropriate**

Remember when on the streets youth workers might at times be 'invading' young people's space. Do not expect to always be made welcome. Therefore knowing when to withdraw is essential.

: Making Contact

As already stated section two provides a model as a guide to working with detached groups, but the first contact will invariably involve dialogue, regardless of the dynamics of the group, the make-up, the places they are hanging out. Walking up and immediately making an introduction as youth workers may have limited success. Using some form of modern technology might prove more successful. For example, ask permission to take some photographs. Explain to the young people the project and how information is being gathered about where young people hang out. Use a digital camera, if available, and ask to film. Many conversations can be developed by first asking young people to pose. When meeting the group a second time previous use of the cameras will be a good starting point to begin engagement.

: Confidentiality

The nature of detached youth work is such that it is essential the boundaries of confidentiality are explicit between both worker and young person (compliant with the child protection policy). Young people may at times assume, given the environment, that confidentiality goes further than it actually does.

At times it may be expedient to make a 'tactical' withdrawal ensuring that an anticipated incident is not witnessed. Phrases such as "If you are going to do that, I do not want to work with you/cannot work with you" can be used.

Managers should appreciate that the worker will sometimes only convey such basic information about a contact as to render themselves accountable. If it becomes necessary or appropriate to provide more detail than this then the anonymity of individuals should be preserved.

Outside of the legal requirements outlined in the child protection policy workers need to be frank with young people about what they report and to whom.

PHASE ④ : EVALUATION

One of the challenges for detached youth work is measuring its success. The work needs to be evaluated against qualitative criteria, quantitative criteria and learning outcomes. This type of evaluation is summative or in other words it takes place on completion of a piece of work or, in this case, to help assess the cycle prior to entering a new design phase. Since informal education is future orientated, development and growth is aided by fostering learning. With this in mind questions need to be asked about whose values and judgements shape the project.

: Is the Evaluation Directed?

For example, having external funding may mean criteria with measurable outcomes, such as reduced crime rates or educational statistics, may have to be met.


: Is the Evaluation Negotiated so Criteria is not Imposed?

For example, is there debate and discussion involving collecting data, filling out questionnaires/forms between key players?

: Is the Evaluation Dialogical to Enrich Practice?

For example, does it involve educators and participants making negotiable decisions?

It is worth bearing in mind that there are problems with evaluating informal education. Any project will have at its core interacting with people therefore:

- **How is an individual's behaviour measured?**
 - **Will the work have an indirect effect on people never met?**
 - **What indicators are there that monitor change?**
 - **Changes in values and attitudes do not happen overnight.**
- 

4

Section 2: The Gear Stick Mode

Engagement with young people happens at different levels which do not always follow a set order hence the gear stick. Detached youth work involves a shared agenda between young people and the worker which may for example start in first gear and move straight to third or alternatively may remain in first.

The Gear Stick Mode

1. From a Standing Point
2. Pick up Speed
3. Accelerating
4. Cruising



Engagement with girls on a street corner

① FIRST GEAR : from a standing point

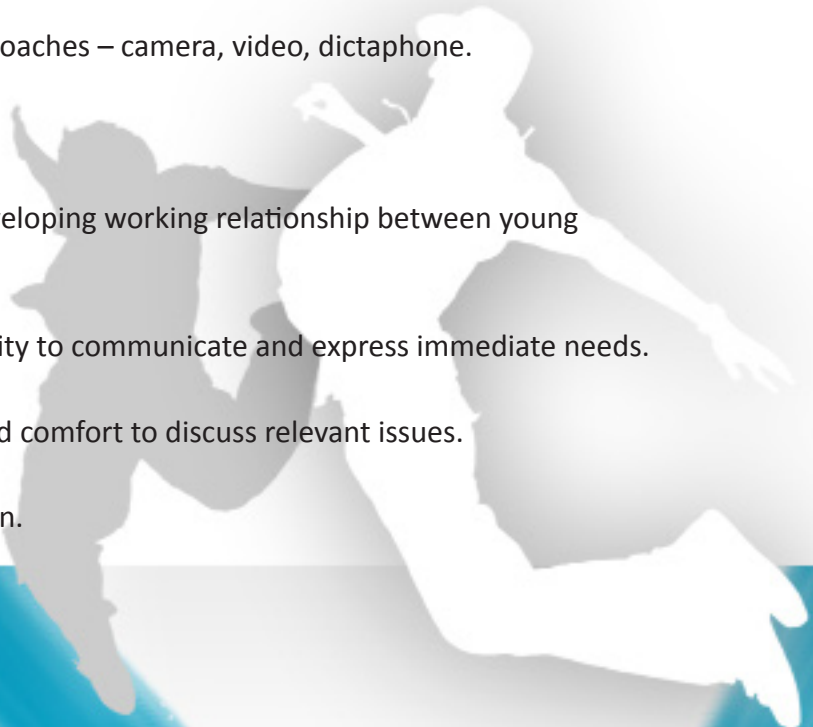
The very nature of detached youth work is founded upon dialogue. In essence a detached youth worker is an informal educator who enters various situations promoting shared ideas and a sense of purpose, has an ability for critical thinking while in action, a repertoire of life experience and informed reading, and guided by an understanding of their role and strategy. Informed by these they foster a learning environment wherein the young people can express their needs, develop a working relationship, explore values and beliefs and own the process of their personal development.

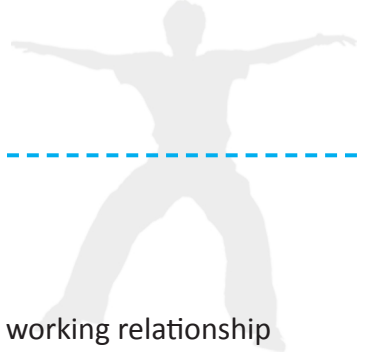
: Programme Methods

- Make contact with young people by visiting streets, parks, schools, shops.
- Engage young people through use of dialogue, questionnaires, leaflets.
- Consider using creative approaches – camera, video, dictaphone.

: Potential Outcomes

- An understanding of the developing working relationship between young person and worker.
- Confidence in their own ability to communicate and express immediate needs.
- The psychological ‘space’ and comfort to discuss relevant issues.
- Thinking that results in action.





② SECOND GEAR : pick up speed

: Second Gear: Pick up Speed

Useful tools of engagement which aid skills already developed in the working relationship are activities. An activity can become a vehicle used for growth such as meeting in a different environment in order to share experiences or relate to an individual in a different context. At this point it will be important to introduce a basic type of contract defining behaviour and responsibilities.

: Programme Methods

- Organised trips to bowling alleys, outdoor pursuits, a neighbouring town.
- Guided tour around area organised by young people or an activity in the street such as football.
- Other activities may include use of local resources such as a park, school, a pool competition with a local youth club, late night shopping.

: Potential Outcomes

- Enhanced dialogue and relationship building – team building.
- Development of skills in organisation and communication.
- Opportunity to assess group's ability to cope with external issues and environments.
- Goal setting introducing change through contract, participation and ownership.

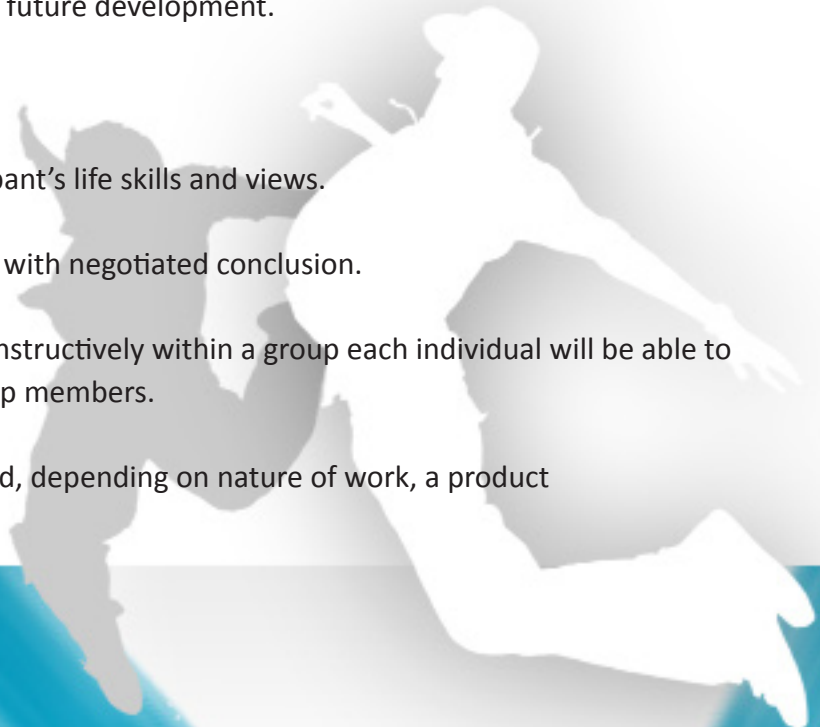
③ THIRD GEAR : accelerating

This gear introduces the idea of pieces of work with time bound, task oriented groups. Generally the task will dictate the type of environment, for example, youth club, resource centre or staying on the street. The group will set goals for itself requiring members to work co-operatively towards these ends while seeking to support one another and sharing ideas, knowledge and skills. Members of the group have the opportunity to be involved fully in the design, implementation and evaluation of the piece of work. The group should also be ready to engage with a fully working contract agreed with the detached workers.

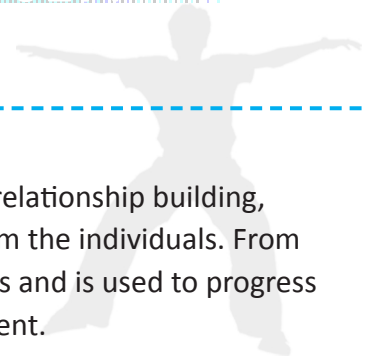
: Programme Methods

- Group work around personal and social development (PSD), arts and drama, youth exchanges.
- Partnerships with agencies who will provide specialist information or funding/resources.
- Introduction to local youth provision and other community groups where the organisations may offer future development.

: Potential Outcomes

- Managed change in participant's life skills and views.
 - Development of timescales with negotiated conclusion.
 - Whilst expressing needs constructively within a group each individual will be able to listen actively to other group members.
 - Individual/group growth and, depending on nature of work, a product might be produced.
- 

④ FOURTH GEAR : cruising



To approach this gear speed will have been gathered in the form of relationship building, developing skills for use in life and a high degree of participation from the individuals. From here on in the relationship with the detached youth workers changes and is used to progress the young people on in terms of their personal and social development.

If an exit strategy has not been designed now is the opportune time to negotiate it with the young people.

: Programme Content

- Exit strategy ending work to include follow-up eg referral onto local youth provider or training agency.
- Training in negotiated, identified area such as young leaders' programme, citizenship, peer education or job skills.
- Community development through active participation.

: Potential Outcomes

- Increased ability to contribute to the needs of others.
- Referrals and partnerships with other local youth organisations/agencies.
- Motivation and skills to actively pursue own development.

5

Three examples of Gear Stick Model in practice.

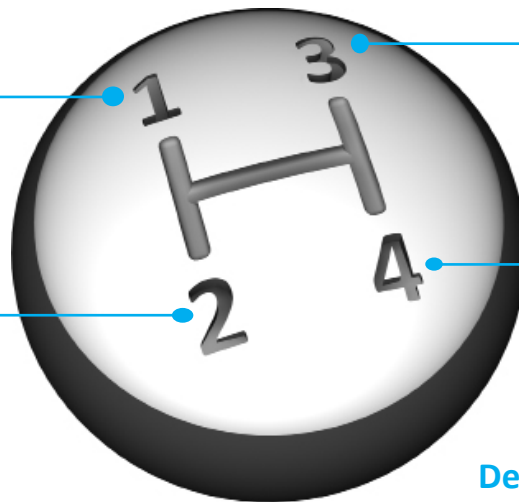
Example 1 - Contact with a group of girls at a street corner.

August – September

Made contact with group of 8 girls aged between 14 – 16. Developed informal relationship on street corner through conversation.

November

Four week introductory programme in Performing Arts. Tri-Partite contract with the detached youth workers, young people and drama tutor.



October

Arrange two trips out of the area for an activity. One was to a bowling-alley the other to an ice-rink.

December

Four week conclusion. Devised piece of drama relating to social issues and performed as piece of peer education to young people in the community.



Example 2 - Intervention with a mixed group regarding community issues

First Gear

Met regularly with a mixed group of about 14 young people aged 14-18 at entrance to Lyndhurst estate. Developed informal, unstructured conversation over a period of about one month. Listened to what group had to say about issues that affected their everyday lives. These included boredom, apathy, violence, identity, substance/alcohol abuse, bullying, paramilitaries, anti-social behaviour. It became evident that their environment was seen as having a negative impact on them. Some of the young people stated “we do not want our young brothers and sisters growing up with the problems we face”, “we want change”.

Second Gear

Organised two trips out of the area. The first was to Crawfordsburn Country Park. The second was to Bangor Fun Park. This helped the group share experiences in a different environment. The youth workers noticed that an activity as basic as a walk along the beach had the effect of making the young people more open and less guarded about voicing their opinion.

Third Gear

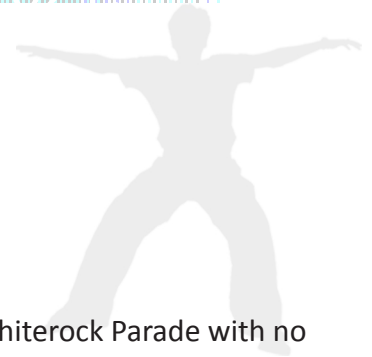
Dialogue with the group assessed what had taken place in gears one and two and it was agreed by all participants that a programme designed should be thematic and multi-disciplinary. This was summed up in the title ‘Making a Difference’ (MAD). The group were keen to demonstrate that in positively changing their own lives they also had the potential to change others within their community and their perceptions of young people. Over 16 weeks, sessions were introduced about history of area, identity, negative influences and cultural art.

The youth workers were surprised how detailed the research was, that some young people engaged in, about their area. One commented “I was taken aback how, over a short period of time, some members of the group visibly grew in confidence. This was especially noticeable with the youngest member who showed leadership when taking part in group sessions. I felt this was due to the significance of the programme and how it related to her own experiences.”

Fourth Gear

Reflection on the previous three gears and the programme content resulted in the group wanting to develop further. This was facilitated by them making a video entitled ‘This is Me’ and using it as a tool to develop dialogue about the oppressive nature of their environment. Individuals within the group progressed personally and socially by – two being employed as part-time young leaders with another youth group, one being invited onto the committees of two separate community organisations, one employed in NVQ childcare and one enrolling in further education. The group as a whole have had 13 different requests to work with others including Belfast Education and Library Board, Police Service Northern Ireland, parents, trade unions and funders.





Example 3 - Interface Response

First Gear

Interface trouble has now been continuing for six weeks after the Whiterock Parade with no signs of abating. It was recorded by Media, that Upper Shankill Area is experiencing its worst violence for fifteen years. Up to 300 teenagers from all areas of the Shankill are congregating daily up by the Springmartin/Moyard interface.

Daily observations (from a distance) by detached workers are being used as a risk assessment to determine a proposed plan of intervention. It is observed that most youths meet in the top field for riotous behaviour whilst younger youths remain at ground level in Springmartin, where less trouble is happening, although street lighting has been switched off.

Through negotiation with the project's steering committee, the police and community activists, a response is devised. In partnership with local youth providers, four teams of detached youth workers converge multi-directional on the sizeable area engaging youths on the edges. Two of the most experienced teams are permitted to continue into the ground level area. Surprisingly their presence is enough to draw up to 120 teenagers down from the top field.

A challenge is issued to the youths regarding their behaviour by the detached team. They responded by saying, "There is f*** all to do in this area, so that's why we riot. If you offer us activities every night of the week we'll do that instead."

Second Gear

The team advised the youths that two minibuses would pick them up from Springmartin at 7.00pm the next night.

The next night 28 youths were collected and taken a drive to Donaghadee for chips and a discussion about focused pieces of work. Subsequently they reported back to the rest of the youths what had been discussed and took responsibility for organising the groups.

Third Gear

78 young people aged 13-22 years agreed to get involved in focused pieces of work which required a weekly commitment of one night. Local youth providers, churches, sporting groups and the community centre offered their premises for work with these groups. The young people got involved in PSD programmes, community initiatives, creation of murals and a youth conference thus diverting them from trouble and building pride in their community and for themselves.

In addition to their group night they could also attend a drop-in at least one other night plus join midnight soccer at the weekends.

A condition of involvement in a group would be the cessation of all riotous behaviour which happened with immediate effect.

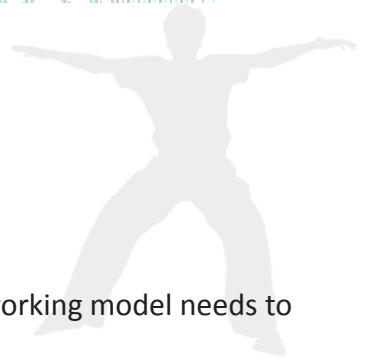
Fourth Gear

The experience of being worked with in groups and given responsibility for their own development, encouraged a group of 14 young people to approach us to train as youth leaders. They successfully completed a Trainee Leader Course over a 4 month period and subsequently assisted in planning and implementing a summer camp as a diversion for the next seasonal Whiterock Parade. The next Whiterock Parade was peaceful with no trouble afterwards.



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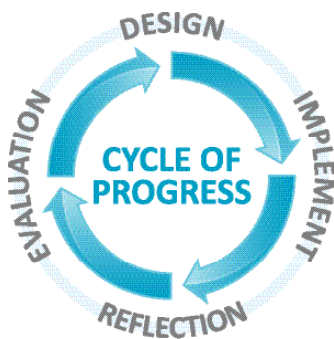
Summary : The Working Model



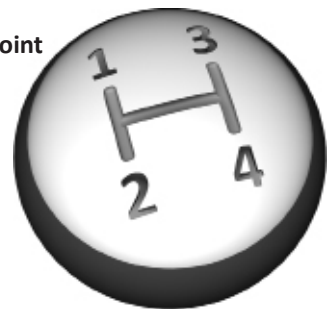
In conclusion to this document a summary of what constitutes the working model needs to be given.

The cycle of progress demonstrates the grounding of policies and procedures needed to operate and develop a detached youth work project. The gear stick mode is an example of detached youth workers' interventions with young people and demonstrates, in theory, how detached youth work practice can be used effectively as a much needed form of youth work. The cycle of progress is a transferable theoretical model. It can be applied, to help establish a detached youth work project but may also be used to develop any piece of youth work. When using the gear stick mode consider using the cycle of progress in whichever gear you are in to aid development and progress to the next gear.

For example, in phase II – implementation – select first gear and make contact with a group by developing dialogue. To decide when it is best to move to another gear use the cycle of progress theory. Design, implement, reflect and evaluate the work in this gear. After discussion a decision might be that the group remains in this gear or has developed enough to go from first to third. Alternatively they might have reached third too quickly and after evaluating decided that second would have been the appropriate selection. Applying the cycle of progress theory to the gear stick mode of practice helps group development.



1. From a Standing Point
2. Pick up Speed
3. Accelerating
4. Cruising



7 Recording Sample

Phase 3 highlights the importance of recordings in detached work. We have included 2 examples of recordings which have been tested as effective methods. During detached work it is possible to engage with up to 10 groups of youths in a session. Having to remember these encounters at the end of a session may prove difficult. As such we have developed the mini detached recording which enables the worker to carry a large number in booklet form, small enough to fit into a pocket. After each encountered it is advised that information is recorded on a mini detached recording form. After the session the information from the mini forms can be entered into a data base or onto the larger recording form as a overall recording of the session.

RECORDING FORM FOR DETACHED

DATE/TIME _____
GROUP NAME _____

		M	F			Live	Contact
Age	<11			Zone	1		
	11-12				2		
	13-14				3		
	15-16				4		
	17-18						
	18+						

ACTIVITY _____
COMMENTS _____
NEXT CONTACT _____
WORKERS _____

Use of Mini Recording Form

After engagement with a group of youths complete this form before moving onto the next. The grid entitled 'Zones' refers to the overall area which has been divided into 4 sizeable zones. If you are in zone 1, enter the number of the youths you just contacted, and enter the zones they live in.

UPPER SHANKILL AREA PROJECT DETACHED WORK RECORDING SHEET			
Worker/s:		Date:	Time:
Neighbourhood:		Location:	
Composition of Group (please tick): Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Mixed <input type="checkbox"/> Size <input type="checkbox"/>			
Age: 10-12 <input type="checkbox"/> 18-20 <input type="checkbox"/>	12-14 <input type="checkbox"/> 20-22 <input type="checkbox"/>	14-16 <input type="checkbox"/> 22-24 <input type="checkbox"/>	16-18 <input type="checkbox"/>
Activity: What areas young people are from:			
INTERACTION Methods of approach: Response from young person/group:			
FUTURE ACTION			
PERSONAL REFLECTIONS			
Signed:			

8

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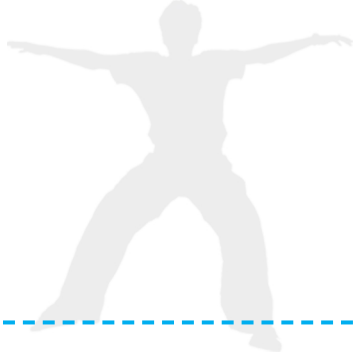
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9

With Thanks to:

- Upper Shankill Area Project Steering Committee
- Margaret McClean - Outreach/Detached Youth Worker
- Ben Rayot - Area Youth Worker
- Kyle Cummings - PBNI
- Joanne Jones
- Nadia McMillan - Clerk Typist

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A decorative graphic at the bottom of the page consisting of several overlapping, curved blue lines of varying shades, creating a sense of movement and depth.

