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If you have any feedback on this toolkit, please reach out to [impact@ukyouth.org](mailto:impact@ukyouth.org)

## Overview

Detached youth work is a form of youth work that meets young people in their spaces, on their terms. This toolkit has been designed for youth workers to support the evaluation of street-based and detached/outreach style youth work. It is designed to better understand the value of street-based youth work, deepen the evidence base of its impacts/outcomes, and support delivery of good practice.

This toolkit was developed by UK Youth in collaboration with Your Space, a youth work project run by Uniting Communities Organisation (UCO) Blackburn. The development took place between October 2020 and June 2022. This project was generously funded by the Clothworkers Foundation.

We are grateful for the contributions & advice of Street Talk in Manchester (who deliver detached youth work) and Centre for Education and Youth (who have experience in evaluating detached youth work in Brighton and Hove).

The toolkit includes the following resources:

- Understanding your area - Community mapping
- Understanding who you are working with - Session records
- Understanding your impact - Most significant change interview
- Understanding how to improve - H assessments
- Communicating your impact – Case studies
- Learning from your partners - Community stakeholder meeting/focus group
- Learning from youth workers - Youth worker interviews/focus group

## Your Space Programme

Your Space was a two-year street-based programme that reached young people on their terms, at a time and in a space that worked for them. This pilot programme sought to address the disadvantage experienced by young people in Blackburn, which has high levels of deprivation.

Delivery started in late October 2020 and the pilot came to end in June 2022. The programme led to 5,290 interactions with young people, across 671 sessions of detached youthwork.

The pilot programme aimed to:

1. Ensure young people are both supported by street-based youth workers and empowered to access youth services;
2. Create a good practice evaluation toolkit for the sector to better understand and evidence the impact of detached youth work

The key enablers to achieve and measure these impacts included:

1. Trusted relationships within, and deep understanding of, the local community. Youth workers had lived and worked in the area for many years
2. Project duration facilitated the development of meaningful relationships between local partners
3. Location, duration, and regularity of detached youth work sessions created the time and space for young people to engage at their own pace
4. Visibility – youth workers were recognisable by their branded t-shirts/hoodies
5. Young ambassadors supported youth workers reach a broader range of young people and facilitate initial conversations
6. Shared learning sessions to develop the impact tools, collaborating with youth workers to ensure they are suitable to the specific context of detached youth work

## Toolkit development

During the two years of delivery, UK Youth developed and tested a range of evaluation research tools to explore the most effective approach to gathering data. Three questions underpinned this process:

1. Do these tools allow youth workers and community stakeholders to understand whether the programme is achieving the desired impact?
2. Will these tools affect how youth workers relate to young people?
3. What are the potential impacts of these tools on young people?

To inform the toolkit's initial design, a rapid evidence review was conducted to understand the evaluation techniques used in other detached youth work programmes, establishing what works, and the strengths and weakness of the methods.

The tools were then designed, shared learning sessions with youth workers carried out, and then feedback sessions used to amend the tools. After programme completion, we consulted other youth work and evaluation practitioners to further refine the tools. But this process is still ongoing! Do reach out to [impact@ukyouth.org](mailto:impact@ukyouth.org) you have any concerns, insights, or recommendations for how this could be improved.

## The needs of young people & for detached youth work

The UK is an unequal place for young people to live and sadly many do not have access to the opportunities and support that would enable them to thrive in life.

Of the 11.8 million young people (10-24 ) in the UK, 4.3 million are living in poverty ([End Child Poverty, 2020](#)) and tens of thousands are facing additional barriers such as growing up in care, being excluded from school, confronting mental health issues, being a young carer or not being in education, employment or training. Growing up in an urban area of deprivation presents additional challenges in gaining sustainable access to quality employment, housing, and health services.

Together, these factors highlight an urgent need to meet young people where they are. Particularly those young people who are not likely nor able to attend a youth centre.

Detached youth work allows youth organisations to better understand the issues in their area, signpost young people to available local services, and ultimately, to understand what further services and support are required to help young people in an area.

More concretely, street-based youth work was able to continue in spite of Covid restrictions. This made it a valuable form of youth work that was well placed to both respond to young people needs more generally and respond the specific challenges posed by the pandemic.

But most importantly, it provided a way to support young people who can be missed by other youth services, but who may have a lot to gain by being in contact with a youth worker.

## Further resources for detached youth work

This evaluation toolkit is best used in combination with the '[Detached Youth Work Guidance](#)' produced by the [National Youth Agency](#) and [Federation for Detached Youth Work](#).

See also:

- '[Detached Youth Work Guide](#)' from Youth Scotland
- '[Community Relations, Equality & Diversity: focused activities on the street](#)' from Youth Initiatives, YouthLink, & YMCA Northern Ireland
- [Contextual safeguarding resources for the youth sector](#)

## Evaluation Tools

### 1. Understanding your area - Community Mapping

Community mapping is a form of stakeholder mapping where youth organisation staff are encouraged to think about the people, groups, and places that make up the community around young people in their area. It can be used to collect data to understand the community context, young people in that context, and identify the community assets or resources that young people can be referred to.

When?	This works best at the very start of programme delivery, before any detached/outreach work has happened.	
Why?	Beyond simply listing 'who' these stakeholders are, it prompts youth organisation staff to consider the nature of the relationships between them and explore the potential for greater collaboration between local partners.	
Who?	This exercise is principally for youth organisation staff, but contributions via conversations with young people can also be a way to ensure the map is representative of young people's experiences. This exercise will form the basis for the community stakeholder focus group session that takes place at the end of the delivery period.	
How?	It's up to you! If your organisation knows your area very well, it can be just your team. If you want to involve other local assets, the more the merrier! Involving young people in this exercise is particularly valuable. We suggest taking around 45 minutes – 1 hour to fill in & discuss your findings using the template below.	
Materials needed:	doc.x <a href="#">Community mapping template</a> <a href="#">Example (includes some supplementary information)</a>	Pdf <a href="#">Here</a> <a href="#">&amp; here.</a>

**Top tip:** If you're feeling stuck, start by printing off a map of your area and begin circling the places that young people tend to be, then any existing partners, then go on from there!

## 2. Understanding who you are working with - Session records

This tool is a more standard evaluation technique. It should be adapted to suit the delivery needs and staff capacity of the specific programme. Principally, this tool records how many young people are approached by each youth worker per location during outreach sessions.

It also records how many were then engaged in specific activities, signposted to other services, notes the topics that were discussed, logs any safeguarding concerns/accidents, and then helps you track this information per outreach location.

When?	The session record should be used after every visit and then a monthly spreadsheet can be updated regularly throughout the delivery period.	
Why?	This allows you to communicate the scope and scale of detached youth work programmes. This give a sense of its quantitative impact/reach on any given area.	
Who?	The session record should be filled out by youth workers, and the monthly tracking can monitored by a programme manager.	
How?	Typically this information can be noted by hand throughout sessions, then stored on an Excel spreadsheet or similar.	
Materials needed:	Doc.x / Excel <a href="#">Session record</a>	Pdf <a href="#">Here</a>

**Top tips:** youth workers reported challenges building an initial relationship with a young person if they were approached with a clipboard and 'counted'. To avoid this, try filling out the session record in quiet moments or as you move between areas. If the resource is available, doing this on a tablet/phone can save time.

On young people's gender, remember you are recording how they present, not who you assume they are. You may not be able to do this straightaway! Sharing your own pronouns can be a way of starting this conversation.

If you need support building a monthly tracking spreadsheet to suit your delivery needs, please reach out to [impact@ukyouth.org](mailto:impact@ukyouth.org).

### 3. Understanding your impact - Most Significant Change (MSC) Interviews

The most significant change approach involves getting a young person to generate and analyse their own personal accounts of change.

If a young person is aged under 15, it is best practice to gain parental permission first.

The principal question is 'since being involved with *name of programme / name of youth organisation's* youth workers, what is the biggest change you've seen in your life / experienced?'

Youth workers liked this tool as it reflected the kind of relationship building conversation that forms part of regular detached youth work conversations, so did not place any extra burden nor feel extractive.

When?	This is a short interview technique that should be used once a young person has engaged with detached youth work for some time (2 months +).	
Why?	This tool captures what outcomes, values, and experiences are considered important by the young people themselves. This means we can build a rich and nuanced qualitative picture of what successful change looks like for them.	
Who?	These conversations should be facilitated by a youth worker.	
How?	The young person can either write their responses, or a youth worker can record and transcribe them if permissions are granted. This can happen while out and about.	
Materials needed:	Doc.x <a href="#">Most significant change template</a> <a href="#">Question prompt</a>	Pdf <a href="#">Here</a> <a href="#">&amp; here.</a>

**Top tip:** youth workers reported this tool working best with young people at secondary school age or older.

## 4. Understanding how to improve - H Assessments

This is a very simple tool that can be used with and by young people or other stakeholders to explore strengths and weaknesses of young people's participation, and include their suggestions to improve it.

When?	Similar to Most Significant Change, best used once a relationship with a young person is built.	
Why?	This tool helps individuals and/or groups to record their own views and ideas in a non-threatening and open, yet structured, way. This helps to foster individual expression as well as common understanding and consensus.	
Who?	These conversations should be facilitated by a youth worker.	
How?	Similar to Most Significant Change, youth workers reported that young people often enjoyed filling this form in themselves. Or, it was completed 'walk and talk' style and responses recorded/summarised by a youth worker once the outreach session was over.	
Materials needed:	Doc.x <a href="#">H Assessment template</a>	Pdf <a href="#">Here.</a>

**Top tip:** If you are working with slightly younger people, or those who are more creative, why not ask them to draw the activities they enjoyed most/least?



## 5. Communicating your impact - Case Studies

Case studies provide the opportunity to explore a young person's experience of detached youth work in greater depth. They also provide the opportunity to coproduce a narrative with a young person, always consider reading it back to them and asking: what have I missed? What would you like me to change?

Broadly, it is helpful if they explore their situation prior to any involvement in the programme, their experiences of the programme, and then what changed as a result of the programme. If a young person is aged under 15, is it best practice to gain parental permission first.

When?	These conversations work best once a productive relationship has been built between youth worker and young person, and towards the end of programme delivery so the young person and youth worker can reflect on their journey together.	
Why?	Case studies allow us to create a compelling narrative around the impact detached youth work can have on a young person, their circumstances and knock on effects on their wider community.	
Who?	These conversations should be facilitated by a youth worker.	
How?	They can be completed through a mixture of reporting from the young person and youth worker knowledge of their story. Proper consent is paramount here to ensure no information is made public without an individual's consent.	
Materials needed:	Doc.x <a href="#">Case study template</a>	Pdf <a href="#">Here.</a>

**Top tip:** building case studies requires commitment from both young person and youth worker. Why not make it a group activity to support group engagement?

While the young person-youth worker relationship is important to facilitate these conversations, some young people may feel more comfortable talking to someone who is less connected to their everyday life. Consider asking them: am I best person to have this conversation with? An external facilitator can help provide a distance that may be helpful.

## 6. Learning from your partners - Community Stakeholder Focus Group

This 'tool' or 'session' helps stakeholders (identified as part of the 1. Community mapping exercise) come together to discuss and determine the value of a detached youth work programmes for young people, the local community, and to identify changes they have seen as a result of the programme.

<p><b>When?</b></p>	<p>This session can happen at the end of programme delivery, and provides an opportunity to bring together team members from across the funding, design, delivery, and evaluation teams – as well as the local community stakeholders.</p> <p>This allows the discussion to be rooted in the local experiences, but connections can be drawn to other national contexts and experiences.</p> <p>It can also be useful to do part way through a longer term project to reflect and adapt to changing circumstances.</p>	
<p><b>Why?</b></p>	<p>It also provides a space for young people themselves to share their experiences of engaging with the programme. These discussions should form the basis of new partnerships and improved ways of working to best support young people in a local area.</p>	
<p><b>Who?</b></p>	<p>These conversations should be facilitated by a youth worker.</p>	
<p><b>How?</b></p>	<p>Getting everyone in a room! Either online or in person, and then working through some discussions/activities.</p>	
<p><b>Materials needed:</b></p>	<p><a href="#">An example agenda is available here – feel free to adapt to better suit your needs.</a></p>	<p><a href="#">A pdf version.</a></p>

**Top tip:** think big and wide about who to get involved here. Everyone from your local MP and Councilors, to local PCSOs, to local business owners and faith group leaders, to parents and headteachers. Anyone and everyone who supports young people! If you have any questions or would like support, please contact [impact@ukyouth.org](mailto:impact@ukyouth.org).

## 7. Learning from youth workers - Youth Worker Interviews / Focus Group

These discussions can either work as a set of individual interviews, or a focus group (depending on the preferences and availability of youth workers). It is a space to discuss:

- practical issues around reporting
- engagement
- safeguarding
- specific local contexts and histories
- best practice
- ways of working within and across local partners
- funder and delivery partner relationships
- any challenges that arose in using the other tools in the toolkit.

<b>When?</b>	Completed at the end of the programme, but ideally before the <u>Community Stakeholder Meeting</u> . This way insights you generate internally can be brought to the community.	
<b>Why?</b>	<p>These conversations allows you to assess the impact of the programme on youth worker wellbeing, professional development, and wider organisational practice.</p> <p>These insights can be shared with organisations doing similar work, and guide the strategic direction of future iterations of the programme.</p>	
<b>Who?</b>	These conversations can be facilitated by another member of your organization, but they are best facilitated by someone external. If this isn't an option, a guide of topics to be considered is available below.	
<b>How?</b>	Getting everyone in a room! Either online or in person, and then working through some discussions/activities.	
<b>Materials needed:</b>	Doc.x  <a href="#">Focus group activities/agenda</a>	Pdf  <a href="#">Here.</a>

**Top tip:** topics to be explored could include their biggest achievements and challenges, their most important lessons, key results (personally and organisationally). If you have any questions or would like support, please contact [impact@ukyouth.org](mailto:impact@ukyouth.org).