

# Processes for Establishing New Areas of Operation and Operational Guidelines

Outside  
Light 

Salt & Light

*Detached Youth Work and Christian Outreach*

*Partners: New Life Church (Old Woking) – St John's Church, St John's - Holy Trinity Church, Knaphill*

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**PROCESS – Detached Youth Work**

As with all good youth work practice, detached work has a process. This process should be followed in **the setting up of a new project** to ensure that future practice is good. In effect, it provides a checklist against which a project's initial and perhaps ongoing assessment can be measured. The areas of work presented here should be regularly reviewed and evaluated to ensure the project is continuing to meet the needs of the community in which it operates.

- Reconnaissance. This is a vitally important stage in the development of a new project.
- Prayer – prayer-walking a possible area of interest is essential
- Prayer-support is also key
- Project issues. Key considerations include
- Aims and Objectives
- Funding and budgets
- Policies i.e. Equal Opportunities, Child Protection, Confidentiality
- Detached work policies and procedures
- Safety, including ID, mobile phone, contact numbers, insurance, legal support
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Management, including reporting structures, access to committee
- Support and supervision

## Community issues

- Information about the community, including
- Layout and boundaries of area
- Demographic information and poverty indicators
- Housing tenure (rented, owned, council) and styles (terraced, flats)
- Shops and other commercial facilities (launderettes, garages, chip shop!)
- Leisure and recreational facilities (sports centres, pubs, restaurants)
- Location of other agencies (police, probation, social services)
- Schools, libraries, clinics, post office and boxes, public toilets
- Special features of the environment, including
- Underpasses and bridges
- Play areas and open spaces
- Bus shelters
- Graveyards
- Information about other agencies, what they do, and what networks exist
- Contact with community members, including :
  - Councillors and council employees
  - Community and residents associations
  - Shopkeepers and other service providers
  - Identification of young people's meeting places
  - Identification of particular groups of young people

## Prayer

Prior to reconnaissance of an area, Outside Light considers it essential that prayer takes place for guidance and protection. Ideally there will be prayer support taking place at the same time as the reconnaissance.

**Initial contact.** Prayer is also essential by those walking out, during the reconnaissance period. It is likely that some contact will be made with young people, even if only at a low-key level. This contact can help clarify or correct the initial findings of the worker from their reconnaissance, and can be the start of developing relationships with young people. The contacts can be made on a number of different levels.

- Observation
- Acknowledgement
- Quick conversation
- Constructive conversation
- Involvement in an incident

Recording of contacts is a good idea, as part of the findings of the reconnaissance period. This initial contact phase is the start of the next stage in the project's development, which is concerned with building relationships with young people and working with them to develop a plan to address the priorities identified in the reconnaissance.

**Relationship building.** Having made some contacts during the early stages of development, it is essential to the success of the project that the worker can build on these introductions and form positive relationships with young people. It is only through relationships where trust and respect are paramount, and where young people are seen not as customers or clients but as partners, that the project will be seen as valid and relevant to the young people. This is a long term and time-consuming part of the job, but absolutely crucial to ensuring the project meets the needs of the young people in the area.

- Who to get to know. Understandably the presence of youth workers talking to young people on the streets can arouse suspicion. As part of the reconnaissance period workers are advised to introduce themselves to relevant adults in the areas where they plan to work. This might include shopkeepers, community groups, leisure centre staff, local police, other youth workers, pub landlords/ladies, school staff etc.

Workers will need to explain who they are, who they represent, their expected times of working etc. Networking like this not only helps to avoid confusion later, but it also helps youth workers to get to know what else exists for young people in the area, and where they might expect to get support when they begin to work directly with young people.

- Potential contact points Workers should use the reconnaissance stage to identify places where young people choose to meet, times that they are there, how other factors for example, the weather can affect arrangements, characteristics of different groups e.g. age, gender etc. At this stage workers will consider whether it is appropriate to begin to publicise their forthcoming presence in an area.

## Contact

This involves the first approach to a group of young people, early conversations and the first stages of establishing relationships.

“...contact-making is likely to be a gradual process. It may begin with observation, which develops into eye contact, then to a nod which after a number of greetings becomes a conversation. All that happens up until that conversation is just as important as the conversation itself.....This low-key approach can often mean that it is a young person who makes the approach rather than the worker.”

**Implementation of development plan.** Once initial contacts have been made and relationships are being established with young people, the worker, in consultation with young people and the Trustees, can begin to devise a plan for the further progress of the project. This is likely to include the following elements

**Contact-making/street work** – Important to maintain a street presence as this is the first point of contact with young people. By this stage it should be clear where and when young people are spending their time, and consequently where the workers should be targeting. However, this needs to be under regular review as young people move around, or are moved on!

**Group work** – It is a likely result of the contact and relationship building work that groups of young people will be identified who are keen to progress from meeting occasionally on the streets to engage in a more structured way with the project. Group work-skills will be needed to allow the group to function and learn as it progresses, balancing individual and collective concerns. By paying attention to the development of core skills such as communication, negotiation and problem solving, the work within the group will have wider application in other areas of the young people’s lives. It is anticipated that group work will form a regular part of the work of the project.

**Project work** – Whilst group work tends to involve natural friendship groups meeting together, project work is more about individual young people meeting with others to address a common issue or concern. Examples might include young people meeting to discuss community safety issues, or a homework club or drama group, which meets the needs of young people unable to study at home. This could be expected to develop out of the general group work programme, or even from street based contact work.

**Development work** – Whilst the priority of any youth project is the face-to-face work with the young people, it is important not to ignore the wider influences which affect the work of the project. These influences include

- Legislation affecting work with young people, both locally and nationally
- Funding opportunities
- Developments within other agencies and projects
- Issues affecting the local and wider communities

This aspect of the work could involve building and maintaining links with a range of agencies, attending relevant meetings, and obtaining information about new and different initiatives both locally and nationally. However much of this work will be undertaken by Trustees. It may, however, also involve an element of training, particularly in areas such as child protection.

**Review, evaluation and planning.** To ensure the progress and development of the work, it is important that staff spend time reviewing and evaluating their work. Failure to do this can result in workers delivering services which have lost their focus, and potentially can result in work which is not based in the community or on the needs of young people.

- Volunteers will find it helpful to review their work at the end of every session – giving feedback to other volunteers/leaders.

In addition, it is essential to have in place mechanisms for support and supervision, which allow the workers the opportunity to verbalise their feelings and observations. An external leader, from another Outside Light Cell perhaps, can help provide a wider frame of reference than someone involved on a day-to-day basis, although this should be used to complement internal supervision rather than replace it.

## **OUTCOMES**

In common with other styles of youth work, detached work is a form of informal social education. However, it is distinct from other forms of youth work in that young people have more scope to determine their own agenda, and to take control of the activity or group they are involved in. This gives the young person the opportunity to develop a range of transferable life skills, which can be used in the transition into adult life and beyond. These skills will give young people the ability to

- assess their strengths and weaknesses
- make decisions
- seek information and advice
- plan time and energy
- carry through agreed responsibilities
- negotiate
- deal with people in power and authority
- resolve conflict
- cope with stress and tension
- solve problems
- evaluate their own performance
- communicate



## Basic Requirements of Volunteers

Before commencing work as a detached youth worker with Outside Light, team members must:

- Have completed a declaration concerning offences against children and young people, and agreed to a check being made of police records
- Have read a copy of the Policy Guidelines, and signed an agreement to abide by them
- In the case of new cells, contact should have been made with the local police to inform them of the nature of the project and the workers involved
- Be prepared to pray with other volunteers

### 6.3 Before starting street work, some basic safety precautions should be taken

- Prayer should take place in advance of going out and when out where necessary
- An outline plan for the session should be left in the office, which includes the following information
  - Intended area to be covered
  - Names of volunteers involved
  - Start time and anticipated return time
  - Staff should ensure they are carrying
    - Mobile phone and details of emergency contact numbers
    - They should ensure their mobile-phone numbers are given to leaders
  - During street sessions, staff should be aware of the following issues
    - Avoid becoming involved in criminal behaviour. When a situation is potentially or actually dangerous, workers should withdraw if possible and appropriate. **“If in doubt, get out.”**
    - Be aware of co-workers feelings and values. At no time should workers feel pressurised to stay in situations where they may be at risk. Strategies for alerting each other to real or potential hazards (e.g. trigger words or use of body language) should be explored.
    - Avoid where possible making lone contact with young people. On no account should workers set out on their own with the intention of contacting young people. On no account should volunteers give lifts to young people unless there is a second volunteer with them.
    - Volunteers should have some prior daytime knowledge of the area to be covered, including locations of dead-ends, and places where personal safety could be at risk.
  - Prayer should take place at the end of each evening.