

Working with Hard to Reach Young People – A Practical Guide

This document provides practical guidelines for professionals who seek to improve their engagement with ***hard to reach young people*** with a view to reducing offending

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*This document provides practical guidelines for professionals who seek to improve their engagement with **hard to reach** young people with a view to reducing offending. It is largely geared towards youth workers, in both the statutory and voluntary sectors who aim to reach young people on the streets. It is also an appropriate reference point for specialist organisations such as, the police, the fire service and health and education professionals, that wish to do targeted outreach work with specific groups of young people especially if this involves going out to where those young people are.*

These guidelines will help you to view young people and their behaviour within the context of the family, the community and their peers. It will provide you with clear boundaries for your work to ensure that you are aware of your own limitations as well as the possibilities. It will enable you to understand and manage the risks associated with this type of work appropriately.

Experienced practitioners will need no convincing of the benefits of working with young people on the streets. Those who are new to this approach, however, will appreciate very quickly how willing young people are to listen to and learn from adults who make the effort to move out of their own comfort zone and shape their message to something that young people understand and see the relevance of.

Reaching out to young people, and making them feel part of the community, rather than the enemy within, is the most welcoming invitation you can make towards engaging their commitment and cooperation to safeguarding their community, its people and its property. Whether that's local fire service workers doing preventative outreach work in the weeks preceding bonfire night or police officers doing graffiti clean-up programmes, the pay-off is much more than a reduction in attacks on fire engines and vandalism, it's the start of building a deeper respect for the work that you do and the service you provide.

We want all young people in Scotland to benefit from positive opportunities, which make a real difference to their lives, and a youth work sector equipped and empowered to achieve ongoing positive outcomes for young people now and in the future.

Developed by Streetwork UK and the Scottish Government

Working with hard to reach young people

Contents

PART 1 – THE CONTEXT

What we mean by *Hard To Reach*

Young people as part of something

Parents and the family

Peers

The community

The school

The youth Club

Needs, wants and fears

Girls (and boys) just want to have fun

Hair-raising changes

Fear of young people

Different and the same

PART 2 – RECOGNISING THE BARRIERS

The underserved

Black and ethnic minority young people

LGBT

Does ageism start at 16?

Rural isolation

PART 3 – GET ON THE GOOD FOOT

Setting up your street based service

Tools of the job

Always work in pairs

Setting goals

Mapping

Making contact

Building relationships

Manage young people's expectations thoughtfully

Dealing with challenging behaviour

Keep the boundaries clear

Work at their pace

Respect young people's territory

Create learning readiness

Child protection & safer recruitment

Your Safety On The Street

On-call back-up

Avoid trouble

If in doubt get out
Emergency procedure

Measuring success

Recording your work
Data Protection

Core requirements

References

PART 1 – THE CONTEXT

What we mean by *Hard To Reach*

By *hard to reach*, we mean young people who are not engaged with, or are disengaged from the usual range of education or other services for children and young people, activities or constructive leisure pursuits. In the context of reducing offending by young people, we are particularly concerned with young people who are at risk of offending due to their distance or exclusion from those services that help them to reach their potential and reduce the likelihood of them committing offences and causing harm to themselves and others.

The term *hard to reach* has its roots in social marketing and starts from the premise that no one is impossible to reach, it's only a question of what is it we really have to do and how much will it cost?

Hard to reach can also mean the 'underserved', in other words there are either no services available for young people, the current services present a significant barrier to them or young people fail to access the services that are available. The questions then become, what services do we have to put in place? How do we eliminate the barriers? And what do we have to do ensure that young people will access what is available?

Hard to reach young people are those who because of their circumstances and the circumstances around them, don't realise that there are services around them that would make their lives a bit better and that is probably the whole crux of the problem in hard to reach young people.

In Glasgow for instance, one of the issues is the notion that in some of the poorest communities, poor in terms of health, education, etc., it has been the same areas for the past 40 or 50 years. In those areas young people's lives and social networks are limited to 4 or 5 streets or at best even 10 streets. Their job aspirations, their relationship aspirations, absolutely everything, is limited to that - those are the groups that are hard to reach. They would not cross the road to go to a community centre in an area where they would get attacked because they come from another area. And, unless we start there we are never going to sort it out.

The real critical part is matching the right solution to the right person. You need a thousand solutions. We need to be much more flexible with what we do, we need to co-ordinate things better, we need to work better together.

Chief Superintendent John Carnochan, Head of the Violence Reduction Unit

Young people as part of something

Parents and the family

Children and young people need to be protected from harm and equipped with the skills and knowledge to make healthy and safe choices about leisure activities, relationships, education, and their future as they grow up. Parents and carers play the most important role in providing all these things for children as well as being the most influential role models.

Families are where young people's values and their attitudes to others and their neighbours are formed. And, the extent to which parents and their carers encourage young people to contribute, achieve and take of themselves and others will have a fundamental impact on their sense of self worth, their confidence to make the most of opportunities and services and the quality of their relationships with others.

Families need support throughout their child's development, especially during the difficult adolescent puberty phase when their child is changing into a young adult and beginning the natural process of starting to make their own life decisions and even challenging the family pecking order. Support will range from information and advice through routine contact with services for all children and families such as schools and GP surgeries, to more specialist services for families with complex or serious difficulties such as social work or psychological services, depending on the nature and extent of children's needs.

Workers should also be sensitive to the fact that not everyone's experience of family will be the same. For some "family" may mean a foster family; living with extended family or living in residential provision. They may also have a young family of their own. Thus the key person or guiding influence in the child or young person's life may actually be a social worker, a teacher, a residential worker, a mentor or a befriender. It is important not to alienate the young person by making assumptions about their home environment and family arrangements.

Peers

It is during a young person's most difficult life transition periods that their friends and peers become increasingly important. In the safety of their peer groups, many young people begin experimenting with things like smoking, drinking and drugs. They also take much greater risks and test the rules of acceptable behaviour to its very limits and in a few cases well beyond those limits. Among their peers, young people face pressure to climb higher, run faster, break, burn or smash things to see what happens, jostle for status, commit actual offences, skirmish with rival gangs and get into real fights.

In short, young people develop their identity, change their behaviour and attitudes, both positive and negative, according to the norms of their peer group and the associations they make. Generally, the healthier and more supportive an upbringing a young person has had, the more able he or she is to manage risk-taking with their peers and to absorb the more positive peer influences. Equally, young people who have experienced a damaging and neglectful upbringing will have more difficulty.

These young people tend to have a problematic family background, one where attachment issues may occur. They don't always have the confidence to develop relationships, the emotional equipment to be able to pick up on a positive relationship in the way that less troubled young people might be able to.

Donny Scott, Children & Families, City of Edinburgh Council

The community

Young people do not exist outside the community they are a vital *part of* the community. And, at the risk of paraphrasing an old song, they are it's future. Investing time and resources in the social development of young people as part of a community, and the responsibilities that come with it, is the best investment you can make towards your community's safety and its future. Young people also have a right to access their share of the community's resources and not to be excluded from them. For example, young people must be consulted by community planning partnerships so that their views are heard when planning local services. Reaching out to and engaging with them, on their terms and on their territory, makes them to feel noticed, valued and respected. If someone has taken the time to talk with them, and explain things in a way they understand, they will get involved and play their part in building a safer community. However, most importantly, young people want to be listened to and be able to influence the provision of services that affect them.

Early experiences can influence later behaviour and meaningful inclusion gives children and young people opportunities to demonstrate their ability to be citizens in their own local environment through practical experiences and activities. Inclusion in the processes that shape society in a way that is appropriate to their age and ability can contribute to their growth into mature, responsible, active members of society.

Scottish Executive, 2005

The school

We must break down barriers and tackle early the things that hold people back. We need to work together in the interests of the individual learner. Building self-confidence, social skills and an awareness of the impact on others will create the foundations for good health and positive economic and civic engagement later in life.

Supporting vulnerable children and families is also at the heart of a Smarter Scotland. This means high-quality, effective, joined up and sustained support for children and families. Children come to school from a whole variety of backgrounds and they all deserve the best possible education to meet their individual needs.

That means giving children access to an environment that is conducive to learning and which provides the stability and experiences that may not exist in the child's home life.

We need to improve the learning experience in our schools and other areas of learning - our children have the right to experience relevant, exciting, inspirational learning.

Fiona Hyslop

Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning

Young people are individuals with different needs, abilities and learning preferences. Positive relationships and access to education have a major part to play in providing life-enhancing experiences for them. The learning and development opportunities offered by schools, youth workers, children's services, colleges and other places of both formal and informal learning must be seen and valued as an integral part of what society provides for young people across the board.

Schools can work to make sure all pupils engage with and benefit from the curriculum, and the curriculum is developing to become broader, more inclusive and more engaging. The aim is for all children and young people to develop skills for life and work, in particular the four capacities of successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors, and responsible citizens. Schools can be inclusive and engaging by providing vocational learning, learning about the world of work and employability skills as part of the curriculum, valued alongside other learning not as a separate experience perceived to be of lower value. They can also adopt a wide range of approaches to motivate pupils; to support pupils to be confident and happy; and, to help children and young people to overcome barriers to learning through additional or planned support.

The youth club

There are a wide variety of youth groups, associations and clubs across the country. Some areas are well-served and others not at all. Open and more generic youth service provision is arguably the most cost effective and presents the fewest barriers to participation. There is huge value in youth work that is available to any young person who wishes to attend, but there is also a place for specialised targeted provision designed for young people who are vulnerable or who have specific needs.

These specialist services help prepare young people and give them the confidence and support to access opportunities that others take for granted. Having the confidence to take part in more open access provision, and understanding and complying with the associated normal social rules, is extremely important as this allows each young person to feel they belong and to understand what to expect and what is expected of them. Ideally all young people would have the confidence and support to access opportunities that are open to them, however, this is not the case and some are much *harder to reach*.

Needs, wants and fears

Girls (and boys) just want to have fun

Young people need a safe place to have a good time, to stretch themselves and develop new social skills such as teamwork through youth groups, sports and other fun leisure activities. The way in which young people use their leisure time has a big impact on their future. And, it is in the company of others that they experience positive role models or be a role model. Young people need places where they can be themselves, but they also need places where they can develop healthy attitudes to their own well-being and the well-being of others - a place where they can think positively about their education, health, relationships, sexual identity, future employment, the community they live and in their role in that community.

Hair-raising changes

Adolescents can be a puzzle, a tinderbox of emotion prone to impulsive, erratic behaviour. Ask a parent why this is, and raging hormones are often mentioned. But scientists are learning that such simple explanations belie the complexity of this tumultuous stage, when the seeds of life-long problems are sown for some and others choose paths that take them to the height of their potential.

OCD, 2006

Puberty is a critical phase in the lives of young people. It is a time when they experience the most dramatic biological, physiological and socially upheaval. There's an awful lot going on for these emerging adults at a time when they have the most trouble controlling emotional behaviour and managing risk. Puberty sparks new drives, impulses, emotions and motivations. Changes in arousal and motivation outpace more slowly-developing self-regulation abilities. As well as higher rates of offending during adolescence, there are also increases in accidents, depression, suicide, violence, teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease. A young person's brain development is also an important factor.

While much of the brain develops during the first few years of life, shaped by both biology and experience, it doesn't stop there. Recent research suggests that several key regions of the brain, including areas of the frontal cortex and the cerebellum, undergo remodelling during adolescence. These studies suggest that much of the brain development during adolescence occurs in the regions and systems that play critical roles in regulating behaviour and emotion and in perceiving and evaluating risk.

Dahl, 2006

Fear of young people

Most young people make a positive contribution to their family, school and to a lesser extent their community. However, the Scottish Household Survey found that a significant number of adults perceive the presence of young people on our streets as threatening. Recent research by TNS Media Intelligence has also shown that only 23% of stories about young people on TV and in our newspapers are positive. Bad news clearly sells papers and this suggests that the media and we, their consumers, play a big role in distorting and magnifying the perceived fear of young people.

One of the other things that we need to do is around the notion of tolerance. In some communities and some areas we need to raise tolerance and in others we need to lower it. We need to raise it in some areas so that they don't get excited when four guys walk along the street, because they are just young guys and young guys have always done that. And so we need to raise their tolerance. And in other areas we need to lower the tolerance so that people say *that is too much*, noisy car park, grass not cut, three piece suites lying out at the front, the graffiti, we need to raise that.

Chief Superintendent John Carnochan, Head of the Violence Reduction Unit

Different and the same

Rather than being seen as troubled and disaffected outsiders who pose a threat to the community, or simply ignoring those who are out of sight out of mind, young people - with their different cultural identities, boisterous behaviours, sexuality, physical or mental impairments and odd friendship groups - must be viewed as a vital part of the community and their diversity as its greatest asset. Meeting young people as equals, without prejudging them, is also fundamental to successfully reaching out to those who are *hardest to reach*.

Accept every young person for who they are, valuing them first as individual people who are learning and who may need support before challenging their opinions and actions and confronting them with consequences. Make every effort to ensure that your services are genuinely accessible and open to all young people regardless of

race, class, gender, ability, impairment, sexuality, dependants and political or religious beliefs. Ask yourself, does your equal opportunities commitment genuinely extend to marginalised young people? If not, what are you going to do about it?

PART 2 – RECOGNISING THE BARRIERS

The underserved

Are young people really *hard to reach* or is it more to do with the barriers put up by some service providers? In other words, what is that some organisations do or not do that stops young people from accessing the opportunities that appear to be on offer? Is the range of provision boring, irrelevant or simply not provided?

To work with young people who are distanced from, and do not access, mainstream services, it is vital to share and demonstrate a principled approach, which has integrity, meaning and relevance to young people and their life experiences. These principles guide our actions to prevent us further distancing and alienating the very people with whom we are concerned. To do this, staff who manage and deliver work with hard to reach young people will need to consider the 'architecture' of the Service. In other words, the influences and prejudices we as individuals bring to it, the institutional language and entrenched values of policies and practices which identify young people as dysfunctional and drive and prescribe the way we work and how we identify success.

Connexions, 2006

Or, is it that some service providers find it difficult to work with young people. For some community centres it may be easier to keep boisterous teenagers out because they demand attention and scarce quality staff resources, and, it's likely to cost money rather than generate desperately needed income. For these providers, it may be easier to blame kids for spoiling things for themselves when something gets broken or damaged than to genuinely create space for them.

I remember walking into one of the busiest and most successful community centres in the country. It was buzzing with activity. The small hall was full of pensioners enjoying dominoes and bingo. The large adjoining theatre hall was full of amateur thespians rehearsing and every other room in the main building hosted adult education classes. Meanwhile, local teenagers moped about outside. I asked the centre manager if young people could use the centre. "Of course" she replied, "as long as they are part of a structured group and can afford the classes". I persisted with questions about what the kids outside could participate in and she cut me short pointing out that these kids could not use the centre because they had been caught throwing stones at the door - I wonder why they were doing that, is it possible they wanted someone to let them in?

Youth Worker, Edinburgh

Black and minority ethnic young people

The membership of local centres, clubs and associations rarely match the cultural and religious diversity of our communities. Yet, now more than ever before, community wellbeing and cohesion depends on reaching out to some of the most isolated young people in our communities i.e. those from minority ethnic and religious backgrounds (particularly those in rural areas) and making sure that local opportunities are open and accessible to them. To reach out to these young people, consider employing workers from different minority ethnic and religious communities who can help build trust and act as role models.

The life chances of black young people are affected by a range of variables leading to their high representation in statistics around children looked after, homelessness, the juvenile justice system and unemployment. It is vital that the potential long-term costs to society of these vulnerable young people are recognised and avoided, and appropriate action is taken to ameliorate their situation.

Barn, 2001

LGBT

Most young lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people face discrimination and exclusion in their everyday life. The lack of visibility of LGBT adults at school and in society means that bullying and harassment continue to be major problems for LGBT youths, which can affect mental well-being, lead to lower achievements at school and to higher suicide rates, according to a recent report published by IGLYO & ILGA-Europe (Pink News, 2007). Discrimination and prejudice influences the transition of young people into adulthood and is at the root their social exclusion.

LGBT youth experience estrangement from family, bullying and marginalisation at school, which can lead to such problems as underachievement and school drop-out, low self-esteem and mental ill-health. These in turn, the report says, have a negative impact on the capacity of young LGBT people to manage the transition from school to work and to become confident and independent adults who can contribute to society.

School (61% of respondents) and family environment (51%) are the places where most young people reported discrimination and exclusion. In comparison, 29.8% of young people faced discrimination in their circle of friends.

Pink News, 2007

Advice on good youth work practice is readily available from [LGBT Youth Scotland](http://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/) <http://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/>

Does ageism start at 16?

For young people under 16, the local youth club can be a great place to meet friends and socialise. By the time they are 16, however, the youth club can seem boring and irrelevant as they aspire to access the pubs and clubs of the over 18s. The lack of community facilities for the over 16s may be one reason why so many prefer to drink in the poorly lit parks and embankments in the evenings with their pals.

When I was little we went to the club but I am too old for it now its all the wee ones that go there. We just go to the chippy or walk about really, there is nowhere to go unless we've got money. We go to the café or into town and wander but even when I have got money no one else does so we don't really do much else. It would be good if we had a café just for us something that was free or cheap where we could listen to music. If the wee ones weren't allowed in it would be better.

Louise, 16

We don't go to any clubs – only play football. I would go somewhere especially in the winter when its freezing but they don't let you smoke or swear and I would just end up breaking the rules. Friday night is piss up night so I wouldn't be going on a Friday. Now that I am working I don't get as bored as I used to so I am not about much anymore but I still meet up with my mates for a kick about but it would be good if we could use indoor pitches but they cost a fortune.

Sean, 17

Rural isolation

In more remote rural areas of Scotland, services and opportunities for young people are much more likely to be geographically, structurally and financially out of young people's reach. The biggest problem for them is transport and getting the opportunity to spend time with friends outside school hours.

Most activities such as cinema, ice skating and roller bowl take an hour and a half on the bus where the last bus leaves at 2.30 in the afternoon which is not feasible or practical or even worthwhile!! Public transport is a joke it is more than expensive and times are totally impractical.

Gillian, age 17

I go to the youth club once a week over the winter as we have no facilities in the summer. It's a five mile walk and costs 50p. I would like to be able to go ice skating, bowling or underage discos. There is nothing like that locally and everything is in Inverness. That is 120 mile round trip and there is no way of getting there at night or on a Sunday as there is no buses. There are only two buses a day which means taking a day off school or work if on a Saturday. I'd like to see more buses and cheaper (£15 return at the moment from Ullapool to Inverness for a 16 year old!). A closer cinema would be good. A clothes shop locally would also be good!

Euan, age 16

Pipe band practice is every Friday in the winter and in the summer I go every Thursday down to the local village hall (not far away, about 2 minutes). I'd like a youth group because we don't have one at the moment because we have nowhere to have one and the only thing really to do round here for young people is the Leisure Centre and hardly anyone goes to that anyway. To go into the nearest city its about £6 on a bus for a CHILD return, so when you become 16 its about £15.

Siobhan, age 16

The transport and financial barriers simply compound the sexual and emotional health barriers faced by young people who struggle with things like depression, self-harm, abuse and worries about sexuality, teenage pregnancy and sexual health.

Because of rural isolation we still have the highest number of young men committing suicide, it is easy to identify some of the unfortunate circumstances for this to happen, the barriers of sheer isolation not only in the geographical sense but the feeling there is nobody close to turn to as everyone knows everyone therefore may tell others.

There are barriers for health in general and especially sexual health. The majority of the young people I work with feel it would be nearly impossible to go to our local GP surgery if something was wrong with them as the first barrier is stepping in the door and knowing the receptionists. The same problems to go to the chemist as always someone there you know.

As a youth service we try to help find solutions to those constraints, but the money for providing better transport links isn't there. We have as a youth group came up with an idea of a mobile youth café. This would be

an old bus redesigned and would enable us to go out to the areas where people feel very isolated. Also hopefully try to have some nurses and drug workers on board sometimes to give advice. We do take a minibus (when we can get it) to have an evening in Inverness now and then so young people get the chance of socialising together outwith school and without their parents.

People see Ullapool as a pretty tourist village in the highlands. And it is. But people don't often see past that and what it really is like growing up in small communities pretty cut off from towns and cities. The young people have the same needs here as anywhere else in Scotland but lack a lot of opportunities based solely on where they live.

Youth Worker, Ullapool

PART 3 – GET ON THE GOOD FOOT

Setting up your street based service

Tools of the job

Firstly, make sure you have a street work bag to carry all the resources and information leaflets you wish to use with young people. Secondly, you will need waterproof jackets that clearly show the organisation you work for – it simply isn't tenable any longer to go out onto the street incognito. Young people and their parents deserve to know, from a distance, that you are a professional worker from a reputable organisation that they can trust. Thirdly, you will need professional identification cards that young people or their parents can ask to see. And, last, you will need a mobile phone so that you can be easily contacted at any time.

Always work in pairs

Work on the street with young people is always done in pairs. Never “go it alone” and ensure all contact is professional, explicit, recorded, has ‘on-call’ back-up and is fully supported by your team and your line manager. If any difficulty occurs and you are uncertain how to proceed always consult your line manager or your team.

Setting goals

Do you know exactly what you are setting out to do? Defining the challenge is key to putting a successful service together and meeting the expectations of funders. In many cases, the funders have already identified the problem or challenge and are looking for you to provide the answer. The question then becomes “what is it they want us to do?” Set finite goals for your service that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART). Ideally, create a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the goals and anticipated outcomes clearly set out before the service begins, this will ensure clear communication for all the stakeholders. Then, decide what **baseline data** you will need to assess the impact of your service. It doesn't need to be complicated and can be in the form of a simple questionnaire that you can ask young people at the start of your contact with them and repeat at the mid-point and the end of the service. The value of gathering good baseline data at the outset will come back to you time and time again as you demonstrate the change in young people's responses and therefore the impact of your work with them.

Mapping

Understanding and being able to accurately describe the local picture is fundamental to the success of your street based service. Before you start, collect background information on the community as a whole, key stakeholders within the community, a comprehensive list of youth services (including their membership criteria and opening times), press cuttings relating to local youth issues and how the young people are perceived. Before you actually engage with young people, walk round the area at different times, speak to local shop-keepers, visit as many likely locations as possible and generally build up as knowledgeable picture as possible about where your target group of young people hang out.

Making contact

The most common experience for street based workers as they approach and start speaking to that group of youths who have scared the life out of the locals simply by hanging around in a group, is that young people are more than happy to chat with interested adults. Keep the introductions simple with “hello, my name is... and this is my colleague... and we work for...,” believe me, the rest will come naturally.

Building relationships

Building a positive relationship is the starting point and the key to successfully working with any young person. Be reliable and consistent with young people, accepting them for who they are without prejudging them for how they look, what they have done, what they say or what they think. In this important task, you are neither a passive facilitator nor a paid friend, but rather a conscious and skilled worker or volunteer whose job it is to help them build their self-esteem and make more positive and healthier life choices.

Manage young people’s expectations thoughtfully

Every relationship has a beginning, a middle and an end. And, as you are in the business of building relationships as the cornerstone of our work with young people, it is your job to manage each of these stages as well as you can for them. You have a responsibility to be honest and up front about what young people can expect and what not to expect from you. If you are thoughtful in your preparations, and communicate plans and changes well, your relationships with young people are more likely to be positive and achieve the best outcomes for them.

Think from the very beginning about how long any work with a young person or group may last and ensure that the exit from such commitments are well managed and clearly communicated at the earliest possible stage. Provide clear and accurate information at all times to young people , including when it might be necessary to disclose information about them to others for the purposes of protecting them. Keep them informed as and when new information becomes available especially if there has been a substantial change that will affect their expectations. Vulnerable young people are easily discouraged when they feel they have been let down and you may face great difficulty trying to re-establish contact. They may miss appointments or let you down (and never take this personally) but, you should never let a young person or group down. Strive to deliver on all commitments you make.

Dealing with challenging behaviour

View young people as primary agents of their own life changes. Always strive to coach and support them to learn how to make healthier choices and access services for themselves. There are times, however, when certain individuals can pose a direct threat to, or impair the experience of, others. Where bullying or abuse arises, always start to build your response and support from the point of view and safety of the most vulnerable. Part of your job is to work with young people who may already be excluded from other provision, including those who have been perpetrators of

bullying, sexism, racism and so on. It makes no sense to add to that exclusion by indefinitely banning individuals. Temporary restrictions may be required from time to time to enable you to conduct a risk assessment and to renegotiate conditions for access with a young person, or to ensure you have appropriate and sensitive supervision arrangements in place. Otherwise, you may offer to provide support elsewhere in a setting that is mutually suitable for the purpose.

I am banned from everywhere. I used to go to the club but Karen goes and she was always being bitchy and everyone would do what she said. They won't let me go back because I lost my temper and hit her and now they say that I am a risk to the other people and the staff. It was ages ago but they still say I am too much trouble – I wouldn't want to go now anyway but they have discos there on a Friday and everyone goes so I just have to wait outside or sometimes my mates stay out with me.

Antonia, 14

I like going to the centre sometimes. It can be a bit boring cos you can only play pool or football and it's the same all the time. I cant go tonight cos he's banned and I don't want to go myself. There is more clubs but I don't like them – or the people who go there. There's one that's wrecked and my brother said that it was like that when he used to go and anyway the staff just shout all the time.

Steven, 13

I go to the clubs most of the time but it just depends on what is on. I went to the music group once and it cost 50p but they had drums and stuff. It was good but I got chucked out. I was banging the drum and she kept telling me to listen but I just wanted to play the drum. Its good when they do the art stuff because they have got loads of paper and paint and it's a laugh when we all go. Usually one of us can get money so that we can all go but sometimes we will just buy munchies and stay out. We have all got bikes and we go on a cycle unless the police stop us. It would be good if there was more to do even if we had a proper park or someone to take us out to burger king or pool or to the omni.

Andrew, 11

Keep the boundaries clear

Avoid all conflicts of interest between work and personal affairs. As relationship-building is at the centre of your work, it is especially important to make sure that the trusting and friendly relationships you build with young people are strictly professional and never confused or blurred by involving them in your personal life and interests. Never allow your home, property, personal information or mobile phone to be available to young people. At no time enter into any personal arrangements with young people outside of approved work. Never buy or receive anything from young people. This includes looking after personal items, pets, children and property. Contact with hard-to-reach young people should only happen during work time and with the full knowledge and support of your

colleagues/team/line manager. If you find yourself in a difficult situation that you are unsure how to resolve, contact your line-manager immediately. You have a fundamental obligation to make sound decisions on behalf of young people that are undistorted by your individual beliefs, family, financial or other interests. Socialising or arranging to meet young people outside approved youth work business is inappropriate.

Work at their pace

Do things at their pace and in a way that suits them. Spend as much time as you need talking to priority individuals and groups about **them**, about what **they** think, what interests and worries them, and what action they think might make a difference. Taking time to work at their pace can actually be a fast track for getting to what is really important for them, what motivates them, for sorting out what they really want or need help with and engaging their willing participation in achieving real and lasting positive change.

Respect young people's territory

Approach and begin to build relationships with young people in their space but always remember to be respectful and sensitive to their territory, their cultural preferences and peer groups. Be interested, friendly and useful. Don't try to impose rules or conditions for young people's participation on their patch. You are on their territory, which means that at any moment they can simply walk away or tell you where to go.

Create learning readiness

Working on their terms, on their territory and at their pace means that you will routinely create moments where young people will be more interested and confident discussing difficult issues. These are moments where they will be much more willing to talk about risk-taking, the consequences and consider healthier choices. It is in these moments - what formal educators call **learning readiness** - where a purposeful intervention by you can make all the difference. Your job is to seize learning opportunities when they arise and to purposefully create discussion and activities that help young people to make informed life choices. By listening to what young people themselves are saying you will be able to develop much more creative, culturally relevant and appropriate responses to them. Make sure you feel ready and skilled to respond to issues that you and your team anticipate may arise.

Child protection

Some very vulnerable young people may disclose their most fearful experiences of violence or sexual abuse, sometimes in the very first meeting. For this reason, we strongly recommend that you have the appropriate clearance to work with vulnerable young people and that you undergo basic child protection training before starting. Always ensure there are adequate support structures, good inter-agency links and referral routes and quality recording and monitoring procedures in place in your organisation to support your work. Always treat the information given to you sensitively, appropriately and follow locally-agreed information-sharing guidance on

whether, and how, and when, and to whom to disclose information the young person has given you. All work of this kind must be strictly in accordance with locally agreed **Child Protection Guidelines**.

If during the course of your work, you become aware that a child may be being abused, or that a person may be abusing a child or children, you should consult **immediately** with your line manager. If a young person indicates that they wish to disclose abuse to you, sensitively explain, before or the moment they begin to do so, that you will be required to act upon this information. Priority should always be given to ensure that appropriate support is available to the young person by referring to the appropriate local agency.

If abuse is disclosed, as soon as possible, contact the appropriate local social work manager, senior police officer, family protection unit or emergency social work services. Abuse is defined as: **physical injury, physical neglect, failure to thrive, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and abuse of others involving young people and children**.

If you consider it important to inform the parents or guardians of the child about the nature of your suspicions, **do not attempt to do so yourself**. Always seek advice and pass your concerns on to the statutory Social Services. It is their responsibility to decide how to proceed and they may already be conducting investigations.

You may be faced with situations that are ambiguous or uncertain, and your actions may have an impact on existing work with young people. That is why it is vitally important to consult with your manager and your team colleagues on how best to proceed. No matter what, **the interests of the individual child and her/his safety must be put before other considerations**. You are encouraged to regularly discuss child protection matters with your team and to include reviews of relevant training, consultation and referrals.

Signpost!

You can find out more about child protection and child protection training here:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2003/03/16909/21128>

<http://www.workspace.cp.scot.nhs.uk/portal/elib/Pages/SpecialistArea.aspx?nid=192013>

To find out about your local child protection guidelines, contact:
[to be inserted]

Disclosure

It is currently an offence for a person who is on the Disqualified from Working Children List to work in a child care position, either paid, or unpaid. Therefore, we strongly recommend that every person who is employed to work with the *hard to reach* is fully vetted by **Disclosure Scotland** before commencing direct work with young people. For guidance on how to disclose an employee, or to get a certificate for yourself, simply visit www.disclosurescotland.co.uk. However, safer recruitment

is about more than disclosure checks and a range of recruitment and selection techniques should therefore be considered. For example, see the following guidance on recruitment and selection:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/169841/0047325.pdf>

It is important to be aware that new legislation to further safeguard children (and protected adults) will be implemented during 2008 and 2009. The ***Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007*** will deliver a robust vetting and barring scheme that will safeguard children and protected adults by keeping people who would harm them out of caring positions and a fair and consistent system that will be quick and easy for people to use and understand. The new scheme will help to ensure that people who have demonstrated through past behaviour that they pose an unacceptable risk, do not gain access to children or protected adults through work or through volunteering. A list of those who are barred from working/volunteering with children will replace the existing Disqualified from Working with Children List. This list and a new adults' list will be managed by a new **Central Barring Unit**, which will work within Disclosure Scotland to provide a joined up and streamlined service.

Your safety on the street

On-call back-up

Make sure you have an on-call phone-in person or suitable safety system and don't start your street work shift without first making contact. You should be available to be contacted either in person or by phone at any time for the full duration of the street work shift and we suggest hourly up-dates to confirm that you are safe. It is especially important to sign-off at the end.

Avoid trouble

Never stray from the agreed route without informing your on-call first - even if the session is quiet. It's not possible to foresee all eventualities that might occur on the street - there's simply no way of knowing what's around the next corner, so, always take precautions to avoid potential risks and dangers. If you even have a feeling or 'gut instinct' that there is a potential danger, you and your colleague should avoid it or extricate yourselves immediately to the nearest safe area. If a particular route, street, park or whatever feels unsafe then it avoid it. If you are with service users and a situation develops that feels unsafe, politely and quickly remove yourselves from risk. Always stay in sight of your street work colleague or at least be aware of where each other is.

If in doubt get out

You and your street work colleague should work as a team and never compromise each other's safety, even where one of you feels more confident in dealing with things. There are many techniques that you may think will help to diffuse or fend off aggression on the street but avoidance is always the best form of defense. Your mantra should always be ***if in doubt - get out***. Afterwards it is very important to take time to talk with your street work colleague about what happened and to decide whether or not it is safe to continue the session. It is better to end a session early than to take unnecessary risks.

Emergency procedure

If you and your street work colleague are threatened or actually assaulted, take whatever means you can to extricate yourselves immediately, such as, hail a taxi, head for the nearest place where help or relative safety can be sought (e.g. a pub or shop) and phone for help. If immediate assistance is required then do not hesitate to contact the police. When you reach a place of safety, call the on-call support immediately.

Measuring success

Evaluating the effectiveness of work with '*hard to reach*' young people is also essential to ensure that resources are used in the most effective and efficient way. As with measuring the distance travelled by young people, it can be very difficult, but it can also add real value and works particularly well when it forms an on-going assessment process as part of a distinctive and accessible curriculum for this client group.

Princes Trust, 2006

Recording your work

Going out to where *hard to reach* young people are means that much of the quality work that you do will often happen in discrete places hidden from the view of others. Unseen by funders, partner agencies and the wider community means the true value of your work will be lost unless you are able to tell them about it and show evidence of its value. If **they** can't see it, **you're not doing it!** Your data is important in helping address gaps in identifying the Hard to Reach groups and in knowing why they continue to be hard to reach, e.g. the two-thirds of young runaways who are not reported as missing by their parents.

By operating on *hard to reach* young people's own territory, you are inviting yourself to share their space and become a temporary part of their group. You should always place them at the centre of your work and look to increase the information, resources and opportunities open to them. The recording, processing and dissemination of information should always take account of the immediate and long-term impact on their lives. In the gathering of research data, view young peoples as active participants and not as passive subjects. Be open with them about your work, and how you intend to monitor and evaluate it. Involving them as much as possible in the process can only enhance the validity of your data. Being a friendly, supportive and useful worker is also an essential part of the transaction of information.

In order to involve people in evaluation they must feel that they are receiving some return to compensate for their time and energy. It is possible to get high levels of co-operation in situations where the researcher provides friendship, information, or support to the research subject... it is only where the researcher is seen as a member of a group will she be allowed access to important information, and only as a group member will she be able to make sense of it.

Kirkup, 1999

Working on young people's terms and on an equal footing routinely creates quality-time that is rarely afforded in conventional settings. This gives you a somewhat privileged insight into what is behind the issues, behaviour and difficulties experienced by those who are at risk. The relationship you build up with individuals and groups, therefore, is established in a setting where they feel more relaxed and in control. Information is shared in an atmosphere of trust, and often in a way that is more open and frank than young people might choose to disclose to others. It is vitally important, therefore, to protect the confidentiality of the information and integrity of the relationship (the only exception here is in relation to child protection). Never compromise young people by openly disclosing their activities or individually identifiable information in a way that would cause them distress or unwelcome consequences. At all times, respect for their interests, intentions and safety should be at the very core of the monitoring and evaluation process.

Data protection

As you will be recording personal information relating to individuals, you are required to do so in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998 (the Act) which provides individuals with certain rights in respect of the processing of their personal information. As such, you should be careful and sensitive about the type of personal information you record. The Act covers the processing of all personal information relating to a living individual whether it is held in computer or paper form. Processing includes obtaining, holding, using, disclosing or destroying such information.

Under the Act, you are required to inform the young people that you will be processing personal information about them. However, the Act requires that specific conditions are met before processing begins and the most appropriate in such cases will be obtaining the consent of the young person concerned. Consent should be informed and in order to ensure it is informed, the young people should be made aware of their rights under the Act. In addition, when dealing with sensitive personal data, such as health, ethnic or racial origin, religion and sexual life, consent must be explicit. Of course, you may find yourself in a position where consent is not practicable or indeed required if, for example, the situation relates to child protection.

Specifically, they should be told that they have a right to see what personal information relating to them is being recorded and how they can go about making a request to see it if it is not appropriate in the work setting to do so. They can only use this right in respect of their **own** personal information and you should take every precaution to ensure that in doing so you do not disclose personal information

relating to another individual unless they will already be in possession of it. They should also be told about the reason(s) or purpose(s) for which their personal information is being processed and, if relevant, to whom it may be disclosed.

You should consider what additional relevant information could be given at this time such as how to make a complaint. You also need to give consideration as to how the personal information will be stored and the length of time and rationale for retention as the Act requires that personal information is held **only for as long as necessary**. Essentially, if personal information is to be processed, then it must be done fairly and lawfully and in compliance with the provisions of the Act. In this regard, you should note that you or your organisation may need to be notified with the Information Commissioner's Office as failure to do so is a criminal offence.

Signpost!

For information specifically geared towards providing information about working with the Act please go to:

<http://www.ico.gov.uk/>

Core Requirements

Always!	Never!
Carry authorized identification card and ensure it is readily available for young people to see.	Undertake any work with vulnerable young people without full and current Disclosure Scotland clearance.
Undertake all work must in accordance with locally agreed Child Protection Guidelines. Discuss and agree all young person contact and action plans with line manager and your team.	Set up meetings with young people without the explicit knowledge and agreement of your line manager / team.
Record all contact with young people in line with procedures.	Receive, buy, sell, lend or borrow from young people.
Have clear aims and objectives for follow up work. Ensure the key worker leads the support package.	Participate in any illegal activity with young people such as taking drugs, handling stolen or counterfeit property, untaxed tobacco, pirate music CDs/DVDs, and so on.
Arrange on-call cover for all out of office work/contact with young people.	Give, offer, or authorize the offer, directly or indirectly, of anything of value (such as money, goods or a service) to a young person or agency official to obtain any improper advantage or personal gain.
Communicate expectations and work parameters clearly.	Work under the influence of Alcohol or Drugs.
Respect the rights, confidentiality and dignity of your colleagues.	Give out personal information about yourself or other colleagues.
Keep your personal life separate from your work with young people.	Invite young people to your own home or visit them at home outside the remit of your job, socialise (unless in a work context) or have sexual relationships with young people.

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