



National Youth Agency

FDYW

Federation for Detached Youth Work
www.fdyw.org.uk

Detached Youth Work Guidance

June 15th 2020

Guidance for youth workers working in non-building-based settings

This publication sets out the basics of **detached youth work** and other non-building-based forms of youth work, and locates them in the context of COVID-19.

Forewords

COVID-19 has brought many challenges into focus for young people and youth workers who support them. The need to transform our practice from working inside to virtual or detached youth work has seen our sector innovate and dig deep to keep supporting young people. We've seen the best of our culture, values and practice as we've adapted, but always kept young people and their needs at the top of our priorities.

The National Youth Agency (NYA) is delighted to be once again partnering with the Federation for Detached Youth Work in developing this guidance. This guidance sits alongside a wealth of support and resources on the <https://youthworksupport.co.uk> website and provides, we hope, a helpful set of references and tools to make your practice as safe and effective as possible during COVID-19.

The NYA has developed formal government-backed guidance for the youth sector. This can be found [here](#) and must be considered in tandem with detached guidance. This guidance has been developed in consultation with Public Health England and the Health and Safety Executive. We ask all leaders and youth workers to consider both guidance documents when considering their next steps and to follow the detached guidance if working outdoors.

Youth work is a powerful support for young people, the only profession that starts and ends with the young person's agenda. When we deliver detached youth work, we step into the physical domain that young people choose to occupy. This is a great privilege, but also requires practitioners to adapt and focus on how we can support young people from their starting point.

Mrs Abbee McLatchie

NYA Director of Youth Work

Youth work has been significantly affected by COVID19; countless youth centres and building-based services have been forced to close. Whilst some provision has successfully gone 'on-line', the contribution of detached youth workers has come to the fore. Many have continued to work, and lots of centre-based workers have joined them, in providing essential services to young people in their communities, in places young people choose to be. The role of detached youth work in bearing witness to the effects of the pandemic on young people, and helping young people speak up about their experiences, cannot be under-estimated.

This work has not been easy, and many workers have reached out for support. The Federation for Detached Youth Work has proudly worked in partnership with the National Youth Agency to provide this support, by producing information, advice, guidance and policy statements, organising training, and hosting webinars for the detached youth work community. This documentation adds to this, and is focused particularly on the challenges posed by an easing of lockdown. We hope it is useful, please give us your feedback so we can continue to support you and all those involved in detached youth work, now and in the future.

Mr Chris Charles

Chair of Federation for Detached Youth Work

Detached youth work

As with all youth work, detached youth work uses the principles and practice of informal education to engage young people in a constructive dialogue about their needs, interests, concerns and lifestyles to support them in their personal and social development. Unlike centre-based provision, detached youth work takes place in 'non-institutional' settings, spaces young people have much more control over. Primarily, but not exclusively, the work takes place in the street, but also in parks, cafés, shopping centres, and other spaces young people have chosen to be. This makes it accessible to young people who are unlikely to attend building-based provision.

Outreach work

Outreach work can be understood as 'reaching out to bring back' to a service or provision, typically somewhere building-based. Outreach work can also involve the taking out of a specific service or information to those not accessing those services. Examples include drugs and sexual health education and harm-minimisation work. Outreach work can happen in many places but is particularly effective in transient spaces such as town centres and transport hubs.

Street-based work

Is focused exclusively on the streets. Street-based youth work is often used to describe detached youth work in other European countries.

Mobile provision

Uses some kind of vehicle, normally a converted van or bus. Mobile provision is most likely project-based (i.e. a music studio, LGBTQIA+ or mental health work). Mobile provision is usually as a form of outreach work or exists as a satellite from a building service.

Pop-up provision

Youth work delivered in temporary locations, either a temporary structure or often high street premises repurposed for short-term use.

The aims of detached youth work: (Burgess & Burgess, 2006: 76)

- to make contact and be available to young people in the settings of their choosing;
- to work with young people through programmes of personal and social education, which help them gain knowledge and recognise new opportunities in the world around them;
- to build effective and meaningful relationships with young people through regular contact, mutual trust, respect and understanding;
- to identify and respond to the needs and agendas of individuals and groups of young people by developing appropriate strategies for action which are both educational and fun;
- to support and challenge young people's attitudes and action towards issues such as unemployment, drugs, poverty, racism, sexism, disability, health, sexuality, criminality, peer, parental and community pressure;
- to enable young people to take more control over their lives and create experiences with them which enable them to make informed choices;
- to support appropriate action that young people take resulting from their own ideas and suggestions;
- to bridge the gaps in understanding between the local community and young people;
- and to highlight issues affecting young people and act as advocates for and with them within the wider community and world.

Practical guidance for detached and street-based youth workers

Post 'lockdown', national guidance on COVID-19 is liable to frequent changes, as will the guidance from local authorities and the organisations you work for. Your work with young people will need to take all these changes into account.

The Federation for Detached Youth Work / National Youth Agency aims to update its guidance regularly because of this. **Please see our various media platforms for more information.**

We recognise some centre-based workers are also moving their work outside into detached and street-based settings and may be anxious about this. We would encourage them to do this only when they and their managers have explored all the risks and are comfortable to do so.

Detached youth work teams should

	Review your organisation's existing detached youth work policy and amend as appropriate.
	Review and up-date Health and Safety documentation, especially risk assessment protocols. Take into account government and Public Health England advice and guidance on risk assessment.
	Review your organisation's insurance policies and DBS checks for staff and volunteers (all should be current and relevant to roles).
	Keep up-to-date with current local and national youth sector guidance, by-laws and regulations for COVID-19. Note restrictions to movement will likely be different in different areas. Plan strategies to talk these through with young people i.e. 'walk and talk'.

In practice

	Do reconnaissance of the areas you are planning to work in
	Make contact with your local community hub, services and partner organisations e.g. police, libraries, Children and Social Care and Early Help, community groups, voluntary organisations, faith groups etc. Discuss with them your intentions and try not to duplicate services.
	Ensure an experienced detached worker accompanies those who are inexperienced or new to working in street-based settings.
	Always work with a minimum of one other colleague, never alone.
	Have a withdrawal plan/exit strategy, make sure all who are working are familiar with it and be clear about the situations where it may need to be used.
	Commit to planning, recording, evaluating and reviewing your work to inform future practice.

Minimising risk whilst in the field

	Arrive at your place of work (and leave) separately from colleagues, avoid public transport where possible.
	Use the attached kit list; check you have the necessary resources to work in the field.
	Remember, dynamic (in the moment) risk assessments are very important.
	Wash hand immediately before and after sessions.
	Observe where young people are and the size of the groups they are in.
	Consider the presence of other members of the public in the same location, especially those who may be vulnerable or over 70.
	Be attentive to any COVID-19 symptoms displayed by young people, colleagues and the wider public.
	Ideally, if you need to pass something to young people, don't ask for its return.

	Wipe your phone and other equipment to reduce transmission risk.
	Observe and demonstrate social (physical) distancing from colleagues and young people.
	Be consistent in what you say to young people about the need for social distancing, good hygiene and the avoidance of contact. Discuss the risks associated with being in groups.
	Ideally, wash your clothes and have a shower as soon as you get home.

Focus on specific questions and themes in your conversations with young people

	How they are feeling and what they are experiencing, especially in terms of changes in their lives.
	Do they understand what is going on and the guidance on keeping themselves, their families and the wider community safe from COVID-19? Try not to escalate any anxieties or worries.
	Be vigilant to signs of young people's mental ill-health, which is likely affected by restrictions to their movements. Families that are self-isolating may be under even greater pressure; here safeguarding should be a priority.
	How they are keeping connected to others, including youth workers (and are they doing this safely); do they have other ideas as to how they can do this? Discuss mechanisms for doing this e.g. telephone, digital platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, Tik Tok, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, Periscope, Skype etc. As a team do you have a plan so those young people who do not or can't access support via digital platforms know how to get in contact?

Support available

Users of this guide must read and take note of the formal guidance for the youth sector from the NYA. This can be found here: <https://nya.org.uk/guidance>

Sources of other **information, advice, and guidance** (including tools for online working) can be found at <https://youthworksupport.co.uk>

Questions about risk assessment have been central to many requests for information received by the Federation for Detached Youth Work at this time. Risk assessments have also been a feature of recent live webinar discussions (see: www.fdyw.org.uk).

National COVID-19 guidance:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance>

Good Practice

Flexibility and creativity, from one street corner to the next

For some young people, the detached youth worker may be their primary source of support. You need to work flexibly and creatively to fulfil this role. Arguably, this is even more important in the context of COVID-19. One street corner can be very different to the next so your approach may need to be equally diverse.

Preparation is key; you should have a wide-range of up-to-date, ethically sensitive, information, advice and guidance about keeping safe. Take care in assessing each and every interaction and respond as appropriate.

The virtual detached youth worker

In some cases, youth workers are being asked not to work on the street and use 'virtual youth work' to develop and maintain relationships with young people and help educate them about keeping safe. As we come out of lockdown, we need to discuss with young people their experience of using these methods – and reflect on our own. This will help inform the use of these technologies in the future, especially with regard to safeguarding. Note their effectiveness in maintain contact with colleagues who are self-isolating.

Consider what you are doing as a worker to help young people engage 'virtually' or through other means/with other provision.

Whose agenda?

Many detached youth workers (and some centre-based workers) are being asked to do detached work with the specific purpose of engaging young people who may not be following the guidance on social distancing. There are inevitable tensions for a practice dedicated to working on young people's territory: in the sense of their agenda. These new dynamics demand an even greater commitment to reflective practice, including thinking about how we should approach issues some young people may not want to discuss.

Preparation is all-important; you should discuss and critique these aims in line with youth work principles. You should be clear about your agenda and any targets you have been set before you engage young people.

Ask:

- What are you setting out to achieve?
- Are you doing detached or outreach work?
- How might your agenda be interpreted by young people; is this a message premised on enforcement or democratic engagement?

Contacting young people

Demonstrate social distancing through your behaviour and encourage young people to mirror these behaviours. Use questions to encourage a dialogue about the need for social distancing and government guidelines. Thinking games like 'Opinion Continuum' (where young people stand at a point on a line that reflects their view) can be good engagement tools and help gauge young people's views and experiences.

Ask:

- Are you keeping safe?
- What are you doing to keep safe?
- How does this affect you, your family, friends, and the wider community?

- What other issues are you experiencing at this time?

Outcomes

Think critically about any outcomes you are expected to deliver; what information are you giving to young people, but what are they saying in return (especially about their feelings and experiences)? What are the implications of this data for outcomes-based interventions; how might future work need to be re-modelled, especially as we all move out of lockdown?

Ask:

- How are you feeling about transitions, e.g. going back to school?
- Are you aware of changes to government guidance?
- Have you been able to maintain connections with others, and to do so safely?
- What has it been like at home, and in your communities during this time?
- Are there signs of vulnerability? Note: you have a safeguarding duty; are your risk assessment and action plans up-to-date and appropriate to changing circumstances?

Moving on

Ask:

- How are you going to support and educate young people as things change?
- What can you do to maintain engagement?
- What follow-up work is needed, and how will this impact your organisation's future?
- What resources will you need to do this work, both now and in the future?

What do we mean by safeguarding and child protection in detached youth work?

Detached youth workers have a duty to work in line with The Children Act (2010) and the legislation on Working Together to Safeguard Children and Young People (2018).

Detached youth work will likely take place in environments where young people can come to harm.

Given workers will not be present all the time, an educative and dialogue-based approach can help foster self-care in young people and help them keep safe; safeguarding should not be something done to young people.

Detached youth work can contribute to the creation of safer environments through the development of trust-based relationships and the provision of information, advice and guidance.

What are the key features of safeguarding in detached youth work?

Workers should undertake safeguarding training and continually reflect on this in the context of their practice. They should be familiar with:

- the safeguarding policies and protocols of their organisations
- those of local safeguarding partnerships
- mechanisms for reporting any concerns they may have, including referral to emergency Social Care teams

There is value in discussing concerns with colleagues; consider the situation, context and needs of the young people involved.

Be aware very young and unsupervised children are a cause for concern (particularly late at night). Report concerns about criminal or sexual exploitation. Details should be passed to your

line manager and referrals made to Children's Social Care, as appropriate (including out of hours duty teams).

- Try to make young people and the wider community aware of your safeguarding duties, but also encourage their commitment to a wider culture of keeping self and others safe. Work with others to try to make communities safer.
- Have and use as necessary a strategy for withdrawing from unsafe situations. Be aware of circumstances where you may have legal responsibilities in relation to crime prevention.
- Apply a rights-based approach to safeguarding when working with young people.
- You may want to explore additional team training around contextual safeguarding:
 - <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/>
 - <https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-you-can-do/resources/child-protection-and-safeguarding>

The role of reflective practice in maintaining a commitment to young people's participation

COVID-19 has forced detached youth workers to reconsider their aims and values.

Maintaining a commitment to participatory youth work, whilst recognising the moral imperative to encourage regard for government guidance, has been a particular challenge.

As guidance changes, aims and values will need to be revisited regularly. You should consider young people's rights and any tensions with more assertive approaches aimed at keeping them safe (they may think you are demanding compliance or trying to control them).

Think about how resilience marries with support and how your approach will be received.

As the constraints on young people's freedom of movement are eased, there may be a need to re-establish relationships. These relationships will be important in helping young people think about (and respond to) new guidance, particularly in terms of their desire to renew relationships with friends and peers but also in relation to taking exercise and managing potential risks.

Doubtless, young people will also have concerns and questions about their futures, both immediate and long-term. You have an important role to play in helping them think these through. Encouraging reflection on their experiences of lockdown, what has been good as well as bad, will help them feel more in control of their transition back to school etc.

Be aware that these experiences are likely to be different for different young people; so too their responses to lockdown. Some will want to stay at home, others are already returning to community life; all will be influenced to some degree by family and culture. Listen carefully and be attentive; how do young people perceive the risks, what are their aspirations? Your approach may need to be equally diverse if you are to support and help them as best you can, particularly in making decisions going forward.

There may be conflict with others as young people assert their right to public space; it will be important to engage with a range of agencies in this regard, and maintain a commitment to advocacy. As ever, young people's self-advocacy should be encouraged. They have much to say that can be valuable in informing and shaping services in the future. This is the essence of participation; young people being involved in discussions and being active in bringing about change.

Above all, it is important to remember detached youth work relationships are voluntary and to maintain a commitment to critical partiality: workers need to be even-handed and non-discriminatory but also challenging.

Reflective practice extends to thinking with colleagues about how the detached youth work team can develop in the future; what experiences have workers had, how do they feel, what has been learnt, and how can a shared vision be arrived at?

Some examples to help you think about the work you may be preparing to deliver:

Example 1

There is a moral imperative to support messaging that helps people keep safe. This said, effective detached youth work demands thinking carefully about how to engage and what to say to different young people who are outside at this time. Workers have found a reasonably assertive position works with some “You should go home.” Yet for others asking questions and having a conversation is much more appropriate “Are you staying safe?”. Specific interventions need to be guided by the quality of relationships, time and place and professional judgement.

Example 2

Youth workers are relatively high on the list of workers at risk of contracting the virus at work, the risk is considerably lower for detached workers. Working outside makes social distancing relatively easy and workers have realised they can role model this behaviour e.g. standing two metres apart helps young people learn just as well as from what you say. Outdoor learning is increasingly recognised as relatively risk free. Detached workers have become active promoters of this important and valuable form of education by organising (for example) street dancing and socially distanced exercise sessions.

Example 3

It is important to recognise, value and support informal community work. A detached worker in London describes observing a community elder in conversation with a group of young men outside a row of shops: “All were at a safe distance from each other and were clearly enjoying spending time together”. Observant workers have always been aware of the important role a wide range of people, from community activists, to barbers, and shop-keepers can play in their communities.

Significantly, barber shops and takeaways have the potential for more than a moment of interaction and are settings many young people regard as safe spaces. Quite a few continue to engage young people even though their premises are closed, such as the barber sitting outside his shop talking to a group of young men on bicycles, again, all socially-distancing. Noting these people and places is important in detached work; they remind us how important communities are both in terms of people and places that are accessible to young people, many of whom may be vulnerable.

Example 4

COVID-19 hubs have sprung up in almost all localities. Many provide invaluable support and help keep people connected. Some analysis of their reach is however essential. Detached workers have an important role to play in encouraging the hubs to think critically about the messages they are sending out, and whether these messages, and the services they offer, are accessible to all in the community. Discussion about cultural issues, about language (and perhaps the need for translation) may be needed.

Detached workers’ knowledge of an area, both in terms of people and physical geography, may also be invaluable at this time. Workers can also get involved in the direct delivery of services, food, medicine etc., and encourage and coordinate the volunteering of others, including young people.

A detached worker in South East London was able to inform the hub high density multi-occupancy properties had not been leafleted and help ensure this happened. It is important workers help identify gaps, act as a link between initiatives like the hubs and local communities, and negotiate where necessary in order to bridge these gaps.

Risk Assessment in Detached Youth Work

The following guidance aims to support those undertaking risk assessments in the context of COVID-19.

Risk assessment is an essential aspect of detached youth work and important in securing the safety and wellbeing of young people, practitioners and wider communities. It is the duty of all organisations to undertake them.

Risk assessment should be active, used to inform changes to the way you work. Risk assessment processes need to be constantly reviewed and updated. This is particularly important in the rapidly changing context of COVID-19 and related government guidance.

Below you will find an example document; it will require additional information specific to your project, location, context and the authorisation/endorsement of a manager/your employer if safe and effective working practices are to be ensured.

It is important that all detached youth workers participate in the process of risk assessment prior to sessions. The responsibilities and accountability of managers and practitioners are established through this process.

Additional information is available from the UK Government Health and Safety Executive at: www.HSE.gov.uk/risk

To minimise risk of young people contracting COVID-19	To minimise risk of youth workers contracting COVID-19
Be clear about your intention when doing detached youth work	Wash hand immediately before and after sessions
Makes sure what you say about social distancing, physical contact, and safe hygiene is consistent and responsive to young people's questions and comments. Model good behaviour	Use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) i.e. face covering, gloves, hand sanitiser. Wipe phones to reduce transmission risk
Be aware of the current regulations for COVID-19 and think of strategies to talk these through with young people in order to limit risks (a 'walk and talk' strategy may be useful)	Arrive and leave in separate vehicles and avoid public transport where possible
Limit the types of activities that may require the passing objects. Provide information that can be given away rather than ask for it back	Staff working at a safe practical distance from one another and young people. Try not to become a focal point for groups gathering
Continue an open dialogue with young people about the formation of groups and any local by-laws and legislation about gathering	Ideally, wash all clothes and shower upon return home

Adapted from work by Bradford Youth Service, City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council, April 2020

Risk assessment template (example)

Company name:

Assessment carried out by:

Date of next review:

Date assessment was carried out:

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing to control the risks?	What further action do you need to take to control the risks?	Who needs to carry out the action?	When is the action needed by?	Done
Hot weather	Workers and young people Dehydration and sunstroke	Carrying sunscreen Bottles of water	Advise to wear head gear Move to shaded area Activities short with more rests and water stops			
Aggressive or Violent behaviour	Workers and young people Physical or verbal attacks on individuals	Observing behaviour before entering area. Always have mobile phone and ID at hand Make sure you and co-worker are always in sight of each other	Work in pairs Management and Police know days and times detached team working Conflict resolution skills if appropriate Know your limitations Walk away if you feel unsafe			
Trips and slips	Youth workers	Assess area before entering, walking etc.	First Aid kit available and at least one first aid trained worker			

	Pavements, rough ground, unstable area giving way etc.	Sturdy footwear	Do not take risks Read and understand safety and policy procedures of your organisation			
Covid Symptoms	All Sneezing, coughing, touching	Wear mask when in enclosed space Practice social distancing Wash hands at every opportunity and hand sanitiser to use regularly	Open conversation with young people about distance and washing hands Take care not to touch people or surfaces Cough or sneeze into mask or arm			
Physical contact	Workers Hand on arm or hug etc.	Observe behaviour and actions Keep at a distance from young people Read and understand safeguarding policy	Make certain community recognise you and your work Police knowledge of teams' work Be aware of others view of you			
Lack of light	Workers Losing way, put in vulnerable position Inciting fear in others	Always have a torch with you Emergency call out available Choose routes you know and are familiar with	Reconnaissance of new routes and new group hangouts Assess areas new to you Encourage groups to talk to you under streetlight if available			

Crowding	<p>All</p> <p>Spreading virus to each other</p> <p>Police could move them on and give fines</p> <p>Social distancing measures and rules on who you can meet</p>	<p>Role model</p> <p>Social distancing</p> <p>Discussion about why it matters for their families/friends</p> <p>Ideas for methods of talking and fun at a distance</p>	<p>Manager to have had discussion with Police</p> <p>Knowledge and understanding of your work</p> <p>Cards to give out explaining COVID-19 info</p>			
Illegal actions	<p>Young people</p>	<p>Observe before entering area, judge safety</p> <p>Community knowledge about work</p> <p>ID and emergency call available</p>	<p>Know your work policies on substance use etc.</p> <p>Recognise that this is their space and walk away if you feel unsafe</p>			

More information on managing risk: www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/

Detached youth work kit list:

- Identity card (to be worn/visible at all times)
- Your youth worker 'uniform', labelled as appropriate (if you use it)
- Work mobile phone, fully charged with numbers for colleagues/manager
- Contact details/cards/leaflets for young people, parents/carers, members of the community
- List of emergency contact numbers (incl. out of hours numbers for local authority Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), Children's Social Care (CSC), and Early Help (EH))

- Torch
- Personal alarm
- Paper and pen (for you and your team)
- Camera and/or dictaphone, particularly if you are doing project work or want to record your interactions with young people (make sure to ask for their consent)

- A wide range of young person-friendly information leaflets (e.g. local sexual health, mental health and other support services)

- Activity resources (e.g. games, juggling balls, Frisbees, footballs)
- Any items required for a specific session (e.g. team session plans, debrief forms, evaluation sheets, risk assessment forms)

For COVID-19 context:

- Permission to work slip/letter from your local hub/the police/trustees/local authority
- PPE (as directed by your organisation/local authority)
- Supply of gloves
- Face coverings
- Hand sanitiser
- Wet wipes
- Tissues
- Sealable plastic bags (to secure used PPE)
- Multiples of anything you typically use/may give to young people to use. (e.g. more paper and pens so you can give them away rather than collect in)

- Local mutual/council information leaflets/publicity

At the end of the session, ask:

- Have all recordings and evaluation procedures been completed?
- Have all staff had a chance to discuss their views/feelings about session?
- Have financial records been completed and receipts collected?
- Does everyone know the plan for the next session; what will happen; who is responsible for what; etc?

Preparation for future sessions

- Information for young people about meeting times, costs etc.
- Consent forms/information for parents/carers