

An example of a methodical approach on building up a professional relationship with new (unknown) target groups.

Dick Smit, Consultant/trainer youth work.

The youth workers of Stichting Jong Rotterdam, an organisation for professional youth work in the Netherlands, have been practising detached youth work for more than fifteen years, both in the city of Rotterdam as in several rural communities in the surrounding areas.

In most of the assignments the aim was to start detached youth work or, as in Rotterdam, to work as a mobile intervention unit in areas where local organisations were not able to get in contact with (groups of) young people who were gathering in public places (e.g. squares, shopping centres, play grounds). In many of the cases their presence was experienced by local residents and shop owners as being a nuisance.

There are many different kind of situations that detached youth workers can encounter depending on for instance the nature of the group, the circumstances, the connectedness between the involved actors, etcetera.

Based on the experience of the detached youth workers in various circumstances Stichting Jong Rotterdam developed a method for a systematic approach. This method is also used in training programmes for junior youth workers and for organisations which are yet unfamiliar with detached youth work.

In the third issue of "Logbook", the e-magazine of Poywe you can read an article on the implementation of this approach in the Erasmus+ project : Developing detached youth work in Malta and Romania (<http://magazine.poywe.org/magazine/logbook-issue-3/developing-detaches-youth-work/>)

The main aims of the method are to realise an objective survey of the situation and the actors involved, to build up a professional relationship with the young people and to work out together an effective plan of approach in order to improve the situation and/or to create a situation that contributes to the positive development of (the welfare of) the young people.

By working methodically and systematically these aims can be effectively achieved in a relatively short period of time.

The method consists of nine successive components or phases, from start (beginning of a new situation / target group) to the last phase of accountability and possible follow up (see scheme).

For youth workers who are unfamiliar with detached youth work practise shows that coaching on the job and supervision during the first time they use this approach is highly recommended.

An example: A thorough elaboration of the preliminary investigation and field research is essential in order to define the proper way to encounter the target group. You have to know for instance where and at what time you can find them, what kind of group it is, how big is the group, age, gender (mixed or not) , background, open for contact or suspicious, possible criminal contacts, are they using drugs or alcohol, commitment with the neighbourhood, etcetera. This knowledge you need to determine the best way to approach the group. Not only because the first impression the get from you is crucial for the further course but also from the perspective of your own safety.

But even when you are well prepared, youth workers who are not used to work on the streets might feel uncomfortable in approaching an unknown group in a surrounding the workers are not familiar with. Coaching on the job by an experienced detached youth worker will support them to overcome their diffidence.

Thus each component of this method affects successive components and will influence the results you want to achieve.



A method for detached youth work

