Further information is available through the following internet resources:

http://www.detachedyouthwork.info/fdyw001.html

http://detached.youthworkonline.org.uk

Submission to Youth Inquiry

1. Please comment on how the relationship between universal and targeted services affects detached youth work. Please give some examples that can illustrate this.

1.1 Detached youth work has always prioritised the needs of the under-supported. We have sophisticated research mechanisms that draw our attention to who we should seek to help. But detached youth work always tries to do this without stigmatising young people through systematic targeting. Philosophically and practically we seek to 'target through universalism'; being present in the street allows us proximity with those we are concerned to work with. But ultimately they choose to work with us. We respect their voluntary association and judge it necessary to avoid locating them in a deficit model. Furthermore, we believe it is essential to securing a trust-based relationship, on which detached youth work relies for its effectiveness.

1.2 Our principal concern is that service structures have shifted away from youth work models to those more commonly found in social work – away from that described above. This identifies young people as deviant and 'problems to be solved', which goes against our ethic of seeing young people as community assets, autonomous and with the capacities of active citizens. This ethic demands we work to a young-person centred model in which we negotiate with young people rather than work to pre-scribed goals and outcomes (as targeted work does). In practice this shift toward targets workers impels the worker toward a controlling function that destabilises relationships, often

pushing the young people away. It is clear to see that this is counterproductive. It takes judgement away from the worker, that most critical of resources when working in uncertain situations and with those who often have chaotic lives.

1.3 A strength of detached youth work is that it can mediate, catalyse and sustain engagement between young people and other services. This is important as many of the young people have no such existing relationships. With good negotiated protocols detached youth workers work effectively with these others. Without them they have often been treated as minority partners and have experienced what can only be described as the 'tyranny of partnership'. We are concerned also those other services are often less committed to working low-threshold (making themselves available and accessible in time and space; being flexible etc. Frankly, many will not leave their offices). This undermines the potential of collaboration. Conversely, where this does happen there is valuable cross-pollination of ideas, mutual aid; in sum a win-win situation for all services and, of course, young people.

1.4 Targeting, in our experience, can actually exacerbate social exclusion and undermine community cohesion. Groups become segregated from other groups and peers. Parents of more socially included young people tend to discourage their children from getting involved, often robbing the other young people of valuable pro-social influences. A shift to purely targeted services will be massively counterproductive.

2. How can detached youth work support volunteering? Please give some examples

2.1 Volunteering is often the route into (professional) youth work; which means many detached youth workers have good and valuable 'street knowledge' from their own experiences of growing up in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and from their volunteering. This form of representation is very unusual in public services and a great strength of detached youth work. It is a concern though that these volunteers are often subject to the same demands as professionals, although they have often very limited experience and training. Typically, detached youth workers work in pairs; today it is likely that a raw volunteer will be expected to buddy up with a professional colleague in

order to maintain this partnership on a cheaper footing. This is clearly problematic and re-positions the volunteer from a historical situation in which they were complementary to integral to service delivery. This helps neither the volunteer nor the service, and ultimately affects young people. The danger is the volunteer can be frightened off due to the demands made of them (and this can negatively affect their volunteering dispositions in the future).

2.2 Detached youth workers have a long history of encouraging young people to volunteer, and it is significant that these are often young people who have experienced disadvantage, and who rarely volunteer. Indeed this integration into local community life is a key aim of detached youth work. For those socially excluded these volunteering experiences can be truly transformative. A particular challenge exists for detached youth workers working in rural areas where there are often fewer readily accessible and suitable (i.e. linked to young people's interests) volunteer opportunities.

2.3 As above, the detached youth workers act as bridges and mediators between opportunities and groups unrepresented in volunteering. Where these opportunities are limited, unsuitable or simply missing detached youth workers will try to create them through seeking out new and innovative relationships with others in the community.

2.4 Many of the young people that detached youth workers work with volunteer within the context of the projects they are involved with, but often don't identify this as volunteering. They might, for example, sit on an interview panel, or represent the project at community events. They see this as part and parcel of what it is to be involved in the youth service – which it is.

3. Please comment on the National Citizen Service (NCS)

3.1 Detached youth workers are concerned that the NCS will have limited benefit for those they work with; many, many of whom are suffering from social and financial exclusion. These young people need year-round support and long-term opportunities for

personal and social development rather than a short-term experience. If it is in addition we would welcome the NCS.

3.2 Many of the young people we work with have, for example, responsibilities as carers and an involvement in an intensive programme is completely impractical. Hence they will, in effect, be excluded from the NCS. If the NCS is funded though cuts to mainstream services and detached youth work (as we are fearful of) this, again, will be counterproductive in terms of the promotion of social inclusion.

3.3 We are very much committed to the voluntary principle mooted in the NCS but that there may be barriers to involvement. We are concerned that the programmes are accessible, well resourced (some young people will, for example, need additional help simply to travel to these programmes), of high quality and that they take account of the learning of detached youth workers about the needs of socially excluded groups in their formation. The success of the NCS must build upon the trust-based relationships secured by detached youth workers; as in volunteering, otherwise the young people we work with will simply not have the confidence or where with all (practical support) to participate. Many young people have parochial attitudes that detached youth workers encourage them to scrutinise but this can also present a barrier. Perhaps localising the programme might be most appropriate. The NCS will definitely need onward support integrated into its model if it is to work for the kind of young people detached youth workers work with.

4. Which young people access your service?

4.1 Frankly, many of the young people detached youth workers work with are on the radar of other services. But it is instructive to note that they often have negative relationships with these other services; and conversely they have positive, freely chosen, relationships with detached youth workers. Clearly there is something important here. We contend these positive relationships are a product of democratic process that validates voluntary association.

4.2 Detached youth work, in the sense of those it works with, ticks a lot of boxes e.g. NEET, disaffected, homeless, those excluded from school or other services, those with drug and alcohol issues, those with poor sexual health, young people in and leaving care, teenage parents, those who judge the street a safer space than the home etc. as well as a wider array of young people perhaps on the cusp of having public service profiles. It is important to note that detached youth workers, given our universal commitment, work with many others as yet unidentified by others services. Our aim is to keep it this way. And then there are those simply not accessing others services (for a wider range of often complex reasons, not least because they may simply be put off by the rules or constraints implicit in these other services, or simply wanting to be social where environments to do so are limited or non-existent). This is of course one of the major reasons why we take services out on to the street in the first place. Working with this latter group has the profound effect of preventing them from needing greater and more expensive assistance from other services in the long run.

5. What do young people want from detached youth workers? Please give some examples that can illustrate this.

5.1 Simplistically, young people want their needs and interests addressing. They expect confidentiality in so-doing, in order that they can be honest and disclose their social realities, such as having drug or alcohol problems. They expect the workers to be friendly, talk, listen, empathise and learn from them. They want to be taken seriously, respected, trusted, and not judged. They want to feel safe and secure and part of a positive, trusting relationship. They seek a point of contact for accurate, up-to-date and impartial advice, information, guidance, support and practical assistance (such as access to condoms) and in places and spaces freely chosen by them. They seek a service that is above all accessible and flexible (something they find rare elsewhere). They want support to access and mediate with other services (e.g. the Police) and other community organisations. They seek a different, more informal relationship than those (more formal ones) with teachers, for example. They seek a relationship different also from that with their parents. They desire, want and need this third space – detached youth workers believe that what happens in this third space is an essential element of their transition of

autonomous adults. To deprive them of it or control them too much with it undermines this process. Beyond this they want to learn, do things (especially with others) have experiences; have access to opportunities where they can take responsibility, be powerful, get their voices heard (and have someone advocate on their behalf when this is not possible), and build relationships with their communities. They want help in pursuing learning significantly informed by them. They want to be encouraged to reflect on their lives. They want to have fun, leisure and recreation, and hang out, like all their predecessors.

Research findings from a detached youth work project (2009).

"The Ideal Detached Youth Worker"

Responses from a youth group:

• Not afraid of the cold, rain and dark nights (L.O.L).

• Someone that can communicate well.

• A good listener… not just a talker.

• Caring and honest.

• Someone who listens.

• Understands the issues that affect young people.

• Someone they can rely on.

• Someone who accepts them/ does not judge them.

• Somebody young people can trust.

• Someone that understands what young people want/need.

• Honest.

• Able to get things done.

• Good communication skills.

• Someone they can trust.

• Good at communication

• Someone who listens to them.

- Listening skills.

- Caring.

- Open.

- Knowledge.

- Keeps their word.

- Someone who is open minded and non-judgemental.

- Someone who respects them.

- Trust.

5.2 For detached youth workers these are foundational to the work. Furthermore, once workers have established relationships, young people accept that the workers will challenge them about why they are doing something in order to open their minds to potential consequences. A worker who may ask them, for example, "why is it that you aren't welcome or accepted at this community centre? Workers aim to create access opportunities in the area e.g. help them to get a team for a challenge day, or participate in an outdoor activity. They will challenge them to become involved in decision-making structures in the project or further a field, such as a local committee. They might inspire them to apply for grants to support work they want to do.

Testimony from detached youth workers:

"One example is a young man I met on the street who informed me that he had been arrested for driving a motor bike illegally. He stated that he was interested in bikes and that he was bored and with nothing to do. He explained that he left school with no qualifications and this knocked his confidence. I supported him to access our local NEET project where he created a CV and looked at various employment and training opportunities, as well as undertaking interesting activities such as paint-balling. He went on to complete a level 1 qualification in Numeracy and Literacy, and was successful in applying for a job at a local warehouse. We were able to link him up with a local motor-cross project where he learned to ride motor-cross in a safe and legal setting, for free. He

later successfully applied, with his group on the street, for a YOF bid to undertake motor-cross events. I supported him at the Magistrates Court, where he appealed his £500 fine and 8 points for driving a motor-bile illegally on the road. I advocated for him in court and explained that he had never committed a crime, or received a caution to-date; he had simply ridden his mate's bike around the corner, before being apprehended. I explained that the young man was trying to better himself and that he was undertaking numeracy and literacy qualifications and that he has set up an interview for a job the following week. I also explained that he was 18 and that the current fine of £500 would take him 2 years to pay off at a £5 per week. The magistrate was sympathetic towards the young man and reduced his fine to £80 and wished him luck with his qualifications and job interview."

"I supported a young man who was homeless and suffering from mental health issues, problem with his temper, and drug and alcohol issues – all clearly inter-related. I referred him to social services and advocated on his behalf. I also had to negotiate with Job Centre Plus regarding his benefit claim under the Severe Hardship rules. I used the CAF system as I felt that the needs of this young man were not being met; this instigated a Child Well Being Meeting, with a plan and review of his circumstances. This young man was successfully supported to receive a DLA claim. I worked with him to attend a residential experience in Scotland, which proved a success (albeit not being without issues). I also attended magistrates and Crown Court with him and advocated on his behalf. He recently contacted me in a text stating that he really appreciated the support 'through thick and thin'."

6. What is the role of young people in shaping detached youth work services? Please give some examples that can illustrate this.

6.1 Young people's very movements shape the working environment of detached youth workers. The general mechanism is that detached youth workers are responsive to the requests made of them by young people in these spaces and places; they will work to the young people's agendas and interests. As such, detached youth work is substantively

shaped by young people, in the spirit of democracy. What actually happens is a product of negotiation and the encouragement of young people to plan and develop responses to meet their own needs. Hence, the work is always influenced by the context in which it takes place. Thereafter, they are encouraged to evaluate their involvement.

6.2 Young people are consulted (through the use of a variety of media) about what they would like to see from detached youth workers, their local youth services and others public services. Often young people are directly involved in meetings with agencies or are able to express their opinions through a detached youth worker. Young people may participate in project advisory groups, for example. Detached youth workers will often also facilitate the consultation processes of other agencies as it is typical that they find it difficult to access the voices of those they are primarily interested in. This might involve negotiating with young people about a visitor to the work who will accompany the worker on the street. For many agencies this experience of contacting young people in the street is powerful and transformative. Many have radically (and successfully) altered their service structures on the basis of what they learnt in these environments.

7. What are the relative roles of the voluntary, community, statutory and private sectors in the provision of detached youth work where you are? Please give some examples that can illustrate this.

7.1 Others sectors tend to work with groups easier to engage. Generally this is fine for detached youth workers as they are committed to the idea of 'fit': where a wide range of services fit together so the needs of all young people are catered for. This is the wider sense of the concept of the Youth Service.

7.2 Invariably, detached youth workers have good working relationships with the wider community and a diverse range of services and structures (such as local town councils and multi-agency partnerships).

7.3 When it comes to the provision of detached youth work services the context of contracting and commissioning can engender competition between providers; unfortunately collaboration can be weakened as a result.

7.4 Often local communities will provide detached youth work on the basis of their recognition of its value; sometimes this is because statutory services have failed to provide detached youth work services.

7.5 It is a weakness that the private sector has limited if any knowledge of detached youth work, although it is difficult to imagine circumstances in which they would wish to deliver services. The Federation for Detached Youth Work are now being more proactive in bridging this gap and addressing other frailties in achieving more productive working relationships and partnerships with other sectors, although generally they are pretty good.

Testimony from a detached youth worker:

"The detached project I ran worked with church groups, community centres and organisations, housing associations, Police, fire officers. We met regularly to discuss community issues and developed work together including community events and joint trips and residentials. Talking regularly with these partners made it easier to publicise activities and helped us to link young people into projects and support that we previously had not known about. We have also been able to use spaces for meetings and project work free or at cheaper rates, which is always helpful."

7.6 Due to their street-based context, detached youth work is impelled to seek partnerships and relationships with others, making use of whatever resources are available. But this context also means workers get to know what is out there quickly, for example, in relation to funding regimes, which are increasingly complex and likely to come from a wide variety of sources. The downside of this is that it takes an inordinate

amount of time to administer – time that workers would prefer to spend working directly with young people.

Testimony from a detached youth worker:

"We recently organised road safety events in towns that have dangerous country roads. The emergency services told us they find it difficult to engage with young riders, drivers and passengers of hot hatchbacks. Detached workers find these groups much easier to engage with, so we organised events at the local fire stations with fire, police, paramedic officers and a charitable foundation that gives information. Workers did the press, advertising, recruitment and organised the programme and resources. Workers approached the Tesco Community champion programme that was able to donate money for refreshments."

7.7 There are often also collaborations across sectors in the delivery of in-service training and this can engender closer working relationships and confidence in referring to other services.

7.8 The greatest challenge for detached youth workers is in securing a more sympathetic understanding of what their work entails in non-youth work sectors, including wider community organisations, which have a tendency to see detached youth work as a mechanism for social control capable of moving young people on from areas where their presence is seen to be a problem.

8. What are the training and development needs of detached youth workers?

8.1 It is an unfortunate consequence of the marketisation of youth work that the majority of detached youth workers are part time level 1 Youth Work Assistants. The ratio to full-time, professionally qualified staff is now very high and we put this down to simple

economics. We seek a much more sustainable balance that best draws upon the relative merits of both full and part-time workers.

8.2 The colleges still produce many good and well qualified youth workers but the throughput to street work (given the generic nature of these courses) is not as influential as it might be. The Federation for Detached Youth Work are looking systematically at the need for more specialist training for those working in public space, including those many part-timers mentioned above (which implies any training responsive also need to be flexible and accessible). The time may have come when we need to move on from the rationale that all youth workers can do all and work in all environments.

8.3 There are obvious challenges for part-time workers in securing the time to train, plan, organise the work and participate in team meetings (seen as essential) so a preference for full-time professionally trained workers is obvious. The diversification in qualification pathways is not always helpful in organising training in a way that is systematic, coherent and of high quality. Some of these conundrums can be solved by keeping senior workers working a substantial number of face-to-face sessions on the street, especially in the most challenging areas and when the most challenging young people are concerned. This has the added benefit that they are able to offer on the street mentoring and teach part time workers 'on the ground'.

8.4 Pay levels also represent a barrier to long-term recruitment which is implicitly needed if training is to be developmental.

8.5 All workers have a need to learn about building relationships and communicating (increasingly through different and new medias) with young people. Research (especially with respect to local demographics and others statistical information) and evaluation skills become more and more important, particularly in offering a counter-poise to a culture that locates detached youth work only in areas of perceived anti-social behaviour. In so doing this demonstrates a profound shift in focus to meeting the needs of the wider community rather than those of the young people. Detached youth workers are committed to learning to learn from young people and empathise with them through engagement with their social realities and the context in which they live.

8.6 Partnership working is now fraught with dilemmas; to secure positive outcomes for young people, detached youth workers need skills in negotiating protocols and good working relationships with an increasing range of other agencies and community groups. This extends to a particular need for learning about the challenges and complexities of managing detached youth work; and networking skills with the wider world of detached youth work from whom they can get tremendous support. Regional forums, seminars and national conferences are needed for this.

8.7 There is a case for examining lone-worker training (but recognising also the specific needs associated with work that is often isolated from others); a more reasoned approach to safeguarding; and shoestring activity training, as well as the more traditional need to keep abreast with trends, such as in drugs work, reflective practice (and new developments in use of Socratic dialogue and Community Philosophy).

8.8 Ideally, training and development is informed by the needs of both the individual workers and detached youth work as a community of practice. It should be continuous and responsive to the context in which the workers are working.

Testimony from a detached youth worker manager:

"In my experience of managing detached workers, we are working on improving the training of part-time workers, where we have problems recruiting and retaining on a long-term basis. My experience has been that it can take a year or more for some people to get good at the work and part-time workers only stick around for two to three years, meaning that it can be hard to manage the balance in teams. We have moved towards having workers with more substantial hours (c. 18) and to full-time workers, as this pushes up the quality and commitment. We are also developing Level 3 modules in detached work for part-time workers, using the QCF framework. The key things I want new workers to grasp are about the nature of the relationship and understanding the aims and purposes of the work. I want them to understand how to work effectively in

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negotiated space, how to make judgements in difficult and risky situations, and how to ensure young people are fully involved in the development of the work. The other training need that I think is vital is getting workers to improve their evidencing of the work and in being confident about celebrating and communicating with the media."

9. What do you think will be the impact of public sector cuts on detached youth work, and on funding and commissioning arrangements?

9.1 Detached youth workers are fearful that public sector cuts will, somewhat ironically perhaps, lead to more working in the street as centre-based and other forms of provision are cut back in favour of cheaper ways to run services. As has been stated, we seek 'fit' between a diverse range of provisions in order to offer to collaborate with other youth service colleagues in offering a full universal service that meets the needs of all young people, some of whom of course are desperate for clubs to go to and feel unsafe on the street.

9.2 Funding and commissioning arrangements cause concern:

Testimony from a detached youth worker:

"In my area a voluntary youth group has been chasing funding though the YCAP, and I now see youth workers working together in partnership with Police on the streets, with an aim of reducing crime and anti-social behaviour. We are not against partnerships but the dangers of losing impartiality are clear: in this example this has resulted in some of their team being attacked and a loss of credibility and trust of detached youth workers out on the street."

9.3 Furthermore, we fear a counter-productive shift toward targeted work (arguments already made), especially with those identified as NEET or associated with anti-social

behaviour. This will be exacerbated through any out-sourcing that takes places. We anticipate this will mean having specific targets in relation to these target groups and seeing them enshrined in contractual arrangements. This scenario is worsened when these contracts are short, which also undermines the effectiveness of the work as it reduces (sometimes even removes completely) the time needed to research the area and young people's needs. This is essential to ensuring the work is appropriately focussed. Furthermore, some of the new players are of questionable quality; [low] cost should not be the final arbiter.

Testimony from a detached youth worker:

"Time limited funding for say 3 years attracts staff who can then do mapping and networking in preparation for the delivery of good projects. Shorter projects are invariably victim to a clock-watching culture as key staff are thinking about the funding running out and getting another contract. They are often inclined to leave in advance. This creates problems in recruitment and retention, and extra costs of advertising, recruitment and selection."

9.4 Sometimes time spent on the streets (e.g. fewer evenings worked) is employed as a way of cutting back on costs. This is counter-productive in maintaining relationships with young people who often have chaotic behaviours such that meetings might not be made. The periods between contacts then extends and relationships suffer. Good detached youth work always aims to have high contact time (at least three sessions a week) with those with greatest need. It can never be effective on the basis of an irregular, opt-in, opt-out model.

9.5 Where contracts have insufficient revenue streams the tendency is that services disappear from community-based settings to other environments where providers who can afford to top-up the difference (e.g. schools).

9.6 Funding and commissioning arrangements have ushered in some dubious practice:

Testimony from a detached youth worker:

"Anyone can go out on the street and talk to young people, but you need to know what you're doing to navigate the dilemmas and manage the boundaries and relationships in order to ensure the work does good rather than harm. I have seen work previously that has caused all sorts of problems, where the workers didn't have the appropriate understanding of the work. Issues could include making promises to young people that are unrealistic and raise hopes for change beyond possibility. There is sometimes collusion with young people about issues because the workers don't have a full understanding of a problem or not knowing how to manage the work around safety and the law."

9.7 A further irony is that the most socially excluded young people (who are invariably more disposed to resisting coercive interventions) will have their problems exacerbated as contracting regimes influence behaviours akin to 'picking low hanging fruit' (i.e. focussing on those young people easier to work with). We have seen performativity in practice.

9.8 Positive interventions based on models of informal education will also be affected and in demise, just when they are needed most. Quality will suffer. The irony is that detached youth work represents extraordinary good value for money, although its proximity with social reality demands we bear witness to the need for investment elsewhere. It does this from a community development context, which, increasing sustainablility, makes good sense economically. Detached youth workers own community development work e.g. getting involved in local action teams, community meetings, wider networking and following up individual young people who need the support are likely to be severely affected as a result of cuts.

9.9 Cut backs in one area of intervention will undoubtedly turn out to be a false economy as disaffection grows and crime and anti-social behaviour escalates (and community

cohesion goes in reverse). A more preventive mentality needs to inform funding to avoid increased costs to, for example, health and criminal justice sectors.

9.10 If workers have to spend more and more time generating income they will obviously spend less and less time involved in their core business, working directly with young people. This is a trend that has got out of control already and another false economy. Workers' morale will suffer. It should be noted also that many youth workers are on near poverty wages and this affects their sense of worth, so any contraction in salaries is simply untenable.

9.11 Detached youth workers' relative invisibility (an often under-recognised reason why they are effective) does make them easier picking, compared with sexier, more high profile services. Much of their work is relatively unrecognised; simple actions that help and support young people are rarely the subject of interest (although they are all the more-important because of that).

Testimony from a detached youth worker:

"When elected members decide where to make cuts they think about the youth centre in their ward and see it as something for their community, however unless they have a dog that needs exercising on winter nights they may never see us or hear about our work."

9.12 Of course the reality is that in some areas the whole youth service has been abandoned. Intriguingly though, in more enlightened areas, detached youth work has been earmarked for retention 'at all cost' due to the high esteem and value it is accorded by local decision-makers. We would very much welcome comparative research on this basis; it will surely evidence the benefits and value of detached youth work interventions.

10. How can available resources best be used?

10.1 Detached youth workers have long since been exponents and advocates of a more progressive participatory agenda, we see it both *as the work* but also the process by which resources are bets used. Engaging services users seems obvious to us given our democratic traditions and it is a truism that when services are profoundly informed by the needs and views of users they are always more efficient in the use of resources and finance. Likewise, detached youth work process (rather than outcome) -based models are evidentially more effective in meeting the needs of young people.

10.2 Continuity of provision is very important and represents cost-savings.

Testimony from a detached youth worker:

"It takes years to establish yourself in a community, vital knowledge and relationships can be lost if jobs are ended without a clear direction for the future."

Investment in training and support for detached youth workers also represents the best use of resources; this increases the quality of the work as well as the profile of detached youth work. Conversely, detached youth work has always been able to work with limited practical and physical resources, indeed many believe its focus on human resources is the reason why it works so well; it is this focus on relationships with young people that are of greatest importance for both parties.

10.3 A more systematic research profile of the areas to be worked in would ensure resources are best used rather than the current system, so often influenced by the whim of politicians seeking a response to, for example, anti-social behaviour problem on a short-term basis. It makes sense to focus our attention on the areas with the greatest need, *provided this is an evidence and young person-based notion of need*. Where communities are central to this process and engage in thinking critically about needs this process is emboldened. A shift to larger, national corporates with few if any links to local communities might undermine this.

10.4 Coordination helps. This enables workers to meet regularly and share and distribute resources. This pooling of resources is essential for detached youth workers who have so few resources of their own. Partnership working and on the street co-working (where subject to an ethical audit) can optimise resource use. In our experience competition for contracts leads to, at best, weakly collaborative systems (a point made in findings of the Nuffield Review).

10.5 There is potential for consortiums between statutory and voluntary sectors. But our experience is that many partners do not want to work in the flexible ways demanded of good practice with the most marginalised.

10.6 Ultimately,

Testimony from a detached youth worker:

"The most important resource for detached work is the worker and the best use is for them to be on the street as much as possible and to reduce the amount of time needed in the office, in meetings or trying to find funding. Most of the office time tends to be taken up by constantly having to evidence and generate income for the work, which can be a real problem as spending all your time evidencing the work or justifying directly impacts on your ability to do it."

Testimony from a detached youth worker:

"Why is it that the police officer, the teacher, the social worker, the community nurse are permanent fixtures in a community … and the youth work is not?"

11.1 This very much depends on a having a more enlightened view of 'results'. Much is literally unmeasurable. On the other hand more sympathetic *evaluation* systems (seen as markedly different from 'measurement') have the capacity to capture greater subtleties, simply because in evaluation we are trying to value (rather than measure) things. Scandinavian dokumentation models are much more robust and appreciated by workers. This is why qualitative measurements tend to fit and reflect the practice more than the quantitative. Much hangs on the precise nature of the system by which results can be validated. Overly bureaucratic systems, as has been pointed out, would only take workers away from face-to-face work, which, undeniably is the best use of their time.

11.2 There is also a temporal dimension; would we need to know what these results are to be before we started working with a young person or might it be possible to identify results through the passage of time? If results are rigidly pre-scribed this is not going to work in a street-based context that relies on responsive, appreciative and flexible practices (in sum, informal education) for their success. Given that workers end up focussing, through necessity (and because it is their job) on different kinds of issues, interests and problems as per the young people they work with it is questionable if the concept of results could be easily transferable from one project to another. The same applies to those worked with:

> **Testimony from a detached youth worker:**
>
> "Achievability with the hardest to reach groups would be harder to reach than with easier to reach groups. Therefore work with easy groups would be rewarded more than work with more challenging groups. This would make no sense."

11.3 This is symptomatic of a recent history of outcomes-based practice that has revealed the grave danger (and reality) of a target influenced behaviour (see reference to

performativity above) - with behaviours being perversely influenced simply to meet these targets.

11.4 Similarly,

> **Testimony from a detached youth worker:**
>
> "If payment by results was introduced the system would be corrupted by tick boxes and painting over cracks. Prime example of this is youth workers having to achieve accredited outcomes and the infamous 'bus journey' certificate."

But if we were to look at effects years hence this would be very interesting as our evidence base demonstrates that a good deal takes time to have an impact (hence so much is lost when we try to evaluate on short-term cycles).

11.5 Critical is the voice of the young person and some respect for their judgement as to whether what happened was of value to them. Detached youth workers have always been enthusiastic at being evaluated in a participatory context. Externally determined results will clearly undermine this democratic way of working.

11.6 The crux of the matter is that the detached youth worker never quite knows what needs they are going to be focussing on when they begin a piece of work. These emerge through dialogue and negotiation so cannot be pre-scribed. If the results to be achieved are pre-determined this will simply weaken and undermine detached youth work's flexibility – the very thing it relies on to be effective. If we were to accept that outcomes are 'what comes out' and that some 'results' only emerge over extended periods of time detached youth workers might be more sympathetic to payment by results. Results tend to be systematic and technical whereas many of the things detached youth workers do are less tangible. How might we establish and validate in terms of results, the quality of a relationship, the effect of a conversation, support and encouragement, especially in

dealing with a distressed young person, or young people's increased confidence and preparedness to 'have a go'?

Testimony from a detached youth worker:

"If a young woman doesn't get pregnant can we take the credit because we had a conversation, gave some information challenged her perceptions or issued a condom? Does her friend, boyfriend, family, the media, school nurse, pharmacy, TV, have any influence?"

11.7 Results tend to be associated with hard outputs such as securing employment – which, in detached youth workers' experience tend to come at the end of a series of more subtle interventions aimed at helping young people make a series of preliminary steps. Of course, detached youth workers aim at these harder outcomes and celebrate and evidence them when they occur; but detached youth work really needs to have a mixed economy of processes by which it is evaluated and not simply those that smack of scientism.

12. How do your local government structures and statutory frameworks impact on the provision of detached youth work?

12.1 There has been a profound shift in recent years from a long-standing and effective tradition of working to a young person-led, needs-based, agenda to a regime in which monitoring and accredited outcomes-based systems that see 'needs' being identified external to young people and of a social character – characterising young people as 'at risk' is part of this. Is the social science that underpins this really that confident about what each *individual* needs? Detached youth workers have always pin-pointed these needs through listening, dialogue, negotiation and learning from young people - and been productive because of it. They rely on flexible practices to do a good job. National Indicators have merely added to the burden of inflexible bureaucracy.

12.2 The regularity of often ill-thought out changes have a deleterious effect. Integrated services have merits, having work informed by area-based planning processes which have a variety of information systems adds to the detached youth workers knowledge of their patch, for example. And statutory networks can create much needed access to funding, information systems, health, safety, legal, recruitment and management advice, insurances, even access to keys (e.g. of a local park, making it possible to bring sports resources to those areas) and restricted parking areas. Conversely, as has been noted, some structures and frameworks have a negative effect, and can be somewhat tyrannical and oppressive (especially when non-detached youth work managers end up managing detached youth work without the knowledge to do so. Risk assessment, as another example, take an inordinate amount of time when subject to unwieldy bureaucracies). Cut backs to crucial supportive colleagues such as community development workers only makes matters worse.

13. How do you think the value and effectiveness of detached youth work should be assessed?

13.1

Testimony from a detached youth worker:

"The value of detached youth work can be recognised in the long term effects and impact that youth work has had on those it works with, who include some of the most needy, disaffected and socially excluded young people in society. We need to listen to the stories from some of these young people and past beneficiaries."

A number of references have been made to the vagaries of detached youth work management. But it is true to say that a suitably qualified youth work manager is able to assess through supervision how effective a worker is in their role. The perspectives and evidence of other professionals (e.g. schools, employment and criminal justice services)

are important also in qualifying the effectiveness of detached youth work interventions. These should be taken into account as part of a wider documentary and participatory evaluation regime that puts young people at the centre. This is all the more profound when we consider the young people detached youth workers generally work with; those whom have few or no experience of being involved in decision-making systems and experience structures such as the youth parliaments as exclusive.

Testimony from a detached youth worker:

"We create spaces for young people to discuss their feelings and ideas and can help them communicate with politicians and agencies on issues that affect them."

13.2 Elsewhere this might be referred to as 'service user involvement' but in detached youth work it is central to everything we do, and especially in setting and measuring indices of success. Young people's feedback about their experiences of the work, how they feel about it, and the benefits accrued are elemental to participatory practice. New medias can support their abilities to articulate their voices. Case studies and stories from staff and young people are what works best, especially in recounting the subtleties of the work to third parties.

Appendix I provides an example account of the life and times of a project over a number of years.

13.3 Evaluation should take place on a continuous and extended basis, over long periods of time. Good social science has the capacity to capture these stories and outcomes over short, medium and longer-terms, hence collaborations are needed to facilitate proper research. Case studies, rather than accredited outcomes, are much better forms of assessment and have the capacity to illustrate legacy.

Testimony from a detached youth worker:

"I am the product of detached youth work; they worked with me when I was young. It took me 15 years to realise my ambition was to be a detached youth worker and not work for a profit driven organisation."

Testimony from a detached youth worker:

"Many young people have, many years later, mentioned to me how important a piece of work I did with them was. I think long term impact should be taken into consideration."

Testimony from a detached youth worker:

"The positive responses we get from groups of young people hanging out on a Friday night would really change people's and the media's constant negativity towards our country's young people."

Testimony from a detached youth worker:

"I worked two evenings a week across two ex-mining towns for 10 years and it is only now that I talk to young adults and they tell me the difference I made to their lives. When the government contracted York University to track young people who were care leavers following the Children Act Leaving Care 2000 they tracked them regularly at yearly intervals and produced a report that was comprehensive and conclusive. This method could be considered for the wider group of young people detached youth

workers meet."

13.4 Much of the value of detached youth work has to be experienced and reflected on to bring it to life. Politicians and other decision-makers should visit the work more, particularly as it doesn't always translate well on to paper. Seeing the work in action has convinced even the greatest sceptics.

Appendix 2 is an account given by a private sector manager of his experiences

13.5 Detached youth work is equally appreciative of the value of monitoring systems and collects a good deal of empirical data. We recognise that it is important to record numbers of contacts etc. Our concern is that, sometimes, the things we are asked to monitor do not connect to service improvement (e.g. collecting the post codes of young people); and worse the ways in which we are expected to collect this data can contradict ethical parameters of respect and confidentiality (typically through a demand to ask invasive questions and an expectation that young people will divulge sensitive information about themselves and sometimes even their families). Beyond this, there are significant implications of the time taken to do this administrative work and the effect it has in reducing face-to-face service delivery.

Testimony from a detached youth worker:

"I think that we need to make sure that workers are given the responsibility for their projects and are not over analysed and measured, which can lead to taking time away from delivering the work. The emphasis should be on evidence collected by the youth workers and young people about the effect that the work is having in the local community e.g. through session recordings and an evidence file."

13.6 The emphasis has to be on robust reporting systems that reflect the reality of the work on the ground. Detached youth workers record how well the work responds to conditions on the ground. This includes the size and demographics of the area, how much time is spent there, the frequency of the work and how well young people are involved in decision-making. Qualitative records are a product of observation and evaluating young people's achievements. The essence is in tracking the 'learning journey'.

13.7 Assessment is one thing, maintenance of value and effectiveness is another. The latter can only be secured with investment in the work, and this includes CPD and supervision (both formal and informal) of staff. The reflection this provokes is essential to quality assurance and should be part of the evidence base.

This submission has been collated by responses made to a call for testimony by members of the Federation for Detached Youth Work, a voluntary organisation set up by detached youth workers, run by detached youth workers but whose membership includes a wide range of stakeholders committed to detached youth work.

The Federation would welcome greatly any opportunity to discuss any matters relating to detached youth work with the select committee.

Appendix 1

Evidence for the education select committee
Youth work in Hoo, Medway Council, 2005-2010

1. Lindsay Hartney has been working as a detached youth worker in Hoo Village since 2005 and over that time has seen significant progress and changes for young people living in that area. Hoo is the largest parish council village in rural Medway, over the years it has seen significant development and has taken on more characteristics of a suburban area with approximately '8000 people living in 3000 dwellings'[1]. The village is home to the rural peninsula's only secondary school as well as a shopping area, sports centre and community hall. It also has a mariner and caravan park with a combination of holiday homes and longer-term accommodation. The area also has a high youth population. Despite its high level of facilities, for a village, Hoo still suffers from some of the same transport and service provision issues that are common to rural areas, with expensive and limited bus services and a general lack of access to specialist support. From the start of the detached project it was clear that Hoo lacked in young people's services, as despite the easy access to the secondary school, many specialist services such as Connexions, drugs and alcohol and sexual health are located in the main towns, making them difficult for young people to access. It was also apparent that young people had little or no provision in terms of universal youth activities. The local Police officer had been in contact with the youth service to discuss his concerns, which included anti-social behaviour, but went beyond this, outlining a general need for engagement and improvement of provision. Up until 2005 Lindsay was working as a detached worker in the Chatham area and had reported seeing large groups of young people meeting as she used the shops on her drive home (Lindsey also lives on the peninsula.) This information began to form a picture that detached work might provide relevant support for young people in the village. Lindsay was asked to lead a team to investigate the potential for developing a project and this report will attempt to summarise some of

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1 www.hoosaintwerburgh-pc.gov.uk/index1_files/history.htm

the work that grew out of that intervention.

2. The team was initially met with a level of mistrust. Lindsay explains that young people felt they had heard it all before and had been let down by a variety of adults who had started to build relationships with them and made promises about improving the area, but had achieved very little. The young people described discussions with PCSO's, community safety wardens and their interactions with a group called Mum's Army, who had recognised that young people in the area needed some form of work or support, but despite good intentions had failed in attempts to provide this. Much of this can be understood in terms of the conflicting nature of the roles these agencies played and their position in relation to the young people. Both aimed to 'sort out' the young people, seeing them primarily as a problem that needed fixing; the Police's role, despite increases in community focus, is not to run activities or deliver youth work. However, both approaches were focussed on doing to the group and trying to force a change in their behaviour, rather than supporting them to meet their potential. Initial hiccups in the relationship with Mum's Army had lead to conflict arising out of disappointment that young people did not immediately live up to expectations or fully appreciate what was being done for them. Lindsay decided that it was important to stress that her team could make no promises about delivering change in the area. All they were able to guarantee was that they would meet the young people on a weekly basis and talk with them; they agreed to work with them to get their opinions heard, but made it clear that this did not mean anything would change. One of the pieces of work that the PCSO's and Mum's Army had been working on was the development of a ball court in a local park; young people had highlighted this as a need and some funding and progress had been made, before the project had seemingly fallen off the rails. The team had repeated requests from young people to help them to get the project completed, but on examining the conflicts and problems that were holding it up, Lindsay decided that the development would be unlikely to be achieved quickly, if at all. Using knowledge of the area and community profiling the team identified that the school had an astro turf that was hired out to groups from outside of the community, but unused by the young people out of school time. They encouraged the young people to write to the school, to attempt to negotiate its use on a weekday evening. Lindsay supported this request by talking to the

school, which agreed to let the young people use the pitch on Monday evenings for an hour and a half. This session is still running 5 years later and has proved extremely popular, attracting young people from the village and beyond; in its busiest times numbers have reached up to 100. Lindsay continued to work with the group around the development of the football cage, supporting young people to write letters to the parish council and attend meetings to discuss the cage, which was finally built in 2008 at least 3-4 years after its inception. By focussing on achievable goals, the team were prevented from repeating the failures of the previous groups and by delivering small changes they were able to earn an increased trust from the young people.

3. Having developed improved relationships with the group, Lindsay and the team started to become aware of a wider range of issues for the young people. One group highlighted that they wanted somewhere warm and dry to go in the winter months, describing a youth club, without having attended one in the past. Again, the team were keen not to promise anything, but introduced the group to the Youth Opportunities Fund, as a way to get started on developing a project. The group completed the application and were successful in their bid for funding. The team were conscious that although they didn't want to lose their street focus, they wanted to support the young people to develop their ideas. They encouraged the group to write an open letter to the 'Village Voice', a parish newsletter, requesting volunteers to help run the youth club. This letter received a good response and initially the youth service trained 8 volunteers. The parish's memorial hall was hired using the funding and young people selected equipment that they felt would be needed. The detached team agreed to support the club in its early stages, not wanting it to fail and because the young people wanted the team to be part of what happened there. However, it was an aim that the team would gradually withdraw, leaving it to be run by a team of volunteers. Unfortunately, this was never fully realised, for various reasons (illness, work commitments and moving home) the initial volunteers moved on and although the club continues to be supported by volunteers, this has been sporadic, affected by changes in the volunteer's lifestyles and situations. To sustain the club we have needed to supply youth service staff to work with whatever volunteers are available. The club still runs and this year we have made a differentiation between youth club staff and detached workers, to enable continued street

work, due to an awareness of other groups not engaging with the youth club. Young people's involvement in the club's development enabled them to have a greater awareness of the funding and resources required, which led to their involvement in subsequent attempts to raise funds, including running stalls at a local community day and a separate fund raiser, where a group ran a boot fair to raise funds for trips and activities, which paid for them to visit London to watch Billy Elliot.

4. There are currently two sessions a week that incorporate the football session at the school and the youth club, as well as street-based detached youth work, which continues to meet young people where they are to be found. During this time the project has received praise from the Police for its perceived role in reducing anti social behaviour, the activities at the youth club and the astro-turf have drawn young people from their usual meeting points near the shopping area. Although this wasn't the aim of these pieces of work, the team have appreciated that this has supported a reduction in the community's fear of young people by reducing the perception that young people were always outside the shop and causing problems and demonstrating perceived positive actions.

5. Over the past five years the team continued to engage with young people on a variety of topics and utilised a range of methods for meeting and working with them. There follows some examples of this work, grown out of conversations and interactions with young people.

Sexual health and teenage pregnancy -

6. Young people discussed sex education in schools, a group talked about how the school used cyber babies as an educational tool with young people, but that they only ran the course with those studying child care in year 11. The group felt this was too old and wanted to have the experience, feeling that it would enhance their understanding and decision-making around family planning. Lindsay agreed with the group and investigated how youth workers had developed similar projects. She found some funding to purchase three cyber babies and attended training on how to deliver this

work. Lindsay has delivered courses with young people across the area, which has opened a range of discussions and learning opportunities. She carefully assesses whether this input is appropriate to the group who have requested it and tailors projects on the basis of their needs. The team have also worked closely with the SRE and teenage pregnancy teams to ensure that young people receive better access to services. The relative isolation of the village has meant that access to free contraception has been a problem, as the nearest family planning clinic was unreachable at times young people could access it and they did not feel confident accessing services through their local GP, due to fears of being recognised by neighbours and relatives. The team set themselves up as a C-Card distribution and delivery point, where young people could register to receive condoms and collect them from youth workers. This work has evolved in partnership with the health teams and now Lindsey and another youth worker Lauren, support a health drop-in at the school that operates two days a week. The school serves most young people aged 11-16 on the peninsula, therefore reaches wider than Hoo village and has been the most utilised of the health teams SRE school-based drop ins.

Training and employment -

7. Poor transport and isolation have had a similar effect on young people's prospects for employment and training, a problem that has been exacerbated by the recent economic situation. Many of the young people that Lindsay encounters complained that they have trouble accessing the services provided by Connexions, as they are also based in the main town. Lindsay worked with Medway Youth Trust (who deliver Connexions) and arranged for a PA to visit villages on the peninsula during the day to offer advice and guidance to 16+ young people who are considered NEET. Lindsay and the PA visit the villages weekly, working from a mobile vehicle, ensuring young people are aware of vacancies and are supported to make good applications for work and training. This project has worked with young people at risk of disengagement and had some successes in getting young people into employment and training.

Transport -

8. It has been clear to the team that transport presents a major issue for young people living in rural area, acting as a direct social disadvantage when attempting to access services and for general development. Although this issue has not seen much progress, the structural and economic issues being significant, the team has worked to enable young people to get their voices heard in a number of ways, including writing letters and signing petitions that were presented to the Director of education and at meetings with local councillors to discuss the issues of transport. At a recent rural transport meeting, one young man was able to voice his concerns that were shared by parish councillors and demonstrated a synergy between older and younger members of the community, who are equally disadvantaged in respect to this issue. The Medway Youth parliament has also campaigned on the issue to raise awareness and combined efforts have had some success in providing discounted bus fares for under 16s**.**

Developing skills -

9. Many of the young people encountered by the detached team had expressed interest in music and MC skills. Through two PAYP bids, two groups attended a youth recording studio in Chatham, where they were able to work for 6 weeks on putting together an album and developing their lyric writing and music production skills. This project had an unexpected side effect, when some young people from another area joined the group at the studio. The two areas were not getting on well at the time and there had been a number of fights and incidents involving some of the young people we were working with. Although the mix caused some concern to the workers, they persevered and the relationships improved to the point that when Lindsay went to drop the CD's off to the young people, she found that they were socialising together. Since this project, Strood youth centre (which is closer to Hoo than Chatham) has set up its own music studio and two of the young people from these projects have been instrumental in its development, volunteering to support other young people with lyric writing and performance skills.

10. On assessing the project, the team became concerned that it was engaging a lot more

young men than women and subsequently worked with the young women to tackle this problem. They learnt that some of the young women had an interest in hairdressing and borrowing an idea from one of the other areas, Lindsay approached a salon in Hoo about setting up a project. A hairdresser from the Salon worked with the young people in a 'real work' environment to develop their skills and learn about his job. They originally planned to only do hair styling, but the youth workers allowed the group to progress by volunteering to let young people cut and dye their hair, under the supervision of the hairdresser. This had a huge impact on the level of trust and the learning possibilities through the course. One of the young women had studied hairdressing at college and said that she felt they had been able to do more in the six-week course than they had in a year at college.

Youth Volunteering -

11. Throughout the life of the detached project young people have given their time and energy to its development. One of the keys to it success has been the sharing of work between youth workers and young people, who have developed a better range of provision in partnership. Youth volunteering happens naturally in the project, from running stalls at boot fairs and charity events to helping in the youth club. Recently, the team needed to recruit some new staff members and Lindsay wanted to ensure that young people were fully involved in the process. Eight young people formed a team, who wrote questions, greeted and interviewed candidates and fully informed the final decisions over recruitment of the new staff. When asked what they thought about volunteering one of the young women turned her nose up and said she wasn't interested in volunteering, yet she is regularly involved in all aspects of the project's development. The young people do not see their involvement as volunteering, but as contributing to their project, yet they work on these activities and towards their goals harder and with more focus than many adults might.

Community action and participation -

12. There are numerous examples in this account, and many more in the life of the

project, of how detached youth workers have enabled young people to get their voices heard on issues that concern them or to support them to improve and develop the services available to them. These methods have included letter writing, making petitions, attending meetings and generally communicating with the community and politicians. When the youth workers suggested these methods or made them available to young people they probably had some idea of the potential for political education, but sometimes, and definitely for the young people, the focus was on the matter at hand. Lindsay explained that she was talking to one of the young people recently and they told her about a problem at sixth form. The young woman said that the six formers were angry, because the school had stopped them from leaving the premises at lunchtime and during free periods. In previous years this hadn't been a problem, but new gates and rules for the younger age groups were impacting on them. The sixth formers had hoped to be treated like adults and felt they were still being treated as children. The young woman explained how they had got together and developed a petition and written a letter to the head of the school to demonstrate their concerns. Although it is hard to prove, it is interesting that the young people have used the methods of participation they have used with their youth workers to communicate concerns in an adult and considered way.

13. The Hoo detached project continues to work with young people in the village, developing projects and work based on their needs, interests and wishes, with the aim of enabling young people to reach their potential, whatever that looks like.

Appendix 2

Testimony of a senior private sector manager who works with a large multi-national company and who spent a fortnight with a community association (and their detached youth work team) as part of his CPD:

The following questions were asked during a post-experience interview:

- Can you tell me about your perceptions of detached youth work before this experience?

- Can you describe your experiences and subsequent reflections?

- How would you describe detached youth work to someone else now?

- On what basis do you think 'it works'?

Response:

"Before going out with the detached youth workers I had no idea this kind of work even existed. I had a sense of youth groups and youth clubs but no idea youth workers worked on the street.

I was intrigued at this interesting idea but my first thoughts on observing the work was that it was 'low key, pretty random, and essentially low impact' and that the workers were doing little more than wander around and that their contacts were pretty hit and miss, often superficial with an occasional intervention that I thought was moderately valuable. I felt an 'effect' may or may not happen and that there were a good deal of opportunities missed, particularly to solve drug and educational problems. In sum, I thought it was a bit of a waste of time.

Having been out with the workers a few times and reflected on my experiences through talking to colleagues who also shared these experiences I began to realise that there was purpose to the route taken and that this was a tricky group of young people to engage in this or any other part of the 'system'. More fundamentally, I realised that a bulldozer approach, for example in asking a question such as "have you thought about STDs?" would see these young people turning off like a light.

My continued exposure to the work made me realise that this was a practice where ordinary and natural conversation is everything, and that this is the basis of relationship-building.

I did of course hear and observe conversations that I recognised as more targeted. For example, a conversation took place about how condoms could be obtained and where they could be obtained for free.

I was conscious that my presence was distorting the relationships somewhat and that the work might well have been even more productive if I hadn't been there.

Another thing that made me think and see things differently was the conversations I had with the workers independent of the young people. It was clear they had an in-depth knowledge of these young people's family and backgrounds. And they had a shared understanding with the young people of their real lives.

I became convinced that by having detached youth workers around there was more than half a chance that these young people would turn to them with their problems *and* when they had new problems. But the relationship the workers have with young people also meant that *they* [the workers] are able to spot problems emerging and work with the young person to head them off.

Intriguingly, the positive relationships detached youth workers had with young people meant the young people were more disposed to seeking support from a wider range of

services with whom the detached workers were associated. In essence they acted as mediators to these other services, such as drug treatment and Connexions.

Above all, my experience taught me that detached youth work is a subtle process, based fundamentally on relationships, both individual and social. And it is really valuable because of this.

The critical point for me is that detached youth workers have a capacity to create connections and develop relationships with young people who so often don't have these kind of relationship elsewhere, whether with families, friends or the institutions, such as schools. Frankly, they seem to have few if any {positive} relationships with adults at all.

I would say that it would take some substantive studies and research to provide the real evidence for the effectiveness of this kind of work. Ideally this would compare two neighbourhoods, one with detached youth work and one without. This would have to be over an extended period, say, ten years. The research would need to have a substantial observational dimension as well as trying to identify evidence of social capital and indicators of the depth of relationships in these different neighbourhoods.

With regard to these timescales, I am intrigued and optimistic by the proposals and policy for new GP commissioning arrangements. Whilst these people are unlikely to buy specific detached youth work services they are big influencers. And the fact that GPs very often hang around for significant periods of time mean they have the long-term interests of their communities in mind. They are likely to say "I am going to be here for 20 years" and they would support detached youth work because of it (and where others who think in shorter time spans would not). This is the kind of timescales necessary to properly evidence detached youth work.

Furthermore, the evidence of the value of detached youth work needs to be seen in a wider context of health, well-being and the resilience of both individuals and communities. The evidence of the effectiveness of detached youth work can be very clear but also might only be visible in long-term changes in communities. There are lots of

different outcomes and we certainly need to expand our horizons about what constitutes evidence beyond numbers and statistics. Something more qualitative is needed and this can only be captured through observation and descriptive reporting.

A narrow field of vision will never do justice to detached youth work; if everything is based on the impact on crime rates or GSCE results a good deal is lost and disregarded as evidence. A range of things need to be taken into account, in order to illustrate accountability. Judgement is all-important in providing evidence of the subtleties of detached youth work. Involving young people in this process is really important. A lot can be learnt for example about the impact of interventions through dialogue, by asking them to chart their progress along some kind of scale, and asking them why these changes have taken place. Of course, we need a balance between the numerical and the descriptive. The latter is not recognised as much as it should be; in fact it *is* taken into account and influential in a policy-making context. Perhaps it needs to be made more positive.

In the end it might be that focusing on narrow issues such as attainment will only be revealed as problematic when we *don't* invest in other things, like detached youth work; essentially the evidence that will be seen by the things we lose or don't have through failure to invest in these practices.

@ Federation for Detached Youth Work, 14th December, 2010.