

**POLICIES AND
GUIDELINES
OF**

**THE OUTREACH
TEAM**

OF

**BALLYMUN REGIONAL
YOUTH RESOURCE**

2004.

Introduction.

This document sets out the policies and guidelines relating to the outreach work of Ballymun regional youth resource. (BRYR)

The purpose of BRYR's Outreach Youth Work is to develop a relationship of trust with young people in Ballymun and to facilitate the building of bridges between them and the community, so their developmental needs can be addressed.

BRYR's purpose is to be a resource for meeting the developmental needs of young people in Ballymun aged between ten and twenty one years. BRYR is particularly willing to travel the road with young people who face serious obstacles on their path of development. Through outreach work, BRYR puts itself in situations where it will have contact with many young people on their own terms, on their own territory, and where it is likely to meet those young people for whom development is most challenging.

Outreach work begins with a contact with these young people, which is achieved in two ways. Firstly, the outreach team make contact with young people where they hang out in Ballymun, by working on the streets of the area at set times consistently each week. Secondly, the team are in contact with young people through referrals made by concerned parties within the community, such as parents, teachers, neighbours and others.

The work is carried out by an outreach team within BRYR. This team does the difficult job of making contact with young people within Ballymun and attempting to build a relationship with them. The team often operates in the uncontrolled environment of the street and works in unpredictable and sometimes volatile conditions. As such it needs to be well resourced and tightly managed. Good management and good organisation are essential to support good quality developmental outreach work over the long term.

The work of outreach is essentially team work. It is delivered by a close knit team, who rely on each other for support in their work. The maintenance of this team is a crucial element for good outreach work. This includes ongoing professional development for every team member.

The combination of good management and good teamwork enable the outreach youth workers to maintain the boundary between supportive and consistent professional relationships with young people, and ordinary personal friendships. It is important to ensure outreach staff can maintain boundaries between personal life and professional life, and do not confuse their role as outreach youth workers with that of other professionals, such as social workers, counsellors or other sorts of youth worker.

Strong management and team support, combined with their being integrated into the significant youth resource within Ballymun that is BRYR, enables the outreach workers to move their interaction with young people beyond mere social contact. A key part of the team's strategy to facilitate young peoples' development is to build stronger bridges between them and the community within which their developmental needs may be met. Through working closely with others such as, for example, BRYR's ongoing support

resource, *Outfit*, or other relevant resources within BRYR and the community, the outreach team can support the young person to integrate more fully into the community.

Outreach is an essential service within BRYR. But equally, BRYR is essential to outreach. The outreach work offers BRYR a direct line into the lives of young people in Ballymun, especially those at risk. BRYR offers the outreach team a greater possibility of building on the initial social contact with young people and, over time, of facilitating their real integration within the community. BRYR, armed with the connection to young people through its outreach, can advocate for them in the community with confidence, and can develop its own well informed responses to their needs.

Outreach has been operating for some years before these policies and guidelines have come to be written. They are written out of the lived experience of outreach work, and are all the more relevant for that. They should be a valuable reference for outreach workers and for others in BRYR who rely on the outreach team to inform their work. They provide a definition and framework for BRYR's outreach in Ballymun. They set down what it is, and what it is not, and offer a vision of all it can be.

There are ten policies set out in this document. Each section in this document begins with one of the ten policy statements. Each statement is followed by a rationale, which explains why the policy is needed and elaborates on the content of the policy statement. Each policy is followed by a series of numbered guidelines outlining how the policy should be implemented in the day to day work of the outreach team. The guidelines and the short elaborative statements which follow give a detailed picture of to how best practice in implementing the policy can be achieved in concrete terms.

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1. Management of BRYR Outreach Youth Work.

Policy: The Outreach Youth Work should be carried out under the direction of the management of BRYR and according to the policies determined by the management of BRYR.

Rationale.

Of its nature, outreach youth work needs to be tightly managed and well organised. The street work in particular is carried out in an open, uncontrolled environment. It is unpredictable. The team do not know for certain who they will meet in a given session or in what circumstances. They may, for example, be confronted with hostility or aggressive behaviour, emotional distress or indifference. Outreach workers may feel pressure to solve the problems of the young people they meet, in ways that take them beyond their capacity, or take them outside of their role. In the work of developing a trust based relationship with the young people, their professional friendship may become confused with a personal friendship. Of course these dangers exist in any youth work, but they are more pronounced in outreach youth work because

- outreach youth work takes place most often in an uncontrolled environment (i.e.: on the street.)
- the work is primarily with the most vulnerable young people in Ballymun.
- the purpose of the work is primarily building relationship (rather than, for example, skills training.) This means that questions of the boundaries between personal friendship and professional friendship will frequently arise.

Possibly more than any other type of youth work, there is a real danger of outreach youth workers confusing personal boundaries with professional boundaries, or confusing the boundary of their role as youth workers with other professional roles, such as addiction counsellors or social workers.

For this reason, outreach youth work needs a strong and clear management that defines and directs the work. The work needs to be well organised so management systems, roles and responsibilities are clear to all.

Guidelines.

1:1. The management functions of the outreach team are exercised by the team leader the programme manager, and the management committee of BRYR.

The team leader is responsible for

- The day to day operations of the outreach team,
- The supervision of staff in the outreach team. The team leader should be aware of the workload and timetables of all staff.
- The maintenance of relationships within the outreach team.

The programme manager is responsible for:

- The development and formulation of policy in relation to outreach work,
- The supervision of the team leader.
- Ensuring the team is adequately resourced and supported within BRYR.
- Ensuring the outreach work of BRYR's outreach team informs the policy of BRYR as a whole, as appropriate.

The management committee holds legal responsibility for BRYR and consequently the ultimate responsibility for all that happens in outreach youth work within BRYR.

1:2. Systems of management should be clear and structured.

The team leader should report directly to the BRYR programme manager.

Team members should report to the team leader.

The team leader should meet with each staff member once a month for supervision. These meetings should be held at fixed times and follow a structured format. The purpose of a supervision meeting is:

- To discuss the staff member's work over the past month.
- To discuss their planned work for the coming month.
- To discuss any issues of concern the staff member may have in relation to the work.
- To discuss any issues of concern the staff member may have within the outreach team that are impacting on the work.
- Constructive feedback from the team leader on the work of the staff member and supportive direction on future work.

The programme manager should meet with the team leader once a month for supervision.

An outreach team meeting should be held every week.

The outreach team leader should hold regular meetings with the BRYR senior youth worker in order to ensure co-ordination and information flow between outreach and other resources within BRYR.

All outreach staff and a member of the Outfit team should attend team meetings.

The agenda of team meetings should cover:

- Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising.
- Street log report on the past week's work. (See also 6:1.)
- Follow up data base report and referrals.
- Activity planning (trips, street education etc.)
- Outfit report.

- Links between the outreach work and other youth work within BRYR.
- Reports from outside committees on which team members sit.
- In-service training.
- Staff issues (holidays, time in lieu etc.)

1:3. An effective information flow should be maintained between the team and the BRYR programme manager.

Term reports should be prepared by the team leader for the programme manager including:

- A summary of the street logs for the quarter.
- A compilation of the follow-up data base.
- An outline of issues arising from the work during the quarter,
- A note of any issues arising from work done in the quarter which the outreach team or the team leader feel should be further addressed by BRYR.

A report on the work of the outreach team should be included on the agenda of the BRYR management team leaders' meeting convened weekly by the programme manager.

The programme manager should maintain informal contact with members of the outreach team.

1:4. All outreach staff should avail of external supervision.

The focus of external supervision is on:

- How the person is coping personally with the challenges of outreach work,
- How they are maintaining the boundaries between their personal and professional lives,
- How they are maintaining boundaries between their role of outreach worker and the roles of other professionals in the community.

Each staff member should avail of external supervision once a month.

The confidentiality of external supervision should be respected by all.

1:5 The culture of management and organisation within outreach should support an ethos of support and good working relationships.

While different roles within the outreach team and its management should be clear and defined, there should be ease of communication and a sense of collegiality among all personnel.

While management is responsible for the direction of the work, management should be operated in a way that encourages inclusive thinking and input on policies and strategies from all staff within outreach. There should be a culture of dynamic interaction with a free flow of creative thinking among all staff.

Those who hold positions of authority within outreach should always work in a way that is supportive and respectful of those they lead.

2. The Outreach Team.

Policy: Outreach work should be carried out by competent, confident and committed individuals, working as a team.

Rationale.

Teamwork is central to outreach work. Given the nature and stresses of the work, it requires a capable group of individuals working as a strong team to do it safely and well.

A strong team is characterised by a sense of *solidarity*, *security* and *significance* among team members. Together, these make for good team morale.

Solidarity. Each team member feels a sense of common cause with their colleagues. They share a common understanding of the work in which they are collectively involved. They feel a sense of loyalty to each other and to the job in hand.

Security. Team members feel safe in the team, physically and emotionally. The team is free from undermining behaviour such as bullying or exclusion. The team is aware of and committed to good health and safety practices.

Significance. Each team member understands and accepts their role in the team. They feel they are playing a meaningful part, and that it matters that they are there. They know that their voice is heard within the team.

As well as team morale, the work requires that individual team members have sufficient capacity to be able to fulfil their role. A team member's capacity can be understood as a combination of competence, confidence and commitment.

Team members should be *competent*, meaning that they are able to maintain professional boundaries, and are participating in adequate ongoing professional development to ensure they are equipped for the task.

Team members should be *confident*, meaning that they feel comfortable in their role and fully understand and appreciate what that role is.

Team members should be *committed*, meaning that they are dedicated to their work, and believe in its value. They each can be relied upon to work in a consistently professional manner.

Guidelines.

2:1. Every effort should be made to support and maintain a sense of solidarity, security and significance among team members.

Each team member should understand and be able to articulate the purpose of BRYR outreach youth work. The role of each team member within the team, and the tasks allocated to them should be clear both to them and to other team members.

The team leader should ensure that team members understand the purpose of their work, their role as outreach workers, and the tasks assigned to them.

Team members should maintain an attitude of practical and emotional support towards each other in relation to the work of outreach.

Team members should challenge each other supportively to remain within the boundaries of their role as outreach youth workers.

Team members should remain respectful towards each other at all times.

Team members should read, understand and sign BRYR's anti-bullying policy.

Team members should be given opportunities to input into the policies guiding outreach work.

There should be regular reviews of policies and guidelines relating to outreach and updating of these as required.

Team members should be encouraged to reflect on the initiating and sustaining causes of the situations in which developmental needs of young people are not met. They should also be encouraged to input into the strategic planning of BRYR their observations and suggestions about how these issues might be tackled.

It is the responsibility of management to ensure that adequate opportunity is afforded the team to strengthen its team morale, in terms of the solidarity, security and significance experienced by its members. Such opportunities include:

- Occasional team building sessions, where relationships between team members can be strengthened and conflicts addressed openly and constructively.
- Space within team meetings for team members to check in about how they are experiencing the work.
- Space within team meetings to allow team members reflect on the issues they encounter through the work and how they as a team or BRYR as a whole might respond to them.
- Occasional evaluation and strategizing sessions for the team.
- Participation of team members in BRYR staff evaluation and strategizing sessions.

Where conflict arises between team members which threatens the capacity of the team to do its work well, every effort should be made by the team to manage the conflict in order

to safeguard the work. It is the responsibility of team members experiencing difficulty with others on the team to raise the issue with the team leader in supervision.

2:2. Every effort should be made to ensure team members are competent, confident and committed in their work.

Team members need to have an empathy with the young people with whom they will interact to the extent that they can sympathetically appreciate the reality of their lives.

Team members need to feel comfortable in the company of young people and be able to cope with testing behaviour they will encounter.

Team members should be clear on and able to articulate the nature of their professional boundaries as outreach workers. They should be able to maintain these boundaries at all times.

Team members need to have excellent communication and listening skills so as to be able to:

- Comfortably engage with young people in conversation.
- Communicate with young people in a way that helps the young people relax and feel at ease.
- Communicate a genuine interest in the young people and a respect for them.
- Communicate clearly who they are and what they are there for as outreach youth workers.
- Listen to what the young people are saying.
- Demonstrate that they are listening and have heard, using words and non-verbal communication.
- Read non-verbal communication signals from young people.
- Be able to recall what they have been told or what they have noticed after an interaction is finished.

Team members need the capacity to strategize. They should be able to reflect on the experience of their work and develop creative strategies to respond to the diversity of situations which they will encounter.

Team members should be open to learning, accepting constructive feedback on their practice and able to identify their training and development needs as practitioners.

2:3. Team members should see themselves as being involved in a developmental learning process as practitioners and as such will be accessing training throughout their time as outreach youth workers.

BRYR should be committed to working with its outreach staff to identify training needs and providing them as appropriate through its resource unit.

Outreach staff should have training in child protection.

- All outreach staff need to have an in-depth understanding of statutory guidelines on child protection. Training in *Children First, the National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children* as set out by the Health Board should be undertaken as a basic requirement.
- Such training needs to be further interpreted to suit the specific circumstances surrounding youth work in general and outreach work in particular. Staff should have access to some training which will enable them to apply Children First to their situation. For example, the City Of Dublin Youth Service Board offers training to their constituent organisations in child protection for youth workers.
- Training in the area of child protection for outreach staff should also cover *self protection*. This should enable staff to deal with their own emotional responses to hearing young people talking about, for example, their experiences of abuse. Staff need to be able to define and maintain personal boundaries so they can respond professionally to disclosure of such experiences.

Outreach staff should have training in how to deal appropriately with difficult behaviour encountered when interacting with young people on the street. Difficult behaviour may take two basic forms.

- Young people in a distressed state or experiencing severe emotional strain. When outreach workers come across this, they need the skill to respond constructively in the context of an interaction on the street, often with other people standing nearby. This skill involves responding sympathetically, offering a way forward, but containing the situation, so the young person is protected.
- Aggressive and threatening behaviour on the street When outreach workers encounter this, they need to be skilled enough to respond in a way that safely defuses the situation.

2:4. Staff should be equipping themselves constantly with information about services and resources available for young people in the community so they can easily advise them or answer questions they may have.

Staff should have the capacity to practice information dissemination in ways that are both reactive and proactive.

Staff should feel confident and competent in being able to respond to questions young people will raise about how to access services or resources, or how various statutory services operate.

Staff should never give information that they are unsure about. Where a young person requests information and the outreach staff at hand cannot respond, they should:

- Make it clear that they are unsure of the correct information.
- Direct the young person to the place where they can access the information for themselves.
- If this is problematic, commit to investigating the query and coming back to the young person with a response.

BRYR should commit to providing back up to outreach staff in accessing information so that requests for information from young people can be responded to.

Staff should periodically create spaces to reflect on information deficits among the young people they work with and design responses to that need. Where staff identify a specific information deficit among the young people they meet, they should be enabled to access the required information either directly themselves or with the support of the resource unit of BRYR . (Examples include where young people need to know social welfare entitlements, legal procedures or how to access educational opportunities.)

2:5. The team should be formed in a way that offers the optimum balance of skills and experience to the work.

The team should ideally reflect a mix in terms of:

- Gender: both male and female.
A mixed gender team should be maintained for outreach work.
- Personality types: both extraverted and introverted.
Approaching a group of young people as strangers attempting to make contact is not an easy task. Extraverted personalities will more easily break the ice and keep the communication open. An introverted person may observe important dynamics in the course of the interaction, which will be useful in planning future work. They may also be able establish one to one contact with one or two young people at the edge of the group, while their colleague interacts with the group as a whole.
- Address: both local and non-local.
Staff who live locally will bring local knowledge to the team. They are likely to know where groups of young people are congregating and may already know some of the young people, making establishing contact with a group easier. However, local staff will need to watch most carefully the boundaries of professional and private life, as they will continue to meet the young people even when not at work. Their view of some young people may also be prejudiced by a previous knowledge of them or by their local reputation. Outside staff will bring a fresh perspective. Their relationship with local young people will begin in the context of a professional interaction, and so

is less likely to be prejudiced. Non local staff are therefore valuable to have on the team.

3. Maintaining professional boundaries.

Policy: Staff should maintain clear boundaries between their personal and professional lives and between the role of outreach youth worker and other professional roles.

Rationale.

As outreach youth work is about building relationships of trust characterised by friendliness and consistency, there is always a danger for staff of blurring the boundaries of a professional relationship and a personal one. The professional/personal boundary is marked by, for example,

- The *time* of day. When the staff member is working and when they are not.
- The *place* of meeting. Where interaction should take place and where it should not.
- The *business* of the interaction. What is the business of their interaction and what is not.

Failure to maintain such boundaries will lead to confusion for the young person. When the worker finds they have to re-draw boundaries, the young person may well feel rejected and further alienated.

The professional role boundaries are marked by the difference between an outreach worker's job and that of another professional, such as a social worker or a counsellor. Confusion of these roles will lead to a raising of expectations for the young person which cannot be fulfilled by the youth worker. So ultimately confusion and rejection will be the result. Even if the young person needs a professional in that role, but they are not available, it is inappropriate for the youth worker to attempt to fulfil the role themselves. Their response at that time should be to advocate through their team leader and ultimately through BRYR to deliver the required service to the young person.

A blurring of boundaries can also exist between the role of the outreach team and other youth work. While outreach is concerned primarily with establishing a trusting relationship between a consistently caring adult and a young person, any medium to long term developmental youth work which builds on that trust, must be taken up by others. Otherwise outreach workers would cease to become outreach workers and their time would quickly be filled carrying out ongoing developmental work for the first thirty or so young people on their data base.

Management carry a specific responsibility in this area. Outreach work needs to be tightly managed in order to support staff in minding boundaries.

Guidelines.

3:1. Outreach staff should maintain clear boundaries between their personal and professional lives.

Staff should present themselves clearly to young people as youth workers who work for an outreach team, which is a part of BRYR. They should communicate to them

- That they are there to befriend them as youth workers,
- That they are there to offer assistance, support or advice to them within their role of youth workers,
- Where, how and when they may be contacted by the young people if necessary.

As and when necessary, staff should also make clear to the young people that they are not prepared to accept inappropriate behaviour such as aggression, illegal activity, or sexual harassment toward them or others in their presence.

Staff should avoid interacting as a youth worker with young people outside work hours.

Staff should avoid discussing their own private lives with young people.

3:2. Outreach staff should ensure that their role as outreach workers is never confused in the minds of young people with the roles of other professionals such as Social Workers, Gardai, School Attendance Officers or other statutory agents.

The outreach service should establish an understanding as appropriate with other agencies, so the function of outreach work is clear to these agencies.

Staff should be able to draw clear distinctions themselves between their role and other professional roles. Examples include:

- The Health Board.
The statutory role of the Health Board in regard to young people is to ensure that they have access to their basic needs such as food, shelter and a safe environment on an ongoing basis. Outreach staff should have contacts within the Health Board and have clear paths of referral for young people whom they come across in their work who are in need of their services. Outreach staff may occasionally need to act directly to ensure a young person gets access to emergency shelter, or to a hospital or to food. However, they should not be providing these services as a matter of course, but instead be connecting the young person to the social services available.

- The Gardai.

The statutory role of the Gardai is to protect the community by enforcing the law. The outreach team may be in contact with young people who break the law. However their role is to develop a relationship with young people and enable them to build a positive contact with their community. Outreach team members need to avoid being seen as agents of law enforcement if they are to be able to fulfill their role. They should avoid being in situations where the law is being broken, such as drug dealing. They should also avoid coming into conflict themselves with the laws of the state. For example, the service should not organize activities for young people of school age during school hours. BRYR should maintain contact with the local Gardai at the appropriate level in order to promote mutual respect and understanding.

3:3. As outreach youth workers the outreach team should remain strictly within the focus of outreach youth work in their involvement with young people.

Outreach staff should avoid engaging in structured medium to long term developmental work with young people.

If the need for such work is identified, it should be discussed at a team meeting and a strategy drawn up for referring these young people on. This strategy may include:

- Referring to a programme outside BRYR,
- Referring to a programme within BRYR.
- Creating a programme within BRYR,
- Advocating through BRYR for the creation of a programme outside BRYR.

3:4. Management should be vigilant in ensuring outreach staff remain within their boundaries as outreach youth workers.

The team leader should ensure that all staff avail of monthly external supervision.

The team leader should create adequate space within team meetings and elsewhere for the discussion of individual cases where maintaining boundaries is challenging..

The team leader should be watchful for staff overstepping professional boundaries in any way.

The programme manager should be familiar with cases on the follow-up data base which require referral or which suggest the need for BRYR to create new responses.

4. Building a relationship with the young people.

Policy. Every effort should be made to develop a relationship based on trust and respect with all young people who hang around the streets of Ballymun, or who are referred to the outreach team by teachers, residents, parents or others, especially those young people most alienated within the community.

Rationale.

The outreach team contacts young people in two ways. Firstly, the team meets young people around the streets of Ballymun in the course of its outreach sessions. Secondly, it takes referrals from parents, teachers, neighbours, other community projects or other people in the community. Because of the high profile of the outreach team in Ballymun, people will often contact the team if they are concerned about any particular young person.

Every effort is made to contact all young people who hang around the streets of Ballymun. Every referral is responded to as constructively and as positively as possible.

This requires planning. The outreach sessions, which take place every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, target particular areas and follow planned routes to ensure that every part Ballymun is covered during the week.

The primary purpose of the outreach team's interactions with young people is to build a relationship of trust with them with a view to building a bridge between them and their community.

The development of this trust requires that a key principle informing all the work is consistency. The young people encountered by the team will often have few if any consistently caring adult figures in their lives. It is important then that the team demonstrate that they will always be there when they say they will, and can be relied upon to follow through on any promises made. For example, the outreach team will follow the same planned route at the same time every week so young people get used to their consistent contact. If a young person calls to the office having been promised that they can meet an outreach team member, that staff person will be there when they said they would.

Guidelines.

4:1. Team members should maintain a high level of consistency with the young people with whom they interact.

Outreach sessions will always take place on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings between 7.00pm and 10.00pm every week.

The team should cover the same route in the same session each week.

Outreach team members should always honour promises they make to the young people.

Outreach team members should avoid making promises they may not be able to keep.

4:2. The service should be delivered in a planned way. Under the direction of the team leader, the outreach team should strategize on how to organize its work to give the best chance of making a constructive contact with each of the young people it targets.

The service should be delivered by staff members working in pairs. The pair should meet before the outreach to plan the session. Anticipating the situations they are likely to encounter, the pair should consider what their goals are for each likely interaction. These goals are set in light of the developmental possibilities with each group or individuals. For example, one group may need some time to plan a trip. One group may be new to the service and need some time to develop a relationship. One group may be uninterested to any contact, and so a brief greeting may be all that is realistic. Strategies for each situation should be thought out beforehand.

The pair should remain flexible in regard to their work plan. The situation they actually encounter may be very different from that which they anticipated. They need to be open to revising their plan as the session proceeds.

The whole target route should be covered during the session. Each group of young people hanging out in the area should be contacted.

Following the session, the pair should take some time to evaluate the work in the light of the strategies planned at the beginning of the session.

Team members who will already know at least some of the young people likely to be contacted in the course of an outreach session should be included in every pair. This will make establishing contact and trust with each group easier and more productive.

Team members who are good at initiating and sustaining conversation should be included in every pair.

Information about events or activities which may be of interest to the young people should be carried by outreach pairs.

4:3. The outreach team should create strategies to develop their relationship with young people from initial contact to a trusting respectful friendship which is always available to the young people.

As appropriate team should employ strategies to support the building of relationships such as:

- Organising structured activities such as trips which afford the team an opportunity to deepen their friendship with the young people.
- Following up on street contacts and referrals by offering practical help and advice as the needs arise within the boundaries of the role of outreach youth work.
- Creating strategies for informing young people about important issues in their lives, for example street education programmes on sexually transmitted infections.

4:4. The outreach team should maintain an attitude of respect for the young people in all their dealings with them.

The outreach team should never speak to young people in a way that causes them to feel intimidated or put down.

The outreach team should always respect the confidentiality of their interactions with young people.

The outreach team should only pursue an interaction with young people where they are welcomed to do so by the young people themselves.

5. Health and safety.

Policy. The health and safety of team members and young people should be the first priority during outreach work.

Rationale.

This policy applies to all youth work. But there are specific risks to health and safety associated with outreach youth work. The outreach sessions take place in an open, uncontrolled environment. Some of the young people the team will encounter may be hostile and aggressive. Indeed they may encounter hostility from adults. Some may be drunk or on drugs. They may be standing around fires. There may be young people they do not know. They may come across young people who are injured or sick.

Guidelines.

5:1. Outreach staff should take every practical step to minimize risk to themselves or the young people they work with.

Team members should always work in pairs.

Outreach pairs should keep in sight of each other at all times. They should avoid going into places where they will be hidden from general view.

Outreach sessions should not run later than 10.00pm in the evenings, to lessen the possibility of meeting aggressive or threatening behaviour.

Outreach pairs should agree a signal to break off contact with a group where one of the pair feels uncomfortable or under threat. The signal should be acted on immediately and without question. Outreach workers should never question each other about this in front of the young people. This can wait until the debriefing afterwards.

Where a situation becomes threatening, the outreach work should be ended for the night. This is to avoid team members being followed and attacked if they remain on the streets.

Team members should not engage with young people if they suspect any of the group is engaging in illegal activity at that time.

Team members should be properly kitted out for outdoor work to ensure they stay warm and dry. A clothing allowance should be available from the BRYR to ensure this.

Team members should always carry their outreach kit bag, containing first aid equipment a dog alarm and a personal alarm.

Team members should have basic first aid training. This training will need to cover some aspects of first aid specific to their work which may not be addressed in some basic first aid training. For example, staff will need to know how to act safely in the vicinity of syringes used for drug abuse.

Staff should never touch discarded syringes. Dublin City Council are responsible for the safe disposal of syringes in Ballymun.

As encounters with young people on the street will occasionally be near fires, staff need basic training in fire safety.

All outreach staff should be familiar with the health and safety policies and guidelines of BRYR. They should read and sign the BRYR health and safety policy document.

6. Developmental nature of the work.

Policy. The outreach work should be conducted in a way that is developmental and strategic and will always be focused on its intention to build a connection between young people and the community of which they are part.

Rationale.

BRYR is a resource to young Ballymunners to facilitate them in having their developmental needs met. One of the key strategies of BRYR is to contact young people where they are at through its outreach work. A key strategy of the outreach work in turn, is to strengthen the relationships between young people and their community including their schools, statutory services, voluntary organizations and their families. It follows that any attempt to build relationship with these young people should have an eye to engaging them in a developmental process. While building and maintaining the relationship is success enough for outreach work, the team will always be trying to build on this relationship in order to assist young people to cross the bridge from marginalisation to constructive and developmental engagement with the community.

Building developmental work on top of contact work requires a strategic approach to outreach. The team need to be constantly monitoring the progress of individuals with whom they are engaged and strategising about how best to facilitate their development. The monitoring requires a combination of keeping good files which are regularly updated, assigning key workers to follow through on cases, and creating spaces within staff meetings to discuss the progress of individuals.

Follow up with a young person can take many forms, depending on the individual situation. Many young people may require short-term assistance to facilitate them to get into an educational programme, or to join a youth club. The outreach team will deal with such cases within their own team. However, given the target group of outreach, many young people may require more long term support to facilitate their development. The outreach team cannot continue to engage in medium to long term intensive support for such people without distorting the nature of their role. At some point they need to decide how to refer a young person on.

There are four options for the team at this point.

- They can refer the young person to an agency outside of BRYR.
- They can refer them to a programme operating in another part of BRYR.
- They can create a new response for their needs within BRYR.
- They can request BRYR to advocate for the creation of a response to the need from an agency outside BRYR.

If the object of outreach work is to build a bridge between young people and the community of Ballymun, the team need not only to develop a relationship with the young people, but also with the community, especially those in the community who can offer resources to further the development of the young people. The team needs to develop a positive appreciation of these resources and those who provide them, so they can

facilitate the creation of links between these groups and the young people who need to access them.

Referring a young person on does not mean that the outreach team break off contact. They will continue to see the young person on the street, or if they had been a referred contact, one of the staff will maintain some low key contact for a period of time afterwards.

Guidelines.

6:1. A set of proper records and systems of tracking the progress of young people should be developed by the team and kept under review.

An outreach session log (street log), which documents the work of any outreach session should be agreed by the team and filled in after each session. This should give the location where the group was encountered, a profile of the group (age, gender etc.), and any issues arising from the interaction. Names and personal details of individual young people should not be entered in the street log.

A data base should be opened on any individual young person with whom a contact is developed beyond the outreach session or other initial contact. This should record the nature of the contact, any outcomes from that contact and any third parties who were involved in the follow up work

All files should be kept in accordance with Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation. A file on any individual should only be opened with their consent and they should be informed of their right to inspect this file at any time.

Files should be carefully kept so non-authorised persons do not have access to them. A code should be used to identify individuals on file and the key to the code should be kept in a separate location to the file.

6:2. Where longer term developmental work is required by the young person, they should be referred on to the appropriate agent who can meet this need.

The decision to refer a young person on from the outreach team should be taken within the outreach staff team meeting.

An Outfit staff member should always attend outreach team meetings, so they can consider and advise on cases which might be referred to them.

The decision to refer should be based on the opinion of the staff members who know the young person. If they conclude that the young person requires and requests more medium to long term developmental support in order to meet their needs, the team leader should seriously consider referral.

On referring, a staff member should be assigned to specifically manage the referral of the young person and to maintain appropriate contact thereafter.

The data base tracking the work of the outreach team with the young person should be updated by this worker as developments occur.

The programme manager should be made aware of all outreach referrals, both within and outside of BRYR.

Referrals should only be made when:

- A good working relationship is established between the outreach team or other BRYR staff with the agency involved.
- The assigned key-worker is fully briefed on the nature of the agency the young person is being referred to and any referral procedures involved.
- The young person is fully informed about what is proposed and what options they have.
- The young person consents to the referral.
- Parents' consent is given where necessary.
- The referral is likely, in the best judgment of the team and the team leader, to be successful for the young person.

Where an appropriate response to the young person's need does not exist, the team should:

- Define what the need is and what response might address it.
- Formulate a proposal.
- Discuss the situation with the programme manager.
- Never attempt to respond to the need itself.

Where an appropriate response to the young person's need does not exist, the BRYR programme manager should:

- Listen carefully to the analysis and proposals of the outreach team.
- Consider if a response does actually already exist.

- Consider the possibility of developing a response within BRYR.
- Consider using BRYR's influence to advocate for the provision of a response by appropriate agencies outside of BRYR.

6:3. A professional relationship between the outreach team and other resources within the community which may benefit young people should be established and maintained.

The team leader should ensure that the team has a good knowledge of local resources which may be important for meeting the developmental needs of the young people they work with.

Team staff should develop a good personal relationship with frontline staff in local agencies related to areas of need such as education, employment, leisure activities, youth work, drug and alcohol support, counseling, parenting, health, legal support and housing.

Staff should have a positive but realistic appreciation of all local services. They need to be able to appreciate what another agency can offer a young person.

Staff should be familiar with the procedures of any agency which a young person might wish to access, so they can advise the young person properly.

The programme manager of BRYR should ensure that BRYR has a good relationship with management and policy makers in all the above areas.

BRYR should maximize every opportunity to influence the policy and practice of agencies that are in a position to assist the development of the young people in Ballymun.

6:4. Outreach staff should consider the parents of young people as potential players in assisting their development.

Where the team considers involving the parents in their work with young people where that involvement is likely to prove constructive.

The team should acknowledge that situations vary and that in some cases involving parents in the work might be counter productive.

All decisions to involve parents should only be taken after consideration by the team and with the knowledge of the team leader.

Obligations to seek the consent of parents for their childrens' participation in activities organized by the outreach team should always be met.

6:4. Management should ensure that appropriate follow up developmental work can take place as required.

The team leader should ensure that staff have adequate time in their schedules for follow up work.

The team leader should take care to ensure that the boundary between outreach work and ongoing developmental youth work is clear and observed by all staff.

7. Child Protection.

Policy. The outreach team should be committed to the protection of young people from harm or abuse, actual or potential and to the care of those who have had such experiences, given the limits of their role as outreach workers.

Rationale.

Good child protection practice should inform all the work of the outreach team. This is especially true for outreach workers who habitually meet vulnerable young people in uncontrolled environments.

Guidelines

7:1. Staff should be familiar with best practice in relation to child protection issues, and be able to apply that practice to their work situation.

The outreach team members should each be familiar with *Children First, the National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children*.

The outreach team members should each be familiar with the *Code of Good Practice: Child Protection for the Youth Work Sector*.

The outreach team members should each be familiar with the child protection policies of BRYR.

- Preventative Child Protection Policy and Procedures. (2004)
- Responding to Child Abuse. (2004)

BRYR should only recruit staff to the outreach team in accordance with policies set out in the above documents.

BRYR should ensure that all staff participate in child protection training appropriate to outreach staff. (2:3)

BRYR should ensure that staff have refresher training in this area at appropriate intervals in order to ensure they are up to date with legalities, policies, guidelines and skills to ensure their competence in child protection.

The team leader should be assigned responsibility to ensure that all staff are familiar with the relevant child protection policies and are competent in acting in accordance with them.

8. The outreach team's place in BRYR.

Policy. The outreach team is part of BRYR and should be fully integrated into the wider organisation of BRYR.

Rationale.

In many ways outreach is at the heart of BRYR. It is through outreach that BRYR establishes its ongoing contact with the young people of Ballymun on their own ground. Outreach connects BRYR into the reality of life for young people in Ballymun, especially the most marginalised.

Outreach also relies heavily on BRYR. In their mission to build a bridge between young Ballymunners and the community, the outreach team works closely with other parts of BRYR to facilitate young people in crossing this bridge. For example, Outfit is a BRYR response to the need to intensively support young people over a medium to long term period, once the relationship and trust has been built with these young people by the outreach team. Developmental needs which are identified through outreach youth work can be fed into the advocacy work of BRYR. Armed with this up-to-the-minute contact with young people, BRYR can make compelling cases for the development of responses to meet these needs. Without outreach, BRYR would not be as informed in its advocacy or its own programme development. Without BRYR, the outreach team would have a much harder job in stimulating the development of community responses to the needs it sees every day.

Guidelines

8:1. Outreach staff should understand themselves as part of the wider staff of BRYR.

The team leader should ensure that outreach staff think of themselves as BRYR staff, rather than as members of a separate, independent team

Outreach staff should introduce themselves as part of BRYR when interacting with others in the community.

8:2. Relationships between outreach staff and their work with BRYR as a whole. All efforts should be made to maintain good working relationships between outreach staff and other BRYR staff.

Outreach staff should keep themselves informed of what is happening in other parts of BRYR, so they can link young people into the organisation should that need arise.

Other BRYR staff, especially members of the BRYR management team, should have access to the information about developments in the lives of young people in Ballymun picked up through outreach, so they can be well informed in designing their policies and programmes

BRYR staff should occasionally take opportunities to work alongside other BRYR colleagues in activities unrelated to outreach, such as *Summer Buzz*.

Outreach staff should participate actively in BRYR staff events such as evaluation or planning meetings, organizational development meetings, staff training and social events.

The programme manager of BRYR should ensure that he is fully briefed on the work of the outreach team and issues which it brings to light about the lives of young people in Ballymun.

The team leader should maintain regular communication with the senior youth worker of BRYR.

Resources within BRYR such as the resource unit and administration should remain fully available to the outreach team under the direction of the programme manager.

9. Positive profile of outreach in the community of Ballymun.

Policy. The outreach team should foster and maintain good relationships with the community of Ballymun, especially with those who are concerned with the welfare of young people.

Rationale.

The outreach team is a very visible presence in Ballymun. It interacts regularly and publicly with the most marginalised young people within the community. To successfully fulfill its role, the team needs to maintain the trust, respect and support of the local community.

The team should be especially aware of the importance of maintaining good relationships with parents of the young people they work with.

Guidelines.

9:1. The general community of Ballymun should be aware of the existence and operations of the outreach team.

BRYR should take appropriate opportunities to raise the profile of the outreach team in Ballymun, by for example, using local media.

Parents, in particular, should be aware of the service's work, and where required, their consent should always be formally sought for the participation of their children in organised activities of the service.

Outreach team members should carry identification tags, visible on their person, identifying them as youth workers engaged in outreach work

9:2. Staff should remain conscious of their position as role models in the community at all times.

Outreach team members should be conscious of their position as role models in the community even when they are not at work. They should be careful to avoid behaviour that will compromise their work as outreach workers, or which would damage the image of the team in the community.

BRYR should support staff, especially staff living in Ballymun who may have difficulty dealing with anti-social behaviour of young people they work with outside of working hours. The team should facilitate discussion of such issues and the development of strategies for addressing such issues.

10. Resourcing the work.

Policy. Every effort should be made to properly resource the service so that high standards can be maintained.

Rationale.

To sustain the outreach work which is so crucial to informing the work of BRYR, the management of BRYR needs to pay due care and attention to the resource base of finances and staff which enables the team to function.

Guidelines.

10.1. Management should ensure that adequate resources are maintained for outreach work.

Adequate staffing should be maintained to ensure that a viable team is maintained and that the catchment area continues to be covered by the team working in pairs, three nights a week.

Adequate resources should be maintained to ensure that the ongoing training needs of the staff can be met.

A programme budget should be maintained to allow for the provision of organised activities for the target group, and to resource the provision of occasional emergency services should the need arise (for example taking a young person to hospital).

Where resource needs arise within the team, the team leader should bring these to the attention of the programme manager. The programme manager should investigate the possibility of responding to the need and feed back to the team as soon as possible.