



Title: Working with Hard to Reach Young People: A Practical Guide

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<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Justice/youth-justice/young-people/people>
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SCS topic headings: Monitoring and Evaluation, Offending Management, Safety of Vulnerable Groups, Equality and Diversity

[This is a guidance document of best practice and effective intervention approaches.](#)

Summary of the intervention's aim

This document provides practical guidelines for professionals who seek to improve their engagement with hard to reach young people with a view to reducing offending. It is largely geared towards youth workers in both the statutory and voluntary sectors who aim to reach young people on the streets.

It is also an appropriate reference point for specialist organisations (such as the police, the fire service and health and education professionals) that wish to do targeted outreach work with specific groups of young people especially if this involves going out to where those young people are.

These guidelines will help you to view young people and their behaviour within the context of the family, the community and their peers. It provides clear boundaries to ensure that you are aware of individual practitioner limitations as well as the possibilities. It will enable an understanding and management of the risks associated with this type of work appropriately.

Outcomes

This guidance document presents practical suggestions about organising and carrying out youth engagement activities. A focus is made on the preparation and conduct of practitioners themselves to become more informed and aware of the young people, their contexts and means of engagement towards ensuring effective interventions. The suggested guidance is essentially a step-by-step guide and includes the following topics:

- A definition and explanation of what are ‘hard to reach’ young people
- Discussions concerning the different contexts and backgrounds of young people
- Recognising barriers against engaging black and ethnic minority young people, LGBT, ageism and rural isolation
- Setting up your street based service
- Making contact; building relationships; managing young people’s expectations thoughtfully; dealing with challenging behaviour
- Practitioner safety whilst undertaking outdoor located activities and services.

Importantly too the document provides guidance about ways in which to measure the outcomes and successes and required improvements of schemes. Information is presented about how to recording work and awareness about data protection issues.

- Core requirements as to what to ‘always’ and to ‘never’ do when working with young people are presented in a table for ease of reference.
- Internet links to appropriate legislation are made explicit where necessary these include links to websites regarding disclosure, child protection and child protection training.

Summary of evaluation conclusions

This is a comprehensive document delivering guidance from the start to finish of schemes and activities aimed to improve engagement with hard to reach young people with a view to reducing offending. It also details ways in which to learn from experiences through recording data and monitoring outcomes.

The context of many recommendations is brought from being an abstract textbook of best practice guidelines to something more practical through varied anecdotal evidence from both practitioners themselves and quotations from written publications (some of these references are provided at the document’s end).

How the evaluation gathered information for findings and conclusions

It is assumed the document’s guidance is based upon the professional views and opinions (from experience) of the author, their associated organisations and the Scottish Executive. This is supported by a wide range of anecdotal evidence from service users and interested or associated youth work organisations. These sources are described as being from governmental publications, academic publications and organisational reports/publications.

The range of publications used to illustrate the points of guidance throughout the document is varied and supports the robustness and validation of the recommendations made. It also supports the usability of the document.

**Further details about the SCS evaluation of this report are available on request.
Date added to the SCS website: July 2010 (RC)**