

# Detached Youth Work Tasks Framework Research



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## What is detached youth work?

Research and practice manuals (see source material below) from across Europe can use the terms street work or detached work, but agree that youth work practice includes a specific type of work that involves:

1. Effectively engaging young people in their own "space," wherever that may be (outside of youth work facilities)
2. Developing supportive relationships with those young people
3. Supporting targeted young people to have their needs and aspirations met through linking them into relevant services and supports.
4. Detached work involves not just linking young people into services and supports provided by the youth service\* and requires cooperation with a range of agencies in the community

\* Detached work differs from outreach work. Outreach work has the purpose of reaching out to young people in need of specific supports i.e. unemployed and/or experiencing addiction. Outreach workers will then facilitate the targeted young person's engagement with a corresponding specific service ie, employment support, or addiction support. Detached workers will engage young people and connect them into whichever service is most appropriate depending on the needs and aspirations of young people encountered.

## Rationale for a task framework:

The task framework is a basis for identifying competencies and supporting effective training of detached workers in a Post Covid context. It also assists us in understanding how practice has changed since the height of lockdown. The task framework can be utilised as a work planning tool for managers supporting detached staff, or new detached workers. The tool does not set out a sequence of tasks, but identifies tasks that are of greatest importance and require the most focus, time and resources in coordinating a detached response to young people.

Future developments based on this framework will include training, manuals and competency frameworks for use in staff supervision and recruitment.

## Methodology:

March 2020 - Project partners surveyed 33 youth work organisations in five countries to review and identify best practices and issues arising in detached work in the context of Covid 19. The results of that research can be found [here](#).

March 2021 - Project partners reviewed literature describing detached best practices and selected 11 manuals and handbooks summarising practice and procedures from 10 European jurisdictions. Detached practices in these manuals were collated into a task framework summarising and organising all the key tasks described by detached youth work practitioners and experts from across Europe.

January 2021 - Project Partners surveyed original the original 33 organisations to assess changes in practice and current best practices in a Post Covid context. Organisations were asked to rank tasks by order of importance in terms of their work in a post Covid context. Participants were also asked to identify important tasks missing from the task framework.

March 2021 -Project partners met to review findings and present findings to youth work services across Ireland for input and refinement.

May 2021 – Publication and dissemination of the task framework

## Practice Findings:

Many of the key practice concerns and tasks identified during the height of lockdown continue to be relevant to detached youth work practice.

In a post Covid 19 context Detached workers continue to emphasis the need to have skills and abilities to execute tasks related to identifying, understanding and engaging young people who are vulnerable and socially excluded, and who have seen their situation exacerbated by lockdown.

Detached workers greatly emphasise the need for digital and online engagement skills and expertise and capacity to successfully execute these tasks in their engagement of socially excluded and isolated young people.

Detached workers by a significant marginal greatly value and place the greatest importance on tasks related to contacting, engaging and supporting young people.

Significant increases in concerns related to mental health are presenting to detached workers and tasks related to addressing these needs are of increasing importance.

Tasks related to work with schools and educational welfare authorities are of increasing importance due to the numbers of young people avoiding school due to difficulty in coping and reconnecting with education.

## Policy Recommendations:

As post Covid social exclusion of vulnerable European young people becomes an increased concern more emphasis on the role of detached workers, their training and priority is needed. Targeted detached supports for young people are needed to address increasing mental health concerns, lack of trust amongst European youth experiencing challenges engaging in school, training and employment. The importance of outreach and detached work in engaging socially excluded young people has always been known by policy makers, but has been under emphasised in past crises; we need to ensure that this mistake isn't made again.

It will be years before we can fully understand the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health and social inclusion of the young people most acutely affected by lockdowns. Our project's research with 33 youth organisation in five countries found in 2021 that vulnerable young people and those at risk are now more vulnerable and further disconnected than before. Follow up research on changes to the key skills and tasks of detached workers found that the needs of young people are more complex, and that consequently identifying and supporting socially excluded young people requires greater competencies and skills.

Prior to the pandemic there were well established concerns about declining mental health for European adolescents (HBSC, 2020), a link between mental health and school avoidance is established in systematic review , (Finning et al, 2019) .

Post pandemic more socially excluded young people are avoiding school, have less trust in authority and increasing challenges in coping, resilience, anxiety (Eurofound 2021) / , our recent research on changing emphasis in tasks and skills in detached workers in Europe has found that detached workers need more online engagement and research skills and better capacity to reach out and engage young people

In the last great youth social exclusion crises, the unemployment crisis following the 2008 GFC, policy makers identified outreach and detached work as the foundation to the interventions provided by the European Youth Guarantee. Analyses of this failed to sufficiently utilise outreach and detached work to engage and support the most (Quality Matters

Detached and outreach work requires skill, planning and focus. Policy makers and service providers need to understand the importance of detached workers and ensure that youth workers with competencies

About the project and to find out more, go to [www.detachedsupport.eu](http://www.detachedsupport.eu).

# Framework of Most Important Detached Tasks in a Post Covid Environment\*

## Most important area of work: Contact, Engage and Support Young People

Establish a confidential and respectful relationship with the young person, helping them commit to a process resulting in empowerment, independence, inclusion and skills to achieve outcomes.	Managing first contacts with young people, instigating dialogue, developing trust and building relationships.	Online work, (e.g. visibility and communications in social media and meeting young people online).	Support young people with individual problems, and take up available supports in the community.	Implement identified tactics for locating and engaging young people both visible and invisible outside services or in need of support.	Being present at the location or in the community, identifying the leaders and other members of the groups, carrying out individual, group, and community activities.
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## Second most important area of work: Research, identifying target Group, Needs and Strengths

Analyse and identifying trends, needs and gaps and relevant resources from local information including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Previous youth work.</li> <li>• Statistics /demographics, crime educational attainment.</li> <li>• People and agencies.</li> <li>• Facilities and services voluntary.</li> </ul>	Consult with the stakeholders (schools, local councils, local NGOs, etc.), informing them about your mission asking for information on needs gaps and trends of all young people with specific focus on vulnerable young people identifying the problems and assets of individuals, groups, making and implementing an action plan.	Using information gathered identify target young people and understand the target group Subgroup risk factors or obstacles talents or assets.
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## Third most important area of work: Advocate for Young People with Services and Policy Makers

Act as a link between young people who need support and other professionals supporting them to attend services they would not otherwise attend.	Maintaining contact with cooperation partners/residence and locals, sharing information, giving voice to young people and underline deficiencies in services and highlight the real concerns of society that you see time and time again. Present issues which are evidenced in your monitoring and evaluation, including gaps in the social support network through which young people may fall influencing policies.	Support and promote the work of local associations so that young people can reach support that already exists.
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## Fourth most important area of work: Map area, Network with Stakeholders and Plan

Map the area, location of facilities, housing types and layout, parks, waste ground, shops, meeting places and areas where targeted young people congregate, live and engage in activities/services.	Identify which young people identified in demographic research are not present on the street.	Understand the safety concerns in all the environments where you will work and address through a safety/risk assessment.	Engage all stakeholders with strategic influence and a supportive role to explain your aims and agree referrals and cooperation.	Identify and plan the implementation of appropriate strategies to engage young people in the target group , including those who are not visible on the street.
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## Fifth most important area of work: Record, Monitor, Evaluate and Share knowledge

Communicate lessons and policy issues highlighting the effectiveness of the work, social engagement as well as local, regional and national development of young people's living conditions.	Translating practice for those not involved or unfamiliar with youth work.	Assessing effectiveness of detached intervention by producing both statistical and qualitative information based on young people's experiences and stories.	Review and analyse reporting and recording data to develop an evidenced knowledge about the individual/group make up/ behaviour and context.
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\*Areas of work and Tasks presented in order of importance, not in sequence. In each area of work Red text first level importance, Pink second level, Orange is third

## Source documents:

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  7. CWVYS (the Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services) – <http://www.youth-association.org/downloads/TheYouthAssociation-DetachedYouthWorkPolicy.pdf>
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