

Outreach Work with Young People

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Outreach Work

Outreach work was formalised in the nineteenth century, starting in the USA. After focusing initially on immigrants and people living in poverty, it gradually came to include many other target groups.

Outreach work in British English (Street work in German, Czech) is work (done by welfare workers, volunteers, etc) designed to help and encourage disadvantaged members of the community.

Outreach

- **Outreach** is the activity of providing services to any population that might not otherwise have access to those services.
- A key component of outreach is that the group providing it is not stationary, but mobile; in other words, it involves meeting someone in need of an outreach service at the location where they are.
- In addition to delivering services, outreach has an educational role, raising the awareness of existing services.
- Outreach is often meant to fill in the gap in the services provided by mainstream (often governmental) services, and is often carried out by non-profit, nongovernmental organizations.

Characteristics of Outreach Work

- Outreach youth is focusing not only on drugs and drug addicts but very often deals with problems from all spheres of life.
- The basis for the outreach work and intervention is a more holistic approach such as school, health, work, friends, and comrades and partners (for instance counselling offices, hospital clinics and youth clubs).

Characteristics of Outreach Work

- Is important to be knowledgeable about the young people's local environment. This refers to both risk factors and resources that can work protectively and strengthen the young people's will to master life.
- The outreach worker cooperates and works as a partner with, among others, teachers, other youth workers, nurses, social workers and other professionals in the local society. In this connection the outreach worker often acts as a coordinator or organiser.

Goals

- ***Early detection and prevention*** of social problems among children and young people as early as possible.
- ***To preserve safe and healthy living environments*** in the cities
- ***Make the young people's own voice heard*** in youth policy making
- ***To provide outreach services*** for individuals and groups of children, young people and younger adults in marginalized situations
- ***To establish contact*** with these individuals and groups and their families as early as possible. Preferably before the drug abuse or deviant behaviour has become predominant. To work towards encouraging, motivating and informing about alternative occupations (such as schools, leisure-activities, work), and to a necessary extent motivate and inform about other care or treatment offers.

Goals

- ***To provide necessary advice***, information and counselling on both risk behaviour and the reduction of such behaviour. To provide relevant services and referrals to treatment and rehabilitation programmes for people using narcotics. Likewise medical, psychological and social services.
- ***To teach young people to utilise the help apparatus*** offers and to contribute to the help apparatus having the optimal and most suitable offer for the young people.
- ***To stimulate the development of work with children*** and young people. Either indirectly through initiatives that stimulate their environments, or directly via work with the child
- ***To gather and provide information and knowledge*** about the living conditions for children and young people and the needs of marginalized young people and drug users. Thereby establishing a basic knowledge base vitally important for social planning initiatives and the taking of appropriate measures.
- ***Based on knowledge and experience; take initiatives*** to improve young people's living conditions. To systematically work towards making the administrative and political authorities take responsibility for the youth's situations and needs.

Target groups

- ***Children and young people who are in danger of developing problems to a such degree that their social and/or mental skills are threatened***
- ***Children and young people with problems who have no contact with the ordinary help apparatus***
- ***Children and young with problems who have established contact with the ordinary help apparatus, but who need the outreach workers' efforts as a supplement to the help they already are receiving***

Stages in good outreach work

- ***Establishing contact***
- ***Establishing mutual trust***
- ***Surveillance (Problems, resources, possibilities, family, further networks, dreams etc.)***
- ***Planning of initiatives (More instant planning than a long term planning process)***
- ***Carry out and see through the initiatives***
- ***Conclusion***

Methods, techniques, skills

- Techniques of conversation
- Techniques of motivation
- Family communication and intervention
- Crisis intervention
- Social and youth group work
- Work with gangs
- Social education
- Activity education

The role of the outreach worker

- The outreach worker is:
- ***Working on public arenas***
- ***Is uninvited***
- ***Acting on someone else's territory***
- ***The terms of contact is defined by the young people***
- ***The outreach worker has to qualify to get contact, not the other way around***

Outreach worker characteristics

- *The outreach workers working towards young people have few control tasks and often no money or materials to distribute*
- *The outreach work is informal*
- *The outreach worker is flexible and works in the moment*
- *The outreach workers work with long-term perspectives and communicate with the entire youth group*

Crises intervention

- It is often in crisis situations that young people are the most motivated for help and change.
- Such crisis can, for example, consist of family affairs becoming critical or that the young people have been thrown out from their homes. Likewise expectations about housing, education and work that have not been redeemed, and depressive reactions and other psychological difficulties that experience shows can lead to suicides and other crisis for the young people.
- It is important for the outreach worker to have knowledge about, and practice with, and as well as possible master the work in crisis situations (crisis interventions).

Family

- Children and young people cannot be seen in isolation from their remaining families. Contact with the family can therefore be of vital importance from time to time, especially connected to the youngest.
- The condition for contact with and the following up of the entire family is that both the youth and the parents wish for it. In many cases the outreach workers become stable contacts for a long period of time. Many of the young people have had far too little of such stable adult contacts.

Local environment

- It is not enough to help individual young people in crisis or social needs, if there are conditions in the local environments that repeatedly creates such problems for new young people.
- In such cases it is important for the outreach worker to participate in work in the local environments. This can be local networking such as neighbourhood work, local committees that work for the interest of the local environments, or other activities in the living environment.
- The aim will be to develop self-carrying initiatives and processes that can prevent a crooked development among children and young people. The outreach worker can actively engage in changing the problem creating factors and improve the conditions in the local environment.

Social network

- Both in the work with the individual young people, families and groups, the outreach workers should attempt to build up and strengthen the social networks in the local environments, by consciously activating as broad a selection of resources as possible, and stimulating to self carrying processes and structures.
- Possible collaboration partners in such a work approach can be the leaders of the boards in housing co-operatives, sport clubs and other voluntary organisations.
- The goal must always be to increase the young people's, the families and the local environments' ability to manage on their own, and thereby also strengthen preventive work. It is important to hinder relationships that can make them into clients and thereby dependent upon the outreach workers, health workers, social workers and the remaining help apparatus.

Working with gangs/groups

- Working with groups is most common with young people within their own living and local environments.
- A normal target for the work is to develop and inspire the young people group to influence their own life situations. Here the starting point must be the groups' interests and resources. The group work must aim to strengthen the positive resources and suppress the negative norms and behaviour.

Getting out of a gang

- To get out of a gang where drugs and criminality are a part of everyday life can be very difficult.
- The need for attention and acceptance in a community with other peers will often be placed in front of other values and priorities such as education or being close to one's family.
- This especially holds true when breaking with the gang can lead to isolation and loneliness and to a life with expectations and demands the young people do not feel that they can live up to outside of the gang.

Information activities

- The outreach workers have access to very important information about the young people's terms of adolescence and life situations.
- Their experience and knowledge should be admitted in local planning of the shaping of housing and leisure environments, and the further development of support , help and treatment initiatives for vulnerable groups of children and young people.
- Outreach workers should pass their knowledge on to other health and social workers. Likewise they should, as a part of preventive work, participate in information work, lectures, collaboration with teachers and contribute to coverage in the media. The focus should be on preventive activities and the affairs in the local environment that have had a negative influence on the young people's life situation and social conditions.

Premises

- Outreach workers should have their own premises as the base for their work. The premises should be located centrally in the geographic area for the outreach work.
- The premises should secure the social workers adequate possibilities (space) to follow up their cases. In addition to a more informal reception room, it should have a room for conversations with individuals and with families. It should also be given room for office work such as writing and telephoning.
- The premises of the outreach work (Outreach work centers) should have set opening times where the young people themselves can visit the social workers.

Outreach Work Principles

- ***Trust***
- ***Continuity***
- ***Flexibility***
- ***Accessibility***
- ***Accountability***
- ***Voluntary decision***
- ***Professional Confidentiality***

VIDEOS

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LSmB9PKYR38>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vkN2IKGqqDk>