

**AGENDA 12a, Enc x) Draft Report of the Detached Youth Work Liaison Meeting, held on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2023, at 10:00am at the YMCA, Ashington**

**PRESENT**

Rob Cox (CEO YMCA), Eric Fletcher (YMCA Youth and Communities Project Manager) Cllr Louis Brown, Cllr Lynne Grimshaw, Sarah Eden

**1. CHAIR FOR THE MEETING**

It was AGREED that Rob Cox would chair the meeting. Rob began by welcoming Eric Fletcher who introduced himself and gave a short introduction to his working life and experience.

**2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were given for Cllr John Tully and Inspector Wayne Daniels.

**3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

None.

**4. DISPENSATIONS**

None.

**5. REPORT OF LAST MEETING**

Those in attendance who were at the previous meeting, held on 25<sup>th</sup> September, agreed the report was an accurate reflection of the meeting.

**6. OVERVIEW OF SESSIONS HELD TO DATE**

*A summary of the report* received in advance of the meeting (22<sup>nd</sup> May – 30<sup>th</sup> November) is detailed below:

Work funded by ATC commenced in May 2023 with the primary aims of establishing meaningful connections with young people, fostering trust, and providing a safe space for them to express themselves and share their concerns.

The team has continued to successfully engage with Ashington's younger population in a range of locations around the town.

***Session Deliveries and Locations***

48 detached sessions have been successfully delivered since the project began, usually by two Youth Workers, with occasional support from a volunteer. Delivery continues to focus around the busiest areas of town for young people, including McDonald's, Asda, and Home Bargains, but also visiting Hirst Park (which tends to be quieter in the bad weather) and other areas based on information from young people and partner organisations. More recently the team have begun to include some of the colliery rows into their route as they've noticed groups congregating there. McDonalds is repeatedly identified as the go-to place for young people to gather regularly.

**7. SESSION MONITORING INFORMATION**

***Youth Engagement and Demographics***

Since May, our Youth Team has made 1,149 individual contacts with young people around the town. Due to the obvious restrictions on recording data during detached work, it's important to note that these contacts will not all be unique and will include some repeat engagements during different sessions. Of the 1,149 contacts made, 590 have been with boys and 510 with girls. The age range of the young people encountered during the sessions varies from as low as 7 years to 19 years, with the majority falling within the 12 to 17-year-old range.

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On average, each session has comprised engagements with 23 young people, but this figure can be as high as 44, or as low as 5, depending on several factors, not least the weather.

### ***Nature of Interactions***

Conversations with young people during detached sessions have generally been positive and constructive. Where staff have observed young people participating in low-level antisocial behaviour they have taken the time to de-escalate situations and discuss the behaviours with the young people involved. They spend time chatting with young people about their day at school and letting them know about upcoming YMCA sessions. Given that Halloween and Guy Fawkes Night have occurred in the last couple of months, this has led to conversations with young people around the dangers of fireworks, and around alcohol consumption in relation to house parties.

Over the sessions, several recurring themes and observations have emerged:

- **Variability in Engagement:** Sessions ranged from quiet to busy, influenced by factors such as weather conditions and school schedules.
- **Young People's Concerns:** Common concerns among young people include boredom, lack of open-access activities, and limited services available to them, leading to discussions about climbing on buildings and vandalism as boredom-driven ASB.
- **Desire for Anonymity:** In some sessions, young people were seen wearing balaclavas, explaining it as a trend and expressing a preference for anonymity due to perceived surveillance.
- **Outdoor Preference:** Many young people preferred outdoor activities, particularly during good weather, and this influenced their receptiveness to signposting for indoor activities.
- **Community Conversations:** Engagements often involve discussions about school, local services, outreach work, funding, and community issues.
- **ASB and Accountability:** ASB incidents were occasionally witnessed, with some young people being subsequently banned from the YMCA. These discussions led to conversations about accountability and re-entry.
- **Transportation and Socialisation:** Reduced public transport fares led to gatherings of young people in central areas to socialise with peers from various towns and villages.
- **Staff Efforts:** Staff actively engaged with young people, addressing inappropriate behaviour as it arose, and signposting to relevant services and activities.

### ***Organisational Developments***

Following the changes to our youth sessions implemented at the beginning of September, our youth team and the young people have settled into the new timetable. Our new Youth and Community Projects Manager commenced his role in early November and has been meeting with a range of organisations to build relationships and explore options for more joined-up and outward facing work.

### ***Conclusion***

This detached work around the town continues to be a vital route to engaging with young people who might not ordinarily come into contact with a youth worker, and to presenting a united front between partner organisations in relation to anti-social behaviour. As trusted adults the Youth Workers are often able to de-escalate lower-level anti-social behaviours, and take time to discuss with young people the impact of their actions

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### **8. OTHER MATTERS DISCUSSED**

YMCA is at full capacity for what needs to be delivered. Moving forward the organisation would like the flexibility and capacity to deliver on things that funding is available for, with an effect on the core sessions delivered. In respect of the Detached Youth work, the funding was agreed to deliver this but then their capacity changed. The core service will deliver in-house 3 days/week, with funded project work over and above this. The ideal offer would be to be open every night with a menu of activities going on that young people can choose to take part in or they can simply use the other facilities whilst meeting up.

Eric is delivering training on the impact of youth work. It was discussed that it is difficult to measure but acknowledged that funders do want evidence of achieved outcomes. Outcomes can be changes in behaviour. Eric talked about a new direction of travel with The Centre for Youth Impact.

[The Centre for Youth Impact](#) was introduced as a tool to support youth workers to generate and act on evidence of the impact of their provision. In summary, this is a framework and set of measures for assessing the quality and impact of youth work, with a focus on socio-emotional skill development. In this regard detached youth work poses challenges for identifying outcomes due to its delivery in public spaces and irregular attendance patterns.

Common outcomes from detached youth work include improved relationships, increased engagement with services, enhanced social skills and personal development, reduced anti-social behaviour, and improved wellbeing. Quantitative measures may focus on reach, frequency of contact, and issues discussed. Qualitative outcomes may come from reviews, case studies, feedback, and interviews capturing progress in confidence, attitudes, skills gained, etc.

A mix of qualitative and quantitative methods is needed to quantify reach and engagement as well as explore personal impacts and benefits. Involving young people helps capture progress from their perspective.

The measures introduced aim to address these evaluation challenges. They align to a framework focused on socio-emotional skill development and include tools to assess quality, engagement, and skill growth over time.

The Centre for Youth Impact highlights that a range of approaches, including the framework offered, can support effective evaluation of what is often difficult to measure, thereby increasing the impact of youth sector organisations. (read more detail in the link below)

<https://www.ymcageorgewilliams.uk/sites/default/files/2023-09/Guide%20to%20Selecting%20the%20Measures%20June%202023-2.pdf>

**Engagement in schools** was discussed with the hope that this would be improved moving forward.

In terms of engagement with schools, the [Ashington Children's Community](#) was discussed as a positive tool and way of future proofing. The group was established in 2021 with the aim of developing a collaboration of organisations that work together for the benefit of babies, children and young people of Ashington. It is currently chaired by Leigh Elliott (CEO, Children North East) with an ambition to recruit an independent chair in early 2023. The group is made up of different sectors within Northumberland, and particularly those who have a relationship to Ashington. The group is a collective and does not currently hold funding as it is neither currently a charity nor is it constituted.

Rob highlighted that YMCA was looking forward to a new vision, mission, and strategy.

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Eric asked members to consider what success looked like moving into the final quarter. Various answers were given in regards youth work, from targeted intervention, softening the blow of the current climate, the impact of COVID and the cost-of-living crisis, as well as offering a safe space for young people to gather, enjoy time together and experience often subliminal positive youth work.

The meeting agreed that funding had been set aside for detached youth work, to reach those not engaged, which could be through choice, or other barriers. Whilst it was recognised that the work does offer an opportunity for intervention where barriers are more serious, there is also less serious intervention with signposting to clubs and associations, and the potential for keyfund type projects and trips.

Sarah asked if moving forward a more flexible funding option would be preferred, allowing centre-based and detached to be used interchangeably. It was AGREED the YMCA team would look at future delivery alongside the strategic work being carried out.

**9. DATE, TIME, AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

To be agreed. *Suggestion – w/c 18<sup>th</sup> March 2024.*