



StreetCRED

Community Relations, Equality & Diversity-
focused activities on the street



Funded by:



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Introduction to the Resource

This resource is designed to help youth workers to engage in work focused on Community Relations, Equality and Diversity while out on the streets with young people in outreach/detached settings. Most of the tools you will find here have been tried and tested by youth workers involved in outreach and detached youth work, all can be used in a wide range of contexts and are offered as suggestions if you want to use your street engagement with young people to explore these themes.

Outreach and detached youth work are terms often used interchangeably while they might have slight differences in emphasis. Outreach work is often focused on providing information about youth services to young people while detached work is often focused on meeting young people 'where they're at'. Both usually engage with young people in spaces of their choosing such as street corners and parks, and there is a focus on making contact with young people who may be experiencing marginalisation or social exclusion or those who are 'seldom heard'. Another characteristic of this kind of street engagement is that young people set the agenda for discussion.

In 2011 the Department of Education in Northern Ireland developed a Community Relations Equality and Diversity policy (CRED) to:

“Contribute to improving relations between communities by educating children and young people to develop self respect and respect for others, by providing children and young people, in formal and non formal education settings, with opportunities to build relationships with those of different backgrounds and traditions within the resources available.”¹

Many youth organisations seek to apply the CRED policy through supporting young people to engage in CRED initiatives.

This resource does not seek to change the youth-led focus of street-based youth work, but simply to provide some ways to help young people explore issues surrounding community relations, equality, and diversity in a fun and interactive way. Ultimately these are effective ways of stimulating discussion and will require you to use your interpersonal and facilitation skills to develop purposeful conversation that contributes to the young people's personal and social development.

Most of the activities require very few resources and each one can be adapted for your setting then used whenever you feel it is appropriate for the young people you meet. However the tools have been set out in a sequence where those at the start might best suit engagement with young people with whom you are in the early days of relationship building, and those towards the end might work better with groups of young people who have gotten used to engaging in interactive activities with you on the street.

¹ The CRED policy is available from <http://credni.open.wp-dev.web.tibus.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/CRED-Policy-March-2011-English-PDF.pdf>

About the Youth Leading Transformation (YLT) Project

In 2015, YMCA Ireland, Youth Initiatives and YouthLink:NI formed a consortium to design and deliver the Youth Leading Transformation project and were successful in obtaining funding from the Education Authority's 'Youth Outreach' initiative for both the 2015-16 and 2016-17 periods. The main emphasis of the project has been to make contact primarily with young people who are not accessing youth services and engage them in CRED-focused activities such as experiential learning around issues of identity, tradition, culture and diversity.

In the 2016-17 phase of the project, 5 youth workers were employed in 5 different areas to deliver on the project's objectives including a remit to engage in detached youth work focused on addressing CRED themes. These workers met regularly for group supervision with two project co-ordinators, recording reflections on their practice and discussing their insights together. This compilation of activities has emerged as a direct result of the team's work and learning with the intention of resourcing the youth work sector more widely with regard to CRED-focussed and outreach/detached engagement with young people.

Values & Guiding Principles

Some see detached youth work as completely separate from other kinds of youth work but its value base draws from core youth work values and principles, and just as youth work more broadly is an educational activity focused on young people's personal and social development, so is detached youth work albeit in a very different setting. When seeking to introduce themes around community relations, equality and diversity in detached settings it is important that these values remain at the heart of any engagement with young people. Before setting out to adapt some of the activities in this resource to your outreach programme, it is worth thinking through some of the following points:

- Relationships, relationships, relationships!

Ultimately the focus always has to be on building genuine relationships from a place of professional integrity. When thinking about how to introduce CRED themes, this does not take the focus on relationships away because the goal is not necessarily to have an amazing conversation about a CRED issue. The tools described in this resource are not intended as 'gimmicks' but rather as a means to an end – the goal is to enhance the relationship-building process and sometimes these activities will help to break down barriers. In addition a person-centred approach opens up the possibility to leave young people with positive words of validation and encouragement. As one of our contributors has noted, the work...

“...Needs to be authentic, with an honest focus on the people rather than the plan/issues. Many of these young people (especially the older they are) have made a conscious decision not to be around issue-based work and are choosing a social space.”

- Transparency

Youth workers need to be open with young people about the purpose of their work – they need to know which organisation you represent, why you are on the street and what is your agenda. Often young people may be suspicious of competing agendas by different adults or agencies which engage with them on the street, particularly if their agenda is controlling or judgemental rather than empowering and person-centred.

- Voluntary participation

As with any youth work activity, young people should have the choice whether or not to engage and should always be able to walk away at any point.

- Youth-led

One of our contributors highlights the importance of allowing “young people to take control and direct the learning to suit their own needs, agendas, predispositions, values, prejudices etc.”

Things to Consider

- Clarity of purpose

As highlighted above it's important for the young people that you are clear about why you are engaging with them on the street but it is also vital for you as a worker and your team. Different organisations and agencies will have different reasons for their outreach programme and before establishing any kind of outreach initiative it is essential to be clear about what you are working towards. For workers whether paid or voluntary, this provides boundaries, enhances safety and increases their participation.

- Team Work

Strong teams are essential for any outreach initiative in terms of clarity of purpose, staying safe, providing support and making time to debrief, reflect and share learning. In addition one of our contributors notes that it is important to make use of preparation time to "discuss situations and scenarios that make us each feel uncomfortable so if they do come up we don't push one another."

- Planning & preparation

Some of the activities outlined here will be things that you'll be able to pull out as and when you need, others will require a bit more advance planning to ensure you've got the resources to hand. As you become more confident you will find it easier to call to mind particular discussion starter questions or to change from one planned activity to another. It's not necessary to put pressure on yourself to follow through on a particular plan for a session because there are many variables with detached work that can influence circumstances on any given night. As one of our contributors wrote, "sometimes it's just about being around".

- Flexibility & reading the mood

Often with street work you have to deal with what's in front of you and respond to whatever situations are presented. In that sense the work can be quite reactionary, particularly if you are present with young people involved in risk-taking behaviour.

Sometimes you might only have the attention of the young people for 5-10 minutes and that's ok. Even if that gives you the opportunity to open up a short discussion on one or two topics, it's still good to make use of even a part of an activity to explore an issue or introduce a different way of thinking about things. As one our contributors comments:

"The context of the streets is unstructured thus structured learning taking place in a flexible space must also be as flexible and versatile to change with the directions young people take activities."

Reading the mood of the group and the context is a skill that develops over time. Trust your intuition, if something feels a bit off, it probably is. As you become more experienced you will get a better sense of when the time is right to engage with a group of young people, when to initiate a conversation on a particular issue, when to hold back from contributing, or when to move on.

- Different settings

Sometimes you'll be in an area that is dimly lit, sometimes it will be well lit, sometimes there won't be a lot of space to move around, sometimes there will be loads of space, sometimes there will be noise from traffic so you will need to adapt accordingly. In addition there will be times where you are engaging with a larger group of young people – 40, 50, 60+ when you may only have the opportunity to engage more meaningfully with a smaller group of 15-20, but it may mean that some of the activities will be harder to facilitate because of wider distractions with the larger group. However in this instance it may still be possible to throw in some discussion starter questions just as you're standing talking in the smaller group. By contrast if you're out and about in an area and you meet smaller groups of young people there may be more scope to use the different tools depending on your reading of the space available and the mood.

- Spontaneity

Feel free to be creative and make up games on the spot or take hold of opportunities that arise where the young people initiate their own activities. One of our outreach teams described an evening where they were chatting with young people with whom they had previously engaged in a youth centre – the group was in a park and the young people challenged the youth workers to a game on the swings of 'who can throw their shoe the furthest on the swings'. It was a fun session for everyone and helped to strengthen relationships by building on previous contact with the young people. It is also important to be able to laugh at yourself and even to 'make an eejit' of yourself, demonstrating an enthusiasm that can become infectious and a willingness to put yourself out there in order to build rapport with the young people.

- Responsiveness to local issues or current events

One of the strengths of a detached youth work approach is the way in which you can be directed by not only what the young people name as their needs but also the issues that they see as important. In terms of the latter it's helpful to be mindful of current and local events and to connect with the tangible issues present in the communities that young people are part of. Sometimes the young people will have specific frustrations – perhaps about a local service or a decision that has been made that is out of their control, and they need some space in which to vent and process the dynamics of that situation. Sometimes they will be reacting to an incident in the local community such as a crime or a death, which might lead to fears or concerns, and they need safe space in which to explore what that means to them. In these kinds of scenarios the detached youth worker can act as a sounding board for the young people, supporting them to process events or information.

With regard to broader events in the news there may be opportunities to help the young people unpack information they're getting from various media platforms, perhaps reducing confusion, addressing myths or exploring what's going on underneath. This can be particularly relevant to CRED themes and a news report might present an opening to consider values for a fair society or practical ways in which we can contribute to community relations, equality or diversity in our communities.

- Power dynamics

Deliberately going to spaces where young people choose to hang out helps to flip some of the power dynamics that can be present between youth workers and young people. Having a mind-set that you're going to learn from the young people creates space for the young people to teach you about their worlds and they may respond positively as you work to build their trust on their 'turf'.

- Health & safety

As with any kind of street-based engagement attending to health and safety is vital, both in terms of the worker and the young people. Always carry a mobile phone and ensure that the battery is fully charged before you head out. Agree a code word amongst your team so that if someone is feeling uncomfortable with a situation or unsafe and feels it's time to leave, you can do that swiftly together. When you encounter young people who are engaging in risk-taking behaviour, you need to bear in mind that different agencies will have different expectations of you as the worker and you will need to adhere to your organisation's policies and procedures. This also applies to issues related to safeguarding or child protection.

- Inter-agency relationships & partnerships

It's important to foster good relationships with other relevant agencies and organisations involved in youth provision or engagement in the local area. There may be times when different agencies are working at cross purposes or have very different agendas, values and methods of working, and it can be difficult for workers to get caught in the middle of these kinds of situations. However it is important to stay true to core youth work values, to work with integrity and keep the welfare of young people at the forefront of what you do. Open communication is vital when conflicts arise with other agencies. By contrast where there is synergy between different agencies there may be good opportunities to collaborate and support the work that others are doing. In addition networks such as the NI Street Work Forum (pg. 16) may offer a valuable way of sharing ideas and getting support.

- Signposting

Be prepared to signpost young people to appropriate services. Often as trust builds, the young people you meet will begin to reveal some of the things that are going on underneath the surface and indicate their needs for specific kinds of support such as counselling, advice, bereavement support, addiction services etc. It is helpful to be aware of services that exist in your area so that you can signpost effectively.

- Give it time

As with any kind of detached youth work approach, it takes time to establish a consistent level of engagement in a particular area. It takes time to build relationships of trust, however as trust increases it opens up further opportunities to address issues relevant to the young people and to educate around CRED themes.

Tools

Sometimes we have to step out of our comfort zones to try something new, the tools in this resource are a suggestion of one way of doing that. There can be times when it's too easy to rely on our default ways of working and do what we always do, but trying out some of the activities here might provide a way to introduce new ideas into your street engagement or to take discussion to a deeper level, particularly in terms of CRED issues.

1. Questionnaire – What Brings You Here?

Aim: To understand young people's needs and to start conversations.

This is a useful tool particularly if you are starting street work in a new area and you want to get a feel for what young people's needs are and start building relationships. It is also a useful format to gauge what young people see as relevant community relations/ equality/diversity issues in their community.

Given the street setting, the easiest way to support young people to complete the questionnaire is to have it set up and ready to complete on a tablet or smartphone rather than using paper copies. Survey platforms such as SurveyMonkey often have apps that can be used on Android/iOS mobile devices.

It is best to keep questions short and clearly worded with multiple-choice options so that young people are not required to give long answers and so that their attention does not drift. The questionnaire should be kept anonymous and it is essential to be clear with the young people from the outset about the purpose of the questionnaire and how the information they provide will be used.

Sample questions can include:

- Why do you choose to hang out here?
- What's the best thing about hanging out here?
- What's the worst thing about hanging out here?
- If you could do any of the following here, what would you choose?
- If there was a place to go and hang out nearby would you go to it?
- What would make it attractive as a place to hang out?

The advantage of this kind of exercise is that you can carry out follow-up surveys with the young people when your detached youth work programme has become more established and get a sense of what has changed in the community since you started.

2. Paper Fortune Teller

Aim: To start conversation and discussion, particularly discussion that explores identity or CRED-focused themes.

Resources required: 1 sheet of A4 paper & marker

A paper fortune teller is an old school game made out of craft paper and different coloured markers. The aim of the game has traditionally been to predict the future but for the purposes of a detached setting, it can be used as a question and answer game.

How to play:

Once assembled, the fortune teller will have 4 colours and 8 numbers. First the game leader asks the player to pick a colour. If for example the colour is green they spell out 'G.R.E.E.N' and move the folds with each letter. Once the spelling is over numbers are exposed on the inside of the wings, the game leader asks the player to pick a number, for example, 4, and this is then counted out, '1.2.3.4' and the folds are moved the same way as before. The game leader then asks the player to select another number for example, 5, and underneath the flap of number 5 will be a question the player must answer. Different people in the group can take on the role of the game leader.

Once created the device is very versatile and can be used to introduce a range of topics for discussion as it allows space for up to 8 different questions. Some workers adapt the paper fortune teller so that it only includes numbers and they make up questions on the spot.

Questions on Identity:

What is your favourite band/music and why?

What is your favourite movie?

Do you know what your name means or where does it come from?

What are your hobbies?

Community Relations, Equality and Diversity questions:

What do you think is the best thing about this area?

What do you think is the worst thing about this area?

How would you define Loyalism?

How would you define Nationalism?

How many diverse groups can you name?

Have you ever been discriminated against?

Have you ever discriminated against someone else?

Do you think that everyone should be treated equally?

Alternatively you can use the 'Would you rather...?' questions (see Tool #3) instead of those listed above.

How to make a paper fortune teller:

- Fold up the corners of a sheet of A4 paper to meet the opposite sides and cut off the top to make a square sheet with diagonal creases.
- Fold the four corners of the square into the centre. Turn over the resulting smaller and fold in the four corners a second time.
- Fold up all four corners so that the points meet in the middle, and the player works their fingers into the pockets of paper in each of the four corners.

(If you get stuck, online tutorials can be found on YouTube.)

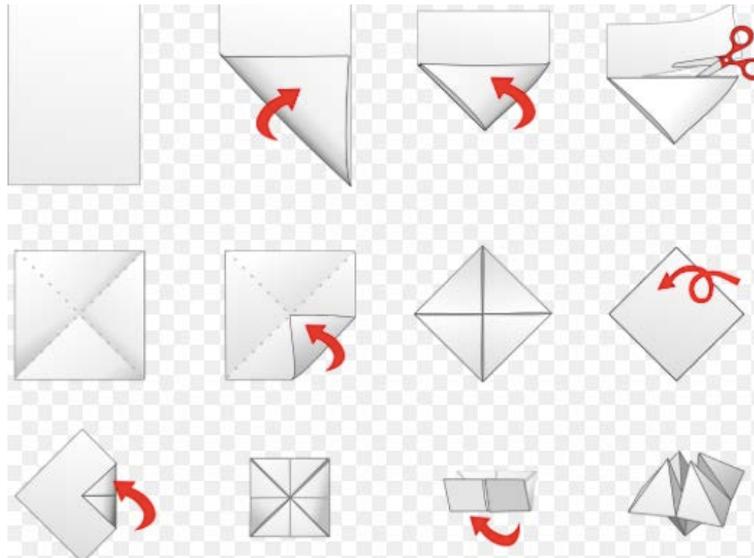


Fig. 1 How to make a paper fortune teller

Adaptation: Pop-Up Football

Another way of exploring the above questions is to use a football instead of the paper fortune teller: Buy a cheap football and either number the hexagonal panels with a marker or write the questions directly onto the panels. The ball is thrown to each young person and whichever panel their right thumb is in contact with when they catch the ball corresponds to the question they answer.

3. Would You Rather...?

Aim: To start conversation and discussion, particularly discussion that explores identity or CRED-focused themes.

'Would you rather' questions are great and so simple as discussion starters. You simply give people two choices, they have to choose one or the other, there is no sitting on the fence!

Sample questions:

- Would you rather drink Coke or Pepsi?
- Would you rather have no teeth or no lips?
- Would you rather eyelashes the length of your arms or arms the length of your eyelashes?
- Would you rather be blind or deaf?
- Would you rather lose all of your money and valuables or all of the pictures you have ever taken?
- Would you rather be the first person to explore a planet or be the inventor of a drug that cures a deadly disease?
- Would you rather be completely invisible for one day or be able to fly for one day?
- Would you rather join the DUP or join Sinn Fein?
- Would you rather get a job as an MLA or get a job as a postman/postwoman?

- Would you rather go to a Jewish service in a synagogue or go to an Islamic service in a mosque?
- Would you rather have a chat with a Buddhist or a Hindu?
- Would you rather give up eating pork or give up drinking alcohol?
- Would you rather have everyone know what you are thinking or never speak to another person?
- Would you rather have £1 million or always know the right thing to do?
- Would you rather have lots of ethnic minorities as neighbours or only ever eat Irish stew for dinner?
- Would you rather be a police officer or go to jail for a year?

You can have a lot of fun with the questions you choose and you can build the game from silly questions to more sensitive CRED-focused topics depending on the group and what's going on.

You can also use this activity to lead into a debate, perhaps by asking the young people to stand on opposite sides of a line and encourage those on one side to come up with an argument for their case to try and convince those on the other side. This kind of constructive discussion can support young people to appreciate different narratives and explore where they come from.

4. Stand Close To Me

Aim: To generate discussion, particularly around stereotypes and discrimination.

Explain to the young people that you're going to assume a particular identity and you're going to ask them to stand next to you in proportion with the extent to which they feel comfortable with you or empathise with your circumstances. So if they feel at ease with an identity they stand quite close to you, but if they feel less comfortable with something they stand further away. Encourage the young people to be honest in their responses.

Possible identities include:

Alcoholic	Republican
Drug addict	Loyalist
Police officer	Christian
Traveller	Muslim
Homeless person	Trans young person
Paedophile	Refugee
Elderly person	Politician

You can also start off with some lighter-hearted suggestions e.g. Justin Bieber, Kim Kardashian, or move towards specific politicians or celebrities if it suits.

As the young people move in relation to the various identities, you can open up discussion around questions such as:

- Is it difficult to decide where to stand? Why/why not?
- Why have you chosen to stand where you are?

- What feelings arise as you make your choices?
- What feelings do you think the person represented might have about where people are standing?

5. Theme-based Image Discussion Starter

Aim: To start conversation, particularly discussion that explores identity, traditions, beliefs and diversity.

Resources required: Images or symbols associated with a chosen theme, season, significant date or festival. The images can be in hard copy format, printed on paper, or else electronic and saved on a tablet or smartphone.

A good way to make the most of particular seasons, dates or festivals is to gather a bunch of images or symbols associated with a specific theme and use these images to stimulate discussion about traditions, culture and beliefs. For example, one outreach team was heading out for a street work session on a Friday night which was the 13th of the month, so they decided to use superstitions and Friday the 13th as a theme to explore values and beliefs, and selected images such as a black cat, ladder, rabbit's foot, the number 3, umbrella etc. Then they asked the young people if they could guess the relevant superstition based on the picture, and guess the origin of the belief.

Another variation of this is to use pictures of cultural symbols to explore young people's understanding of the meaning behind these symbols and to discuss ways in which particular symbols might be unifying or divisive. Events such as St Patrick's Day offer an opportunity to explore symbols and themes that can be shared by Catholics and Protestants and thus enhance relationships between different groups of people.

6. The Alphabet Game

Aim: To start conversation and discussion, particularly discussion that explores identity and diversity.

Resources required: Print out each letter of the alphabet onto an A4 page and laminate the paper.

Place the letters out on the street – depending on the weather conditions and the setting, you might want to be creative about this e.g. use blu-tack to attach the letters to railings/lampposts/benches etc. or use washable pavement chalk to mark out each letter on the ground.

Explain that each person needs to stand beside the letter that starts the word that answers the questions asked by the facilitator. Some possible questions/statements are:

- What is your favourite food?
- What's the best film you've ever seen?
- Where were you born? (The place, not the hospital!)

- What's the best concert/sports match/event you've ever been to?
- Where would your ideal holiday destination be?
- What school do/did you go to?

Having used one or two general questions/statements, try to include some questions/statements that will begin to bring out some of the diversity within the group and open up some discussion:

- What letter does your first name start with? What's the meaning of your name or where does it come from?
- Who is someone you really admire? What characteristic is it that you most admire?
- What is your first memory of being different from other people?
- Share a memory of a time when you felt really welcomed and included.
- When you hear the words 'community relations' – what is the first word that comes into your head? (You can try this with other words such as 'equality', 'diversity', 'peace', 'conflict' and so on.)

7. Take a Step forward

Aim: To develop discussion that explores equality and other CRED-focused themes.

Resources required: Cards with the character descriptions. (Alternatively these can be given verbally to each participating young person.)

This exercise can be used to show how different people can be held back. Give each of the young people one of these different characters to play and ask them for now not to share who their character is.

- A 14 year old with two parent family, dad has a good job
- A 16 year child of a single working mum
- A 16 year old in a wheelchair
- A 12 year old Polish Child who's parents work very long hours
- A 15 year old Syrian who speaks very little English
- A 16 year old Muslim who isn't sure they believe in God
- A 17 year old who is homeless after coming out as gay

Ask the young people to think about their character's life. Are they happy or sad? Hopeful or not? Do they have a good social life? Do they enjoy school?

Ask the young people to take a step forward if the following statements apply to their character:

- You have never encountered any serious financial difficulty.
- You have decent housing with a telephone line and television.
- You feel your language, religion and culture are respected in the society where you live.
- You feel that your opinion on social and political issues matters, and your views are listened to.

- Other people ask for your opinions on different issues.
- You are not afraid of being stopped by the police.
- You know where to turn for advice and help if you need it.
- You have never felt discriminated against because of your origin.
- You can go away on holiday once a year.
- You can invite friends for dinner at home.
- You have an interesting life and you are positive about your future.
- You can participate in an international seminar abroad.
- You can go to the cinema or the theatre at least once a week.
- You can buy new clothes at least once every three months.
- You can use and benefit from the Internet.

Ask the young people to look around and see who is in front of them and who is behind them. Ask them to share their character's circumstances and discuss what things held them back and when they moved forward.

Discuss some of the following questions:

- How does it feel if you were getting left behind and unable to make progress?
- How does it feel when your circumstances are bringing you ahead of other people?
- How true to life is this activity? What can we learn from it?
- How would you feel about the game if you were playing yourself, where would you be?

Further Information

The Federation for Detached Youth Work - www.fdyw.org.uk

The FDYW is a grassroots organisation of detached youth workers aiming to improve the quality of detached youth work practice in the UK. Its website includes a number of informative publications and the Federation also hosts an annual conference.

Youth Initiatives - www.youthinitiativesni.com

Youth Initiatives is a cross community youth work organisation which aims to awaken hope, inspire initiative, and mobilise youth to make a vital contribution to their community and to reconciliation in Northern Ireland through the discovery and renewal of Christian faith in daily life. YI also coordinates the activities of the **NI Street Work Forum**, which aims to provide practitioners with a forum to critically discuss and give 'voice' to the practice issues that they view as important and holds seminars and workshops for street work practitioners from across Northern Ireland. For more information contact Vinty Firth or Maria Scullion via streetworkforum@gmail.com.

Community Relations, Equality, & Diversity NI - www.credni.org

This website provides teachers, youth workers, schools and youth organisations with a wide range of information and resources on the development of community relations, equality and diversity.

Further Reading

Reconnecting Detached Youth Work: Standards & Guidelines for Excellence by Graham Tiffany (2007)

Reaching Socially Excluded Young People: a National Study of Street-based Youth Work by David Crimmens (2004)

Contributors

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YLT Consortium:

Youth Initiatives - www.youthinitiativesni.com

YouthLink: NI - www.youthlink.org.uk

YMCA - www.ymca-ireland.net

YLT Partners:

The Blue Houses, Ballysillan Youth For Christ

The Base Project, Lambeg

Damask Community Outreach, Lisburn

Rhythm, Youth Outreach, Banbridge