

12. OUTREACH

This section

- (a) sets out the rationale for Outreach;*
- (b) explains the concept of Outreach;*
- (c) provides examples of Outreach activities and a sample Outreach timetable;*
- (d) highlights the importance of network development for the delivery of outreach activities.*

Rationale

A Youth Information Centre should be concerned with its non-users as well as its users. Centre-based work does not suit the needs and lifestyles of all young people and the most vulnerable groups, who are often most in need of Centre services, can be reluctant to use them. Barriers to information access can be most acute in the case of disadvantaged young people. This arises from the fact that they are often located in isolated social networks, and can lack the personal contacts as well as the motivation and skills necessary for identifying and using information sources. The correlation between information lack and socio-economic disadvantage has been well documented and proves that many information services are failing to reach those most at risk and least well able to cope with the complexities of modern living.

Transport costs can also be prohibitive for young people on low incomes and, particularly, for those living in isolated rural or urban areas. Often their location places them at a disadvantage and limits their access to information as well as to other resources and facilities.

There is also a need to alert young people to the existence of the wide range of services, facilities and opportunities available to them and in doing so to provide an active rather than a reactive passive service, which merely responds to expressed need.

What Does Outreach Mean?

Outreach means taking the Centre services out into the community – reaching out to those to whom the Centre is inaccessible, or who are unaware of its existence or reluctant to use it.

A clear understanding of the demographic and socio-economic situation in which the YIC operates will inform the level and type of outreach work.

Examples of Outreach Activities

Youth Information Centres provide a range of imaginative outreach activities, aimed at reaching young people in their own territory. Flexibility and innovation are displayed in providing a range of responses, in a variety of settings, using all forms of media and methods of contact. Some Centres also actively encourage the involvement of young people in the preparation and distribution of information to their peers in an effort to enhance its acceptability and to develop the information skills of those involved.

Examples of outreach work include the following:

Information Points in e.g. schools, youth clubs;

Publications e.g. youth/sports directories, newsletters, factsheets;

Local Radio Programmes/Local Newspaper Columns on topics of interest;

Workshops/Exhibitions/Information displays in the Centre and at other locations;

Talks/Presentations to school and other groups;

Youth Information Noticeboards in schools and other locations;

Use of intermediaries to reach young people e.g. youth/social workers;

Information Studies programme for schools;

Competitions e.g. poster competition on particular theme.

Sample Outreach Activity Timetable

It is advisable to prepare a monthly or quarterly Outreach plan, based on subjects, which are topical at the particular time of year. The following is a sample monthly Outreach Activity Timetable:

January

College Application
Summer Work in U.S./ J1

February

Summer Work/Travel Abroad
Voluntary Work Abroad

August

Evening Classes
Continuing/Distance Education

September

Evening Classes
Continuing/Distance Education
Sports/Leisure Activities

March

Summer Work/Travel Abroad
Job Hunting Skills

October

Studying Abroad
Information Studies Module
Drug Prevention/Treatment Facilities

April

Summer Activities

November

Careers
European Programmes for Young People

May

Youth Group Activities for Summer

December

Spring Evening Classes

June/ July

Tourism/Travel in Ireland
Events/ Festivals

Using the Youth Information Website www.youthinformation.ie

All correspondence and publications from a Youth Information Centre should include mention of the Youth Information Website. If a particular Centre has its own website, it should be mentioned also. Many young people will visit the website rather than visit a centre. If they cannot get the information they are looking for, then they may email you with a query. The website also makes the service available to people across the country and, indeed, across the world. When you receive a query via email, your response should include the name of the Centre, the address, fax and telephone number along with any other relevant information. This will ensure that the user will return, and even pass on the address to others.

Networking

Effective Outreach work also involves the development of good working relationships with other relevant agencies and individuals who can act as intermediaries, or assist in the organisation and delivery of outreach activities. These might include FÁS, Youthreach, youth workers, social workers, teachers/guidance Counsellors, Juvenile Liaison Officers, Community Welfare Officers, Scouts/Guides, student bodies, social services, other information agencies, local media.