



# Outreach Youth Work Handbook

The Finnish Way

Emmi Paananen • Miikka Piironen • Katja Uustalo (eds.)

## Editors

Emmi Paananen, Miikka Piironen & Katja Uustalo

## Members of the handbook development team

Jani-Markus Heinola, Nuorten palvelu ry

Anita Hyvönen, Jelppiverkko

Tanja Jokiniemi, Municipality of Lapinlahti

Tuomas Jääskö, Municipality of Kittilä

Piia Lahokoski, Municipality of Nurmijärvi

Suvi Luoma, City of Akaa

Juha Mertala, City of Pudasjärvi

Marika Mäkinen, City of Orivesi

Saija Paronen, City of Tampere

Larissa Rainio, Municipality of Myrskylä

Ilita-Mari Ruponen, City of Helsinki

Satu Sirviö, City of Pori

Jani Suomalainen, City of Espoo

Suvi Valtonen, City of Naantali

Liisa Vilen, Municipality of Laukaa

Mari Virtanen, EKAMI Group, Rannikkopajat

– Coastal Workshops

Katri Peräaho, MIELI Mental Health Finland

Marika Vartiainen, EHYT Finnish Association  
for Substance Abuse Prevention

**Photography:** Laura Oja, Noon Collective

**Illustration:** Sofia Wilkman

**Graphic design and layout:** Hahmo

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ASSOCIATION FOR OUTREACH YOUTH WORK  
AND WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES

MINISTRY OF  
EDUCATION AND CULTURE  
FINLAND

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# Welcome to the Outreach Youth Work Handbook – the Finnish Way!

This handbook is primarily aimed at everyone doing outreach youth work in Finland and their supervisors and those being inducted into the job. The purpose of this handbook is to support the daily work of outreach youth workers and to provide a tool for the local development of outreach youth work. We hope that this handbook will also serve the rest of the youth sector and everyone working with young people, in addition to students in education, social work and health, among others. This handbook describes the outreach approach, social empowerment and walking beside young people. These all are elements we would like to see spread even more widely across services regardless of the sector or the target group.

**T**he roots of outreach youth work are in outreach work, which has been going on for decades among population groups living in difficult circumstances. The outreach approach has been naturally suited for Finnish youth work, because they share the same values and goals. Outreach work has been introduced in Finland particularly to support young people who are not in education or employment and young people who need support to become independent. This development has given Finnish outreach youth work its well-established form, which is described in this handbook. To this day, outreach youth work is based on voluntary participation, going out where the young people are, walking beside them and applying a resource-focused approach. These attributes have been passed on over the decades with the outreach approach.

The single most important step for outreach youth work in its current form was including it in the Youth Act in 2011, at which time when the Ministry of Education and Culture started granting more regular aid to municipalities for organising outreach youth

work – this started an intensive professionalization and expansion process across Finland. As the 2020s drew near, the national coherence of the work form was further boosted by the first version of this handbook, regional coordination, the activation of outreach youth worker networks and a centre of expertise. These accelerated joint development and advocacy efforts, the strengthening of the professional identity and making the work widely visible.

This handbook describes what outreach youth work is like today and sheds light on its common values and principles, the goals that provide direction to the work and the underlying structures. The book highlights key points and questions for developing outreach youth work to meet the needs of young people in local settings. We hope that this handbook will support the occupational well-being of outreach youth workers and help them recognise untapped opportunities in their work and its limitations. You can use this book to obtain professional validation, help with tough questions in your daily work and new perspectives on your work.

*March 2022, Emmi, Katja and Miikka*

**1940s**

Gang work  
in parishes

**1970s**

Outreach work develops  
in Norway, piloted in  
Finland

**1991-1995**

OYW project in Tampere  
that leads to the  
work form becoming  
established

**2011**

Outreach youth work  
included in the Youth  
Act

**2008**

State aid for workshops  
for hiring outreach  
youth workers

**1990s-2000s**

Outreach youth work  
projects across  
Finland

**2017**

New Youth Act, role of  
outreach youth work is  
clarified

**2018**

First version of the  
Outreach Youth Work  
Handbook, activities of  
national youth work centres  
of expertise begin

**2017-2020**

Outreach youth work  
becomes part of the activities  
of the National Workshop  
Association, new strategy and  
name: Into – Association for  
Outreach Youth  
Work and Workshop  
Activities



**2022**

**Revised version  
of the Outreach  
Youth Work  
Handbook**

1

# What is outreach youth work?

You can always be in touch if something comes up!

I got in that school. Thanks for helping me.

How are you? Has everything gone well?

The work with a young person can last from one week to several years.

## Outreach youth work



Outreach youth work supports the internal motivation and independence of young people and strengthens their ties to services and the ability find a path forward.



When the young person reaches their goal and work with them is finished, they are still always welcome back again.

### Wellbeing

How are you?

How are you feeling?

Have you eaten today?

Family?

Friends?



Meetings and discussions can be held over coffee or even on a walk in the forest.



A young person wants to start working together.

### Dreams

What are you good at?

What do you dream of?

Hobbies?

Do you want to try something new?

Do you want to find new people in your life?

What makes you excited?

### Actions

What happens tomorrow?

Do you have enough money?

Did you know about the workshops?

Are your papers in order?

Studying?

Sick leave?

## Principles of outreach youth work

- » voluntary
- » walking beside young people
- » taking the side of young people
- » holistic

# 1.1 Purpose and goals of outreach youth work

Outreach youth work is challenging educational and interactive work with a growing young person. Outreach youth work ensures that every young person receives the support they need for growth, independence and social inclusion – so that nobody has to grow up and cope on their own. In addition, the work involves supporting the overall well-being of young people also in communities and at a societal level.

## Outreach youth work stands by young people

The work involves meeting young people aged 15–28 who need support in their daily life and new visions for the future. The mission of outreach youth work is to reach young people in need of assistance and provide access to services and other support designed to promote their growth, independence, social inclusion and life management skills as well as to improve access to education and the labour market (cf. Youth Act 1285/2016). This cooperation is particularly beneficial for young people who have not had a support network for pursuing their personal goals.

Outreach youth work begins by establishing a trusting, respectful relationship with the young person. The young person's expertise of their life is always at the heart of the work. Outreach youth workers help the young person commit to a process that has been planned together and aims to help them build a good everyday life and a future for themselves. The outreach youth worker is a safe adult contact who takes the young person's overall well-being into consideration and supports them in all areas of life. The worker accepts the young person's way of being and respects them as who they are. Young people are always treated individually as who they are, but still as a part of their local community and society. The goal is to strengthen the young person's inclusion in their personal life and in their local communities and society.

The workers meet young people who are in different situations in life that require growth, development and independence. The purpose of outreach youth work is to approach these questions by means of non-formal education and youth work. The provided support is socially empowering and holistic and it utilises cross-sectoral cooperation.

### Developmental milestones of youth

- » Young people grow into themselves, their personality becomes stronger.
- » Young people detach themselves from dependence on their guardians and other educators.
- » Young people establish an independent relationship with society and find their place in it.
- » The social agency of young people develops.
- » Communal peer relationships and other relationships become stronger.

## Social empowerment as the goal

Outreach youth work creates opportunities for the social empowerment of young people. The work is about strengthening key life skills that allow young people to live the life they suit best and to pursue their goals. Cooperation with young people improves their ability to act in social situations, form relationships with other people and build social inclusion in various communities. Social empowerment fosters trust in that life will carry you through anything and a sense that making a difference in the world is not only possible, but also worth it. Social empowerment gives young people a stronger sense that they are in control of their life and can cope in various situations.

Social empowerment is achieved when a person is genuinely seen and supported as they face issues that are important to them. For a young person, even a single conversation or an exchange of messages can be a socially empowering experience. However, the outreach youth work process typically lasts longer, and goals are pursued at the pace that suits the young person. At the heart of social empowerment is unhurried interaction, mutual trust and doing things together. During the process, the young person experiences a sense of belonging in the communities that matter to them, they discover something to do that gives them strength and their agency increases. The outreach youth worker gradually makes themselves redundant, and the young person feels like they can cope independently with the various situations that they will face.

The young person can assess their social empowerment using the Sovari indicator. It involves assessing changes in the following areas: coping with everyday life, self-knowledge, social skills and relationships, life management and learning abilities and working life skills. In addition, young people can influence outreach youth work activities by providing feedback about the support they have received and how useful it has been. This feedback shows outreach youth workers the meaning of their work, in addition to helping them develop activities and highlight the effects of social empowerment.

## Socially empowered young person

- » The young person feels they are seen, heard and valued for who they are.
- » The young person is surrounded by a positive, safe social network and they feel like they belong in the communities that matter to them.
- » The young person identifies personal strengths and appreciates themselves for who they are.
- » The young person feels like they can personally influence the course of their life and believe in themselves in various situations.
- » The young person lives a meaningful life, feels well and can find a path to education and employment that suits them.
- » The young person has goals and believes in the future, and they have motivation to pursue their goals.



## Goals

1. to strengthen self-knowledge
2. to improve social skills and trust in other people
3. to promote life management
4. to provide skills for studying and employment
5. to provide more opportunities to influence the course of one's life and to foster a belief that you can overcome challenges



## Social empowerment

is the development of key life skills.

By a human, for a human

Interaction

Walking beside someone

## Core of social empowerment



being heard



trust

being appreciated

positive experiences



sense of community



discussion



encouragement

safe atmosphere

new perspectives



creative methods

doing things together

## **Role and significance of outreach youth work in society**

Outreach youth work has its own social purpose: to make the voice of young people heard so that they would receive the services they need and to draw attention to any gaps in services and in the support network of society through which young people can fall. Outreach youth work produces knowledge, provides solutions that meet young people's needs and engages in various forms of cooperation to bring about changes. One of the strengths of the work form is the versatile, holistic understanding of youth and the life of young people, because the work is done where young people are. Due to this, outreach youth work should be utilised systematically and constructively in the decision making of municipalities and wellbeing services counties.

Outreach youth work promotes the living conditions and well-being of young people on a local level. The work aims to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live a meaningful life that is conducive to their well-being in their living environment. Advocacy aims to guarantee that every young person will get the support they need and the opportunities to fulfil their potential. Outreach youth workers operate locally, regionally and nationally in various networks as experts in the life situations of young people and the phenomena that belong to youth. Outreach youth work regularly produces knowledge about the life of young people and current phenomena.

## **Professional goals in outreach youth work**

### **Social empowerment of young people**

- » Stronger social skills
- » Stronger self-knowledge
- » Stronger life management

### **Enhancing the social inclusion of young people**

- » Stronger local communities
- » Increasing inclusion in personal life
- » Increasing inclusion in processes to influence matters

### **Smoothing the transitions of young people**

- » Transition to essential services
- » Getting an apartment
- » Transitioning to education
- » Transitioning to paid labour

SOURCE: PARENT CUSTOMER MANAGEMENT AND STATISTICAL SYSTEM, "GOALS" TAB

## 1.2 Values and approach



Finnish outreach youth work has its own strong values and principles that guide the approach. These reflect the purposes and underlying principles of the Youth Act. Learning more about these and using them to reflect on actions are top priorities for each professional and organisation doing outreach youth work. Values and principles form the common foundation for all outreach youth work, which serves as the basis for achieving the desired effects and outcomes. They mark the limits of the work and help identify its fundamental task.

**O**utreach youth work is educational and interactive work. Young people always work voluntarily with outreach youth workers.

Outreach youth workers need sensitivity and the ability to reflect on things, situational awareness and experience in dealing with challenging situations in life. The socially empowering nature of the work lies in the interactions with people.

Plenty of time is spent on building trust, because without it, it is impossible to hear the young person's story and see them as a whole person. Outreach youth work gives young people someone to walk beside them, to support and guide them for as long as they need. This idea of walking beside someone is based on spending time together and having conversations, doing things together and sharing experiences.

Working with young people involves systematic cooperation towards the goals set by the young people themselves. The cooperation between a worker and a young person forms a curve, similar to a process, with a beginning and an end. Outreach youth work often makes contact with young people facing some kind of problem. Despite this, the work is always resource-focused and based on fostering hope and improving opportunities to take action. Outreach youth workers help support young people in their everyday life and face their challenges and dreams together with them.

Outreach youth work utilises and forms cross-sectoral cooperation networks to help young people,

when needed. Outreach youth work promotes dialogue between different actors, respects the young person and their immediate circle and processes any information it receives in a responsible manner. The approach adopted in the work is flexible and agile – the work keeps up with the times, listens to the young people and changes according to their needs and social phenomena. All activities are based on the principles of youth work, such as solidarity, cultural diversity, healthy lifestyles and a respect for life and the environment (see 4.1 Youth Act).

### Outreach youth work as part of youth work

Outreach youth work is part of the broad field of Finnish youth work governed by the Youth Act. All youth workers with their own approaches and in their own settings promote the social inclusion of young people, their opportunities for exerting an influence and their ability and conditions to take part in society. In youth work, a pedagogical relationship is established between the youth worker and the young person. All youth work is always educational, meaning that its purpose is to support the growth, independence and sense of community of young people.

Youth workers act as interpreters of youth and the living conditions of young people and have the ability to constructively question and highlight social evils. They encourage young people to influence things themselves and work with the young people to develop opportunities for exerting an influence.

## VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

### **Voluntary participation and autonomy**

Young people decide if they want to accept the support of outreach youth work or not. Refusal does not have any consequences. Each young person determines their needs and decides the direction they want to pursue in life.

### **Youth-oriented**

The primary mission of outreach youth work is to support the growth and development of young people and to identify youth as a phase of life and the related phenomena in society. Work is done in a variety of settings, and young people are contacted wherever they feel comfortable. Outreach youth workers work primarily based on the information and goals provided by the young people.

### **Confidentiality**

Cooperation between outreach youth workers and young people is based on trust. Aiming for a mutual understanding, the unconditional transparency of the work and honesty are ways to build and maintain mutual trust. Outreach youth workers understand the importance of confidentiality and the obligation to observe secrecy and do not process the information of the young people without their consent or make any decisions concerning young people behind their back.

### **Together, not on behalf**

Young people are seen as agents with the will and the ability to build a life and a future that they find meaningful. Outreach youth work inspires and supports young people as they make independent choices and strengthens their ability to take action and accomplish their goals. Outreach youth workers should not exploit their power and dictate what young people should do.

### **Walking beside young people**

Outreach youth workers walk beside young people in matters that are important to them and in various transitions and changes in life. They help young people find useful services and commit to them. Outreach youth workers make sure that the young people are heard and understood when they use the services. They remain a part of the young person's life for as long as the young person wants or needs them. Young people are always welcome to return to the outreach youth workers.

### **Holistic approach**

Young people can talk to outreach youth workers about any issue or phenomenon that is meaningful to them. Factors affecting their situation in life are considered from a variety of angles, and things are not examined solely based on individual attributes, particular problems or diagnoses. The focus is on identifying and supporting the resources, strengths and potential of young people.

### **By a human, for a human**

The work is based on a humanistic view of human beings and respecting the young person for who they are. Each young person is seen as a unique individual, whom the outreach youth worker connects with using their personality and strengths. The work is based on interacting with other people and respecting them as equals.

### **Own personality and set of values**

In addition to their professional skill, outreach youth workers rely on their own personality as a tool that helps them interact with young people. The values and commitments, background and experiences of the worker are always present in their interactions. Professionalism involves recognising the effects of these things and reflecting on them in relation to the values of youth work. Outreach youth workers should think about and identify how they draw from their personal attributes and private life history in their work.

## No thresholds

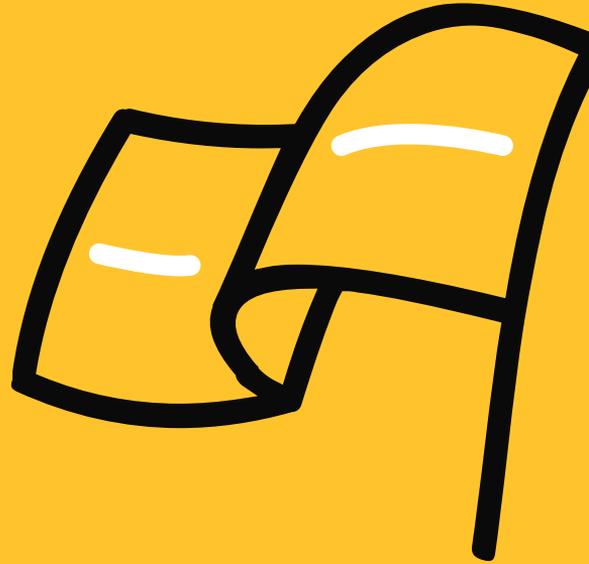
Outreach youth work is present where young people are and provides a chance to establish contact with a safe adult. Outreach youth workers can be easily contacted through many different paths and communication channels. Young people can decide what information they want to reveal about themselves and may also remain anonymous, if they wish. The activities do not involve any particular requirements or conditions that the young people are required to meet. No deadline is set in advance for working with a young person, and the number of meetings is unlimited. Outreach youth work is always free of charge and gratuitous.

## Cross-sectoral cooperation

Outreach youth workers are thoroughly familiar with the service network and work in active cooperation with the services that are essential to young people in their region. The goal is that outreach youth workers help young people establish a timely contact with the services that can best address the situation. In cross-sectoral cooperation networks, outreach youth work serves as an expert in social empowerment and produces knowledge to the other services about the living conditions and needs of young people in a vulnerable position.

## Hearing the voice of young people

The voice of young people is amplified locally in current discussions. Young people are given opportunities to influence things that matter to them. Outreach youth workers serve as a path and highlight opportunities for exerting an influence. Outreach youth workers utilise the feedback from young people in developing their work and in knowledge management. Based on this feedback, outreach youth workers identify the effects and benefits of their work and can validate the importance of their work.



## Professional Code of Conduct in Youth Work

- » Youth work is about interactions, encouraging education and doing things together.
- » Youth work strengthens the social inclusion of young people in their local communities and in society.
- » Youth workers behave constructively and openly in their work community and cooperation network.
- » Youth workers act as interpreters of youth and the living conditions of young people.
- » Youth work is done in an environmentally sustainable manner.
- » Youth workers take care of their occupational well-being.

SOURCE: PROFESSIONAL CODE OF CONDUCT IN YOUTH WORK, ALLIANSSI & NUOLI RY 2020

**”I’ve gotten help with things that I wouldn’t have the courage to do on my own. I feel much more hopeful about the future.”**

SOVARI FEEDBACK 2020



2

# Outreach youth work in practice



## 2.1 Target group

The target group of outreach youth work is young people aged 15–28 who need support and are willing to work with an outreach youth worker. Typical needs for support are related to the young people becoming independent and looking for their path in life. The focus areas of the work and the specific target groups are decided locally. The work focuses primarily on young people in a vulnerable position.

### ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS FOR BECOMING INDEPENDENT



 Outreach youth work involves working with young people transitioning from basic to upper secondary education and older, up to the age of 29. Cooperation with outreach youth workers is voluntary and aimed at all those who feel they need support in becoming independent and forging a life for themselves. The primary target group consists of young people who are not in education, employment or services. Sometimes a young person may already have access to a service, but they are lacking more comprehensive support where someone walks beside them, or they may be at risk of falling outside the services for some reason. In such cases, they may find it helpful to talk to someone new confidentially about the things that matter to them. Outreach youth workers provide support for instance in finding the right services and dealing with the authorities, dealing with everyday situations, looking for hobbies and social relationships.

The minimum age for outreach youth work is set around the time that young people finish comprehensive school, because the work aims to promote the independence of young people and help them find their paths to active citizenship. More specific minimum age limits are always set depending on the needs of the locality. When deciding the minimum age and the target group, outreach youth workers should consider the activities of other youth work, pupil and student welfare services, the party responsible for guidance and supervision of compulsory education, child welfare, health care and other services for young people. Outreach youth work should be aimed particularly at the young people who do not have access to services or who are deemed to be at risk of falling outside them. The organisation should regularly examine whether its work is aimed at supporting the independence and social inclusion of these young people using the tools of youth work in the manner referred to in the Youth Act.

## **Various life situations of young people at the focus**

The work aims to reach young people to whom the offered opportunities, the approach and its known

effects (see also 2.6.2 Effects of outreach youth work) can provide something they consider necessary and who are first of all interested in working with outreach youth workers. These are typically young people who are seeking new perspectives: they are interested in their study and job opportunities, want to reflect on questions related to independence and life in general with a safe, open-minded adult or need specific services that they have not yet been able to access for one reason or another.

The classification of young people into different groups can be utilised when specifying the target group. Every young person belongs to more than one group at the same time. Belonging to particular groups affects the young person's future in different ways, depending on the time, place, culture and social structures. Various groups can be examined and identified, for example by considering the young people's

- educational backgrounds and labour market situations
- family backgrounds and circumstances
- socioeconomic statuses
- neighbourhoods
- gender identities and sexual orientations
- ethnic and cultural backgrounds
- lifestyles and subcultures
- factors affecting functional ability and health.

Outreach youth work pays special attention to young people and groups of young people in a vulnerable position who are at a greater risk of feeling excluded and being deprived of the common good. These include young people with a lower socioeconomic status or an underprivileged background, sexual and gender minorities, language and cultural minorities and young people who need physical or mental support. In addition, outreach youth work should have tools for interacting particularly with young people who have experienced bullying or loneliness, because these experiences are also known to be associated with social exclusion later on. The outreach youth work organisation should therefore take the needs of these above groups into consideration when planning its activities and developing the competence of its personnel.

Outreach youth work respects everyone's right to choose their lifestyle. It is worth keeping in mind that while activities are mainly aimed at young people who are not in education or employment, not all of them benefit equally from intensive social empowerment or referral to services. Sometimes these young people are referred to as so-called NEET youth (*Not in Education, Employment or Training*) as if they had essential features in common. However, they do not form one homogeneous group: the group of young people in a similar labour market situation includes youth in the most versatile situations who have different needs.

In addition to those looking for a place to study, a job or something else to do and those feeling discouraged and deprived, there are also other young people who are not in education or employment. This group includes, for example, young people preparing for entrance exams, dedicated to practising creative or athletic skills, taking care of a near relation, living alternative lifestyles or focusing temporarily on voluntary work or voluntary studying on their own terms (cf. Hiilamo et al. 2017). Despite this, it is a good idea to actively communicate to all young people that if they have any questions, they can easily contact the outreach youth workers at any time.

## Defining the local target group

The target groups and focus areas of the work are always defined in the municipality. This definition is based on the special characteristics of the region, the local needs and professional ethics while paying particular attention to the types of young people who seem to be left without the services in the locality, the phenomena that can be observed and who the outreach youth workers can reach. The definition should broadly take advantage of the knowledge produced by both outreach youth work and others on young people (see 2.6.1 Knowledge production methods) and examine the needs to coordinate services (see 2.4 Cross-sectoral networks).

You should consider, for example, how the young people in the region who withdraw into their homes can be reached, or the young people who spend a lot of time in

public areas and outdoors. A knowledge of the target groups and the living conditions of the young people and networking with other actors helps to discover the young people who need special attention locally.

Clear target groups and focus areas help to allocate resources systematically and according to the needs. However, a certain degree of flexibility should be left in the definition, because outreach youth work should keep up with the changes in its environment, react to them flexibly and discover new young people and groups to use the services. In the context of the work, you should always be able to respond to direct contacts from young people and any needs for support that come up in the field. In addition, regardless of the focus areas, you need to immediately reach out to any young people of whom a contact request has been submitted to outreach youth work according to the Youth Act.

### Things to consider when defining the local target group

- » Definition of the Youth Act: young people under 29 years of age who are in need of assistance
- » Local survey (hearing from young people, local phenomena, young people's living conditions, settings, other services): How can the young people in need of assistance be identified and reached?
- » Young people under 18: What kind of cooperation is done with the party responsible for guidance and supervision of compulsory education? How and to what extent do we work together with schools, educational institutions and others doing youth work? What is the relationship of the outreach youth workers with the minors who have access to other services?
- » Young people who are using services: What separates outreach youth work from other services for young people? What is the relationship of outreach youth work with young people who are already using other services?

## Situations where outreach youth work is not the primary provider of assistance:

- » The young person is unwilling to work with outreach youth workers.
- » The young person has an acute substance abuse problem that they are unwilling to address despite attempts to motivate them.
- » The young person suffers from a severe condition that requires specialised psychiatric treatment, such as a psychosis, a suicide attempt or a severe personality disorder.
- » The young person has access to guidance and intensive supportive action (e.g. child welfare).
- » There is a need to guide and supervise the compulsory education of a minor – this is the responsibility of the party responsible for guidance and supervision of compulsory education in the young person's municipality of residence.
- » It is apparent that the young person needs services and supportive action according to the Act on Disability Services and Assistance due to a disability or an illness and they can be referred to social work with disabled people for a service needs assessment.
- » It is deemed that the young person only needs someone to accompany them once to get from the location of one service provider to another or to some other setting.
- » The professional sees that the young person needs a volunteer or a professional support person, and the support relationship has reasons, goals and a desired duration that can be decided in advance. Support person activities require an agreement, and they are related to the young person's customer plan, which is followed up by a social worker.



## 2.2 Where and how do outreach youth workers work

Outreach youth work is done throughout Finland, from Hanko to Utsjoki, and from Korsnäs to Ilomantsi. Settings vary from parishes with a few hundred residents to the urban neighbourhoods of big cities. Local approaches always take shape through the workers' competence, the resources and focus areas of the organisation and the special characteristics of the region. However, outreach youth work everywhere is based on certain socially empowering methods.

### 2.2.1 Settings, or the field

Outreach youth work is actively involved in the everyday lives of young people and can be carried out in a variety of settings. The work is adjusted to match the situations of the young people and their needs for support, which change shape constantly with the development of the rest of society. Flexibility and the ability to adapt to the reality of young people are integral elements of outreach youth work.

It is characteristic of the work to be present wherever young people are and provide opportunities to establish contact with a safe adult, whether it be in a physical or a digital environment. Workers work regularly out on the turf, contact and meet young people and partners and possible networks and make time for gradually getting to know one another.

A youth-oriented approach without thresholds can be achieved when the outreach youth workers work in a variety of ways in various settings that are characteristic of different groups. Young people need to be able to easily reach an outreach youth worker whenever they want, and schedule a meeting with a youth worker quickly – preferably in the same or no later than the next week.

Work is done, for example, in the facilities of the outreach youth workers, various service points, on the streets, in cafés and public areas, in workshops and educational institutions, in nature and online. Outreach youth workers are actively involved in cross-sectoral networks and occasionally also use their partners' assistance to gain access to places where they might find young people who need assistance. The persistent efforts of outreach youth workers in the field build trust and shared positive experiences, which make it easier to make contact and do things together with outreach youth work.

Flexible working hours and the possibility to move from place to place are vital to outreach youth work. Meetings are arranged in places that can be easily accessed by young people and where cooperation with outreach youth workers is most natural for the young person at the time. If necessary, young people can also be met with at home if this is relevant in light of their situation. Depending on the region, the work may require travelling long distances – for example when accompanying a young person to the services they need or to other settings located outside the municipality of residence.

The requirements of the varied settings and mobility should be taken into consideration when planning the resources, working hours and occupational safety issues. The environments of young people are part of their personal sphere of life, and working in them requires the outreach youth worker to show sensitivity, understanding and respect towards the prevailing social codes. Youth inclusion and power of decision are highlighted especially when outreach youth workers work in settings in which the young person feels most at home. Smooth, open communication guarantees that the young person understands the reason why outreach youth workers are present, whether it be in a physical or a digital setting.

## Outreach youth work settings

- » welcoming facilities of outreach youth work
- » public areas, streets and cafés
- » vehicles: private cars, public transport
- » various service points (e.g. Ohjaamo One-Stop Guidance Centers, Kela, social services)
- » youth work facilities, facilities of organisations and free-time activities, libraries
- » educational institutions and workshops
- » nature, camp centres, recreational areas
- » digital platforms
- » the young person's home
- » call-ups of the Defence Forces



The organisation needs to identify regionally significant phenomena and the special characteristics of the setting to provide high-quality guidance everywhere and work in these circumstances on the young people's terms. The planning, assessment and development of outreach youth work requires regular surveys. To ensure that the work meets the local needs, at least the following factors should be examined:

### **survey of the target group**

– total number of young people in the target group; environments of the young people; observations on the growth and living conditions of the young people and current phenomena

### **special regional characteristics**

– local aspects, meaning the actors, events, facilities and places in the environment, leisure opportunities, available education and employment, housing situation, substance abuse culture

### **reaching the young people**

– number and channels of contacts from young people and their near relatives; activeness of the authorities and others referring young people to outreach youth work; reached and unreached young people; ways of reaching out; visibility of outreach youth workers and to what extent there are no thresholds

### **our organisation**

– outreach youth work statistics, knowledge production and experiential knowledge of workers; effects of the work and feedback from young people; occupational well-being of outreach youth workers; occupational safety, organisational and team structures, financial situation of the unit

### **tools**

– competence and competence needs, methods and their main areas of focus, funding of operations and temporal resources; applications and systems, facilities and equipment

### **networks**

– youth services, their availability and possible gaps in services; main and potential cooperation partners; structural cooperation between organisations and workers' personal networks; resources required by network cooperation.

A close-up, low-angle shot of a person's feet wearing bright yellow and white sneakers with white laces. The person is standing on a light-colored, textured pavement. In the background, the tips of other people's feet wearing brown shoes are visible, suggesting a crowded or public space. A white speech bubble with a drop shadow is overlaid on the image, containing a quote in bold black text.

**”I’ve been able to stop and think about what I want from the future. I didn’t even want to think about it before, because it just made me anxious.”**

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## 2.2.2 Methods used in outreach youth work

Outreach youth workers use various support, education and guidance methods to help the young person in a variety of ways depending on the situation and the need. The working methods evolve constantly, and methods are chosen based on the respective goals and target groups. Local needs also affect the choice of methods – outreach youth work always mirrors its region and the young people living there. All outreach youth work across the country still shares the same values and principles, in addition to the basic elements of the approach and the guiding objectives. The approaches of all workers have several things in common: the aim of making the voice of young people heard and duties based on a cross-section of phenomena and the living conditions of young people.

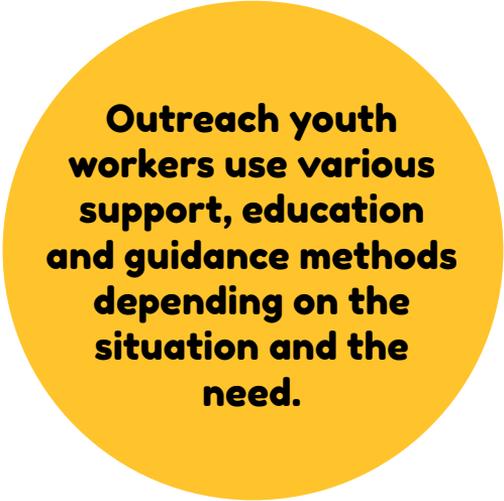
The most common working methods of outreach youth work are individual support and walking beside the young people, going out into various settings, providing guidance and referring young people to services, and cross-sectoral network cooperation. The methods of youth work include targeted small groups, camps and trips. They are applied when they serve the individual needs of young people and the goals of outreach youth work. The work involves the versatile use of modern digital tools to reach young people and to spread information. Various online platforms

are used creatively to interact with young people, and meetings can be organised online.

As part of its basic work, outreach youth work organises Aikalisä [“Time Out”] activities in cooperation with the Defence Forces and the Non-Military Service Centre. The idea is to reach each age group of young people who are eligible to enlist and to provide support and assistance for men of conscription age and for women who wish to volunteer for military service. In order for the outreach youth work team to be able to use all the approaches and methods of basic work, it should have good professional skills, adequate resources and technical capacity.

The work involves working in pairs, which provides the young people a broader range of perspectives on their situation and versatile competence. The pairs support each other’s well-being and receive reinforcement from each other with regards to safety, professionalism and working with young people.

The documentation of customer information and compiling statistics is an important part of the work. When young person starts to receive guidance, their process and goals are logged and their progress is registered. In addition, outreach youth workers compile information about the effects of their work and various phenomena to support advocacy and development.



**Outreach youth workers use various support, education and guidance methods depending on the situation and the need.**

## METHODS OF OUTREACH YOUTH WORK

### **Individual support and walking beside the young person**

Getting to know the young person, building trust and surveying the overall situation. Young people are offered confidential conversational support and the set goals are pursued together. Cooperation begins with the identification of the young people's strengths and resources. The young person's sense of life management is strengthened and the steps forward are made visible.

### **Group activities and camps**

Group activities are used to foster social relationships and a sense of community, discuss various themes, reduce loneliness etc. Forms of activities include targeted activities in small groups, camps (e.g. Nuotta periods in Finnish Youth Centres) and theme groups that serve the individuals needs of young people and advance the goals of the work.

### **Going out in the field**

The aim of going out in the physical and digital environments of young people is to make contact with young people. Forms of activities include school visits and informative events, e.g. for 9th graders and students in upper secondary and higher education, and going out regularly in places where young people spend time and in events to increase visibility and the number of contacts.

### **Referral to services and interpretation**

Young people are referred to the services, activities or information that they need. They are supported as they commit to and make use of the services. Decisions issued by the authorities and the rights and obligations of the young person are interpreted to them.

### **Cross-sectoral network cooperation**

Network cooperation includes notices filed by the authorities on young people, supporting young people in the service network, creating

the necessary network for a young person, utilising the professional skills of networks and lending the expertise of outreach youth work to networks, partnerships and raising awareness and advocacy.

### **Working in pairs**

Young people, particularly new contacts, are always met in pairs, if possible. Work is done in pairs because it is beneficial for the young people and improves their situation, but also improves the workers' occupational well-being and the professionalism and continuity of their work. Each outreach youth worker has a designated partner either within their team, among the other outreach youth workers in the region or in the cross-sectoral network.

### **Aikalisä activities**

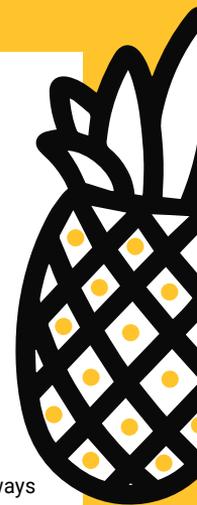
Outreach youth work provides support and guidance during call-ups to all conscription aged young men and and to all men and women whose military or non-military service is interrupted. Outreach youth work in municipalities is responsible for the activities that are based on cooperation between the Defence Forces, the Non-Military Service Centre, the State Treasury and the municipalities.

### **Digital youth work**

Forms of work include using the social media and building a stronger presence on it, providing information to young people, reaching out to them online, utilising digital tools in guidance and engaging with young people in games and online communities.

### **Process monitoring and documentation**

Key tasks include the documentation and monitoring of customer information and the goals and process, producing statistical data and knowledge on phenomena, monitoring customer feedback and the effects of the work and developing work based on knowledge.



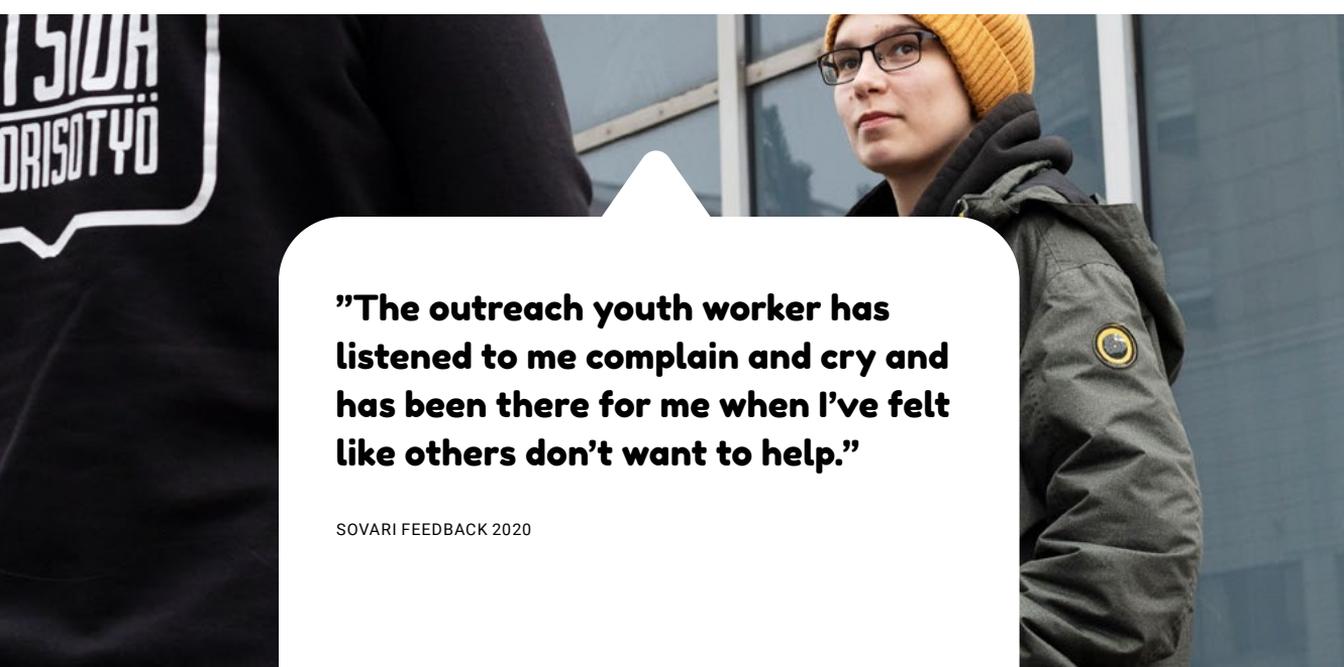
## 2.3 Cooperation with young people

Outreach youth work involves building a trusting relationship with a young person and offering them support with issues that matter to them. The aim is always to achieve the young person's goals, build a meaningful life and give the young person a sense of being able to cope in various situations. Once the young person has been socially empowered and has received the help they need, the work is ended by mutual agreement. The young person is still welcome to return to outreach youth work services at any time.

**T**he key objective of the work is the social empowerment of young people. A trusting, appreciative attitude and walking beside the young person in their situation in life are essential elements of an empowering approach. The principle is that no young person is left alone with their questions or challenges in life, but they are addressed together instead. The young person is joined by an adult who has time and who sees their strengths and resources.

Once contact has been made with a young person and they express their willingness to cooperate with the outreach youth worker, it is time to move on to interaction and walking beside them. Respectful

interaction is, indeed, the most important and most effective element of outreach youth work, which in itself already empowers the young person. Young people are always approached without any assumptions or prejudice. In terms of the worker, this requires strong self-reflection, sensitivity and positioning themselves on an equal footing with the young person. The goal is to establish a mutual understanding of the moment and the reality in which the interaction occurs. The key is trust and being present as a human for a human, working together to advance the young person's goals. These principles of interaction are also observed in incidental or spontaneous meetings with young people.



**"The outreach youth worker has listened to me complain and cry and has been there for me when I've felt like others don't want to help."**

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## STEPS OF THE WORKER-YOUTH RELATIONSHIP AND WORKFLOW

### 1. Guidance and initiating cooperation

A contact with the young person is made, and they want to begin cooperation with the outreach youth worker.

### 2. Getting acquainted and building a trusting relationship

Getting acquainted, the young person sets the pace, building trust and a solid foundation for cooperation. Considering the goals of the young person.

### 3. Interaction, walking beside the young person, doing things together

Unhurried interactions are important, as is systematically pursuing the set goals. The young person's resources are strengthened while working in a youth-oriented way.

### 4. Regular communication

The outreach youth worker is committed to the young person and the process. They are interested in the young person and their situation, ask them how they are doing and show them that they care.

### 5. Interpretation

The outreach youth worker makes the rights and obligations of the young person visible and interprets the decisions and services provided by the authorities. The goal is to make sure that that young person has understood and has been understood in various situations.

### 6. Strengthening youth agency and inclusion

Supporting the young person as they take responsibility and express their personal thoughts and opinions, working together and enabling experiences of success. Strengthening the young person's inclusion in meaningful communities.

### 7. Referral to services and network cooperation

The young person is referred to the right services at the right time and assisted in using the services. The necessary networks are built to support the young person, making use of the skills of other professions.

### 8. Monitoring and further development of goals

Social empowerment and the achievement of goals are assessed together. The young person is given an opportunity to provide feedback on outreach youth work.

### 9. Ending cooperation

The process is ended together with the young person once they feel like they can cope in various situations and have achieved their goals. The young person may always return to seek further assistance, if needed.

## 2.3.1 Guidance

Young people can contact outreach youth work themselves when they feel they need support or want to talk about their concerns in confidence. Direct contacts from young people are the most fruitful in terms of initiating cooperation – this means that the young people are motivated and want to improve their situation from the start. Young people can contact outreach youth work easily through multiple channels, even anonymously if they wish. The most common channels are messages and social media, face-to-face meetings in various settings and the national yhteysetsivaan.fi website.

There are many ways to lower the threshold for direct contact in outreach youth work. One of the most important ways is to be present where the young people are. Outreach youth workers can be easily reached, they actively focus on communication and visibility. This means going out in the field and raising awareness in educational institutions and various services, the streets and public areas, at call-ups, on social media etc. The key principle in guidance is having no thresholds, and each organisation is responsible for ensuring this on their part.

Outreach youth workers always work with the consent of the young person, and the work is voluntary – also when the person contacting them is someone other than the young person themselves. In addition to the young person, their friends or family or the professionals working with them may contact outreach youth work. In these situations, the outreach youth worker needs to know who is contacting them. The information is also passed on to the young person once they are reached. When contacted by friends or family and professionals, the outreach youth worker often takes on a consulting role, because the mere expertise of the outreach youth worker and their ability to suggest various services can help the person contacting them if they are concerned. Only some of these contacts lead to cooperation between the outreach youth worker and the young person, but the worker may still have had a significant role as a solution-oriented professional who gives hope and advances the situation.

Associations and foundations working with young people and other communities organising free-time activities for young people can contact outreach youth work with the consent of the young person (or the guardian of a minor). The Youth Act specifies the authorities that have the duty or the possibility to submit a contact request to outreach youth work. The duty and the possibility to file a notification concerns educational institutions, the Defence Forces and the Non-Military Service Centre, Kela and other authorities. The authorities submit contact requests to the online service yhteysetsivaan.fi, which works nationwide and is directly linked to the PARent system of outreach youth workers (or other similar information systems). In addition, the people contacting outreach youth work may use the same channels as the young people.

### Initiating cooperation

The young people who typically end up working with outreach youth workers are people who feel they need and are willing to accept assistance and can verbalise their need for assistance. Not everyone has a clear goal or the ability to express it in words, even if they feel they might benefit from the support of an outreach youth worker. In these situations, getting to know one another and building trust are especially important.

In some situations, the young person may refuse to cooperate at first, but later contact the outreach youth worker themselves. Outreach youth workers also reach out to young people again, if they have seemed unsure during the initial contact or they have given the worker permission to get back to them. Reaching out and getting to know one another requires particular sensitivity, looking at things from the young person's perspective and reflecting on the most suitable methods of interaction – which is naturally a different process for each young person.

When a young person wants to change their life and is willing to open up about their situation to a new outreach youth worker who is still unfamiliar to them, they are taking a big, bold step. This is often worth saying out loud, because this, too, encourages the young person to actively improve their situation.

## Outreach youth work



Outreach youth work is contacted in the home municipality.

1.

### Who can contact the workers?

Young person

Young person's family and friends

Educational institutions

Defence Forces

Kela

Centre for Non-Military Service

Other authority

### How can outreach youth work be contacted?

1. Outreach youth work can be contacted in many settings, and the updated contact information can be found on the website of the organisation, on social media and using the search engine at entit.fi. Outreach youth work organisations have registered in the yhteysetsivaan online service, and you can submit contact requests to them.
2. Young people can contact outreach youth work (in whatever way suits them best, including anonymously), or a contact request according to the Youth Act is submitted to the outreach youth workers.
3. The outreach youth workers try to reach the young person, which will lead to one of the following outcomes: 1) the young person wants to initiate cooperation, b) the young person does not want or need the service, c) the young person cannot be reached despite attempts.

2.

### How can you contact the workers?



yhteysetsivään.fi

3.

### Reaching out



Various channels are used to reach out to young people.

At this point, the young person often has a strong will to act or they are at least curious to see what will happen next with the outreach youth worker. Outreach youth work does not sit around and wait for the young person's issues to be addressed only after other professionals have been added to their support network or the young person has gained access the services they are entitled to in some other way. Outreach youth workers immediately focus their attention on the conditions for social empowerment and the measures that support them. Cooperation with the young person starts here.

### **2.3.2 Getting acquainted – trust and respectful interaction**

Getting acquainted vital in outreach youth work, and this step of the process should not be rushed. When meeting and communicating with young people, workers stop and listen to what they say about themselves, their life and their experiences. The holistic approach of outreach youth work consists of the outreach youth worker's unreserved attention and approach to the young person's situation and the readiness to openly face and examine various topics that come up. Cooperation always takes place in the reality that the outreach youth worker and the young person form together, based on the information given by the young person. The interactions leave space for the young person's personality and story, which will be revealed over time and in an atmosphere of trust. Outreach youth workers also have to be present as their authentic selves, so that getting acquainted is reciprocal. This way, outreach youth workers can genuinely interact with and support the young person, and the young person is seen exactly as who they want to be seen.

The young people contacted by outreach youth workers are often in a situation where it is not easy for them to trust other people. Building trust usually requires several meetings where you try to find a common wavelength, communication method and an idea of the interaction relationship specifically between you and me. Since the most important thing is that the young person feels the outreach youth worker sees and hears them for who they are and does not judge

them for things they have or have not done, there can be no formula or specific instructions for this step of the process. Standardised processes and generic questionnaires could stand in the way of a budding relationship, so you should exercise particular caution when using such tools. Outreach youth workers pay attention to their presence, are interested in the young person and show them that they care. Once the young person gradually starts to trust the outreach youth worker, who reciprocally shows that they trust them, there is a possibility that the young person may also learn to trust other professionals and people and society in general. Trust is vital to social empowerment and positive agency.

### **Avoiding the pitfalls of shame and guilt**

Young people working with outreach youth work can sometimes feel ashamed and guilty of being in a situation where others try to help them and a professional lends them their support. Many have a tendency to think that they are personally responsible for everything and that they have simply got what they deserved when they have faced struggles in life. This may be the case even if the life events of the young person have been heavily dependent on the kind of society and environment they have grown up in and the way they have been treated. The young person may sincerely believe that they should struggle on their own and transform their life completely in order to finally be their own, valuable self in the eyes of their family and friends and the rest of society.

It is important for outreach youth workers to recognise such harsh impressions and tensions as the ones described above that rarely empower young people. Workers should do their best to dispel them. Previous experiences can also weaken the ability to build trust and commit to services. Once you know each other better and have more information, you can look back at the previous experiences of the young person with them and identify the factors that affected them – which typically have nothing to do with the personality, deliberation and authority of the child or young person – and the underlying social structures and phenomena.

Sometimes you may notice that the personal history of the young person is linked to various broader phenomena in many ways: for example, intergenerational inequality, childhood poverty and other accumulation of disadvantaged conditions, regional segregation and inequality, racism and other forms of discrimination. Even outreach youth work cannot solve these structural issues, but it can draw attention to them constructively and lay the groundwork for a better tomorrow for both the young people themselves and the rest of society (see 3.6 Joint advocacy).

## Transparent principles

When outreach youth workers start working with a young person, they should openly tell them about their methods and their role next to the young person. Outreach youth workers should point out that they do not perform any duties belonging to the authorities, that the cooperation does not involve any sanctions or obligations and that the relationship with the worker in itself will not bring any financial benefits to the young person. Explaining the principles of voluntary participation and youth-orientation is one of the first and most important things to discuss so that the young person can engage in cooperation as an active agent. The young person is also told about the confidentiality requirement to ensure transparency. Cooperation with the friends and family or network of the young person always requires their consent. The young person has to know when and why outreach youth workers are dealing with their issues and who they work with. During the cooperation, outreach youth workers make the young person's role visible and strengthen their agency and participation in dealing with their matters. Outreach youth workers work together with young people, not on their behalf.

In terms of getting acquainted and building trust, it is important to identify the settings, methods and ways of communication that best support the young person. The mobile nature of the job is explained to the young person in the beginning so that they do not feel like they need to adapt to meetings on the worker's terms and in the worker's facilities. Sometimes work begins in or near the young person's home, in public areas or online – whichever helps the young person commit to cooperation. Outreach youth work adapts

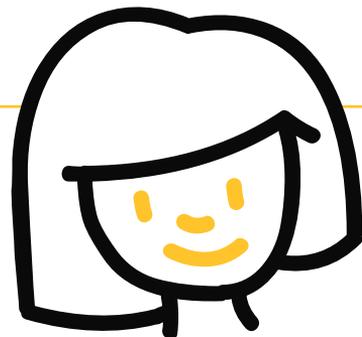
to the needs of each young person case by case and does not expect young people to adapt to a certain mould or style of meetings.

## Working with groups

The principles of trusting, equal interaction apply to both individual and group guidance. When working with groups, you should also remember to treat everyone equally so that everyone can find the most suitable way to participate and share their experiences with others. When instructing groups, outreach youth workers should observe the principles of safe space, examine the relationships between the participants and identify various group phenomena (e.g. silent, divided, disruptive or close-knit group). Outreach youth workers working with groups understand how groups are formed through storming, performing and adjourning and are able to develop activities in a way that encourages young people.

### Key elements of getting acquainted and interactions

- » voluntary participation
- » building trust
- » equality and reciprocity
- » no rush – being present at the moment
- » listening to the young person's story
- » transparency, confidentiality
- » communication methods and settings that suit the young person



### 2.3.3 Walking beside the young person and doing things together

It is the role of outreach youth workers to support young people in various situations in life and to metaphorically walk beside them while empowering them. All kinds of questions may come up during the process, some of which will be new to the outreach youth workers, and it is impossible to prepare for everything in advance. There is no pre-written script or pre-set goals for the work, but it is the worker's duty to support the young person as they write new chapters in their life in the direction of goals and wishes that gradually become clearer. Young people may also be undergoing challenges that outreach youth work cannot permanently or conveniently help with. Young people need to gain a sense of being cared for and an experience of not being left alone even in difficult situations. These experiences build trust in the outreach youth worker and through this often with other people and society in general, if this trust has been put to a test due to adversity.

Walking beside the young person means going through things together, looking for information and taking on challenges together safely. Sometimes it means having confidential conversations and looking for various alternative ways of thinking and solutions to the young person's situation. Outreach youth workers use their professional skill and experience to bring hope and alternative perspectives to the young person, even when the young person struggles to see them. Doing things together also involves dealing with and practising everyday matters. The work involves using and becoming familiar with various services; interpreting various decisions and the language used by the authorities in general; and helping the young person make sense of how the service system works and what opportunities it provides.

The key is to face and deal with new situations beside the young person, on the same level and from a shared perspective, so that they do not feel left alone with their questions. It is up to the worker to ask about and bring up topics that may affect the life of the young person (such as relationships, financial situation and housing, lifestyle, previous experiences, dreams) and to take an interest in the young person's experiences. Supporting and walking beside the young person means highlighting various opportunities, strengthening the young person's agency and resources and giving them more hope and trust in the future.

#### Common things that come up in outreach youth work

- » challenging questions about growth and identity
- » lack of future prospects
- » loneliness, harmful social relationships
- » circumstances that make everyday life harder, financial trouble (including running into debt and a bad credit history)
- » health concerns and mental health issues, crises and traumas
- » harmful lifestyles and habits, lack of a daily rhythm, problems related to substance abuse and gaming
- » questions concerning challenges in studying and learning
- » working life skills and finding a job

## Emotions on the line

Outreach youth work is always based on open discussion and honest relations – a genuine interactive relationship based on which workers can find the words, gestures and actions that fit that specific moment and best promote youth empowerment. Workers may, at their discretion, also tell the young person openly about their personal thoughts and feelings concerning the interaction or the situation of the young person. This is particularly important if these thoughts and feelings affect the emotional atmosphere and thereby the cooperation with the young person.

Disagreements can sometimes occur in outreach youth work. All the actions, ways of expression or choices that the young person finds meaningful do not always sit with the outreach youth worker's personal set of values. Tense situations, conflicting opinions and the resulting feelings are part of the day-to-day job, so there should be tools available for recognising and addressing them (such as work guidance and internal discussions in the work community). The outreach youth worker expresses their opinions and provides reasons for them without judging the young person, whose perspective and past experiences may be very different.

Negative emotions (such as frustration, disappointment or fear) and expressions do not, as such, provide a good footing for a support and guidance relationship. Addressing difficult emotions and experiences – including those of the worker themselves – together with the young person can, however, reveal underlying messages and help the young person understand other people better. As such, discussing ways of experiencing things works as an educational tool: it gives the young person more words and other tools for identifying, addressing and expressing private emotions in a constructive way. Stronger emotional skills facilitate the development of self-knowledge and identity, which also improves the young person's relationship skills and social relationships.

## Not superheroes, but people who depend on each other

If outreach youth workers feel that a young person also needs help from other professionals or needs assistance that outreach youth work cannot offer, they should recognise the limits of their work. Workers openly tell the young person about the ways in which they can help them. They are familiar not only with the strengths of their professional approach and the effects of social empowerment, but also the broad spectrum of other services that address the various needs of young people. Workers guide and motivate the young person to use services that will benefit them, and also help them to use these services. In these situations, workers make their role visible next to other services. It is important that the young person understands who can help them and in what situations. Outreach youth workers can work in pairs with other professionals, if this benefits the young person. The underlying principle of the work is that the young person is not left unaware of any incidents or decisions that have been made, nor without the support they need (see 2.4 Cross-sectoral networks).

Outreach youth workers use educational methods and do not shy away from difficult topics that affect the reality of young people. At the same time, it is worth keeping in mind that youth workers are not expected to have any training or particular skills for therapeutic work, nor is this the duty of youth work. There are separate professionals in social welfare and health care who deal with severe emotional problems, mental health problems, traumatic experiences and crises and drug and gaming addictions, issues that occasionally come up in outreach youth work. Outreach youth workers recognise the limits of their work methods and guides and accompanies young people to these other service providers, when necessary. Workers can also work together with them, always remembering their role as youth workers.

The worker's personal attitudes, emotions and possible feelings of being rushed are inevitably present in interactions. It is important to be aware of these things, and the worker should plan their life

so that they have time to recover from the previous assignment before the next meeting and unload the emotional burden caused by the work, if needed. In interactive work, an unrushed professional who is truly present is crucial for success. This unrushed presence must come across to the young person in all situations, including interactions that take place online or on the phone. In addition, the physical and mental safety and well-being of the worker and the young person or group should be taken into consideration in interactions. Outreach youth workers are responsible for safety and well-being together with their supervisor with the help of systematic activities and firm structures (see 3.2 Occupational well-being).

## Empowered youth

During the process, the outreach youth worker consciously puts their observations of the young person into words. This helps the young person recognise their abilities, strengths and available resources and improves their self-knowledge. Noting any positive steps forward and making them visible improves the young person's motivation and encourages them to continue along the path they have chosen. Listening to the young person and treating them respectfully helps them express their needs and ask the outreach youth worker or other relevant people for help if they need it. Being heard and helped reinforces the experience that matters can be influenced and are worth influencing. Support from outreach youth workers strengthens the young person's confidence in themselves and others. Workers help the young person feel motivated and set meaningful goals for themselves. In addition, it is the workers' duty to provide new perspectives for the young person and to act as a critical partner when examining and assessing various approaches and ways of thinking.

Discovering the young person's motivation and setting goals may require persistent interactive work and a broad range of actions and methods. The work empowers the young person when it starts by finding the young person's own voice and setting goals that they themselves believe they can achieve. No matter what the young person's goals are like, the aim of the

support provided by the workers in all contexts is a socially empowered youth who feels they are forging a life for themselves: who has plans for the future and believes in themselves in various situations.



### **In a nutshell: walking beside a young person**

- » Dig out the young person's strengths and resources.
- » Identify their goals and work towards them.
- » Make any steps forward visible.
- » Do and experience things together.
- » Reflect on experiences and emotions.
- » Explore different options and examine them critically.
- » Practice skills together.
- » Stay within the professional limits of outreach youth work and seek help from other professionals when needed.

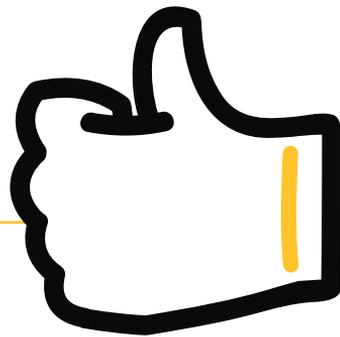
## 2.3.4 Ending cooperation

The ultimate goal of outreach youth work interactions and assistance is an empowered youth. As this destination draws near, the outreach youth worker will gradually make themselves redundant, and the young person will learn to rely on themselves in various situations. When the worker and the young person together recognise the moment when the active support of outreach youth work is no longer needed, the cooperation should be ended. It is important for the outreach youth worker to also identify the guidance relationships that can be ended in order to limit and manage their workload. If the worker is about to end cooperation as the young person is turning 29, they must make sure that the person will have the support networks and the services they need in the future.

Because of the voluntary, youth-oriented nature of the activities, it is inevitable that cooperation can also sometimes be ended by a one-sided decision of the young person. The young person may feel that cooperation is no longer necessary for some reason or otherwise withdraw from the cooperation. Sometimes cooperation may also be interrupted because of new contact details or unexpected situations in life. Outreach youth workers will not always know the reason why cooperation has ended. These situations require a plan on how long and using which methods the workers will try to reach the young person and when they will simply allow the young person to come back, if they wish. If the young person has previously given permission to share their information with other parties, possible partners can be informed that the worker's cooperation with the young person seems to have ended at least for the time being.

Ending cooperation does not mean that the young person is no longer welcome back or that all communication stops. Outreach youth workers usually contact young people whose process has ended from time to time, and the young people can always contact the workers. The follow-up of ended processes benefits the young person, so the outreach youth worker should contact them after a certain time to see how they are doing. This policy, which is naturally always

requires the young person's consent, is part of the culture of caring: the young person is not left alone. Follow-up is particularly useful if the young person has started studying, engaging in workshop activities or rehabilitation or has moved elsewhere. In such cases, the worker makes sure that the young person has not been left alone in the new situation and that they are still receiving the support they need. If the young person later feels they need support from an outreach youth worker, cooperation can begin again according to the same principles as before.



### Things to remember when ending cooperation

- » Ending cooperation is agreed together once the goals have been achieved or the path to them is clear, and the young person feels they can cope in various situations.
- » The young person gives feedback and talks about their experiences.
- » The young person is told how they can contact the outreach youth worker in the future.
- » The worker contacts them after some time to find out how they are doing.

## 2.4 Cross-sectoral networks

Successful outreach youth work requires cooperation with other professionals and services. Within these networks, outreach youth workers make their work known, advocate on behalf of the young people they meet and ensure the flow of information and smooth approaches. When reaching out to young people outside services, outreach youth workers often also notice gaps in services. This also provides a unique opportunity to improve the range of services. In practice, this is done through cross-sectoral cooperation networks.

### 2.4.1 Social empowerment supported by cross-sectoral cooperation

Outreach youth work enhances and develops the service system in close cooperation with other professionals. Since the outreach youth workers are familiar with the services and employees in the region, the challenging situations of young people can be addressed by flexibly tapping the know-how and expertise of the different fields. Cross-sectoral network collaboration makes it possible to quickly share information on different topics and how the services work. By combining the perspectives of different organisations and professional fields, we can form comprehensive pictures of things and situations. This is also the best way to identify the opportunities and services available to young people in the region and any weaknesses they may have.

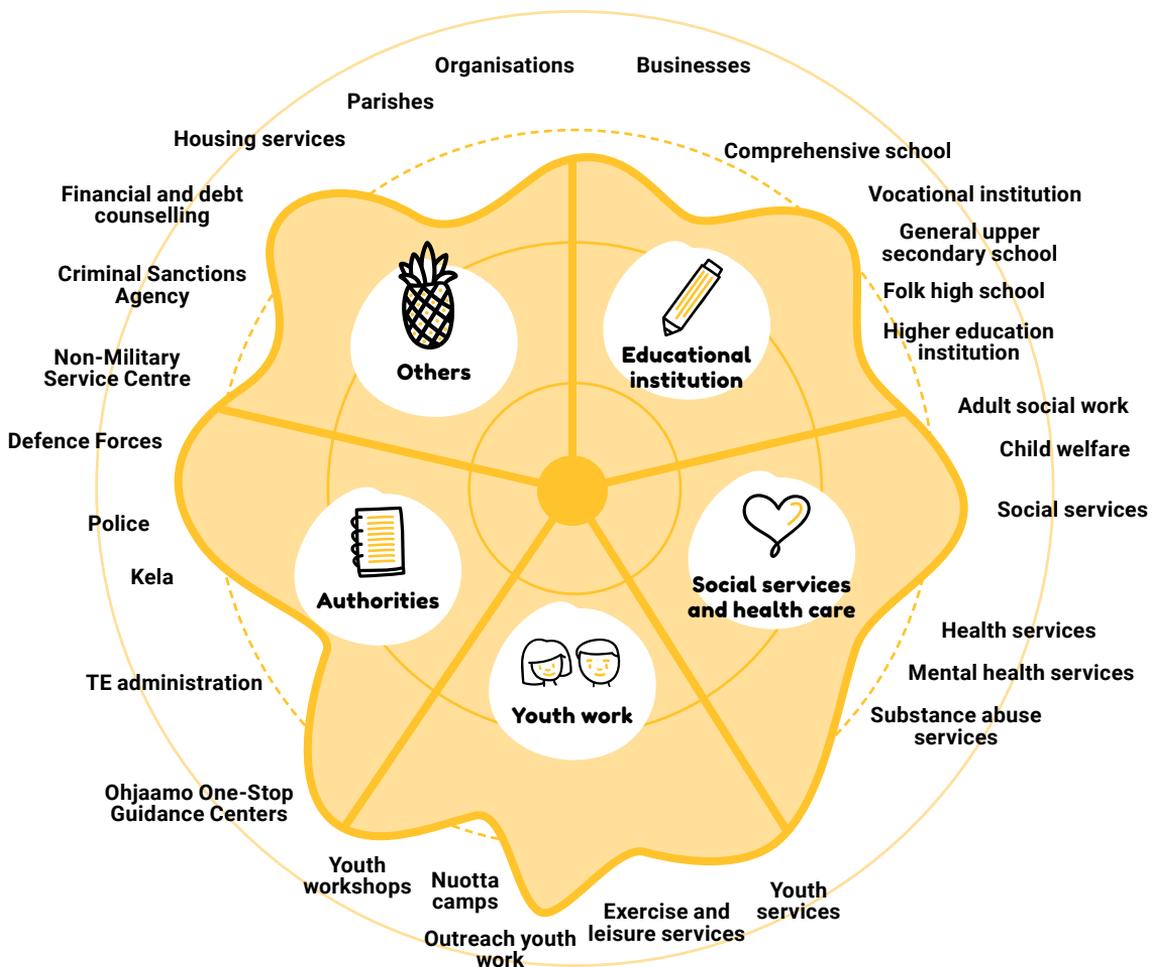
Outreach youth workers use these networks to make their work known among other partners and find out about any young people in need of support. By spreading information about outreach youth work to partners, workers can reach young people and communities that would not otherwise hear about the activities. Once the other partners are familiar with the duties of outreach youth work and understand the benefits and the effects of its approach, they can describe the work to young people in a way that inspires confidence. The partners all work together to promote young people's issues in society and make sure that their voice is heard.

Cross-sectoral cooperation requires a knowledge of the local service system, strong networking and systematic communication. The parties working with young people should be identified and contacted regularly. It is a good idea to look at the division of duties with them and see how well the approaches meet the young people's needs. This ensures that the young people's guidance processes are as straightforward as possible and there are no blind spots or unbridgeable gaps between the services.

## Keys to successful cross-sectoral cooperation

- » The services know what their common target group is.
- » They know the interfaces of the services as well as any overlaps.
- » The partnership has been agreed; work is done and planned together.
- » There is a clear agreement on the referral and accompanied transfer of young people to another service.
- » There is a clear, publicly expressed division of work and responsibilities between the parties.
- » The services can address the various needs of young people together.

## PARTNERS AND FELLOW SUPPORTERS OF OUTREACH YOUTH WORK





**Cross-sectoral  
cooperation requires  
a knowledge of the local  
service system,  
strong networking  
and systematic  
communication.**

The network cooperation partners of outreach youth work can vary greatly depending on the local target groups, the young people's needs, the services available in the region and the resources and methods of the outreach youth work organisation. Close parties typically include other youth service providers, such as workshops, Ohjaamo One-Stop Guidance Centers, social services and health care providers, Kela and employment-enhancing activities. The cooperation with educational institutions focuses on reaching and helping young people who are at risk of dropping out or have not found a place to study. If the young person is a minor, that is, subject to compulsory education, outreach youth work is done in cooperation with the party responsible for guidance and supervision of compulsory education in the municipality. Cooperation is carried out with the Defence Forces and the Non-Military Service Centre particularly during call-ups and to support young people who have dropped out of military or non-military service or have been exempt from service due to not being fit for service (Aikalisä activities).

The voice of outreach youth work should be heard in the local government's statutory youth steering and service network, which gathers information on young people's growth and living conditions and improves the coordination of services. The purpose of the steering and service network is to develop appropriate activities in services intended for young people and

to strengthen the activities in which young people engage voluntarily on their own terms and their social inclusion (cf. Mäensivu & Rasimus 2013). The steering and service networks should draw attention to any gaps in local services. The young people's needs and personal support networks connect outreach youth workers to multiple different services, and they work in close cooperation with these services to improve the young person's situation.

It is important for the young person to receive help flexibly, not only from outreach youth work, but also from other experts. This means that the outreach youth worker does not have to have a thorough command of all the various fields related to the issues they address when working with young people. When a worker who is familiar with the young person's situation in life notices that the young person needs a new kind of support network, they can take the initiative and invite the necessary professionals to come together. However, outreach youth work should not be primarily responsible for coordinating a support network that is built like this or otherwise, nor for arranging its meetings. When dividing the responsibility for coordinating the support network, one should pay attention to the goals underlying the work done for the young person and the partner that has the best opportunities to influence the young person's situation.

## Effective solutions in cross-sectoral cooperation:

- » **regular communication** and frameworks for discussing current issues (e.g. regular meetings; multi-directional communication about changes in workers and other changes)
- » **informative events** for partners and stakeholders (e.g. on outreach youth work activities, focus areas and development targets in the region and information about phenomena and the circumstances and living conditions of the target youth)
- » **agreed and documented cooperation models** (e.g. participation of outreach youth workers in student welfare groups, cooperation at transition phases and with drop-outs with the party responsible for guidance and supervision of compulsory education, work with Ohjaamo One-Stop Guidance Centers)
- » **working in pairs** with professionals in other fields (e.g. going out where the young people are and making home visits together with mental health professionals; organising joint group activities and events)
- » **designated outreach youth workers** who are responsible for more intensive cooperation with a close partner (e.g. educational institutions, workshops)
- » **going out** to the facilities of partners (e.g. Kela offices)
- » **service mapping and reports** (descriptions of who does what and with whom, how the processes are divided into phases, how cooperation and accompanied transfer are managed)



## 2.4.2 Role of outreach youth workers in networks

The role of outreach youth work in cross-sectoral networks is to act as an expert in youth and particularly the situations in life that concern young people in a vulnerable position. Outreach youth workers share information on young people's living conditions and needs to other professionals and identify opportunities to promote youth inclusion, particularly of those in a vulnerable position. Outreach youth workers examine changes in approaches, the service system or society from the perspective of the young people they work with.

Outreach youth workers always maintain their youth work role when working in the support networks of young people: they make sure that the young person is heard and understood and understand what happens in these networks and what is being agreed in discussions. The worker positions themselves at the young person's side, helping them provide information that is relevant for the work and to express their will. It is usually a good idea to come to network meetings together with the young person and also leave them together. This is to avoid giving the impression that the worker talks about the young person without them being present.

The network cooperation of outreach youth work largely consists of the two-way coordination between the young person and services and the authorities. So-called accompanied transfer refers not only to helping the young person commit to helpful services, but also to committing and linking the services and the authorities to the young person. Once a young person has access to the services they need, the outreach youth worker does not end the guidance relationship as a result. The worker listens to and monitors the young person's needs in changing situations, making sure that things progress as desired. They communicate trust in other professionals, the service system and society to the young person. For other professionals and the authorities, the worker sheds more light on the expectations and collective experiences of the young person.

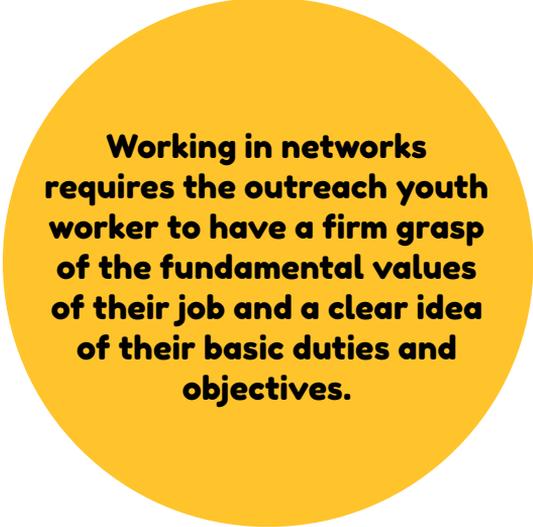
## Cooperation by common agreement

Working in networks requires the outreach youth worker to have a firm grasp of the fundamental values of their job and a clear idea of their basic duties and objectives. When working in networks, the outreach youth worker respects the young person's autonomy and agency. Sometimes partners need to be reminded of the fact that outreach youth workers never make decisions that are binding on the young person, exercise power as an authority or use administrative registers or process the young person's information without their knowledge. In addition, outreach youth workers do not deal with other professionals on behalf of the young person, behind their back or without their consent. Outreach youth workers are under no obligation to report on their work with a young person to any partners, if the young person does not want them to do so. According to our principles, outreach youth workers do not know the interests, needs or goals of young people better than they do themselves.

The outreach youth work organisation, supervisor and workers must ensure that work is distributed appropriately in the networks. If necessary, boundaries should be drawn between the duties of outreach youth workers and other professionals. Boundaries should be established systematically and communicated openly by agreeing on the duties and the division of responsibilities. Boundaries between work forms also help young people recognise the roles of outreach youth work and other actors. A clear division of duties helps them turn to the right professional and build trust on the basis of validly tuned expectations.

Overlapping work can be avoided if the members of the cooperation networks are aware of their responsibilities. Occasionally you may also need to consider whether working with outreach youth workers will be particularly useful for the young person if they already have a support network with other professionals whose duties include guidance. However, it is worth remembering that duties should always be limited only in relation to other services and workers. Limits should not be drawn in relation to the young people in the target group, whose situations, needs and will the outreach youth workers need to listen to attentively.

Due to the flexible nature of the work, outreach youth work is sometimes expected to address shortages that emerge in other services or even fill the gaps in services. However, covering for other services is not a good idea in terms of the young people, outreach youth work or the service system as a whole. The risk is that the worker will start to take action based on information they obtain from someone other than the young person and pursue goals not set by the young person themselves. It is also not desirable for the worker to perform duties that require special expertise in some other field without the appropriate know-how or organisational support. In these cases, the young person's right to comprehensive, trusting interaction with outreach youth workers who comply with the underlying principles of youth work hangs in the balance. It is up to the organisation and the supervisor to make sure that local outreach youth work is carried out precisely in the manner provided in the Youth Act and does not end up performing other duties.



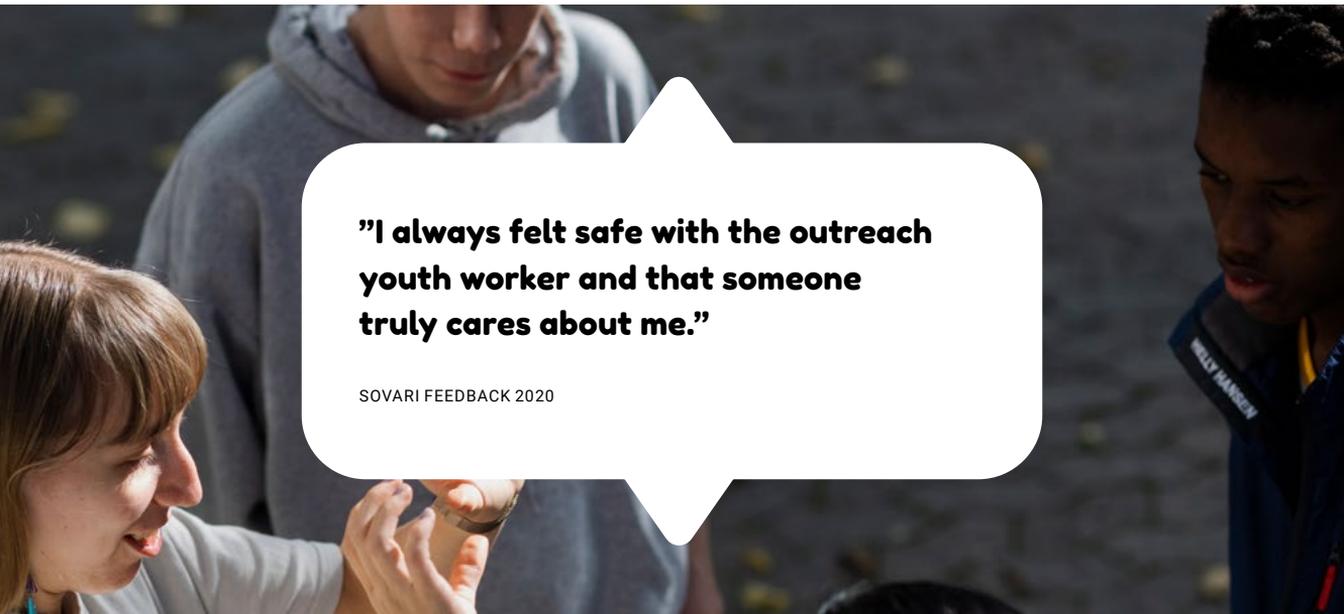
**Working in networks requires the outreach youth worker to have a firm grasp of the fundamental values of their job and a clear idea of their basic duties and objectives.**

## 2.5 Communication and making the work visible

The core message of outreach youth work is that nobody has to cope with things on their own. Communication makes the goal, principles and effects of the work visible, in addition to how the service can be reached. Outreach youth work also has the unique opportunity to make the voice and experiences of the target young people heard. Communication and PR are carried out in a variety of ways as part of the daily work by the workers, the supervisor and the entire organisation.

Communication is aimed separately at young people, local decision-makers and partners, and the channels and communication styles are different for each target group. Outreach youth work utilises the local (and national) media, social media and networks in a variety of ways. Making the work form known, talking about it and advocating on its behalf are some of the duties of not only outreach youth workers, but also supervisors and organisations. Effective communication is based on a plan, and the results are regularly monitored. Communication can be made easier by choosing a core message that is repeated in all communication and helps the message stand out from the flood of messages.

Communication and marketing are an essential part of outreach youth work and they require capacity, tools and sufficient resources. The results of the work may not be obvious from the outside. But without visibility and making the effects known, outreach youth work cannot reach young people or justify the importance and necessity of the work. Workers and organisations make use of the special expertise of communication specialists whenever needed and also gather views and tools from fields outside youth work. It is particularly useful to keep track of the means of expression, channels and influencers that are popular in the media environment of young people. The developers of communication and digital activities in youth work can also share inventive, effective ways to give publicity to the work.



**"I always felt safe with the outreach youth worker and that someone truly cares about me."**

SOVARI FEEDBACK 2020

## To young people and their friends and family

Giving publicity to outreach youth workers and the effects of the work form improves young people's awareness of their opportunities and builds trust in outreach youth work. Often the best way to connect with young people is to have them discover outreach youth work themselves and express their willingness to cooperate. Direct contacts from young people are promoted through having a presence and a good reputation among young people, active multi-channel communication and by eliminating any thresholds.

Presence among young people and communicating the activities already before they need assistance make it easier for them to contact outreach youth work when needed. This can be done through a social media presence and campaigns, communication with partners, participating in various events and informing young people about the service in the places where they are.

All communication and interaction – whether it be publications or face-to-face meetings – should embody the values and principles of outreach youth work. Outreach youth work communicates with both young people and networks, local communities and decision-makers according to the socially empowering approach: always creating hope and offering the necessary support and solutions that help young people.

## Outreach youth work informs the young people

- » when engaging with them in the field
- » through its networks
- » by marketing and a presence in everyday settings and local communities
- » by describing its activities in local media
- » by utilising social media and websites
- » by offering [entit.fi](http://entit.fi) and [yhteysetsivaan.fi](http://yhteysetsivaan.fi) as ways to contact the service.

## To networks, local communities and decision-makers

Communication to local communities and decision-makers focuses on the significance, effects and results of outreach youth work through the organisation and the supervisor. Phenomena that have been observed among young people are highlighted and given publicity. This is done by utilising data produced by PARent, the Sovari indicator and other tools and the young people's personal stories. In addition, communication and marketing with other outreach youth workers in the region is useful. This makes the message more effective, helps it spread across a wider area and ensures that it caters for a larger group of people. The peer networks of outreach youth work, regional coordination and national communication help in the planning and implementation of local communication.

The residents of the municipality and the region and the local communities can usually be effectively reached through local media – such as newspapers and websites, TV and radio channels. The local media can be approached by writing press releases, inviting them to learn about outreach youth work and writing letters to the editor. Media releases should be written if you have something newsworthy to say, such as new statistical or impact data or a reform that affects outreach youth work. Young people's experiences or the workers' observations of a current phenomenon in society are also worth reporting on. A letter to the editor is a great way to advocate for outreach youth work and inspire discussion, and it allows outreach youth workers to display the knowledge and expertise they have about a particular topic.

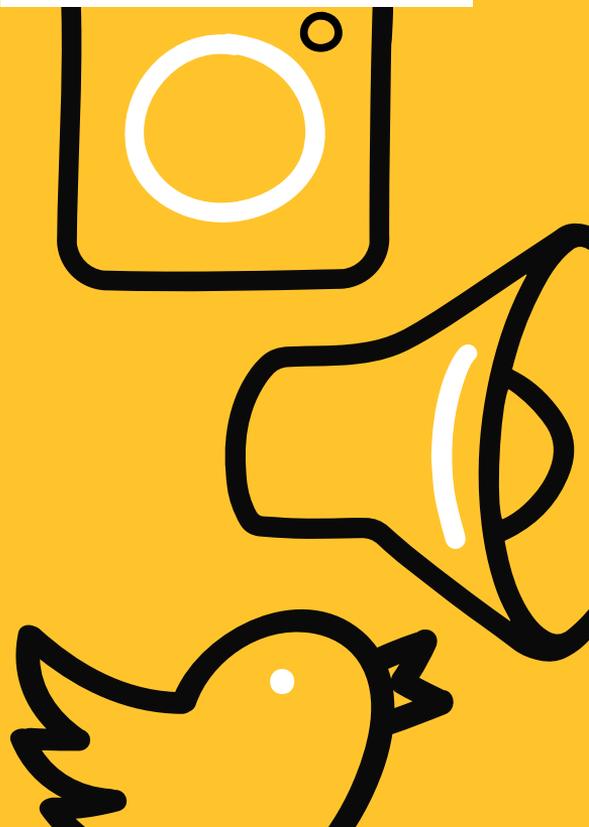
Outreach youth workers also report to their networks and partners about their approach and goals, in addition to the content and effects of their work and the phenomena they witness when working with young people. As long as the networks have a clear idea of the benefits and methods of outreach youth work, engaging in cooperation and guiding young people in a timely manner can be done smoothly. Active communication promotes the effectiveness of local services and the expediency of the available services in terms of young people.

It is the duty of outreach youth work to amplify the voice of the young people in its target group and to identify any gaps in services that they observe that may otherwise remain unnoticed. Conveying information to local government decision-makers is important for the development of living conditions in the municipality and the services intended for young people. In addition, decision-makers are informed about the role of outreach youth work as part of municipal services and about the resources for the work and their adequacy. This establishes the position of the work form more firmly in the field of services and helps build useful collaborations and develop the work in the long run based on information that is relevant for outreach youth work. The transparency of the work and disclosing its results is also important to ensure adequate resources for the work.

## Consider these in communication

- » **Core message:**  
What is most essential?
- » **Target group:**  
Who do we want to reach?
- » **Where:** What platforms do we use?
- » **What:** What is our content like?
- » **When:** What is our schedule?
- » **Who:** Who is responsible for posting?
- » **Participation:** What in addition to just posting, materials and news?
- » **Metrics:** What works, what doesn't?
- » **Evaluation:** How do we further develop activities?

SOURCE: SOCIAL MEDIA PLAN, VERKE



## 2.6 Knowledge, evaluation and effects

Making the voice of young people heard is one of the duties of every outreach youth worker. Outreach youth work has various ways to gather knowledge and make the effects of the work known. Information concerning young people is used in various ways to help plan and manage the work. The produced knowledge is utilised widely to promote youth inclusion.

It is important to verbalise outreach youth work and to provide information on what it is about: the themes that are addressed with young people and the needs they have that require assistance. Knowledge is required about every organisation and municipality, and regionally and nationally. This makes it possible to identify and call attention to the special local or regional aspects of the work as well.

Planning, managing and developing outreach youth work requires knowledge. It provides a basis for the self-evaluation of activities and the setting of development targets. Feedback from young people and monitoring statistics help outreach youth workers and organisations to make sense of the strengths and development needs in their activities. One of the goals of outreach youth work is to strengthen youth inclusion, which includes listening to and documenting the experiences and needs of young people. Young people get to have a say in how outreach youth work is performed: they get to provide information about how the service works and their experiences are also considered when developing the activities.

Knowledge production is also necessary to demonstrate the effects of outreach youth work. This means answering the question of how well outreach youth work has achieved the set goals and objectives. These effects are revealed when the young people assess their experiences of the help and support they have received and how useful it has been. Outreach youth workers should identify the things that have improved or become possible in the life of young people as a result of the help and support.

In addition, knowledge on outreach youth work is required for civic advocacy. Outreach youth workers work in close cooperation with young people and as part of the service network. They are at a great vantage point to observe the phenomena, conditions and services that affect the lives of young people. It is a good idea to collect and pass on this knowledge and understanding of young people's situations in society.

### Knowledge is needed

- » **to give publicity to outreach youth work** – How could young people and networks be more aware of us?
- » **for quality assessment, monitoring and development** – How could we do our work even better?
- » **to demonstrate the effects and impact** – How does the work benefit young people and society, why is it a worthy investment?
- » **to develop the service system** – What development needs or e.g. gaps in services are identified in outreach youth work?

**Making the voice of young people heard is one of the duties of every outreach youth worker.**

### **Producing knowledge together**

Outreach youth work supervisors play a key role in producing and utilising knowledge. It is the supervisor's duty to support knowledge production and the evaluation and development of outreach youth work based on it. The supervisor should also spread knowledge about outreach youth work within the organisation and in the municipality. Knowledge production therefore facilitates youth inclusion in society: outreach youth work can make the voice of young people heard in various forums to decision-makers and service providers on issues concerning young people.

Knowledge production requires outreach youth workers to commit to data collection. Outreach youth work is structured according to the young person's needs, so data collection also needs to respect the young person's power of decision. Answering surveys is not mandatory. Outreach youth workers should understand the purpose of collecting data and how it benefits both them in their job and the wider society and its service system. This is the best way to motivate the young person to answer surveys: their purpose is to find out what young people have to say and to improve the range of services based on their views.

### **2.6.1 Knowledge production methods**

Versatile knowledge on outreach youth work is required. Statistical follow-up data and qualitative data based on observations, experiences and stories complement each other and build an overall picture of what outreach youth work is. Outreach youth work has its own customer management and statistical system, PAR, managed by the Regional State Administrative Agency for Western and Inland Finland and financed by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The PARent system, which is free for users and designed for outreach youth work, consists of a user interface for managing customer information, compiling statistics and reporting.

The PAR system is used in the monitoring of state aid, harmonising knowledge production and statistics across the country, monitoring one's own performance and reporting to various funding agencies. The compilation of statistics includes numerical data on every young person reached by outreach youth workers, the goals and progress of the work and the guidance given to the young person and their transfer to other services. Statistical data is compiled on the [www.nuorisotilastot.fi](http://www.nuorisotilastot.fi) page where it is freely available for anyone to use.

Outreach youth workers should also have access to tools for monitoring the content of fieldwork and the interactions with young people. Professionally compiled, up-to-date data on observations and phenomena can reveal factors, weak signals and development needs that are overlooked by formal data systems. Outreach youth workers can use the collected data to verify their everyday work and the present content of their interactions. This way, knowledge that otherwise remains unheard and concealed can be made visible and effective (see also 3.6 Joint advocacy).

All the outreach youth work organisations who receive financial aid from the Ministry of Education and Culture are obligated to answer a national survey that is conducted annually. The survey collects

information, for example on the implementation and organisation of youth work, the staff, collaboration on a local level and regional coordination – the challenges, the successes and the development and training needs. Based on this information, the state and the regional administration can assess the state of outreach youth work on a national and a local level and further develop the activities based on the feedback given by outreach youth work organisations.

National statistical data answers the following questions, among others:

- How many young people does outreach youth work reach?
- In what situations in life have young people come to outreach youth work?
- What are the goals of the young people that are pursued through outreach youth work, and how well have these goals been achieved?
- Where have the young people gone after outreach youth work, and to what extent have they moved on to other services, education or employment?

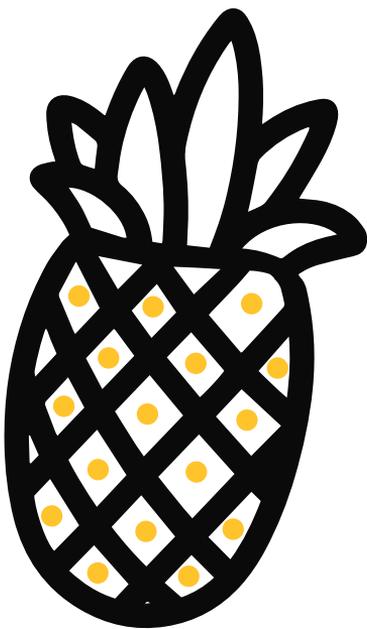
## **Sovari indicator reveals the socially empowering effects of work**

Data is collected in outreach youth work on the quality of the activities and their socially empowering effects using the national Sovari indicator. Sovari is a survey developed for the needs of outreach youth work and intended for the target group of the work. It has been developed together with outreach youth workers. It produces nationally comparable data that can be used to verify the effects of outreach youth work on the social empowerment of young people. Sovari produces effect data on the changes experienced by young people during the period of outreach youth work.

Sovari measures the improvement of various life skills in young people: self-knowledge, social skills, life skills, learning abilities and working life skills, and a sense of life management. Sovari produces knowledge and figures on how satisfied the young people have been with the way outreach youth work is done and what kind of social empowerment they have experienced as a result of the service they have received. Sovari is coordinated by Into – Association for Outreach Youth Work and Workshop Activities.

Sovari sheds light on young people's experiences of the way outreach youth work is done and its effects:

- What issues have the young people addressed with outreach youth workers?
- How satisfied are the young people with the way outreach youth work is done?
- Which activities were successful and which needs of the young people have been addressed well?
- How and with what should the young people be helped and guided better?
- What experiences of progress and empowerment have they gained as a result of the service?



## SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT

### Self-knowledge

Recognising what is important to you personally, personal strengths and resources

**"I'm capable"**

**"I'm good"**

**"I can"**



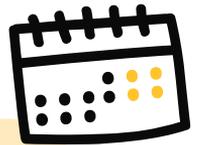
### Social skills

Confidence, courage and the skill to interact with other people

**"I know how to interact with others"**

**"I express my opinion"**

**"I have the courage to ask for help"**



### Life skills

Navigating everyday life, housing, rest, money, using services, controlling substance use

**"Things are going well"**

**"I take care of myself"**

### Learning abilities

### and working life skills

Finding a suitable path to studies and employment, knowing the rules of working life

**"I take care of my duties"**

**"I can go to work"**

**"I know what I can study"**



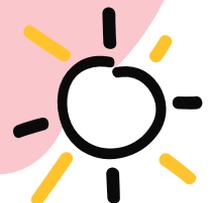
### Life management

Personal goals, forging your own path in life, confidence that you can overcome challenges

**"I can achieve my goals"**

**"I will overcome challenges"**

**"I have a plan for my life going forward"**



Statistical data and Sovari give words to describe outreach youth work. The national figures act as a mirror to the regional and local statistics and the results of Sovari. Repeated every year, this knowledge production reveals the changes and trends in the activities. Comparing the data helps to pinpoint special regional characteristics and to assess the strengths and development needs of the service. The statistics include the assessments of outreach youth workers of the goals of working with young people and the progress made as a result of the service.

Outreach youth work does not reach all the young people who have been referred to the service. It is also important to gather information on the situations of these young people and their possible needs for support. The national survey related to Sovari examines why some of the young people referred to outreach youth workers do not want support or guidance from the workers.

## **Outreach youth worker, harness the knowledge!**

In addition to national statistics and Sovari data, it is a good idea to also use other knowledge production methods, if possible: you can, for example, gather stories from young people, stay on top of the latest research and also order theses yourself. When forming a big picture of the work environment, you can supplement your personal research and the national data collection of outreach youth work with statistics, follow-up data, survey results and effect indicators, for example using the following sources:

- number of young people (including those belonging to language and cultural minorities) in the municipality (Statistics Finland)
- number of young people not in education or employment ([nuorisotilastot.fi](http://nuorisotilastot.fi))
- Youth Barometer (State Youth Council & Finnish Youth Research Network)
- School Health Promotion study (THL)  
*[only in Finnish]*
- Sotkanet Statistics and Indicator Bank on health and welfare (THL)
- Cost examples of health and well-being promotion (THL) *[only in Finnish]*
- Kelasto database on social security (Kela)
- Labour Force Survey (Statistics Finland)
- Employment Service Statistics and Employment Bulletins (TEM)
- other indicators of inclusion, welfare and health (e.g. municipal welfare reports).

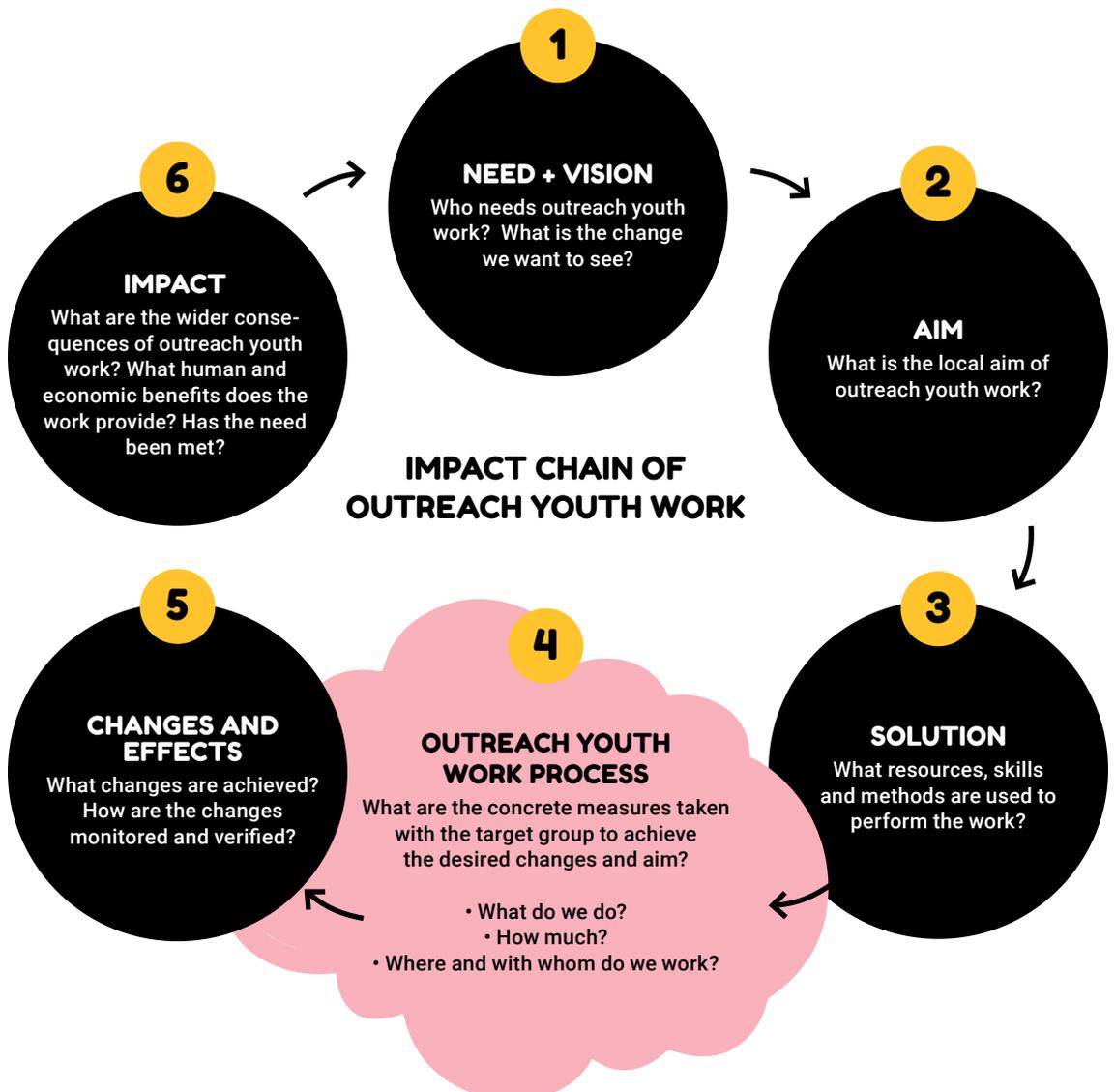
When assessing and developing activities, it is also important to listen to the partners' views of outreach youth work and its effects on young people. Outreach youth work can be assessed from multiple perspectives with the help of partners:

- What changes have been observed in young people as a result of outreach youth work?
- Which of the young people's needs can outreach youth work address?
- Which of the young people's needs does the municipality address well, and which should be addressed better?

## 2.6.2 Effects and evaluation of outreach youth work

High-quality outreach youth work is aware of its effects: the organisation knows and can describe how the work affects young people, communities and society. Effects are anticipated and monitored as part of the planning, development and evaluation of work. Evaluating, describing and monitoring the effects is best done in cooperation with others working with young people and, if possible, with the young people themselves. The work involves evaluating the effects of the selected target groups, focus areas and approaches on the young people and various groups of young people.

The target of assessment is the types of young people that are reached by the applied methods and with the selected partners. It's good to scrutinize and ask from time to time: in what ways the support affects the young people who are reached? What are the effects of the work on various groups of young people and the differences between groups? Who may be more overlooked? In this respect, outreach youth work needs knowledge management, that is, the ability and the tools to process and examine knowledge produced at work, make tacit knowledge explicit, manage information systems and distinguish what is relevant in terms of the goals of the work.



The analysis can include the well-being and health effects, education and employment effects, social effects, equality effects and gender effects. The organisation should also be able to describe the chains of effect, that is, through which measures outreach youth work achieves these or other effects so that they help improve the situations of the young people who are struggling the most and thereby bridge the gaps in well-being between young people and groups. In terms of effects, we can also consider their estimated likelihood, duration and significance in terms of the life of an individual young person or the position of a group.

The national Sovari results show that the well-being effects of socially empowerment provided by outreach youth work are typically related to the young people's

- feelings of being seen and heard as who they are
- identity, self-perception and self-confidence
- opportunities to identify and utilise individual resources and skills
- ability to understand options and make well-founded, independent choices
- mental and physical health, functional capacity and smooth everyday life
- meaningful relationships, inclusion and position in local communities
- trust in other people, services and society
- the subjective meaningfulness of their situation in life and future prospects.

The effects of service guidance, advice and network cooperation done in outreach youth work are typically related to the young people's

- subsistence and financial situation
- housing conditions
- existence and stability of patient care and support relationships
- studies and employment and labour market status.

## General impact

The socially empowering effects concerning individual young people can also be assumed to have wider individual, social and economic spill-over effects as they cumulate over time and thereby produce new consequences. When assessing the long-term, crucial effects of the service on the target group, we talk about impact. It is, however, difficult for outreach youth workers themselves to examine and verify impact in light of their role. An impact study, however, can provide more in-depth knowledge on outreach youth work. The study involves examining the course of young people's lives over a longer period of time, including after the support provided by outreach youth work. Such studies can explore the following aspects, among others:

- How has the life of the young people turned out as a result of outreach youth work and after it?
- What has been the significance of outreach youth work and other factors on their course of life?
- What is the human and economic significance of outreach youth work in society?

High-quality, long-term outreach youth work that is available without thresholds aims to build social trust and equal, sustainable development. In the long run, it can help reduce the need for remedial services and the costs generated by last resort benefits and transfers of income. An impact study based on extensive register data shows that outreach youth work across the nation has successfully reached young people who are at risk of social exclusion and has clearly decreased the likelihood of falling outside employment and education in a statistically significant way (Vauhkonen & Hoikkala 2020).

3

**Outreach  
youth worker  
– identity,  
structures and  
management**



# 3.1 Outreach youth worker

**Outreach youth workers are experts in social empowerment who put their personality in their work, in addition to their solid professional skills. Respectful interaction, trust and equality are at the heart of the work. Workers need to understand how to facilitate the young person's growth and well-being and how to reflect on their actions as an educator. A clear job profile helps workers recognise the boundaries of their work form and to engage in meaningful work in networks.**

## Professional identity

Outreach youth workers are professionals in educational and interactive work who act as experts in youth. Their primary duty is to support the growth and independence of young people and to identify the living conditions and current phenomena affecting young people and try to influence them, if necessary. Outreach youth workers act as reliable adults whose job is to give time and walk beside young people whenever needed. Workers serve as role models for young people in their unrushed meetings.

Cooperation between young people and workers ideally takes the form of an accepting, trusting and appreciative relationship. The culture of trust and caring also involves the possibility of a strong attachment between the worker and the young person. In these situations, the worker is mindful of and reflects on their professional role. The worker also keeps a certain distance from the young person, as is suitable in an educational relationship. The equality of the worker and the young person is an essential prerequisite of the work, as is the worker's ability to be a human for a human.

Workers are willing to behave empathetically and genuinely care for the young person. The key is to try to listen to and hear what the young person has to say without strong expectations and the courage to broach topics – these are the most important tools in social empowerment. Workers agree to maintain

strict confidentiality and the principle of transparency. Cooperation with a young person always happens on the young person's terms, in the direction of their goals. Workers should critically examine their behaviour and identify their personal motives as well as the influence of power relations on their work and on their position as a role model for the young person. The work requires sensitivity to recognise the difference between motivating and encouraging the young person versus pressurising them and knowing things better than them.

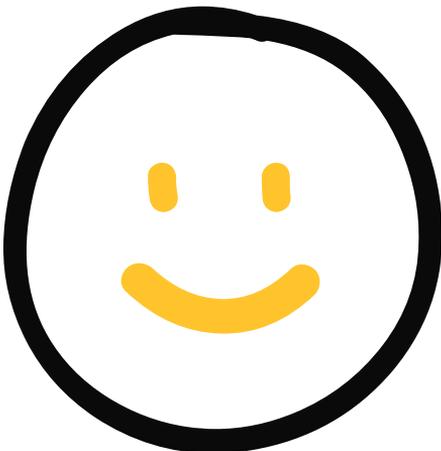
When working in networks, outreach youth workers often act as interpreters between young people and other services. The work in these situations involves verbalising and translating the young person's needs and adapting them to the language of the service system, and translating the services and the decisions to the young person's language. At the same time, outreach youth work has a unique opportunity to observe how the social system and services work and any problems there may be. Indeed, outreach youth workers should have the will and the ability to address any issues they notice and to work on behalf of young people locally, regionally and nationally together with other actors.

Professional outreach youth workers are committed to teamwork with other outreach youth workers in their organisation or region. Teamwork is utilised to debrief the work and the experiences and in active reflection. Reflectiveness is an essential part of the

professional identity and the approach of outreach youth workers. Self-reflection and reflection with colleagues, along with work guidance, are ways to learn new things, obtain support and widen one's perspectives at work. In addition, reflecting on the activities and experiences together with a young person or a youth group is an important part of the empowering approach. Workers should possess sensitivity, competence and a real possibility to work according to the needs and goals of the young people, that is, in a youth-oriented manner.

### Questions to help you reflect on your professional identity

- » Why am I working as an outreach youth worker?
- » What are the qualities of a competent, good outreach youth worker?
- » What would we miss if outreach youth work was not done in our municipality?
- » What are the strengths of outreach youth work? How should the work be developed?



## Competence requirements

Outreach youth work is challenging educational and interactive work, but there is no specific degree that qualifies you to become an outreach youth worker. Workers should have adequate training for and experience in working with young people. Experience in interacting with people in challenging situations in life and providing individual support is recommended. The work requires a broad understanding of the growth and development of children and youth.

Competence requirements evolve over time, and it is important for outreach youth workers to regularly update their competence profiles. Key forums for developing competence are various training events, meetings with colleagues and networks, national discussion in the field and publications on the youth sector and young people. In addition, outreach youth workers have to have a broad understanding of the status of young people in society and the effects of various phenomena, significant reforms and major political decisions on young people.

The work requires the skill to interact with people. Social interaction and emotional skills are important in this respect. When interacting with young people, workers also need to pay attention to non-verbal interaction, that is, communicating presence, use of voice, gestures and body language. Outreach youth workers need the ability to work highly independently and actively in networks. The work is often done together with other professionals or in pairs. Both independent work and network cooperation require clear structures and competent management that recognises the values and basic task of outreach youth work and is implemented accordingly. Outreach youth workers need the courage to draw from their own life experiences at work, take the side of the young person and address any problems.

Succeeding at work requires trust in personal and others' professional skills and a strong professional identity as an outreach youth worker. Workers need the ability to make independent decisions and search for information and a thorough knowledge of the

service system. Other required competencies include resilience and the ability to withstand pressure and tolerate changes. The work involves learning new information and adapting your behaviour according to the situation.

Outreach youth workers with reflection skills engage in the value discussion and are also ready to face value conflicts. They can put their work and their expertise into words and make the service known to networks and young people. Workers recognise the effects of their work, gather information about them and communicate locally. Together with others doing outreach youth work, they produce knowledge about the situations of young people to the wider society. Outreach youth workers need to be able to work in different settings, from social media platforms to cross-sectoral networks and the leisure activities of youth.

## **Recognising the role and the limits**

Outreach youth workers use their personality at work while maintaining professionalism and keeping a certain distance. Young people are approached as equal agents, meaning that the worker's professional role is temporarily placed in the background in the interaction. It is important for outreach youth workers to separate work from leisure. Although the work is humanitarian and you put your personality on the line, the situations and stories of the young people need to remain within the working hours and the work community. This is to ensure both confidentiality and occupational well-being.

Outreach youth workers understand the processes related to walking beside someone and building a trusting relationship and are able to carry the power and responsibility that inevitably come with educational tasks. During the process, outreach youth workers ensure the building of trust, their personal and professional boundaries, the rules of the cooperation, and listening to and pursuing the goals and wishes of the young person. When the process is over, the worker is responsible for ending the cooperation together with the young person according to plan.

Sometimes cooperation with a young person is interrupted, for example if the outreach youth worker moves on to other duties. In these situations, the necessary information and responsibility is transferred to a colleague or some other professional assisting the young person. When workers change, things are done with the permission of the young person while considering their interests, situation in life and goals and while keeping other partners involved in the process. Changes in workers always present the risk of breaking up a trusting relationship. If possible, work should be done in pairs from the start so that young people are given the opportunity to work with more than one reliable, familiar adult. Open reflection on the interactive work with a close pair also helps outreach youth workers to develop professionally and to recognise the limits of their competence, ability to cope and professional role.

When outreach youth workers work in cooperation with partners and in various networks, they should make sure that the basic task and goal of the work and the values and approach are fulfilled without any breaks. Although the work approach is flexible and work is done based on the young people's needs, outreach youth work cannot replace or cover for missing services. Workers should not assume a role or pursue goals that do not belong to them. They should recognise the situations in which professionals in some other field or the authorities can help the young person better than outreach youth workers (see 2.1 Target group).

Workers act as experts in youth in all situations and perform socially empowering work that is always voluntary for the young person. Identifying and sticking to the boundaries is, above all, responsible behaviour, because boundaries help young people identify the roles of outreach youth workers and other actors. They also clarify the division of roles between partners and various professions and consequently also improve the ability to cope and occupational well-being.



## 3.2 Occupational well-being

A typical day at work for an outreach youth worker consists of challenging situations and meaningful experiences of interacting with young people. The work can be simultaneously characterised by the opportunity to express yourself based on your strengths and the risk of compassion fatigue. Work guidance, observing occupational safety, professional management and effective organisational structures help workers cope at work.

### Occupational well-being in outreach youth work

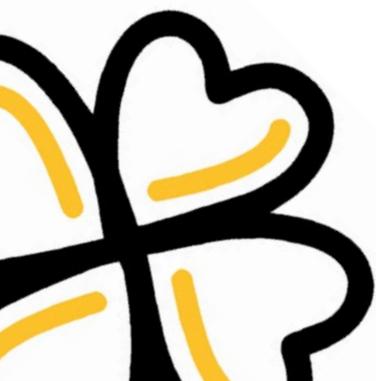
Ideally, outreach youth workers experience feelings of optimism and meaning while working. Workers are constantly learning new things when they interact with young people, colleagues and professionals in other fields. The values and approach of outreach youth work are inspiring and humane. In addition to professional skills, workers make use of their personality and strengths at work. The versatile, responsible and varied nature of the work makes everyday life interesting for outreach youth workers. Most workers are highly motivated and gain a lot from their interactions.

Outreach youth workers work with young people in challenging situations in life, work independently and come across a wide variety of wishes and needs on a daily basis. The situations they come across at work and the young people's stories of their struggles inevitably also put a strain on the workers' occupational well-being. Outreach youth workers may experience feelings of inadequacy in their professional role, and

not all the situations of young people can be resolved through outreach youth work. The worker's personal resources and the small factors of life are also bound to affect the ability to cope at work. The worker and the organisation should commit to regular debriefings and work guidance to prevent value conflicts arising from work and possible compassion fatigue.

The active support of the organisation and the supervisor is the key to promoting workers' occupational well-being. A work community that promotes occupational well-being has established clear structures for coping at work and occupational safety, and workers can agree to these structures and influence them, if necessary. Occupational well-being can be promoted by a dialogical relationship between the supervisor, the outreach youth worker and the team. In addition to the outreach youth workers in the organisation, the team can consist of other outreach youth workers in the region and others working with young people.

In order to function successfully, all teams need mutual trust and a shared understanding of the goals and the basic task of the work. Making the effects and significance of the work and everyday successes visible is important for the ability to cope at work. The supervisor's genuine interest in the work form and its development supports workers in their daily work and helps them commit to the work. In addition, including outreach youth workers in making decisions on their job profile, working hours and the development of the work is important and keeps up motivation.



## **Factors affecting the occupational well-being of outreach youth workers:**

### **Strengthening**

- » self-direction
- » meaningfulness and successes
- » social support

### **Protective**

- » reflection and work guidance
- » personality as a resource and a tool
- » resilience

### **Weakening**

- » psychosocial stress
- » exclusion and loneliness
- » lack of appreciation and low wages

SOURCE: HAKULINEN 2020

## **Occupational well-being with structures**

The organisation and the supervisor are responsible for structures that support occupational well-being, and it is also up to the outreach youth worker themselves to take care of them. Every outreach youth worker should have a clear, written job profile and an assessment of the job demand level, which is up to date and takes account of all the worker's duties.

New workers are given a thorough orientation to the job, and plenty of time is reserved for this. The organisation introduces outreach youth workers to their activities, the locally identified target groups and special approaches and the local settings. The regional coordinator (see 3.5 Regional networks), on the other hand, is responsible for introducing them to the fundamental values and principles of outreach youth work, the common practice and the regional and national collaboration structures.

The daily structures of workers regularly provide time for actively debriefing incidents at work and unloading the emotional burden, reflection and goal-oriented work guidance. These things should be considered already before challenges emerge in the ability to cope or a situation escalates into a crisis. The daily schedules of outreach youth workers should provide time and resources for developing the work community, peer support and network participation and for maintaining their personal ability to cope and competence.

The organisation needs to have a safety plan, a risk assessment for various settings and a crisis management plan to support independent work and to identify the limits of responsibilities. Outreach youth workers are clear on how to seek occupational health care or other support services. Both the workers and the supervisor pay attention to their personal ability to cope and that of their pair and the team. Team members look out for themselves and each other. Any concerns about personal or a colleague's ability to cope are addressed early on. It is up to the supervisor to identify causes of stress at work and to support the workers' ability to cope at work.

## WORKER

### – talk about these things!

- How are you?
- What support do you need from your supervisor?
- Are the resources adequate?
- Have you faced challenges at work?

## SUPERVISOR

### – ask these questions!

- How are you?
- How are you coping at work?
- What help and support do you expect from me, your supervisor?

## Structures promoting the occupational well-being of outreach youth workers

- » possibility to influence how the work is done and the working hours
- » dialogical supervisor-worker relationship
- » clear job profile and setting limits
- » regular work guidance
- » clarifying the role of outreach youth work in networks
- » regular case debriefing sessions and reflection
- » thorough orientation
- » teamwork

SOURCE: SORELL 2017

**Work guidance**, or supervision, is regularly needed in outreach youth work. It is recommended that workers undergo work guidance roughly once a month (Finnish supervisors' association 2020). This improves the ability to cope and motivation at work. In addition, work guidance should also be available in a highly flexible way and at short notice for debriefing challenging situations and situations that have escalated into crisis. Work guidance can address topics related to coping at work, setting boundaries at work, job profiles and the workplace culture, in addition to sharing the work with others. The supervisor is responsible for organising work guidance – the worker commits to the work guidance process.

**Occupational safety** is systematically built into the structures of the work. Safety is a top priority when going out among young people, making home visits and meeting young people alone. Outreach youth workers have clear instructions and plans for interacting, for example with intoxicated or aggressive young people and for unexpected, dangerous situations. Occupational safety is improved by working in pairs, choosing the meeting places with care and planning the facilities and the tools (e.g. location data, calendar apps).

## 3.3 Implementation of outreach youth work

Municipalities are responsible for organising outreach youth work, and the manner of providing the service depends on the municipality. The work should match the local needs, phenomena and social changes. High-quality outreach youth work consists of various duties and steps that should be revised regularly. A general process description of the work is useful in management, development and performing the basic tasks.

The implementation of outreach youth work is voluntary for municipalities. If a municipality decides to organise outreach youth work and applies for state aid for this purpose (see 4.3 State aid), the provision of the service is governed by the Youth Act. The municipality determines the need for the work and the target groups, the desired scope, the manner of implementation and the service providers. When applying for aid, the focus is, for example, on the resources required by outreach youth work in the locality, that is, how bit the total budget is and what is the organisation's own contribution of it. The Regional State Administrative Agencies that are responsible for granting state aid also monitor the goals and focus areas of the work, the job profiles of outreach youth workers and how the work is implemented. Municipalities typically provide the service themselves or obtain it from a service provider. Indeed, there is a wide variety of e.g. associations and foundations working alongside municipalities in Finland.

The commonly identified steps of the process are the same for everyone, and making them explicit facilitates both management and development and doing the basic work. The outreach youth work organisation and the workers benefit from a general process description of the work, because this serves as a basis for planning, evaluation and development. The simplest form of this is a description of what the work entails and its various steps. The steps of the process are similar throughout the country, despite the work being highly versatile and situation-specific.

The process consists of several overlapping and sequential tasks and steps. In addition, the work is adapted to the places where it is delivered. Organisations should actively examine the types of local needs that are addressed by the work.

### General process of outreach youth work

The steps of the general process of outreach youth work are divided into three parts:

- 1) reconnaissance, networking and communication
- 2) individual and communal work
- 3) teamwork, compiling statistics and co-development.

High-quality outreach youth work includes all of these steps. In daily work, the emphasis on different steps varies from week to week, but each of these steps should be regularly included in the process. Making the various steps of the process visible in the team and discussing the competence and resource requirements facilitate daily work and commitment to work. A methodical, developing organisation manages the process and establishes structures to ensure the quality of work. The versatile nature of the process and various competence requirements make outreach youth work a challenging job that requires special expertise.

A young man with short, spiky brown hair is smiling broadly. He is wearing a grey hoodie and has a backpack strap visible over his shoulder. He is standing outdoors in front of a large glass window that reflects a blue sky with white clouds. To his right, the arm and shoulder of another person wearing a light blue shirt and a brown flat cap are visible. A white speech bubble with a black border is positioned above the man's head, containing a quote in bold black text.

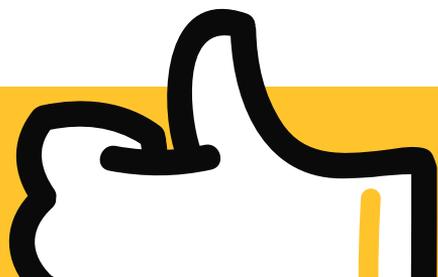
**“I haven’t had to fear  
that my problems or  
choices or I myself will  
be judged.”**

SOVARI FEEDBACK 2020



## STEPS OF THE PROCESS

- 1. Mapping and choosing the target group** (living conditions, phenomena, settings, services etc. of young people) – Mapping helps to understand what is happening in the setting and how the work should be targeted. Mapping makes it easier to anticipate and respond to various phenomena. It is used as a basis for determining the main target group and exploring the best ways to meet the young people's needs.
- 2. Daily planning, teamwork and occupational well-being** – Practical work is planned in the weekly and monthly meetings of the organisation. Workers constantly reflect on their work and attend work guidance regularly. In addition, they take part in the regional outreach youth work network, events and training.
- 3. Reaching out to young people and making contact** – Making use of various ways to reach young people and engage them in cooperation. Making contact, getting to know each other and building a trusting relationship.
- 4. Individual guidance** (building trust, conversations, activities, planning the future etc.) – Interaction and a socially empowering approach help young people find their path in life and live a life that feels meaningful.
- 5. Activities in small groups** – Communal activities, such as groups, activities that are open for all, trips and camps support the goals of outreach youth work and the young people. The activities make use of networks (youth work, organisations, youth centres etc.).
- 6. Referral to services** (using other services, building a network, applications, dealing with matters etc.) – Young people are motivated to seek services and to make the most of them. Outreach youth workers walk beside the young person as they use various services.
- 7. Cooperation with stakeholders** (partners, wider networks etc.) – The work with stakeholders consists of cooperation meetings, visits, providing information, giving publicity to the work and other network cooperation.
- 8. Documentation, listening to young people and reporting** – Documentation of the work and data collection is part of daily work (e.g. PARent and Sovari)
- 9. Communication and giving publicity to the work** – Communication channels include websites, entit.fi, social media sites and regional and national groups and networks. The aim is to give local publicity to young people and partners.
- 10. Advocacy** (local, regional, national) – Information about the living conditions and current phenomena affecting the target group is gathered and passed on to the public local and social discussion.
- 11. Using information in evaluation and development** – The gathered information is used to evaluate the effects, significance and success of the work and to highlight development needs for the development of the work.



## 3.4 Management

Outreach youth work is a demanding job that requires expert management to succeed. It is up to the supervisor to ensure that the organisation delivers high-quality, socially empowering outreach youth work and that the workers have everything they need to be happy at work. The supervisor has a key role in developing the local and regional impact of outreach youth work and in making the results of the work known. They pass on the knowledge accumulated at work and influence the living conditions of young people on a structural level.

 Outreach youth work management requires an understanding of the goals, approach and effects of socially empowering work. High-quality work requires healthy workers whose occupational well-being and safety are systematically taken into consideration. The organisation delivering outreach youth work needs to understand youth as a special phase of life. Its duty is to make support available to every young person as they become independent and find their place in society. Good management helps to ensure the unobstructed fulfilment of the principles of outreach youth work – above all, its voluntary nature, youth-orientation, confidentiality and holistic approach.

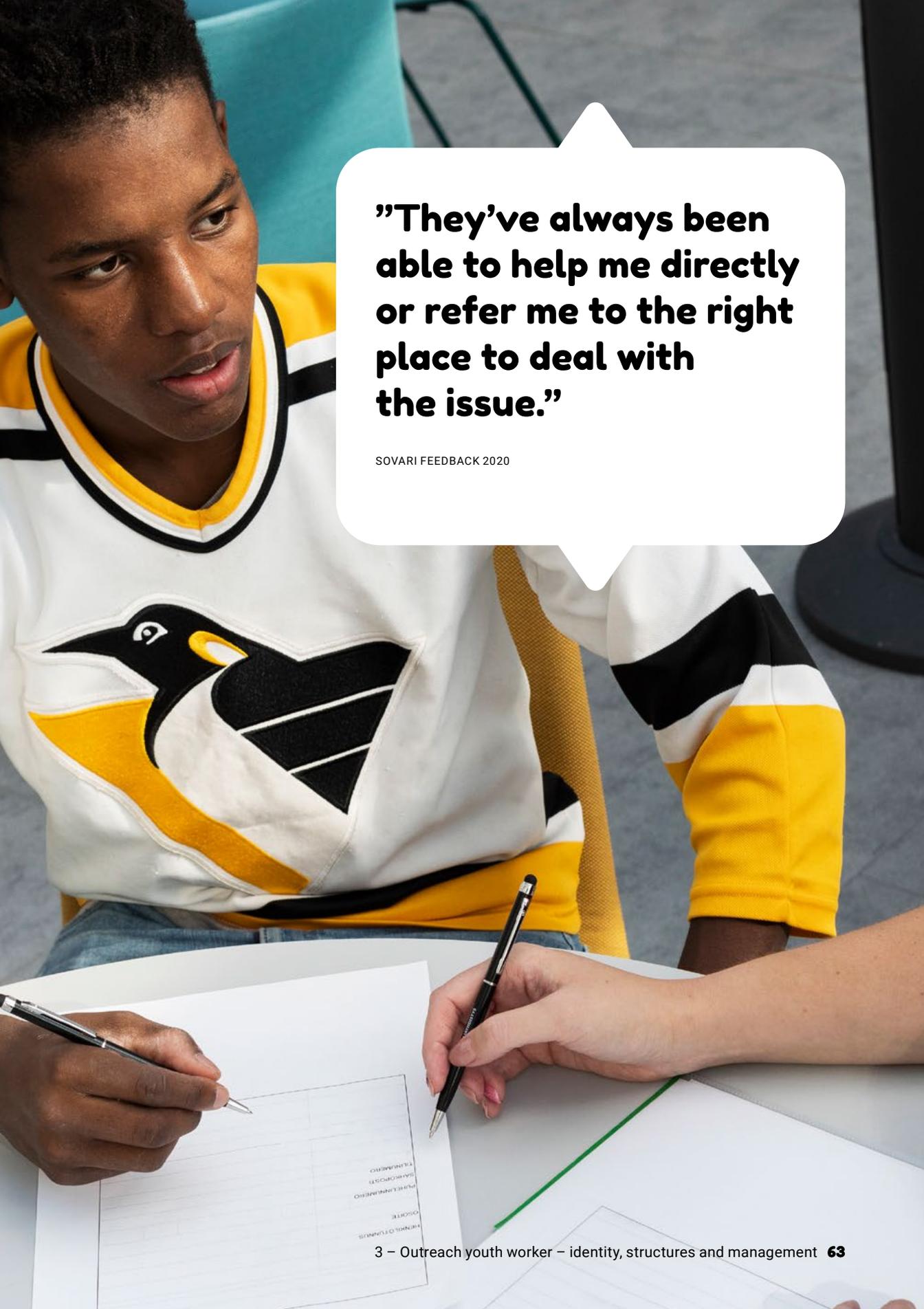
Outreach youth work requires competence development in order to respond to changing situations and needs. Competent management is not possible without being highly engaged in the daily work as well as giving workers space to work independently. In order to perform their duties successfully, supervisors build a dialogical relationship with outreach youth workers and listen to and meet with them regularly. In doing so, they become familiar with the activities and results of outreach youth work and the situations of local youth and services so that they can address these issues in the municipality.

The municipality as the organiser of the service, the organisation, the supervisor and the outreach youth workers together determine the local goals, limits

and opportunities of the work form while considering the local needs. It is the supervisor's duty to build networks for the outreach youth workers, establish relationships with stakeholders and support activities in these networks and relationships that are in line with the outreach youth workers' job profile. They make sure that outreach youth work activities are known and made visible so that young people and their friends and family can contact outreach youth workers easily and without thresholds. Supervisors engage in advocacy in their local, regional and national forums and pass on the understanding and knowledge gained in outreach youth work.



**The duty is to make support available to every young person as they become independent and find their place in society.**



**“They’ve always been able to help me directly or refer me to the right place to deal with the issue.”**

SOVARI FEEDBACK 2020

## Managing outreach youth work – what does the supervisor do?

### Scope of the work

The supervisor

- takes care of funding and reporting and delivering the work in the manner required by the funding in cooperation with the outreach youth workers
- ensures the physical requirements of the work and the appropriations for activities (suitable facilities; equipment and materials; enabling mobile, flexible work in diverse settings)
- ensures the information and technical requirements (customer information system: PARent or a compatible system; customer feedback and impact assessment tool, such as Sovari; use of yhteysetsivaan.fi; other modern applications)
- answers the annual evaluation and monitoring survey together with the team (National outreach youth work questionnaire)
- makes sure that there is an up-to-date services description of the activities of the outreach youth work team.

### Competence development

The supervisor

- ensures that new workers are thoroughly trained to deliver outreach youth work and be aware of its local and national characteristics
- enables participation in training and events
- holds regular development discussions and supports the workers' personal development
- coordinates the division of duties and competencies in the work community, utilises the expertise of the workers.

### Occupational well-being and safety

The supervisor

- creates optimal conditions for working in pairs, across team boundaries if needed, and understands the benefits of working in pairs to the workers and the young people

- coordinates reflection on work: enables structures and takes part in reflection with outreach youth workers
- ensures adequate and regular work guidance to the workers, including crisis management guidance, if necessary
- is responsible for occupational safety and ensures that workers feel safe.

### Management of professionalism and resource allocation

The supervisor

- ensures that outreach youth work is based on the Youth Act, the values and principles of outreach youth work and the Professional Code of Conduct in Youth Work
- creates team structures and regularly takes part in the daily work, attends team and weekly meetings
- identifies the needs of the target group with the workers and the gaps in local services to determine the focus areas and the goals of the work
- regularly revises the basic task of the work (what, why, to whom) with the workers and helps them define the limits of the work
- determines the job profile of each worker with them, specifying the duties and how demanding they are
- reserves enough time for the different processes at work and for planning and development.

### Interaction and trust

The supervisor

- takes an interest in the workers' daily work and experiences, also supports them in work-related value discussions
- ensures a common understanding of what high-quality outreach youth work is and trusts that the workers have the professional skill to deliver it
- creates conditions where workers can work flexibly and independently and enables the development of working methods
- provides the necessary support and gives feedback, maintains a feedback culture that supports motivation and a sense of meaning.

## Knowledge management and the development of work

The supervisor

- collects and asks the workers to provide information to help plan activities and perform their duties
- coordinates knowledge production and dissemination and is responsible for managing advocacy
- helps the workers recognise the results, effects and significance of their work both on a local level and in the wider society
- delivers the local knowledge about young people, their living conditions and services that outreach youth work has gathered to the municipal administration, political discussion and partners
- makes current information on decision-making and the discussions held in networks available to the outreach youth work team
- assesses the develops their work as a supervisor using management quality indicators and tools
- takes part in regional and national peer networks, events and trainings.

## Network collaboration

The supervisor

- clarifies the role of outreach youth work in relation to other services and ensures the functionality of network cooperation structures
- ensures that the voice of outreach youth work is heard in the cross-sectoral steering and service network required by the Youth Act (or other equivalent cooperation team)
- utilises the professional skills of outreach youth workers in network cooperation and assesses the expediency of networks in terms of the basic task
- takes part in peer networks themselves and utilises the support of the regional coordinator and the national agencies of the youth sector in developing the work
- allows workers to participate in the regional peer network and the national discussion in the youth sector.

SOURCE: MÄKINEN 2020

## SUPERVISOR

– ask these questions!

1.

### Occupational well-being

- How are you?
- How are you coping at work?
- What help and support do you expect from me, your supervisor?

2.

### Content of the work

- How are the young people – the ones you are helping – doing, are there any current phenomena?
- Does the job description require updating?
- Does network cooperation work, how could it be developed?
- What successes have you experienced?

3.

### Job conditions and resources

- Do you have the resources you need to do your job?
- What do you need to do your job?
- Does the compensation match the demands of the job?

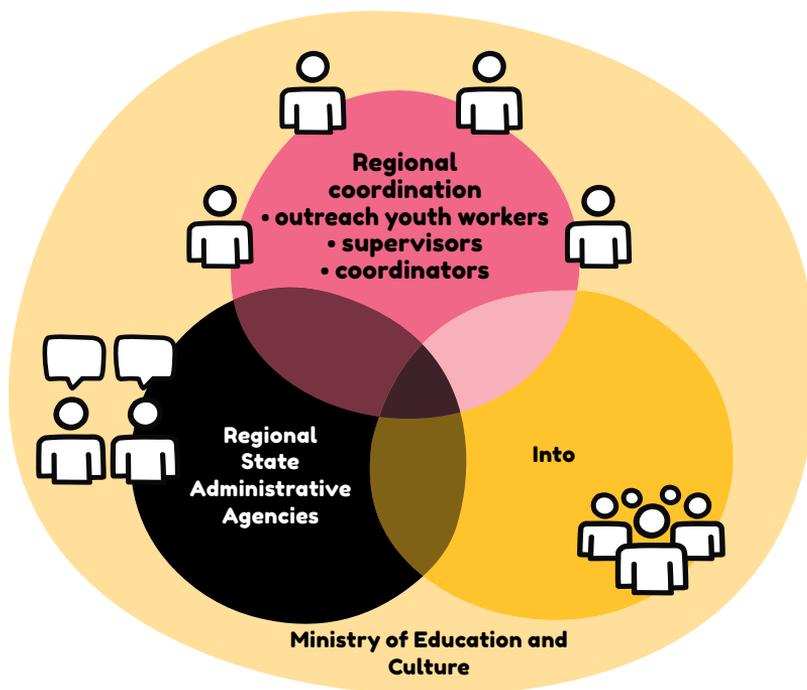
## 3.5 Regional networks and coordination

The resources of outreach youth work include regional and national networks that help strengthen the workers' professional identity and refine the work together. Outreach youth workers and supervisors benefit from regional networks particularly in the form of peer support and development. Regional coordinators support the networks and develop national youth work together.

**T**he purpose of regional networks in outreach youth work is to provide a forum for peer support and development. The aim of the network meetings is to get to know others delivering outreach youth work in the region and to share information about the activities. Current discussions and topics that are relevant to the field are at the focus. In particular, regional work provides the opportunity to discuss the latest events in each locality and the issues that are relevant in the daily work of each team. Networks also provide opportunities for exchanging good practices and learning from each other. The meetings are intended for outreach youth workers and their supervisors. If necessary, representatives of stakeholders or external experts can also be invited into the network to give a talk or training on a topic chosen by the network. Regional networks develop local and regional activities and outreach youth work on a national scale.

### Key elements of regional meetings

- » discussion on current issues
- » exchanging good practices and peer development
- » peer support and occupational well-being
- » greetings from the Regional State Administrative Agency and the Ministry of Education and Culture
- » exchanging the latest news and getting to know other outreach youth workers
- » visits and talks by experts
- » educational elements
- » joint development and advocacy.



## Coordination of outreach youth work

The regional networks of outreach youth work are coordinated by regional coordinators whose activities cover all of Finland. State aid granted by the Regional State Administrative Agency is available for the work of the coordinator, and the coordinators also double as outreach youth workers in their organisations. Coordinators are thoroughly familiar with the special characteristics of their region and the outreach youth work actors and workers. They act as a link between local outreach youth work with young people, regional activities and the national level.

The coordinators form a collegial network with clear structures and regular activities. They share and develop their common work within this network. One of the main tasks of the network is to establish a national understanding of outreach youth work based on regional knowledge and experiences. The coordination network plays a key role in the national development of outreach youth work. This work is supported by the senior inspectors of the Regional State Administrative Agency and the national coordinator of outreach youth work.

### The aims of the regional coordination of outreach youth work are to

- » strengthen regional cooperation and invite parties to work together
- » offer peer support
- » enable joint advocacy to the outreach youth workers in the region
- » support active communication between regional outreach youth work, the Regional State Administrative Agency, the Ministry of Education and Culture and Into – Association for Outreach Youth Work and Workshop Activities and other actors
- » gather and amplify the voice of young people and call attention to current phenomena
- » strengthen the quality of outreach youth work and support the constant development of the work form.

## Main duties of a coordinator

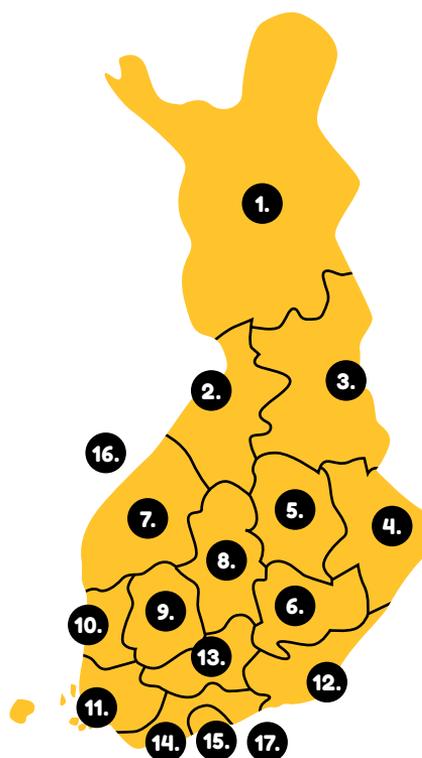
- » highlighting the importance of occupational well-being and setting an example to others by taking care of personal well-being
- » knowing the outreach youth workers and the supervisors in the region and updating contact information lists
- » supporting the daily work of the workers in the region
- » supporting new workers
- » communicating regional knowledge and needs and the themes presented by workers to Regional State Administrative Agencies and national players
- » drawing up regional plans of action with the coordination region
- » organising regional meetings
- » regular, close cooperation with the Regional State Administrative Agency and the national coordinator.

## National networks and support

In addition to the regional network and coordination, outreach youth workers and supervisors benefit from networks particularly with colleagues who work in similar settings in municipalities across Finland. The understanding of the workers and supervisors of outreach youth work as a work form can be improved through joint national discussion and new, up-to-date information. Contacts are established with outreach youth workers and supervisors in different regions on the regional and national outreach youth work days, various social media sites and during training events and meetings. The Regional State Administrative Agencies and Into – Association for Outreach Youth Work and Workshop Activities work to facilitate contacts and enable peer networking.

## REGIONAL NETWORKS OF OUTREACH YOUTH WORK

1. Lapland
2. North Ostrobothnia
3. Kainuu & Koillismaa
4. North Karelia
5. North Savo
6. South Savo
7. South and Central Ostrobothnia & Ostrobothnia
8. Central Finland
9. Pirkanmaa
10. Satakunta
11. Southwest Finland
12. Southeast Finland
13. Kanta- and Päijät-Häme
14. Uusimaa
15. Capital Region
- 16., 17. Svenskspråkigt uppsökande ungdomsarbete



## **Into – Association for Outreach Youth Work and Workshop Activities**

- » national expert organisation for outreach youth work and workshop activities
- » represents over 270 organisations
- » improves the operating conditions of outreach youth work and workshops
- » develops and provides training and communication on outreach youth work and workshop activities across the country
- » coordinates the Centre of Expertise for Targeted Youth Work 2020–2023

## **Regional State Administrative Agency**

- » implements and develops national youth work and policy regionally
- » grants state aid to municipalities, joint municipal authorities and communities (incl. outreach youth work) and assesses the impact of the aid
- » organises further education and supplies information concerning the youth sector to youth work practitioners
- » collects information on youth work and policy and assesses the adequacy, quality and accessibility of services intended for young people

## **Ministry of Education and Culture**

- » steers and implements the measures agreed in the Government Programme
- » prepares acts, decrees and decisions concerning its administrative branch and the budget and other matters related to financial planning
- » guides the agencies within its administrative branch (incl. RSAA), deals with matters concerning them and allocates appropriations to them
- » grants state aid (incl. towards outreach youth work), which the Regional State Administrative Agencies in turn distribute to agencies in their region
- » approves national youth work organisations, youth workshops, youth centres and youth work centres of expertise as eligible for state aid and assists their activities and grants state aid to the development of national youth work and youth activities

## 3.6 Joint advocacy

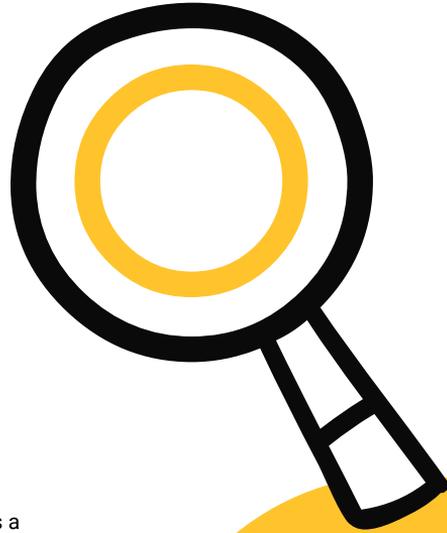
**Outreach youth work seeks to strengthen the inclusion of young people, improve every young person's conditions for living a good life and build a more humane society. Success can best be achieved by outreach youth workers who embrace their role as advocates on an individual, regional and structural level. When helping young people, gathering information and communicating about their work, outreach youth workers form a social force that can improve the performance of the entire service system.**

**Y**outh work has been created to promote young people's social inclusion and opportunities for exerting an influence and to improve their capabilities to function in society. According to the definition of the Youth Act, the common purpose of youth work is to promote non-discrimination and equality and the realisation of civic rights while improving young people's growth and living conditions (see 4.1 Youth Act). Work is done by amplifying the young people's voice, drawing attention to any problems in the realisation of civic rights and influencing the effectiveness of services and general social development. Similarly to other youth work, outreach youth work has its own advocacy mission that is fulfilled on an individual, community and structural level.

The socially empowering activities of outreach youth work not only influence the lives of the young people who are reached, but also have wider effects: they strengthen social support networks and can therefore prevent social problems. Outreach youth work is involved in building and shaping particularly the system of local services and networks. Youth workers can suggest goal-oriented measures to guarantee the effectiveness of services in their locality, to prevent situations that create challenges in young people's living conditions and to develop the living and operating environments.

In order for development to be based on relevant knowledge and also taking into consideration the experiences of young people who are not in education, employment or services, it is important for outreach youth workers to gather information about young people's situations in life and circumstances while working in the field and during guidance processes. This allows them to not only consider individual solutions together, but also structural solutions to address the issues.

Advocacy often involves a critical approach to activities, because the purpose is to develop and change existing structures that may discriminate against certain people or groups. Far-reaching changes can be achieved by influencing the knowledge base of decision-makers and officials. Knowledge gathered in the work may help to refine the views of social causalities and what is the desirable development for young people in a difficult position. In terms of the public debate, the desired change is related to influencing the attitudes towards young people and the atmosphere on the basis of the empathetic understanding that outreach youth workers have of the world of young people.



Powerful knowledge in outreach youth work is a combination of the experiences gained when working with young people and services and the documentation stored in information systems. Equally, it consists of the expertise built through training and learning and the insight, interpretations and proposed solutions created through discussions in the outreach youth workers' community and networks.

The knowledge typically concerns the needs of the young people and the local communities, phenomena that concern young people, youth as a phase of life, the service system and the effectiveness of local services. It can also concern social living conditions on a wider scale and the impact of social structures with regards to how they appear in the target groups and settings of outreach youth work. Through work experience, outreach youth workers gain professional literacy that helps them put the things they observe in the field in a wider context of social debate and trends.

**Through work experience, outreach youth workers gain professional literacy that helps them put the things they observe in the field in a wider context of social debate and trends.**

## Every outreach youth worker exerts an influence!

Individual outreach youth workers exert an influence, above all, on the young people they meet and the services these people need. They aim to find effective solutions and build support networks for the young people. The workers exert an influence on these networks by protecting the interests of the young person and amplifying their voice. As someone walking beside the young person, the worker is also in an ideal position to gain insight on the living conditions and needs of young people, the struggles they face and the performance of the service system. They are often aware of what can prevent young people from contacting a service or having access to it, how well services work together and what happens in the life of young people after using a service.

Outreach youth work should be well-known among the services in the region, and it should have a strong expert role in issues related to youth inclusion and the performance of the service system in terms of young people in the most difficult positions. Outreach youth workers often refer young people to services who have not used them before. This can increase the demand for services. If outreach youth workers notice that there are no services available to meet the needs of young people, they are not accessible or the circumstances make the life of young people difficult in some way, it is the duty of the workers and their supervisors to pass on this information to the cross-sectoral networks of the municipality and the region, the local government officials and the decision-makers.

Outreach youth work should exert its influence on the agencies working with young people to engage in systematic cooperation with each other. If they do not do so fluently, outreach youth work, as an agency that constantly keeps track of the available services, is in a key position to encourage such cooperation. Outreach youth workers are not, however, the only ones responsible for intensifying cooperation and inviting

agencies around the same table, let alone engaging in social development. Sealing the cracks in the available services and addressing social issues require the ability to broadly take responsibility from relevant organisations, supervisors and other agencies.

Cross-sectoral networks should also be sufficiently competent and tied in with decision-making in order to take the initiative and develop the service system, in addition to forming a picture of the situation. The development of services for young people as a whole is the key in order for outreach youth work to perform its guidance tasks in a meaningful way.

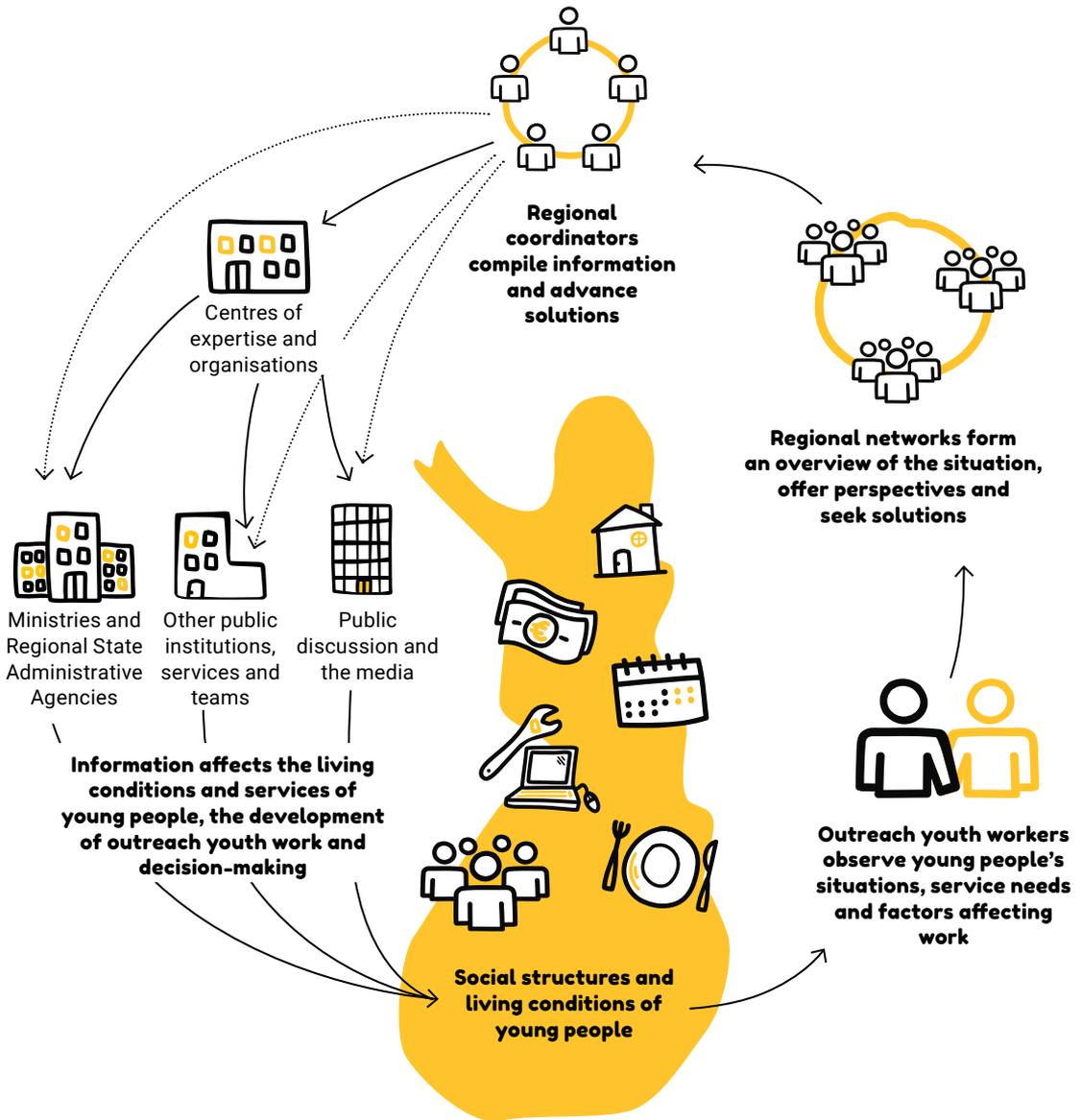
## Outreach youth worker networks as social advocates

Regional networks (see 3.5 Regional networks) provide a natural channel for sharing current information required for advocacy, forming perspectives and shared opinions. Together outreach youth workers can outline the best ways to exert an influence. Regional coordinators also gather experiences and views from outreach youth workers on various phenomena and issues that affect young people or outreach youth work, such as the impact of political decisions and structural reforms.

The coordinators regularly survey the factors affecting outreach youth work in their region in a variety of ways and inform national policy-makers (Into – Association for Outreach Youth Work and Workshop Activities and other expert organisations, the Ministry of Education and Culture and other ministries, Regional State Administrative Agencies) of the results of their reviews. The unique understanding that outreach youth workers have of young people and their situations in life can thus be utilised in the development of outreach youth work and the wider society.

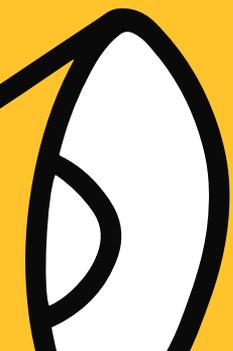


# JOINT ADVOCACY



## ADVOCACY STRATEGIES OF OUTREACH YOUTH WORK

- » analysing and reporting the information gathered by outreach youth work
- » surveys for young people and reporting on their results
- » highlighting young people's stories and cases
- » lending expertise to the discussion on services, cross-sectoral cooperation and the planning of other sectors
- » participating in regional and national networks and well-being teams
- » sharing information by answering questionnaires for outreach youth workers and participating in studies
- » exerting influence on a particular issue together with young people or other professionals
- » taking a stand through social media, blogs, letters to the editor, press releases and newspaper articles
- » direct contacts with decision-makers, political parties and political decision-making
- » reporting any problems to the agency responsible for the issue or the inspectors of the Regional State Administrative Agency.





⋮ 4

# **Steering and state aid**

# 4.1 The Finnish Youth Act, act on outreach youth work

Outreach youth work, its duties and delivering it in the municipality is provided for in the Finnish Youth Act (1285/2016) and the act to amend section 11 of the Youth Act (1232/2020). Outreach youth work is delivered on the basis of the purposes and underlying principles of the Youth Act and of the sections of the Youth Act governing outreach youth work. The Youth Act is binding only on outreach youth work funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The outreach work intended for young people that is organised by other sectors is governed by the acts on these other sectors. In this context, we will now present the most important sections of the law with regards to organising outreach youth work.

## Section 2 Purpose of the Act

The purpose of this Act is to:

- 1) promote the social inclusion of young people and provide them with opportunities for exerting an influence and improve their skills and capabilities to function in society;
- 2) support the growth, independence and sense of community of young people and facilitate the acquisition of knowledge and adoption of skills necessary for this purpose;
- 3) support young people's free-time pursuits and engagement in civic society;
- 4) promote non-discrimination and equality among young people and the realisation of their rights; and
- 5) improve young people's growth and living conditions.

The principles underlying the purpose of the Act are:

- 1) solidarity, cultural diversity and internationality;
- 2) sustainable development, healthy lifestyles, respect for life and the environment; and
- 3) cross-sectoral cooperation.

## Section 9 Cross-sectoral cooperation

For the purpose of planning cross-sectoral cooperation between local authorities and developing such cooperation, local governments shall establish a steering and service network or appoint a cooperation team whose activities target all the young people living in the municipality. The network or other cooperation team shall operate in interaction with youth organisations, congregations and other entities providing youth services. Two or more municipalities may have a shared network. The networks will not address issues related to any individual young person.

The network or other equivalent cooperation team is to:

- 1) gather information on young people's growth and living conditions and assess their situation in the light of this information in support of decision-making;
- 2) improve the coordination of services intended for young people and promote shared procedures in referring young people to the services while ensuring a smooth exchange of information;
- 3) promote cooperation in the implementation of youth activities.

## Section 10 Outreach youth work

The mission of outreach youth work is to reach young people in need of assistance and provide access to services and other support designed to promote their growth, independence, social inclusion and life management skills as well as to improve access to education and facilitate entry into the labour market. Outreach youth work is based on voluntary participation by and cooperation with the young person involved.

When the local government engages in outreach youth work, it shall designate a local government official or other person contracted by the local government to assume responsibility for the implementation of outreach youth work. The outreach youth worker shall have adequate training for and experience in working with young people. Outreach youth work may be provided by a single municipality or several municipalities together. The municipality may organise outreach youth work by acquiring the services from an entity providing youth services. If so, the municipality shall ensure that the services are provided in accordance with this Act.

Outreach youth work shall primarily be initiated in response to the information provided by the young person him- or herself or his or her own assessment of the need for support. Additionally, outreach youth work may be initiated in response to information provided by other authorities.

## Section 11 Disclosure of information for outreach youth work purposes

No information may be disclosed for outreach youth work purposes except with the young person's consent unless otherwise provided in this Act or other laws. Regardless of non-disclosure provisions, information identifying the young person involved and his or her contact details shall be disclosed to the young person's home municipality for outreach youth work purposes as follows:

- 1) an education provider shall disclose information on a young person who is not subject to compulsory education and who ceases to participate in vocational education,

general upper secondary education or preparatory education for an upper secondary qualification;

- 2) the Defence Forces and the Centre for Non-Military Service shall disclose information on a young person who is exempted from military or non-military service because of lack of fitness or who decides not to complete military or non-military service.

The education or training provider, Defence Forces and the Centre for Non-Military Service may decide not to disclose information on the young person referred to in subsection 2, if they – considering the information available and the young person's situation and his or her need for support in the light of all the relevant circumstances – determine that he or she is not in need of services and other support within the meaning of section 10. (30.12.2020/1232)

Regardless of non-disclosure provisions, information identifying the young person involved and his or her contact details may be disclosed to the young person's home municipality for outreach youth work purposes as follows:

- 1) an education provider may disclose information on a young person who has completed his or her basic education but who is not pursuing any studies beyond the completed basic education;
- 2) an education provider may disclose information on a young person who is subject to compulsory education and who ceases to participate in vocational education, general upper secondary education or preparatory education for an upper secondary qualification;
- 3) additionally, an authority other than an authority defined in this section or the Social Insurance Institution of Finland Kela may disclose information on a young person, if such an authority or Kela – considering the information available and the young person's situation and his or her need for support in the light of all the relevant circumstances – determine that the young person is in need of immediate support in order to access the services and other support.

If a registered association, foundation or other organisation offering free-time activities determine that a young person is in need of outreach youth services, they may, subject to the express consent of the young person or the consent of the guardian of a minor young person, disclose information identifying the young person and his or her contact details for outreach youth work purposes. (30.12.2020/1232)

Those disclosing information pursuant to this section shall, in advance and using an appropriate means of communication, notify the young person or the guardian of a minor young person that information on the young person may, in the cases referred to in subsection 2 and 4, be disclosed for outreach youth work purposes.

Provisions on child welfare notices and anticipatory child welfare notices are set out in sections 25 and 25c of the Child Welfare Act (417/2007). Provisions on contacting social services for the purpose of assessing the need for support are set out in section 35 of the Social Welfare Act (1301/2014). If a party required by law to disclose information has contacted an authority comparable to social services, no notification need to be filed with outreach youth work services based on the same information.

## **Section 12 Processing of information on young people by outreach youth services**

The identifying information and contact details disclosed for outreach youth work purposes may be provided in electronic format. The information obtained in the course of outreach youth work or otherwise may be combined in order to identify the young people in need of assistance and to carry out the duties of outreach youth service. When the affairs of any individual young person are addressed in the context of outreach youth work, records shall be made of the party disclosing the identifying information and contact details of the young person, any further measures to be taken, the type of information disclosed and the parties to which such information is released. The file controller responsible for the processing and management of the personal information is the local municipality.

Information obtained in the course of outreach youth work may only be disclosed to another authority with the consent of the young person, or if he is she is a minor, with the consent of his or her guardian. However, a minor may make decisions regarding the disclosure of his or her personal information according to their level of maturity. All the information shall be promptly destroyed when no longer necessary for the performance of duties.

A person engaged in outreach youth work may not, without the consent of the young person involved, or if he or she is a minor, without the consent of his or her guardian, disclose to third parties any information that may come to his or her attention in the course of the duties foreseen in this Act regarding the young person's personal circumstances, state of health, benefits received, supportive action or financial position.

## **Other relevant acts**

In addition to the Youth Act, outreach youth work is also governed by other acts. Outreach youth work also involves working in cooperation with many different sectors, so it may also be useful to look at the legislation that governs other parties in the network. It is a good idea to revisit the acts regularly, assess them in relation to your work and express the ways in which the various acts are realised and appear in practice with the work community and organisation. The following, in particular, may be worth looking at in outreach youth work:

- The Constitution of Finland
- Non-discrimination Act
- Social Welfare Act
- Child Welfare Act
- Data Protection Act
- Administrative Procedure Act
- Local Government Act
- Act on Compulsory Education (in Finnish)
- Act on the National Registers of Education Records, Qualifications and Degrees (in Finnish)
- Act on Rehabilitative Work (in Finnish)
- Act on Unemployment Security (in Finnish)
- Act on the Openness of Government Activities
- Act on Equality between Women and Men
- Conscription Act
- Non-Military Service Act

## 4.2 Disclosure of information for outreach youth work purposes

The purpose of the disclosure of information is to guarantee an opportunity for young people to obtain support and information about the available services. The basis for disclosing data for outreach youth work purposes in the young person's home municipality is the mission of outreach youth work to reach the young person. Only information concerning young people under 29 years of age may be disclosed for outreach youth work purposes. The information may only be identifying information or contact details, that is, information based on which the young person can be contacted. This is personal information that can help identify the young person, such as their name, phone number, email address and address. The contact information of outreach youth work should be easy to find.

### Using the disclosed information

Outreach youth work is done confidentially, in light of the information provided by the young person themselves. The information disclosed for outreach youth work purposes may only be used in outreach youth work. The young person's information is processed carefully, and discretion is exercised when discussing the young person's matters in the work community – workers are granted access only to the information systems and registers they need to perform their duties. Special caution is practised to maintain confidentiality when disclosing information (such as sending encrypted emails). Young people's information is never disclosed to third parties or others without the express consent of the young person involved, or if he or she is a minor, without the express consent of his or her guardian.

Outreach youth work does not disclose young people's information without the consent of the young person involved or the consent of their guardian, unless the criteria for filing a notice with the authorities are fulfilled (child welfare notice, notice according to the Social Welfare Act or notice according to the Criminal Code of Finland). In these cases, the young person (or the guardian of a minor young person) is also informed of the notice and the disclosure of information in advance, if possible. In the context of outreach youth work, records are made of the type of information disclosed and the parties to which such information is released. Young people and their guardians have the right to know how the personal information collected in the context of outreach youth work is processed and to which parties such information is disclosed.

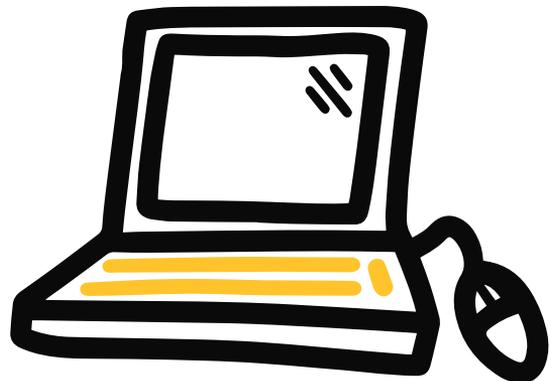
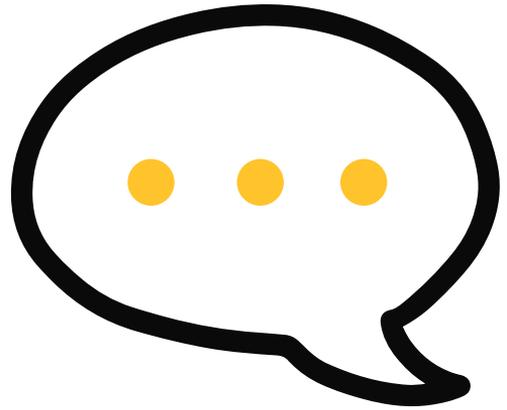
The identifying information and contact details of a young person or other information collected while working with the young person are not archived, but all the information is promptly destroyed when no longer necessary for the performance of duties. The municipality may archive quantitative data related to the development of the activities in which individuals cannot be identified. Similar anonymous statistical data on the young people in outreach youth work is recorded in a common database through the PAR system or a similar customer management and statistical data system.

## Processing of personal data

The identifying information and contact details of a young person may be disclosed in electronic format. The Ministry of Education and Culture and the Regional State Administrative Agency for Western and Inland Finland, together with CSC – IT Center for Science Ltd., have built a national outreach youth work contact system which was implemented in autumn 2021.

[www.yhteysetsivaan.fi](http://www.yhteysetsivaan.fi) is a free national service that makes the electronic disclosure of young people's identifying information and contact details to the outreach youth work in their home municipality secure, smooth and fast, and compliant with the data protection regulations and the Accessibility Directive. Outreach youth work can still be contacted in other ways as well, such as by direct contact, phone or email.

Contact requests sent to the [yhteysetsivaan.fi](http://yhteysetsivaan.fi) system are transferred to the customer management systems used by the local municipality. The file controller responsible for the processing of personal information related to outreach youth work is the local municipality, in accordance with the Youth Act. The municipality should prepare instructions for the processing of personal data and provide the necessary training. Caution must be practised and the requirements of the data protection regulation complied with in the disclosure, reception and all types of processing of personal data.



The processing of personal data refers to activities such as the collection, storage, use, transfer and disclosure of personal data. All activities involving personal data, from the planning of processing to the erasure of personal data, constitute processing of personal data. The personal data forms a customer data file, and the local government official responsible for the administration of outreach youth work, as referred to in the Local Government Act, is responsible for this data file. When the local government engages in outreach youth work, it should designate a local government official or other person contracted by the local government to assume responsibility for the implementation of outreach youth work.

## 4.3 State aid for outreach youth work

The Ministry of Education and Culture provides funding for the hiring of outreach youth work employees through aid distributed through the Regional State Administrative Agency. The Regional State Administrative Agency grants state aid towards youth work. The purpose of the aid is to reduce the social exclusion of young people – that every young person would remain on their education path, youth unemployment rates would fall and the inclusion of young people would increase. The discretionary aid can be awarded to hire an outreach youth worker (a maximum of EUR 30 000 per person-year).

**T**he purpose of the state aid for outreach youth work is to support outreach youth work as provided for in the Youth Act (1285/2016). Aid can be granted to municipalities and incorporated societies and foundations that have a valid agreement with one or more municipalities concerning the provision of outreach youth work services in the municipality. Aid cannot be granted to private individuals. Aid can also be applied for to cover the costs of regional coordination.

The Ministry of Education and Culture recommends that outreach youth work is carried out in cooperation particularly with education providers, Ohjaamo One-Stop Guidance Centers, youth workshop activities and social services and other agencies providing services for young people, such as the employment administration and the Social Insurance Institution of Finland.

### Applying for and monitoring state aid

State aid is applied for in the regional administration e-services using the form entitled "Valtionavustus etsivän nuorisotyön tukemiseen" for one year at a time. More information about the criteria for granting aid can be found on the page on subsidies (in Finnish) of the Ministry of Education and Culture. The aid for outreach youth work is discretionary. Applications are assessed and compared on the basis of an overall assessment.

The state aid covers part of the labour costs of an outreach youth worker. The municipality or the organisation providing outreach youth work is also required to pay their contribution of the funding to cover the other costs of the activities (activities, facilities and equipment, work guidance costs, travel and training costs etc.) Regional State Administrative Agencies supervise the use of aid, and granted aid can be recovered if the employee hired with the aid has performed other duties besides the duties of outreach youth work according to the Youth Act or has been absent from work without having an appointed replacement.

The use of the state aid is monitored using the PAR system or a similar customer information and statistical data system. The organisational data and the statistical customer data is reported three times a year from the PAR system to the national PARKKI database. The data transferred to the database can be found on an organisational, regional and national level on the Nuorisotilastot.fi website. Outreach youth work practitioners are obligated to answer an annual national survey.



**”I feel much more confident about the future knowing that help will always be near and that my wishes will be heard and respected.”**

SOVARI FEEDBACK 2020

# Closing words

**T**o our great delight, Finnish outreach youth work has seen unprecedented development in recent years. The ground-breaking first version of the handbook, published in 2018, has proven its worth in expressing the work in words and helping in the orientation of new employees. However since the work form is constantly evolving and the operating environment is changing, we found that there is a need for a newer, most extensive version of the handbook that would reflect how the work is done today and provide tools for the situations we now face.

A development team of 16 members, representing an exhaustive array of regions and organisations, was set up to help create this new handbook. The team was tasked to make the voice of Finnish outreach youth work heard and showcase its national diversity. Together, we have identified the spirit that is characteristic of the field of outreach youth work, pursued common focus areas and done our best to answer the questions that workers in different regions come across regularly in their daily work. A team of supervisors and representatives of key partners for the work form also took part in planning the framework of this handbook.

In addition to the resourceful development team and all those who carefully commented on the text, we must also thank the active and insightful community, which at the moment of writing consists of almost 600 outreach youth workers who do not hesitate to voice their opinions. Without them, this handbook would not have been possible: thank you for the attentive discussions, messages and input over the years! A special thank you to all those who have supported, encouraged and guided us along the way in a variety of ways.

We want to see Finnish outreach youth work continue to develop on the basis of its uncompromising values and to act as an undeniable expert in youth in the years to come. One of the special strengths of outreach youth work, in our opinion, is the unity of our work form and the lively networks of outreach youth workers where multiple voices engage in discussion on the essential nature and meaning of the work. Outreach youth workers across the country are also firmly connected to the field of youth work and have established ties which have proven strong with other professionals working with young people. In cooperation with other actors, youth work will become an even more powerful force that will make youth even better – build a society where everyone has the opportunity to find their place.

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**W**hat is outreach youth work? What values and principles, goals and methods does the work involve? What kind of skills, structures and leadership does it take to succeed? What impact does the work have and how can this be made visible?

The Outreach Youth Work Handbook shows that no young person has to be left to cope on their own. In virtually every Finnish municipality there are outreach youth workers to walk beside those who feel they need support in becoming independent and forging a life for themselves. The book encourages all outreach youth workers and others working with young people to engage with them in the way these young people describing their experiences have been engaged with:

**"I've always been able to contact an outreach youth worker whenever there's something on my mind. Including things that I didn't believe I would be helped with before working with an outreach youth worker."**

**"I've discovered new perspectives for examining my life and my problems. It feels absolutely wonderful to also be able to talk about this and that with the workers after dealing with other issues. The possibility to cancel or postpone visits without hassle or complications is also very positive, because the visits do not create pressure to perform, so to say, and I don't feel like I've failed even if I'm a bit late."**

**"Being able to talk openly and in confidence to folk who do not change every time or even every year has been really important. Outreach youth workers, at least in my case, have always been really optimistic and encouraging. And I never hear any commands, orders or scolding from them, but they let me decide what to do."**

**"I've received support with things in my life and learned to appreciate my life more."**

**into**

ASSOCIATION FOR OUTREACH YOUTH WORK  
AND WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES

MINISTRY OF  
EDUCATION AND CULTURE  
FINLAND

QUOTES: SOVARI FEEDBACK 2020  
OF OUTREACH YOUTH WORK

