YOUTH-POLICE WORKSHOPS
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Introduction

The “Youth-Police Workshops” methodology was first developed by Second Wave, a youth-arts centre in southeast London (www.secondwave.org.uk) as part of their work on youth and policing. Second Wave is based in Lewisham, an area where there have been historical tensions between young people, predominately of ethnic minority backgrounds and the police, particularly around the use of stop and search.

The Second Wave project aimed to improve relationships between young people and the police by bringing both groups together in a safe and creative workshop setting to build mutual trust and respect, share their experiences, and learn from one another. The safe workshop setting allowed participants to challenge stereotypes and preconceptions held by both young people and police officers about what it means to be part of the other group.

In 2011, the My City Real World project supported the Alouan youth centre and local police force in Gouda, Netherlands, to replicate the methodology that had been successful at Second Wave in London. Gouda has experienced similar problems to those in London, seeing a breakdown of trust between the police and young people, many of whom were of Dutch-Moroccan heritage, who felt victimised and targeted by the policing in their town.

Evaluations of both projects, demonstrated positive outcomes for the young people and police involved and improved relationships. After interest from other cities in developing similar projects, it was decided that a toolkit would be a useful resource for those who saw a need for setting up similar projects in their own areas. This manual is a practical guide, describing the philosophy behind the project, outlining the basic steps for setting up a “Police-Youth Workshop” project and providing activity cards on which workshops with youth and police can be
based. We hope the toolkit allows others to replicate and adapt the workshops and we looks forward to expanding the toolkit to include activities and experiences from other areas.

The problem
The practice of stopping, questioning and searching people in the street has been a major contributor to the strained relationship between minority communities and police across Europe. The police are far more likely to stop young people, particularly those from minority and marginalised communities than any other segment of the population. The vast majority of those stopped are innocent of any crime and the percentage of stops which lead to arrests is low. These encounters, which are most often the primary point of contact between youth and the police, are complex and problematic, having a profound and lasting effect on how police and young people come to view one another. For young people, these stops can be frightening and humiliating, leading to a feeling of marginalisation and exclusion. For police, these encounters can all too often be counter-productive and ineffective, harming their relations with communities. Research shows that the anger that is fostered by repeated discriminatory stops, ID checks and searches can explode into the kinds of rioting and public disorder that were seen in the UK in the 1981, 1985 and 2011; in France in 2005 and 2007, in Denmark in 2008 and 2009 and most recently in Sweden in May 2013. 1

In Gouda, following an incident in 2008 when a local bus driver was stabbed, relationships between the police and Dutch-Moroccan community became strained and difficult. This was particularly the case for young people. Young people frequently cite discrimination and unfair targeting by police for stops and fines as the source of the problem and growing tensions. Meanwhile, police note national pressures for stronger law enforcement against young people and the negative attitude of some young Dutch-Moroccans toward the police as major factors in making interactions hostile and confrontational. Previous attempts to improve the youth-police relationship and to increase communications had been unsuccessful. The police identified the need for a project to improve relationships and the “Police-Youth Workshops” project began in 2011.

The goals of the project
The goal of the “Youth-Police Workshops” project is to improve relations between young people and police, focusing on communication and mutual understanding. This is achieved by bringing both groups together in a safe and creative workshop environment, where both groups can develop mutual trust and respect by sharing their experiences and where they can learn from each other. In order to improve the relationship, it is important to examine why both parties act as they do. Police learn to see young people not as a group but as individuals, while young people get to know the man or woman behind the police uniform. With this common understanding, insightful lessons can be learned and relationships formed.

The games and activities are also carefully designed so that inflammatory issues, such as stop and search and discrimination, can be discussed and explored without the risk of personal criticism. Role-plays in particular allow participants to represent their experiences of police and young peoples’ behaviour, while also removing oneself from the characters being portrayed.

How it works
Many youth-police engagement projects are ineffective in promoting a change in attitudes or behaviour over time. Traditional initiatives, such as friendly football games or one-off information sessions, perpetuate the notion of young people and police being different ‘teams’, and the encounters are too brief for participants to get to know one another. When police attend community meetings to engage the public and answer questions on their policies, it is often in a formal Q&A format, with the police in uniform and answering questions from positions of authority. This is a barrier to a meaningful conversation and honest exchange of perspectives, for both the public and the police.

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The “Youth-Police Workshops” methodology avoids many of these short falls. Sustained contact between young people and police allows enough time for initial preconceptions to shift, as well as the space to gradually share different perspectives. A number of ground rules are put in place, so as to minimize power imbalances which inherently exist between young people and police, allowing the project to take on a context of equality and shared learning (see the section below on ‘levellers’).

Youth empowerment is a key element of the project. Each workshop is planned in advance by the young people, giving them a sense of ownership, responsibility and leadership throughout the process. This also allows them to make the connection between issues being discussed in the project and developments in their own residential area and community – encouraging active citizenship and engagement with wider political issues.

**For whom?**

The project is aimed at young people who come into contact with the police, usually through stop and search encounters. This may mean targeting youngsters from disadvantaged neighborhoods and their communities, since they are most at risk of being excluded and stigmatised. Likewise, police participants should be those who come into contact with young people as part of neighbourhood or response policing.

When conducting initial outreach and selecting potential participants, it is preferable that members already want to work towards improvement of the police/youth relationship and see the need for change.
To achieve the best results and create meaningful changes in relationships, the project should last 12 months, including at least 10 workshops between the young people and the police officers. An initial phase of outreach and familiarising participants with the project is outlined below, along with the substantial content of youth and police engagement workshops. The last month can be set aside for final meetings, closing celebrations, and public showcases.

**Central roles and responsibilities**

**Facilitators**

A key part of the project’s success will lie with the facilitators, who are responsible for bringing the young people and the police together. In some cases, it is important for them to be independent and not associated with the youth centre, police, or local authority. Their independence can make it easier for them to gain trust and to treat all participants equally. This was integral to the project’s success in Gouda.

In other contexts however, it may be possible for youth workers to facilitate the project. However, this decision should be made carefully, based on whether the individuals will be able to engage the police, treat everyone in the group impartially, and be a neutral guide for the discussion.

It is preferable to work with two facilitators. While one coaches an activity, the other can properly observe the group and see where extra attention is needed. With two different personalities, the young people and the police can choose who they feel more comfortable open-
ing up to. It also allows the facilitators to support each other through difficult situations and relationships as they develop. The role of the facilitators is to make everyone feel safe and included in the project. It is very important that the participants feel that they can associate with one another in a relaxed and enjoyable way in this unusual situation. They are also mediators in heated discussions or intense situations, where necessary, so they should be comfortable in managing conflicts, either through one-on-one conversations or positive interventions.

The facilitators (or youth workers, if playing this role) involved in the project should be a trusted reference point for the young people, and the go-to person for support and mediation if necessary. The facilitators are also essential in maintaining contact with the young people between sessions, as well as for any behaviour management that may be necessary during the sessions. In Gouda, it was important that neither facilitators nor police handled any discipline issues, as this upsets the power balance with the police and the neutrality of facilitators.

The facilitators (or youth workers, if playing this role) should ensure that the young people are present for workshops and keep track of absentees, identifying and supporting young people (or police) who are at danger of dropping out of the project.

Key experience and qualities needed in the project facilitators are:
- Expertise at working with young people from diverse (and sometimes troubled) backgrounds.
- An understanding of youth-police relations and familiarity with working with the police.
- Knowledge and skills for guiding exercises and games, including drama activities.
- A neutral stance / position towards the conflict between young people and police.
- Ability to create trust with and between groups. And a genuine interest in the social world of both groups.
- Ability to mediate and solve conflicts.

**Police representatives**

It is important to have two police officers acting as police coordinators for the duration of the project. Their extra responsibilities are to attend evaluation meetings, speaking on behalf of the police on how the workshops are being experienced. They should also be the liaisons for
the facilitators and youth workers, for any communications and updates between sessions. Finally, they act as a motivator and stimulator, keeping the police officers active and engaged during the weeks when there are no planned meetings, keeping track of absentees and identifying problems as they might arise.

Local government
The municipality or local government should be informed about the project. It is a good idea to get them aboard early on. Their official support can help with the recruitment of police, and they are useful contacts in promoting the project and its outcomes.

Project Coordinator
While this role is not essential and can be performed by one of the youth workers, having a project coordinator can be very useful. This person supports the full project cycle. They do not necessarily have to attend workshops, but can play a central role in recruiting participants, securing funds, administrative duties, promotion and outreach, capturing and marketing resources, and seeing wider opportunities for expansion and promotion.

Essential Elements
To address the power imbalance that inherently exists between young people and police, a number of ‘levellers’ should be put in place:

- The meetings should be held in a place where the youngsters feel at ease, such as in a youth center. In this way, the police are the guests of the young people. The attitude towards the police should be open and welcoming, as they are taking a ‘risk’ in coming to a place that belongs to the young people, where the young people feel safe and supported.
- Police should not attend the workshops in uniform, as this can be intimidating and inhibit open communication on both sides. Uniforms evoke certain reactions, making it difficult for the youngsters to see the man or woman behind the uniform.
- Young people also come in their regular clothes, but feel free to set rules for caps, hoodies, sunglasses, etc. These can, like uniforms, hinder open communication.
- To give the young people ownership over the project, they should be responsible for planning the activities and selecting the topics for discussion (see more below).
First steps – setting up the project

Outreach
1. Identify which areas or communities are having particular problems with youth-police relations and/or stop and search.
2. Meet the youth workers from that neighborhood, listen to their stories.
3. Meet police officers, listen to their stories.
4. Arrange a meeting between youth workers and the police.
5. Meet the young people together with the youth workers.

Once interest has been confirmed, facilitators should hold separate introductory workshops for young people and the police. In Gouda, the “taster” workshop was facilitated by the youth workers and young people from the London project, who were able to share their experiences and activities. This worked well for recruiting people into the project, learning about how these issues are experienced in different contexts and giving all a taste of what the project and the workshops would involve.

Introductory sessions
An introductory session for the police should familiarise the police with the project methodology, goals of the project, and the commitment involved. It is also an opportunity to introduce to the police issues of concern from a young person’s perspective. An introductory session for the young people allows them to get to know the facilitators, as well as share their experiences of policing. They will be shown some of the activities and topics of discussion that might be covered. Separate sessions allow both groups to share any concerns they might have so that these can be addressed before the groups come together.

Once the introductory sessions have been held and questions and concerns dealt with, the core of the project can begin, bringing young people and police together.

In the course of setting up the project, it is not uncommon to encounter a lot of resistance. Both young people and police will have many objections, and they will be pessimistic about the end result of the project. Don’t be put off. Since several workshops will take place, the project allows enough space to overcome these perceptions and show all that the process does work.
Each workshop between young people and police is sandwiched between a preparation and an evaluation meeting:

**Preparatory meeting:**
YOUNG PEOPLE, YOUTH WORKERS AND FACILITATORS

**Workshop:**
YOUNG PEOPLE, POLICE, YOUTH WORKERS AND FACILITATORS

**Evaluation meeting:**
YOUTH WORKERS, POLICE REPS AND FACILITATORS
Preparatory meeting
Duration: approximately 1 ½ hours.

Participants: young people, youth workers, facilitators.

Purpose:
During this meeting there is time allotted to reflect on how things went in the previous workshop, the young people’s perspectives on the process, local developments, and whether there has been any contact with the police since the last workshop. After this discussion, participants agree on the programme and theme of the next workshop, and to the division of labour.

There are a number of ways in which themes can be chosen for the next workshop:
• The young people make a suggestion
• The facilitators put forward a variety of options, from which the young people select their favourite.
• The facilitators distill a proposal from the stories, discussions and findings from previous workshops
• The facilitators may feel they need to make a binding offer, if they believe that a particular theme or topic needs to be dealt with immediately
• The police can suggest a theme to the facilitators, which can then be put forward to the young people.

Once the theme has been agreed, facilitators can start exploring this with the young people. They may want to brainstorm particular issues they want to discuss within the theme and road test some of the games and activities. In this way, young people go into the workshop with the police feeling prepared and in control.

The preliminary meeting is also the moment to decide who is responsible for certain housekeeping issues at the joint workshop. As well as ensuring things run smoothly, this also gives the young people a chance to develop leadership skills and take responsibility for the project. A few key points to consider are:
• Who is hosting that night? If a young person is going to lead the discussion, who will it be, and what would they like to discuss?
• Who makes sure that everyone gets refreshments at the beginning of the meeting and during the break?
• Who will help clean up afterwards?

These preparatory meetings are an important opportunity to gauge the temperature of the project and identifying any problems that young people are having. Often events will have happened over the last month that may involve the young people and/or police or maybe a wider community issue. These incidents will impact how the project proceeds and on relations within the group. Thus it is important to use the preparatory meetings to identify these issues and reflect with the young people on the best way to deal with them.

Workshops with young people and police
A full set of activities for facilitators to use during the workshops with young people are police are laid out in this manual’s ‘toolkit’ section. Additionally, a suggested schedule for 10 workshops is provided below.

Participants: young people, police, facilitators, youth workers. The group should be about 15-20 people, with two thirds young people and one third police officers.

A typical workshop lasts around two hours with a break and light refreshments. The workshop includes a mixture of warm up games, issue-based games, discussions and activities.
Typical workshop

Aims:
- To build relationships between the young people and the police.
- To break down barriers between young people and the police.
- For young people to develop an understanding of police policy and practice.
- For the police to develop an understanding of how their actions impact on young people and how to interact better with young people/young people from diverse communities.

Resources needed: Flip chart, pens, chairs.

INTRODUCTION:
Welcome and Introductions, recap of ground rules set by participants and an overview of activities and themes that will be explored during the session.

WARM-UP GAMES:
Name games to learn or reinforce participants’ names and a selection of warm up games to energise and get people working together.

ISSUE-BASED GAMES:
Introduce the themes of the session through a selection of issue-based games.

REFRESHMENT BREAK

DISCUSSION OR ACTIVITY:
Discussion or activity based around the key themes of the session.

CLOSING GAME:
Closing games to reenergise the group, allow reflections on the session and end with a positive interaction.

CONCLUSION:
Close the session; discussion to resolve any issues and tensions and reinforce any learning coming out of the session.
Detailed description of the workshop outline and why it has been designed in this way:

1. Introduction
The introduction provides an opportunity to introduce the themes of the workshop and recap on the ground rules and issues/learning from previous sessions.

2. Warm-up games
Warm-up games are short, fun games to break the ice and remind participants of each other’s names. These exercises should unite the group. They are designed for participants to get to know each other better. After all, people are more inclined to listen to someone with whom they have a connection or with whom they have already laughed, than with a total stranger. Make this clear in the preparatory meetings, so that everyone knows the purpose of starting the sessions with ‘childish’ games.

Even an activity or game that everyone finds “stupid” or “crazy” can work well. It can act as a unifier when both young people and police find something stupid or a little bit embarrassing – in a way, it unites them in feeling a bit silly.

The advantage of a game is that everyone works within the same rules, and the issue of status or rank is transcended. Everyone is equal in the game. Of course games are available for different purposes - the choice depends on what the focus of the workshop is. There are games that generate energy, others that generate concentration or focus, and still others that inconspicuously promote certain themes.

3. Issue-based games
Issue-based games are a fun way of introducing the theme of the workshop and getting participant to think about some of the issues that will be discussed. Although games are designed to be fun and less “silly” than some of the warm-up games, they can introduce serious themes and reactions to issues so care should be taken to introduce them and debrief after to reinforce the themes and identify how participants have experienced the exercise and what they have learnt.
4. Refreshment break
The refreshment breaks are essential. Not only for concentration, but often the break provides an opportunity for informal conversation. These moments are experienced as particularly valuable. It is also important to provide refreshments and something to eat, as this can encourage attendance and promotes a shared social atmosphere.

Pizza or hot food never goes a miss either during the break or at the end of the session.

5. Discussion or activity:
After the break the main theme is developed further, with discussions or activity sessions. The theme, questions and format for the discussion will have been planned in advance but should also allow space for issues coming out of the games and interactions. The discussion section deals with the most difficult or contentious issues in a contained way. The devised discussions, activities and role play allow participants to reflect and share their perceptions on the theme. Discussions can be difficult and reveal tensions but the focus on specific themes can allow participants to explore the issues and understand other’s perspectives.

6. Closing game:
The closing games (or you can use one of the warm-up games) reenergise the group and allow group reflection on the workshop. This can allow the group to end with a positive interaction, if tensions have arisen during the discussion or activity.

7. Conclusion:
Close the session formally, taking some time to acknowledge and where possible resolve any issues and tensions and reinforce any learning coming out of the session. Questions to consider are:

- What have you learned during this meeting?
- What would you want others to learn from this?
- What can you use outside of these meeting?
- Is it necessary to have a follow up to this meeting, and how what kind of follow up would this be?
- Is it necessary to take action? Who would do what?
Evaluation meeting

Duration: approximately 1 hour
Participants: facilitators, youth workers and police representatives.
Purpose: To evaluate the last workshop, and discuss any developments outside of the project.

During this meeting there is time allotted to reflect on how things went in the previous workshop, the police’s perspectives on the project, issues within the police service and whether there has been any contact with the young since the last workshop.

Key points to cover in the meeting are:
• How is the project going from the police perspective?
• Any issues arising and the best ways to resolve them?
• Evaluation of the previous workshop?
• Themes they would like raised in future workshops.

Ending the project

At the end of the project, it is likely that both young people and police may feel proud of what they have achieved and the journey they have been on together. The end of the project provides an opportunity to celebrate; this could be a party, shared dinner or more formal session. It is best to ask the young people and the police how they would like to mark the end of the project. In Gouda, a formal session was organised, where participants were presented with certificates of participation, shared their thoughts on the project and then shared food and refreshments. There was also a public event to share the results of the project evaluation and a film made on the project.3

If possible, a public event could be organized to promote the project and the work that has been going on. It is an opportunity for the wider community to hear from participants, through
panel discussions and presentations, about the challenges that young people and police are facing and potential ways of resolving them. A public event is an excellent promotional tool, whereby youth workers and other police forces can learn about “Youth-Police Workshops” and build interest in their own communities. If you have chosen to evaluate the project and the impact it has had, this is also an excellent chance to promote the results. Workshops can also be held introducing some of the activities, and contact made between groups interested in starting their own project.

3. The Gouda film is available at:
This toolkit provides:

• A set of cards (or building blocks) providing examples of the types of exercises or games that are used to make up the workshops.
• A possible layout for 10 “Youth-Police Workshop” sessions.

“Youth-Police Workshops” cards
These cards (or building blocks) providing examples of the types of exercises or games that are used to make up the workshops. The cards are designed to give flexibility and allow people using them to pick, choose and adapt the different activities and games described. There are five different types of cards/activities:

• **Introduction and closing games and discussions** (6 cards)
• **Warm-up games** (13 cards)
• **Issue-based games** (14 cards)
  These explore five themes:
  - Trust
  - Perception and Stereotypes
  - Shared Experience
  - Interaction
  - Peer Pressure
• **Discussions** (10 cards)
• **Activities** (4 cards)
Suggested layout for 10 “Youth-Police Workshop” sessions

Workshops should be designed to progress the relationships and themes discussed over the course of the year (roughly ten sessions). Sessions differ in terms of difficulty and potential to cause tension and conflict between the participants, so they have been colour coded on a traffic light system to indicate this. Start with easier ‘green’ sessions, move on to ‘amber’ and then finally ‘red’ sessions, when participants know each other and have established a basic level of trust and ability to work together. If there are issues or tensions in the group or in the wider neighbourhood that are impacting on group dynamics, facilitators might want to go back to ‘green’ or less difficult sessions. Equally, if a workshop hasn’t covered all of the associated issues, it is possible to repeat the themes using some of the other suggested activities. In Gouda, sessions around police practice were repeated or revisited frequently across the year. Young people had a lot of questions related to the law or their treatment on the streets and these were revisited as issues arose away from the project.
Workshop sessions

WORKSHOP 1

Introductory session
The aim of this workshop is for the participants to get to know each other and develop together the ground rules for the project. Session should be based around fun, warm up games and initial discussions about the aims of the project and themes that participants want to cover.

Suggested activities:
DISCUSSION: Safety: Setting the ground rules

WORKSHOP 2

Developing empathy through shared experience:
The aim of this workshop is to encourage participants to get to know each other and learn to work together in a respectful manner. Session should include warm up games and issue-based games that focus on getting to know each other and shared experiences. Discussions should be based around what participants have in common or encouraging the two groups to work together.

Suggested activities:
ISSUE-BASED GAME: Experiences of youth
ISSUE-BASED GAME: What we have in common
DISCUSSION: Perceptions of young people

WORKSHOP 3

Exploring trust:
The aim of this workshop is to encourage participants to get to know each other and to develop a basic level of trust between the participants. Session should include warm up games and issue-based games that focus on exploring the nature of trust. Discussions should be based around issues related to trust and why trust might break down between people, particularly young people and the police.
Suggested activities:
ISSUE-BASED GAME: Leading and following
ISSUE-BASED GAME: Two bodies, One mind
ISSUE-BASED GAME: Trust circle
DISCUSSION: What is trust?
DISCUSSION: Who do you trust?

WORKSHOP 4

Police Practice:
The aim of this workshop is to provide participants with an understanding of policing policy and practice and the associated issues.
Session should give participants a clear sense of the policies and practices of the police. The activities should allow space for all participants to ask questions and learn about different experiences and perceptions of police practice.

Suggested activities:
ACTIVITY: Workshop on stop and search
ACTIVITY: Visit to the police station
DISCUSSION: Getting to know the police

WORKSHOP 5

Acknowledging difference
The aim of this workshop is to allow participants to acknowledge, share and celebrate differences whether these are based on age, gender, culture or due to being a police officer and young person.
Session should include warm up games and issue-based games that focus on getting to know each other and acknowledging difference.

Suggested activity:
ISSUE-BASED GAME: the culture game
WORKSHOP 6

Exploring perceptions and stereotypes:
The aim of this workshop is to explore the perceptions and stereotypes that we hold about each other.
Session should include warm up games and issue-based games that focus on exploring the nature of perceptions and stereotypes, how they are formed and can be broken down. Discussions should be based around how perceptions and stereotypes can impact people’s lives and the relationship between young people and the police.

Suggested activities:
ISSUE-BASED GAME: Stranger
ISSUE-BASED GAME: Four faces
ISSUE-BASED GAME: Point of view circle
ISSUE-BASED GAME: Frozen images
DISCUSSION: How are you perceived?
DISCUSSION: Perceptions of young people?

WORKSHOP 7

Exploring interactions:
The aim of this workshop is to explore the nature of interactions between the police and young people, particularly stop and search interactions on the street.
Session should include warm up games and issue-based games that focus on exploring the nature of police-youth interactions. Discussions should be based around how interactions go wrong and can be improved.

Suggested activities:
ISSUE-BASED GAME: Worker and helper
ISSUE-BASED GAME: Body language
ISSUE-BASED GAME: Stranger in your house
DISCUSSION: Confrontational situations
ACTIVITY: Exploring stop and search
**WORKSHOP 8**

**Peer Pressure:**
The aim of this workshop is to explore the nature of peer pressure and how we are all subject to it, no matter of age or occupation. Session should include warm up games and issue-based games that focus on peer pressure and belonging. Discussions should acknowledge problems and focus on findings joint solutions.

**Suggested activities:**
ISSUE-BASED GAME: Belonging to the group
DISCUSSION: Exploring the nature of friendship, belonging and peer pressure

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**WORKSHOP 9**

**Problem-solving:**
The aim of this workshop is to allow the participants to work together to solve common problems. Session should include warm up games and issue-based games that focus on working together cooperatively and solving problems. Discussions should be based around how the need to belong can impact on how we treat others.

**Suggested activities:**
DISCUSSION: Problem solving
DISCUSSION: Island Utopia
ACTIVITY: Visit to the police assault course
ACTIVITY: Mission (im)possible
Final Session

The aim of the workshop is to celebrate the challenges and successes of the project. Participants should work jointly on the best way to celebrate and close the project in the final workshop. This can include a party or dinner or a more formal presentation session providing participants with a certificate for their participation in the project.

Final discussions should allow participants to reflect on the project, process and personal journeys that they have taken and to share lessons and learning with each other.
Acknowledgements

This toolkit was written by Maartje van Amersfoort, Marijn Visser and Talmud Bah. The philosophy and activities were developed over a number of years by young people, youth workers and police at the Second Wave youth arts centre in southeast London, UK and the Alouan youth centre in Gouda, the Netherlands.

More information can be found at: www.mycityrealworld.org