



TØNSBERG  
KOMMUNE

# Inviting street youth in developing outreach work

How can participating practice be involved in the meeting between social workers  
and youth in at-risk urban environments?

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MEDVIRKNINGS  
AGENTENE



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# Hello! Happy to be here 😊

My name is Arve Howlid

Outreach worker in Tønsberg, a mid-size Norwegian city,  
approx. 50.000 inhabitants

25 years experience from low threshold youth work

Part-time student: Master of public health, now working on Mater-thesis

How can participating practice be involved in the meeting between social workers and youth in at-risk urban environments?



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The outreach service carried out a participation process towards a marginalized youth group. This provided awareness about both the youth group and the outreach work at the regions most central bus hub, at the city shopping mall. The youth group clearly appreciated being taken seriously.



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By using renowned process methods towards young people in the streets, the outreach service became more relevant for these youngsters. Subsequently, we received several inquiries from youth in this area seeking our help and advice. Consequently, outreach services should do more of this.



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## **Outreach work.**

The service provider that conducted this inquiry, based on a RAR-report

## **Rapid Assessment and Response (RAR)**

The method pinned out the bus hub area when looking into teens alcohol and drug use

We needed focus on this area. We used methods for collecting data from this urban street environment. This is what I will highlight.



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Cooperation with youth is voluntary, based on informal contact, and the service has no decision-making authority or control of circumstances

RAR is cooperation in gathering overview and knowledge about a topic, which leads to an action plan based on existing local services

Three methods came to be used in this process:\*

- Reframing
- Brainstorming
- Blueprint

\* Resources:

[www.servicedesigntools.org](http://www.servicedesigntools.org)

[www.prosessverktøy.no](http://www.prosessverktøy.no)



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- One of the highlighted activities from this action plan was, for the outreach service, to spend more time around the central bus station. Situated in city center, at the regions largest shopping mall.
- All participants in the RAR-process emphasized this area, both youth in this area, youth NGOs, police, childcare services and shopping mall security.





As we are going more into this area, we needed to look into:

- How do we perform at the bus hub today?
- How could we find out?
- Who are going to tell us?
- Why would they participate?
- We did this quite scientifically, and also published an academic article.





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Reframing is a few minutes discussion of one specific core opinion of some theme

Core opinion:  
outreach on  
the bus hub

*"The outreach workers has good contact with youth at the bus hub"*

New core opinion

Opinion supported by: ???

Opinion are false because: ???

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A brainstorming is not a therapeutic conversation – differs from social work. This can be challenging.

We opened for an oral process, where we were to conduct and take notes

### The brainstorming process:

- Fairly conventional
- 45 min



The theme of the meeting was specifically:  
"We need Your help to do our job at the best."



The conductor initiates, guides and pulls participants further and summarizes findings

From focus on practicalities, to more in-depth themes

We wrote on the flipchart so our informers could see what we noted.





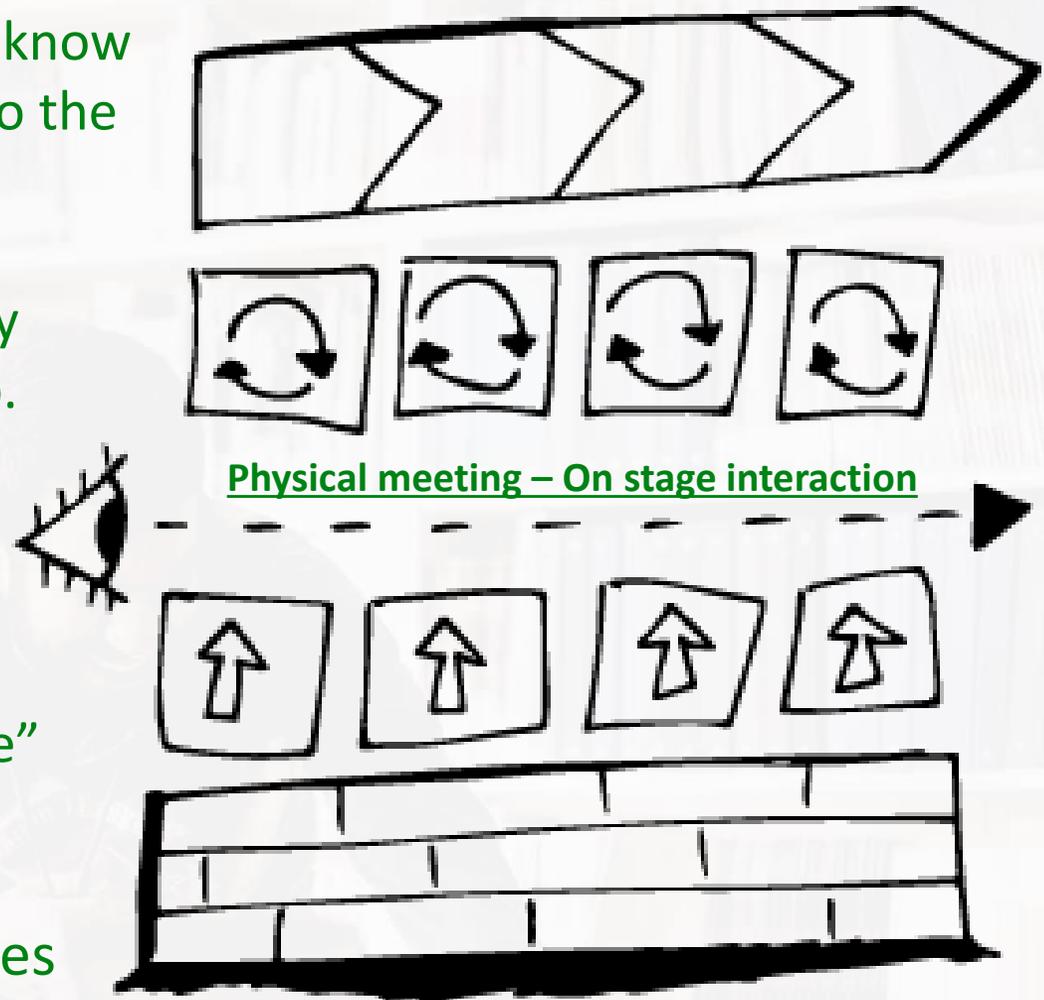
Blueprint  
looks into  
the whole  
process of  
one physical  
meeting

How customer get to know  
your service. What do the  
youth see.

Customer activity  
What do they do.

“Behind the scene”  
activities

Institutional supportive resources



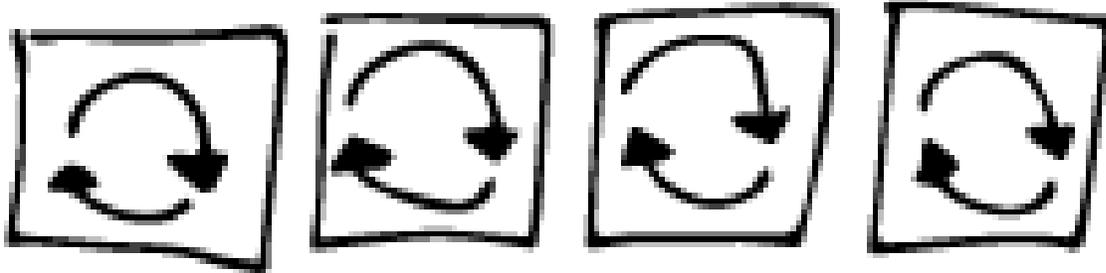
Physical meeting – On stage interaction



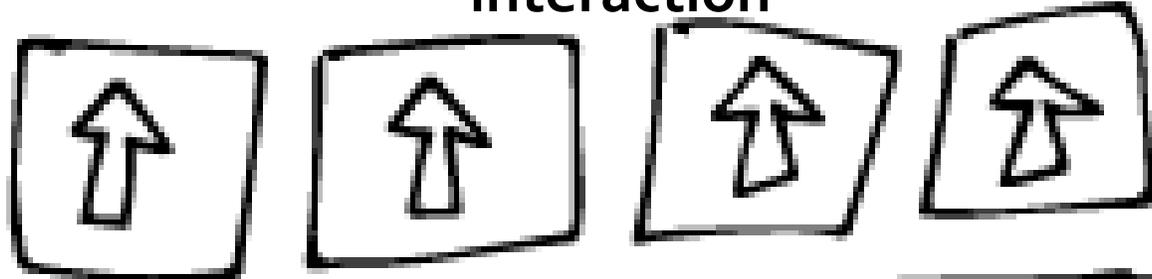
How customer get to  
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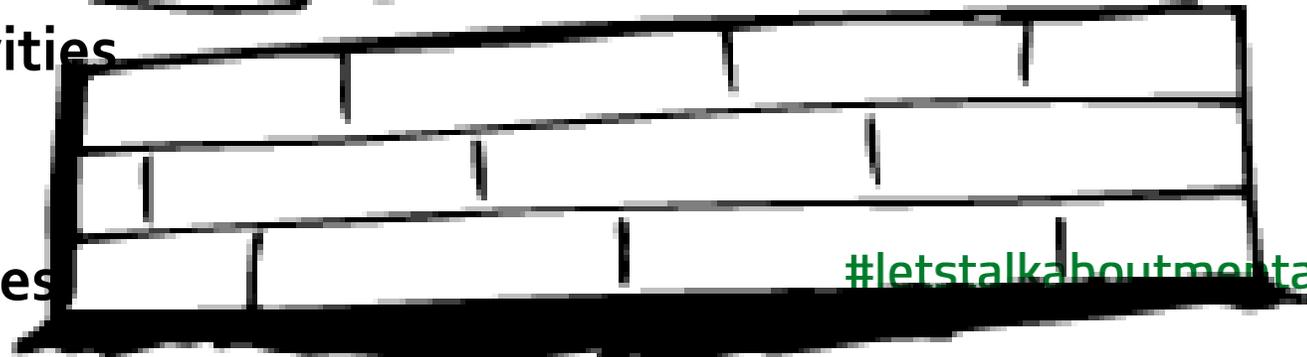
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Physical meeting – On stage  
interaction



Behind the  
scene activities



Blueprint looks into  
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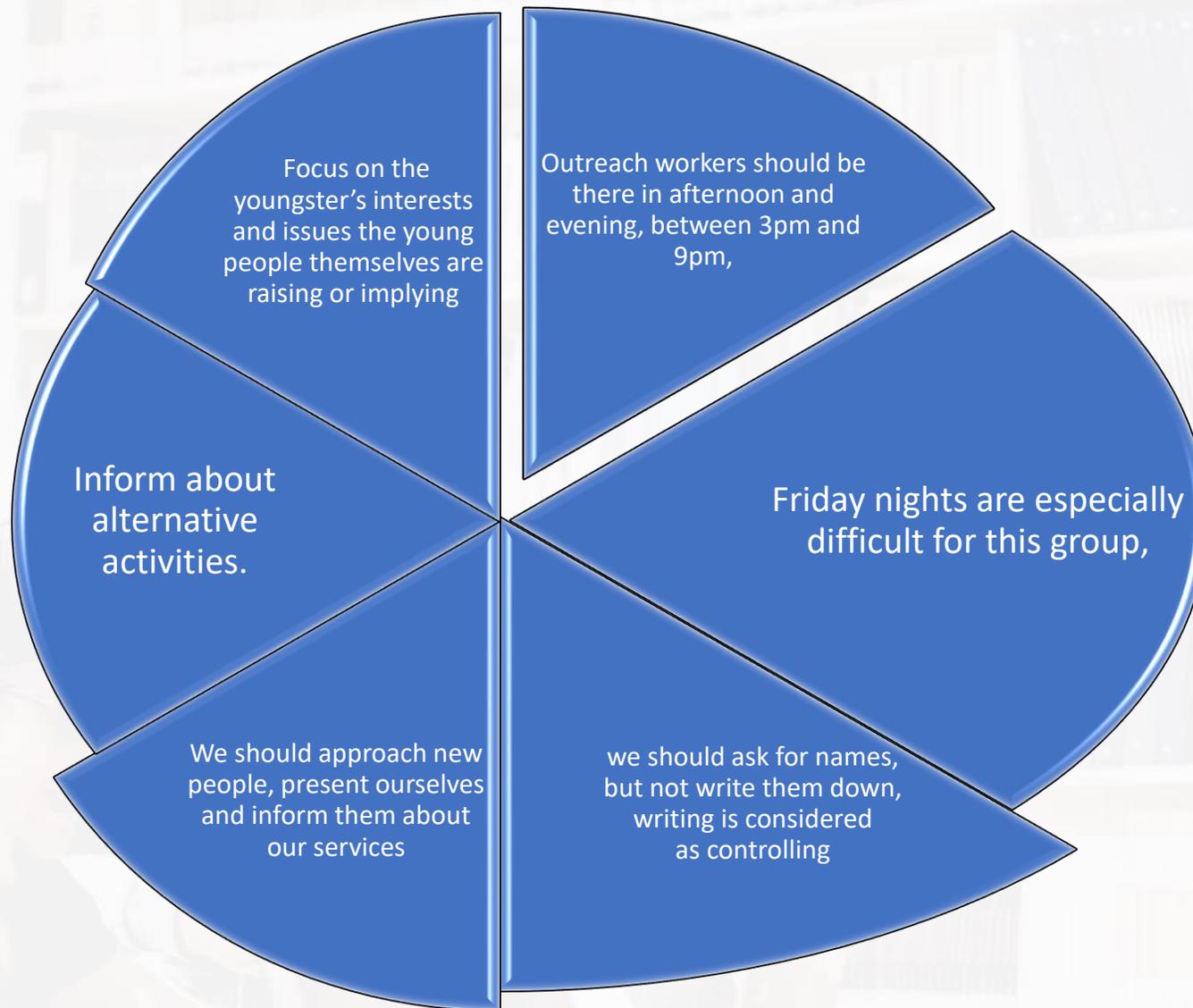


Institutional supportive resources

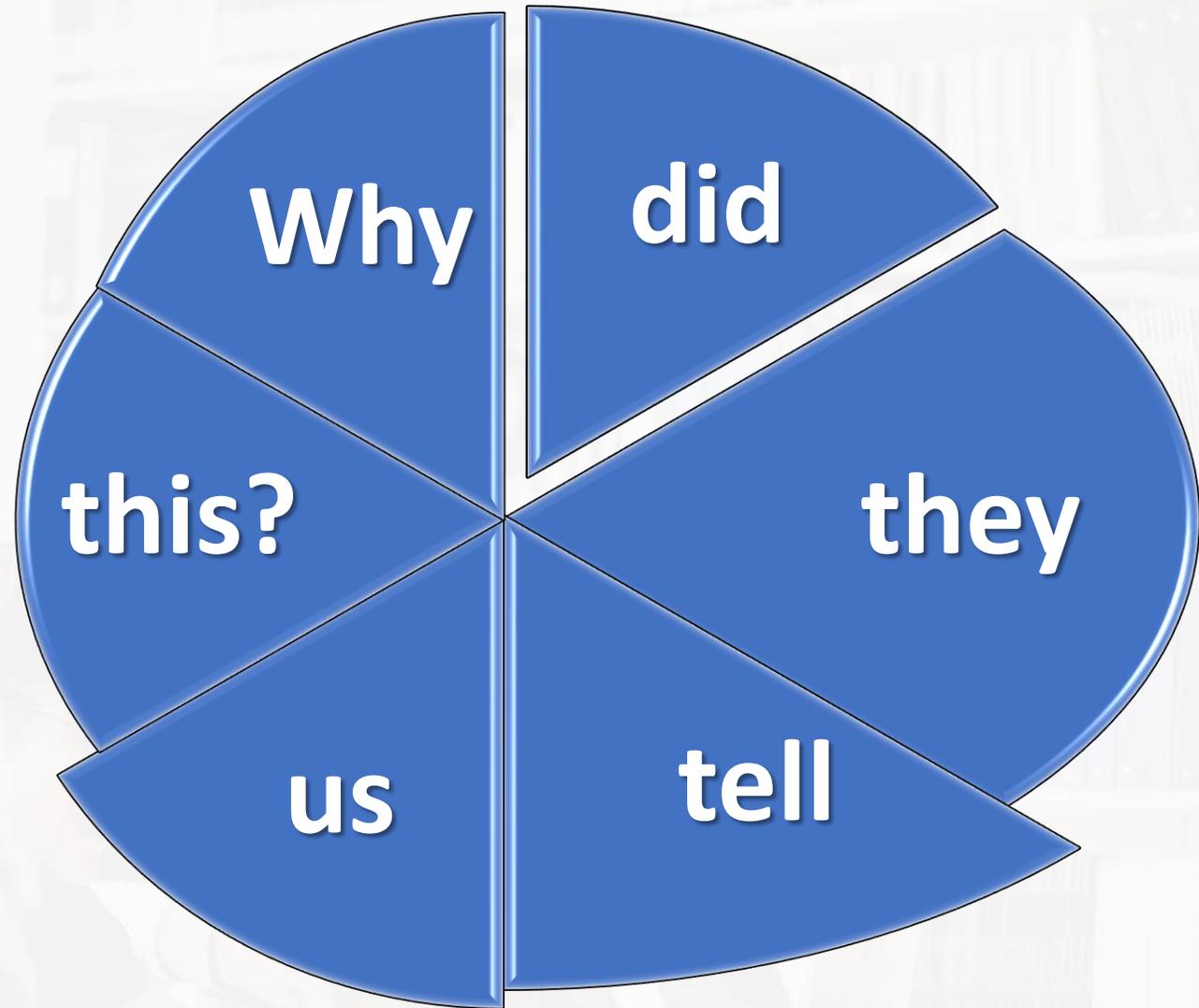
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**Outcome:**  
Posted on  
Facebook later  
same afternoon  
with thanks



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“Don’t just sit there! Do something!”

*The core of social work?*



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What's wrong with this?

“Don't just sit there! Do something!”



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What if you turn it around?

“Don’t just do something! Sit there!”

The core of letting people take control?



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The invitation is a key part of involving youth.

- From this unstructured place (the bus hub) we most often invite young people just ahead of an arrangement.
- We went there a few hours before the planned brainstorm-meeting. We got to talk with three youngsters about this. They said: “Post the invitation on Snapchat!”
- Then they looked at my colleague and me, two middle aged men, and they offered to post it on Snapchat themselves.





## «Can you let go of control? Don't just do something...»

- The design and distribution of the invitation was beyond our control, it was “taken over”. This felt strange, but it felt right.
- The invitation was posted by some who had an interest of their own in the meeting. This is an example of empowering practice.
- And, the youth does this Snapchat-thing better than me!





# «What is your superpower?»

- When meeting some youth out in the streets – you should always look for their superpowers.
- When you release the youngsters superpowers – you may have found Your superpower in youth work!





# Empowerment

- Active involvement in spreading the invitation is to be understood as empowerment. Empowerment is both a goal, a central value, and a resource in working on health issues.
- By exploring adolescents' experience of the outreach service, and publishing findings the same evening, these young people got an opportunity to influence their own lives and surroundings.





# Empowerment

- Empowerment is crucial in all youth work.
- A 12 year old kid could be a child playing with friends, a 20 year old may be a full time worker, student, parent, your electrician.
- From 12 to 20 you go from being controlled, to having control.
- Through this process everyone needs a variety of mental support.
- We must support this process, strengthen their vital relations.





## What did they say about themselves?

- They describes an inclusive environment, with several negative traits.
- Use of drugs and self-harm is referred to as common.
- They wanted the outreach workers to intervene in quarrels, drama and rumours, contribute to positive atmosphere, and make them smile.
- One said they often greet each other negatively: "you look ugly today"
- The group confirmed that such words puts them in a bad mood.
- They wanted our help stopping this bad language habits.





## **...later, the same evening.**

- Later the same evening, as the idea buzzing took place, we met other adolescence at the bus station who wanted a similar process, but with threats between youth as a theme.
- We thus experience the process as meaningful for the entire youth group of this area.
- Obviously someone had been talking about it.





## ...later, the same spring.

- One month later, the outreach services received a request from students at the University of South-Eastern Norway (USN). The students wanted to meet youth for a group discussion. The topic chosen by the students was violence between adolescents.
- We conducted a similar invitation towards youth and experienced an comparable séance.





## ...later, the same year.

- We received several inquiries from youth in this area seeking our help and advice, on different issues.
- Housing, school, work, friends, mental health, drugs, family...
- The outreach service by this participating process apparently became more significant for these youngsters.
- Marginalized youth had gained a place to seek advice.





After completing this process, several thoughts came to mind.

It is obvious that thoroughly planning provides a "roadmap" that makes this processes manageable and transparent.

Planning, and be open about your plan, is important.





To run a good process for these young people, we also preformed internal processes at our workplace before and after.

For our process the combination of methods seems crucial.

We who work in this area by this became more aware of what we are taking part in. The processes helped us to see both the youth, ourselves and the area more nuanced. And we could talk about it.





What is your role,  
when asking your target group?

What's in it for them?

Why should they talk to you?



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Thank you!



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