

A RESEARCH REPORT:

A COLD BATH?

ENGAGING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE CITY CENTRE OF BATH



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Executive Summary

The overall vision of the Steering Group was to *commission Action Research, in order to build a clearer picture of the need and to suggest ways of addressing the issues* in relation to young people (YP) in Bath, especially in the city centre.

Research Procedure

The research team engaged in several different methods of qualitative research in order to collect data to make recommendations on how the Christian community can serve YP in the city.

<p>Face-to-face Conversations</p> <p>Used to engage with yp in an informal manner to gain honest opinion</p>	<p>Focus Groups</p> <p>Used as an opportunity to bring clarity to data collected in early research</p>	<p>Interviews</p> <p>Used to gain views and thoughts of youth leaders from across the city on issues</p>
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Summary of Key Findings

On the collecting together the information gathered through primary research, the research team was able to identify several trends in the data that were used in order to inform the recommendations made later in the report. In the table below there is a summary of the key findings from each method of research.

Face-to-face Conversations	Focus Groups	Interviews
Spaces to hang out	Employment & Finance	Peer Pressure
Boredom	Exams & Schooling	Identity
Exam Stress	Drugs & Alcohol	Safe Spaces

Recommendations

We are making 3 key recommendations:

- Provision of Safe Spaces
- Support with Career Mapping
- Provision of Detached, relational work



Safe Spaces



Career Mapping



Detached Work

It is our belief that the most effective way of taking forward the recommendations above is through the establishment of a **Bath Youth Partnership** that could provide a focal point for the recommendations of this research and other youth work related developments.

1.0 Introduction

In this section we will introduce the background to the report, as well as the aims & purpose and research objectives.

1.1 Background

This Research Project resulted from discussions between a number of Church and Project leaders who are based in and/or are serving the city centre. Those involved were aware that there are a large number of young people (yp) who come into the city centre from outlying areas, particularly on Friday and Saturday evenings. The group was concerned that many of these yp engage in casual sex and other destructive behaviours, as well as consuming alcohol. A 2001 study into 'Drug use and Young People' in Bath & North-East Somerset (BANES) found that 78% of those aged between 11 and 19 years had had an alcoholic drink and that 16% of 11 to 15 year olds had tried an illegal drug in the last year (Jones & Starkey).

A Steering Group was formed to look at the issue of young people in the city centre and the Group commissioned this research (see Appendix 1 for further details).

1.2 Aims & Purpose

The overall vision of the Steering Group was to *commission Action Research, in order to build a clearer picture of the need and to suggest ways of addressing the issues* in relation to yp in Bath. When this became an obvious option the following aims for the research were devised (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Aims of the Research

To identify the needs and opportunities relating to young people (11 – 18 yrs.) resident in or visiting the city centre, especially in the evening (7-12pm)

In order to achieve the aims set out above, some research objectives (Appendix 4) were produced to bring greater precision to the practical implications of the project and research.

The focus of this research has been on engagement with yp in order to gain their perspective on a number of issues, outlined later in this document, with the objective of producing this Final Report & Presentation to be distributed to Churches and other Youth Projects in Bath, especially those in the city centre.

1.3 Bath City – A Profile

'Bath is a compact city, with many of its facilities and attractions contained within an easily walkable centre' (Complete University Guide, 2013). The city is a world heritage site and a major centre for tourism. It is also home to two Universities.

According to the 2011 census the overall population of Bath and North East Somerset (BANES) was 176,016 with around 38,300 people aged 10 – 24. In the geographical area which was the focus for this research, over 2,800 people aged 10 – 24 were resident; however many of those we spoke to had travelled in from other areas of Bath.

Central Youth Work Provision

There are 2 local authority 'youth hubs' serving Bath's young people providing 12 hours of open 'universal' services. There are currently x6 full-time employed Church Youth Workers in the city centre. Voluntary workers at Churches vary from 4-5 up to 15-20 depending on the size of Church.

Appendix 3 has further population data, as well as information about youth provision in the city.

2.0 Methodology

This chapter will outline the research methods used, including topics such as question selection and how research was practically carried out.

The bulk of the research has been undertaken via face-to-face interviews and conversations. Members of the research team met informally with YP on the streets of Bath and entered into conversations about provision, needs and places to 'hang-out'. This was followed up by a number of Focus Groups at different educational facilities in the city, as well as at detached youth work organisations. Interviews were used to gauge the opinions of and work being carried out by local churches and statutory bodies. This was then combined with secondary, 'paper-based' research gathered online.

2.1 Question Selection

Question selection was an area of the project which both the steering group and research team felt was vital to get right from the beginning of the practical research. Much of our research was going to be built upon the questions we asked and the manner in which we asked them. We initially entered into discussion about this within a meeting with the steering group looking both at what the research aims were and how we felt YP might best engage with the questions asked.

The research team was aware of the potential need to make adjustments to the questions through initial feedback from conversations with YP. Both Adam Rush and Dave Wiles agreed that a very slight rewording of some of the questions and a reordering of them enabled YP to better engage and to provide fuller, more informative data.

The 'reworked' & final questions were as follows:

- **What things do you feel are stressful for YP in Bath?**
- **Where do you and/or your friends normally 'hang out' when in the city centre?**
- **Is there anything, you believe, that Youth Workers could do in order to serve YP?**

For more information on how these questions were then adapted and used in our interviews & focus groups please see Appendix 5.

2.2 Research Procedure



We used three major methods of research in order to collect data. *For further information of each research procedure used please see Appendix 6.*

2.3 Participants

Research was carried out in Bath city centre. It involved face-to-face conversations with over 100 young people on the streets, four focus groups of young people from different backgrounds and numerous interviews with Church and Project leaders from the city.

3.0 Findings

In this section we will attempt to communicate the main trends we have found throughout our research. Our results have been broken down into our 3 research methods and the Key Issues from each. We will use these in order to make our recommendations in Chapter 4.

3.1 Summary of Key Issues



3.2 Findings – Face-to-face Conversations

Our fieldwork has revealed that in general YP engaged really well when approached by the research team. This has underlined the importance of detached work as a provision for YP in Bath City centre.

Spaces to hang out in were clearly a key issue for YP during this method of research. Quantitatively speaking over 80% of those YP we spoke to mentioned space when asked for recommendations on what youth workers could provide for them in response to the issues raised. **Boredom** was the second most raised issue by YP during our face-to-face Conversations on the streets of Bath. This seemed a major cause of behaviours such as drinking and drug taking in local parks – it was common to hear YP use phrases such as ‘well, we have nothing better to do...’

Perhaps surprisingly we also found **exam stress** to be a major issue for YP when we spoke to them on the streets of Bath. Parents and the influence of certain types of schooling played a primary role in conversation.

3.3 Findings – Focus Groups

Within the context of Focus Groups we found the yp we spoke to easy to engage with, generally positive in their interaction with the research team and enthusiastic about the opportunity to voice their opinions and be heard.

Employment and finance was an issue discussed at length in all four focus groups conducted. YP felt that even when jobs were available in the city that they were difficult to attain due to a lack of experience and an inability to effectively write CVs. There was a lack of support for YP in attempting to find employment. Closely linked to this issue was **exams and schooling**. Many felt that there simply wasn't enough clear practical support in school or college to help them cope with the demands of schoolwork and exams.

The issue of **drugs and alcohol** did not come up as much during our initial research on the streets of Bath, however it was more of an issue for those we spoke to during focus groups. They felt that Bath had a serious drug culture

and that this led to them feeling intimidated in many of the cities parks due to others taking drugs recreationally. Alcohol consumption seemed to be more approved of than drug taking as a general rule.

3.4 Findings – Interviews

Interviews with Church and Project Leaders from the city gave an interesting insight into how those working with YP on a daily basis view the issues. Many of the leaders interviewed were able to reveal some of what they thought to be the 'root-causes' of behaviour as well as identifying many of the behaviours themselves.

The issue of the 'groups' or even 'tribes' YP associate themselves with was one that was felt could inform a lot of the behaviours we saw regularly during the research. The idea of **peer pressure** and need for acceptance in these groups was a common one pointed to by leaders in informing anti-social behaviour such as alcohol consumption and drug-taking. This was closely linked to **identity** issues which were referenced in some form or another by almost every leader interviewed. The premise being that many of the YP that they work with are attempting to figure out who they are and in this process are seeking acceptance in a number of differing ways.

At every stage of our research the problem of a lack of **space** for YP was raised in some way. What was communicated strongly in this stage of data collection was the need for relationship and that there would ideally be some form of intentional youth work happening within designated youth spaces in order to see genuine positive change in the causes of anti-social behaviours.

4.0 Recommendations

In undertaking this research over the past 6 months we have gained a vast and varied insight into the views and opinions of YP specifically found in Bath city centre. We therefore make our recommendations based not only on empirical findings, but also in light of the many interactions we have had with YP, and with leaders in the city. We hope that the recommendations found below will provide you with the beginnings of a framework for better, more informed interaction with YP in a way that brings hope to our city.

In short we are making 3 key recommendations. These are:

- Provision of Safe Spaces
- Support with Career Mapping
- Provision of Detached, relational work



Safe Spaces



Career Mapping



Detached Work

4.1 Safe Spaces

'There are no places to go when it rains... at least none that are free.'

Participant – City Centre Café Focus Group

'I constantly see groups from schools taking drugs in the parks. I don't want to be around it so I usually hang out in Bristol instead.'

Participant – Riverside Focus Group

'We have found that young people struggle to find spaces to hang out. There can often be an aggressive response to groups hanging out in the city from the residents and police which makes the situation worse.'

Christian Youth Worker

If there is one area in which YP feel neglected in Bath it is that of having nowhere to 'hang out' with mates. Time and time again we were told of the frustration of YP having limited things to do and no dry, warm spaces to go to when it rains or is cold.

YP value safe, warm space and they are rightly aware that their movements and 'ownership' of community space are restricted and certainly disproportionate to their numbers. Oona King (Chair, Make Space Youth Review) has said, "It's time we decided, as a society, whether we support teenagers or ignore them. We have to build young people back into communities. Not doing this costs us billions dealing with the consequences of anti-social behaviour, crime and violence and even more in the emotional consequences of a dispossessed generation of teenagers."

It is recommended that:

- **Projects and Churches explore the possibility of safe spaces for young people, with other agencies to promote the idea that Bath might become the first UK town to rectify the injustice of unequal access to space experienced by young people**

4.2 Career Mapping

'Schools have been let down by the Department for Education, poorly prepared for the transition to their new role'

Steve Stewart – Chairman, Careers England

'If you want to get a job you need experience. Otherwise you have to have a connection to someone who can offer you work on the basis of trust. It's difficult to find work.'

Participant – St Michael's Focus Group

'It's clear that nationally driven attempts to tackle youth unemployment aren't working. Many young people tell us that... finding a scheme that's right for them is a real challenge.'

David Simmonds – Chair of LGA's Children & Young People's Board

The face of careers advice and support in Schools is changing. The government has let down our YP and this has been reflected in our results. We were surprised that so many YP mentioned the stress of school, exams and careers when approached, however as the project went on this simply became a trend that was difficult to ignore. Local Churches and Projects have a major opportunity to step up and engage with YP in an issue that is clearly extremely important to them. YP are not being adequately supported elsewhere and it is therefore imperative that we seek to address this issue.

One particular group of YP suggested that they had very little prejudice in terms of where this support comes from. They would happily go wherever there was effective, well-informed advice on offer. The key issue here is results. If we can support YP in their efforts to map careers and find employment in a way that provides results, not only will they feel more connected to society as a whole; they will also contribute in a positive way to the city.

It is recommended that:

- **Projects & Churches look seriously at opportunities to provide YP with careers advice. This advice could include issues such as general school education; help with revision & exams; practical help with CVs, job applications & interviews; as well as mapping out academic and vocational routes to employment for YP. Partnership with existing youth employment organisations should play an important role here.**

4.3 Detached, relational work

'Any new ministry or project would need to be heavily relationship based. It would need to involve genuinely caring for young people and getting to know them as a starting point.'

Christian Youth Worker

'It is vital for youth workers to connect more effectively with young people.'

Christian Youth Worker

The real value in our research, besides discovering some of the issues YP view as currently being important in the city and hearing their suggestions for how Youth Workers might best serve them, was the opportunity to engage with them in various ways.

The research team was constantly amazed by the positive interaction with YP during almost every part of the project. Evidently, giving YP a voice and the ability to speak about what was important to them made them feel genuinely valued and has been of enormous benefit to the team as they have looked to plan their own youth work activities.

Understanding the way YP feel and think has shed light on many of their actions and enabled far more informed planning of programmes for the research team and it would be foolish at best to simply stop this conversation here.

During our interviews with leaders from across the city we found an overwhelming response that working with YP is always most effective out of a place of relationship and trust with that YP.

It is recommended that:

- **Youth workers place high priority on working with YP in 'detached' environments. Providing real value for youth workers who will feel better informed of the patterns of behaviour of YP and their needs & for YP who feel more valued when actually listened to. Consistency should be regarded as highly important as this supports building strong relationships and trust.**

4.4 Recommendations – the next steps

It is our belief that the most effective way of taking forward the recommendations above is through the establishment of a **Bath Youth Partnership** that could provide a focal point for the recommendations of this research and other youth work related developments.

We recognise that although individuals and single organisations can undertake the recommendations above; partnership between organisations makes them far more viable in the long-term and should increase their effectiveness.

With this in mind the steering group and action research team have planned a meeting of interested parties for Friday October 18th from 11am – 1 pm at the Riverside Youth Hub (York Place, London Road, Bath, BA1 6AE). If you would like to book a place at this meeting please RSVP to Adam Rush by emailing adam_rush89@hotmail.co.uk.

5.0 References

Jones, M., & Starkey, F. (2001), Drug Use and Young People, in Bath & North East Somerset. University of the West of England.

Wiles, D. (2007) Bath Night Life (Research Summary) FYT

http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/census_2011_-_ward_profile_-_abbey.pdf

http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/census_2011_-_ward_profile_-_kingsmead.pdf

<http://www.bathyfc.co.uk/images/Youth-cafe-website-map.jpg>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-23730015>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-20452398>

<http://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/cities/bath/>

6.0 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Initial steering group

The initial Steering Group comprised:

Rev'd Rob Trickey (Minister, Hay Hill Baptist Church)

Dave Twine (Community Worker, Manvers Street Baptist Church)

Luke Brightwell (Youthworker with Bath YFC/St Michael's, Twerton)

Dave Wiles (BANES Youthworker)

Adam Rush (Youthworker, St Michael's Without)

The Group appointed Dave Wiles to undertake the research, assisted by Adam Rush.

The research was funded by a generous grant from the Chrysalis Fund, and formally commissioned by Hay Hill Baptist Church.

Appendix 2 – Research Objectives

In order to achieve the Aims & Purpose of the project, some research objectives were produced to bring greater precision to the practical implications of the project and research. These were as follows:

- To engage with young people, in order to determine their concerns and their ideas for addressing these;
- To build up a picture of current provision, including YFC's Youth Café;
- To identify other interested parties (e.g. church-based or LA youth workers);
- To engage with statutory bodies and charities;
- To interview Church and Project Leaders within the City Centre, with a view to enlisting their support for future development of the project;
- To research and apply for funding for any longer-term development;
- To produce an interim report after 3 months, a final report at the end of the six-month period, summarising the research and providing recommendations for further action.

Appendix 3 – Bath City Centre Profile

Ward Populations

Name	Overall	Aged 10 – 15	Aged 16 – 25
Abbey	5,670	102	1181
Kingsmead	5,516	186	1356
Totals	11,186	288	2,537

These figures are representative of the areas in which the majority of our research was carried out in the city centre.

BANES

Overall Population: 176, 016

Aged 10 – 15: 11,639

Aged 16 – 24: 27,206

Our research however was focused on both those YP living in and coming into the city centre. The population statistics above show the figures for Bath and North East Somerset rather than simply the city centre.

Bath Population (2001)

Total: 83,992

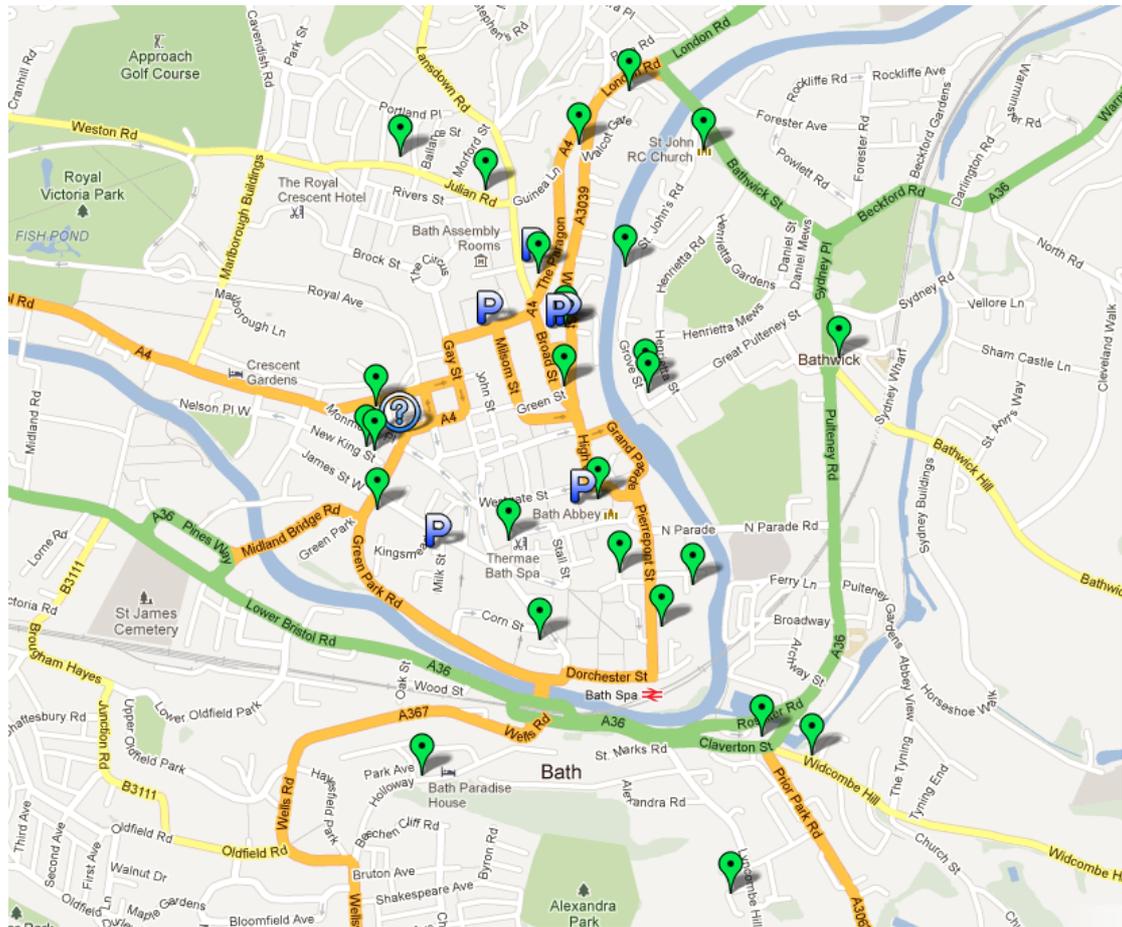
Central Youth Work Provision

There are currently 2 local authority 'youth hubs' serving Bath's young people providing 12 hours of open 'universal' services. The rest of the provision is targeted youth work and therefore not open to all YP. They employ the equivalent of 5 full-time youth workers (x1 full-time & x5 part-time).

City Centre Church Youth Workers

There are currently x6 full-time employed Church Youth Workers in the city centre. Voluntary workers at Churches vary from 4-5 up to 15-20 depending on the size of Church.

Appendix 4 – City Centre Map



<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NEXUS Walcot Methodist 2. St Swithin's 3. St John's, Bathwick 4. St Mary's Catholic 5. Christ Church 6. Bethel Chapel 7. Hay Hill Baptist 8. Bath YFC (Hay Hill Baptist) 9. Bath YMCA 10. New Testament Church of God (Bath YMCA) 11. Stepping Stones (Bath YMCA) 12. MENUNITED (Slug & Lettuce) 13. St Mary's, Bathwick 14. St Michael's Without 15. Bath Central URC 16. Living Springs MCC (Bath Central URC) 17. Bath Elim 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 18. Holy Trinity Queen Square 19. Living Hope (Percy Community Centre) 20. Redeemed Christian Church of God (PCC) 21. Bath Abbey 22. Bath HOTS 23. Bath Citadel Salvation Army 24. St John's Hospital/St Michael's Within 25. Genesis 26. Manvers Gospel Hall 27. St John's Catholic 28. Manvers Street Baptist Church 29. Bath City Church 30. Widcombe Baptist Church 31. St Matthew's <p>City Centre: Street Pastors, New Life Gospel Outreach evangelism, Save Our City (Worship on the Streets)</p>
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Appendix 5 – Research Questions

Three main questions were devised and taken to the streets of Bath to be used by the research team involved in this type of primary data collection:

- **Where do you and/or your friends normally 'hang out' when in the city centre?**
- **What are the main issues/concerns for YP in Bath currently?**
- **Is there anything, you believe, that Churches could do in order to serve YP?**

These questions were then revised based on conversations with YP and those found in section 2.1 were used.

Question selection for Focus Groups & Interviews

Throughout the process of carrying out Focus Groups and Interviews we intentionally decided to keep the questions very similar to those asked in our initial round of primary research. This provided much more opportunity for direct comparison between data and allowed us easily identify overlap in data collected. In essence both these methods of research were used in order to bring some clarity and focus to the information already gained from street work and therefore we wanted to be able to easily draw out were it contrasted.

The major difference in our methodology here was the manner in which the research team engaged with those involved. There was a much greater sense of 'leading' from the research team and they would ask additional questions were they felt it was necessary. This 'leading' was kept to a minimum as we were keen not to bring our bias to the results however in focus groups and interviews were certain topics had not been mentioned, either to affirm or reject them, the researcher was encourage to do so.

In interviews with Church and Project leaders we adapted the questions by including the term 'in your opinion' at the beginning of each. This technique was used to enable those being interviewed to freely express opinion rather than attempting to second-guess at what YP may or may not think.

Appendix 6 – Research Procedure: Methods Used

As indicated in section 2.2, we used three methods of primary data collection. Our methodology for each is outlined below.

Face-to-face Conversations

The action research team went out in teams of two people and approached YP on the streets of Bath. This method was aimed at keeping conversation and interaction informal. The research also had a much more 'detached' feel at this stage as there was little affiliation to an organisation by nature of the surroundings. The focus of the team was to gain honest opinions from YP and to allow those being asked to lead conversation as much as possible.

Focus Groups

Four focus groups were carried out with YP from differing backgrounds in the city. On these occasions the researcher was given more freedom to lead conversation when it stalled or if a topic that was prevalent in the face-to-face conversations didn't come up naturally. We used this as an opportunity to affirm or reject some of the answers given at the initial research stage to bring clarity to our results.

Interviews

Interviews with Church and Project leaders were carried out. These were face-to-face and usually lasted for between 45 minutes to an hour. These were much more directed by the research team as they sought to cross-reference information gathered from YP with the thoughts, opinions and experiences of leaders in the city.