

# Nurture and youth work: aiding transition

Fiona Durrant

YMCA George Williams College, 199 Freemasons Rd, London E16 3PY, UK • Contact details: [Fiona.durrant@hotmail.com](mailto:Fiona.durrant@hotmail.com) • Published on 28 April 2017

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## ABSTRACT

In recent years, nurture groups (NGs) have maintained a positive growth whereas targeted youth work in schools has diminished. Transition into secondary education is a crucial time for a young person, and this research examines the crossovers between youth work and nurture groups, exploring how these interventions support transition for young people.

Literature shows overlaps between nurture and youth work, although neither specifically mentions the other and both remain independent. The research covers three key themes: the value in using NGs to support secondary transition, the specialist nature of NGs, and the overlaps between NGs and youth work, defined by the National Youth Agency as: "...the science of enabling young people to believe in themselves and build positive futures... Youth work takes a holistic approach... its starts where they are at" (National Youth Agency, 2017). Youth work takes place in communities and schools, and "offers young people safe spaces to explore their identity, experience decision-making, increase their confidence". Youth work is governed by a code of ethical conduct, released in 2004, that states: "The purpose of youth work is to facilitate and support young people's growth through dependence to interdependence, by encouraging their personal and social development and enabling them to have a voice, influence and place in their communities and society" (National Youth Agency, 2004).

The research took a pragmatic, mixed methods approach and was undertaken with professionals from a wide range of disciplines with an interest in the transition to secondary schools; including youth workers, teachers, and CAMHS practitioners.

Findings suggest there are significant similarities between youth work and nurture, and transition from primary to secondary schools should be considered holistically alongside intervention work. Similarities are such that both sets of practitioners would benefit from sharing expertise and learning opportunities.

## INTRODUCTION

OFSTED reported in 2011 the value of nurture groups (NGs): for young people with challenging behaviour, saying they made "...a considerable difference to the behaviour and the social skills of the pupils" (Ofsted, 2011). This report recommends that local authorities consider NGs as an early intervention strategy, and while this evidence was compiled from primary schools, the value could translate into secondary education. There has been a focus in policy around transition for young people into secondary school and how this needs to be better supported (Evangelou et al., 2008). The Department for Education funded pupil premium summer schools for young people moving into Year 7 to bridge the gap for students who might need additional support for key skills such as numeracy and literacy (Department for Education, 2015).

It is well documented that children's brains undergo a secondary stage of development in adolescence (Dahl, 2004): "Children aged 11 and 12 are... moving out of childhood and into the teenage years, when they are expected to take on more adult responsibilities... school transition acts as a status passage that allows children to progress to a higher level of psychosocial maturity" (Symonds, 2015). Young people at this crucial stage of transition need more support than they have ever done at this time of austerity and concern about emotional wellbeing, when traditional school-based youth work with external youth workers providing weekly group work during the school day, that could have supported these young people has suffered extreme cuts (Unison, 2016).

## Literature review

NGs are designed to meet the needs of children with attachment issues; Bowlby highlights the importance of making intimate emotional bonds, and regards it as being "...a principle feature of effective personality functioning" (Bowlby, 1988). The key thinking is the caregiver, namely the parent, holds a major role in the development of positive attachment, resulting in attachment behaviour. Bowlby explains attachment behaviour manifests in attaining or maintaining proximity to another individual who they perceive as being better able to cope with the world (Bowlby, 1988). This is what Bowlby calls a "secure base" (Bowlby, 1988); the place (person) where someone returns when there is a problem.

In youth work, the 'relationship' is the key to success with young people; the ethical principles of youth work include "Treat young people with respect", with a focus on valuing each individual (National Youth Agency, 2004). Martin states that "other professionals will normally form a client/professional relationship in order to deliver a service", however "In contrast, a youth worker will see the relationship as a primary goal" (Martin, 2009). The Positive for Youth report

recognises “young people need supportive relationships with people they trust to help them to develop their values and judgement...” (Cabinet Office & Department for Education, 2011). Sercombe notes that “youth work is a professional relationship in which the young person is engaged as the primary client” (Sercombe, 2010). This relationship may be compared to the importance of attachment theory within NGOs. However, there is an argument as to whether a professional can be classed as an attachment figure, and Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall (1978) suggest that temporary relationships can be considered as emerging attachments. Howes, however, recognised certain categories of adults in a child’s life could be seen as alternative attachment figures, including extended family, teachers, and child care providers (Prior & Glaser, 2006).

Teicher and colleagues in (Boxall & Lucas, 2010) suggest the way that a child is cared for can affect the size of brain areas and the maturation process. It has been widely accepted that early experiences affect brain development (Measer, 2005), however it is now recognised that the adolescent brain goes through a phase of growth as well. Music (2011) explains that the adolescent brain responds differently to that of adults, and when confronted with fear it is the amygdala that reacts, whereas in an adult it is the prefrontal cortex. Biological differences like this help explain why teenagers can appear to over-react and erupt. Music (2011) further claims that: “Those subjected to inconsistent care or trauma are likely to be more hypervigilant and less able to concentrate.” We can link this to attachment, and understand that young people who have not had adequate care as children may have attachment issues and this can affect brain development and behaviour.

It is during adolescence that young people start to explore new relationships; Music (2011) suggests these relationships are influenced by earlier experiences of intimacy: “Having a problematic relationship with parents increases the likelihood of depression and problems with peers.” Music (2011) recognises that: “while good relationships at home aid an adolescent’s transition into independence, peer groups also assert their own separate influences.” Therefore, work that takes place in peer groups – potentially NGOs – could have a big impact on a young person.

Difficulties associated with the start of adolescence are compounded for young people in the UK who usually move from primary to secondary school around this time: “...children undergo two transitions at this time – to secondary education and to being a teenager – and both must be considered and provided for” (Measer, 2005). The child moves from a school where they have worked closely with one or two teachers in their own classroom, to a large environment where they have many teachers and many classrooms. It must be challenging for a child who has already suffered with rejection or broken attachment, to lose what could be a secondary attachment or a secure base, likewise: “...there is evidence that children who fail to make a successful transition are more likely to become alienated from school and to truant or create difficulties and disruptions at school” (Measer, 2005).

To help overcome some of the problems associated with secondary transition, there are a number of ways in which they can be alleviated. Greenhough and Hughes (in Measer, 2005), talk about children living in “two different worlds” at home and school, and the value in exchanging

knowledge across these two worlds – if someone from school is interested in the other part of their life, it gives value for the child and helps them transition. One of the strategies is to have “adult, non-teacher, learning mentors [who] can be supportive for children showing signs of disengagement” (Measer, 2005). These mentors are “...not teachers, social workers or youth workers, but are trained in using strategies derived from these practitioners. They seek to act as a reliable adult for the child – one who stays around and can be trusted”.

This links to the style of work youth workers undertake, and traditionally there has been youth work taking place on school sites, although more recently Local Authority youth services have diminished. The Department of Education and Science (1991) highlighted that “youth work on school sites can make positive contributions to the personal and social education (PSE) of young people”. The same report recognises the benefit of having a room allocated that is designed to be more homely, but more importantly the report notes that the most important part of the work is “...the excellent relationships between youth workers and pupils”. There are, of course, other principles that are underlying to youth work – listed in the Ethical Conduct in Youth Work document are ethical and professional principles, including: respecting young people’s rights to make their own decisions, and contributing towards the promotion of social justice (National Youth Agency, 2004). Youth workers also follow a set of national occupational standards to accredit their JNC qualification – these include: promotion of inclusion and equality; facilitation of personal, social, and educational development; developing youth work strategy and practice (National Youth Agency, 2017).

## The link between nurture and youth work approaches

There are six principles of nurture: children’s learning is understood developmentally, the classroom offers a safe base, the development of wellbeing, language is a vital means of communication, all behaviour is communication, and recognising the importance of transition in children’s lives (Lucas, Insley, & Buckland, 2006). Looking at this list, there are key links to adolescents moving to secondary education – the most obvious being the recognition of transition as being important in a child’s life; NGOs could have a strong role to play in this transition period for young people.

Considering the “secure base” theory dictates that there should be four areas within a nurture room: home, work, kitchen, and play; thinking about the humanistic side, Eccleshall & Locke (2013) provide insight into the value of the workers, saying “...staff are the most important resource”, and “nurture leaders should... be able to form trusting bonds with the children and their nurture colleague”. This importance of the relationship is an obvious thread throughout youth work, transition work, and attachment.

The qualities suggested for a practitioner are: emotional resilience, care, compassion, warmth, kindness, gentle but also firm, and patience (Eccleshall & Locke, 2013). These qualities sound familiar to those expected of a youth worker, particularly considered alongside documents such as the NYA’S Ethical Conduct in Youth Work or the Youth Work National Occupational Standards (National Youth Agency, 2004, 2017); both of which reference qualities such as respect and trust

as being integral to effective and professional youth work. Considering transition, Eccleshall & Locke (2013) suggest identifying pupils in the summer term of Year 6: "Nurture groups can be particularly effective in managing the transition of vulnerable young people from the primary phase into the secondary phase" (Bennathan, Boxall & Colley, 2011), if NGs can support this transition then one has to question why more groups do not exist and why they are not compulsory.

The research looks at addressing the following key questions, with a view to providing practical support for practitioners in secondary nurture settings:

- What are the key similarities and differences between youth work and nurture provision, and is there merit in sharing learning?
- What are the qualities a practitioner needs for intervention work at the time of transition?

## METHODOLOGY

The research methodology was qualitative as it was primarily aligned to exploring attitudes, behaviour and experiences (Dawson, 2009). However, after consideration of aims and practicalities, it blended into a more pragmatic approach incorporating a short questionnaire with tick boxes and ranking systems to simplify data analysis (see Appendix 3) and in-depth, semi-structured interviews (See Appendix 2 for interview questions). "The point is that research is not about using some methods rather than others; it is about using any methods you know or imagine that are fit for your inquiring purpose" (Knight, 2002). The research was undertaken in May 2015 across Hampshire, with a pilot questionnaire administered to inform the main questionnaire, in which 57 professionals participated. The sample was a convenience one, in that it was drawn from professional colleagues. It was also a quota and purposive sample as it included individuals relevant to the topic from the following professional groupings: youth workers; teachers; school pastoral workers; CAMHS workers, and someone from senior leadership in a school.

The questions were a combination of tick boxes and open ended questions and the five participants for interviews were selected on the basis of their answers to open ended questions and their range of professions. The data were analysed and themed according to the research aims by creating a comparative analysis and through using coding across the interviews (see Appendix 4).

Using the six 'key ethics principles' from The Research Ethics Guide (Boddy et al., 2015), I drafted a Code of Ethics that included anonymity, confidentiality, your right, the final report, data protection, consent (see Appendix 1) and I went through this with each participant.

The findings for each of the nine questions in the questionnaire are presented first, followed by a summary of the themes that emerged from the interviews.

## FINDINGS

### Questionnaire findings

The majority of professionals (70%) were working within secondary education. 46 of those were working with 11 year olds, and the ages with the highest frequencies were between 11 and 16 (Figure 1 and Figure 2). Therefore the results from the questionnaire are generally focused around the ages of adolescence and transition.

Figure 1: The professional role of the 57 respondents

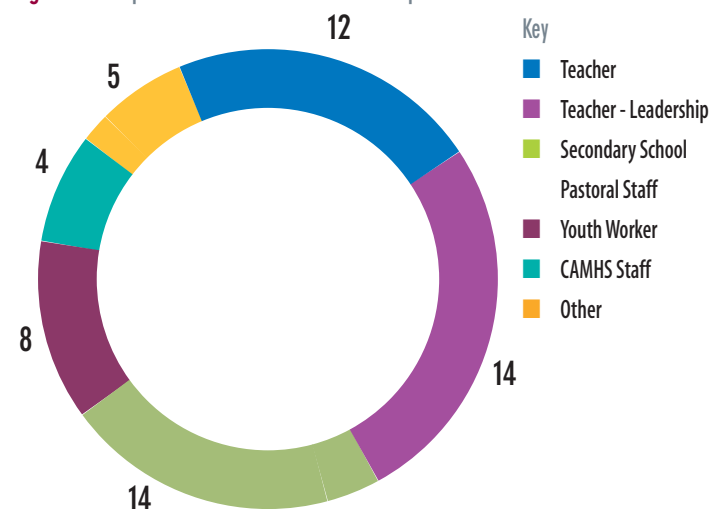
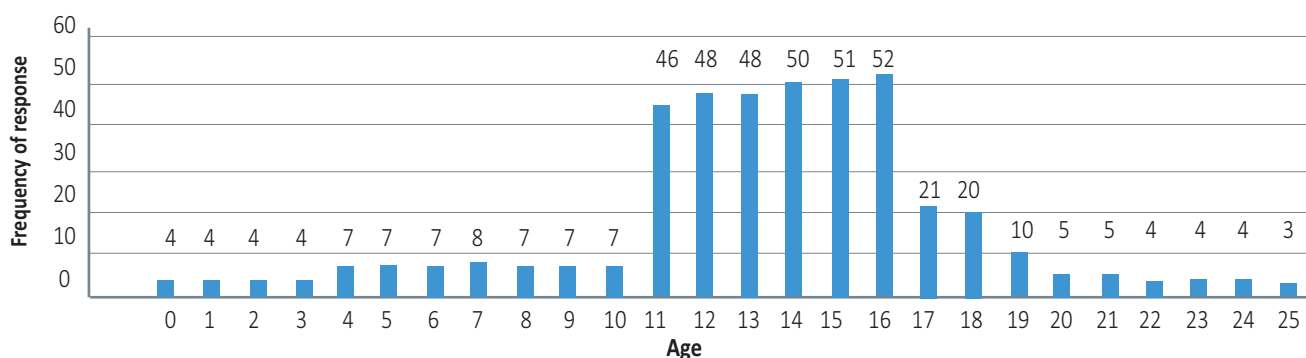
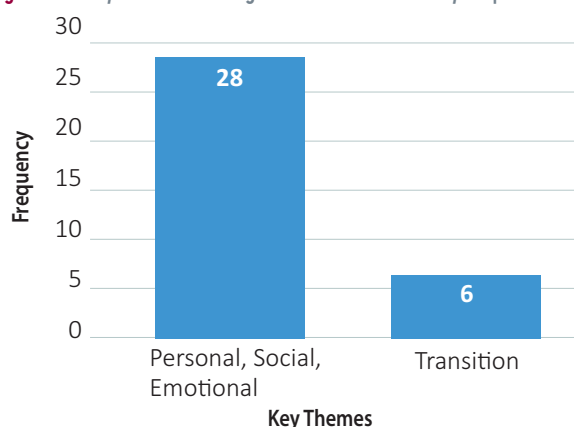


Figure 2: The age groups of young people the respondents worked with

Graph showing frequency of responses to Question 2 – What is the age group of young people you work within your professional capacity?



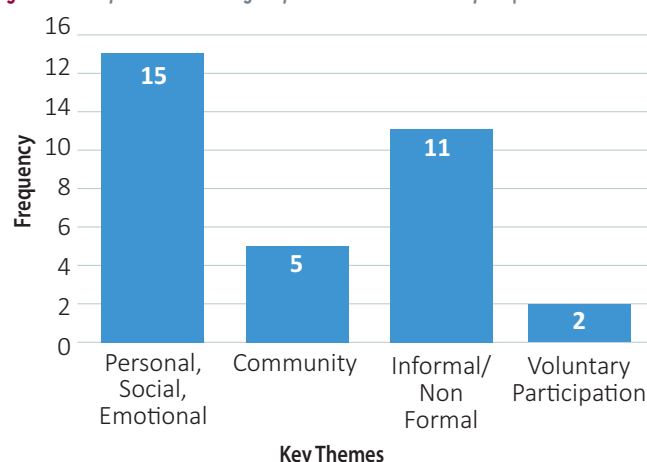
**Figure 3.1:** Key themes relating to nurture identified by respondents



More respondents could identify nurture with a key theme of ‘personal, social, emotional’ and a secondary theme of ‘transition’, than could identify themes in youth work (Figure 3.1 and Figure 3.2).

When asked to identify youth work, four themes emerged (Figure 3.2); the top theme was the same as that for nurture: ‘personal, social, emotional’, with 15 respondents making this link. Professionals were clearer on the purpose of nurture than youth work, and were more able to identify nurture.

**Figure 3.2:** Key themes relating to youth work identified by respondents



Participants were asked to consider to which intervention a list of traits belonged to. The list was written from a combination of nurture and youth work theory. Table 1 shows that most of these traits were aligned to both nurture and youth work. Highlighted in green is the highest scoring column for each trait, and the only one that didn’t come up as ‘both nurture and youth work’ was the element of the safe base. This trait is the only one that scored highest for being nurture provision only.

**Table 1:** Qualities/traits identified with nurture and with youth work

Frequency of answers to the question: “Which of these qualities/traits would you relate to youth work and to nurture provision?”

Answer options	Youth Work only	Nurture Provision only	Neither	Both	Response Count
A positive relationship with an adult is key to success	0	0	2	51	53
Education based intervention	3	21	1	28	53
Welfare based intervention	7	10	2	34	53
Helps to improve attendance of young people at school	1	7	0	45	53
Helps improve self-esteem of young people	1	1	1	50	53
A young person is understood developmentally, for example, the work starts at the place where the young person is at	1	12	1	39	53
Language is vital for communication	1	1	2	49	53
All behaviour is communication	0	2	4	47	53
It is important to offer a safe base - with a home area, opportunity for play, kitchen and work area	2	25	5	21	53
Transition is important in a young person’s life and needs recognition and support	0	10	3	40	53
Help to raise aspirations of young people	4	0	1	48	53
Works with/benefits the whole community	15	0	4	34	53
Promotes a young person’s self-awareness, confidence and participation	1	2	1	49	53
Promotes inclusion, equality and diversity	1	3	1	48	53
Works with all young people	16	0	15	22	53
Enables young people to make decisions	2	0	0	51	53
Having and sharing food is important	2	14	11	26	53
Answered question					53
Skipped question					4

Highlighted in orange are the sections with secondary scores with a response of 20% or more. There were two where nurture had a high secondary score, and these were being an "education based intervention" and "a young person is understood developmentally..."

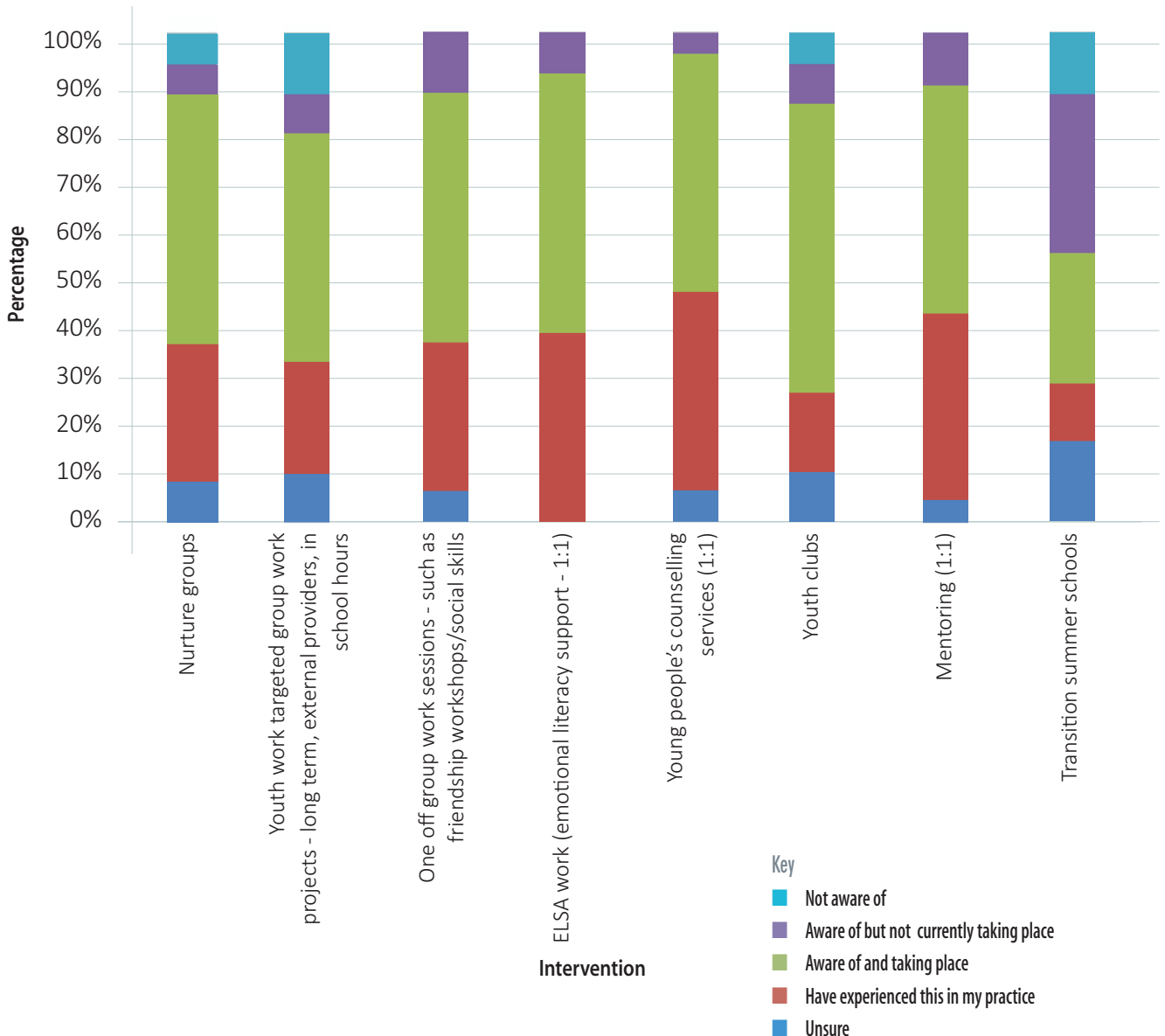
The transition element was noted as being predominantly both youth work and nurture, with 75% of respondents suggesting this, and a further 19% recognising that transition was a key element of nurture practice.

Figure 4 shows interventions that staff were aware of or had experienced. The interventions most had experienced were

one-to-one services – mentoring, counselling and Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA). All of these scored highest in that category, whereas the lowest scoring was transition summer schools. NGs were the fifth most recognised intervention, with 14% of respondents not aware of or unsure and 86% of respondents aware or had experienced. Almost double the number of respondents confirmed that NGs were taking place (51.02%) compared to transition summer schools (26.53%) This figure was reflected in "have experienced in my practice", with 28.57% experienced NGs and only 12.24% experienced transition summer schools. This would suggest nurture is used more favourably than summer schools to aid transition.

Table 4: Awareness of interventions

(responses to the question "Which of the following interventions are you currently aware of/are taking place with secondary age young people?")



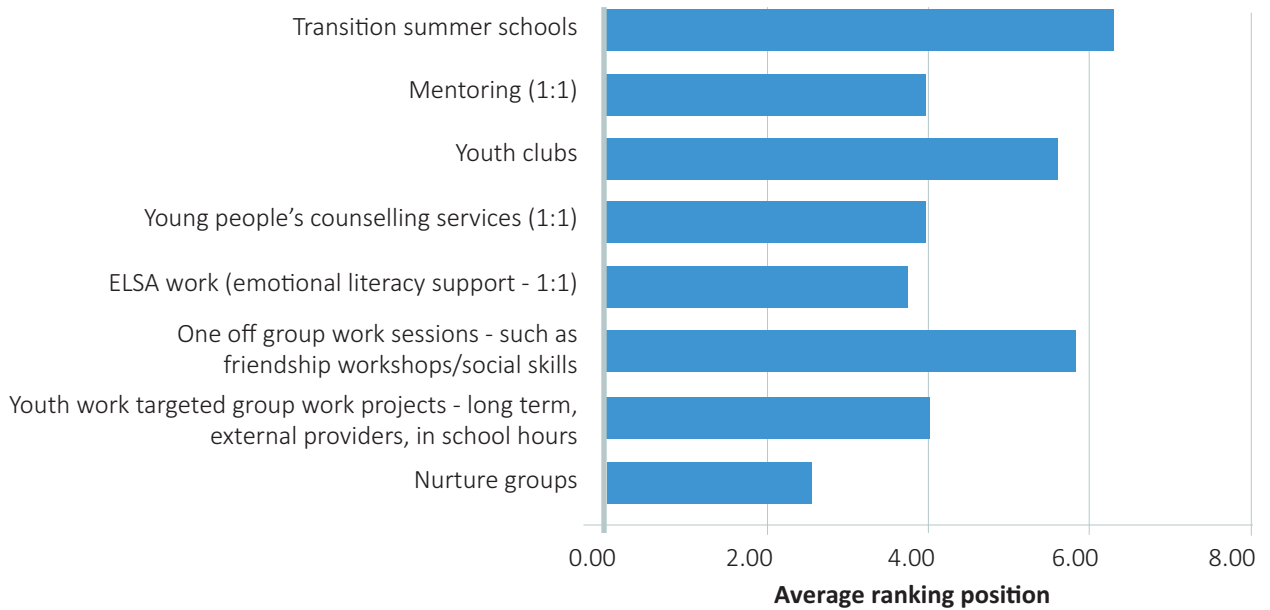
**Figure 5** shows interventions ranked by greatest impact with young people – those with the lowest scores were considered to have most impact and those with the highest scores least impact. NGs were considered to have the greatest impact; followed by counselling services and mentoring. The intervention considered to have the least impact was transition summer schools, followed by one-off group work sessions and youth clubs. All of the top three require positive relationships to be built with over a sustained period of time, whereas the bottom three interventions would not require this relationship and were more ad-hoc in terms of facilitators.

When asked who was best to run nurture provision in schools, the results showed a pastoral member of staff was preferable over a qualified teacher. There was some approval for youth workers, although the preference was that they were internally employed by the school as opposed to a third party (**Figure 6**).

Respondents who answered “other” suggested it was dependent on the skills of the individual, and that children needed to relate to the worker. There was a proposal for a multi-disciplinary team of teachers, youth workers and mental health professionals, which provides an interesting angle in terms of meeting the needs of a child in a holistic way.

**Figure 5: Which interventions have the greatest impact on young people?**

Of these interventions, please rank which ones you feel have the greatest impact with young people in terms of: improved attendance, self-esteem, aspirations, attitudes, and general wellbeing (1 having the most impact and 8 the least)

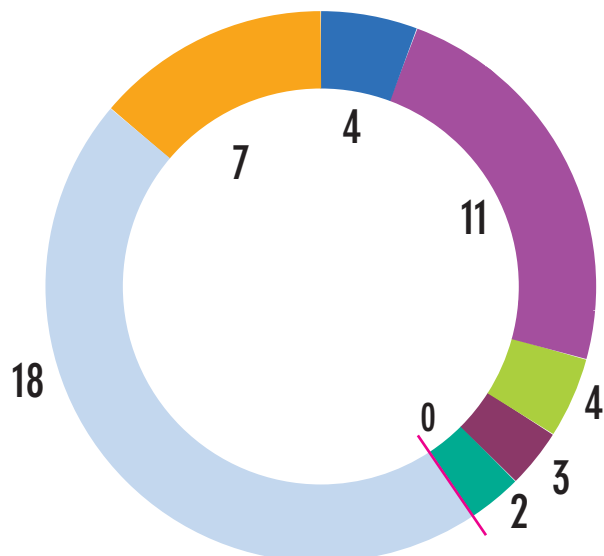


**Figure 6: Who is best placed to run nurture provision?**

Responses to the question: “Thinking specifically about nurture provision, who do you feel is best placed to run this in schools?”

Key

- Youth workers (external)
- Youth workers (internal-school employed staff)
- Learning Support Assistant
- SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator)
- Qualified teacher
- Head of Year
- Pastoral school staff
- Other (please specify)





## Interviews

Five professionals were interviewed, and the key themes identified from the transcripts included: transition; similarities and differences between nurture and youth work; relationships; the person for the role; and secure environment.

### Transition

School Pastoral Staff... *“secondary education is so much different to what they’re used to in primary. At primary they move around less don’t they, at primary they’ve got a teacher for the year... They move into secondary school... they’re bombarded with loads of different people and loads of different personalities... it’s much more fragmented I think when they get to secondary school, and if they don’t have that one person or a group of people who can help them, with that side of things, then that can set that young person up to have all sorts of problems...”*

The school staff focused on the transition across educational provision, whereas the youth worker talked more of a transition from home to school, and how this needed specific support.

Youth Worker: *“Nurture groups... I see them as breakfast club ... to try and transition from home to school environment ... It’s providing that kind of solid stable consistent approach that young people may not for a variety of reasons be getting at home... so they are better able to engage in education.”*

One interviewee suggested involving a transition teacher would be beneficial to nurture delivery (Interview 5:2). While all the professionals interviewed work with the transition age group, they all had different ideas of what transition was for a young person.

### Similarities and differences between nurture and youth work

A large part of the interviews focused on the key differences and similarities between youth work and nurture. The chart shows key attributes that were assigned to each role by the interviewees: It is clear there are attributes shared by each role, and similarities in terms of grouping responses, “good listener” linking to “communication”, and “able to adapt” linking with “flexible”. These responses linked with those in the questionnaire from **Table 1** reiterate that there are similarities in the skill set of professionals and delivery of each provision.

**Table 2:** Key attributes of youth workers and nurture leaders identified during interviews

Interview	Youth workers	Nurture leaders
1	Open minded, good listener, able to adapt	
2	Relationship building, empathy, care	
3	Open minded, flexible	Have time, approachable, availability
4		Communication, flexible
5	Empathetic, emotionally intelligent	Emotionally intelligent, empathetic, group work

## Relationships

The theme of relationships ran through all of the interviews; Youth Worker (YW) explained a teacher was involved in the nurturing project: YW... *“when she walked through the door she was a Trailblazer member of staff and the young people did have to adapt to that ... but generally they were very good at that because they did have that positive relationship. That comes down to picking the right member of staff. You’ve got to have the right member of staff, where actually a little bit their heart is a bit more youth worker than teachery...”*

Having the right person for the role was brought up in interview 3:

School pastoral staff *“I don’t think it should be a teacher, I don’t think it should be anybody from a leadership side of things because I think that in itself might be quite intimidating for a young person. I think... young people, respond in a completely different way, and in a much more relaxed way to someone they don’t perceive as an authoritarian...”*

This was echoed in interview 4: *“I think in a secondary setting, somebody who’s not a teacher is the better”* (Interview 4:2 – Locality Team Manager), whereas in interview 5 there was an opposing view: *“... I think it would be great for teachers and support staff to work together on it”*, but recognised that *“... I think it’s less about the kind of position of the person, more around the capabilities of the person to deliver...”* (Interview 5:2 – Senior Leadership Team Member).

Interviewee 5 also said that: *“the children have got to feel confident in them and feel like they can trust and work with them”* (Interview 5:3 – Senior Leadership Team Member). All interviewees recognised the relationship was important in the successful delivery of nurture work and consideration was needed in appointing someone.

## Secure Environment

Interviewee 2 talked about group work and having the opportunity to talk about issues in *“an extremely safe not vulnerable way”* (Interview 2:3 – Youth Worker), being safe where no one can walk into the room unannounced; the suggestion is for a separate building that is not seen as being part of school (Interview 2:5 – Youth Worker). The school leadership interviewee commented on the need for a safe space, saying: *“I think safe environment is absolute top priority that the children or young people have got to feel safe in that environment...”* (Interview 5:3 – Senior Leadership Team Member).

## DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that transition for young people is much more than the move from primary to secondary education; in one of the interviews with a youth worker, they discussed more of the transition from home to school, as opposed to across key stages in education. Practitioners discussed transitions for young people from home to school, as well as the move in physical environment and educational methods. Transition needs to be seen holistically by practitioners, and it must be understood that transition does not only happen at 11, but is an ongoing process through life (Palmer & Panchal, 2011) which needs support from peers and trusted adults. Transition cannot be understood vertically or as age-related, because people move through different experiences at different ages, and means “recognising the transition process is a vital requirement in understanding and developing a coping strategy” (Washington, 2011). Transition needs support throughout life and as adults we may experience it through peer friendships or more formally through developmental coaching but there is a case for providing it through structured group work that may be at its strongest in adolescence.

It is recognised that “neuroscientists now believe young brains can be shaped – and young people’s futures changed for the better or worse – during this second major phase of development in adolescence” (Hunt, 2015). This reinforces that: “we should be recognising that teenagers are children too” (Hunt, 2015). This knowledge is imperative for practitioners working with teenagers. All too often teenagers are considered old enough to look after themselves, when if their brain is fundamentally redeveloping then they need as much support as a toddler. Brain development should be taught to all practitioners working with young people, as this could change their practice and help them reconsider their interactions with adolescents. The 2011 Positive for Youth discussion paper on adolescent brain development highlights the need to invest in this area and even for parents to work to understand their children’s behaviour through what has been understood in this field (Cabinet Office & Department for Education, 2011).

The evidence shows NGOs have a place in many secondary schools, but not in all, and that there are many who do not offer this intervention. There are pockets of good practice, but this is sparse and varies across the country. It was evident that the key to a successful intervention with young people was the relationship they had with the facilitator, and that getting the right person for the role is one of the most important starting points for success in terms of building a trusting relationship for learning to happen (Tiffany, 2001). This was evident in both the survey and interviews. In **Figure 6** which shows who is best placed to deliver nurture in schools, those who selected ‘other’ fed back that it was dependent on the skills of the staff and that the children needed to relate to the worker. This is fundamentally similar to youth work in terms of the focus around building positive relationships. It seems logical that there is learning that could be shared between nurture and youth work around how best to build these relationships.

Generally, the findings indicated the strong similarities between nurture and youth work, with the only key difference being the nature of youth work as a voluntary relationship (**Figures 3.1 – 3.2**, and

interview with Locality Manager). Other interventions do not necessarily rely on the relationship focusing more on the product, rather than the process. This makes youth work and nurture very similar as the process is most important, relying on experiential learning rather than a didactic approach (Blacker, 2001). Many of the interviewees felt that there could be merit in youth work being provided in schools (**Figure 4** and **5**) but in a role where it was supporting nurture and working alongside it (interview with youth worker 1 – “It’s often the voices you don’t hear the most that you hear the loudest”; **Figure 6**). There were mixed feelings about an external youth worker providing nurture, as they would have to work within the parameters of the school and this could compromise their ability to keep things confidential (interview with youth worker 1 – “if it’s also delivered by school teachers, you’ve got a struggle with confidentiality”). It is clear there would need to be definitive guidance for the staff running the group if an external youth worker were to be involved with a school member of staff, but for the overall impact and benefit it could have on young people and the community, it could be really positive.

There is a lack of knowledge between professionals around what youth work is and what it can provide. This was also evident, to an extent, with NGOs. The lack of knowledge seemed mainly to occur with staff in secondary education, who were unaware of youth work projects (**Figure 4**). This could be a sign of the times for youth work which has suffered severe cuts. However, there is also an opportunity for youth work charities to work with schools to help meet the needs of the children in their care by providing alternative educational opportunities for young people. Schools are in receipt of pupil premium, which leaves opportunities for youth work to be creative and be funded by schools. One of the pertinent messages that came across from the research was around joined up working, and the value in weaving youth work into schools as part of the intervention to ease transition to create a context for the intervention and give it more meaning in the wider community, so that schools are not seen as isolated, but that any work undertaken in school benefits the local area.

In a report from Demos, nine out of ten teachers had favourable attitudes towards non-formal learning and 51% strongly agreed their students would benefit from non-formal learning opportunities (Birdwell, Scott, & Koninckx, 2015). The report also showed: “Three out of five teachers strongly agreed that non-formal education can help young people develop important social and emotional skills, as well as skills that are important for the workplace” (Birdwell et al., 2015). Having opportunities for young people to learn in an informal way gives many more of them the opportunity to achieve. This is evidence there is an appetite for this style of learning but it may be necessary to provide additional finance to enable it to happen.

Overall the research addressed the following key questions, with a view to providing practical support for practitioners in secondary nurture settings:

### **What are the key similarities and differences between youth work and nurture provision, and is there merit in sharing learning?**

The main similarity between youth work and nurture is the use of the relationship; both of these interventions depend on having positive relationships between professionals and young people, and without this the intervention cannot work. Both of these interventions are experiential



styles of learning, and both operate with young people needing additional support for emotional and social learning. The key difference between the two is the nature of the relationship – being voluntary in youth work and compulsory in education. The other important difference is being able to measure and validate the work that takes place – NGs using a Boxall Profile are better able to demonstrate their impact than youth work providers who do not have a standard way to monitor and measure impact. If there was a similar tool available for youth work, this could have a major benefit in terms of accessing funding.

### What are the qualities a practitioner needs for intervention work at the time of transition?

The qualities that were recognised as being important across both of these interventions were: emotional intelligence and empathy, open mindedness and being approachable. It was recognised that in both nurture and youth work you need to be able to build positive relationships with young people, and understand that transition is more than just a move of schools.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Youth work and nurture have similar traits and skill sets, and it would make sense that there be shared learning between the two practices; youth workers would benefit from learning about attachment and nurture provision, and nurture could learn about how best to deliver group work and build positive relationships. In terms of supporting professionals with this research, it would be sensible for trainers of each profession to offer specialist modules to each other to share their practice and strengthen both youth work and nurture. It would also support youth work to be able to understand how to interpret and use a Boxall Profile and then make appropriate interventions as a result of this; there could be a stronger relationship between schools and youth workers if they worked together to meet the needs of the young people in both of their care. It would also support youth work with credibility if they could use the Boxall Profile to measure the development of young people they are working with, although there might need to be some adaptation. Youth work is continually being asked to measure success and the Boxall Profile is a good way for this to happen, as well as to ensure that intervention for young people is targeted and meeting their needs.

School staff should consider working more closely with youth workers to utilise their specific skill set in working with young people who may be disengaged from learning. Teachers do not seem to know enough about youth work and related positive interventions, and it would help for this to be part of secondary school settings so that different types of learning experiences can be offered to young people, offering them something other than the current formal education. It would appear that there is sufficient overlap in the principles and practice of NGs and youth work that joint staff training would be a good way to skill teachers in complementary practices that would support their work in aiding the transition of young people from primary to secondary education and other transitions related to early adolescence.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1 - Code of Ethics

The purpose of this research is to grow knowledge in the area of youth work and nurture practice in secondary education. The research is part of my MA in Youth and Community Learning and Development, at the YMCA George Williams College. This research project has been approved by Tina Salter (lecturer at YMCA GWC) as being suitable and relevant for this course of study.

**ANONYMITY** I guarantee that no names or contact information shall be used in the final report. Information you give will not be stored or categorised under your name, and you and any case studies you share shall remain anonymous. This will help to prevent anything that is said being traced back to you.

**CONFIDENTIALITY** I guarantee that I shall not disclose any information that you share with me, to any third party, unless permission to do so has been agreed.

**YOUR RIGHT** I agree to keep you informed of the progress of my research, and if at any point you wish to see the final report, you have the right to do so.

**THE FINAL REPORT** The final report from this research will be held in the YMCA George Williams College library. It will also be available upon request to anyone who has taken part in the research, or to other professionals who are working within the sphere of youth work or nurture provision.

**DATA PROTECTION** As a researcher, I will comply with the Data Protection Act 1998. Any information you share with me will only be used for the purpose listed above and will be kept securely and anonymously.

**CONSENT** I have read and agree to this Code of Ethics and understand how my input will be used within this research. I agree to my input being used in the final report and understand that this will be anonymised. I understand that at any point I can request an update on research progress and am able to access the final report. I confirm that I am taking part in this research voluntarily:

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date

#### CONTACT

You may contact the researcher, xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx, by the following:

### Appendix 2 - Semi-Structured Interview

**WELCOME** Code of ethics and introduction to research. Name, role, where do you work? Tell me about your job.

**NURTURE** What do you know about nurture? Have you experienced this in your practice? What is the impact? Do you have an example or case study to share? What is it about nurture that sets it apart from other interventions?

**YOUTH WORK** What do you know about youth work currently? Has this changed within the last 5 years? Is youth work relevant as an intervention for young people? What role (if any) does youth work have in schools? What makes youth work, work? Do you know of youth work programmes in schools? How do these work?

#### SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

What do youth work and nurture have in common? What sets youth work and nurture apart? Can nurture and youth work combine to develop resources in schools to support young people? What else needs to be considered for youth work and nurture to develop as resources to support young people?

#### ROLE OF THE PROFESSIONAL

What attributes does a nurture leader need? What attributes does a youth worker need? Is there a role for a youth worker in schools? What would they do/what can they bring to education that is different?

## Appendix 3 Questionnaire

Thank you for participating in my survey. This is a survey aimed at a targeted group of professionals working with young people, to try and ascertain the value of nurture provision and its effectiveness, particularly with students in their first year of secondary school.

All comments and feedback will be anonymised, and the Data Protection Act 1998 will be adhered to. By completing this survey you agree for your feedback to be used in the final report, of which a copy will be held in the YMCA George Williams College library.

If you wish to see the final report you may do so by emailing XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX.

Tick the box which most applies to you

### 1. What is your primary job role?

- Teacher
- Teacher - Leadership
- Secondary School Pastoral Staff
- Youth Worker
- CAMHS Staff
- Other (please specify)

### 2. What is the age of the young people you work with in your professional capacity?

### 3. What do you understand by the following:

Nurture provision

Youth work

### 4. Which of these qualities/traits would you relate to youth work and to nurture provision?

	Youth Work only	Nurture Provision only	Neither	Both
It is important to offer a safe base - with a home area, opportunity for play, kitchen, and work area				
All behaviour is communication				
A positive relationship with an adult is key to success				
Education based intervention				
Helps to raise aspirations of young people				
Language is vital for communication				
Having and sharing food is important				
Promotes a young person's self awareness, confidence, and participation				
Works with all young people				
Transition is important in a young person's life and needs recognition and support				
Helps to improve attendance of young people at school				
Helps to improve self-esteem of young people				
Promotes inclusion, equality, and diversity				
Works with/benefits the whole community				
Enables young people to make decisions				
A young person is understood developmentally, for example, the work starts at the place where the young person is at				
Welfare based intervention				

**5. Which of the following interventions are you currently aware of/are taking place with secondary age young people?**

	Not aware of	Aware of but not currently taking place	Aware of and taking place	Have experienced this in my practice	Unsure
Nurture groups					
Youth work targeted group work projects - long term, external providers, in school hours					
One off group work sessions - such as friendship workshops/social skills					
ELSA work (emotional literacy support - 1:1)					
Young people's counselling services (1:1)					
Youth clubs					
Mentoring (1:1)					
Transition summer schools					

Other (please specify)

**6. Of these interventions, please rank which ones you feel have the greatest impact with young people in terms of: improved attendance, self-esteem, aspirations, attitudes, and general well-being.** (1 having the most impact and 8 the least)

- Nurture groups
- Youth work targeted group work projects - long term, external providers in school
- One off group work sessions - such as friendship workshops/social skills
- ELSA work (emotional literacy support 1:1)
- Young people's counselling services (1:1)
- Youth clubs
- Mentoring (1:1)
- Transition summer schools

**7. Thinking specifically about nurture provision, who do you feel is best placed to run this in schools?**

- Youth workers (external)
- Youth workers (internal - school employed staff)
- Learning Support Assistant
- SENCO (special educational needs co-ordinator)
- Qualified teacher
- Head of Year
- Pastoral school staff
- Other (please specify)

**8. Please give any examples of best practice, when you have experienced or been made aware of either nurture or youth work taking place in schools that has supported a young person. Please explain what the intervention was, and who was leading the intervention (which professional role)**

**9. Please enter your name. If you are happy to be contacted for further interviewing please leave your email address/phone number as well.**

**Contact details**

Email

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Telephone no.

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## Appendix 4

### Example of coding of interviews

The systemic evaluation of the nurture group revealed 15 categories. During this process of analysis, four key systemic concepts emerged: parental involvement, communication, selection process and training. The key issues arising from these four concepts are considered below.

- **Green** = Youth work traits
- **Pink** = similarities and differences between youth work and nurture
- **Orange** = relationships

**FD** (Laughs) ok, so thinking about trailblazer, what is it about trailblazers that made it feel nurturey for you, I mean in respect of the project, what was it, a weekly group work session?

**YM** *Urrr, weekly group work session primarily working with outdoor education to promote self confidence, self esteem and raise aspirations so young people were better able to cope in the school environment, urm and to behave more appropriately, respond more appropriately and engage more appropriately. Um, basically it was, it was a tool. It was irrelevant whether or not they climbed the hill or made the stick castle or did the sea shells whatever else, **it was about the process of working together, learning to value themselves, learning to appreciate what they could do. Working with other people in an appropriate manner, learning better communication skills**, but having the opportunity to talk about issues that were important to them in an extremely safe not vulnerable way. **So it was a very small group, I can't remember I'm trying to think, ACE was 8 I think Trailblazers was 12.** So it was a maximum of 12 but with any sort of group like that there are drop outs so invariably you ended up with about 8 after the first few weeks because "ur I don't like this" or whatever else, or parents would pull them out for various reasons or they get excluded because that's half the reason they have been referred. So you end up with a core of 8 and the work you can do with those 8 would be the **relationship building** and it was so much more intense, because you were taking them off school site, it was out of the school environment. So you do have a **nurturing relationship**, you build banter where you can actually challenge, especially with my style which might be more bantery than other people. So I tend to use humour and the way young people are themselves to help develop their learning so that they can see things differently. You know, when they have sat there for the last few weeks telling you they can't do something and then they go and do it, "so I can see you definitely can't do that, no that's awful, terrible" and using humour, forcing them to disagree with you so they say "oh no I did do that" so then we can pull out that conversation.*



**FD** Do you think the relationship is really important?

**YM** *It's vital. But then it's vital for a teacher, for youth workers, counsellors. Communication and relationship building is vital in any young person centred work.*

**FD** **Cool. Were there any specific traits then that worked, or, the things you have said they sound like they are transferable across to other things? You said that actually the programme was just a tool and a mechanism, and the important part was the relationship, so with that understanding, does that mean then that other styles of youth work and other projects also are nurturing in your opinion?**

**YM** *Yes, but to a different degree and in different ways. It depends how it is set up, and it depends on the age of the young people. **With a youth group where the young people come in voluntarily, sporadically, for different lengths of time, they access you when they need you. So the relationship building is vital otherwise they won't bother to come in, but you don't have the same nurture necessarily, possibly after a year or so because you've built that long term relationship but you don't have such a quick nurturing relationship.** Whereas if you see them weekly for a specific time length, an hour or two depending on which group it was, and the off site – taking them off site, **because it wasn't in classrooms it felt like it had a higher value time-wise, because it wasn't in school they automatically relaxed, they were more there than when they were in a school environment.** I don't believe necessarily that these styles of work can be delivered by teachers in a school environment.*

**FD** **Interesting, that leads on to my next question. So thinking about traditional nurture groups in schools, they are usually run by school staff in a school environment, and nurture rooms typically have four designated areas, a kitchen, a home area with cushions and sofas, a work area, and an area for play. Those are the main zones that a nurture room would have. The nurture room is normally based within a school, it's part of the school environment. It's usually a classroom set aside and normally run by teachers. Now obviously, youth work is different to that, so what I am looking to try to understand is what the difference is. Do you think youth workers have a different impact to a member of school staff for a young person?**

**YM** *I think the key difference probably comes down to voluntary participation. Youth work at its core, works completely, one of its founding ethics, is voluntary participation. It's what the young person wants, they choose to access. If a young person walks through my door they have chosen to walk through my door. If they choose to sit down and talk to me they have chosen to do so. **The problem where it gets problematic in schools is the choice is very much more limited.** There is a choice, there's always a choice. But if a young person*

*is struggling at school, is at risk of exclusion, engaging in lots of anti social behaviours, etcetera etcetera, school might identify that a nurture group would be good. Excellent, that's fantastic, and they can send them. The choice then for that young person is a permanent exclusion from school or engage in this what may appear to them to be some crappy poncy whatever stigma label they choose to put on it or is perceived by kids. So it's more of a challenge then to get past that so that they feel they are voluntarily participating. Now I think if it's also delivered by school teachers, you've got a struggle then around confidentiality. So if a young person came to me in Trailblazers and shared with me risk taking behaviours, which I personally may not like, approve of or think are a good idea, for example they smoke 20 at the weekend, I was not obliged to tell the school this. **However, a teacher would struggle to have that level of confidentiality because they are employed by the school.** So there isn't the safety zone bit, and that clear clarity. So for example a young person, a 15 year old who has sex with their boyfriend, I can speak to them we can look at what we need to do, refer them and sort things out. I know for a fact when I was working very closely with the secondary school, I had amazing access and a hell of a lot of freedom within the school grounds, even though they knew that they would refer the young people to me for this support, they did it because they had the confidentiality, whereas if they dealt with it they would have to pass it on, it would go to the safeguarding lead because technically they are under 16 so they are breaking the law, therefore they have to phone parents and tell them that their young person might be pregnant. Whereas if they come to me, we do the talk, we do the pregnancy test, we do the distraction talk while we panic 300 times waiting for the lines, and thank god 99 times out of a hundred, they came back negative. Then we did the safe sex talk, what are you going to do in future to stop this from happening, so we can do the preventative stuff, and the young person feels safe, they don't think (well they do think), if my mum finds out she isn't going to love me, she will be disappointed in me, blah blah blah. All those strong emotions. Whereas if they do it at the school, well they won't do it, they'll hide it. They don't have that safety net.*