

Access All Areas

A Diversity Toolkit for the Youth Work Sector



Promoting Equality and Inclusion

A self-assessment Toolkit for youth leaders to assess the level
of equality and inclusion in their programmes...

... with practical tips on how to make youth organisations fully
inclusive for all young people

About the Authors

About NYCI

The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) is the representative body for national voluntary youth work organisations in Ireland. It represents and supports the interests of around 50 voluntary youth organisations and uses its collective experience to act on issues that impact on young people.

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About Youthnet

Youthnet was an independent agency which represented the interests and aspirations of the voluntary youth sector in Northern Ireland. The voluntary youth sector in Northern Ireland delivers youth work in a variety of settings including local communities, churches, rural and urban interfaces and developmental work in schools. It folded in 2016.

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About 'Access All Areas'

"Equality is not about treating people the same, because different groups of people have different needs, different groups experience discrimination in different areas of life in different ways. Treating everyone the same can have the effect of being an indirect form of discrimination when it is clear that some groups have much greater needs than others.

Equality is about securing equality of opportunity, equality of participation and equality of outcome."

NCCRI, March 2003

Access All Areas was developed by a large group of youth work practitioners across the island of Ireland to be used in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. These experts wrote and edited 12 individual chapters, 11 of which focus on a particular group of young people who frequently experience exclusion in their lives. The experts opted to gather their expertise in one publication because of their recognition that young people have multiple identities and should not be seen under one identity alone. The National Youth Council of Ireland and Youthnet Northern Ireland coordinated this publication.

Access All Areas Toolkit has been designed to be used by trained youth workers, by volunteer youth leaders, by directors and managers of youth services and others working with children and young people. It invites you to look at what support you need - at both leader and organisational level - to make sure that all young people in your community feel they belong and are actively participating in society.

Since Access All Areas was first developed in 2009 it has been used extensively and updated to respond to newly identified needs of those working with diverse young people. This new edition comes in 3 formats to allow for ease of use – a companion guide, a CD Rom with the full Toolkit, and a downloadable version (divided into individual specialised chapters). We have developed two new chapters since 2009.

The reasons we developed Access All Areas

Whilst much has been done in recent years to tackle inequality and to work for the inclusion of people from all backgrounds at all levels of society, discrimination is still a reality for many people.

Many young people face challenges in accessing services, achieving in education, living healthy lives, having a sense of well-being and making a full contribution to society. These challenges are often compounded by additional factors in a young person's life. This may be that they are from a minority ethnic background, are a young Traveller, identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender or have a disability. They may have been involved with the juvenile justice system, find themselves outside of education, training or employment, or be a young parent. It may be that young people are dealing with mental health issues in their life or they are the primary carer for a family member. Young people may find themselves restricted by gender stereotypes or vulnerable to discrimination based on their gender. Sometimes referred to as 'hard to reach', 'diverse' or 'seldom heard' the needs of these young people are explained in Access All Areas alongside valuable advice on how to fully include these young people in your organisation, whether you are involved in a small community-based youth group, a specialised youth group, or a youth project.

“When we aren't proactively being inclusive we are, in effect, perpetuating exclusion and inequality in our society.”

Youth work is ideally placed to challenge inherent inequalities and to engage with young people from a range of backgrounds and to raise awareness of the diversity in society.

How can 'Access All Areas' help you?

1. It can help you to **quickly assess** how well you are currently doing by proofing your work with specialised checklists
2. It can help you to **plan** by providing information about needs, demographics resources and useful contacts
3. It can help you to **provide better service** to all groups by giving practical advice
4. It can help you **develop policies** by providing guidelines



What's in 'Access All Areas'?

Access All Areas Toolkit is arranged with the following chapters, each of which can be downloaded separately from www.youth.ie/diversity

Chapter 1	Promoting inclusive youth work practice – organisational support
Chapter 2	Working with young people from a minority ethnic background
Chapter 3	Working with young LGBT people
Chapter 4	Working with young Travellers
Chapter 5	Working with young people with a physical disability, who have sight loss or who have hearing difficulties
Chapter 6	Working with young people with a learning disability
Chapter 7	Working with young people with mental health issues
Chapter 8	Working with young people involved in juvenile justice
Chapter 9	Working with young parents
Chapter 10A (ROI)	Working with young people who have left school early
Chapter 10B (NI)	Working with young people who are out of education, employment or training (NEET)
Chapter 11	Working with young men and young women to challenge gender stereotypes
Chapter 12	Working with young people with caring responsibilities (young carers)
Chapter 13	Working across the generations (intergenerational practice)
Chapter 14	Working with young people in rural or geographically isolated areas

Chapter 15 Working with young people who are affected by homelessness

* Please note that each of the chapters is page numbered separately to allow each chapter to stand alone. Youth workers are invited to dip in and out of Toolkit, engaging with different chapters when it best suits their needs.

How is ‘Access All Areas’ structured?

Chapter 1 ‘Promoting inclusive youth work practice – organisational support’ includes the various tools you will need at organisational level:

- A definition and deeper understanding of equality and inclusion
- An overview of youth work policy in relation to equality and inclusion
- An overview of legislation that aims to ensure equality and inclusion in youth work
- A master checklist to be used by youth leaders and managers
- A master checklist that young people can use to assess the youth activities they attend
- A discussion on collecting and using data (ethnic identifiers). A sample registration form is included.
- Using Access All Areas to carry out a regional audit

Chapters 2-15 all focus on a ‘harder to reach’ group of young people and are structured in the following way:

- **Demographics**
Facts and figures about the particular group of young people
- **Terminology**
Definitions of useful terms
- **Needs and Issues**
Key needs and issues that have been identified by practitioners from current research and practice
- **How to develop inclusive practice**

Practical guidelines and advice on being more inclusive of young people from the identified group

- **Checklist**

A specialised checklist to self-assess your group or organisation and identify actions you can take

- **Contacts and resources**

Useful contacts and resources to further your understanding and build key relationships with relevant organisations

Where do I start?

We recommend that you start with the Master Checklist (**Chapter 1, Page 22**) to assess where you are as an organisation or group. This will help you identify areas you can work on. If you want to take a more detailed examination of your service in light of a particular priority group (e.g. disability) then you can look at that chapter for information and support. Each chapter contains a more detailed checklist which can help you identify the additional actions to put in place to engage with that target group of young people.

After completing the master checklist or a specialist checklist from the end of a particular chapter - fill in an action plan with your team so that your work is given direction and a timeline to keep you on track. The information contained in each chapter will support you in carrying out your action plan.

It is useful to revisit the Toolkit on a regular basis to see what areas you can progress in next.

Don't get burdened down by the amount of information available – see Access All Areas as a reference and support document to facilitate you in reflective practice.

We also want to highlight that, although this toolkit is structured into chapters that relate to particular groups and identities, children and young people are

not limited to labels but have multiple identities. This resource is not designed to box people into groupings, it advocates for a holistic approach in meeting the individual needs of young people. We hope that it demonstrates the value of developing a **‘universal design approach’** - a way of planning and delivering programmes that ensures, as far as possible, that it caters for as many people as possible, irrespective of their individual circumstances.

We wish you all the best using Access All Areas, we welcome your input and any changes you would like to see. We also offer training on using the Toolkit. If you would like to share your inclusive youth work stories with us we are collecting them to share and we are launching an award project if anyone would like to put themselves forward for inclusion.



CHAPTER ONE

Promoting inclusive youth work practice - organisational support

Introduction

‘Access All Areas’ has been designed to be used by trained youth workers, by volunteers in local youth groups, by directors and managers of youth services and anyone else working with young people in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The toolkit invites us to look at the support that is needed - at a personal and organisational level - to make sure that **all** young people feel they belong and are actively participating in their community.



Terminology

This resource has been developed for youth workers on the island of Ireland. At times it is necessary to make distinctions between our two jurisdictions and we have had to choose a terminology to reflect this. We have chosen for the most part to use Northern Ireland (NI) and Republic of Ireland (ROI). At times we also use North and South. Where there are large tracts of text that refer specifically to the different jurisdictions we have used coloured boxes:

Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland

Overview of chapter

This chapter looks at specific support that an organisation might need to embed inclusive youth work practice. The chapter includes the following:

- 1. A definition and deeper understanding of equality and inclusion**
- 2. An overview of youth work policy in relation to equality and inclusion**
- 3. An overview of legislation that aims to ensure equality and inclusion in youth work**
- 4. Developing an equality and inclusion policy**
- 5. A master checklist to be used by youth leaders and managers**
- 6. A master checklist that young people can use to assess the youth activities they attend**
- 7. A discussion on collecting and using data (ethnic identifiers). A sample registration form is included**
- 8. Using Access All Areas to carry out a regional survey**

1 A definition and deeper understanding of equality and inclusion

Equality is the notion that **everybody** is of equal value and deserves equal respect, dignity and opportunity. It is based on four key objectives:

1. Access to services
2. Inclusion in decision making and shaping one's own community
3. Relationships based on love, care, respect and solidarity, and
4. Acknowledgement of diversity and the right to social statusⁱ

Inclusion Inclusion is identifying, understanding and removing barriers that exist to ensure participation and belonging. It focuses on allocating resources to achieve equality of outcome for all.

Inclusive youth work is responsive to the needs of all young people. It involves:

- Openness and dialogue
- A willingness to change
- A commitment to equality

Equity Equity, similar to inclusion, ensures that young people have equality of outcome regardless of background. This means that support is provided to meet the specific needs of diverse groups. It is also about making sure that young people are not directly or indirectly excluded and that positive steps are taken to include those who might otherwise feel excluded.

Diversity Diversity encourages respect for, and expression of, the range of identities represented by children and young people involved in youth work and those who work with themⁱⁱ

What does an inclusive group look like?

Creating a service based on equality and inclusion means asking if our projects, programmes and activities are based on the norms and values of the majority group or do they include the needs of young people from diverse living circumstances and identities? An inclusive service is one that reflects the range of diversity within a community. In a mainstream, volunteer or universal service this will mean engaging with the young people in the community in a way that is responsive to the numbers of young people from diverse backgrounds that live within that community. For example, demographic studies indicate that 16% of the young people in the country come from a minority ethnic background, about 10% have a disability, 20% will, at some stage, have a mental health issue, 1.5% are Travellers, and 7.5% is an accepted estimate for numbers who are LGBTI+. Small numbers will be involved in juvenile justice, will have left school early, will experience homelessness or will be a young parent. A mainstream, volunteer or universal youth group should reflect this diversity in their membership relative to their overall numbers. For example, the number of young people in a youth group from a minority ethnic background would ideally be similar in percentage to that in your own community. Furthermore, all diversities should be included, either by actual targeting and inclusion or within regular programme activities and conversations – for example developing an LGBTI+ friendly environment, doing disability and mental health awareness programmes etc.



Sometimes services work exclusively with marginalised and diverse young people and may not see how, or why, they might become even more inclusive. However, diversity is never a single identity issue. All young people have multiple identities and all aspects of exclusion should be addressed even in specialised services. For example, a person with a disability will have a sexual orientation, a gender and an ethnicity etc. Some of these aspects of identity will sometimes put them into other minority groups. An inclusive service challenges prejudice and looks at what diversity is **not** represented or included in the group. This may involve looking at more invisible diversities such as sexual orientation, early school leaving or mental health or it may involve looking at more obvious diversities such as ethnicity, disability, young parenthood etc. and finding ways to address these.

The principle of equality and inclusion needs to be firmly embedded in our society and promoted from an early age. Youth work is an ideal setting for working towards this goal by exploring issues and developing awareness with young people.

How do we ensure equality?

Equality means that everybody should have equal prospects of well-being, having their needs met, and to develop themselves. Resources should be distributed in such a way to provide for this. ⁱⁱⁱ

Therefore, equality means asking if your service offers the same level of outcome to all young people in your community? For example:



- Do some young people feel intimidated by the dominance of the majority group?
- Is it harder for some young people to physically access and participate in your project or group?
- Is there racism or homophobia in the project or group which makes it difficult for young people from diverse backgrounds to participate?
- Does your service accommodate the various learning needs of young people?

How do we ensure inclusion?

Inclusion is a process that is relevant to all young people but particularly focuses on those groups who have historically been marginalised or at risk. It involves a process of identifying, understanding and breaking down barriers to participation and belonging. It recognises the need to involve parents/carers in its practices and decision-making processes. It also asserts that inclusion is not possible without those being ‘included’ playing a full part in the process.^{iv}

Inclusion is about the quality of young people’s experience; how they are supported to learn, achieve and participate fully in the life of the youth service. In essence it involves adapting policies and practices within youth services to remove barriers to learning so that nobody is marginalised. Inclusion moves away from labelling young people, towards creating an appropriate learning environment for all children.^v

The specialised chapters in this toolkit will assist you to include a range of diverse young people and leaders in your organisation and youth groups.

2 An overview of youth work policy that relates to equality and inclusion

There are a number of key policy documents that underpin the delivery of youth services across the island of Ireland and provide a mandate for delivering a service based on the principles of equality and inclusion.

Northern Ireland (NI)

10 Year Strategy for Children and Young People (2006 – 2016)

The Strategy for Children and Young People highlights the need to provide equality across services and to ensure provision is inclusive of **all**.

Youth Work Strategy (2005-2008)

A new youth work policy for Northern Ireland '**Priorities for Youth**' will be available for consultation in due course. It is hoped that delivering an 'inclusive' service will be a key priority.

One of the key themes of the current strategy is 'Delivering Effective and Inclusive Youth Work'. It aims to:

"Ensure that high quality youth work is inclusively and effectively delivered to facilitate the personal and social development of young people within a supportive public policy framework"

Department of Education Priorities

One of the key priorities for the Department of Education NI in the delivery of education across the formal and non-formal sectors is '**Reducing the Gap** –

Removing Barriers to Access’. The intended youth service outcomes under this priority are:

- Commitment to promoting equality of opportunity
- Targeted provision for disadvantages or marginalised young people
- Responsive and coordinated service
- Outreach provision

Community Relations, Equality and Diversity Policy (CRED)

The Department of Education (NI) has a policy for delivering Community Relations, Equality and Diversity (CRED) across education.

The CRED policy aims to:

“...develop self-respect and respect for others, promote equality and work to eliminate discrimination...”

It also seeks to provide opportunities for young people to build relationships with those of different backgrounds and traditions.

The intended outcome of the policy is that children and young people will have a greater understanding of equality and diversity for all section 75 groups, respect the rights of all, and have developed the skills, attitudes and behaviours that enable them to value and respect difference and to engage positively with it.

It is anticipated that the main themes of this policy will underpin the development of ‘Priorities for Youth’.

A number of other policies will have a direct impact on the delivery of youth work including, for example, the Department of Social Development ‘Volunteer Strategy’ and the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister ‘Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy’.

Republic of Ireland (ROI)

Youth Work Act (2001)

The Youth Work Act governs all Youth Work in Ireland and commits youth services to meet the needs of all young people equally and fairly.

National Youth Strategy (2015-2020)

This aim of this strategy is to enable **all** young people to realise their maximum potential, by respecting their rights and hearing their voices, as they transition from childhood to adulthood. One of the key principles is that: “An equality perspective is integrated into all policy and practice.”

Linking to ‘Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures’, the key national children and young people’s strategy, one of the five outcomes of the NYS is that all young people will be “connected, respected and contributing to their world”.

Quality Standards in Youth Work (NQSF and SLVYG)

The National Quality Standards Framework (NQSF) and the Standards for Local Voluntary Youth Groups (SLVYG) are mechanisms by which all youth groups and organisations assess their practice. A core principle under which youth groups measure themselves is on how equality and inclusiveness are ensured and showing how all young people are welcomed and valued.

National LGBTI+ Youth Strategy 2018 – 2020

A key national strategy developed to support and include LGBTI+ young people.

National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017 - 2021 (NTRIS)

A key national strategy designed to reverse the effects of discrimination experienced by Travellers and Roma.

3 An overview of legislation that aims to ensure equality and inclusion in youth work

Republic of Ireland legislation

Equal Status Act (2000) and the Equality Act (2004) – in relation to Youth Work

The Equal Status Act 2000 and Equality Act 2004 prohibit services from discrimination and harassment on nine grounds. 'Services' includes all youth services, whether they are run by volunteers or paid staff, or whether fees are paid by participants or not.

The nine grounds are:

- Age
- Gender
- Religion
- Disability
- Family status
- Sexual orientation
- Civil / marital status
- Membership of the Traveller community
- Race (ethnicity, skin colour or national origin)



Northern Ireland legislation

Section 75 (a) – in relation to Youth Work

Similarly Section 75(a) of the NI Act (1998) requires public bodies to have due regard to the need for promoting equality of opportunity across nine equality grounds:

- **Age**
- **Racial group**
- **Marital status**
- **Sexual orientation**
- **Between men and women generally**
- **Between persons of different religious belief**
- **Between persons of different political opinion**
- **Between persons with a disability and persons without**
- **Between persons with dependants and persons without**



Other relevant equality legislation in the North, which protects young people through the provision of education and services, includes:

- Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998 (as amended)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended)
- Special Education Needs and Disability (NI) Order 2005 (as amended)
- Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976 (as amended)
- Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (NI) 2006 (as amended)
- Race Relations (NI) Order 1997 (as amended)

Discrimination

Discrimination is treating a person less favourably than another person. It includes making distinctions between people and denying them opportunities on the grounds of issues other than ability or qualifications, for example their gender, sexual orientation, ethnic background, disability, family circumstances etc.

Under Equality Legislation there are three kinds of discrimination:

1. **Direct** (e.g. refusing someone a service, being hostile to young people because of an aspect of their identity). Direct discrimination occurs when a person receives less favourable treatment, or a less favourable outcome, than another person in the same situation would have received on the grounds of their identity under the nine grounds.
2. **Indirect** (e.g. creating barriers to a young person's participation in a youth service). Indirect discrimination occurs when a seemingly neutral policy or requirement actually has an adverse impact on a person from a minority background. Indirect discrimination can be unintentional. It can happen when services fail to take into consideration that different groups of people have different needs. Treating people with different needs as the same can have the effect of being an indirect form of discrimination. For example, failing to provide for the mobility needs for people who are wheelchair users, such as providing wheelchair ramps, is a form of indirect discrimination that is fundamentally inequitable as it clearly denies access to this group of people.
3. **By association** – a young person is discriminated against not because of their identity or status but because of their association with someone else (e.g. treating someone unfavourably because they are a family member or friend of a gay person, member of the Traveller community, person with a disability etc).

Please note: In Northern Ireland, this would be known in equality legislation as 'Victimisation'.

Harassment

Harassment is any form of unwanted conduct related to any of the discriminatory grounds that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating a hostile, humiliating or offensive environment for the person.

Harassment, including sexual harassment, on any of the nine grounds is prohibited. This prohibition applies to all aspects of a youth service: in programmes, in drop-ins, on trips, on the sports field, and so on.

A person who is responsible for the operation of a youth service must not permit a young person to be harassed, or to be sexually harassed, because of their identity or status linked to the nine grounds. This responsible person will be liable for the harassment unless they took reasonably practical steps to prevent it.

In this way, a person could take a case against a youth service if they are being harassed or sexually harassed by another person in the group. Therefore, the responsibility is on the youth service to prove that they took all reasonable measures to ensure that it was stopped.

Youth services are liable for discrimination or harassment committed by an employee in the course of their work, whether or not it was done with the youth service's knowledge or approval. However, a service has a defence against being liable for the discriminatory actions or harassment of an employee if it can prove that it took such steps as were reasonably practical to prevent the employee from committing the actions.



Please note: Harassment applies to both the actions of workers and of young people.

Positive action (Affirmative action)

Positive action occurs when measures are taken to correct an unequal state of affairs, for example where equality of outcome has been verifiably absent because of discrimination in the past. Examples would be where previously under-represented groups (such as women) are deliberately targeted.

Under the Equal Status Act in the Republic of Ireland, youth services are allowed to:

- Provide preferential treatment, and
- Take positive actions that are genuinely intended to promote equality of opportunity for young people covered by the nine grounds.

Under Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 Public Authorities are ‘bound’ to have regard to the need for affirmative action (positive action) when considering their duty under the clause.

Further info: Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Phone: 01 858 9601 Email: info@ihrec.ie Website: www.ihrec.ie	Further info: The Equality Commission Phone: 028 90 500 600 Email: information@equalityni.org Website: www.equalityni.org

4 Developing an inclusion policy

You may have identified the need to develop an equality and inclusion policy or to review your existing policies. The following section will help you to develop your equality and inclusion policy.

An equality and inclusion policy should be developed in consultation with all team members. It should be reflective of practice and offer workable guidelines toward maintaining an inclusive and equal youth work setting.

Contents of an equality policy

It should include the following sections:

1. Your organisations mission statement.
2. Your organisation's general principles, core values and/or guiding principles.
3. Statement of your organisation's commitments to equality and inclusion.
4. A statement of who is targeted in an equality and inclusion policy. At minimum these must include all of the following 9 grounds:
 - Gender
 - Civil / marital status
 - Disability
 - Race (colour; ethnic or national origin)
 - Membership of the Traveller community
 - Family status
 - Sexual orientation

- Political or religious belief
- Age

Ideally you would also include the following grounds:

- Socio-economic status
- Address / geographic location

You might also consider including:

- Trade Union membership
- Criminal conviction
- Recovering from addiction



5. Statements outlining the responsibility of your organisation and its staff with regard to equality and inclusion.
6. Policy implementation statements about your:
 - Programmes and practices
 - Publications
 - Training
 - The work / service environment
 - Policy review and evaluations
7. Outline of your organisation's complaints procedures.
8. Clearly outline legislation and definitions in relation to equality and inclusion (e.g. discrimination—direct and indirect, harassment including sexual harassment, and interculturalism)

The NYCI Equality and Intercultural Programme can support you in developing an Equality and Intercultural Policy

5 A master checklist on equality and inclusion

The checklists are all framed under a proofing model referred to as the 5 P's which are outlined here:

Participation

Making sure we include the voice of young people at all levels of our youth service

Policies and procedures

This is a written commitment to deliver an equal and inclusive service

Public image

How we present our service to the community – to young people, their parents and other community services

Professional development

This is about staff and volunteers being trained and supported to deliver an inclusive youth service

Programme planning and delivery

Making sure our programmes are designed and delivered to consciously include the diverse needs of all young people in the community

Encompassing these five criteria at all times is the question of practice:

Practice

This is about looking beyond the practical application of youth work to the values and attitudes that pervade the youth service. It is crucial that this is fully considered in all youth work provision.

A note on other checklists in Access All Areas

Each specialised chapter has a checklist designed to look in more detail at your inclusion practice in relation to specific groups. These allow you to assess how well your service is doing in offering equality of outcome to young people who have diverse lives in your community. They are self-assessment exercises and can be used repeatedly and by all members of an organisation in an ongoing process of monitoring and evaluation. Ideally all of the checklists should be completed by each youth service over a period of time. International best practice says that obvious improvements should be planned for and monitored by repeating the self-assessments on a regular basis. This allows groups to assess their current position and to measure their achievements from this position over a defined period. At all times it is important to compare your current levels of inclusion with local demographics to get an accurate reading of how inclusive your service is relative to the diversity of the community in which you work. An inclusive service is one that fully reflects all the diversity within a community.



Using the checklists

1. Try to do the checklists as a team and have people from different roles in your organisation involved, ideally including the full spectrum from management to young people. Some groups have done each checklist during team meetings and followed them up with a discussion.
2. Go through the 'checklist' as a group or in pairs - discuss which points should be answered 'YES', which should be answered 'NO' and which should be answered 'PARTLY' and agree them as a group.
3. As a team identify 3 - 5 questions you answered 'NO' or 'PARTLY' to that you can work on over the next 6 months.
4. Put together a set of ACTIONS that will address these points (you can use the template provided on page 29). Use the appropriate chapters in Access All Areas to help you decide on a course of action - each chapter has practical advice and a list of resources and contacts.
5. Develop a work plan, indicating when the action will be completed and the milestones on the road to its completion.
6. Identify who in your youth group/organisation is going to be responsible for making sure the ACTIONS happen.
7. Plan to meet regularly to review how the ACTION PLAN is working.
8. When the work plan is completed, evaluate your progress and choose your next set of goals.

Using the master checklist

The master checklist will help you determine, in a general sense, how well equality and inclusion are embedded in your organisation. It will point you to actions that need attention and it may help you identify groups that you may not be targeting successfully. The specialised chapters will then help you to work more effectively with those young people that are not currently included in your youth groups.



You may be filling out this checklist as a leader of a youth group, youth club or youth service. Alternatively, you may be working within a youth organisation as an administrator or at organisation headquarters. Therefore, the degree to which you engage directly with young people may differ from others. You should answer the questions as they apply to your situation. **Be careful about questions that you initially think are ‘not applicable’ to you as this can be another way in which we inadvertently exclude people by evading the role or influence we may have – ask yourself instead how the questions can be made applicable to your own situation.**

When completing the master checklist, you should think about a range of diversities. Where it is not stated specifically, the checklist always refers to young people from minority ethnic backgrounds, young LGBTI+ people, young Travellers, young people with a disability, young people with mental health issues, young people involved in the juvenile justice system, young parents, early school leavers or those not in training employment or education, young people at risk of homelessness, young carers and geographically isolated young people. Follow steps 1-9 above in completing the master checklist.

Master Checklist

Public image

To be successful in making people from diverse backgrounds feel included they need to be visible in our organisation, [even if we do not work directly with young people]:

How do we present our services - to young people, their parents and other community services?

1.	A range of diverse young people are visible, or are specifically mentioned, in advertising, promotional materials, publications and photos of our organisation.	YES	PARTLY	NO
2.	Promotional material about our group/ organisation (flyers, posters, news articles, newsletters etc.) is inclusive:			
	• We use simple English to describe our programmes and activities	YES	PARTLY	NO
	• We use visual images to show what we do and where we meet	YES	PARTLY	NO
	• We have a disability accessible website (a blind person can use a voice activated screen reader to access the content)	YES	PARTLY	NO
	• Our material is available in the different languages most commonly used in our community	YES	PARTLY	NO
	• In the material, we state that we are accessible and inclusive of all people	YES	PARTLY	NO

3.	There are lots of ways to get in contact with our organisation/ group. You can:			
	• Phone the youth organisation/leader	YES	PARTLY	NO
	• Text (SMS) the youth organisation/ leader	YES	PARTLY	NO
	• Email the youth organisation/ leader	YES	PARTLY	NO
	• Drop in to the youth group/ organisation	YES	PARTLY	NO
	• Follow us and contact us on Facebook	YES	PARTLY	NO
	• Use Twitter to communicate with us	YES	PARTLY	NO
4.	The building(s) where we meet are accessible for wheelchair users, those who have sight loss or are deaf (see Access all Areas chapter 5 for a more detailed checklist on being accessible to people with a disability)	YES	PARTLY	NO
5.	We (staff, volunteers and young people) are open to and welcoming of all members of the community:			
	• Young people from a minority ethnic background including those who are asylum seekers, refugees, and undocumented	YES	PARTLY	NO
	• Young people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex or who identify sexual orientation in other terms (LGBTI+)	YES	PARTLY	NO
	• Young Travellers	YES	PARTLY	NO
	• Young people with a disability	YES	PARTLY	NO
	• Young people with mental health issues	YES	PARTLY	NO

• Young people who have been involved with the juvenile justice system	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Young parents	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Young people who have left school early	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Young people from all gender identity expressions	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Young people experiencing homelessness	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Young people who are geographically isolated	YES	PARTLY	NO
6. We tell all young people in our community about our youth group and encourage them to join:			
• We ask the members to invite their friends	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We tell all the schools in the area about our group/ organisation	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We put up notices in local libraries and community space/ centres	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We advertise in local newspapers	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We put notices in local shops	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We tell all the local places of worship (mosques, temples, synagogues, churches, evangelical church groups etc.) about our group/ organisation	YES	PARTLY	NO

7.	We seek to meet all parents in our community, tell them about our youth group/ organisation and reassure them about concerns they have about their children joining our youth group(s).	YES	PARTLY	NO
8.	We display information and awareness raising material (LGBTI+ information, Traveller pride week, anti-racist posters, disability awareness etc.).	YES	PARTLY	NO

Professional development

Our staff and volunteers are trained and supported to deliver an inclusive youth service?

9.	Our youth group/ organisation applies equality principles and legislation (e.g. staff and volunteers are committed to equality and follow inclusive practice.	YES	PARTLY	NO
10.	Job descriptions/ volunteer roles require staff and volunteers to have awareness of equality and inclusion issues.	YES	PARTLY	NO
11.	Staff and volunteers receive training on equality and inclusion issues and working with specific groups of people (LGBTI+, minority ethnic, Travellers, disability etc.).	YES	PARTLY	NO

Participation

To be effective in developing relevant, useful services, it is necessary to consult with diverse communities and young people [even if we do not provide direct work, or are currently working with diverse groups]:

How do we make sure we include the voices of young people at all levels of our youth organisation?

12.	The management committee of our group/ organisation includes members from a diverse range of backgrounds.	YES	PARTLY	NO
13.	Our group/ organisation provides a range of informal ways for young people to have their say about the group (advisory groups, forums, group contracts, surveys, consultations, reviews, evaluations etc.).	YES	PARTLY	NO
14.	Our group/ organisation has young people from a range of backgrounds involved in making decisions.	YES	PARTLY	NO

Policies and procedures

Does our organisation have a written commitment to deliver an equal and inclusive service?

15.	Our group/ organisation has a written commitment to equality and inclusion (charter, code of practice, mission statement, policy etc.).	YES	PARTLY	NO
16.	Volunteers/ staff understand what equality and inclusion means.	YES	PARTLY	NO
17.	We put what is written in our policy about equality and inclusion into practice (e.g. we model inclusive language; we address	YES	PARTLY	NO

identity bullying, hate speech and name calling: racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, disablism, islamophobia, classism etc.).

Programme planning and delivery

To be successful in addressing current issues faced by young people and youth workers, our youth groups need to be aware of who young people are and how they live [even if we do not provide direct work]:

How do we make sure our programmes are designed and delivered to consciously include the diverse needs and identities of all young people in the community?

18.	Our group/ organisation has up to date information about the ethnicity of young people in our local areas, and the numbers of Traveller families in the area.	YES	PARTLY	NO
19.	We learn about the cultural or ethnic backgrounds of young people who are part of our group/ organisation.	YES	PARTLY	NO
20.	We collect information on requirements in relation to disabilities.	YES	PARTLY	NO
21.	We have information on the gender breakdown of our group/ organisation and we include options on our forms to self-define and identify as non-binary/gender fluid, transgender etc.	YES	PARTLY	NO
22.	We compare the makeup of our local area with the people who attend our group and identify groups of young people who are under-represented.	YES	PARTLY	NO
23.	We consider the needs of all young people in our community when planning programmes (cultural, religious, mobility, literacy, family	YES	PARTLY	NO

responsibilities, diverse abilities, educational, health, etc.).

24.	We ask a broad range of young people including those who do not attend what they would like to get involved in.	YES	PARTLY	NO
25.	We run programmes or activities on diversity and equality that challenge prejudice and promote inclusion of:			
	• Young people from a minority ethnic background	YES	PARTLY	NO
	• Young LGBTI+ people	YES	PARTLY	NO
	• Young Travellers	YES	PARTLY	NO
	• Young people with a disability	YES	PARTLY	NO
	• Young people with mental health issues	YES	PARTLY	NO
	• Young people involved in juvenile justice	YES	PARTLY	NO
	• Young parents	YES	PARTLY	NO
	• Young people who have left school early	YES	PARTLY	NO
	• Gender roles and stereotypes are explored and challenged	YES	PARTLY	NO
	• Young people experiencing homelessness	YES	PARTLY	NO
	• Young people who are geographically isolated	YES	PARTLY	NO

Develop your Action Plans

Use the checklist above and the information in the toolkit to develop an action plan.

Refer to the checklists you have reviewed. **Consider the explanations you gave to the 'no' and 'in progress' responses.** Choose the areas where you feel you can make some concrete improvement in the:

- Short term (1-2 weeks)
- Medium term (1-3 months)
- Long term (6 months – 1 year)

Write up an action plan with:

1. Timeframes for completing your chosen tasks.
2. Allocate the person in the team responsible for ensuring the various tasks are completed. Ensure the tasks are divided across the team.
3. Determine what supports need to be put in place to complete these tasks.

Action Plan Template

Section (e.g. working with young LGBTI+ people)	Description of action to be taken	Date for completion	Person responsible	Supports needed
Short term (1-2 weeks)				
Mid term (1-3 months)				
Long term (6–12 months)				

6 A master checklist that young people can use to assess the youth activities they attend

Young people/ youth members can use this checklist to assess the youth group/ organisation they are a part of (or other voluntary groups in your community). It can be done as a youth activity.

Use the checklist to identify how your youth group/ organisation can be more inclusive of young people who have diverse lives and identities. When reading the checklist consider the following groups of young people: young people from minority ethnic backgrounds, young LGBTI+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and other gender identity descriptors) people, young Travellers, young people with a disability, young people with mental health issues, young people involved in the juvenile justice system, young parents, young people who have left school early, young people who are geographically isolated and young people experiencing homelessness.

How do I get started?

1. Invite a team of young people to come together to assess the youth group/organisation (ideally young people from different backgrounds).
2. Ask them to go through the 'checklist' as a group – they may also decide to change some questions.
3. Together they discuss which questions should be answered 'YES', which should be answered 'NO' and which should be answered 'PARTLY' to convey their experience of inclusion and equality in the youth group.
4. Identify between 3 and 5 of the questions that were answered 'NO' or 'PARTLY' that your group/ organisation can work on over the next 6

months. At this stage you will need to involve the youth leaders too.

5. Put together a set of ACTIONS that will address these issues (use the template at the end of this document if it helps). You can also use the appropriate sections in Access All Areas to help you decide on a course of action (there are more detailed checklists in each section which may help you along with practical tips and a list of resources and contacts).
6. Identify who in your youth group/ organisation is going to be responsible for making sure the ACTIONS happen.
7. Plan to meet regularly to review how the ACTION PLAN is working.
8. After 6 months you can go back to the checklist and re-do this process over again identifying 3 to 5 new points to work on.

Master Checklist for youth members to use

Public image

To be successful in making people from diverse backgrounds feel included they need to be visible in our organisation.

How do we present our services - to young people, their parents and other community services?

1. A range of diverse young people are visible, or are specifically mentioned, in advertising, promotional materials, publications and photos of our group/organisation. YES PARTLY NO

2. Promotional material (flyers, posters, news articles, newsletters etc) about our group/organisation is inclusive:
 - We use simple English to describe our programmes and activities YES PARTLY NO

 - We use visual images to show what we do and where we meet YES PARTLY NO

 - We have a disability accessible website (it is written in a way that a blind person can use a screen reader to access its content) YES PARTLY NO

 - Information about our group is available in the different languages most commonly used in our community YES PARTLY NO

 - In the material, we state that we are accessible and inclusive of all young people YES PARTLY NO

3. There are lots of ways to get in contact with our organisation/ group. You can:

- Phone the youth organisation/leader YES PARTLY NO
 - Text (SMS) the youth organisation/ leader YES PARTLY NO
 - Email the youth organisation/ leader YES PARTLY NO
 - Drop in to the youth group/ organisation YES PARTLY NO
 - Follow us on Facebook YES PARTLY NO
 - Use Twitter to communicate with us YES PARTLY NO
4. **The buildings where we meet are accessible - for wheelchair users, those who have sight loss, are Deaf, parents of babies and young children, for people of different religions or none, etc** (Chapter 5 has a more detailed accessibility checklist). YES PARTLY NO
5. **The youth group (youth members, youth leaders, staff and volunteers) are open to and welcoming of all members of the community, for example:**
- Young people from a minority ethnic background including those who are asylum seekers, refugees and undocumented. YES PARTLY NO
 - Young people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, intersex or who identify their gender identity or sexual orientation in other terms (LGBTI+) YES PARTLY NO
 - Young Travellers YES PARTLY NO
 - Young people with a disability YES PARTLY NO
 - Young people with mental health issues YES PARTLY NO

- Young people who have been involved with the juvenile justice system YES PARTLY NO
 - Young parents YES PARTLY NO
 - Young people who have left school early YES PARTLY NO
 - Young people with all gender identity expressions YES PARTLY NO
 - Young people experiencing homelessness YES PARTLY NO
 - Young people who are geographically isolated YES PARTLY NO
6. **Youth leaders have information and a list of specialist services they can refer young people to.** YES PARTLY NO
7. **Youth leaders take part in meetings, partner and network with other community groups** (e.g. health professionals, Community Gardaí/ PSNI, schools, social workers, community workers, specialist organisations). YES PARTLY NO
8. **We tell all young people in our community about our youth group and encourage them to join:**
- We tell our friends YES PARTLY NO
 - The youth leaders tell all the schools in the area about the group YES PARTLY NO
 - We put up notices in our local library and community space/centres YES PARTLY NO
 - We advertise in local newspapers YES PARTLY NO
 - We put notices in local shops YES PARTLY NO

- We tell all the local places of worship (mosques, temples, synagogues, churches, evangelical church groups etc.) about our group YES PARTLY NO
- 9. Youth leaders seek to meet all parents in our community, tell them about our youth group and reassure them about concerns they have about their children joining our youth group. YES PARTLY NO
- 10. We display information and awareness raising material in our meeting place (LGBTI+ information, Traveller pride week, anti-racist posters, disability awareness etc.). YES PARTLY NO

Professional development

Our staff and volunteers are trained and supported to deliver an inclusive youth service?

- 11. Our youth group/ organisation operates under equality principles and legislation in relation to employment and involvement of volunteers (e.g. members of the staff and volunteers come from diverse backgrounds, youth leaders are committed to equality etc.). YES PARTLY NO
- 12. Staff and volunteers are committed to equality and inclusion YES PARTLY NO
- 13. Staff and volunteers receive training on equality and inclusion issues and working with specific groups of young people (minority ethnic, Travellers, LGBTI+, disability etc) YES PARTLY NO

Participation

To be effective in developing relevant, useful services, it is necessary to consult with diverse communities and young people [even if the organisation does not work directly with young people]:

How do we make sure we include the voices of young people at all levels of our youth organisation?

14.	The management/ advisory committee of our group/ organisation includes members from a diverse range of backgrounds.	YES PARTLY NO
15.	Our group/ organisation provides a range of ways for young people to have a say about the group (advisory groups, forums, group contracts, surveys, consultations, reviews, evaluations etc.).	YES PARTLY NO
16.	Our group/ organisation has young people from a range of backgrounds involved in making decisions.	YES PARTLY NO

Policies and procedures

Our organisation has a written commitment to deliver an equal and inclusive service?

17.	Our group/ organisation has a written commitment to equality and inclusion (charter, code of practice, mission statement, policy etc).	YES PARTLY NO
18.	Our youth leaders understand what equality, interculturalism and inclusion means.	YES PARTLY NO

19. Our group/ organisation puts what is written about equality and inclusion into practice (e.g. we act on our rules on bullying, name calling, etc). **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

Programme planning and delivery

To be successful in addressing current issues faced by young people and youth workers, our youth groups need to be aware of who young people are and how they live.

How do we make sure our programmes are designed and delivered to consciously include the diverse needs and identities of all young people in the community?

20. Our group/ organisation has up to date information about the ethnicity of young people in our local areas, and the number of Traveller families in the area. **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**
21. We collect information on the cultural or ethnic background of young people who are part of our group/ organisation. **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**
22. We collect information on member's requirements in relation to disabilities. **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**
23. The youth group has information on the gender breakdown of our group/ organisation and they have included options for us to self-define and identify as non-binary/gender fluid, transgender etc. **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**
24. The youth leaders compare the makeup of our local area with the people who attend our group and identify groups of young people who are underrepresented. **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**
25. We consider the needs of all young people in our community when planning programmes (cultural, **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

religious, mobility, literacy, family responsibilities, diverse abilities, educational, etc.).

26.	The youth leaders ask a broad range of young people, including those who do not attend, what they would like to get involved in.	YES PARTLY NO
27. We run programmes or activities on diversity and equality that challenge prejudice and promote inclusion of:		
	• Young people from a minority ethnic background	YES PARTLY NO
	• Young LGBTI+ people	YES PARTLY NO
	• Young Travellers	YES PARTLY NO
	• Young people with a disability	YES PARTLY NO
	• Young people with mental health issues	YES PARTLY NO
	• Young people involved in the juvenile justice system	YES PARTLY NO
	• Young parents	YES PARTLY NO
	• Young people who are not in school, employment or training/ early school leavers	YES PARTLY NO
	• Gender roles and stereotypes are explored and challenged	YES PARTLY NO
	• Young people experiencing homelessness	YES PARTLY NO
	• Young people who are geographically isolated	YES PARTLY NO

Action Plan Template

	Description of action to be taken	Date for completion	Person/s responsible
Short term (1-2 weeks)			
Mid term (1-3 months)			
Long term (6 – 12 months)			

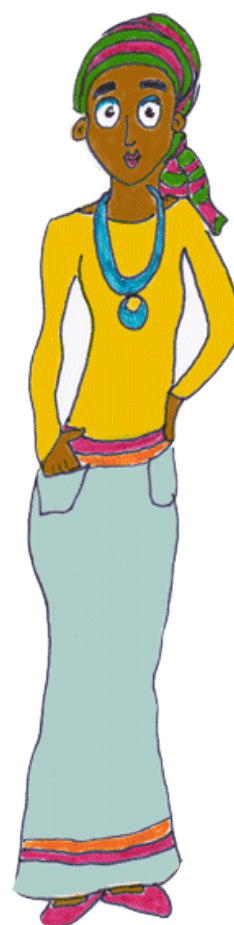
7 Good practice on collecting, storing, and using identity data

Ensuring equality and inclusion practice: identifying diversity in your youth organisation

It is impossible to determine how inclusive your service is if you do not have data on the identity or circumstances of the young people who use your service. If you are unsure how to address this, the following section will give you some guidelines on collecting, collating and using data.

Collecting identity data is not straightforward. The sensitivity and expertise needed to support young people who have not as yet come out openly as LGBTI+ for instance, or those who are concerned about their mental health, or who have a disability but don't want to reveal this information, or whose immigration status is something they fear disclosing, is considerable. Collecting data on these aspects of identity are therefore not recommended. Readers are advised to work with relevant organisations for advice on how to go about collating more sensitive data and to be clear why they would need it. You must also comply with GDPR guidelines on storage and use of data and why you are asking for information.

However, it is totally appropriate and indeed good practice that some aspects of a young person's identity are asked about. These include asking whether a young person has a disability, have any special requirements, what religion they practice, what their ethnic identity is, what gender they



identify as, and whether they come from a Traveller background. It is up to those answering to decide whether to impart the information, and this option should be clear, but it is appropriate to ask.

Therefore, registration forms in all youth services should invite young people to identify their special requirements, any disability, their gender, their religion (or none) and their ethnic or cultural identity. An example of how to do this and how to use the information you collect, in accordance with good practice, is laid out below.

If your organisation does not use registration forms, there are other ways of collecting this information – through one to one conversations or through activities for example. For more information on this, see page 46.

Rationale for asking about ethnicity, gender etc.

In order to be able to meet the needs of the young people who attend your organisation (and also your staff or volunteers) it is important to know what is important to them. This may include our ethnic or cultural identity, gender identity, religious practice and any special requirements or disabilities we might have. In order to plan effectively it is important for youth services to know this information. You might, for example, decide to acknowledge the diversity within your organisation by celebrating important festivals or religious days. You would need to know which ones are important to the group you are working with. You might also need to understand what cultural practices your members live by – for example certain foods might cause offence, or members may have to abide by specific dress codes. When planning an event, you would also need to know in advance what special supports you would have to put in place with regard to young people with a disability. For example, the need to ensure wheelchair access, to provide visual aids or to use different learning and communication styles. Ensuring safer spaces is also critical. This will include knowing – and using - the preferred pronouns of members of your group.

What is the best approach to collecting information on ethnic identity, disability, gender, religion etc.

One of the more obvious ways to gather information about your members is through the use of registration forms. Good practice research asserts that information about a person's ethnicity and gender should always be self-described, by the person themselves if aged 11 or older – and by parents/guardians for participants under 11. Young people may prefer to have someone present to explain aspects of a registration form and sometimes to help them fill it out. Always respect a person's right not to disclose information about themselves. Non-disclosure is common, especially in relation to disabilities. Some organisations are concerned initially about the lack of responses to identity questions. But given time, trust-building and a realisation by young people that it is used to improve services the rate of responses does increase so perseverance is important.

Asking identity questions raises the question of data protection and confidentiality. Be clear to your members that this information will be kept confidential and safe and that it will be used to meet the needs of all those using the organisation. Also explain that you are committed to inclusiveness and equality, and that without this data you cannot assess how well you are meeting this goal.

Reviewing and adapting your registration forms

We would recommend using the questions in the sample registration form below which you might like to copy or use to adapt your own forms. You can also use this form to do a once-off inclusion survey. There may be situations when parents or youth members ask questions about using the registration form. In practice though, we find that most people are very happy to fill it out as it is. However, a fuller rationale has been included after Table 1 that you can copy and use.

Table 1 – Sample registration form^{vi}

Our youth centre believes in **equality, diversity and inclusion.**

We would like all people to feel **included** here. In order to **respond/plan for individual needs** and interests we are asking you to complete the form below.

Only reveal what you are happy for us to know.

The information given will be **treated confidentially** and used only to make this a safe and relevant youth group that meets your needs and interests

Name: 	Phone:
Address: 	Email:  Date of birth: / /  Religious tradition: _____ Practising ☐ Non-practising ☐
Gender Male ☐ Female ☐ Non-binary ☐ Other descriptor ☐ Please describe if you wish to Does this match the sex you were assigned at birth? Yes ☐ No ☐	
Your National / Cultural / Ethnic Identity: _____ (Give your answer to describe the identity that best describes who you are – what cultural heritage you most identify with. Examples others have given to this question include Irish, Irish-Traveller, Polish, Irish-Polish, Nigerian, Nigerian-Irish, British, Northern Irish etc.)	
Individual Requirements: (Please mention anything that we need to know about e.g. disability, allergies, medical conditions, dietary requirements etc. and the supports you need to allow you to participate) _____	
Languages you speak: 1 st language (mother tongue) _____ 2 nd language/s _____	Interests Friendships  Art  Music  Sport  Self-Confidence  Computers  Direction in your life     Other  _____
How did you hear about us? _____	

Supplementary information to offer those filling out the registration form

Why is it important to ask about ethnicity, religion, gender and disability?

Our ethnic identity, gender, religion and any special requirements or disabilities we have identify us in very deep ways, especially when these are key signifiers of a minority identity. It is important to ask these questions in order to plan effectively and to be able to be able to meet the needs of the young people who use our service (and also our staff or colleagues).

Ethnicity & language: We might, for example, want to acknowledge the cultural diversity of our members by celebrating important festival days. We would need to know which ones are important to our group members and also which languages are relevant if we wanted to put up welcome signs in different languages in our meeting spaces. We might also need to source information in other languages so we can explain our activities more clearly to parents or our members (for example, NYCI has translated flyers that explain what youth work is in 8 different languages and some youth organisations have resources available in several different languages). We would also need to understand what cultural practices your group members live by – for example certain foods that might cause offence or specific dress codes or gender rules our group members may have to abide by.

Moreover, many young people from migrant or mixed ethnic backgrounds who have been brought up in Ireland may describe themselves as Irish. However, the language spoken at home and associated cultural heritage will have a significant influence on their personal understanding of diversity. Equally, an experience of being part of a migrant family may mean that they have different needs and experiences from others who have been established in an area for a long time especially in regard to having a sense of belonging.

Gender: We ask about gender to respect the young person's personal expression of their gender identity, to not assume a binary identity, and to know to ask what pronouns to use. The question that asks whether the gender described is the same as the sex assigned at birth is to know if someone is transgender – or intersex – so we can plan around practical issues such as gender neutral toilets, changing spaces in swimming pools etc. and when going on residential.

Disability: When planning an event, we would also need to know in advance what special supports to put in place to meet the specific needs of young people with a disability who would like to attend our service. For example, we may need to ensure wheelchair access

or have visual aids or accommodate an assistant for a member. We may also need to adapt our activities, our way of work or our ways of communicating.

Religion: We would also need to know if we can plan an event on specific days and whether our members' religious services might clash with an event and prevent them from being able to attend.

What is meant by ethnic identity?

Ethnicity can, and is, defined in several different ways. Language by its very nature changes over time and meaning is often not fixed. We use the term ethnicity* to be able to describe how we are different to other people. That difference, however, is what we interpret it as and not how others (often wrongfully) would believe. Ethnicity, at its simplest, means the group of people to which we feel we belong. Where we belong to two (or more) groups of people then we have dual ethnicity or we are multi-ethnic. This will be the case for children of mixed parents, or for people who have lived for a considerable time in two or more different countries, or in the case of Northern Ireland where a person might feel they belong to Ireland, Britain and Northern Ireland. We believe it is better to use the term quite loosely and for people to respond to the question as they see fit. It is important to know that the group that we belong to – i.e. our ethnic identity - might, or might not necessarily, be linked to our genetic ancestry.

National identity & ethnic identity: We used the term 'national or ethnic identity' in this registration form. We have included the term national because people understand it as a term referring to their country of origin. However, while the term national is a legal definition of the country you belong to, ethnicity is more about where you truly feel you belong to. These are not necessarily the same. Where possible the person's ethnicity is the preferred description to include. However, if you travel abroad is part of what you offer then it is important to know what the nationality a person holds.

*In common terminology the term 'race' is often used to denote difference in peoples. It is no longer appropriate to use the term 'race' in this way. The term needs to be understood as a social construct that is linked to assumptions of superiority of some groups of people over others most often linked to an assumption of genetic superiority. This has been proven to be false science and completely discredited but we live with its legacy in the form of racism. For this reason, many use the term in the context of racial justice work.

Reviewing your staff and volunteer forms

For staff and volunteers, it is valid to ask similar identity questions to those in the young person's form, again always stating that the questions are optional and explaining why you are asking them.

Alternate ways of doing an inclusion survey - using interactive methods to collect data on diversity

Doing a survey is an alternate way of doing an equality audit. However, it may not give you a 100% return as some members will be absent on the night you do it or parents may not get around to returning the forms. Other ways to collect data on the identity of individuals in your youth group is through conversations with parents or the young people themselves. You can also do it through the activities that you run.

Activities for collecting data

You can develop a **picture of cultural diversity** (or influence) for your membership by putting up a world map, an Irish map and a county map and asking the young people and volunteers to say what parts of the world/country/county they have lived in or their parents have lived in. It helps to use pins and string to create lines from their own name (placed around the outside of the maps) to the place/s they want to talk about. In this activity don't forget to ask about different cultural connections from within the country such as those of the Traveller community. Also fully include those from the majority culture who may have significant connections to other areas in the country or who may have family living abroad.

You can discover how many **languages** are used in the group by asking the young people to draw flags, or stamp their painted hands, on a wall and write 'welcome' beside it in their home language/s.

You can explore **gender identity** in groups by asking the young people to create a name badge and to include their pro-noun on it. This activity will involve doing awareness raising on the importance of pronouns and understanding gender as not being only a binary concept.

If you are doing these activities as part of a data collection survey it helps to have someone observing and writing down the information. If some information is unclear it can be clarified later. Make sure the young people know you are also doing a data collection exercise.

Using the data collected to assess how diverse your organisation is

An identifier process helps you with your organisational review (planning). You can use it to establish whether the membership of your youth group reflects the diversity within your wider community. By comparing the statistics from your youth group with demographic data, you can see if you are engaging – in relative numbers - with the young people from diverse backgrounds in your community. This will be easier with some data sets than others. For many groups you can use the demographic data included in the various chapters of Access All Areas.

Ethnic diversity

Ethnic identity is one area that takes some in-depth research. To look at your ethnic diversity relative to local demographics you will be asking:

Does the % of minority ethnic young people attending my organisation reflect the % of people from a minority ethnic background in my area – and in relative numbers to the population of different ethnic groups that live in the community?

To do a comparison you will need to determine the ethnic diversity in your community.

- Don't forget that in any data set in the Republic of Ireland, people with UK citizenship are included as a minority ethnicity.
- Travellers are a minority ethnic group in both Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.
- **Whatever source of data you find you will need to be able to compare like with like. This means you will need to collate your data in the same way as your comparative data set.**

To find out the local demographics you can try a number of sources:

Republic of Ireland:

- Ask your local schools for their statistics. All schools collect these statistics and your local schools may be able to give you the information.
- The Department of Education and Skills may be able to give you statistics for the schools in your area. You would need to know the Department codes for the schools. The schools can give you these. GDPR considerations may put restrictions on this service.
- Pavee Point did an all-Ireland health survey of the Traveller community in 2010. Their statistics can be accessed for each county on www.paveepoint.ie or <http://pavee.ie/ourgeels/>
- Ask a local Traveller support service for information about Travellers in your community. They may know the families in person and will be able to advise you. They may know if the Travellers in your area are keen to engage. They might also know whether they would be comfortable disclosing that they are Travellers and other sensitivities that you should be aware of. Many Travellers do not like to self-identify, especially in youth groups where settled young people are in the majority.
- Look up the central statistics website – www.cso.ie. You can find statistics for each town in Ireland, with over 5000 residents classified by ethnic or cultural background. Be aware that research from Pavee Point

suggests that the CSO figure may not represent the actual number of Travellers in the Republic of Ireland.^{vii}

- The Central Statistics office (CSO) [www.cso.ie] can provide a full report for your area that includes breakdowns by age and ethnicity but there may be a small charge for it.

Northern Ireland:

- The Department of Education Northern Ireland Statistics and Research branch can provide you with a breakdown of ethnicity in primary and post primary schools by district council area
- Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency can provide more general information on migration and population www.nisra.gov.uk. The statistics on the population comes from two main sources: 'The Registrars General Annual Report' which give an annual overview of the NI population and 'The Census' which gives a once in a decade detailed breakdown of the population (next one due 2021). Detailed population and migration small area statistics can also be obtained from the Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information Service www.ninis.nisra.gov.uk/mapxtreme/DataCatalogue.asp?button=Population

If you have no sources:

- In the absence of more detailed information you can use a 16% figure for ethnic identity as the figure you compare your data to in the Republic of Ireland as this is the national average. This would mean that ideally 16% of your group come from a minority ethnic background.
- You could use a 1.5% figure for Traveller ethnicity to compare your data against as this is the national average in the Republic of Ireland. However, this will not be relevant in many communities and it would be much too low in others.

Collating and storing your data for comparative purposes

The exercise above shows the importance of collating your data in such a way that it can be used effectively. This will involve creating a database that will accurately give you the data you need. Ideally you will be working toward increasing your diversity over time, setting realistic goals and implementation plans. Collating this data well and future proofing it should help you measure this. It will need to:

- Have options for different gender descriptions – at a minimum it should include male, female, non-binary, other descriptor, and also have fields for transgender and intersex
- Have options for ethnic identity that correlates with national data sets - ideally use the descriptors from the national census but leave fields for new descriptors to be added. Use the most up-to-date fields – for example, Roma and Arabic will be new fields added to the Republic of Ireland census in 2021. In 2026, when the census goes online, there may be more fields added. The UK example may be a good example to look at - see www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/style-guide/ethnic-groups#list-of-ethnic-groups. However, there will be national differences, much less from Caribbean backgrounds in Republic of Ireland and perhaps more – relatively - from Brazil. Moreover, if you are comparing your data with schools data a fuller list of descriptors is more useful and you can identify the young people from specific ethnic groups in your area that are not attending your youth groups and you can look at new ways of engaging with these groups.
- If you leave the ethnicity question open for description – which is good practice – there is a task in translating that into any fields you are using in your database (for example if you follow the census descriptors). If you have room in your registration form it is good to use the same fields that are in your database, but it is always best practice to include an open descriptor question.
- Alternatively – depending on what you are using the data for you could

decide to use just 3 ethnicity fields – white Irish/Northern Irish, Traveller and minority ethnic background. This will give you an overall percentage of ethnic diversity in your groups (there may be some discrepancies with comparative data sets as there could be a number of members who are white Irish/Northern Irish and who are also from minority ethnic backgrounds such as naturalized Irish/UK citizens from a white background). If you are using this method, it is advisable to count the number of different ethnic backgrounds the young people come from so that you know the breadth of ethnic diversity in your groups.

- Use the national census for religious descriptors.
- One way to record disability and special needs is by the type and level of support that may be needed. This could include fields such as PA/extra staff support, adapted toilets, adapted activities, sensory adaptations, time out rooms, additional training, dietary needs, medication requirements, etc.

Determining supports for those that have a disability or special requirements

- Ask the young person or their parent/ guardian who has told you about a disability what you can do to meet their needs.
- Put plans in place to make the necessary provisions.
- Do relevant disability awareness training based on your members identified needs with every member of staff and volunteers including staff that have minimal contact such as admin, security or maintenance staff. For example, in the case of an emergency a warning alarm is not appropriate if one of your members has hearing loss, or flashing signs will not be appropriate for someone who is blind.

For more information see Chapters 5 and 6 Working with young people with a disability.

Determining supports for transgender, intersex and non-binary young people

- In spaces that you manage or can influence, ensuring that you have gender neutral toilets.
- Ask each young person what their preferred pro-noun is, use it and support others to use it.
- Each situation relating to toilets, changing areas and residentials will be developed in a case by case basis in consultation with the young person. This will include asking for:
 - Managing toilet preferences when gender neutral options are not available
 - Managing changing room preferences in sports/ swimming centres you use
 - Deciding what needs to happen on residentials in terms of room sharing etc
- Do awareness training with staff and volunteers including staff that have minimal contact such as admin, security or maintenance staff.



For more information see Chapter 4 Working with LGBTI+ young people.

What to do if your membership is not diverse

There may be several reasons why your group is not diverse. It may be because ethnic diversity in your area is low. It may be that another youth group in your area is engaging with young people with a disability or with LGBTI+ young people. Or you may be targeting a particular minority group that has little diversity within it. To embed inclusion in youth work it is important to approach it with a community focus.

- Make contact with other youth groups in your community. Determine if other groups are actively engaging with young people in the area from minority groups. Together, assess whether the minority young people who would like to engage in youth work in your area are accessing a youth group. Determine if there are any gaps in provision and decide how to fill those gaps.
- Run diversity inclusion programmes in your youth group. This could include doing ongoing activities on equality, identity and inclusion. It could also include doing visits and exchanges – especially with groups that are already engaging with young people from diverse backgrounds.



8 Using Access All Areas to carry out a regional or county-wide survey

Why run a regional or county-wide diversity survey?

Because youth activities are by definition ‘voluntary’, those who decide to attend a given youth group, will, by their actions, make up the demographic of a group. This can result in a group that reflects the inherent inequalities that exist within wider society i.e. it will consist of those young people who are the most ‘privileged’ or have the strongest, and most mainstream, social networks.

Nevertheless, much work has been done to target young people who come from diverse backgrounds and diversity in youth groups is growing. However, we do not know what the true picture of diversity is across all youth groups and youth organisations as there are no central reporting systems in place.

Moreover, to get a clearer picture of diversity in youth services we would need to assess it on a county or regional level. Without this knowledge youth organisations and decision makers are not in a strategic position to know which minority groups are not accessing youth work opportunities. For strategic planning to fill these gaps it is important to know:

- Which groups of young people with diverse lives and identities are being reached and where?
- Which groups of young people with diverse lives and identities are not being reached, in what areas, and what are the reasons?
- In what ways can we support youth organisations to be more inclusive in the areas, and with identity groups, where diversity is not evidenced?

Access All Areas can be used to carry out a regional or county-wide survey.

Who would be involved in carrying out a survey?

A survey could be coordinated by an ETB/ ELB Youth Officer or Regional Manager of a national or regional organisation with support from other youth organisations. It only has a value if the vast majority of youth organisations in the region or county are involved as a survey would need to look at youth engagement in an entire geographical area to have validity in terms of who is engaging. Sports bodies could also be included.

The actual tasks involved could be carried out or coordinated by Youth Development Officers or Regional Managers during a visit to each youth group or youth leader under their remit in the chosen area. A typical county wide or regional survey could involve up to 30 youth groups or more.

Collection of the results from each youth group should go to the co-ordination body that would collate the data, compare it with demographics from the area and then map out and disseminate the results to the participating organisations.

What tasks are involved in doing a diversity survey?

There are 4 tasks involved in doing a survey:

1. To know the strengths and gaps that exist amongst youth groups in the area (as youth leaders perceive them) we can use the Master checklist in Access All Areas and ask all youth leaders to fill it out for their group.
2. To capture a picture of the diversity that exists and what areas of inclusion need a greater focus, we can capture a snapshot picture of diversity across youth groups in the region by adapting the registration form (or a diversity activity) discussed earlier in this chapter and ask each youth member to fill it in. It can help to choose one meeting and ask everyone attending to fill it in. For a research survey it is appropriate to anonymise it by taking out the name and contact details.

You can add questions to the form to capture other specific information you might want such as asking what inclusion activities or topics they have covered.

3. To capture a snapshot of inclusive practice, coordinators of the survey (or researchers) can observe the visual messages conveyed within the youth group setting – posters, signs, flyers, existing diversity, etc.
4. To capture how inclusion is practiced the coordinators of the survey (or researchers) can ask the youth group about the activities they held, or discussions they had in the previous few months on equality and inclusion topics. Alternatively, the survey form (task 2) can include a question asking if the young people have done activities on inclusion in the previous few months and if so on what topics of inclusion.

Analysis

Task 1 By asking youth leaders to fill in the checklists and collating all of these together the coordinating body/ researchers will identify strengths and weaknesses within the region. This can help identify areas that need attention such as training needs, networking events, partnership building, etc.

Task 2 By asking young people and leaders – on any given night - to fill out a registration/ survey form (or take part in a diversity activity) that captures data on the ethnic, religious, gender and disability diversity within the youth group you get a clear picture of diversity in the group. This can then be compared with demographics on minority ethnic groups, minority religions, Traveller groups and those with a disability living in the area. This provides a very clear picture of the levels of engagement of young people from diverse backgrounds and identifies who is not engaging and where they are (see the section above on where to find area demographics and see the demographics section in each chapter in Access All Areas).

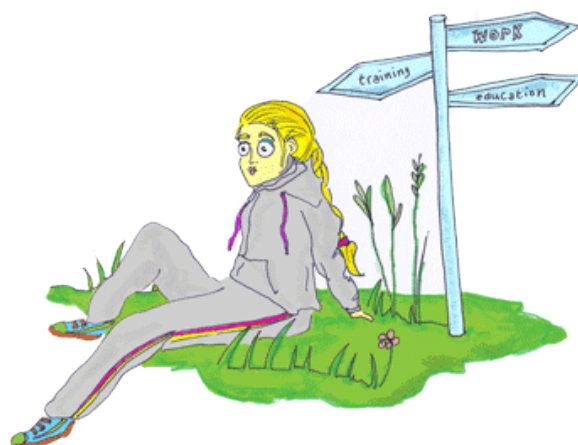
Task 3 Observing the youth setting, and their publicity and notices in the area can demonstrate how people from diverse backgrounds will see the youth group/ service.

- Is there anything to show that it is an LGBTI+ friendly environment?
- Is there anything to show that it is culturally diverse or welcoming?
- Is it an accessible building?
- Is there information, or an invitation to talk to someone, if a young person needs support on issues such as mental health, sexual health or pregnancy advice, back to education or training possibilities etc?

Task 4 By asking questions about the activities that have been run in the previous few months that have focussed on diversity and inclusion you can get a very good sense of how embedded inclusion is in the youth service. Also of importance is how they run activities. For example:

- Do they use a number of ways to explain and run activities to accommodate the diversity of learning needs in the groups?
- Do they have a learning ethos as leaders, to deepen their understanding of inclusion issues and a commitment to social justice?

Ideally the data collated above would be backed up by interviews with other key organisations and stakeholders in the county or region. These might include minority religious bodies, disability support groups, refugee and migrant support groups, Traveller organisations, LGBTI+ organisations or networks, and sporting organisations.



Follow on

The Access All Areas individual chapters can be used by each participating youth group/organisation to look more closely at their practice and to develop action plans.

Support on the process is available from NYCI.

Useful Contacts

Department of Children, Disability, Equality and Integration www.dcyu.ie	Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform www.justice.ie
Department of Education and Skills www.education.ie	Central Statistics Office www.cso.ie
Department of Education NI www.deni.gov.uk	Northern Ireland Statistic and Research Agency www.nisra.gov.uk
The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Phone: 01 858 9601 Email: info@ihrec.ie Web: www.ihrec.ie	The Equality Commission Phone: 028 - 90 500 600 Email: information@equalityni.org Web: www.equalityni.org

Community and Voluntary Sector

Activelink www.activelink.ie	Online network for Irish non profit organisations: information on seminars, events, employment and volunteering opportunities and general news relating to the community and Voluntary sector in Ireland.
Changing Ireland www.changingireland.ie	Changing Ireland is an independent community development magazine published quarterly and located in a disadvantaged community where positive change is taking place, in Moyross, Limerick.
The Wheel www.wheel.ie	Support and representative body connecting Community and Voluntary organisations in Ireland.

NICVA www.nicva.org	NICVA, the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action, is a membership and representative umbrella body for the entire voluntary and community sector of Northern Ireland. NICVA offers a range of services including advice (governance and charity advice, HR), fundraising, research, policy and lobbying, training and consultancy.

References

- ⁱ Inequality and the Stereotyping of young people, Maurice Devlin published by The Equality Authority 2006 p16-17
- ⁱⁱ Model of Effective Practice, Curriculum Development Unit (2003)
- ⁱⁱⁱ Based on Baker J, Lynch K, Cantillion S, and Walsh J (2004), *Equality: From Theory to Action*, Palgrave Macmillan, Bakingstoke
- ^{iv} www.bristol-cyps.org.uk/services/eit/definitions.html
- ^v www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/multiagencyworking/glossary/?asset=glossary&id=22998
- ^{vi} This registration form was developed from one devised by Gurranabraher Youth Service (YWI Cork) after they reviewed their practice using Access All Areas checklists
- ^{vii} See <http://pavee.ie/ourgeels/>

CHAPTER TWO

Working with young people from a minority ethnic background

Introduction

This chapter focuses on working with young people from a minority ethnic background. It presents demographics relating to minority ethnic communities, explains the varying needs and issues that young people from minority ethnic backgrounds may face and it offers practical advice on reaching out and including culturally diverse young people in youth groups. It concludes with a list of contacts and resources that will help you in your work.

In the Republic of Ireland, under the **Equal Status Act 2000** and the **Equality Act 2004**, it is unlawful to discriminate against a person on the grounds of their race (ethnicity, skin colour or national origin), or religious belief, or membership of the Traveller community, in the provision of goods and services, education, sports, access to public facilities and accommodation.



In Northern Ireland the **Race Relations (NI) order 1997**, makes it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of colour, nationality, ethnic origin, national origin and membership of the Irish Traveller community

Terminologyⁱ

This resource has been developed to be used by youth workers on the island of Ireland. At times it is necessary to make distinctions between our two jurisdictions and we had to choose a terminology to reflect this. We have chosen for the most part to use Northern Ireland (NI) and Republic of Ireland (ROI). At times we also use North and South. Additionally, for clarity, where information is significantly different we have used coloured boxes:

Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland

An **Ethnic Group** is a group that regards itself or is regarded by others as a distinct community on the basis of shared characteristics such as language, religion, nationality or traditions. We are all members of an ethnic group.

Culture is the way in which ethnicity is expressed. It includes the customs, values, behaviours and means of communication by which we belong to a community.

Minority Ethnic refers to a culture or ethnicity that is identifiably distinct from the ethnic majority. This may include people who have been long established in Ireland, people who are naturalised Irish citizens or British, or people who have recently arrived.

Ethnic Majority refers to the predominant ethnic group in society (e.g. White, Irish, Celtic, Christian, and settled (i.e. non-Traveller)).

Migrant (or Immigrant) refers to people who have themselves, or through their parents, chosen and planned to live abroad in order to work and/or study. If they are residents of the European Economic Area (EEA) they can live and work in Ireland or the UK without a visa. Migrants from outside the European Economic Area (EEA) must have a visa/permit to work, live or study in Ireland

or the UK. Various permits with differing entitlements are available depending on each person's circumstances.

Undocumented Migrant is a person without formal immigration papers. People can become undocumented for many reasons. Undocumented migrants are unable to travel home, afraid to report abuse or exploitation, progress in their lives such as attending 3rd level education and are afraid to step out of the shadows. Sometimes undocumented migrants are incorrectly referred to as illegal immigrants. No person can be illegal. Top 5 nationalities of undocumented persons in the Republic of Ireland are Filipino, Chinese, Mauritian, Brazilian, and Pakistan.



Refugees have been compelled to leave their country of origin because of a well-founded fear of persecution. They are granted rights similar to Irish and British residents i.e. the right to work, to social welfare, to claim citizenship etc. Refugees have not had the opportunity to financially and psychologically prepare for life in a new country.

Asylum seekers are people in the process of applying for refugee status. This is a legal process that can take several years (the average is currently 2 years). Refugee status may be granted depending on the merits of the case and the ability of the person to show that they have a well-founded fear of persecution in their country of origin. Those who are refused refugee status may be offered leave to remain or subsidiary protection. Those who are deemed to not have a case will receive a deportation order.

Interculturalism is an approach aimed at achieving social harmony in a multi-ethnic society. It actively promotes dialogue, understanding, co-operation, collaboration and respect between and within all cultural and religious groups in society. It stresses that residents will develop their communities together.

Travellers are recognised as a minority ethnic group in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland and as such this chapter relates equally to Travellers as to other ethnic groups. This Toolkit also has a separate chapter dedicated to working with Young Travellers – see Chapter 3.

Other common terminology used to refer to people from minority ethnic backgrounds includes: Black and minority ethnic (BME), foreign-nationals, non-Irish nationals, new communities, new-Irish, black, third country national, people from overseas, international people, people from diverse cultures, etc. These terms are all acceptable in the right circumstances but they may not be liked by some individuals so it is always appropriate to ask.

Terms that should **not** be used are: ‘non-national’ as it denies a person’s own nationality; ‘coloured’ and ‘half-caste’ as they are associated with apartheid and the colonial era; ‘illegal’ as it is dehumanising and inaccurate.

REMEMBER

Identity and ethnic identity in particular, is self-defined and open to change. Therefore, we should not assume someone else’s ethnicity on the basis of limited information, nor should we assign an ethnicity for someone without asking them how they like to be described. People from minority ethnic backgrounds increasingly prefer to describe themselves in terms of their new identities, their mixed identities or their national identity. So terms such as African-Irish, Polish-Northern Irish, Nigerian-British, Indian-Irish, Black-Irish will become more commonly used. This should be encouraged as it denotes a sense of belonging in a community as much as a personal identity. For this reason we use the term minority ethnic background to acknowledge the changeable but still concrete nature of a person’s ethnic identity.

Demographics

Demographics for the Republic of Ireland

Almost 1 in 7 young people (15%) aged 15-24 living in Ireland are minority ethnic with this rising to 16% for those aged 5-14. This represents over 200 different nationalities described in the 2016 Republic of Ireland census.

(Central Statistics Office 2017a:EYO29). Only 7.5% of all 0-14 year olds were born abroad (Central Statistics Office 2017a: EYO20). This demonstrates that the vast majority of minority ethnic children were born in Ireland. Data on ethnicity is critical as it captures diversity that does not appear on nationality or place of birth data sets (i.e. it captures those children who are Irish by birth and nationality but who have a parent or parents from different ethnic backgrounds).

Growing cultural diversity: dual identity

Mixed relationships (i.e. Irish and a minority ethnic partner) are becoming widespread in contemporary Ireland so working with children of dual heritage will become the norm. Many of these children will describe themselves as Irish and may not mention their dual ethnicity. For this reason, it is considered good practice to ask what the ethnic identity of young people's parents are, as well as what languages are spoken at home, because the parents' culture or migrant status may play a significant part in the identity of the young person you are working with. First and second generation Irish children are fast becoming the most significant minority ethnic grouping in Ireland.

An increasing number of young people from a minority ethnic background also identify as being part Irish when they describe their identity i.e. having a dual nationality. In 2016, 34,761 of those aged 0-14 years old and 14,384 of those aged 15-24 identify as having dual nationality with one of these being Irish. The number of dual nationality citizens has nearly doubled since 2011 in line with increased numbers becoming Irish citizens by naturalisation. (Central Statistics Office 2017: 50).

The table below gives the largest groups of minority ethnic or dual identity Irish young people aged 0-14 and 15-24 in the **Republic of Ireland** (CSO 2017a: EYO24)

Aged 0-14 (CSO 2016)	Aged 15-24 (CSO 2016)
• Polish (19,772) and Irish-Polish (6706) • Irish Travellers (12,313) • UK (6,392) and Irish-UK (1,178) • Lithuania (5,882) and Irish-Lithuanian (1,006) • American (1,601) Irish-American (4,332) • Romanian (4421) and Irish-Romanian (975) • Latvian (3,542) and Irish-Latvian (673) • Nigerian and Irish-Nigerian (927 +2,239) • French (906) and Irish-French (1,374) • Indian (1,832) and Irish-Indian (298) • Chinese (1,258) and Irish-Chinese (190) • Brazilian (553) and Irish-Brazilian (405)	• Polish (11,277) and Irish-Polish (215) • UK (9,249) and Irish-UK (2,228) • Irish Travellers (5,705) • Lithuania (4,413) and Irish-Lithuanian (40) • American (1,812) and Irish American (3,595) • Romania (3,711) and Irish-Romanian (314) • Brazilian (2,782) and Irish-Brazilian (154) • French (2,064) and Irish-French (443) • Latvian (2,271) and Irish-Latvian (40) • Nigerian (892) and Irish Nigerian (1,146) • Chinese (1,683) and Irish-Chinese (99) • Indian (932) and Irish-Indian (124)

The demographic data for young people from minority ethnic backgrounds varies throughout the Republic of Ireland but cultural diversity is widespread and is the norm in most towns and villages.

The table below contrasts the ethnic profile of those aged 15-24 and children aged 5-14. For example, the number of younger black or black Irish children is

nearly twice the number in the older cohort and corresponds to the rise of 1% in the minority ethnic figures for the younger age group. A significant number of this younger cohort are, or will soon be, of an age to engage in a range of youth groups.

Ethnic Identity of Young People Aged 5-14 and 15-24 (CSO 2017a: EYO29)

	Age 5-14	Percentage of total population aged 5-14	Age 15-24	Percentage of total population aged 15-24
White Irish	548,636	81.6%	462,994	82.3%
White Irish Traveller	7,996	1.2%	5,705	1%
Any other White background	49,108	7.3%	45,650	8.1%
Black or Black Irish	19,313	2.9%	9,485	1.7%
Asian or Asian Irish	17,488	2.6%	13,350	2.4%
Other incl. mixed background	14,129	2.1%	10,437	1.9%
Not stated	15,654	2.3%	14,684	2.6%
Total	672,324	100.0%	562,305	100%
Minority ethnic percentage		16.1%		15.1%

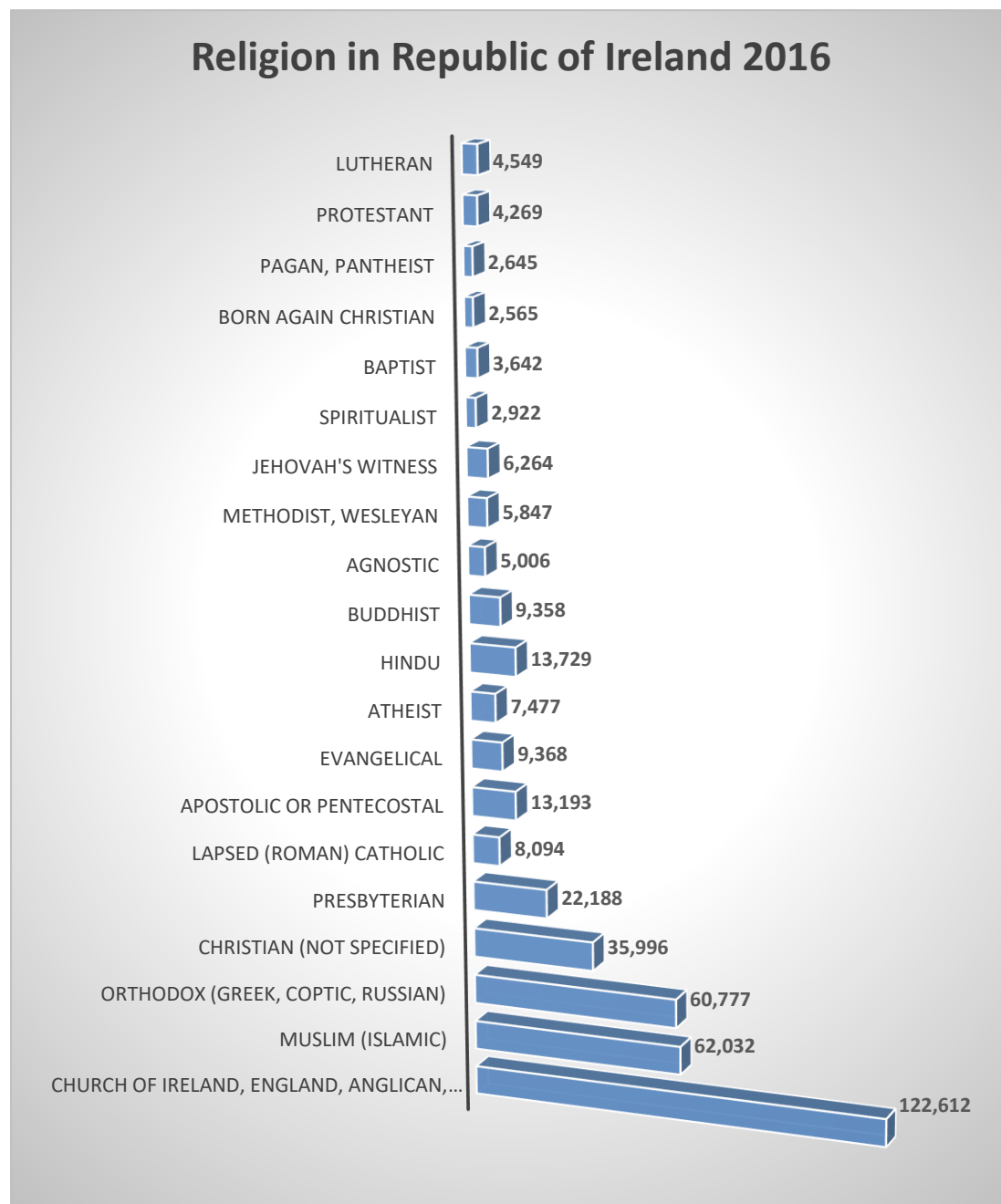
Religious diversity in Republic of Ireland

Alongside changes in ethnic diversity, there is increasing religious diversity in the Republic of Ireland.

- Roman Catholics have decreased to 78.3%. 7.5% of Roman Catholics are from minority ethnic backgrounds with Polish people accounting for the largest number of non-Irish Catholics at 2.8%.
- The second largest group are people with no religion at 9.5% (CSO 2017a: EYO36).
- In 2016 there were 62,032 Muslim people in Ireland, which represents a rise of nearly 29% on the previous census.

- There were 13,193 members of Apostolic and Pentecostal churches of whom nearly 15% are Romanian and 11.5% are African.
- 24% of Africans are Muslim, 21% are Roman Catholic (CSO 2017a: EYO38).

The following graph represents the relative numbers of minority religions in Ireland (CSO 2017a: EYO38).



Demographics for Northern Ireland

The number of foreign nationals living in Northern Ireland had risen to 11% of the population in 2011ⁱⁱ, 4.5% had been born outside of UK or Republic of Ireland; 6.5% were born in the UK or Republic of Ireland. 1.8% were described as non-white. 3% spoke a main language other than English at home. The most significant languages are Polish at 1% (17,700 people), followed by Lithuanian, Gaelic, Portuguese, Slovak and Chinese (NISRA).

In 2015 it was estimated that there were 600 asylum seekers living in supported accommodation in Northern Ireland. The real figure is believed to be higher. This represents 200-300 applications per year of which 35% were refused refugee status or leave to remain. In Northern Ireland, asylum applicants are most commonly from China, Somalia, Sudan, Nigeria and Zimbabweⁱⁱⁱ (Law Centre NI). The Refugee Action Group (RAG) estimated that there were around 2,000 refugees living in Northern Ireland in 2007 (RAG 2007). If approximately 180 receive refugee status per year this figure could now be 3000. In addition, by December 2016, 360 Syrian refugees had been settled with an expectation that this will rise to 2000 over a five year period^{iv} (Embrace NI).

Religious diversity in Northern Ireland

Census 2011 in Northern Ireland showed that 45% of the population were Catholic or brought up Catholic and 48% were Protestant or brought up Protestant, other Christian or Christian-related denominations. Below are the prevalence rates for the main religions:

- 41% Catholic
- 19% Presbyterian
- 14% Church of Ireland
- 5.8% other Christian or Christian-related denominations
- 3% Methodist
- 0.8% other religions and philosophies
- 16.4% recorded no religion or no religion was stated

Cultural diversity among young people attending schools and universities in Ireland (North and South)^v

- In 2011, 32,013 young people from 163 different countries outside of the Republic of Ireland were registered in post-primary schools. Exact figures aren't available for primary level, however, the Department of Education and Skills estimates that 10% of the primary school population are non-Irish (approximately 46,000)
- In Northern Ireland in 2011 7,465 young people are registered as being from an ethnic minority in primary and post-primary education. 30% attend schools in the Belfast Area
- Approximately 8.3% of students in third level colleges in the Republic of Ireland are from countries outside Ireland and 10% of students in Universities in Northern Ireland are International Students

Language diversity in Ireland (North and South)

When planning for inclusion of minority ethnic young people in youth work it can be helpful to know the principal languages spoken in Ireland and where some of the main languages are spoken in the world.

Key languages: Polish, Lithuanian, Romanian, Latvian, Slovakian, Chinese ^{vi}	
Other key languages spoken	Principal countries in which these languages are spoken
French	France, Belgium, Congo, Rwanda, and several North and West African countries
Russian	Russia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Ukraine and other former USSR states
Portuguese	Portugal, Brazil, Angola, East Timor
Spanish	Spain, South America (except Brazil)

In order to determine how inclusive your youth group is it is appropriate to collect data on the ethnicity and languages spoken of those that are attending. Information on how best to do this is set out later in this chapter.



Needs and issues for young people from minority ethnic backgrounds

For newly arrived immigrants settling in a new country can be a difficult process. It may take years, even a generation or two to develop a real sense of belonging in a new country. Your organisation can help young people who have experienced migration to make this transition. This includes the opportunity to make friends and reduce social isolation, to increase their proficiency in English, to be acknowledged for themselves and not stereotyped by their status or their ethnicity (migrant, refugee, asylum seeker, undocumented, Nigerian, Polish, Muslim etc.) and to have a break, for example from family responsibilities. Moving involves facing many life changes and challenges including finding employment, securing accommodation, registering for education, learning a new language and adjusting to life in a new culture.

‘Your organisation can help young people who have experienced migration to make this transition.’

Many people struggle to find the help and relevant information they need to settle in their new country. Often there is so much information, or conflicting information, making it difficult to filter out what is important and what is factual. More often the informal networks that might be used by the majority culture to convey information are not available to newcomers.

Family life, language and cultural heritage

Younger people will usually pick up a new language much quicker than their parents and some parents may always struggle to learn English. Because of this, young people are often expected to interpret and translate for their parents when accessing services such as housing, health, employment, education, youth organisations etc. This can inadvertently result in role-reversal where parents become more dependent on their children and children take on

more responsibility than would otherwise be the norm. In the context of youth work, low English proficiency can create barriers, especially where youth workers want to inform parents about youth work activities and subsequently need to seek permission from parents for children to attend activities etc.

Inter-generational differences can be an additional issue for immigrant families. Parents may expect or hope that their children will adopt the traditional values and roles of their country of origin. Meanwhile young people will face pressures to adopt the values and roles of their local peer group. Families often fear that their children will lose their culture and values. As a consequence parents may be inclined to limit their children's involvement in youth organisations because they fear their children will adopt social practices that they do not like.



Some young people will strongly connect with and maintain the culture, language and values of their parents while others will choose to adopt aspects of local culture at the loss of much of the culture, language and values of their parents. Other young people will display aspects of both cultures and adopt a bi-cultural identity. Research shows that this third option contributes to a greater long term success for young people and it is this model that intercultural youth work seeks to embed.^{vii} Your organisation can do a lot to help young people to integrate by doing activities that value both the cultural heritages present within your group (including the languages spoken at home) alongside understanding and valuing 'Irish', 'Northern Irish' or 'British' cultural values, norms and traditions. This is also invaluable for Irish/Northern Irish young people in your group who equally need to integrate in what is becoming a more culturally diverse country.

'Research shows that this third option contributes to a greater long term success for young people and it is this model that intercultural youth work seeks to embed.'

Parental concerns

Just like other families, parents of immigrant families are concerned for the safety of their children. This can be intensified amongst families who have migrated because they may not have had the opportunity to develop trusting relationships with local people. Parents are unlikely to trust organisations - including youth groups - that have not been personally recommended. These recommendations will be absent if trusting relationships and social networks have not been developed. These relationships will be harder to establish for people who do not have proficient English or are not confident speaking English.

Other parental concerns include:

- **Unfamiliarity with the Irish/UK concept of youth work. Youth work differs considerably in other countries**
- **Lack of awareness of the existence of local youth projects and youth clubs and what they do**
- **Unfamiliarity with the practical aspects of joining a youth project or youth club**
- **Different cultural perspectives on acceptable behaviour for young people**
- **Fear for the safety of their children getting to and from youth groups (such as facing racism)**
- **Fear for the well-being of their children in social groups (such as facing exclusion or isolation)**
- **Concerns over financial issues and the cost of activities, membership fees or uniforms**
- **Fear that youth group activities will impact on study time**
- **Concern that youth group activities will clash with family responsibilities such as minding younger children etc.**

Young people's concerns

Young people themselves may also have fears. Some may not feel very comfortable in social situations. Social codes of behaviour may differ from the ones they have become used to in school so new skills may have to be developed. This can be more difficult if young people have low English language proficiency or lack of confidence speaking English. For many it can be very difficult to join a new group without having a friend or trusted person present. Young people may fear being perceived as 'different'. Many will have experienced racism or discrimination. Most will not understand the geographical limitations that some youth organisations work within. This can be especially difficult where their established social networks cross geographical boundaries – for example they may travel some distance from their residence to attend church or school. Other rules may also be confusing, for example, many young people will not understand the system of being put on a waiting list to get a place in a group and may see it instead as a way of rejecting them.



Separated children seeking asylum, asylum seekers and refugees

Some young people arrive in Ireland without family members to seek asylum.

In the **Republic of Ireland** if they are under 18 they are placed under the care of the Health Service Executive (HSE). If they are seeking asylum (known as separated children seeking asylum), they will stay in care until their 18th birthday when they must enter the adult direct provision system if they haven't yet received a positive decision on their refugee status. Then referred to as aged-out minors they are not entitled to continue in education beyond the Leaving Certificate, unless they can enter a sponsorship scheme, so many find themselves with nothing to do while their asylum applications are being processed. Meanwhile, the institutional conditions of direct provision can have a devastating effect on their potential and aspirations.

In **Northern Ireland** separated children seeking asylum are particularly vulnerable. If their asylum application fails, the Government will seek to identify appropriate facilities in the country where they came from so that they can be returned. Failing that, they are given discretionary leave to stay for 3 years or until they reach 17.5 years of age (whichever is the shortest).

For all asylum seekers the stresses of living in a new country will also be compounded by the memory of past traumas that made them flee their countries of origin in the first place. These experiences will have a profound impact on young people's sense of safety and identity, and their ability to trust and develop relationships. Young people may experience anxiety, difficulties in establishing friendships, low self-esteem, survivor guilt, aggressive outbursts or emotional numbness, sadness, withdrawal, sleeping problems, intrusive thoughts, post-traumatic stress disorder etc. These experiences will severely limit the young person's ability to concentrate, to retain information and to

'Your organisation offers a valuable diversion from these stresses and a chance to be treated as a person in their own right rather than as someone with a particular status.'

attend activities on a regular basis. Your organisation offers a valuable diversion from these stresses and a chance to be treated as a person in their own right rather than as someone with a particular status.

Young refugees and asylum seekers often require extra assistance in educational support because their previous education may have been disrupted or may even be non-existent. Many of these young people will have missed out on education because they spent a significant part of their childhood in refugee camps or in politically unstable societies.

More information about the educational needs of young refugees and asylum seekers is contained in the Early School Leavers chapter of this Toolkit.

Developing inclusive youth work with young people from minority ethnic backgrounds

This is what minority ethnic young people have asked of youth organisations:



TOP TIPS

A series of '**Top tips**' developed in partnership with young people who are **new to Northern Ireland or from a minority ethnic background** to help create a more welcoming and inclusive youth setting.

TIP 1
Create a welcoming space

- ▶ Make your community safe for me
- ▶ Create a safe environment for new people to join you
- ▶ Take pride in the appearance of your community/centre

TIP 2
Build a trust relationship

- ▶ Be willing to talk to me
- ▶ Give me a chance and make an effort with me
- ▶ Hear my story

TIP 3
Take some time to learn

- ▶ Know that there are a variety of cultures in N.I.
- ▶ Gain knowledge of different ethnic minorities
- ▶ Tell me where to get information

TIP 4
Adjust your programmes

- ▶ Provide support (e.g. mentoring or buddy system)
- ▶ Speak slowly – be patient
- ▶ Have materials in my language
- ▶ Encourage me and put yourself in my shoes

TIP 5
Respect Difference

- ▶ Don't make people who are different feel uncomfortable
- ▶ Don't make fun of a culture you don't understand

TIP 6
Challenge Racism

- ▶ Take abusive comments seriously and challenge negative attitudes
- ▶ Think before you judge me

Organisations involved:
Shared Futures, Muslim Youth Northern Ireland, Chinese Welfare Association, Public Achievement, Northern Ireland Community of Refugees and Asylum Seekers, Kameleon, Young NCB, Photography: Mohamed Fez Miah

Youthnet
network for the voluntary youth sector
www.youthnetni.org.uk Email: info@youthnet.co.uk

European Union
European Regional Development Fund
Investing in your future

YESIP
Young Enterprise Scheme

design: www.concise.design.com

This chapter was developed by Anne Walsh (NYCI), Suzanne Lindsay (Foróige) and Ben Ewan (Youthnet) for 'Access All Areas – a Diversity Toolkit for the Youth Work Sector' published by NYCI and Youthnet 2012 and updated in 2018

Planning, promoting and delivering a programme to a culturally diverse group of young people

To **plan an effective service** that includes young people from minority ethnic backgrounds you first need to:

- Find out how many people in your local area identify themselves as being from a minority ethnicity or nationality and identify the main countries of origin and languages spoken in your area
- Learn more about the minority ethnic communities in your area such as their religious and cultural backgrounds
- Identify the needs, issues and barriers to youth work that might face people from minority ethnic backgrounds
- Find out about services in your area that work with migrants, refugees and asylum seekers
- Attend regionally based forums where you can meet minority ethnic-led organisations
- Network with local schools and churches
- Prepare your staff and the young people you currently work with by doing cultural awareness and anti-racism programmes
- Focus on how you will ensure opportunities for long-term engagement as one-off projects with no opportunities for continued contact can damage the trust you have built up



To **offer an effective service** for young people from minority ethnic backgrounds in your community:

- **Allow more recruitment time for young people from minority ethnic backgrounds to become involved in your organisation. Developing interagency partnerships is a positive way to reach the target group. Advertise in minority ethnic papers and use the internet to advertise your programme. Translate your basic information and be very specific - explain exactly where and when the group meets**
- **Learn about other cultures directly from the people themselves – don't be afraid to ask, it is the best way to learn**
- **Do not be too concerned about 'PC' language or new terminology – use what comes naturally but be open to change. Remember it is better to take action, rather than not, for fear of offending someone. Don't be afraid to make mistakes, see it as a valuable learning opportunity for all**
- **Seek input from available expertise wherever possible. Share your experiences with others. Network with other support services**
- **Consider that young people from minority ethnic backgrounds may not have adequate financial resources to take part in many activities. Transport to and from activities may also be a problem**
- **Do not expect young people to be the representative for their culture. They may not want to be differentiated from others while in a youth group setting**

To **deliver an effective service** to young people from minority ethnic backgrounds in your community be aware of the following:

- **Create a welcoming environment – make your community safe for new people to join**
- **Respect difference - have visual imagery in your centres that show you are open to diversity e.g. images of people from different parts of the world, welcome signs in several languages etc.**
- **Make an effort, talk and listen to what the young person wants to tell you, especially about their culture or country of origin**
- **Attending social events can be daunting for minority ethnic young people – social codes may not be known and social language may not be familiar**
- **Be flexible in your programming – explore what activities are the most relevant, translate materials as appropriate, and be patient**
- **Developing new skills is often a key motivator for young people from minority ethnic backgrounds and their parents in getting involved in youth work opportunities**
- **Art, drama, photography, video, music, sports and games work well especially where language proficiency is a concern**
- **Culture proof your activities (ask yourself will it work cross culturally)**
- **Gender issues can arise. Deal with them as sensitively as possible**
- **Talking to young people and parents directly is the key to understanding and meeting their specific needs and allaying their concerns or issues**

NB: Asking someone personal questions, especially around their migration experience, status or circumstances, could be seen as prying and insensitive. It could bring up painful memories or it could make someone feel ashamed. Only ask questions that you would answer about your own life, and your own cultural background and experiences that you would easily share with others.

The following section expands on some of the practical advice outlined above.

Are you reaching the young people from a minority ethnic background in your community?

To discover if you are reaching the minority ethnic young people in your community you must first know the ethnic identity of the young people already attending your organisation. One way of doing this is by including an ethnic identifier question on your registration form, if you use one. A suggested wording is highlighted here:

What is your ethnic/national identity? _____

[Give your answer as you do to your friends. Examples others have given to this question include Irish, Northern Irish, Irish-Traveller, Polish, Nigerian, Nigerian-Irish, Lithuanian-Northern Irish, Kurdish etc.]

What is the ethnic/national identity of your: Parents/guardians?

1) _____ 2) _____

(This question is asked to record what other cultural influences play a significant part in your life)

What languages do you speak at home? 1) _____

2) _____ 3) _____

If you practise a religion please state? _____

It is important to tell young people and their parents that the information is collected to help plan inclusive and appropriate youth activities and stress that it is confidential (shared only within the organisation) and optional. Best practice models indicate that it is appropriate for all young people over the age of 11 to identify their ethnicity for themselves and for parents to choose the ethnicity for younger children. It is important to be present to answer any questions young people or parents may have about filling out this form.

Questions on religious practice are also appropriate so that you can plan effectively, as are questions on the language/s spoken at home. An example of a full registration form that includes all the questions a youth group might need is included in **Chapter 1** of Access All Areas.

Determining the demographics of minority ethnic young people in your community

Having collected data on the group of young people you are working with you should then compare the information with the demographics from your own catchment area and determine if the young people from a minority ethnic background in your area are represented proportionately in your youth group.

One of the ways to determine if the young people you are working with reflect the ethnic makeup of your community is to compare your data with the statistics from local schools.

In the **Republic of Ireland** this data is collected for all schools and you can request it from the statistics section of the Department of Education and Skills (DES) if you cannot source it directly from your local schools.



In **Northern Ireland** this information is available from the Department of Education (DE) statistics and research section or directly from your local school. Data is collected for primary and post-primary schools.

See **Chapter 1** of Access All Areas for a more detailed explanation on collating and comparing data on ethnicity and religion.

Working with other services

Many organisations that work with adult migrants, refugees and asylum seekers do not have the expertise or capacity to work with young people. As a result young people from minority ethnic backgrounds often miss out on valuable youth work opportunities.

One way to meet these young people's needs is to develop a partnership with specialist migrant support organisations that will be able to provide advice and links to the young people.



In the **Republic of Ireland** contact details for local organisations - including minority ethnic led organisations are available from your county ETB Youth Officer, your local community/county forum - which is available online – and from organisations such as New Communities Partnership^{viii}. Attending an interagency forum can be a useful way to network with many groups, including minority ethnic led groups.

In **Northern Ireland** minority ethnic led organisations can be found through the The Northern Ireland Council for Racial Equality^{ix} and a number of locally based forums.

Specialised organisations – working with young people who have experienced torture or trauma

Young people who have experienced torture or trauma should be engaging with specialist support services. Make sure they are aware of the specialist support services they can access. At the same time it is important that the young people continue to engage with your youth organisation.

Experiences of torture and trauma can seriously reduce a person's ability to concentrate. It can also affect a person's ability to make clear judgements and set safe boundaries for themselves. Specialised psychosocial support may be needed depending on the young person's personal history – develop relationships with service providers that can offer the appropriate support where necessary

To support someone who has experienced trauma or post-traumatic stress the following guidelines are important:

- **Do not ask the young person about their past experiences.**
- **If a young person starts to talk about a past traumatic event bring them gently back into the present moment, to the activity they are doing now. Explain that this space is not a helpful place for them to talk about a past event – that should be done with a qualified person in a safe space**
- **Some young people who experience trauma may see your engagement with them and your concern as a friendship whereas you will see it as a professional service. Explain your role and commitment clearly so that the young person's trust is not broken and the professional relationship can be maintained**

Involving parents

Historically youth organisations have focused on the young person as an individual in their own right and close contact with parents has often been limited. However, to engage with young people from a minority ethnic background it is important to involve parents from the outset to allay their fears. Youth organisations do not exist in many countries so parents can be suspicious of the role and values of youth work.

Some families from minority ethnic backgrounds may not allow or may limit their children's involvement in youth organisations.

Always provide clear information to families about the programmes you offer. The National Youth Council of Ireland has produced a leaflet which explains youth work, the role of the youth worker and intercultural youth work. This is a good resource to provide to parents and translated versions are available online on www.intercultural.ie.

If you are running programs that discuss relationships, sexual health or HIV-AIDS, make sure that you speak to parents or elders in the community. Adapt your programme to the needs and sensitivities of the ethnic diversity within your group, in consultation with parents.



When you work with families from minority ethnic backgrounds you will need to gain the trust of parents. Best practice strategies include:

- Reassure parents of the ethos of your organisation, the safety guidelines you follow and the benefits of youth work
- Have clear information (where possible translated) about your organisation, what activities you run, how they will be run, at what times and where they will be run
- Work closely with local services that already have contact with parents from minority ethnic backgrounds. You may be able to attend a group that parents attend and explain your programme
- Have open days at your organisation for parents where they can meet the youth workers face to face
- Always make a point of introducing yourself and having a chat with parents who visit the centre or drop their children off
- If a young person has not been given permission to attend your programme or to take part in a particular activity offer to meet with their parents in person
- Consider holding parent events such as mother & daughter evenings or father & son events
- Invite parents to get involved as volunteers
- Be aware that in some cultural groups the father or male relative or elder in the faith community may have the final decision-making role
- Be careful to allay parents' concerns about privacy; they may not want to share information about their personal background and they may be wary of traditional 'Irish' curiosity

Communications – written, verbal and translations

Language barriers can and do exist:

- Many young people and their parents will not have strong literacy skills. Introduce written communication gently at first to determine skill levels before relying on it as a key communication tool or in activities
- It is always good to give information on meeting times, places and dates in written form as well as verbally
- Repeat instructions if it is not clear that someone has understood
- Don't be afraid to ask someone to repeat themselves if you have not understood what they have said – give your conversations time; ask questions to clarify things but make sure you have understood enough to move the communication forward
- Telephone conversations are usually more difficult for people from minority ethnic backgrounds so they can be reluctant to ring up for information, registration etc. A drop-in service should be provided so that the person can get information and familiarise themselves with your premises
- Translated permission notes for activities would be useful. Consider asking someone relevant in your community to help you translate your current forms

When providing information about your organisation make sure that you avoid jargon wherever possible and provide an explanation for terms that people from minority ethnic backgrounds may not be familiar with such as youth work, participation, volunteering etc. Do not use acronyms without explanations of what it stands for. Proof all your information for its use of 'plain English'. Try to use short sentences and paragraphs. In promotional material, where possible, include photos of your staff next to their name. Use words such as 'we' and 'you' so that your documents explain things from the reader's point of view.

A useful guide for 'plain English' writing is available at www.plainenglish.co.uk/files/howto.pdf and at www.dest.gov.au/archive/publications/plain_en/writing.htm

Interpreting (verbal communication)

You may work with young people or parents who are not proficient English speakers. If you are communicating through an interpreter it is important to remember:



- Everyone has a right to confidentiality and professionalism, so do not use children, relatives, friends or unqualified bilingual staff members as interpreters in any conversations that might be personal or sensitive
- Use short statements and avoid use of jargon or the vernacular in conversations. If necessary repeat what you are trying to say using different and simpler terms
- Interpreting can take place face to face or alternatively over the phone.
- Look at the service user and not the interpreter ^x

Games and activities

Many youth organisations use fun games as a way of engaging young people and developing teamwork in a group. Many of these activities may not be culturally appropriate for young people from minority ethnic or cultural backgrounds.

You may need to adapt your games or activities so that **they do not**:

- Contain war-like themes e.g. laser games, paint ball
- Contain high challenge activities where young people are asked to take sudden or unexpected risks
- Make people feel uncomfortable or ashamed (losing face is experienced differently across different cultures)
- Make people reveal details about their migration story
- Contain references to spirits, witches, devils etc. Witchcraft is a very real and powerful belief in many cultures
- Lead to a feeling of loss of control e.g. blindfolding
- Invade a young person's personal space or involve physical touching e.g. asking people to hold hands or carry each other
- Contain surprises that could trigger traumatic memories e.g. loud noises, activities involving boats (ask first)
- Involve camping or hostelling as it could be too close to unpleasant life experiences from the past

However, many of your activities can be adapted to ensure the involvement of young people from a minority ethnic background. For example, if you are running a physical contact game then split the group into separate groups for males and females. If you are planning to run any activities that involve the things mentioned in the list above take the time to explain the activity in advance and allow young people a choice as to whether to participate.

Sports and outdoor activities

Barriers to participation in structured sport include lack of knowledge about sporting associations especially Irish sports such as hurling, gaelic football, rounders etc. Another issue for some is the lack of access to a car so transport to activities can be difficult. Similarly, the cost of participating in structured sport and outdoor activities, such as registration fees, uniform, kit and equipment costs can be too high. Gender issues can also arise. Some cultural groups may associate certain sports as gender specific. Concerns about the dress codes in sporting and outdoor activities may arise but solutions are usually available.



To increase participation in sport, provide practical support to the young people:

- **Translate information about sports and outdoor activities**
- **Subsidise registration fees and uniforms**
- **Arrange transport or car-pooling to events**
- **Introduce a simplified registration process i.e. not too many forms**
- **Network with schools or youth organisations**
- **Introduce them to role models from diverse cultures who play sport such as the female soccer group Hijabs and Hat tricks^{xi}**

Learning focussed activities

Our education systems often present a way of learning which might be very different from the young person's country of origin. Both formal and non-formal education in Ireland – both North and South - promote a considerable degree of self-motivated learning and critical approaches which may be unfamiliar to some cultural groups who are used to a more instructive, authoritarian and structured learning processes.



Gender issues

Young women from minority ethnic families often miss out on youth work opportunities because activities provided are not segregated by gender. Some families may not allow their daughters to attend activities where young men are present. This may apply to all activities or just particular activities e.g. swimming. This varies depending on the religious or cultural values of the parents and also on how they interpret and practice their religion.

If you speak to parents about their concerns you may be able to work out a way to adapt your activity. For example, if a young woman is not allowed to attend an overnight camp alone you may allow their parent to attend as a volunteer support worker.

Other strategies to promote the access of young women include:

- **Using female tutors and coaches**
- **If your organisation runs activities which require a uniform such as netball or soccer, allow modifications such as long pants instead of shorts or skirts**
- **If you run swimming activities consult on the need for gender specific sessions and also whether all-in-one swimsuits should be the accepted rule for females**

Tackling racism

Racial discrimination means treating a person in a less favourable way than another on the basis of their ethnicity, skin colour, religion or nationality. Racism is a crime. It is driven by fear of difference and the practice of negative stereotyping.

Racism is a serious concern for many people from minority ethnic backgrounds. Evidence shows that incidents of racism are on the increase in Ireland.^{xii} Racism has a major impact on the mental health, sense of identity, sense of self and well-being of young people from minority ethnic backgrounds. Take active steps to prevent and address racism at your organisation including the development of clear and visible rules, policies and disciplinary procedures.



Actively promote the value of interculturalism and increase the knowledge about different cultural groups at your organisation.

Ideas:

- Take part in special events such as intercultural festivals
- Acknowledge and celebrate special cultural days (Eid, Divali, Chinese New Year etc.)
- Promote positive images of people from a range of different cultural backgrounds
- Challenge Myths (see Myths chapter of this chapter)
- Talk to young people about their culture – including Irish/British/Northern Irish - as part of normal conversation
- Organise activities for young people that increase their awareness of

other cultures. Exchange visits to other groups in your area can be helpful

- **Take abusive comments seriously and challenge negative attitudes - adopt a no-tolerance approach and create group charters that highlight respect**
- **Ongoing racist issues will need more targeted responses that may include training and/or developing a community-wide interagency approach**
- **Develop an anti-racist policy for your organisation that includes an anti-racist code of practice (template on www.intercultural.ie)**
- **Link in with Reporting Racism mechanisms such as www.I-Report.ie and link with your local Ethnic Liaison Gardaí or your local Minority Liaison Officer PSNI (Police Service of Northern Ireland) to report racism**

The role of the Gardaí and the PSNI in reporting racism and community policing

In some cultures authority figures such as police are treated with fear or seen as corrupt. As a result some young people may be fearful of authority figures such as police, security officers and transport inspectors.

There are a number of community policing projects in **Republic of Ireland** which work with people from minority ethnic backgrounds to allay these fears and increase their awareness of their rights and responsibilities with regard to services provided by the Gardaí. There are Ethnic Liaison Officers in many Garda stations who will respond to issues raised by people from minority ethnic backgrounds including racist incidents.^{xiii}

In **Northern Ireland** legislation came into effect in 2004, enabling the courts to impose tougher sentences for offences defined as 'hate crimes'. It is deemed to be such an offence where a crime is 'aggravated by hostility if, either at the time of the offence, immediately before or after its commission, the offender demonstrates hostility to the victim based on the victim's racial, religious or sexual orientation group, or his/her disability'

Minority Liaison Officers (MLO's) provide a service across all District Command Units (DCU) in Northern Ireland. These police officers are specifically trained to offer support to victims of racial incidents and to any other victims of 'hate crime'.^{xiv}



Challenging myths about migrants and asylum seekers

One very practical way of challenging attitudes is to be aware of common myths about people from a minority ethnic background and have the facts that debunk them. You can use these myths in your youth work activities. You can make sure your work colleagues are aware of them. You can enlarge them and put them up for your participants to see or you can use them as part of an activity – such as creating opportunities for a group to discuss what they hear and what they believe to be true and providing space for others in the group to present alternative viewpoints that challenge the myths.

Myths on migration^{xv}

Nearly 85% of all migrant workers are from the EU. EU nationals are free to seek work in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland without any restrictions. Migrant workers from outside the EU require permission to work in Ireland. They will either need a green card or a work permit (depending on the job).

Since the enlargement of the EU in 2004 there have been more people coming to **Northern Ireland** from abroad than there has been outward migration; a significant proportion of this immigration since 2004 has been from Eastern Europe^{xvi}.

Myth 1 Migrant workers take jobs from ‘Irish/Northern Irish’ people

Migrant workers fill many jobs that cannot otherwise be filled such as in medicine, information technology, in hotel and catering sector, agricultural work etc.

- There is always the possibility of displacement in a competitive economy but most available research shows that migrant workers replace rather than displace workers in Ireland and the UK

Myth 2 Migrant workers are a drain on the economy

- Migrant workers expand the economy by allowing businesses to grow and by investing their own skills and money in enterprises
- Migrant workers are vital for our health services, the hospitality sector and many other parts of our economy
- The majority of migrant workers are skilled and educated. This contributes to our competitiveness and productivity levels
- In the Republic of Ireland non-EU students pay over double the fees of Irish and EU students. Non-EU students cannot access any social welfare benefits even if working
- In Northern Ireland Non-EU students pay 3 – 4 times the fees of British and EU students.
- They contribute both as tax payers and consumers of goods and services

Myth 3 Migrant workers bring down wages

- Wage levels including the minimum wage have consistently risen over the past decade
- Migrant workers should not be blamed for employers who do not pay minimum wage and who violate employment legislation for their own profit
- Migrant workers are involved in campaigning for fair pay and good standards of employment for all workers

Myth 4 Migrant workers are a burden on public services

- Migrant workers tend to pay more in taxes than they receive in benefits
- Social welfare is important for any worker as a safety net in times of illness or unemployment. Even when migrant workers pay social insurance they can find it hard to access social benefits
- There can be pressure on public services when there are insufficient resources and increased needs (e.g. teachers or language supports) or when waiting lists are already long (e.g. affordable housing lists). This results from public services not being able to keep up with the changing needs of the population and is not the fault of any one group

Myth 5 ‘Illegally’ resident migrant workers should be told to leave

- It is estimated that there are between 20,000 and 26,000 undocumented in the Republic of Ireland including children. It is the Migrant Right Centre Ireland (MRCI)’s experience that most migrant workers come to Republic of Ireland legally but become undocumented through no fault of their own e.g. when an employer did not renew their work permit
- Like many Irish emigrants who have found themselves undocumented in the US, undocumented migrant workers living in the Island of Ireland are simply trying to make a living and support their family; they do not want to be undocumented
- Many of those who become undocumented have



also experienced workplace exploitation, which often involves being owed significant amounts of money in unpaid wages

Myth 6 Migrant workers are not interested in being a part of our community?

- Sports clubs, churches and community associations all over Ireland, North and South, are experiencing a new lease of life as migrant workers and their families participate and integrate into their local communities
- Migrant workers often speak several languages and given the opportunity would like to learn English. This can be difficult when working long hours and classes are not available at times when workers are free
- Like the Irish experience of emigration, migrant workers generally develop an identification with the country they live in, while retaining a strong attachment to their country of origin
- Our society has undergone huge changes in the past 15 years. Only a part of this has to do with migration. Globalisation, communications, wealth and international travel all shape how we define ourselves as a society

Myth 7 Ireland is accepting more refugees and asylum seekers than ever before^{xvii}

- Approximately 1.5% of people resident in the Republic of Ireland have sought asylum at some time. In Northern Ireland 0.1% of the population has sought asylum.
 - The numbers of people applying for asylum has been falling since 2002 with numbers consistently decreasing.
 - Applications for asylum in the Republic of Ireland represent just 2% of the total number of made within Europe each year. The total applications for Northern Ireland represents just 0.05%

- In 2015 only 9.8% of asylum seekers in the Republic of Ireland received refugee status or leave to remain^{xviii}. This compares with a figure of 16% in the UK for 2009-2010 who were granted refugee status and a further 8% are granted discretionary leave to remain
- In 2017 there were approximately 5,000 asylum seekers resident in direct provision centres in the Republic of Ireland, two-fifths (2000) of these are under 25^{xix}. In Northern Ireland, it is difficult to determine as figures are only available for the UK as a whole. Research indicates there are around 100-200 asylum seekers at any given time within Northern Ireland, at least 60% of which are children.^{xx}
- If an asylum application fails applicants may be offered humanitarian leave to remain or subsidiary protection. Nearly 300 residents living in direct provision centres have been waiting for a final decision for more than 3 years. In Northern Ireland, asylum seekers are entitled to temporary accommodation until the immigration authorities decide if asylum was claimed 'as soon as was possible'. If they are entitled to support, housing will be provided until their case has been heard.

Myth 8 Asylum seekers abuse the system^{xxi}

- Offensive labels such as 'bogus' have been commonly applied to asylum seekers implying that they do not have genuine cases and they want to access the Republic of Ireland welfare system. This ignores the fact that a number are recognised as having a genuine fear of persecution and are accordingly given refugee status. Many others receive humanitarian leave to remain because of serious concerns about the harm that might come to them if they were forced to return to difficult political or social situations where violations of human rights are known to exist, or where there is ongoing conflict



Furthermore:

- By law, asylum seekers are not allowed to work although most would like to. Only recognised refugees have the right to work. Many asylum seekers become active volunteers while waiting for decisions on their case
- In Northern Ireland, asylum seekers get support from National Asylum Support Service (NASS) if the immigration authorities decide that they claimed asylum as soon as they arrived. They can't claim benefits or work. Most asylum seekers' accommodation is in deprived areas where research has shown they are more likely to face racial harassment.
- Asylum seekers are not entitled to go on public housing lists. Refugees who cannot afford private housing can apply for housing assistance and will be assessed under the same criteria as Irish/British nationals.

Checklist 2 - How accessible is your organisation to young people from a minority ethnic background?

This checklist can help you to identify how you can improve your service for young people from minority ethnic backgrounds

Programme planning and delivery

We make sure our programmes are designed and delivered to consciously include the diverse needs and identities of all young people in the community

Our youth group reflects the diversity of the wider community

• Our service/group/club has up to date information about the numbers of young people from minority ethnic backgrounds in our community	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We know which minority ethnic communities are most highly represented in our area	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We collect statistics on the cultural and ethnic background of the young people who use our service	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We compare the ethnic profile in our community to the ethnic diversity in our group/s to see if all ethnic groups are fairly represented (e.g. if 2% of the local community come from an Asian background we would like Asians to	YES	PARTLY	NO

represent 2% of our membership)

• We identify the young people from minority ethnic backgrounds in our community who do not use our service	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We have a list of the organisations in our area that represent minority ethnic groups	YES	PARTLY	NO

Our programme responds to the ethnic diversity of the community

• Our programming is relevant to the diversity of ethnicities and cultures in our area	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our programme is responsive to the specific needs, issues and experiences of young people from minority ethnic backgrounds	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our programme is considerate of different religious needs	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We provide anti-racism, equality, inclusion and intercultural programmes for all young people	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our group celebrates cultural days of significance to our members	YES	PARTLY	NO

Public image

How we present our service to our community

We know and actively communicate with:

➤ Organisations that work with people from minority ethnic backgrounds	YES	PARTLY	NO
➤ Organisations that have a good understanding of the needs and issues of minority ethnic groups	YES	PARTLY	NO

We provide information about our youth group to:

➤ Young people from minority ethnic backgrounds	YES	PARTLY	NO
➤ Parents from minority ethnic backgrounds	YES	PARTLY	NO
➤ Organisations that work with people from minority ethnic backgrounds (schools, specialist services etc)	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We work closely with parents to ensure their concerns for their children are met	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Information about our youth group is translated	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our organisation uses an interpreter	YES	PARTLY	NO

• Our organisation has visual imagery in its premises and publications that reflects the ethnic diversity of the community and proactively invites all ethnic groups in the area to join	YES	PARTLY	NO

Participation

We make sure we include the voices of young people at all levels of our youth service

• We consult with young people, parents and organisations about the specific needs and issues for minority ethnic young people in relation to accessing and participating in youth work – including those who do not use our service	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We promote a message of safety and respect and invite the active participation of all young people, including those from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Young people from different ethnicities are involved in decision making in our organisation	YES	PARTLY	NO

Policies and procedures

We have a written commitment to deliver an equal and inclusive service

• Mechanisms are in place that protect participants from racism and discrimination	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our organisation has a written commitment to anti-racism, equality, inclusion and interculturalism	YES	PARTLY	NO

Professional development

Our staff and volunteers are trained and supported to deliver an inclusive youth service

• Staff and volunteers receive training on interculturalism, cultural awareness, tackling racism and the issues young people from minority ethnic backgrounds face	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our staff, volunteers (and young people) address racist comments or behaviour and model inclusive language	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We have staff members or volunteers who come from a minority ethnic background	YES	PARTLY	NO

Useful contacts

Migrant / Refugee Rights organisations – Republic of Ireland

Migrant Rights Centre Ireland

13 Lower Dorset Street,
Dublin 1

Phone: 01 - 889 7570

Fax: 01 - 889 7579

Email: info@mrci.ie

Web: www.mrci.ie

The organisation is concerned with the rights of migrant workers and their families. MRCI supports migrant workers and their families in situations of vulnerability including empowering migrant workers through community work practice achieving policy change. MRCI runs **Young, Paperless and Powerful**, an advocacy and support project for undocumented young people.

SPIRASI

213 North Circular Road
Phibsboro
Dublin 7

Phone: 01 - 838 9664

Fax: 01 - 882 3547

Email: info@spirasi.ie

Web: www.spirasi.ie

SPIRASI is a humanitarian, intercultural, non-governmental organisation that works with asylum seekers, refugees and other disadvantaged migrant groups, with special concern for survivors of torture. In partnership with others, SPIRASI enables access to specialist services to promote the well-being of the human person and encourages self-reliance and integration.

Crosscare Migrant Project

1 Cathedral Street

Dublin 1

Phone: 01 - 873 2844**Fax:** 01 - 872 7003**Email:** migrantproject@crosscare.ie**Web:** www.migrantproject.ie

Crosscare Migrant Project provides information and advocates on behalf of emigrants, returnees and immigrants through its walk-in, outreach, phone and email services, website and publications - including an induction pack.

Irish Refugee Council

37 Killarney St,

Mountjoy,

Dublin 1

Phone: 01 - 764 5854**Fax:** 01 - 672 5927**Email:** info@irishrefugeecouncil.ie**Web:** www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie

The IRC is a membership organisation which is open to individuals and organisations that support the organisation's aims. Their work includes policy, research, networking, information and legal components. IRC runs a youth group for refugees and asylum seekers.

National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI)

[www.pobal.ie/Beneficiaries/
EuropeanIntegrationFund/
Pages/Publications.aspx](http://www.pobal.ie/Beneficiaries/EuropeanIntegrationFund/Pages/Publications.aspx)

The NCCRI was an independent expert body that provided advice and developed initiatives to combat racism and to move towards a more inclusive, intercultural society. The NCCRI resources on all aspects of racism and interculturalism, including training resources, glossary of terms, advice to service users etc. are all located on the Pobal publications website alongside other useful publications on racism, integration, and interculturalism. Look for the Useful Publications page.

Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration

Department of Justice and Equality
Floor 2
Bishop Square
Redmonds Hill
Dublin 2

Phone: 01 - 418 3200

Email: info@integration.ie

Web: www.integration.ie

The Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration is set up to develop, drive and co-ordinate policy in relation to the integration of legally resident immigrants across Government Departments so that immigrants are fully integrated into Irish society. It sees the concept of integration as a complex one and recognises there are many different views as to what constitutes integration. They administer national funding to promote integration.

Reception and Integration Agency

Floor 2
Bishop Square
Redmonds Hill
Dublin 2

Phone: 01 - 418 3200

Fax: 01 - 4183271

Email: RIA_Inbox@justice.ie

Web: www.ria.gov.ie

The Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) is responsible for the procurement and overall administration of State provided accommodation and ancillary services for applicants for international protection (asylum seekers), and suspected victims of human trafficking. RIA has accessible, up to date and clear statistics on asylum seekers accommodation on its website.

Garda National Diversity and Integration Unit (also known as GRIDO)

Garda Community Relations Bureau, Garda Headquarters
Harcourt Square, Dublin 2

Phone: 01 - 666 3150

Web: www.garda.ie/en/Crime-Prevention/Community-engagement/The-Garda-Racial-Intercultural-Diversity-Office-GRIDO-.html

Migrant / Refugee Rights organisations – Northern Ireland

Racial Equality Unit

The Executive Office Equality Directorate

Racial Equality Unit

Room E4.15, Castle Buildings

Stormont Estate, Belfast BT4 3SQ

Phone: 028 - 9052 8560

Fax: 028 9052 3272

Email: race.equality@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk

NI Council for Racial Equality (NICRE)

Phone: 028 - 7710 767235

Email: patrick@nicre.org

NICRE is a new organisation involved in advocacy, supporting integration and tackling racial inequality.

Bryson Intercultural

Bryson House

28 Bedford Street

Belfast BT2 7FE

Phone: 028 9043 - 8211

Email: info@brysoninternational.org

Web: www.brysongroup.org

Bryson Intercultural seeks to be a leader in working with and empowering minority ethnic families and their communities in Northern Ireland, including the indigenous Irish Travellers and newly arrived minority ethnic individuals, by promoting and supporting into Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland Community of Refugees and Asylum Seekers (NICRAS)

143 University St,

Belfast BT7 1HP,

Phone: 028 - 9024 6699

Email: info@nicras.org.uk, also

NICRAS.youthwork@outlook.com

Web: www.nicras.btck.co.uk

NICRAS is a Refugee Community Organisation (RCO) that represents the interests of asylum seekers and refugees. They support integration, raise awareness, inform on changes in the immigration law, organise social and fundraising events and respond to the changing needs of its members

NISMP – Northern Ireland Strategic Migration Partnership

Web: www.migrationni.org/support-organisations

List of organisations which provide information, advice and support for people from migrant and minority ethnic communities in Northern Ireland.

STEP South Tyrone Empowerment Programme

The Junction

12 Beechvalley Way

Dungannon,

Co Tyrone BT70 1BS

Phone: 028 – 8775 0211

Email: info@stepni.org

Web: www.stepni.org/migrant-project-overview.asp

S.T.E.P. Migrant Workers' Support Project offer advice and guidance for Migrant Workers in the Dungannon area.

Stronger Together

c/o STEP (see above)

Phone: 028 – 8775 0211

Email: info@strongertogetherni.org

Stronger Together is a network of over 150 members representing BME Organisations and Groups, BME individuals, Community Sector, Volunteers Sector and Public Service Sector. The three key aims are to:

- Share information and knowledge
- Provide a useful and central shared resource to connect service providers within the sector; and
- Identify new opportunities for partnership and innovation

Islamic organisations - All Ireland

Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland 19 Roebuck Rd Clonskeagh, Dublin 14 Phone: 01 - 208 0000 Email: info@islamireland.ie Web: www.islamireland.ie	Islamic Foundation of Ireland 163 South Circular Road, Dublin 8 Phone: 01 - 453 3242 Email: ifi@indigo.ie Web: www.islaminireland.com
Ahul Bait Islamic Cultural Centre (Shi'a Muslim Islamic Centre) Milltown Bridge, Dundrum, Dublin 14 Phone: 01 - 260 4491	Irish Muslim Peace and Integration Council 8 Coolmine Industrial Estate Blanchardstown, Dublin 15 Phone: 01 - 5156206 Email: info@impic.ie Web: www.impic.ie
Irish Council of Imams in Ireland Contact through the Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland or the Islamic Foundation of Ireland.	
Belfast Islamic Centre 38 Wellington Park, Belfast BT9 6DN (BIC have a youth programme MYNI, Muslim Youth Northern Ireland) Phone: 028 - 9066 4465 Email: info@belfastislamiccentre.org.uk Web: http://belfastislamiccentre.org.uk/index.php/youth-group/	
NIMFA – Northern Ireland Muslim Family Association 7 Rugby Road, Belfast, BT7 1PS Phone: 028 - 9031 5784 NIMFA provides services and activities for the Muslim community in NI. It is dedicated to maintaining Islamic culture and values whilst integrating into the wider community. They provide daily prayers, and an Arabic and Islamic school and social activities for children and young people from 4 years to GCSE	

Regional and local services – Republic of Ireland

Clare Clare Immigrant Support Centre Unit 13 Carmody St Business Park Carmody St Ennis, Co Clare Phone: 065 - 6822026 Email: cisc@eircom.net	Cork NASC (Irish Immigrant Support Centre) Ferry Lane, Dominick St, Shandon, Cork Phone: 021 – 450 3462 Email: info@nascireland.org Web www.nascireland.org
Cork New Communities Partnership Cork 107 Shandon Street Cork Phone: 021 - 2399 910 Email: ncpcork@gmail.com Web: www.newcommunities.ie	Dublin Africa Centre 9c Abbey Street Lower Methodist Church Building Dublin 1 Phone: 01 - 865 6951 Email: info@africacentre.ie Web: www.africacentre.ie
Dublin (and national) New Communities Partnership 53 Upper Dorset St Dublin 1 Phone: 01 – 8727842 Web: www.newcommunities.ie	Dublin County Balbriggan Integration Forum Cairde Building, 8 Hampton St Balbriggan Co. Dublin K32 HD86 Phone: 089 - 4958737 Email: info@balbrigganintegration.ie Web: https://balbrigganintegration.ie
Dublin 15 Fingal Ethnic Network Unit 1, MGB Building Base Enterprise Centre Mulhuddart, Dublin 15 Phone: 087 05441896 Email: info@fingalethnicnetwork.ie Web: http://fingalethnicnetwork.ie/	Kerry Tralee International Resource Centre 13-14 St Patricks Bungalows Boherbee, Tralee Phone: 066 712 7918 Mobile: 087 982 2983 Web: http://tirc.ie/

Galway Galway Migrant Services (under Galway County Partnership) Unit 8, No 2 The Plaza Offices (above Argos & Lidl) Headford Road, Galway Phone: 091 - 773466 Office Mobile: 086 6020580 Email: katya@galwaymigrantservice.ie Web: http://gcp.ie/programmes-supports/support-for-communities/communities-by-interest/migrants/	Galway Migrant and Asylum Support Croi na Gaillimhe Society of St. Vincent de Paul Maureen O'Connell House 1 Mill Street Galway Phone: 091 – 895203 Email: info@croinagaillimhe.ie Web:http://croinagaillimhe.ie/migrant-and-asylum-support/
Limerick Doras Luimni Central Buildings 51a O'Connell Street Limerick Phone: (061) 310 328 Email: info@dorasluimni.org Web: www.dorasluimni.org	Mayo Mayo Intercultural Action (MIA) (under South West Mayo Development Company) Main Company Office, Georges Street, Newport Co. Mayo F28 X329 Phone: 098 41950 Mobile: 086 040 6134 (Diversity Mayo Project) Email: npestova@southmayo.com

Please note: this list is not in any way exhaustive. For a list of organisations in your area consult your County Council, local Partnership, ETB Youth Officer for your county, your Community Forum and/or your local Ethnic Liaison Officer

Regional and local services – Northern Ireland

Craigavon Intercultural Programme 7 Foundry St, Portadown, Craigavon BT63 5AB Phone: 028 - 3839 3372 Email: info@cipni.com Web: www.craigavonintercultural.org	Ballymena Inter Ethnic Forum 20 William St, Ballymena BT43 6AW Phone: 028 - 2564 8822 Email: Natasha.taylor@interethnicforum.org.uk Web: www.strongertogetherni.org/ballymena-inter-ethnic-forum
Strabane Ethnic Community Association 34 B72, Strabane BT82 9AE, UK Phone: 028 7188 6419 Email: info@seca.org.uk Web: www.seca.org.uk	African Community Support Organisation NI C/O 9 Lower Crescent, Belfast BT9 1NR Phone: 028 – 9043 4090 Email: admin@acsoni.org
Chinese Welfare Association 1 Stranmillis Embankment, Belfast, BT7 1GB Phone: 028 - 9028 8277 Fax: 028 - 9028 8278	Indian Community Centre 86 Clifton Street, Belfast, BT13 1AB Phone: 028 - 9024 9746 Email: info@iccbelfast.com
Polish Association NI Email: olalojek@yahoo.com (Aleksandra Lojek-Magdziarz) Email: maciek@polishassociation.org (Maciek Bator)	Foyle Multicultural Forum Phone: 028 7137 0989 Email: info@foylemf.org Web: www.foylemf.org

North West Migrants Forum (Advice and support service in the Derry City Council area and its environments) 10 Fountain Street Londonderry BT48 6QX Phone: 028 7136 2184 Email: info@nwmf.org.uk	NWMF are committed to promoting equality of opportunity and equal protection for people of different ethnic backgrounds in Northern Ireland. Their main focus is working with vulnerable migrants specifically from non EU countries, black minority ethnic backgrounds, asylum seekers and refugees.
Horn of Africa Peoples' Aid Northern Ireland (HAPANI) Botanic House 1-5 Botanic Avenue Belfast BT7 1JG Phone: 028 9031 5778	Supporting & Empowering Individuals From The Horn Of Africa And Beyond In Northern Ireland
Building Communities Resource Centre Unit 22 & 23, Acorn Business Centre 2 Riada Avenue Ballymoney BT53 7LH Phone: 028 2766 5068	Ethnic Minority Support Project provides services to Black and Minority Ethnic groups and individuals across the Causeway Coast and Glens area.
African & Caribbean Support of Northern Ireland (ASCONI) First Floor, 9 Lower Crescent Belfast, BT7 1NR Phone: 028 9043 4090, 028 9043 4106 Email: admin@acsoni.org	ASCONI is an autonomous community-based organisation with a proactive approach towards targeting needs and facilitating belonging among individuals from the continent of Africa, the Caribbean (West Indies) and other families in Northern Ireland with these linkages.

**CRAICNI - Cultivate Respect,
Appreciate Inclusion in Communities
in Northern Ireland**

Email: info@craicni.com

A Social Enterprise with the primary goal to develop and deliver quality learning experiences that focus on integration, cohesion and inclusive action.

Translating and interpreting services – All Ireland

Global Translations Ltd.

Phone: 01 - 2960533 / 01 - 2960069

Lionbridge International

Phone: 01 - 2021200

The Irish Translators' and Interpreters' Association

Phone: 01 - 8721302

This association keeps a register of members, which contains names of individual members and their languages of proficiency.

Word Perfect Translations Ltd.

Phone: 01 - 8720008

DCU Language Service

Phone: 01 - 700 5673

Email: interpreting@dcu.ie

Resources

National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI)

Intercultural resources, including research publications and activity based resources, can be requested from NYCI or downloaded from www.intercultural.ie

Youth Link NI

Intercultural resources, including activity based resources, can be requested from Youth Link downloaded from www.youthlink.org.uk or Ph: 028 90323217

Central Statistics Office

www.cso.ie

See the following detailed reports based on migration and diversity:
www.cso.ie/en/csolatestnews/presspages/2017/census2016profile7-migrationanddiversity/

NISRA

www.nisra.gov.uk

Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

Education

The National Adult Literacy Agency

www.nala.ie

The Dublin Adult Learning Centre

www.dalc.ie

City of Dublin Education and Training Board

<http://cityofdublin.etb.ie>, www.ncge.ie/node/3074

Supporting Refugee Students Transition to and Progress in Post-primary School

Learning and Work Institute-UK

www.learningandwork.org.uk

Skills Audit for Asylum Seekers and Refugees: A Practitioners Manual

www.learningandwork.org.uk/resource/skills-audits-for-asylum-seekers-and-refugees-a-practitioners-manual/

Supporting Syrian Refugee Resettlement with ESOL

www.learningandwork.org.uk/2017/07/10/supporting-syrian-refugee-resettlement-with-esol/

Background information on migration and its causes

General

Trocaire

www.trocaire.org/getinvolved/education

Forced to Flee: Why Should I Care About Migration and Refugees?

www.trocaire.org/getinvolved/education/resources/forced-flee

European Country of Origin Information Network

www.ecoi.net

Human Rights Watch

www.hrw.org

The International Crisis Group (ICG)

www.crisisgroup.org

Intercultural and Anti-Racism Training

Youth Work training (ROI)

National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI)

NYCI offers Intercultural Training programmes in:

- Intercultural awareness and cultural competency
- Tackling racism
- Policy development and implementation
- Developing intercultural programmes
- Embedding diversity in youth work
- Identifying, Challenging and Transforming Hate in Youth Settings

Web: www.intercultural.ie/training **Email:** Anne@nyci.ie **Phone:** 01 4784122

Youth Work training (NI)

Youth Link NI

Farset Enterprise Park

638 Springfield Road

Belfast BT 12 7DY

Phone: 028 90323217

Email: info@youthlink.org.uk

Web: www.youthlink.ork.uk

Youth Link NI offers credited training in Youth Work including modules in:

- OCN NI Level 1 Award in Diversity and Good Relations (QCF)
- OCN NI Level 2 Award in Diversity and Good Relations (QCF)
- OCN NI Level 2 Award in Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Youth Work Practice

Other intercultural training bodies (ROI)

Kensika Monshengwo (Interculturalism Anti-Racism Awareness Training and Training for Trainers) Phone: 089 9887142 Email: kmonshengwo@hotmail.com Web: https://training-intercultural.com	PARTNERS Training for Transformation Kimmage Development Studies Centre Kimmage Manor Whitehall Road D12 P5YP Phone: 01 - 406 7588 Email: partners@eircom.net Web: www.trainingfortransformation.ie/

Other intercultural training bodies (NI)

TIDES Training – General Office Duncairn Complex, Duncairn Ave, Belfast BT14 6BP Tel: 028 9043 8180 E-mail: info@tidestraining.org

Useful Reading Resources

An Garda Síochána. Your Police Service in Intercultural Ireland. Dublin: An Garda Síochána

Berry, John. W (2008) Globalisation and Acculturation
www.sciencedirect.com/science

CDYSB. 2009 Essential Guidelines for Good Youth Work Practice Toolkit.
www.cdysb.ie

Council of Europe, Croft, T., Crolla, V. & Mida-Briot, B. (2003) T-Kit on Social Inclusion Strasbourg: downloadable from www.salto-youth.net/tkitinclusion/

Dublin City Centre Citizens Information Service & Partners (2009) Find Your Way – A Guide to Key Services in Dublin City Centre. Dublin: Dublin City Centre Citizens Information Service

HSE. A HSE Guide to working with Interpreters (word document)
<http://handbook.muh.ie/admin/120907%20Guidance%20in%20Using%20Interpretation%20Services.doc>

HSE. Health Services Intercultural Guide: responding to the needs of diverse religious communities and cultures in healthcare settings

Immigrant Council of Ireland (2011) Paths to Parental Leadership Toolkit

Irish Rural Link, Egan, A., (2009) Reaching Out – Information and Resources for Rural Community and Voluntary Groups. Westmeath: Irish Rural Link

Migrants Rights Centre (2009) Tools for Social Change – A Resource Guide for Community Work with Migrant Workers and their Families in Ireland.
www.mrci.ie Dublin: MRCI

Migrants Rights Centre (2006) Realising Integration. Dublin: MRCI

University College Cork Ní Laoire, C., Bushin, N., Carpena-Mendez, F. & White, A. (2009) Tell me about yourself – Migrant Children's Experiences of moving to and living in Ireland Cork: UCC <http://migration.ucc.ie/children/>

NYCI, Mauro-Bracken, L. (2009) Report on Consultations for an Intercultural Strategy in Youthwork. Dublin: NYCI

NCCRI (2007) *Useful Terminology for Service Providers*

www.pobal.ie/Publications/Documents/Improving%20Government%20Service%20to%20Minority%20Ethnic%20Groups%20Key%20Terminology%20for%20Service%20Providers%20-%20NCCRI%20-%202007.pdf

NCCRI (2007) Key Considerations for Service Providers

www.pobal.ie/Publications/Documents/Improving%20Government%20Services%20to%20Minority%20Ethnic%20Groups%20-%20Key%20Considerations%20for%20Service%20Providers%20-%20NCCRI%20-%202007.pdf

NCCRI Seeking Advice and Redress against Racism

www.pobal.ie/Publications/Documents/Seeking%20Advice%20and%20Redress%20against%20Racism%20in%20Ireland%20-%20NCCRI%20-%202006.pdf

North Eastern Board NI Inclusion and Diversity Service resource for teachers

www.education-support.org.uk/teachers/ids/

NWICN (2008) Opening Doors - The Intercultural Toolkit for Service Providers in the North West Inner City Dublin: North West Inner City Network (NWICN)

NYCI, Mc Crea, N. (2003) Steps Toward Inclusion. Available to download on [Steps Towards Inclusion 2003.pdf](#)

NYCI, Walsh, A. (2017) Make Minority a Priority www.youth.ie/minority

NYCI, Walsh, A. (2016) 8 Steps to Inclusive Youth Work Available to download on www.youth.ie/sites/youth.ie/files/NYCI-8-steps-inclusive.pdf

Ombudsman for Children's Office "Dublin. Your City/Our City: A guide compiled by Separated Children" and "All I have to say" Separated Children in their Own Words" www.oco.ie/

References

ⁱ See

www.pobal.ie/Publications/Documents/Improving%20Government%20Services%20to%20Minority%20Ethnic%20Groups%20Key%20Terminology%20for%20Service%20Providers%20-%20NCCRI%20-%202007.pdf, Also Opening Doors: Intercultural Toolkit for service providers in North west Inner City Network (NWICN)

ⁱⁱ www.nisra.gov.uk/sites/nisra.gov.uk/files/publications/2011-census-results-key-statistics-northern-ireland-report-11-december-2012.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://lawcentreni.org/Publications/Policy-Briefings/How-many-refugees-in-NI-Oct-2015.pdf>

^{iv} www.embraceni.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Refugee-booklet-January-2017-F.pdf
pp 13

^v Statistics sourced from: CSO, Department of Education and Skills and Report and Recommendations for an Intercultural Strategy in Youth Work by Siobhan Lynham. You can find statistics for ROI residents classified by nationality and age group from: www.cso.ie/statistics/nationalityagegroup.htm N.I. Statistics sourced from Department of Education Northern Ireland. UK – www.ukcisa.org.uk/about/statistics_he.php

^{vi} For further information on languages spoken in various countries see www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0855611.html In Northern Ireland see NICEM 'Annual Report 2008-2009' and 'Equality Unit Black and Minority Ethnic and Migrant Worker Mapping Update' Feb 2011)

^{vii} See Berry, John. W, 2008, Globalisation and Acculturation, available on www.sciencedirect.com

^{viii} New Communities Partnership membership list www.newcommunities.ie/

^{ix} www.facebook.com/nicre.org/

^x Guidelines to working with interpreters are available on www.intercultural.ie, www.spirasi.ie and the NWICN Toolkit Opening Doors

^{xi} See www.sari.ie

^{xii} Annual reports from Garda Ethnic Liaison Division and ENAR Ireland i-report

^{xiii} contact Community relations section, phone 01 - 6663150, fax 01 - 6663801 or email crimprev@iol.ie for a confidential service

^{xiv} Policing, Accountability and the Black and Minority Ethnic Communities in NI (2004).

Radford, K. Betts, J. Ostermeyer, M. ICR

^{xv} Sources: Migrant Rights Centre Ireland www.mrci.ie,

- **Migrant Worker** - A migrant worker is a person who is working in a state of which s/he is not a national. A migrant worker can be documented and undocumented.
- **Work Permit** - A work permit gives permission for a migrant worker to be employed in a specific job. The employer must show that there are no Irish or EU candidates available to fill the position. A work permit is normally issued for two years and can be renewed for three years.
- **Green Card** – A green card is a type of work permit issued for selected professional areas and for jobs with a salary of €60,000 and over. It is valid for 2 years.

^{xvi} Migration and Migrant Workers in NI (2008) ARK, quoting Bell et al, 2004

^{xvii} Sources:

www.pobal.ie/Publications/Documents/Challenging%20Myths%20and%20Misinformation%20about%20Asylum-Seekers%20and%20Refugees%20-%20NCCRI%20-%202008.pdf and Sanctuary www.catholicbishops.ie/refugees

^{xviii} www.independent.ie/irish-news/ireland-refuses-asylum-to-90pc-of-applicants-35229842.html

^{xix} www.ria.gov.ie

^{xx} Geraghty and others(2010), in 'Attitudes to difference', NCB NI and Ark YLT www.ncp.org.uk/pdf/ATTD_web_final.pdf

^{xxi} www.pobal.ie/Publications/Documents/Challenging%20Myths%20and%20Misinformation%20about%20Asylum-Seekers%20and%20Refugees%20-%20NCCRI%20-%202008.pdf

SECTION THREE

Working with LGBTI+ young people

Introduction

This section focuses on young people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex (LGBTI+ⁱ). It presents demographics relating to LGBTI+ young people, explains the varying needs and issues that LGBTI+ young people may face and it offers practical advice on actions you can take to support them to access your youth service and contribute to it. At the end, if you have further questions or want to obtain resources, there are contact details for BeLonGTo and other LGBTI+ youth and community groups, as well as suggested further reading.



By all accounts LGBTI+ young people are ‘coming out’ about their identities younger and in greater numbers than ever before. In this way LGBTI+ young people who are in a position to tell others about their identities often cause great positive change in their youth groups and schools. However, most LGBTI+ young people are aware of their sexuality/gender at 12 years of age but do not tell others until they are 14-16. Because of this it is very likely that you are presently working with LGBTI+ young people who have not disclosed their identities to you yet. A key to ensuring that LGBTI+ young people are safe and included is to presume that you already are working with some, and to create

an environment which is open, safe, welcoming and equal for them.

Your role as a youth worker may involve working with a young person you have built a trusting relationship with who tells you they are LGBTI or +. The plus stands for other minority sexual orientations and gender identities. You can advise them about the availability of special interest youth services, however, it is important that the young person feels welcome to stay involved in your youth group, alongside any special interest group they might choose to attend.

By reading this section you most likely have an interest in working to make your youth service open, welcoming and safe for LGBTI+ young people. The fact that you want to achieve this and are taking action, means that you are well on the way to making it happen. As with all young people we want LGBTI+ young people to be empowered to grow confidently from their involvement in your service. We hope that you enjoy reading this section and are inspired to make positive changes in your service as a result.

In the Republic of Ireland under the **Equal Status Act 2000** and the **Equality Act 2004**, it is unlawful to discriminate against a person on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender in the provision of goods and services, education, sports, access to public facilities and accommodation. The gender ground also protects transgender people from discriminationⁱⁱ.

In Northern Ireland under the **Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (NI) 2003**, and the **Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (NI) 2006** it is unlawful to discriminate against a person on the grounds of sexual orientation in the provision of goods and services, education, sports, access to public facilities and accommodation and also in employment. Legislative protection for transgender people lies within Sex Discrimination legislation.



Terminology

This resource has been developed to be used by youth workers on the island of Ireland. At times it is necessary to make distinctions between our two jurisdictions and we had to choose a terminology to reflect this. We have chosen for the most part to use Northern Ireland (NI) and Republic of Ireland (ROI). At times we also use North and South. Additionally, for clarity, where information is significantly different we have used coloured boxes:

Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland

LGBTI+: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex people. The plus sign represents other minority sexual orientations and gender identities that are not specifically named, such as non-binary people.

Coming out: is the process through which an LGBTI+ person accepts their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics as part of their overall identity. It generally refers to the process of self-acceptance and to the acts of sharing this identity with others.

“Coming Out’ is not an event but rather an ongoing process. Most LGBTI+ people will spend their lives coming out in different ways because society generally assumes people are heterosexual unless a person indicates otherwise.

Sexual Orientation: sexual and romantic attraction.

Asexual: someone who rarely experiences sexual attraction; they may experience romantic or emotional attraction.

Bisexual (Bi/Bi+): An individual who may be attracted to more than one gender. Bi+ is an umbrella term used to describe other identities such as queer, pansexual and others who are not exclusively attracted to one gender.

Lesbian Women and **Gay Men** are people who are physically, sexually and/or emotionally attracted to members of the same sex. The word 'gay' is sometimes used for both.

Heterosexual/straight: Someone who is attracted to people of a different gender.

Pansexual: Someone who may be attracted to any person, regardless of their gender.

Queer: A term someone may use to describe their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression that does not conform to societal norms. Some LGBTI+ people identify as 'queer.' This can indicate that while they are not heterosexual and/or cisgender, the labels gay, lesbian, bisexual and/or transgender do not work for them. Queer is also used as an insult in Ireland, so some LGBTI+ people would be offended if they were called queer. It is best used to describe yourself rather than others.

Gender identity refers to each person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth.

Gender expression: how we show our gender through clothing, hair, voice, behaviour, etcⁱⁱⁱ.

Gender fluid: refers to a person who does not feel confined by the binary division of male and female. They may fluctuate between genders or express multiple genders at the same time.

Gender Binary: the socially constructed idea that someone's gender can be one of two options, either male or female, and that this corresponds with someone's sex assigned at birth.



Cisgender: when one's gender identity matches the sex assigned at birth. This is used to describe anyone who is not transgender.

Transgender, or Trans: People whose gender is different to their sex assigned at birth. It is an umbrella term to describe anyone who is not cisgender. A trans person may identify as male, female, both or maybe neither gender fits them. The experiences and needs of transgender young people may differ from those who identify as lesbian, gay and bisexual. Nevertheless, the “coming-out” process and experiences of homophobic or transphobic bullying can be similar.

Gender dysphoria: The distress a person experiences because the sex they were assigned at birth does not match their gender identity.

Sex: At birth, babies are usually assigned male or female, based on their anatomy. (However, see Intersex below.) This sex designation is then recorded on their birth certificates.

Transition: the process in which some trans people begin to live as the gender with which they identify, rather than the sex they were given at birth.

Transition may or may not include social, medical or legal changes, such as: coming out to family and friends; changing one's appearance and/or name, pronoun, and legal documents; and medical treatment, such as hormones, hormone blockers or surgery. In the past, this was called a 'sex change.'

Non-binary: An umbrella term for any gender that is not exclusively male or female.

Intersex: is a term for people whose physical sex is not definitively male or female.

Intersex people are assigned a sex at birth of either male or female. Some children are surgically operated on without their consent to assign a sex: gender identity should be entirely for them to decide. For some intersex people, variations are apparent at birth, for others they emerge later^{iv}.



Homophobia refers to the fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against people who are or are perceived to be gay, lesbian or bisexual. Biphobia can also be used to specify similar actions targeting those that are or are perceived to be bisexual (Bi/Bi+).

Transphobia refers to the fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against trans/transgender people, based on the expression of their internal gender identification.

Heterosexism are societal and institutional structures that affords a range of economic, social and legal advantages, to people who are heterosexual, at the expense of others. This can affect everyone and happens on a variety of levels from: subtle to overt; interpersonal and institutional; intentional to unintentional.

Internalised Homophobia are negative beliefs and attitudes about same-sex orientation that lesbian, gay and bisexual people absorb through growing up in our society, which can interfere with the development of self-esteem and positive relationships.

Note: This terminology page is by no means exhaustive and it is always recommended to talk to the young people you work with about the terminology they use and what it means to them as changes are happening rapidly in this area.



Rainbow flag



Bisexual flag



Trans flag

Demographics

Irish research has found that LGB young people were 8-11% of all youth, including 4% who identified as gay or lesbian, 4% as bisexual, and 3% as 'not sure'^v. Of the 352,257 post-primary students in the Republic of Ireland in 2016 / 2017^{vi} 8% represents 28,180 students who would identify as LGB.

Figures for a percentage of those who identify as transgender in the general population are limited. In New Zealand, researchers found 1.7% of high school students were trans, and a further 2.5% were unsure of their gender.^{vii} Of the 352,257 post-primary students in the Republic of Ireland in 2016 / 2017; 5,988 (1.7%) would likely be trans or non-binary students.

People with intersex variations are about 1.7% of the world population^{viii}. This would put the number of intersex students in the Republic of Ireland at approximately 5,988.



Needs and issues for LGBTI+ young people

Evidence indicates that young people are coming out as LGBTI+ in greater numbers and at an earlier age. “The LGBTIreland Report’, the largest study of LGBTI+ people’s mental health and wellbeing in the Republic of Ireland found that the most common age that someone knew they were LGBTI+ was 12 years old.^{ix}

The ShOut report from Northern Ireland indicates that 86% of young LGBTI+ people were aware of their sexual orientation while at school.^x

Education

‘The LGBTIreland Report’ which explored education issues in the Republic of Ireland found that:

- 20% of LGBTI students felt that they belonged completely in their school
- 67% of respondents reported witnessing bullying of other LGBTI students in their school
- 47.5% of LGBTI students personally experienced anti-LGBTI bullying
- 24% skipped school to avoid negative treatment due to being LGBTI
- 4% left school early because of negative treatment.

‘OUTstanding in your field: exploring the needs of LGB&T people in rural Northern Ireland’^{xi} found in general a high prevalence of homophobic language being used within education settings as well as low reporting from students. It noted that the vast majority (88.5%) of LGBT people had heard homophobic/transphobic language at school/college and more than half (55.4%) heard it most days or everyday. Most of those in this study reported hearing such language from other pupils (87.7%), while



over a quarter heard it from teachers (26.2%). Those living in rural areas were more likely to hear homophobic/transphobic language than their urban based counterparts.

The four most widely cited hindrances in tackling homophobic bullying according to the 'PRIDE Evaluation' in Northern Ireland were parental disapproval (53%); a lack of confidence in developing and delivering resources (39%); student disapproval (35%) and school inexperience in dealing with these issues (29%).^{xii} 'OUTstanding in your field' found that 88.3% of people didn't report these and other negative experiences within education. The most common reasons were down to a belief that the school/college wouldn't do anything about (53%) followed by a fear of being outed to friends or family (40.6%).



The ShOut report^{xiii} in Northern Ireland demonstrates that 44% of LGBT young people had been bullied at school because of their sexual orientation. The more recent 'OUTstanding in your field' report^{xiv} did not qualify whether negative experiences in education amounted to bullying. It did however show that the following were experiences of LGBTI people in schools/colleges:

- **54% had experienced verbal abuse**
- **22.5% had experienced physical abuse**
- **52% were the subject of gossip and rumours**
- **35% experienced intimidation during the course of their education.**

Health impacts

Research carried out, both in Ireland and internationally, has established that LGBTI+ young people are at significant health risk due to isolation, fear, stigma, the 'coming-out' process, bullying and family rejection.^{xv} The negative health impacts on LGBTI+ young people of widespread homophobic bullying have been well established. These impacts include internalised homophobia, poor body image and vulnerability to eating disorders.^{xvi}

'The LGBTIreland Report' noted the significant impact of bullying on LGBTI+ peoples mental health. Those that experienced LGBTI+ bullying had significantly higher scores on the depression, anxiety, and stress scales and lower scores on the self-esteem scale. They also had significantly higher scores on the alcohol use scale, indicating more problematic alcohol use and behaviours.

This study also showed that in comparison to those that had not experienced LGBTI bullying in school, those that had were:

- **12% more likely to self-harm;**
- **18% more likely to have seriously considered ending their life; and,**
- **19% more likely to have attempted suicide.**



In addition to the health needs and challenges facing all young people, significant barriers exist to LGBTI+ young people accessing health services, including lack of access to appropriate information and fear of negative reaction. Young people who have not disclosed their sexual/gender identity to their parents/guardians, or who may not have supportive parents, may also not be in position to secure parental consent and so may not be able to access health services.^{xvii}

Young LGBTI+ people in Ireland may experience additional barriers as a consequence of societal attitudes to sexual and gender identity. LGBTI+ people are shown as being “more likely to engage in alcohol misuse, drug abuse and deliberate self-harm”.^{xviii}

Suicidal behaviour

In relation to 14 – 18 year olds, “The LGBTIreland Report”, found that:

- **56% had self-harmed**
- **66% of bisexual respondents and 67% of transgender respondents reported a history of self-harm**
- **15 years and 9 months was the average age of onset of self-harm**
- **69% had contemplated suicide**
- **32% had attempted suicide**
- **21% of gay respondents and 37% of lesbian respondents had attempted suicide at least once.**
- **Levels of severe/extremely severe stress, anxiety and depression were 4 times higher among 14-18 year old LGBTI teens in comparison to a similar age group (12-19 year olds) in the My World Survey^{xix}**

Research carried out in Northern Ireland for the ShOut report into the needs and experiences of young people in Northern Ireland who identify as LGBTI+ found that:

- **26% of LGBTI+ young people had self-harmed**
- **29% had attempted suicide**
- **24% had been medicated for depression^{xx}**

“Out On Your Own” research in Northern Ireland highlights that 71.3% of those surveyed had thought about taking their own life.^{xxi}

The findings on self-harm and attempted suicide were strongly linked to experiences of being physically or verbally threatened, or hurt; and feeling alone and socially isolated, particularly in school, and a fear of or actually experiencing rejection by friends and family.

Connecting for Life: Ireland’s National Strategy to Reduce Suicide: 2015-2020 has recognised LGBTI+ people as being a priority group. ^{xxii} The area of mental health was also looked at in the ROI’s LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy 2018-2020^{xxiii}. It noted that:

“The mental health challenges young LGBTI+ people face are often the product of broader social attitudes, and so it is acknowledged implicitly throughout this Strategy that changing attitudes of non-LGBTI+ people towards LGBTI+ people through awareness and education improves the lived experiences of LGBTI+ young people themselves.”



Protect Life - Shared Vision: The Northern Ireland Suicide Prevention Strategy and Action Plan 2006 – 2011 indicated one of its actions as “to ensure that appropriate support services reach out to all marginalised and disadvantaged groups, in particular lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, and transgender groups, ...”^{xxiv} A later report on the ‘Development of a new suicide prevention strategy for Northern Ireland’^{xxv} has stated that there should be an ‘information campaign for raised risk groups including LGBTI+’ people.

Alcohol and Drug use

The LGBTIreland Report explored alcohol and drug use among LGBTI young people. Of 14 – 18 year olds, it found that:

- **62.3% had no alcohol issue**
- **28.4% had a medium level of alcohol problems**
- **4.4% and 4.9% had high or very high levels of alcohol problems.**

The ratings for 19 – 25 year olds was significantly higher.

- **47.9% had no alcohol issue**
- **38.8% had a medium level of alcohol problems**
- **7.2% and 6.2% had high or very high levels of alcohol problems**

With regards to drug use, The LGBTIreland Report showed that more than a quarter of participants aged 14-18 (29.8%) had taken drugs recreationally during their life. Nearly two-thirds of those aged 19-25 (62.5%) had also done so. The three drug types used most often in the past month and year were: hashish/marijuana/cannabis; codeine-based drugs; and ecstasy/E/yokes.

The Northern Ireland research “Out On Your Own” indicated that 71.6% of young men had tried drugs or solvents at least once. In total, 17.4% of the respondents indicated that they used some form of drug on a regular basis, the most common being poppers with 10.6% indicating they used poppers on a regular basis.^{xxvi}



Developing LGBTI+ inclusive youth work

This section focuses on some ways in which you can make your youth service LGBTI+ open and friendly, and hence safe and welcoming to LGBTI+ young people. It is important to have a supportive structure in place:

- **Ensure that you have a policy on the inclusion of LGBTI+ young people**
- **Explicitly mention LGBTI+ people in your policies and procedures**
- **Specifically outline equality legislation in your policies**
- **Ensure that your commitment to equality and inclusion are publicly known**
- **Ensure that your policies and procedures are understood, supported and followed through by staff and volunteers on the ground**
- **Deliver programmes that promote diversity and challenge myths and stereotypes**
- **Design and deliver your programmes to consciously include the needs and identities of LGBTI+ young people**
- **Ensure that staff and volunteers are adequately trained to work with LGBTI+ young people**
- **Provide literature, toolkits, and guidelines to educate and support workers and volunteers on LGBTI+ issues**

Creating safer environments for LGBTI+ young people

- Do not assume everyone is heterosexual/cisgender or that everyone's parents are heterosexual/cisgender.
- Refer to the fact that some people experience attraction to the same sex/gender as themselves, or to multiple sexes/genders
- Try to avoid equating LGBTI+ issues only with sexual behaviour – those who identify as LGBTI+ have as varied interests as those that are heterosexual/cisgender
- Include information about LGBTI+ issues, supports, etc. in material that is distributed to everyone so that people do not have to identify themselves as LGBTI+ before getting information that is appropriate to them
- Address manifestations of anti-LGBTI+ prejudice – name-calling, bullying and violence
- Be aware that discussion around LGBTI+ identities may result in anti-LGBTI+ sentiment being expressed and be prepared for this
- Make it easier for young people who identify as LGBTI+ to find one another
- Make it easier for LGBTI+ young people to find other forms of support through LGBTI+ youth organisations, help-lines and so on
- Engage with parents of young LGBTI+ people who make contact and give them details of parent support networks e.g. www.look.ie (Loving Our Out Kids), www.sailni.com (SAIL) and www.gendered.ie (for families of gender variant children and Transgender young people)

Tackling Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia

‘By working together, standing up for the democratic values that we share, refusing to go along with loudly-voiced prejudices, we can overcome the bias and hostility experienced by many young gay people throughout the country. No-one should have to suffer on account of their sexual orientation.’

Former President of Ireland Mary McAleese^{xxvii}

Tackling homophobia, biphobia and transphobia within youth services needs to be taken on seriously, in the same way as other issues of equality are approached. Being inclusive of LGBTI+ identities needs to become an integral part of what youth work does.



A first step is to promote the visibility of LGBTI+ youth. This can be achieved in a number of simple ways:

- **Frequently tell young people and staff that LGBTI+ young people are welcome in your service and will be treated equally**
- **Include LGBTI+ people as part of the community - in discussions, group work, one-to-one work, programmes and policy development**
- **Provide positive images of LGBTI+ people to be used alongside those of other individuals and community groups. This can be done by acknowledging the sexual orientation and/or gender identity of famous and successful LGBTI+ people. This should happen in the same way as ensuring work presented to young people includes positive images of ethnic minority people, women, people with disabilities etc.**
- **Provide books, leaflets and posters which depict LGBTI+ people and LGBTI+ community groups**
- **Celebrate LGBTI+ life in the same way that other diversity in the community is celebrated. Mark LGBTI+ days of significance, such as LGBTI+ Pride and International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHOTB) each May**

It is vital to ensure that the conditions in youth groups and projects are such that youth workers who are inclusive of LGBTI+ identities in their work are not victimised or isolated. This will mean inclusion of sexual and gender identity as an issue in equality policies for both young people and staff.

Practical ways of responding to Homophobic, Biphobic and Transphobic remarks

From colleagues:

Firstly, name the behaviour as homophobic, biphobic or transphobic.

Then you could continue with:

- “I feel uncomfortable with jokes like that/that kind of labelling.”
- “As far as I’m concerned we are all entitled to respect.”
- “You know, LGBTI+ young people are coming to our service, and we want to make them feel welcome and equal.”
- “We have procedures to protect us all from that kind of behaviour.”
- “Everyone is entitled to their opinion, but I’m shocked to hear views like that expressed here; we are all expected to support equality.”
- “I’m worried that comments and attitudes like that can have a terrible impact on LGBTI+ young people, maybe we need to have training on LGBTI+ issues.”

From managers or supervisors:

Firstly, name the behaviour as homophobic, biphobic or transphobic.

Then you could continue with:

- “I expected you would be a leader in the promotion of equality here. Please don’t assume I feel OK with what you said or seem to believe. I feel very disappointed and unsafe when I hear you speak of a minority group like that.”
- “If someone said something like that about me, I would have expected you to stand up for me. I feel it is part of your job as a manager/supervisor.”

From staff you manage or supervise:

Firstly, name the behaviour as homophobic, biphobic or transphobic

Then you could continue with:

- “That kind of statement encourages scape-goating. We have a policy against that, it’s called equality and we are all accountable for upholding it. You are in danger of being disciplined if you don’t desist from expressions of that kind.”
- “Have you ever attended a course or seminar on LGBTI+ issues at work? Maybe we should look into it. You don’t seem to know much about the effects of homophobia on people with whom you work, or anyone else for that matter.”

From young people:

Firstly, name the behaviour as homophobic, biphobic or transphobic.

- Young people often use the word gay randomly to describe a person, event or object they don’t like or is in their minds ‘un-cool’ or ‘weird’. This is actually homophobic and needs challenging.

Timing is crucial here, make it clear immediately that it is not acceptable. The rule of thumb is to Stop it, name it, and put it in the context of your group or organisation’s rules or codes of conduct, by naming the consequences of the use of disrespectful language or behaviour. Follow with a request for a change of future behaviour and check in and reassure anyone in the room that the comment or action was targeting.

You might ask questions like:

- “What do you mean by that? A lot of the young people here use that kind of language – what do you think that’s about – why are people so negative?”

- “What are you intending to achieve by the use of the word gay?”
- “We have made it very clear in our policies that we respect everybody’s human rights so using language in that way which implies that there is something wrong with being gay is unacceptable.”
- “What you just said is homophobic. Why do you feel that it is acceptable to insult LGBTI+ people?”
- “Those remarks break this service’s equality policy. We are committed to ensuring that all young people, including LGBTI+ young people are safe and welcome here. You know we will not tolerate that.”
- “That sort of language is unacceptable in this service. You know we will not tolerate homophobia any more than we would racism or sexism.”
- “Remember how we’re always talking about equality - it sounds like we really need to talk about LGBTI+ equality.”

If further discussion is needed you might say:

- “That is unacceptable in this service/youth club. I will want to talk with you about this later today/after the group ...”

For further help:

Contact BeLong To for a copy of Addressing Homophobia: Guidelines for the Youth Sector

Contact SAIL NI for a copy of Supporting Trans Youth which has guidelines on tackling Transphobia www.sailni.com/education

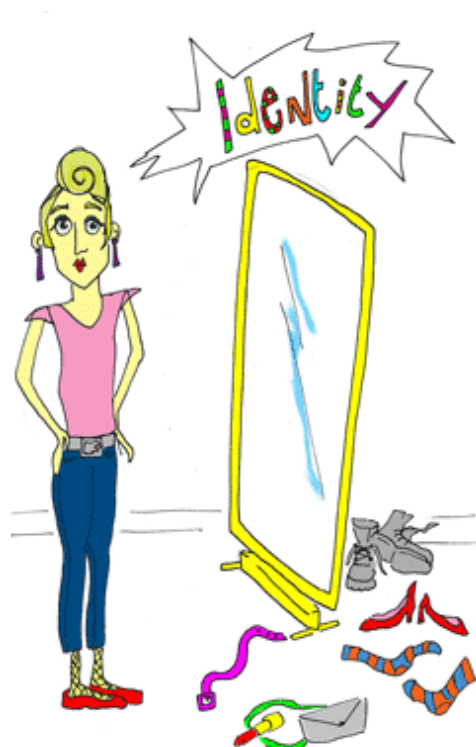
Understanding Coming Out

There is a substantial period in a young person's life when they are struggling to come to terms with their sexual or gender identity. These years can be especially challenging for LGBTI+ young people because of their extra emotional dependency on their families, friends and those in school at this time of their lives.

Known as “coming out” it is an ongoing process through which the young LGBTI+ person accepts their sexual orientation and/or gender identity as part of their overall identity. It involves a process of self-acceptance and sharing this identity with others.

Most LGBTI+ people will spend their lives coming out in different ways because society generally assumes people are heterosexual unless a person indicates otherwise. For example, when starting a new job a gay or lesbian person will have to make a decision as to whether they will come out or not.

Research has indicated that the most common age when a young person realises that they are LGBTI+ is 12 and that the most common age when they tell anyone else (usually a friend) is 16, i.e. there are approximately four years between a young person knowing that they are LGBTI+ and telling someone else. This period corresponds with most of their teenage experience.



During this time, young people have reported feeling invisible, feeling terrified of being found out and being treated in a negative manner. One 17-year-old LGBTI+ male captured his experience of isolation and invisibility as follows:

‘During school I spent every minute monitoring what I was saying and doing. I wouldn’t even let myself think anything gay. Then after school I’d spend my time paranoid thinking I had slipped up on the act’.

Research carried out by The Rainbow Project in Northern Ireland in 2009 indicated that 39% of LGB people alter their behaviour to avoid others knowing that they are not heterosexual.^{xxviii} The difficulty and reluctance to explore one’s sexual identity is further hampered by negative experiences as noted below:

‘The whole notion of LGBTI+ students being recognised at my school was non-existent...the biggest mention we got was that we were more likely to contract AIDS...which led to the catchy chant “You’re going to die of AIDS!”’



Coming out can be one of the most testing and distressing times in an LGBTI+ young person’s life. There are personal risks involved with coming out to family, friends and colleagues. Young LGBTI+ people can fear rejection and being misunderstood. By and large, LGBTI+ young people come out and go on to live full and happy lives. However, this process can be marked by intense anxiety and young people may need a great deal of support at this time.

Again the key to letting a young person know that they are safe at this time is to ensure that your project is visibly LGBTI+ friendly and that staff are open and prepared for a young person to come out to them.

Remember, if a young person does come out as LGBTI+ to you or another staff member it means that they trust you a lot. It is a testament to your ability to work with young people. Acknowledge that it may have been a difficult thing to tell you and thank them for opening up. If it seems appropriate, talk with them about how they are and if they need any support or want to know about any LGBTI+ youth groups in the area. It is understandable that you might be nervous and afraid of saying the wrong thing. But don't panic – this is a good thing! A young person may tell you because they are experiencing problems (e.g. with their family, or bullying), while others may be telling you because they are beginning a process whereby they want the people they care about to know that they are LGBTI+). Either way it's a big deal for that young person. They may have been building up to this point for a long time. Let them know that you understand how hard it is/may be to talk about it. For some, they might not want anything to happen, and are content and happy to be coming out to you. Others, particularly trans young people, may want you to start using a new name and/or pro-noun when addressing them. It is most important that you just maintain your positive and open relationship with the young person and be led by what they want to happen. A factor of this is respecting the young person's confidentiality, and not sharing their sexuality or gender identity with others without their consent.

Young people Coming Out as transgender

The term transgender is an umbrella term (see our Terminology Page for more detailed information) to describe anyone who is not “cisgender”. It can refer to people whose gender identity or gender expression is different to the sex assigned to them at birth. A transgender boy, for example, was registered as female at birth but has a clear and persistent identity as male. A



transgender girl was registered as male at birth but has a clear and persistent identity as female. Gender identity is an innate, largely inflexible characteristic of each individual's personality which is generally established by the age of four, although the age at which individuals come to understand and express their gender identity may vary based on each person's social and familial development^{xxix}.

Some people identify as gender non-binary, meaning that they do not fit into either the female or male gender identity. The following advice will give youth work organisations guidance on how they can best support individuals who are coming out as transgender and work to avoid transphobic bullying; it will also have relevance for supporting young people who identify as non-binary, gender fluid or intersex. Self-determination is an important principle, in that the responsibility for determining a person's gender identity rests with the individual themselves, or in the case of a young person who is not yet able to advocate for themselves, with their parents/guardians



How should a youth organisation respond?

Whilst the youth organisation may find the transition of one of its members initially challenging, it is critically important to the physical, psychological and emotional well-being of the young person that they are treated with dignity, respect and fairness for his, her, or their preferred gender identity. It is extremely important to ensure that the preferred gender, name and pronoun are used to address transgender or intersex people as it is a mark of respect against which individuals will measure the level of safety and inclusion for them

within the group. Some people will seek to legally change their name and gender by deed poll and get a gender recognition certificate^{xxx}. While adjustment to using a person's new name may take time, and accidents in misuse of original names may happen, the organisation should also be alert to the deliberate use of the original name and pronoun by other members and youth leaders as a means of name-calling and harassment.

Young people who identify as intersex or non-binary will have varying needs. It is good practice to ascertain what supports they need on an individual basis and, where possible, to negotiate those supports between the young person, their family and the youth work organisation to try to reach an agreement that is fair and respectful to all.

Questions about schools, toilets and changing rooms

The use of toilet and changing facilities often causes most debate around the inclusion of transgender youth. It is a good idea to try to include gender neutral or unisex facilities in your buildings or future planning of accommodation as this can alleviate many difficulties.

Some people may feel uncomfortable with a transgender person using gender-specific facilities or having a gender neutral option.

This discomfort may be rooted in an unfounded assumption of inappropriate behaviour and consequently it is not a reason to deny the trans person access to the facilities. However, it is important to address this discomfort and to foster understanding of gender identity in order to create a culture that



respects and values all people and prevents transphobic bullying. Regardless of the setting; the key goal is to ensure the safety and support of the young person so that they may be free from harassment and victimisation and in a position to reach their full potential.

If a young person asks you what they should do about being trans at school, you can find detailed responses in GLEN's document "Being LGBT at School" and in BeLonG To's trans info sheets. Some of the advice you can offer will also have relevance for youth organisations. For example, at first glance it may seem that the challenges facing single-sex schools or youth organisations (including single-sex boarding schools) in supporting their trans young people may be more complex than those of a co-ed school or youth organisation. However, increasing numbers of single-sex schools are supporting young people in making a transition. It is possible for a student to transition and remain in a single-sex school or youth organisation. Examples of how two schools approached it are available in the GLEN document. A school's single-sex status will not be altered by the continued enrolment of a transgender student whose gender is not that of the remainder of the student population.

In Northern Ireland the Department of Education has posted a guidance document for schools and youth centres on their website: 'Supporting Trans Youth: guidance for supporting trans and non-binary young people in formal and non-formal education'. The document aims to provide guidance and information on how to effectively support transgender, non-binary and questioning young people, and help improve their experiences throughout educational and youth work environments. It is available on: www.eani.org.uk/resources/assets/attachment/full/0/51716.pdf



More about Coming Out - what LGBTI+ young people say^{xxxi}

Young people were asked about coming out. These are some of their responses:

What is coming out?

- “It can be difficult at times but it is also a learning experience”
- “Something positive”
- “Coming-out as who you are”
- “Expressing one of many aspects of who you are”
- “Something you should not be pushed into”
- “People’s comments can be difficult to deal with”

What are the barriers to coming out?

- “People making smart comments on the street”
- “People passing judgement before they get to know you”
- “People thinking all gays have AIDS”
- “Religion”
- “Stereotypes”
- “People thinking it’s a phase”
- “Your own fear of being different/alone”
- “Fear of closing yourself off from all your friends”

So why come out?

- “To be honest with yourself and others”
- “Finding your real self”
- “To stop living a lie”
- “It is a release”
- “To live your own life”
- “It strengthens your character”

Practical tips for working with young people on Coming Out

Although ‘coming out’ can occur in a variety of ways and settings, even when you least expect it, we have compiled the following tips for young people which might be useful for them if they are considering doing just this!

Ask yourself why you are coming out to a particular person or persons

When you begin to come out to people, or when you have made some LGBTI+ friends, you may experience excitement and elation – the ‘scream it from the roof tops’ feeling. Cherish this – you have everything to be proud of, but maybe not everyone needs to know your sexuality. Think about who you are planning to tell or want to come out to. Is it a family member, a friend or an acquaintance? Do you need to come out to that person at this moment?



Timing

Although for many people there is no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ time to come out, planning exactly when you are going to tell someone is well worth thinking about. Are you going to have adequate time afterwards to discuss it further or to answer any questions the person may have? Will you have the full attention of the person or are they pre-occupied with something else?

Where to tell?

Location can be important too. To allow for conversation afterwards pick somewhere that will give you privacy with minimal risk of any interruptions. If it’s someone that you think may react favourably to your disclosure the location is probably less important. However, if you in any way expect negativity you are probably best sticking to a location where you feel safest.



Time to digest

Remember that you have had time to think about what you want to say. The person you are telling has not. Depending on your relationship with them they may have suspected already, but even if this is the case it may still take time for it to sink in with them. Don’t automatically expect an extreme reaction either, the person you are telling may be slow to react. This could be because they fear offending or embarrassing you as much as anything else.

Resources

Having resources to hand is also useful. BeLonGTo have produced some booklets on being LGBTI+, as have some youth groups around the country. For more info on this – visit www.belongto.org

Talk to others

Talk to other LGBTI+ young people about the fears, expectations and reactions they experienced when coming out. Get involved in one of the LGBTI+ youth groups listed here.

Training

Further training is recommended to help ensure that your project or service is inclusive of the needs of LGBTI+ young people.

For more information on available training:

- Republic of Ireland – contact BeLonGTo at 01 - 6706223 or info@belongto.org or www.belongto.org
- In Northern Ireland signposting and further information and support can be accessed by contacting The Rainbow Project www.rainbow-project.org 028 9031 9030 or Cara-friend <https://cara-friend.org.uk> 028 9089 0202



Checklist 3 — How accessible is your organisation to Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender (LGBTI+) young people?

This checklist can help you to identify how you can improve your service for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender young people

Professional development

Our staff and volunteers are trained and supported to deliver an inclusive youth service

• Staff and volunteers have received training about working with LGBTI+ young people	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Staff and volunteers model inclusive language when speaking to clients about relationships and sexuality	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Staff and volunteers know how to respond to a young person who is considering “coming out”	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Staff and volunteers have an accurate understanding of issues for LGBTI+ young people	YES	PARTLY	NO

Public image

How we present our service to our community

• Our service displays LGBTI+ awareness posters and information	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our promotional materials names LGBTI+ young people and indicates that they are safe and welcome in the service	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We have a referral list of services for LGBTI+ young people and their families	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our service displays information about LGBTI+ youth support services	YES	PARTLY	NO

Programme planning and delivery

Our programmes are designed and delivered to include the diverse needs and identities of LGBTI+ young people

• Staff and volunteers actively challenge anti-LGBTI+ attitudes & comments	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We provide informal education to young people about LGBTI+ issues	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our service marks LGBTI+ days of significance, (e.g. LGBTI+ Pride each June, International Day Against Homophobia each May)	YES	PARTLY	NO

Participation

We make sure we include the voices of young LGBTI+ people at all levels of our youth service

• Our service actively promotes a message of safety and respect for LGBTI+ people	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We consult with LGBTI+ young people, parents and organisations about the specific needs and issues for LGBTI+ young people in relation to accessing and participating in youth work	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our service consults with LGBTI+ young people and actively involves them in decision making and the development of the organisation	YES	PARTLY	NO

Policies and procedures

We have a written commitment to deliver an equal and inclusive service

• Our service has policies and procedures in place to deal with homophobic / transphobic bullying and harassment	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our service has an equality policy that names LGBTI+ young people	YES	PARTLY	NO

Useful contacts

LGBTI+ Youth Projects - Republic of Ireland

BeLonGTo Youth Service for young people – Dublin and National

Phone: 01 - 6706223

Email: info@belongto.org

Web: www.belongto.org

See the website for full details of Dublin groups and other groups nationally not listed below or for updated contact details.

Carlow

MUI (My Unique Identity) YWI

Carlow

Phone: 085 2722379

Email: leanneecrys@yahoo.ie

Cavan

LGBT Youth Cavan

Phone: 087 2193904

Email: lgbtyouthcavan@gmail.com

Cork

Up Cork (YWI Cork / Cork Gay Project)

Phone: 021 - 4300430 / 021 - 4808600

Email: info@gayprojectcork.com

www.facebook.com/upcorklgbtyouth

Donegal

BreakOut

(Groups in Letterkenny, Ballybofey, Glenties and Moville)

Phone: 086 1247968

Email:

sinead.murray@donegalyouthservice.ie

Galway

shOUT LGBT Youth Group

Phone: 087 7738529

Email: shout@youthworkireland.ie

Web: www.youthworkgalway.com

www.facebook.com/shOUTGalway

Kerry

Kerry Youth Pride (KDYS)

Phone: 085 7599567

Email: oonaghosullivan@kdys.ie

Kildare

KLGBT (Kildare Youth Service)

Phone: 087 2564539

Email: KLGBT@kys.ie

Kilkenny

OpenDoor Youth Project (Ossary Y. S.)

Phone: 087 7377556

Email: rcarberry@ossaryyouth.com

Laois Luck Out (youth Work Ireland Laois) Phone: 086 2398577 Email: elaine@ywilaois.com	Limerick GOSHH Phone: 087 4447368 Email: youth@goshh.ie
Louth Dundalk Outcomers Phone: 042 - 9329816 Email: youth@outcomers.org Web: www.outcomers.org	Mayo Ballinrobe Youth Café Phone: 087 7714967 Email: ballinrobeyouthcafe@gmail.com
Sligo SMILY Phone: 089 4820330 Email: smillyyouthlgbt@gmail.com	Tipperary OUTstanding (Youth Work Ireland Tipperary) Phone: 087 9100727 Email: zoe.gogarty@youthworktipperary.ie
Waterford Chill OUT (WSTCYS) Phone: 086 0218941 Email: chillout@wstcys.ie	Westmeath Athlone Spectrum (Foroige) Phone: 086 0279149 Email: mary.oneill@foroige.ie
Wexford Wexford LGBT Youth Group (FDYS) Phone: 053 91 23262 Email: david.clark@fdys.ie	Gorey LGBT Youth Group (Gorey Youth Needs) Phone: 086 1512861 Email: karen.mccann@gyng.ie
Wicklow LGBTI+ Group (Arklow) Phone: 086 7789427 or 0402 39646 Email: apluck@crosscare.ie	Bray LGBTQ+ Youth Phone: 01 2050502 Email: braylgbtyouth@gmail.com

LGBTI+ Youth Projects - Northern Ireland

Cara-friend LGBTQ+ youth Phone: 028 - 90890202 Email admin@cara-friend.org.uk Web: https://cara-friend.org.uk		Cara-Friend has support groups in: Belfast, Ballymena, Foyle, Cookstown, Armagh and Newry. Contact us or see our website for more information.
GenderJam NI Phone: 028 – 9099 6819 Web: https://genderjam.org.uk	Out and About (YouthAction NI) Phone: 028 - 90240551 Web: www.youthaction.org	
Gay Newry Web: www.gaynewry.com	Family Ties Project Web: www.familytiesproject.org.uk	
The Rainbow Project Belfast / L'Derry Phone: 028 - 90319030 (Belfast) Phone: 028 - 71283030 (L'Derry) Web: www.rainbow-project.org	Here (lesbian and bisexual women support) Phone: 028 - 9024 9452 Web: https://hereni.org	
SAIL NI Phone: 028 - 9532 0023 Web: https://sailni.com	Quire – LGBTI+ choir Web: www.quire.org.uk	
Gender Identity Services for NI Knowing Our Identity (Child and Adolescent Gender Identity Service) Phone: 028 - 9063 8000	Brackenburn Clinic (Adult Gender Identity Service) Phone: 028 - 9063 8854	
Transgender NI (Hub of information for NI) Web: https://transgenderni.org.uk		

Other useful contacts – Republic of Ireland:

Gay Men's Health Service Clinic: 01 - 6602189 Outreach 01 - 8734952 Web: www.gaymenshealthservice.ie	TENI (Transgender Equality Network Ireland) Dublin 01 - 6334687 Web: www.teni.ie
OUThouse – LGBTI+ Community Centre Phone: 01 - 8734932 Web: www.outhouse.ie	GLEN (Gay Lesbian Equality Network) Phone: 01 - 4730563 Email: www.glen.ie
Cork Gay Project Phone: 021 - 4304884 Web: www.gayprojectcork.com	L.inc Phone: 021 - 4808600 Web: www.linc.ie
Rainbow Support Services Limerick Phone: 061 - 468611 Web: www.rainbowsupportservices.org	Dundalk OUTcomers Phone: 042- 9329816 Web: www.outcomers.org
LOOK (Loving Our Out Kids) Parents Support Network Web: www.look.ie	

Useful Reading Resources

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- Department of Education and Skills, Department of Health and HSE (2015) Well-Being in Primary Schools – Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/Well-Being-in-Primary-Schools-Guidelines-for-Mental-Health-Promotion.pdf

Department of Health (2017) National Youth Mental Health Task Force Report.
<https://health.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/YMHTF-Final-Report.pdf>

Department of Education and Skills (2013) Action Plan on Bullying – Report of the Anti-Bullying Working Group to the Minister for Education and Skills.
www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/Action-Plan-On-Bullying-2013.pdf

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- ⁱ The plus stands for other minority sexual orientations and gender identities.
- ⁱⁱ See an example of a transgender discrimination case being awarded under the Gender Ground www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/dublin-barber-fined-5-000-in-transgender-discrimination-case-1.3577517
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- ^{xi} O'Doherty 2016 OUTstanding in your field: exploring the needs of LGB&T people in rural Northern Ireland
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- ^{xvii} Frankham, 1996; BeLongTo, 2004
- ^{xviii} Reach Out – The Irish governments National Strategy for Action on Suicide Prevention 2005-2014
- ^{xix} Dooley and Fitzgerald (2012) My World Survey: National study of youth mental health in Ireland. Dublin: UCD and Headstrong
- ^{xx} Youthnet, 2003 ShOut Report
- ^{xxi} McNamee, (2006), The Rainbow Project
- ^{xxii} NOSP (2015) Connecting for Life: Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide: 2015-2020.

^{xxiii} DCYA (2018) LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy 2018-2020.

^{xxiv} Protect Life - Shared Vision: The Northern Ireland Suicide Prevention Strategy and Action Plan 2006 – 2011

^{xxv} Dept of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (2014) Development of a new suicide prevention strategy for Northern Ireland: Pre-consultation Engagement Summary Report

^{xxvi} McNamee, (2006), The Rainbow Project

^{xxvii} Former President Mary McAleese speaking at BeLonGTo National LGBTI+ Youth Forum in October 2008

^{xxviii} McNamee, (2006), The Rainbow Project

^{xxix} Mallon, 2009; Brill & Pepper, 2008

^{xxx} See www.belongto.org for information on the process of changing name and gender by deed poll and getting a gender recognition certificate

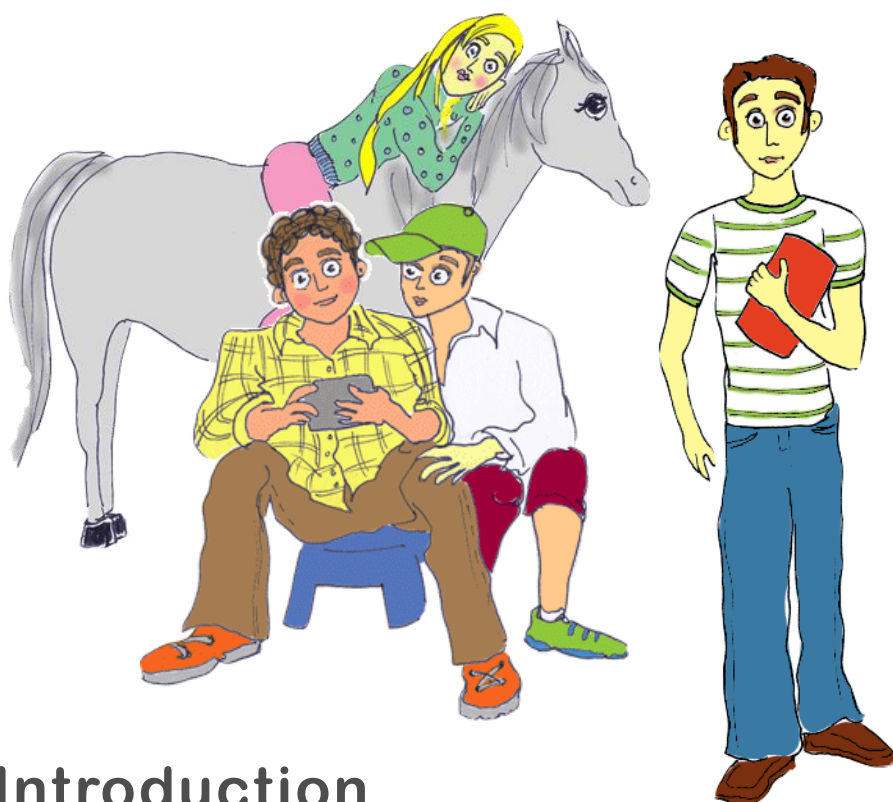
^{xxxi} These responses were given at a focus group of LGBTI+ young people in 2006 organised by BeLonGTo

SECTION FOUR

Working with Young Travellers

“There is a special minority within a minority culture: children. In the dominant society, the children of a minority must endure along with their parents, the problem of social and cultural discrimination, and they are even more exposed to the risk of cultural dissolution.”

Children of Minorities, UNICEF, 1993



Introduction

This section focuses on young people who are members of the Traveller community. It explains aspects of Traveller culture, the varying needs and issues that young Travellers may face and it offers practical advice on working with young people from the Traveller community. It concludes with a list of resources that will help you in your work with young Travellers.

Travellers are an indigenous minority, documented as being part of our society for centuries. Travellers have a long shared history and value system which make them a distinct ethnic group. They have their own language, customs and traditions.

“Being a Traveller is the feeling of belonging to a group of people. Knowing through thick or thin they are there for you, having the support of family systems. Having an identity.”

Michael McDonaghⁱ

In the **Republic of Ireland** under the **Equal Status Act 2000** and the **Equality Act 2004**, it is unlawful to discriminate against a person on the grounds of membership of the Traveller community in the provision of goods and services, education, sports, access to public facilities and accommodation.



In **Northern Ireland** the **Race Relations (NI) order 1997** makes it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of colour, nationality, ethnic origin, national origin and membership of the Irish Traveller community.

Terminology

This resource has been developed for youth workers on the island of Ireland. At times it is necessary to make distinctions between our two jurisdictions and we have had to choose a terminology to reflect this. We have chosen for the most part to use Northern Ireland (NI) and Republic of Ireland (ROI). At times we also use North and South. Additionally, for clarity, where information is significantly different we have used coloured boxes:

Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

The terms ‘Traveller,’ ‘settled Traveller,’ ‘housed Traveller’ or ‘member of the Travelling community’ are all used in relation to Travellers. These terms can give rise to certain preconceptions about the lifestyle, culture and practice of this community. Travellers are often perceived by the majority population in relation to the practice of nomadism. It is important to distinguish between the term nomadism as it applies to Travellers’ identity and its origin as a largely descriptive term. In fact the majority of Travellers living in Ireland (North and South) are living in standard housing accommodation. This does not change the identity of Travellers as a distinct ethnic group. A Traveller living in a house is still a Traveller - just as an Irish person living in England is still Irish. It is important for the youth worker to fully understand nomadism and how it is more than simply physical movement – it is a mind-set and a particular view on lifeⁱⁱ.

With this in mind terms such as ‘settled Traveller,’ ‘housed Traveller’ or ‘member of the Travelling community’ are not preferred by some Travellers or Traveller organisations. At the same time, some Travellers do prefer these terms. Using the terms ‘Traveller’ (or member of the Traveller Community) however, is broadly acceptable. The best approach is to ask the Travellers you are working with what their preferred terms are.



Traveller Ethnicity

“Our Traveller community is an integral part of our society for over a millennium, with their own distinct identity – a people within our people... As Taoiseach I wish to now formally recognise Travellers as a distinct ethnic group within the Irish nation. It is a historic day for our Travellers and a proud day for Ireland” **(An Taoiseach Enda Kenny, March 1st 2017)**

Traveller ethnicity was formally recognised by the Irish State in March 2017. Travellers are already named as a distinct group for protection against discrimination under Ireland’s equality legislation. While recognition as a distinct ethnic group does not confer any new constitutional rights or immediate benefits, it has longer term implications for improving policies, programmes and institutional practices that impact on Travellers.

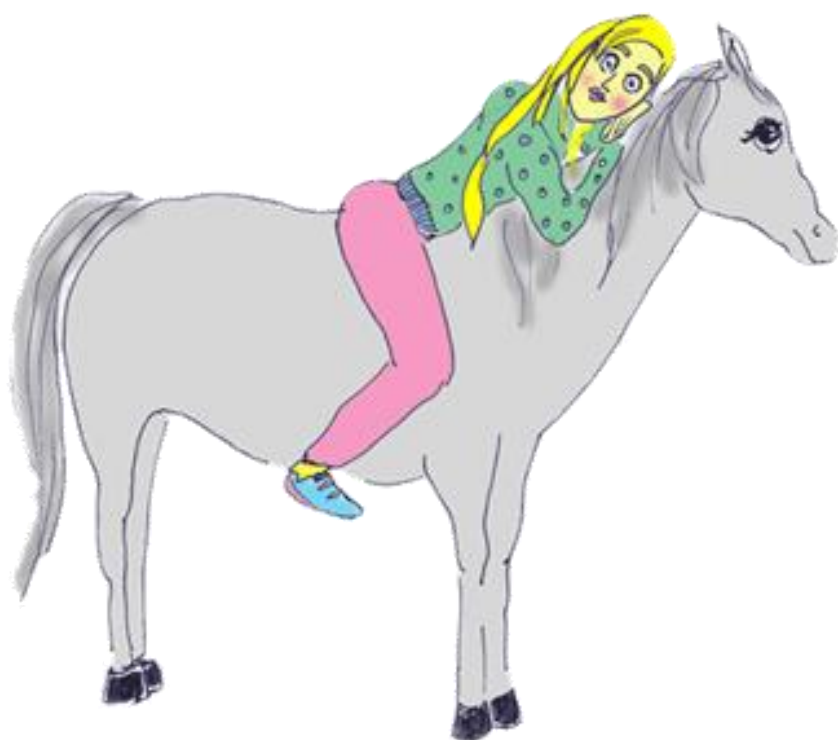
Discrimination

Research has consistently shown that Travellers are the community most often discriminated against in Ireland.ⁱⁱⁱ Such were the levels of disadvantage identified by the ESRI in their recent report that they concluded that improving the situation of Travellers poses a challenge to policy because of the very great scale of disadvantage and discrimination. They question whether it is possible for mainstream policies in the areas of education, employment, housing and health to meet the needs of this very disadvantaged population. They speculate how tailored policies, if required, can be implemented in a way that respects the cultural identity of Travellers and includes them rather than contributing to their marginalisation. They quote Pavee Point as stating that policies that can be deemed ‘neutral’ can lead to indirect discrimination of Travellers and Roma when they impose additional barriers for Travellers and Roma because of their unique situation.

National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS) 2017

National Traveller/Roma Integration Strategy (NTRIS) is the key policy initiative by the Government aimed at tackling discrimination and inequalities experienced by Traveller and Roma in Ireland. The Strategy sets out the commitment of the State to reinvigorate efforts to ensure that Travellers and Roma interact fully with the public health sector in order to address some of the underlying health-related challenges facing those communities.

It also sets out strategies to improve outcomes for Traveller and Roma communities in the areas of education, accommodation and employment. The aim is to ensure a coordinated approach across government in order to best meet the needs, and to reach stated outcomes, for Travellers and Roma in Ireland through improved public service engagement. The NTRIS Strategy is in line with the standards of the EU Framework for the Implementation of Roma Integration Strategies.



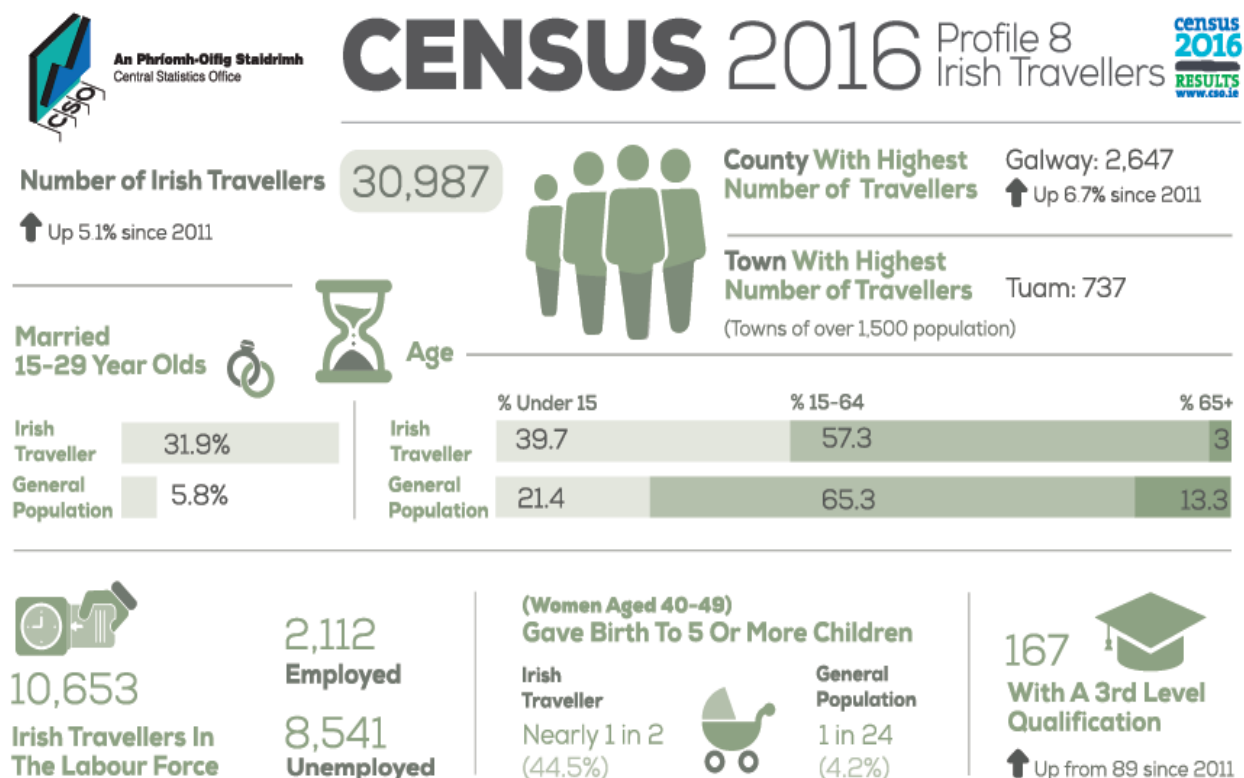
Demographics^{iv}

A census of the Traveller community was undertaken in 2008-09 as part of an all Ireland peer to peer research study of Travellers. In total there were 40,129 Travellers living on the island of Ireland.

Table 1: Estimation of Traveller population (2010)

	Republic of Ireland	Northern Ireland
Number of Traveller families	9,056	1,562
Average family size	4.0	2.5
Estimated Traveller Population	36,224	3,905

Census 2016 presented the following figures:



The census recorded figures above falls short of the estimations made when the peer research was carried out in 2008-09 suggesting that the actual numbers remain significantly higher than those recorded in the official census.

Nevertheless, Census 2016 shows valuable comparative figures on age structure, health, employment and education.

Irish Travellers and Age Structure

There were 30,987 usually resident Irish Travellers enumerated in Census 2016, an increase of 5.1% on the 2011 figure (29,495). Almost 60% of Travellers were aged under 25, compared with just 33.4% of the general population. There were just 451 Traveller men aged 65 and over, and 481 female Traveller females.

Young Travellers between the ages of 0-14 years (12,313) represent the second highest number of young people from minority ethnic and cultural backgrounds in the Republic of Ireland (after the UK); while Travellers aged 14-25 years (5,705) represent the third highest group (after Polish, and UK young people).

Health

In relation to health, the 2010 All Ireland Traveller Health Study (AITHS) identified significant inequalities, including:

- The gap in life expectancy between Travellers and non-Travellers - 11 years between women and 15 years between men in 2010.
- Traveller men had four times the mortality rate of the general



population and Traveller women have three times the rate.

- The infant mortality rate for Travellers was 3.5 times the rate of the general population.
- There were only 3% of Travellers over the age of 65 compared to 13% in the general population according to the previous Census.
- The suicide rate was 6 times higher than that of the settled population.

Employment

According to Census 2016,^v while 10,653 Travellers were in the labour force, the vast majority, 8,541 (80.2%), were unemployed. Almost 1 in 8 Travellers (11.3%) stated that they were unable to work due to a disability, which was almost three times the rate of the general population (4.3%).

In their analysis, the ESRI^{vi} compared Travellers and non-Travellers between the ages of 25 and 65 and found that 50% of Travellers were unemployed compared to 14% of non-Travellers. They also found that only 11% of Travellers were in employment compared to 66% of non-Travellers. The authors stated that Travellers have 19 times the odds of being non-employed compared to the general population.^{vii}

Education

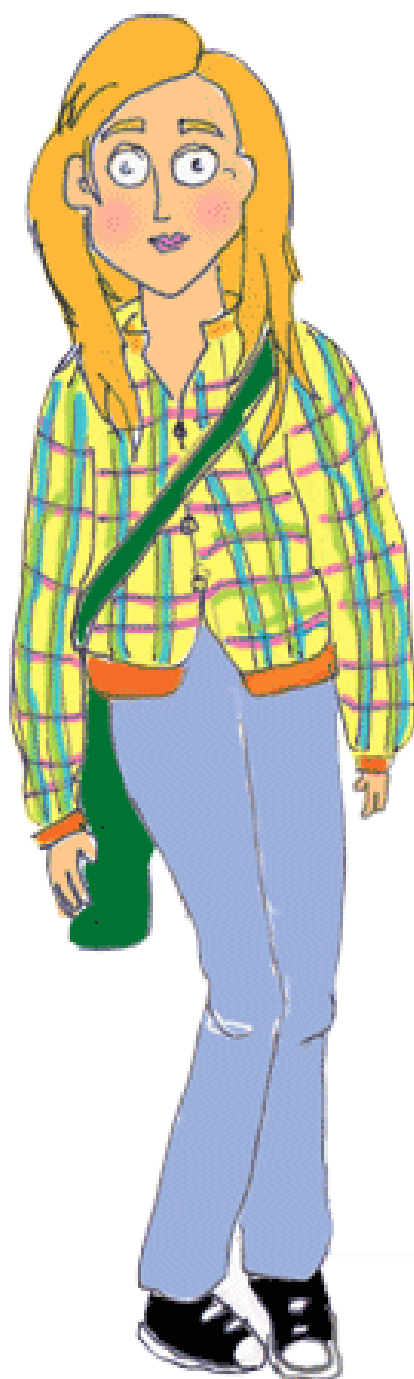
Educational attainment among Travellers continues to lag significantly behind that of the general population. Among Traveller females, just 13.3% were educated to upper secondary level or above, compared with almost 7 in 10 (69.1%) of the general population. Nearly 6 in 10 male Travellers (57.2%) were educated to primary level at most, compared with just



13.6% of the general population. The 167 Travellers with a third-level qualification was almost double the 2011 figure of 89.

Comparing the Traveller population to the non-Traveller population the ESRI found that the difference between Travellers and non-Travellers were dramatic. 70% of Travellers had completed no more than primary education compared to 10% of non-Travellers and only 1% of Travellers had a degree or higher.

The odds, the author states, of leaving school without having completed second level were 33 times higher for Travellers than for non-Travellers. When the fact that Travellers are younger than the general population is taken into account, and noting that younger adults tend to stay longer in education than their older counterparts, the odds are over 50 times higher for Traveller youth.^{viii}



Needs and issues for Young Travellers

The needs of young Travellers must be seen in the context of the reality of Traveller lives, recognition of Traveller culture and an appreciation of what Travellers themselves want.^{ix}

Young Travellers must be acknowledged, recognised and embraced by the youth workers for themselves in order for young Travellers to be proud of their identity, have a sense of belonging and have the right to reach their full potential without hiding who they are.



Why is it important to work with Young Travellers?

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child contains several important social rights for all young people such as the right to participate in leisure, recreational and cultural activities. Young members of the Traveller community have contributed to society through their culture, enterprise, sporting excellence, artistic achievements, participatory expertise and unique history and traditions. Youth services can be the place where the contributions made by young Travellers are nurtured and celebrated.

Young Travellers face discrimination daily - through denial of access and verbal and physical abuse - purely based on their identity as Travellers. They experience being followed around shops and being refused entry to sports halls, cinemas and discos etc. This constant discrimination coupled with the

effects of indirect discrimination which affects access to health services, education and employment can lead young Travellers to feel socially unaccepted, inferior to other young people and they can experience a lack of pride in their culture, anxiety about their identity and low self-esteem. Youth services have a lot to offer to young Travellers especially in the areas of building confidence offering non-formal education opportunities, chances to participate fully and creating a place of welcome where their culture is recognised and taken into consideration in planning and programme development. The non-formal, youth centred and participative approach of youth work appeals to many Travellers.

Traveller culture

In order to work effectively with young Travellers it is important to understand some aspects of their culture and to know what constitutes the cultural distinctiveness of this minority social group.

History of the Traveller Community

Different theories of the origin of the Traveller community have been proposed with the most convincing theories confirming the presence of the group before the 10th century AD.

Research carried out for the RTÉ documentary 'Blood of the Travellers' revealed that historians believe that Travellers were one of two tribes put to the sword by Queen Mary 1 (1553-1558). DNA of Traveller families taken for the research shows that Travellers come from two distinct tribes.

While Travellers are often associated with a

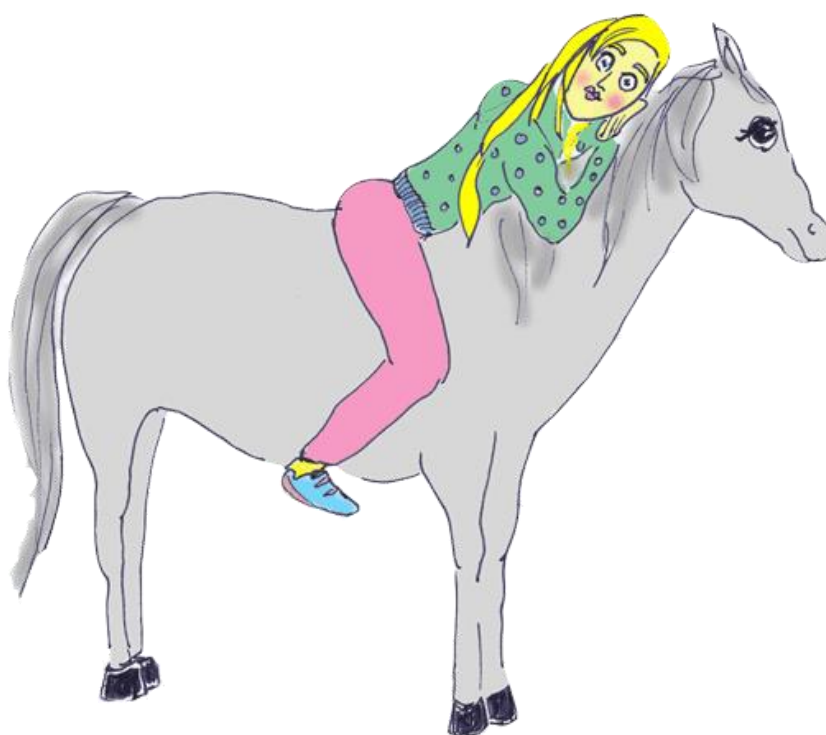


nomadic way of living, over the last 30 years many have migrated to urban areas. This is due in part to the trades and activities of their traditional, nomadic, rural existence being rendered obsolete by industrialisation. Another development that led to Travellers moving into urban areas in the Republic of Ireland is the enactment of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act in 2002. This made trespassing a criminal offence so that Travellers living on the roadside, awaiting accommodation with nowhere else to go, became criminalised. Nevertheless, Travellers' cultural identity has largely withstood this transition.

In Northern Ireland trespassing is not a criminal offence; however police do have powers to evict where six or more vehicles are present, where damage is caused to the land, or threatening, abusive or insulting language is used.

Families and Kinship

Travellers organise within family groups - socialising together and supporting each other. Family bonds are extremely strong and radiate out beyond the immediate or 'nuclear' family group. In this way the extended family plays an important part in the lives of most young Travellers. Traveller children have the advantage of growing up in an environment where the extended family generally lives as a community and some of the restrictions and restraints experienced by the children are likely to be less than in the settled community. However, as young Travellers grow up and become young people this often changes. The



age of maturity can differ substantially for some members of the Traveller community. Young Travellers of 14 or 15 years of age will frequently take on adult responsibilities such as employment and domestic duties. Tighter restrictions are often placed on young women from the Traveller community in particular.

The notion of 'kinship' is of utmost importance and is reflected in activities and practices. Relationships within families and aligned with the family name are extremely significant; marriages predominantly taking place within the wider family circle.

Traveller language

Traveller language is known as Shelta, Gammon or Cant. The language borrows and adapts words from old and new forms of English and Irish and follows an unwritten tradition. Some Traveller organisations and representatives have begun the process of recording and documenting the language in order to preserve it.

Religion and Superstition

Strong religious beliefs remain important for most of the Traveller community. In practice it is usually composed of an orthodox Catholic faith together with superstitious beliefs. This can be a powerful factor in the lives of young members of the Traveller community.



Concept of time

For many Travellers the concept of time differs greatly from that of settled people as stated in the following quotation:

“Chronological time is irrelevant since what happened yesterday or what will happen tomorrow are both subordinate to today’s search for sustenance. Travellers, therefore, live intensely in the present whether the occasion be one of sorrow or of joy”.^x

Youth workers may need to adjust their approach to accommodate this concept of time when working with young members of the Traveller community.

Understanding ethnicity and the Traveller Community

Because Travellers have a long-shared history and distinct value system, their own language, customs, values and traditions it was argued that the only viable way to describe the Traveller Community is as an ethnic group because of the view they hold of themselves and their culture.^{xi}

In the **Republic of Ireland**, the then Taoiseach Enda Kenny announced a formal recognition for Travellers as a distinct ethnic group within the State on the 1st March 2017.

Traveller groups in the country welcomed the Taoiseach’s announcement as a positive move, and a recognition of Traveller status - a position that was already held for Irish Travellers in **Northern Ireland**, the rest of the United Kingdom and the European Union.^{ix}



REMEMBER

- **Identity, and ethnic or cultural identity in particular, is self-defined and open to change. Therefore, we should not assume someone else's ethnicity or culture based on limited information, nor should we assign an ethnicity or culture for someone without asking them how they like to be described. People from minority ethnic and cultural backgrounds increasingly prefer to describe themselves in terms of their new identities, their mixed identities or their national identity.**
- **So terms such as Irish Traveller, Traveller, settled Traveller, housed Traveller or just Irish/Northern Irish may be commonly used. Self-identification should be encouraged as it denotes a person's sense of belonging in a community as much as describing their personal identity. In intercultural youth work we are engaging with people from minority ethnic and cultural backgrounds. We use the term 'background' to acknowledge the changeable but still concrete nature of a person's identity and the fact that we all have a past that influences our present and our future lives**

Accommodation

Accommodation is probably the issue most closely associated with the Traveller Community in Ireland (North and South) today. A perception among the majority population is that members of the Traveller Community tend to live in caravans, in small or medium sized groups, by the side of the road and with little or no facilities. This nomadism is often perceived to be what sets Travellers apart from the wider population. However, these days members of the Traveller community are more likely to live in standard or group housing accommodation.

Nevertheless, accommodation remains a difficult issue for many Traveller families, not least with regard to access, location, adequate provision of basic services, local hostility, discrimination, and security of tenure. Members of the

Traveller community continue to experience significant marginalisation in the area of accommodation.

In the **Republic of Ireland** the 2006 Census found that 40.6% of Travellers live in 'temporary housing units' of which:

- 91% are without central heating
- 38% are without piped water
- 35% are without sewerage

In **Northern Ireland** the 2008 Travellers' Accommodation Needs Assessment showed that:

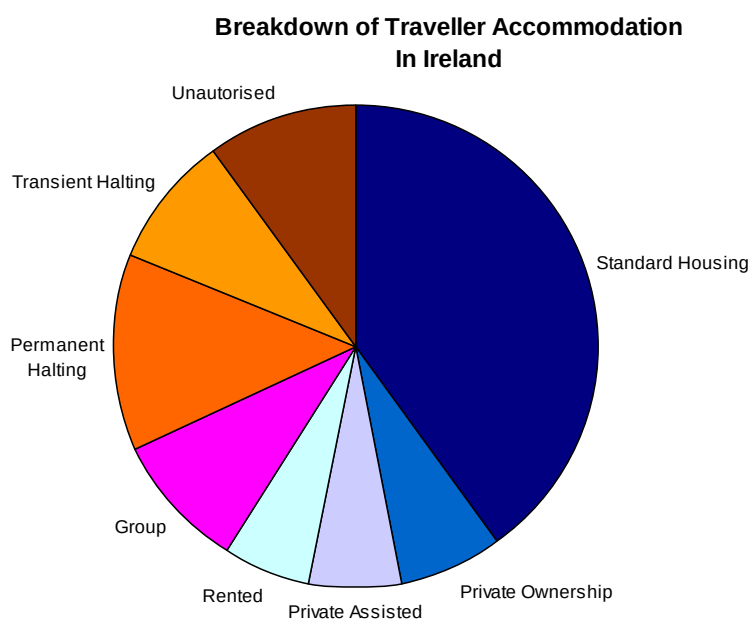
- 11% of respondents had no access to electricity
- 11% had no access to toilet facilities
- 13% had no access to mains water



The most common accommodation type for Travellers is standard local authority accommodation or social housing and this accounts for around 40% of Travellers in Ireland (North and South). In contrast less than 10% of Traveller families now live on unauthorised (e.g. roadside) sites in the Republic of Ireland; the figure falls to 7% in the North.

The graph below illustrates the different types of accommodation occupied by Travellers in Ireland today. It is important for the youth worker to be aware of the accommodation types and their location used by young members of the Traveller community in their area and become aware of the issues the young people face in relation to those accommodation types. Inadequate, inappropriate accommodation often leads to effects on other areas such as health, overcrowding, conflict, inability to preserve Traveller culture, access to education and access to services and basic facilities.

- Standard Local Authority Housing (incl. voluntary housing) / Social Housing
- Private Housing (own resources)
- Private Housing (assisted by Local Authorities)
- Private Rented Accommodation
- Group Housing
- Permanent Halting Site Bays (incl. sharing) / Serviced Sites
- Basic Service Bays/Transient Halting Site Bays (incl. sharing) / Transit Site
- Unauthorised Sites



Where Travellers live

According to the Census 2016^{xii} Travellers in the Republic of Ireland were more urbanised than the general population with almost 8 in 10 (78.6%) living in cities or towns (of 1,500 or more), compared with 62.4% of the total population. Dublin city and suburbs had the largest number of Irish Travellers with 5,089 persons. This was followed by Galway city and suburbs with 1,598 persons and Cork city and suburbs with 1,222.

Among towns with 1,500 or more persons, Tuam had the highest number of Irish Travellers with 737 persons, followed by Longford with 730 persons. Navan, Mullingar, Dundalk and Ballinasloe all had 500 or more Irish Travellers in 2016.

The issue of homelessness for the Traveller Community

The issue of homelessness for Travellers is a growing reality as they continue to experience significant marginalisation in the area of accommodation. Within the community there are families growing up in homelessness, often living in temporary accommodation, sometimes secured on a day by day basis, and where they are isolated from extended family supports.

Homelessness and young Travellers

Travellers tend to take on adult responsibilities at a young age and included in this can be a responsibility to find housing. Within the context of the current housing crisis, this places an onerous burden and stress on young Travellers.

In addition, cultural stigma in terms of sexual orientation, drug use, and psychiatric illness are believed to be key issues impacting significantly on homeless risk for young Travellers.

For more on youth homelessness see [Chapter 15 of this Toolkit 'Working with Young People Affected by Homelessness'](#)



Education

The educational achievement of members of the Traveller community is starkly different to their settled peers. The reasons are many and complex with external and internal factors impacting on educational attainment at school.

Young Travellers' direct experience of school

Imagine the unfamiliar world the Traveller child encounters when he/she first enters school, where rules and values conflict with the child's experience at home. In school, the authority figure usually speaks differently, behaves differently and most importantly does not have an understanding of Traveller culture. Pupils from the Traveller community may discover that certain ways of being (symbolised through appearance, clothes, possessions, activities, ways of expressing themselves, language etc.) are favoured over others, that certain family compositions are more 'normal' than others or that certain attitudes (for example, expectations around politeness) are more appreciated than others.

This may be the first time the Traveller child realises they are different. And sometimes these 'differences' are expressed negatively by the settled community due to their lack of understanding or awareness or because of prejudice. This results in confusion and isolation for the Traveller child.

A lack of visibility of Traveller culture within the school system can contribute to feelings of isolation and lead to poor self-esteem. Youth workers must make sure that these experiences are not replicated in their youth service.^{xiii}



Inherited experience of education

A negative experience of education by parents from the Traveller community can lead to misunderstandings about the importance and value of school for their own children. 47% of Travellers over 15 years of age in the Republic of Ireland have not attended school beyond primary level. Furthermore, it can be difficult for Travellers to see the positive outcome of staying on in mainstream education, as many experience discrimination in trying to obtain employment, thus severing any incentive to achieve success in mainstream education.

In the past, education policy in the **Republic of Ireland** promoted a segregated model of provision. In practice this meant that in many schools young Travellers were placed in special all-Traveller classes with one teacher who catered for all Traveller children regardless of age in one classroom. However, over the past decade this approach has been acknowledged as inappropriate and has been largely abandoned in favour of an inclusive, age-appropriate and integrated educational model. In **Northern Ireland** formal education is currently integrated, however, where there is a large concentration of Traveller children (e.g. West Belfast) Education and Library Boards may opt in favour of segregated provision for Travellers.

Recent trends in education

In **Northern Ireland**, data from the Department of Education for NI (DENI) on the performance of school leavers 2009/10 reports that:

- 9% of Traveller school leavers obtained at least 5 GCSEs graded A* - C compared to 72% of the NI school population
- 63% of Travellers leave with no GCSEs compared to 2% of the general NI school population



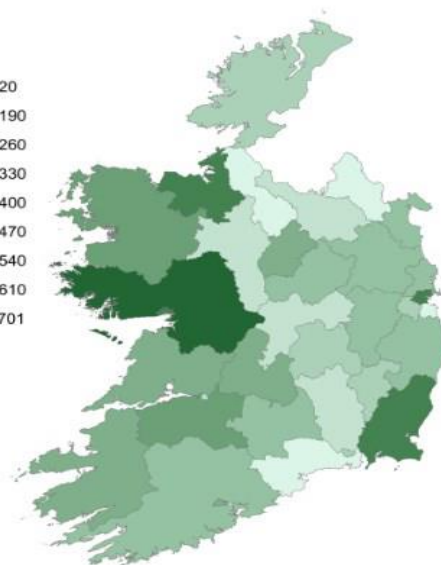
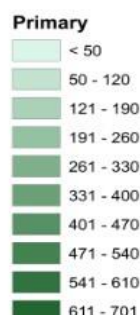
- Attendance at post primary education sits at 92% for the general population and at 53% for the Travellers

In **Northern Ireland** the School Leavers Survey (Department of Education NI) indicated that, in the period 2004-2008, Travellers were substantially less likely than the rest of the Northern Ireland population to say they were going to Further Education (20% vs 28%) or Higher Education (0% vs 38%). Travellers were also substantially more likely than the general school leaving population to say they were going on to unemployment (33% vs 4%).

In 2015/2016 there were 8,207 pupils in mainstream **primary schools** who identified as members of the Traveller community. This equates to 1.5% of all mainstream primary pupils. There were also an additional 84 pupils attending two separate schools for members of the Traveller community.

**Map 1:
Number of Traveller Pupils Enrolled
in Primary Schools, 2015/2016**

The number of Traveller pupils varied with local authority area from 701 in the Galway County to 41 in both Leitrim and Monaghan County.



In the 2015/2016 academic year, 2,689 **post-primary Traveller students** were registered. This total is a rise of 500 on the 2009/10 academic year. It equates to 0.8% of all students in post-primary schools. Of these, 1,276 were male and 1,413 were female.

The following Table shows total number of students in receipt of education support in 2015/16. The numbers begin to drop off after age 15 indicating that Traveller students are less likely to progress to senior (Leaving Cert) cycle as non-Traveller students.

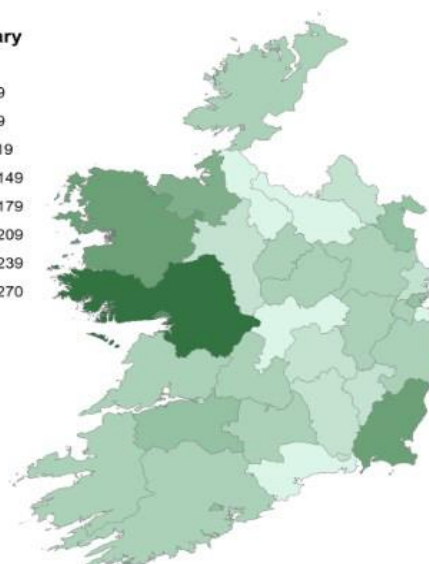
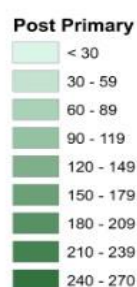
Table 1

Age 13	14	15	16	17	18	19+
524	597	595	447	272	58	7

Map 2:

Number of Traveller Pupils enrolled in Post Primary School, 2015/2016

The number of Traveller students enrolled in post-primary school ranged from 270 in Galway County Council at the highest, to 23 in Leitrim County Council.



Third Level

Improvements have been ongoing in the Republic of Ireland with the number of young Travellers attending third level education steadily increasing. In 2016 Travellers holding a third level qualification was just over 170, almost double the figure of 89 in 2011. In 2018 a modest uptake of 1% was achieved among Travellers of third-level education courses with the support of access programmes in universities and colleges amounting to 41 students^{xiv}.

University courses that Travellers have taken up include medicine, psychology, law, teaching, youth and community work and health studies. While things are improving we cannot forget that many young Travellers leave school before the age of 16.

[More information on this is available in chapter 10A of this Toolkit - 'Working with Early School Leavers'.](#)

Traveller Education Strategy

The primary aim of the Republic of Ireland's Department of Education and Skill's Traveller Education Strategy^{xv} is to ensure a quality, integrated education for Travellers, underpinned by the principles of inclusion and mainstreaming. This Strategy is represented in the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS).

Employment / Unemployment

The Traveller economy is the term used to describe work that Travellers take on. Traditional examples of this type of work include scrap metal recycling, market trading and horse dealing. However, with increasing regulation and enforcement in work areas associated with Travellers (e.g. recycling, waste disposal, horse trading) opportunities for self-employment have become more difficult to find. In more recent times



many members of the Traveller community have set up businesses working in manual labour, manufacturing, retail, building and maintenance, landscaping,

childcare and beauty therapy. Many others are currently employed as community development workers, youth workers, mentors, counsellors, therapists and public servants, Gardaí/ PSNI, solicitors and barristers. It is important to highlight these positive steps when talking to young Travellers about education.

Increasingly the involvement of Travellers in continuing education and training has been central in strategies to increase Traveller participation in the mainstream labour force. One of the agreed actions of the National Traveller Monitoring and Advisory Committee (2008) was to address the profile of members of the Traveller community in the workforce.^{xvi} Youth workers can do a lot to further that work in their youth service through peer education, introducing role models and giving positive examples.

According to Census 2106, while 10,653 Travellers were in the labour force, the vast majority, 8,541 (80.2%), were unemployed. Almost 1 in 8 Travellers (11.3%) stated that they were unable to work due to a disability, which was almost three times the rate of the general population (4.3%).



Health (all-Ireland)^{xvi}

Young Travellers face several issues in relation to their health:

- **Infant mortality rate for Ireland (North and South) is 14 per 1000 live births compared with 4 per 1000 for the national population**
- **Traveller males born today can expect to live 15 years less than settled males. These figures are what the general population would have experienced in 1945-7^{xvii}**
- **Traveller females born today can expect to live 11.5 years less than females in the general population**
- **Suicide is 6 times higher for Traveller men than men in the general population – it accounts for 11% of deaths amongst Travellers^{xviii}**

These facts re-enforce the need for consistent and culturally specific interventions aimed at improving Traveller health.^{xix}

Barriers to using Health Services

Travellers can face several barriers in using health services in Ireland (North and South).

- **They may not be able to communicate well about their physical and mental health care concerns**
- **They may have a lack of knowledge about health services and their entitlements**
- **In the Republic of Ireland in particular they may believe there are financial barriers in accessing services**

There is also a clear link between the poor health status of Travellers and their poor living conditions, the social exclusion they constantly face and the racism they consistently encounter.^{xx}

More recent barriers to health

It is important here to mention two serious and increasing health issues for young Travellers in Ireland. There are real opportunities for youth services to address these issues within their projects.

Drugs

Recent research suggests that drug use among Travellers is still lower than that of the general population, but evidence shows that it is growing. The age profile of drug users in the Traveller community tends to be from the teen years up to people in their mid-thirties. The research also finds that there are more male drug users than female and these are highly concentrated in areas of disadvantage. There are several barriers for Travellers in dealing with drug misuse:

- **It is seen as a relatively new problem for Travellers and therefore still has a stigma attached to it. Many Travellers address the issue of drugs as a “family matter” thus not accessing external support. The stigmatisation of drug use can also lead to the Traveller community not accepting drug users within their wider family circle**
- **Another barrier to Travellers seeking help and support about drug misuse is a general lack of awareness of services available**

Suicide

Suicide is six times higher amongst Traveller men than men in the general population. It is predominately a male issue with 65% of it occurring among those aged 30 years and younger. Suicide is seen to be a recent phenomenon in the Traveller Community.^{xxi}

There are several factors that can lead a young Traveller to take their own lives including family problems, psychiatric illness, alcohol and drug use, unemployment, violence - both for victims and perpetrators, racism, discrimination and sexual orientation. Young men are particularly at risk as many leave school early and feel they have no purpose or role in their community.

Suicide is not something that is discussed openly in the Traveller community or within a lot of Traveller families. When suicide does occur, young Travellers may feel that they have no-one they can talk to about it.

Gender issues

Women from the Traveller community play an important role in their immediate family and the wider Traveller community. They generally take on a traditional role of mother and carer with responsibility for the home, family and children. They are also the link with many of the service providers and often take on leadership roles within their own community.



Young Traveller women can be expected to take on these roles at an earlier age than those in the settled community. This can be a factor in young women's lack of attendance in youth services and programmes. They may be needed to remain at home and help to look after younger siblings and with household chores.

Parents can be stricter with young women than young men and might be reluctant to let their daughters attend youth services. Marriage at an early age can lead to added responsibility for young women which can be another factor in the difficulty of retaining young Traveller women in youth services.

Experience of conflict

Violence and conflict exist in all sectors of society, including in the Traveller community. Conflict is not the over-riding part of being a member of the Traveller community. However, it is something that is often highlighted in the media, without the same level of interest shown to positive aspects of the Traveller community.



Conflict between members of the Traveller community can be connected to the strong values attached to family. Power struggles relating to defending the family honour and avoiding shame can pressure Travellers to get involved in conflicts. For a small minority of Travellers violence and conflict have been a normal part of their upbringing. This normalisation of violence in Traveller life has led to it becoming an exciting spectator sport, bringing large numbers to watch.

Crime

Ethnic identifiers are not done with young people entering the Juvenile Justice System but anecdotal evidence would suggest that young Travellers are disproportionately represented in these services.

Further information is available in chapter 8 of this Toolkit – ‘Working with Young People involved in the Juvenile Justice System’.

Other areas of conflict can include inter-generational conflict, conflict around drug misuse, sexuality (including homosexuality and promiscuity) and child abuse.

Inter-generational conflict

As Traveller traditions and culture struggle to find a place in modern society many families can experience inter-generational conflict. Parents will expect, or hope, that their children will adopt the traditional values and roles of their family. Meanwhile young people will face pressure from their settled friends to adopt “non-Traveller” values and roles. Families often fear that their children will lose their culture and values and they may be inclined to limit their children’s social circles because they do not trust mainstream social values. Young people can feel torn between their parents’ cultural norms and the norms of the majority settled community and trying to straddle two cultures can be very difficult. This can sometimes result in young Travellers falling out with their families and becoming isolated from them. Coming from a close family unit can make this doubly isolating as the young person has limited alternative support systems to fall back on.



Racism and Discrimination

Racism and discrimination is an explicit part of the economic, social, political and cultural exclusion experienced by Travellers in Ireland. This treatment is completely contrary to internationally accepted human rights.^{xxii}

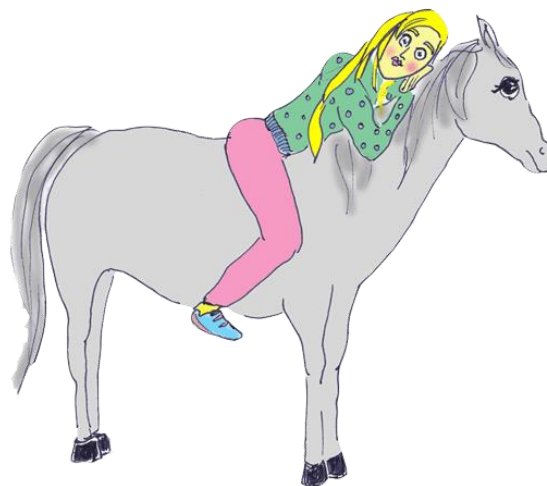
Members of the Traveller community have been subjected to two forms of discrimination:

1. Direct discrimination which is mostly experienced by members of the Traveller community as exclusion on an on-going basis. The Task Force of the Travelling People 1995 states:

“Discrimination at the individual level is most common when a Traveller seeks access to any of a range of goods, services and facilities to which access is denied purely on the basis of their identity as Travellers.”

2. Indirect discrimination occurs when policies, practices or initiatives unfairly impact on Travellers and in turn have a negative effect on their lives. For the Traveller community the effects of this type of discrimination can be seen in the unequal outcomes for Travellers in relation to health, education and employment.

National policies have failed to recognise that some groups in society may not be equal in terms of literacy, education, information, finances or access. Recently policy has made moves to address this issue but the impact of indirect discrimination has already had the effect of further marginalising this group.



Developing Traveller inclusive practice

The most important piece of advice for any youth service hoping to engage with young Travellers, like any young people, is to go out and meet and talk to the young people, their parents and others in the community. Explain who you are, where you are from, what you do and why you want to work with young Travellers. The key to working meaningfully with young Travellers in your service is through building trusting relationships.

To start:

- **Find out how many Travellers are living in your local area. You can do this by looking at CSO figures (ROI) or NISRA figures (NI) or the Our Geels study or AITHS 2010**
- **Learn more about the Traveller community in Ireland— especially things such as culture and values. Get in touch with some of the National Traveller organisations for information on the Traveller community in Ireland (see useful contacts at the end of the chapter)**
- **Contact the local Traveller services in your area**
- **Engage in site-work. Go and visit where the Travellers in your area live. Get to know them**
- **Contact the Youth Officer in your ETB / ELB area who will have details and information on other local services in your area**
- **Network with other local youth services, schools and community development organisations as it is likely some of these are already engaging with members of the Traveller community in their services**
- **Consider cultural awareness training or an information session facilitated by a Traveller organisation to ensure staff are aware of and up-to-date on issues affecting young Travellers. These are available from national and some local Traveller organisations (see also list of training courses at the end of this chapter)**

- **Facilitate awareness programmes on Traveller culture with the young people already engaging in your service**
- **Realise that mixed social events can be daunting for young Travellers. The social codes and the social language used in your youth group may be unfamiliar. Create a safe environment where a person they trust is present**

Targeting and recruitment

Historically youth services on this Island have focused on the young person as an individual and close contact with parents has often been limited. When engaging with young Travellers it is very important to involve their parents from the outset to allay their fears.

- **Involving young Travellers requires more recruitment time. Leaflets or posters are not adequate. Going out and meeting the young people and their parents is essential. It may be a case that Traveller parents and young people are unsure what “youth work” is. Traveller parents may be uneasy about letting their children join a service that is away from the family home and run by people they do not know. Building trust with parents, families and others in the community is a must in opening up your service to young Travellers**
- **Work closely with local Traveller or youth services who already have relationships with Traveller parents**
- **Site-work - which involves the youth worker going to where the Traveller community is living (rather than relying on the traditional process of having the young person approach the youth service) - is a very effective way of engaging with and recruiting young Travellers and their families**

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- Have “Open Days” or evenings that Traveller parents can attend so that they can meet the youth workers face to face. Consider having open meetings on site or in a local Traveller organisation where Traveller parents may feel more comfortable
- Have clear information for families about your service and activities you run. Leave leaflets or posters in local Traveller organisations or health clinics where Traveller parents can access them
- Encourage adult Traveller men and women to become volunteers/leaders in your service. This may serve as a way for parents to let their young people attend while relationships are being built between the service and the community
- If a young person is not allowed to attend a service offer to meet with the parents to discuss if there is anything you can do to aid their participation
- If parents are concerned about specific activities or youth groups try and meet with them, explain the supervision and safety policies of your organisation. Treat parents as allies and partners
- Have peer leadership places available to encourage prolonged participation by older Traveller youth. (Because Travellers take on more responsibility at a younger age than the settled population it can sometime have the effect of making them feel like they are “too old for youth work”. To counter this, have places available for peer leaders. In this way, the young Traveller can remain involved for a longer period of time with your youth service.)
- Run activities for parents in the youth centre such as cookery, health and safety courses etc

Working with Local Traveller Services

Develop a partnership with a local Traveller organisation. They may be aware of groups of young people who want to participate in youth activities. They will be able to provide advice and links to the community you are trying to reach while you can use your expertise to make sure their service is appropriate for young people.

Contact details for your local services, including Traveller-led services, are available from all the National Traveller organisations, from your local Community Development office or the Family Resource Centre in your area. Also see the resources and links at the end of this section.

Developing Activities

Your service will have a lot to offer young Travellers. The benefits can include the opportunity to make friends and reduce social isolation/ marginalisation, develop skills, be acknowledged for themselves and not stereotyped by their status (Traveller), positively celebrate their Traveller identity and culture, have a break from family responsibilities and have the opportunity to simply enjoy fun activities.

However it is important that all social and recreational activities are culturally appropriate and do not result in further isolating young Travellers. In choosing activities, liaise with the young people in your service and also parents or a trusted person within the community about what is appropriate and what they want to do.



Building self-confidence around Identity and Culture

Youth services should be a safe space for young Travellers to express their identity and be proud of who they are. It is important to make time and to offer opportunities for young people from different cultures to discuss and learn about each other's cultures. Culture should be celebrated. However, young people should not be expected to be 'experts' on their culture. Like many others, they may not find it easy to explain aspects of their own culture.

It can be daunting and difficult for young Travellers entering a youth service, where they are the only people from their community. Having Traveller peer leaders, or even better, Traveller youth workers can help to allay these fears. This also has the added benefit of exposing young Travellers to Traveller role models and the opportunity to look up to members of their own community.

- **Remember questions about someone's cultural traditions may be appropriate but asking someone about their personal experiences could be considered prying and insensitive**
- **Involve young people in the planning of culturally appropriate activities**
- **Reinforce cultural identity where appropriate**
- **Create a welcoming environment – make sure all young people in your service have ownership over the space you use**
- **Be flexible in your programming – your organisation's customary ways of doing things may not work with different cultural groups. Explore what activities are the most relevant to your group members and remember that some young Travellers may not want to “do some work about culture”**
- **Encourage leadership from within the Traveller community. Invite Travellers to come into your project as volunteers or peer leaders**
- **Culture proof your programming (ask yourself if what you are planning will work cross culturally)**

- Support young Travellers to understand and ‘straddle’ both settled culture and Traveller culture

Communications – written, verbal and visual

Barriers can exist:

- Some young Travellers may not have strong literacy skills so written communication can be a challenge for them. Introduce written communication gently at first to determine their skill level before relying on it as a communication tool
- Travellers often tend to live very much in the moment and may find it difficult to remember structured times, location or dates. It is always good to give information a number of times. Where possible, information should be verbally communicated to parents along with written notes
- Repeat instructions if it is not clear that someone has understood
- When providing information about your own service make sure that you avoid jargon
- Provide an explanation for terms that some people may not be familiar with such as “youth work” or “community development”
- Do not use acronyms unless you provide an explanation e.g. ETB, ELB, NYCI, ITM, Co.Co. DES, etc
- Remember that using technology such as email etc. for social networking may be difficult if young Travellers do not have access to the internet

Education

Young Travellers may not have the same level of academic achievement as other young people. It is important that youth services promote the importance of remaining in education. Consider having different professionals come in to talk to the young people about their jobs. In doing this try to be culturally diverse and include a professional from the Traveller community to provide young Travellers with role models.

Work closely with local schools. While youth work aims to compliment mainstream education by providing programmes and activities that emphasise the social and personal development of young people, you may find that you can have a role within schools in supporting them on issues for young Travellers and working in partnership to support young Travellers to stay on in education.



Health

It is important that youth services make information available to young Travellers about what health services they are entitled to. Young Travellers may have a lack of knowledge about health services which places barriers on them accessing healthcare.

More recently Travellers have been involved in Primary Health Care Teams and in the provision of health services. This is considered crucial in bridging the gap between the Traveller community and the health service. Youth services should develop links with these teams to further inform their own approach to delivering health programmes within their services in which young members of the Traveller community are involved.

In addition, if you are running programmes on sexual health or relationships make sure you speak to Traveller parents beforehand. Involve health professionals who will be experienced in delivering information in a culturally responsive way.

Drugs

Drug use is a relatively recent problem in the Traveller community but is becoming increasingly common and presents a real and dangerous impact for young Travellers. Youth services need to increase the awareness of young Travellers about the dangers of drugs and available drug-related services. This information should be displayed and accessible and the stigma of drug misuse should be challenged.

The stigma attached to drug use can lead to it not being discussed within the Traveller Community; some people will deny there is a problem at all. It is very important that youth services are a safe space where this issue is discussed in an open and supported way. Consider running parallel sessions on drug misuse for parents from the Traveller community so that dialogue is possible between young Travellers and their parents.



Suicide

Many Travellers have experienced the pressure of being removed from their traditional way of life. Legislation and policy have made it impossible to pursue traditional Traveller traits – such as travelling, working with horses and learning traditional trades. Young men in particular can lack purpose and a place in society. Leaving school early and being bored can lead to increases in binge-drinking, drug-taking, anti-social behaviour and dangerous driving. These in

turn increase a person's risk of suicide. The following quote sums it up:

“A consequence of increased integration is that today young Travellers dress like and share the same interests as their settled peers...Young Travellers are more openly questioning why their culture is held in disregard, or what it is about the name “Traveller” that evokes such hostility from others. Some take the course of having as little to do with the society that rejects them as possible... What is of greater concern are those who react by rejecting their traditions and culture in order to fit in.”

Suicide among the Irish Traveller Community 2000 – 2006, Mary Rose Walker, 2008

It is important for youth services to be safe spaces where young Travellers can explore issues relating to suicide and their mental health. Support services and how to access them should be displayed clearly, taking into account any literacy problems that may exist for some.

Gender

Parents can be reluctant to let their daughters mix with “settled” young men or young men from different cultures and this can have an impact at the participation of young Traveller women in youth services. The most effective way to allay these fears is through developing respect and trust in the service provided. Good relationships with Traveller parents or people of high standing within the community are vital. If you run gender specific programmes this may ease parents' concerns. You will also need to ensure gender specific supervision.



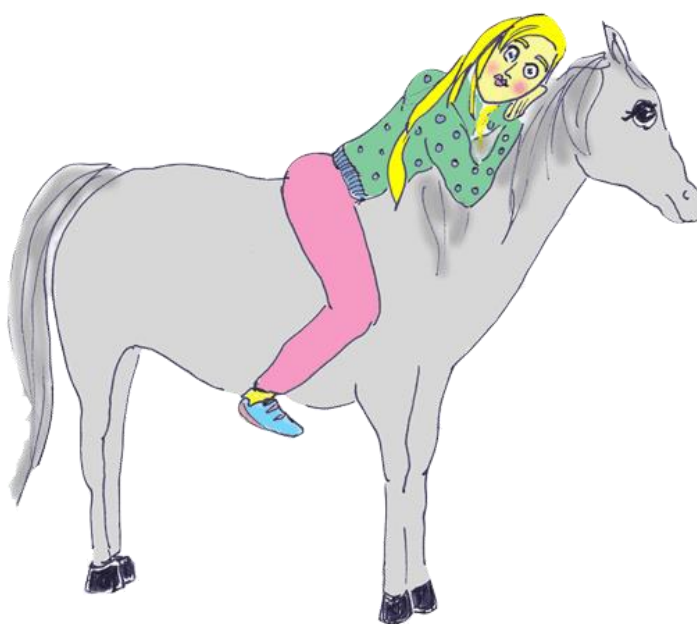
Mixed activities are also possible when Traveller parents are assured that their traditions and beliefs will be respected in the youth services that their children

attend. Having an older Traveller woman present during mixed activities can help alleviate concerns.

While striving to work in a way that promotes the gender specific values and traditions of the Traveller community, it is also important to promote the concepts of equality, human rights and diversity.

Conflict

Young Travellers may have to deal with experiences of conflict. Young people may be traumatised by their own experiences or those of loved ones. Effects of conflict include injury, death, loss of homes, disruption to home life, disruption to education, effects on mental health and well-being. These factors can often impinge on young people's



ability to attend their youth service. Parents may have concerns for the safety of the young people when attending a youth project. Young people who feel they are not understood or supported become more marginalised and isolated. For these young people and their families attending a youth project may not be a priority in times of conflict.

For a small minority of young Travellers violence and conflict has been a normal part of their lives. To break this cycle, conflict needs to be addressed in all areas of a young person's life - both personally and socially. It is important that the reality of violence and conflict is acknowledged and challenged in a youth work settings for young Travellers.

To work meaningfully with a young person or group who are experiencing conflict the following should be remembered:

- **Implement rules and policies to ensure the safety of the young people and the workers**
- **Highlight the negative aspects of conflict and discuss and challenge them**
- **Implement programmes that deal with conflict as a reality. Look for ways to dissuade young people from participating in or spectating in conflict**
- **Establish a neutral, safe place in the youth project. Have a confidential space available for young people to talk to a youth worker about the situation**
- **Provide support for workers and young people who have experienced conflict**
- **Establish a reporting process in the event of conflict taking place during activity time**
- **Keep the lines of communication open with trusted people within the Traveller community. Be aware of the young people from different families and how this might play out in a project**
- **Be aware of flashpoints that may trigger conflict such as certain times of the year e.g. St Patrick's Day, Halloween and large gatherings such as Weddings, Funerals, and First Communions etc.**
- **Have links with your local community Gardaí/PSNI and the Juvenile Liaison Officer**
- **Have information available in your service on dealing with conflict**

Racism and Discrimination

- Take active steps to prevent and address racism at your service including the development of clear rules and policies
- Treat racist issues initially as you would treat a bullying incident – with a no-tolerance approach and/or in the context of a group charter that highlights respect
- Actively promote the value of interculturalism and increase the knowledge about different cultural groups at your service. Young Travellers will need to be strongly supported in this process - they may feel they have much to lose and are strongly protective of their way of life
- Ensure that young Travellers attending mixed groups run by a settled youth worker are accompanied by someone who they trust, preferably an older, trusted member of the Traveller community
- Take part in special cultural events or intercultural festivals, such as Traveller Pride Week or Social Inclusion Week
- Acknowledge and celebrate special cultural days (religious ceremonies, weddings, funerals etc.)
- Promote positive images of people from a range of different cultural backgrounds, for example in the graphics you use in promoting your service, and the posters you display
- Promote positive role models from within the Traveller community, both local and national
- Talk to young people about their own unique culture and background as part of your normal conversation
- Organise activities for young people that increase their awareness of other cultures. For example, some services in areas with a low number of Traveller young people could organise combined activities with

services in other areas. These activities provide an opportunity for young people to learn about other cultures through fun and social programmes

- **Invite settled children to Traveller projects and halting sites to participate in joint activities**
- **Serious racist issues usually need a community-wide response with all support agencies involved**
- **Ensure all staff have an opportunity to take part in anti-racism training**

Networking and Professional Development

A useful way of improving your knowledge about working with young Travellers is to contact the National Traveller Organisations – for example: Involve, Pavee Point, Irish Traveller Movement (ITM), and Exchange House, etc. See more resources and contact links below.

Some national Traveller and youth organisations offer support and training around cultural awareness, engaging with the Traveller community and “culture-proofing” your organisation. These training and professional development opportunities can help to develop your skills, knowledge and confidence in this area.



Challenging myths about the Traveller Community

One very practical way of challenging attitudes is to be aware of common myths about Travellers and have the facts that debunk them. You can use these myths in your youth work activities. You can make sure the people you work with are aware of them. You can enlarge them and put them up for service users to see.

Myth 1 Traveller accommodation lowers nearby house prices

Independent research has shown no drop in house prices due to adjacent Traveller accommodation. This myth is generated to try to keep the Traveller community out and results in Travellers being deprived of a place to live.

Myth 2 Travellers do not want to be part of our society

The Traveller Community have always been part of our society. Unfortunately, Traveller experience of our society is often one of exclusion from the mainstream. Members of the Traveller community are often viewed as ‘a problem’; one that would be solved if Travellers would just be ‘normal’ and ‘fit in’. Travellers are a distinct ethnic group with their own culture, shared history, language, traditions, perceptions and sense of belonging.

Discrimination is now, and has always been, the main barrier facing the Traveller community when it comes to equal participation in society. Discrimination has a deep effect on the community and gives Travellers the message that they are not wanted. Up until recently there was no legal redress for the Traveller community or other groups experiencing discrimination. Now with equality legislation, Travellers are beginning to challenge the treatment they receive.

Myth 3 All members of the Traveller Community move from place to place

Travellers do not want to live without access to basic facilities such as water, electricity and sanitation. The vast majority of Travellers living on the roadside are on local authority accommodation waiting lists and are living on the roadside because there is nowhere else for them to go. Targets set by public authorities to provide housing for Travellers have been consistently unmet.

Myth 4 All Travellers live off Social Welfare and subsidise their living through crime

Unemployment remains unacceptably high amongst Travellers for a number of different reasons - early school leaving, discrimination, literacy problems and lack of belief that they can get a job due to being a Traveller. Nevertheless, any Traveller on social welfare is means tested like any other member of the population.

As in all communities there will be some Travellers who engage in crime but to associate all Travellers with crime or to blame Travellers for crime without proof is offensive and further contributes to the exclusion of Travellers and discrimination in the labour market.



Checklist 4 - How accessible is your organisation to Young Travellers?

This checklist can help you to identify how you can improve your service for young Travellers.

Programme planning and delivery

Our programmes are designed and delivered to include the diverse needs and identities of young members of the Traveller community

Our service reflects the diversity of the community

• Our service has up to date information about the number of young Travellers in our area	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our service knows about the members of the Traveller community that are highly represented in our area – where they live, who they are, how to contact them etc	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We collect statistics from young people who use our service about their cultural or ethnic background	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We compare the numbers of Travellers are in our area to the numbers of Travellers in our youth group e.g. if 3% of the local population are Travellers we will see if they are fairly represented in our group (i.e. 3% of our membership)?	YES	PARTLY	NO

Service delivery

• Staff and volunteers consider cultural differences in the way they develop and deliver programs	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We consider community profiles and needs in our strategic planning processes	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We have staff members or volunteers who are Travellers	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We have Traveller peer leaders in our organisation	YES	PARTLY	NO

Professional development

Our staff and volunteers are trained and supported to deliver an inclusive youth service

• Staff and volunteers receive cultural awareness training and professional development opportunities	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Staff and volunteers address racist comments or behaviour	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Staff and volunteers actively promote a service environment that is respectful of all cultures and values interculturalism	YES	PARTLY	NO

Participation

We make sure we include the voices of young people at all levels of our youth service

• We consult with a broad range of young people, including those who do not use our service	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our service actively promotes participation from all service users including those from the Traveller community	YES	PARTLY	NO

Public image

How we present our service to our community

Partnerships and networks

• We have a list of relevant Traveller Support services that we can refer young people and families to	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Staff attend relevant interagency forums, local forums, or seminars on Traveller issues	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We provide information about our service to a broad range of Traveller and non-Traveller organisations and services	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our service works in partnership with Traveller services to make our program accessible	YES	PARTLY	NO

- Our service works in partnership with parents to ensure their concerns for their children are met **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

Information about services

- Our service uses verbal communication
- Our service has visual information available about other community and government services **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**
- Our service actively communicates with parents **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**
- Our staff regularly engage in site-work and outreach work where young Travellers live **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

Policies and procedures

We have a written commitment to deliver an equal and inclusive service

- Mechanisms are in place that protect participants from racism and discrimination **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**
- Our organisation has a written commitment to anti-racism, equality, inclusion and interculturalism **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

Useful contacts

Irish Traveller organisations

Armagh Traveller Support Group www.armaghtsg.org	Provides support for Traveller families in the Armagh area.
Craigavon Traveller Support Group www.craigavontravellers.org	Provides support to Traveller families in the Craigavon area to access various services.
Derry Traveller Support Group 028 7135 9340	Provides support to Traveller families in the Derry area to access various services
Exchange House Ireland National Traveller Service Phone: 01 872 1094 www.exchangehouse.ie	Provides services, i.e. Family Support, service for young peoples, Drugs Counselling and Education programmes, to members of the Traveller community in the Dublin area.
Involve www.involve.ie	Involve is the main provider of services for young Travellers nationally since 1988. Currently, Involve funds projects for young people. Involve is a partnership organisation in which Traveller and settled communities work together in responding to the needs of Travellers.

Irish Traveller Movement (ITM) www.itmtrav.ie	National network of organisations and individuals working within the Traveller community.
National Traveller Women's Forum www.ntwf.net	The National Traveller Women's Forum is an alliance of Traveller women and Traveller organisations from throughout Ireland which aims to work collectively to challenge the racism and sexism experienced by Traveller women and promote Traveller women's right to self determination, the attainment of human rights and equality within society.
Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre www.paveepoint.ie	Pavee Point is a non-governmental organisation committed to the attainment of human rights for Irish Travellers. The group is comprised of Travellers and members of the majority population working together in partnership. Pavee Point promotes the human rights of Travellers through several different programmes including drugs, mediation, health, violence against women and education.
Travellerheritage.ie www.Travellerheritage.ie	First ever online photo archive of Irish Travellers, searchable by surname/categories to explore the history of Travellers

Traveller Visibility Group (TVG) http://groups.msn.com/TravellerVisibilityGroup	Cork-based organisation which brings together Travellers and settled people in solidarity, to facilitate community development work within the Traveller community.
Western Traveller and Intercultural Development (WTID) www.westtrav.ie	Co Galway-based (in Tuam) Community Development organisation, whose area of work covers: Youth work, Primary Health Care Programme, Community Child Care Centre and many other outreach programmes.
Travact https://travact.ie/about-us/ Phone: 01 8486515	North-Dublin based, TravAct provides support, information, developmental and advocacy services to marginalised Travellers in the area. They run a Youth Project working with North Dublin Travellers.

Training and Education organisations

Solas Community Training Centres www.solas.ie	Solas operate a variety of training and employment programmes as well as a recruitment service to jobseekers and employers.
National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) www.nala.ie	Independent membership organisation concerned with developing policy, advocacy and research and offering advisory services in adult literacy work in Ireland.

Youth related sites

Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO)

www.oco.ie

The Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO) is here to make sure that the government and other people who make decisions about young people really think about what is best for young people.

Youthreach

www.youthreach.ie

Programme directed at unemployed young early school leavers aged 15-20. It offers participants the opportunity to identify and pursue viable options within adult life, and provides them with opportunities to acquire certification.

Discrimination and anti-racism organisation

Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (ROI)

www.ihrec.ie

IHREC is an independent public body, with a mandate established under the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 (IHREC Act 2014).

Their purpose is to protect and promote human rights and equality in Ireland and build a culture of respect for human rights, equality and intercultural understanding in the State.

Equality Commission for NI

www.equalityni.org

The Equality Commission is an independent public body established under the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

The Equality Commission seeks a shared, integrated and inclusive place, a society where difference is respected and valued, based on equality and fairness for the entire community.

Citizens Information**National Traveller MABS (Money Advice and Budgeting Services)**

www.natTravellermabs.org

Part of the national network of Money Advice and Budgeting Services around the country that offer free, confidential and independent services for people in debt or in danger of getting into debt.

International links**Irish Traveller Movement in Britain (ITM)**

www.irishTraveller.org.uk

Develops and facilitates a national network of groups, organisations and individuals working with and within the Traveller community, to promote the interests and welfare of the Irish Traveller community in Britain.

National Youth Council of Ireland offers training on intercultural, anti-racism and inclusive youth work – see www.youth.ie

Useful Reading Resources

Bhreathnach, Aoife (2006) *Becoming Conspicuous – Irish Travellers Society & the State*

Bhreathnach, Ciara (2004) *Portraying Irish Travellers: Histories and Representations*

Cauley, William (2006) *Canting with Cauley: A glossary of Travellers – Cant or Gammon*

Connor, Sean, Van Hout, Marie Claire (2008) *The normalisation of Substance Abuse among Young Travellers in Ireland: implications for practice.*

Department of Education and Science (2002) *Guidelines on Traveller Education in Second Level Schools.* Dublin.

Department of Education and Science (2003) *National Youth Work Development Plan 2003-2007.* Dublin.

Department of Education and Science (2005) *Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy,* Dublin.

Department of Health and Children (2002) *Traveller Health A National Strategy 2002 – 2005.* Dublin.

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Macalister, R.A.S. (1937) *The Secret Languages of Ireland.* UK, Cambridge: University Press.

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Pavee Point Travellers organisation (1998) *Respect: Education without prejudice - a challenge for Early Years Educators in Ireland*. Dublin.

Pavee Point Travellers organisation (1997) *Travellers - Nomads of Ireland*. Dublin.

Online Resources

"Irish Traveller" on Wikipedia

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_Traveller

About the Irish Traveller communities in Ireland

http://pavee.ie/ourgeels/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/AITHS2010_SUMMARY_LR_All.pdf

Friends, Families and Travellers

www.gypsy-Traveller.org/history/

www.qub.ac.uk/schools/SchoolofEnglish/imperial/ireland/Travellers.htm

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- ⁱ Traveller Voices, www.paveepoint.ie/voices
 - ⁱⁱ Kenny, 1994; McDonagh 1994
- Review Body, 1983, p.6. The Traveller Community have been defined as “an identifiable group of people, identified both by themselves and by other members of the community as people with their own distinct lifestyle traditionally of a nomadic nature but not now habitual wanderers.”
- ⁱⁱⁱ The European Parliament Committee of Inquiry on Racism and Xenophobia in 1991 reported that, in Ireland, “The single most discriminated against ethnic group is the ‘Travelling People’” (The Task Force on the Travelling Community report pg. 78).
 - ^{iv} Research was carried out with Travellers across Ireland and with Traveller organisations in relation to Traveller Health. The All Ireland Traveller Health Study was done in conjunction with UCD, the Department of Health and Children in the Republic of Ireland and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in Northern Ireland. The report can be accessed on http://pavee.ie/ourgeels/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/AITHS2010_SUMMARY_LR_All.pdf and see also the following table <http://beyond2020.cso.ie/Census/TableViewer/tableView.aspx?ReportId=109363>
 - ^v www.cso.ie/en/csolatestnews/pressreleases/2017pressreleases/pressstatementcensus2016resultsprofile8-irishtravellersethnicityandreligion/
 - ^{vi} Dorothy Watson, Oona Kenny and Frances McGinnity. 2017. A Social Portrait of Travellers in Ireland. ESRI
 - ^{vii} Dorothy Watson, Oona Kenny and Frances McGinnity. 2017. A Social Portrait of Travellers in Ireland. ESRI Page 39
 - ^{viii} Dorothy Watson, Oona Kenny and Frances McGinnity. 2017. A Social Portrait of Travellers in Ireland. ESRI Page 68-9
 - ^{ix} Murray 1997
 - ^x Mac Aonghusa, 1990, p.7
 - ^{xi} O’ Connell DTEDG, 1992, p.3ff
 - ^{xii} www.cso.ie 2016
 - ^{xiii} Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy, 2006
 - ^{xiv} www.irishtimes.com/news/education/just-1-of-traveller-children-go-on-to-higher-education-1.3738693 quoting The National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education which has set a target of raising the number of Travellers at third level to 80 by next year, but concedes it may be difficult to achieve this. Image: Higher Education Authority
 - ^{xv} The Traveller Education Strategy is available at www.education.ie/en/Publications/PolicyReports/des_recom_traveller_educ_strategy.pdf

^{xvi} Further information on health that was collected in census 2006. See www.cso.ie

^{xvii} It is important to point out that these statistics are from research carried out in 1987 and represent the most up to date research into Traveller health in Ireland.

^{xviii} http://pavee.ie/ourgeels/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/AITHS2010_SUMMARY_LR_All.pdf

^{xix} http://pavee.ie/ourgeels/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/AITHS2010_SUMMARY_LR_All.pdf

It is sobering to note that the age population pyramid demonstrating the life expectancy for Irish Travellers is almost identical to the profile for Nicaraguans – Beyond the Local Conference Report, NYCI 2005

^{xx} Government Responses to improving health outcomes for members of the Traveller Community have been taken. The Department of Health and Children’s publication Traveller Health: A National Strategy, 2002 – 2005 set out clear and practical responses to some of these inequities. A Traveller Health Advisory Committee has been established by the Department as has a Traveller Health Unit in each Health Service Executive Area. The involvement of members of the Traveller Community in the Primary Health Care Teams and in the provision of health services is considered crucial in bridging the gap between the Traveller community and the health service

^{xxi} http://pavee.ie/ourgeels/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/AITHS2010_SUMMARY_LR_All.pdf

^{xxii} The United Nations International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination defines racial discrimination as “any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on a equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life”.

CHAPTER FIVE

Working with young people with a physical disability, who have sight loss, or who have hearing difficulties

Introduction

This chapter focuses on young people with a physical disability, who have sight loss, or who are deaf or hard of hearing. It explains the needs and issues these young people may face and offers practical advice on actions you can take to work with them. It concludes by directing you to the people and resources that can support you in your inclusive youth work.



It is important to stress that young people with a physical disability, or who have sight loss, or have hearing difficulties, all have the same interests, desires and ambitions as any other young person. They are all individuals and place their mark on the world in their own way. The youth work sector is ideally placed to provide environments with reduced barriers for all young people to express themselves freely. It is important that young people with access needs have a range of opportunities and are included and supported in mainstream community-based youth groups in their area.

This chapter was developed by Daragh Kennedy and Laura Leeson (Irish Wheelchair Association); Fiona Kelty and Niamh Connolly (National Council for the Blind of Ireland), Nigel Connor (Irish Deaf Youth Association) and Caroline Carswell (Sound Advice) for 'Access All Areas – a Diversity Toolkit for the Youth Work Sector' published by NYCI and Youthnet 2012 – Updated 2018

Under the **Equal Status Act 2000** and the **Equality Act 2004**, it is unlawful to discriminate against a person on the grounds of their disability in the provision of goods and services, education, sports, access to public facilities and accommodation.



In Northern Ireland the **Disability Discrimination Act 1995** and the **Equality (Disability) (Northern Ireland) Order 2000** gives disabled people rights in the areas of the provision of goods and services, education, sports, access to public facilities and accommodation and also in employment. Disability discrimination in education is covered by the **Special Education Needs and Disability (NI) order 2005 (SENDO)**, as **amended**. SENDO applies to schools, education and library boards, amongst other further education bodies.

Demographics

It is widely acknowledged that approximately 10% of the population is living with a disability of some type. This rises to 19.4% in one study where mental health disabilities are included.ⁱ These statistics include all ages and all disabilities. This chapter of the Toolkit focuses specifically on working with young people with a physical disability, who have sight loss, or who have hearing difficulties. It is quite difficult to obtain accurate figures of how many young people of a specific age profile fall into these categories as the statistics

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are compiled in such a way that this is not possible. The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) estimates that 1.2% of young people have a physical or sensory disability.ⁱⁱ

Demographics, however, do not convey the lived experience of individual young people. Research shows that a person with a disability is almost twice as likely to be unemployed as someone without a disability.ⁱⁱⁱ If you look beyond a disability you will see an individual with feelings, emotions, hopes, dreams and abilities. You will find someone who has many things in common with you. This chapter is aimed at supporting the inclusion and full participation, of each individual young person with a physical disability, who has sight loss, or has hearing difficulties that joins your youth group.



Terminology

This resource has been developed for youth workers on the island of Ireland. At times it is necessary to make distinctions between our two jurisdictions and we have had to choose a terminology to reflect this. We have chosen for the most part to use Northern Ireland (NI) and Republic of Ireland (ROI). At times we also use North and South. Additionally, for clarity, where information is significantly different we have used coloured boxes:

Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

This chapter was developed by Daragh Kennedy and Laura Leeson (Irish Wheelchair Association); Fiona Kelty and Niamh Connolly (National Council for the Blind of Ireland), Nigel Connor (Irish Deaf Youth Association) and Caroline Carswell (Sound Advice) for 'Access All Areas – a Diversity Toolkit for the Youth Work Sector' published by NYCI and Youthnet 2012 – Updated 2018

Language is critical in shaping and reflecting our thoughts, beliefs, feelings and concepts. Some words by their very nature can degrade and diminish people with a disability. The term “disabled young person” may convey a message that the only thing worth mentioning about a person is their disability. In this case it is better to say “young person with a disability” as this emphasises the person first without denying the reality of the disability.

However, some people prefer to use the term “disabled person” interpreting it as meaning that the person is disabled by society because they are denied the conditions needed to ensure that they can participate on an equal basis with everyone else in society – such as physical access, supports etc. It is important therefore to ask the young people you are working with which of these two terms they are most comfortable with you using.



Terms such as cripple, spastic, handicapped, invalid or dumb can be derogatory and offensive when used out of context and should be avoided as they can label people in a negative way. Sometimes people with a disability are compared to “normal people”. This implies that the person with a disability is abnormal and ignores the fact that everyone has their own unique identity and abilities. For comparisons you could say person without disability.

A disability is any physical, mental or sensory difficulty which makes it necessary for a person to significantly change the methods they use to perform life activities.

The Northern Ireland Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005 defines a disability as a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

On deafness

There can be many misconceptions about deafness and deaf people. Signing deaf people do not see themselves as a disability group, rather as a linguistic minority with their own culture and norms. The term 'Deaf' is especially meaningful for the signing deaf community. It identifies their community as a group of people who share a perception of the world through an emphasis on visual and kinaesthetic input. This description is used most commonly for people who sign due to being deaf at birth or in very early childhood and who may never have learned to talk. They often capitalise the word 'Deaf' to define themselves as a cultural, social and linguistic group that can include people of all levels of hearing loss. Members of the signing deaf community use sign language as their primary means of communication, as well as those who don't, provided they accept the aims of the community. Younger people who were born deaf may hear and talk without using sign language thanks to new hearing technologies and infant education approaches based on speech and reading interventions. It is important to ask a person how they prefer to communicate. If they speak to you this is likely their preferred mode but if in doubt just ask. It is better to know than to wrestle with any doubt you have.



Irish Sign Language (ISL) is the first language of the signing deaf community in Ireland. It is a distinct and separate language from both English and Irish (Gaelic). ISL is not just a language of the hands but also the face and body.

British Sign Language (BSL) is the first language of the signing deaf community in the UK. Like ISL it is a distinct and separate language from English. BSL similarly is also a language of the hands, face and body.

In **Northern Ireland** both ISL and BSL are used depending on where the person learns to sign. Regional variations apply to sign language and Northern Ireland also has its own regional variations.



Needs and issues for young people with a physical disability, who have sight loss or who have hearing difficulties

Young people with disabilities have many things in common with other young people. They like to go out, make friends, be independent and have fun. Your service could offer many things for young people with disabilities.

Some young people with a disability may need extra assistance or adaptations to participate in your service, which is also the case for other young people who use your service, such as young people who are shy or those who are having problems at home. Young people with a disability don't expect you to be an expert or have specialist training. In fact they may want to use your service because you are not a specialised disability service.



Many young people with a disability may have limited social contact. They may go to a specialist school or workplace where their friends live far away from them, they may have difficulties with transport or their parents may be overprotective. A more general service may be just what they are looking for.

For members of the signing deaf community, low levels of educational attainment is a serious issue, with 80% of signing deaf people over 16 having the reading age of an eight year old. This has resulted in many working in low-level jobs, having problems with public bodies and generally experiencing a significant communication challenges with the hearing world.

A large number of deaf people use cochlear implants and they may also use a hearing aid. For these young people the provision of a loop system is invaluable. Loop systems are used with hearing devices to give the person clarity in understanding someone who is using a microphone (P.A.) system. These are especially useful in larger public places such as churches, lecture halls, theatres etc. and also when there is a glass partition in place such as at reception areas.

It is also important to remember health and safety issues in relation to disability. Alarm systems need to work for everyone. For example, people with hearing issues may not hear an alarm or someone directing them to leave a building.



Developing inclusive youth work practice for young people with a physical disability, who have sight loss or who have hearing difficulties

The biggest barrier that faces people with a disability is often the attitudes of other people. It is important to remember to show respect, acceptance and dignity to all young people you work with, including young people with disabilities. Here are some tips to help you to communicate and work with young people with a disability.

Be supportive

Be supportive and welcoming. Remember that the young person may be feeling nervous if it is their first time visiting your youth group. Try and reassure them and get them involved in group or team activities or introduce them to some of the other young people using your service.

Ask before you assist

If you think someone needs help, ask them, and don't assume that they need your help. If they say yes, ask them what they want you to do before you act. If they say no, accept their answer rather than keep asking them. Don't be offended if a person says no as they may just want to be independent.

Focus on the person

When speaking with a young person with a disability who is accompanied by a parent, carer or friend speak directly to the young person with the



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disability. If you have a conversation for more than a few moments with someone in a wheelchair, someone who is sitting down or someone of short stature, pull up a chair or squat down so you are communicating at eye level.

Don't bombard

Just like any young person if you overload them with too much information or questions you may lose them. Pace yourself according to their level of comprehension and confidence.

Respect personal space and property

Never lean on a wheelchair as it is the personal space of the owner. Never move personal property such as a wheelchair, walking aid, microphone, guide dog or long cane away from a person with a disability without asking first, as they may feel more comfortable if it remains within their reach.

Blindness and impaired vision

Ensure your promotional material is printed in such a way that it is easy to read and is clear for everyone. Avoid using very small print and cluttering too much information together. Colour schemes and designs are important so seek advice from the National Council for the Blind of Ireland or the Royal National Institute for the Blind before starting to design your material. A clear print design checklist is included at the end of this chapter.



Don't presume that someone with vision impairment is completely blind. Ask the person if they can see a particular landmark or object. For example, they might not be able to recognise someone across a room but can see printed

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material when held very close.

To guide someone in a particular direction always offer your arm, rather than grabbing their arm or pushing them in the direction. When meeting someone, identify yourself and others who are in the room. Address the person with sight loss by name when directing conversation to them in a group situation.

For a first time visitor, describe your venue setting and the equipment and facilities that are available and their location in the room. For example "the kitchen is on your left hand side".

Don't leave someone in an open space, bring them to some reference point that they can feel, like a wall, table or chair. To be left in open space can be disorientating for a person with no vision. Ask them where they would like to go before leaving them.

When purchasing computers or other equipment seek advice or link the person to the National Council for the Blind of Ireland or the Royal National Institute of the Blind as they have expertise in aids for people with vision impairments and individual needs can be met such as the need for voice activated software.

Never feed a guide dog. If everyone who met the dog each day fed it a titbit, the dog would have no appetite for meals and could become ill and unable to work. Never pat or distract a guide dog when it is wearing a harness.

Deaf, deafened or hard of hearing people

Ensuring access for hard of hearing young people involves making provisions so that they can access spoken and written communication. You will need to determine how the young person you are working with can best do this and

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what communication methods they are most comfortable with. If they use a hearing aid installing a loop system may be helpful. These systems vary considerably and you would need to work closely with members who could benefit from it to decide which one might be suitable.



When you are communicating directly with a young person who has hearing difficulties try and minimise noisy surroundings and distractions such as loud music. To get their attention you may be able to tap the person lightly on the shoulder or wave your hand.

Face the person and speak slowly. Eating, smoking or putting your hands near your mouth can cause difficulty when talking with people who lip read. Make sure you are in a well-lit area so that your face isn't in shadow. Shouting can make it harder to lip read and can interfere with the sound through a hearing aid. Remember though that not all deaf people can lip read. You can always write something on paper or via SMS text if you are unable to communicate.

Ideally you should have a mobile number available that young people can text that is consistently monitored and/or an email address that can be used for contact purposes. Also social networking sites are an excellent way to keep in touch and they can also be used as a platform to contact your service. However, do remember that for signing deaf people sign language may be their first language and it does not follow the same structure as spoken English. Written text can be difficult to read for some people so any website, email or text messages should use plain English to avoid confusion.

Speech challenges

It is normal to feel embarrassed or guilty if you can't understand a person you are speaking to. Try to avoid feeling this way and focus your attention on trying to understand them. Don't pretend to understand them if you do not. The person with a disability has, most likely, experienced this before and won't be surprised if they are sometimes not understood.

Be patient and repeat what you have understood, their response will provide some guidance as to whether you were correct in your understanding. Be patient and wait for the person to finish what they are saying rather than interrupting and trying to guess what they are saying. If you are having trouble communicating try asking questions that require only a short answer or use other communication methods such as writing on paper or into a phone.



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Challenging myths about young people with a physical disability, who have sight loss or who have hearing difficulties

One very practical way of challenging attitudes is to be aware of common myths about young people with a disability and have the facts that debunk them. You can use these myths in your youth work activities. You can make sure the people you work with are aware of them. You can print them in large print and put them up for service users to see to increase awareness.

Myth 1 People with disabilities are helpless

Don't assume that someone with a disability needs your help. A young person who doesn't need help may (understandably) feel very frustrated that other people are constantly trying to take over tasks that they can do themselves. If you think someone needs help, ask them first. If they say yes, ask them what to do before you act. Most young people with a disability want to be independent and have control over their own life. They want to be able to look after themselves rather than be looked after.

"I know that a lot of people feel they should do everything for people because they feel sorry for them ... but I would rather do things for myself than have other people do them for me and then be expected to be grateful even if I do not like the way they were done"

Stephen, a young person with a disability.

"Some people can be patronising, even condescending or are too helpful. I've been referred to in the past as a poor handicapped boy. Some go out of their way to aid me and often embarrass me in the process"

Paul, a young person with a disability.

“I hate it when people treat me specially because I look different. I don’t want to be treated specially. I just want the same deal as everybody else. I did not want people to fuss over me, only do what I asked and leave it at that. Fussing just makes me feel either useless or angry, and getting the message across without being rude isn’t easy”

Peter, a young person with a disability.

Just because someone has a disability doesn’t mean they don’t have abilities. You might be surprised to learn that they have talents and abilities that other people might not have. Don’t assume that someone with a disability cannot get involved or is not interested in getting involved with your program.

Myth 2 People with disabilities need sympathy

People with disabilities do not need sympathy or want pity. They also don’t need to be told that they are brave or courageous for living with a disability. Some young people with disabilities are brave, some are not, just like everyone else. People with disabilities do not need to be treated as children, they need opportunities to maximise their independence.



Myth 3 People with disabilities are sick

A disability is not necessarily a sickness. Many people with disabilities are healthy and free of disease.

Myth 4 People with a physical disability or deafness also have a learning disability

Having a physical disability or deafness does not mean having a learning disability as well. Less than one third of people with a physical disability have a learning disability. Just because someone has difficulty speaking to you does not mean that they have difficulty understanding what you say. It can be frustrating for someone with a physical disability to be constantly spoken down to.

Myth 5 People with disabilities have trouble hearing

Some people yell or raise their voices when talking to someone who is blind, in a wheelchair or have some other sort of physical disability. When communicating with someone with a disability speak in a normal tone of voice unless they ask you to speak louder.

Myth 6 All disabilities are obvious

Not all disabilities are obvious. In fact it is likely that some young people using your service have a disability that you don't know about. Don't assume that you always need to know if someone has a disability.



Myth 7 People with disabilities only want to hang out with each other

The reason most of us make friends with particular people is because we get along well with each other and have common interests. People with disabilities are no different. Most like to have a range of friends including those with and without a disability.

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Myth 8 People with disabilities aren't interested in or cannot have sex

Adolescence is a time when young people develop an interest in sex and become more aware of their sexuality. This is normal for all young people, including young people with a disability. Many people (and some parents) treat young people with a disability like children and are shocked when they are interested in or have a girlfriend or boyfriend. There is no reason why having a disability means that someone does not have an interest in relationships or sex!

Myth 9 All people with disabilities are the same

People with disabilities are individuals. Not all individuals are the same. Not all disabilities are the same. For example, two people with vision impairment may have different needs and abilities. This will be as a result of the cause of the disability, their particular impairment, upbringing, experience and ability. The effects of disability differ from person to person. Even if you know someone else with the same disability don't assume that you know how a person thinks, feels or acts. This is the same when helping people with a disability, not every person has the same needs.



Myth 10 People with disabilities are conservative

This is a stereotype. People with disabilities have different values, tastes and styles just like everyone else. Some are conservative and some are not.

Myth 11 Deaf people cannot use the telephone

Some hard-of-hearing people have enough residual hearing to talk on the phone. Many cochlear implant users also use the phone thanks to modern technology.

Myth 12 Deaf people are dumb or mute

Many young people with hearing devices can hear and talk just like any other person thanks to modern technologies and education approaches. Similarly deaf people who use Sign Language are not dumb: most signing deaf people are congenitally deaf never learnt to speak for different reasons. Signing deaf people are not dumb or mute, they are still capable of making vocal sounds but some will choose not to speak for they are aware they may not be understood. Some may think they will be difficult to understand or have inappropriate pitch or volume. In any case, terms like "deaf and dumb" or "deaf-mute" are outdated and considered offensive.

Myth 13 Unusual sounding speech means the person has a learning disability

Speech development depends greatly on one's ability to hear him or herself talk and whether hearing devices are worn. For some deaf people, sound, the foundation for learning speech, which hearing people take for granted, is not accessible. The situation has nothing to do with a person's intelligence.

Myth 14 Deaf people can read lips

Lip-reading is a skill that some deaf or hard of hearing people have; others do not. Even with the best lip-readers, it is important to remember that only about 25% of speech is visible on the lips. Some words look almost exactly the same - for instance, the words "paddle" and "battle."

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Myth 15 Hearing devices completely correct hearing loss

Hearing aids are assistive devices which improve hearing for some individuals. Hearing devices do not "correct" hearing. A hearing device may enable a person to hear someone's voice, even though she or he may not be able to understand distinct words. Just because someone wears a hearing device does not mean the person hears normally, particularly in group settings.

Myth 16 Deaf people are not very bright or educated because they have not learned to talk or do not use proper English grammar

Most young people who are deaf hear and talk thanks to hearing devices while for signing deaf people their primary language, or first language, is Sign Language; English is a second language. Most people who are deaf or hard of hearing learn English usage and have speech training, but some may find it easier to use their primary language when possible.

Myth 17 Sign Language is universal

Sign Language is not a singular universal language used by deaf people. Just as hearing people in different countries speak different languages; deaf people around the world employ different sign languages. For example, Irish Sign Language (ISL) is different from British Sign Language (BSL), American Sign Language (ASL) and French Sign Language (FSL).



Myth 18 Sign Language is spoken language conveyed through signs

Sign Language is not a manual code for the spoken language. This means signing deaf people do not sign word-for-word to form grammatically correct sentences. It would somehow be unnatural to do so. However, with the advent of Total Communication, Signed Exact English is taught to students. Total Communication (TC) is an approach to deaf education that aims to make use of a number of modes of communication such as signed, oral, auditory, written and visual aids, depending on the particular needs and abilities of the child. Many students who learn Signed English do not realise it is Signed Exact English they are learning and not SL.



Checklist 5 - How accessible is your organisation to young people with a physical disability, who have sight loss or who have hearing difficulties?

This checklist can help you to identify how you can improve your service for young people with a physical disability, who have sight loss or who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Note: Making your service more accessible is likely to make it safer and more accessible for other people who visit your service such as parents with prams, or people who do not speak English. It could also help you meet your public liability and workplace safety responsibilities.

Programme planning and delivery

Our programmes are designed and delivered to include the diverse needs and identities of young people with a disability

Physical access to our venue

- Our service has transport arrangements for young people who have difficulty in getting to our service **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

Car parking

- There are designated accessible car spaces located close to the entrance of our venue **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

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• People can be dropped off and picked up close to the entrance of our venue	YES	PARTLY	NO

Venue approach

• There is a clear and level pathway, from the car park or the street approach, to our venue, which is well maintained, free of hazards and lit at night	YES	PARTLY	NO
• There are no overhead hazards such as low awnings, low signs or overhanging branches	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Where the approach to the venue is not level, ramps and stairs are provided	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Ramps are built according to Part M Building Standards i.e. not too steep	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Steps on stairs are slip resistant and handrails are provided on stairs	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Step edges are highlighted	YES	PARTLY	NO

Entrance

• The main entrance of our venue has level access	YES	PARTLY	NO
• The main entrance or the accessible entrance is obvious or clearly signposted	YES	PARTLY	NO
• All doorways are a minimum of 800mm in width	YES	PARTLY	NO

Moving around the venue

• Our venue and venue entrance is free of hazards that block pathways (such as bikes, school bags, brochure stands, pot plants)	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Wheelchair users have access to all parts of our venue	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Floor surfaces are even and slip resistant	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our venue uses tonal contrast between walls and doors, doors and door handles, walls and floors	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Lifts are sufficiently large to accommodate a wheelchair user with one other person and are in working order	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Fixtures and fittings such as door handles, door bells, brochures and promotional material are at the right height to be reached by wheelchair users i.e. 900 mm – 1000 mm	YES	PARTLY	NO

WC facilities

• There are designated wheelchair accessible toilets	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Accessible toilet doors open out rather than in towards the bathroom (where possible)	YES	PARTLY	NO

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• Accessible toilets have grab rails next to the toilet on both sides	YES	PARTLY	NO
• There is sufficient room for a person to position their wheelchair beside the WC and manoeuvre themselves from the wheelchair to the WC. NB (Minimum size is 1500 mm x 2000 mm. The IWA preferred size is 1800 x 2500 mm with door opening out)	YES	PARTLY	NO
• The wash basin has free space underneath	YES	PARTLY	NO

Programmes

• Our programmes and activities are designed with all young people in mind	YES	PARTLY	NO

Public image

How we present our service to our community

Promoting our service

• Our promotional flyers use a text and background that contrast in colour and use a plain font such as Arial. Font size is large enough to accommodate the needs of people with low vision (14 point is recommended)	YES	PARTLY	NO
• All promotional material can be printed in Braille or large text	YES	PARTLY	NO

• We use warning signs for entertainment events where there will be strobe lighting or smoke machines	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Promotional flyers are easy to read, use basic English and avoid jargon	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Photos and drawings of young people we use in promotional material feature a range of young people, including young people with disabilities	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We involve young people in the production of our promotional material including young people with a disability	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our promotional flyers state if we have wheelchair access	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We network with and provide promotional material to a wide range of services, including disability services	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Young people can phone, SMS (text), email or fax our service	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Young people can keep in contact with our service using Facebook or Twitter	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our website meets disability standards i.e. they are compatible with voice activated software. (This software audibly reads out text on websites. NCBI's Centre for inclusive Technology www.cfit.ie or RNIB's Web Access Centre webaccess@rnib.org.uk can assist with user testing of your website.)	YES	PARTLY	NO

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• We use clear print in our printed material (see clear print guidelines below)	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We use a loop system in situations where we have P.A systems (reception areas and at presentations etc)	YES	PARTLY	NO

Partnerships and networks

• We have a referral list of disability services for young people and their families	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our service works in partnership with disability services to make our service accessible	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We provide information about our service to disability services	YES	PARTLY	NO

Professional development

Our staff and volunteers are trained and supported to deliver an inclusive youth service

Staff and volunteer awareness

• Our staff and volunteers are trained in basic disability awareness	YES	PARTLY	NO

Our staff and volunteers know how to communicate with the following:

▪ a person with reduced mobility	YES	PARTLY	NO
▪ a person who is deaf, deafened or is hard of hearing	YES	PARTLY	NO

▪ a person with impaired vision	YES	PARTLY	NO
▪ a person with a speech impairment	YES	PARTLY	NO
▪ a person with a brain injury	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our staff and volunteers have strategies in place for promoting friendships among young people attending programs, such as group and team activities	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We employ an inclusion worker or a staff member/volunteer has responsibility for inclusion in their job/role description	YES	PARTLY	NO

Participation

We make sure we include the voices of young people at all levels of our youth service

• Young people with a disability are involved in decision making, e.g. have input about how services are run, are involved in informal consultations, attend a youth or management committee	YES	PARTLY	NO

Policies and procedures

We have a written commitment to deliver an equal and inclusive service

• Our organisation has a written commitment to equality and inclusion that includes people with a disability	YES	PARTLY	NO

Useful contacts – Republic of Ireland

National Disability Authority Phone: 01 - 608 0400 Web: www.nda.ie	The National Disability Authority is the lead state agency on disability issues, providing independent expert advice to Government on policy and practice
Enable Ireland Phone: 01 - 261 5900 Web: www.enableireland.ie	Enable Ireland supports children and adults with disabilities and their families and provides services in local communities throughout Ireland
Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA) Phone: 01 - 818 6400 Web: www.iwa.ie National organisation for people with physical disabilities	Muscular Dystrophy Ireland Phone: 01 - 872 1501 Web: www.mdi.ie National organisation for people with Neuromuscular conditions
The Irish Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus Phone: 01 - 457 2329 Web: www.iasbah.ie	National Council for the Blind of Ireland Locall phone: 1850 33 43 53 Web: www.ncbi.ie
Sound Advice Email: hello@soundadvice.pro Web: https://sound-advice.ie	Organisation promoting technology-supported mainstream education and living for deaf children and students

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Irish Deaf Youth Association (IDYA)**Phone:** 085 198 4166**Email:** info@irishdeafyouth.com**Web:** www.irishdeafyouth.com

National organisation representing young Deaf people. It is affiliated to the Irish Deaf Society. They have a group that meets in Cabra, Dublin

Vantastic**Phone:** 01 - 839 2447

Wheelchair accessible Transport for Dublin and surrounding areas

DeafHear**Web:** www.DeafHear.ie**Phone:** 01 - 817 5700

Offers services to people who are deaf and hard of hearing and advocates and campaigns for equal access and opportunities

NALA**Freephone:** 1800 20 2065**Web:** www.nala.ie

Gives supports to people with literacy problems

Useful contacts – Northern Ireland

Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) Phone: 028 - 9032 9373 Web: www.rnib.org.uk	RNIB Northern Ireland supports children and adults with sight loss to live full and independent lives
Learning SPACE Phone: 028 - 90319360 Email: info@learningspaceni.co.uk Web: www.learningspaceni.co.uk	Learning SPACE is an award winning store specialising in educational resources for all children
Northern Ireland Deaf Youth Association (NIDYA) Phone: 028 - 9043 8566 Web: www.nidya.org.uk	NIDYA provides help, support, encouragement & fun for Young Deaf and hard of hearing people in Northern Ireland
Contact a Family NI Phone: 028 - 92627552 Email: nireland.office@cafamily.org.uk Web: www.cafamily.org.uk	Contact a Family provides advice, information and support to families with disabled children

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RNIB Web Access Centre Phone: 020 - 73912178 Email: webaccess@rnib.org.uk	National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) Web: www.ndcs.org.uk
Disability Action Phone: 028 - 9029 7880 Textphone: 028 - 9029 7882 Email: hq@disabilityaction.org	

Resources

Intergr8 DVD Resource

This is an educational Toolkit for mainstream youth services made by young people with disabilities. To obtain a copy of this dvd contact www.iwa.ie, www.mdi.ie or www.foroige.ie

Make It Clear Guidelines

www.ncbi.ie/services/services-for-organisations/making-written-documents-accessible-to-all

NCBI Braille Transcription and Audio Recording Services

www.ncbi.ie/services/services-for-organisations/making-print-and-multimedia-accessible-mcs

Making Websites accessible

www.ncbi.ie/services/services-for-organisations/making-websites-and-other-technologies-accessible-cfit

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Disability Awareness Training

www.ncbi.ie/services/services-for-organisations/disability-awareness-training

Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA) Disability Awareness Training Services Blackheath Drive Clontarf Dublin 3 Phone: 01 - 818 6400 Web: www.iwa.ie	Irish Sign Language Classes Irish Deaf Society Phone: 01 - 860 1960 Web: www.deaf.ie

Real-Time Captioning (ESOL and hearing difficulty)

PCR Ltd. (Dublin) Phone: (0)404 - 64355 Web: www.pcr.ie	See Write Now (for live stream) Phone: (0)404 - 64355 Web: www.pcr.ie

Irish Sign Language interpreters

SLIS Phone: 01 - 413 9670 Web: www.slis.ie	Bridge Interpreting Phone: 087 904 6594 Web: www.bridgeinterpreting.ie

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Using Plain English and no jargon

Refer to NALA for advice.

Freephone: 1800 20 20 65

Web: www.nala.ie

A useful guide for “plain English” writing is also available at www.plainenglish.co.uk/files/howto.pdf and at www.dest.gov.au/archive/publications/plain_en/writing.htm

Clear Print Design Checklist

Font size and formatting

- Is the font size at least 12 point or ideally 14 point?
- Is the font type simple and clear (sans serif)?
- Is the text left aligned (ie not justified)?
- Does the text always start on the left most margin of the page?
- Does the text contrast effectively with the background?
- Avoid using upper case in the text and headings
- CAPS should only be used for single words
- Avoid using underlining and italics
- Use colour, bold or a larger font size to highlight keywords or headings
- Avoid splitting words between two lines
- Avoid curved or vertical text

This chapter was developed by Daragh Kennedy and Laura Leeson (Irish Wheelchair Association); Fiona Kelty and Niamh Connolly (National Council for the Blind of Ireland), Nigel Connor (Irish Deaf Youth Association) and Caroline Carswell (Sound Advice) for ‘Access All Areas – a Diversity Toolkit for the Youth Work Sector’ published by NYCI and Youthnet 2012 – Updated 2018

- **Only use central alignment for titles**
- **Leave adequate space between each line**
- **Do not stretch or cram words**
- **Leave a space between each paragraph**
- **Leave an adequate gutter between columns of text**
- **Bullet points should be solid and bold**
- **Line spacing should be greater than single spacing**

Consistent layout

- **Ensure that the layout is consistent and logical**
- **Use recurring features wherever possible**
- **Put page numbers in the same place on each page**

Images

- **Avoid text over images**
- **Avoid using watermarks behind the text**
- **Ensure that images are not the only way of providing information**
- **Images should be described in 'alt text' box for screen readers**

Forms

- If the reader needs to write on the page, is there is adequate space to use a big thick marker?
- If using tick boxes or tables, make the border solid and bold

Printing

- The paper should have a matt finish
- Folds on the paper should not obscure any text

Videos and Podcast

- Videos and podcasts should be transcribed for people with ESOL or hearing issues

Use the above checklist or refer to NCBI (Republic of Ireland) for additional advice - Locall 1850 33 43 53 or www.ncbi.ie.

Or contact RNIB (Northern Ireland) for advice on accessible print etc.

www.rnib.org.uk

This chapter was developed by Daragh Kennedy and Laura Leeson (Irish Wheelchair Association); Fiona Kelty and Niamh Connolly (National Council for the Blind of Ireland), Nigel Connor (Irish Deaf Youth Association) and Caroline Carswell (Sound Advice) for 'Access All Areas – a Diversity Toolkit for the Youth Work Sector' published by NYCI and Youthnet 2012 – Updated 2018

References

ⁱ The Southern Health and Social Services Board: Disability Etiquette, 2004

ⁱⁱ www.ncse.ie/uploads/1/ncse_imp_report.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ The Southern Health and Social Services Board: Disability Etiquette, 2004

Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2000) Part M Building Regulations

Irish Wheelchair Association (2010) Best practice Access Guidelines – designing accessible environments

Disability Act 2005

Equality Act 2000 – 2004

Irish Deaf Youth Association

National Council for the Blind of Ireland

Sound Advice

This chapter was developed by Daragh Kennedy and Laura Leeson (Irish Wheelchair Association); Fiona Kelty and Niamh Connolly (National Council for the Blind of Ireland), Nigel Connor (Irish Deaf Youth Association) and Caroline Carswell (Sound Advice) for 'Access All Areas – a Diversity Toolkit for the Youth Work Sector' published by NYCI and Youthnet 2012 – Updated 2018

CHAPTER SIX

Working with young people with a learning disability

Introduction

This chapter focuses on young people with a learning disability. It explains the needs and issues that young people with a learning disability may face and offers practical advice to help you to work with them. It concludes by directing you to the people and resources that can support you in your inclusive youth work.



It is important to stress that we all have strengths and weaknesses in relation to learning. We all have different ways of learning, different communication styles and different ways of conveying information. Self-awareness on the part of a youth leader on what their strengths and weaknesses are and particularly the tendency they have toward adopting a certain learning/teaching style is helpful when working with young people with a learning disability. It is also important to understand that young people with a learning disability have similar interests, desires, emotions and ambitions as any other young person. As individuals they place their mark on the world in their own way. When you look beyond a disability you see an individual that may have talents and abilities that other people might not have. Youth work is ideally placed to provide environments for young people to express themselves freely and to be involved. It is crucial that young people are included and supported in their

community-based youth groups even if they are also attending specialised services.

In the Republic of Ireland under the **Equal Status Acts 2000 and 2004**, it is unlawful to discriminate against a person on the grounds of their disability in the provision of goods and services, education, sports, access to public facilities accommodation and employment.

In Northern Ireland the **Disability Discrimination Act 1995** and the **Equality (Disability) (Northern Ireland) Order 2000** gives disabled people rights in the areas of the provision of goods and services, education, sports, access to public facilities and accommodation and also in employment. Disability discrimination in education is covered by the **Special Education Needs and Disability (NI) order 2005 (SENDO), as amended**. SENDO applies to schools, education and library boards, amongst other further education bodies. **Autism Act (NI) 2011** means that rights and access of services and benefits will now be based on a person's level of social and communication impairment and function as well as on intellectual or physical ability.



Terminology

This resource has been developed to be used by youth workers on the island of Ireland. At times it is necessary to make distinctions between our two jurisdictions and we had to choose a terminology to reflect this. We have chosen for the most part to use Northern Ireland (NI) and Republic of Ireland (ROI). At times we also use North and South. Additionally, for clarity, where information is significantly different we have used coloured boxes:

Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland

In exploring how a young person with a learning disability can be involved in your youth group it is important to treat the person as an individual, and to look foremost at what they can do, rather than at what they may have difficulty doing. Ask the young person (and their parents/guardians) about their **abilities** and their **interests**, then what specific learning or functional difficulties they may have that could affect their engagement in youth work. Then look at what **support** they need to be fully involved. This focus on the young person as a young person first is fundamental. Looking at the specifics of a disability, and how the disability might affect the young person, follows only after that fundamental approach.

Terminology relating to disabilities is complex. Terminology changes over time and words can take on different meanings and can become emotive for those involved. Much of the terminology relating to disabilities is linked to categories that have been developed to aid in the assessment of children and young people so that educational supports can be provided. Furthermore, terminology differs both within and between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. For example, in Northern Ireland the term 'learning disability' is often used whereas in the Republic of Ireland you may also hear the term 'intellectual disability'. In Northern Ireland there is a strong resistance to the use of the term intellectual disability. In the Republic of Ireland the term 'young person with a disability' tends to be used more often, meaning the person is central, not the disability, whereas in Northern Ireland the term disabled person is often used, meaning that the person is disabled by society (this is the definition used by the social model on disability) and it is up to society to put the necessary supports in place to give everyone the opportunity to live inclusive and productive lives. The term 'disability' itself is not used especially in relation to specific issues such as Dyslexia, Dyspraxia etc. This is explained in more detail in the Appendix of this chapter. The best advice is to ask the young person you are working with or



their parent/guardian what terminology they prefer to use or model your terms on the ones they use. We must also remember that how we speak about a disability often determines how young people feel about themselves and their relationship with the world around them. What is important is how we remove barriers in our services to support all young people to achieve their own potential and for the majority of young people with a learning disability this will require challenging attitudes, behaviours and language.

This is encapsulated by taking a **universal design approach** – an approach that caters for people irrespective of their age, size, ability or disability. For example, easy to read documents benefit more people than those who specifically need them; wheelchair access benefits people with buggies; clear signage and instructions makes our spaces safer and more pleasant for everyone including people who have literacy issues, those who are Deaf, and those where English is not their first language, etc.

What is a learning disability?

A **Learning Disability** affects intellectual ability which may mean that a person finds it more difficult to learn, understand and communicate. A learning disability can also affect someone's speech and their ability to communicate verbally. A learning disability will be described by experts as mild, moderate, severe or profound.



The extent of someone's disability varies greatly from person to person. Some people with a learning disability may have additional disabilities. However, with the right support individuals can lead fulfilling and independent lives.

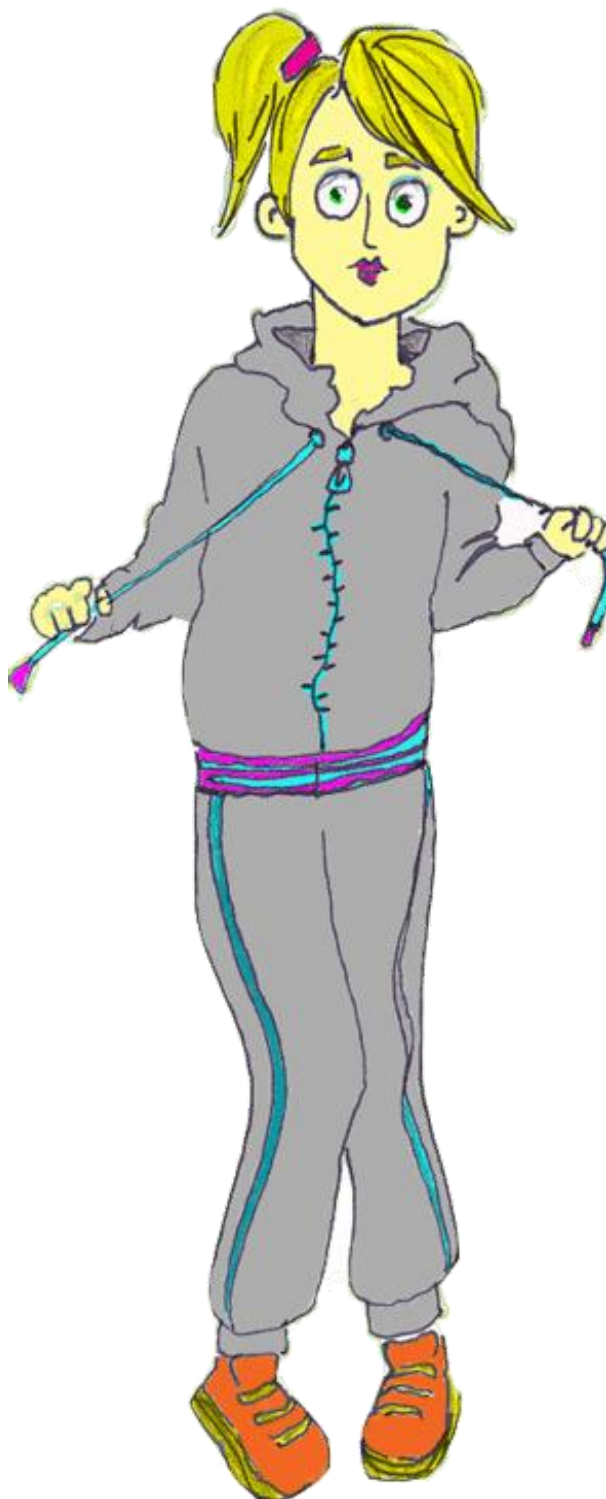
For more detailed information on a range of learning disabilities and related conditions see the Appendix at the end of this chapter or visit

www.mencap.org.uk

Demographics

In **Northern Ireland (NI)** 33,000 have a learning disability and over 20,000 individuals are affected by Autism.ⁱ

In the **Republic of Ireland (ROI)** the National Intellectual Disability Database (NIDD) estimates that the number of people aged 5 to 19 years with learning or intellectual disability is 7.9% of the population (the vast majority of which are specific learning difficulties i.e. dyslexia). Those affected by Autism Spectrum Disorder is 0.6% of the population.ⁱⁱ In all cases boys are affected considerably more than girls.



Needs and issues for young people with a learning disability

Young people with a learning disability like to go out, make friends, be independent and have fun. Your service can offer these things to all young people. Some young people with a learning disability may need some extra support or adaptations to be made to be able to participate in your programmes. This is also the case for many of the other young people who want to use your service.

Young people with a learning disability don't expect you to be an expert or have specialist training. In fact they may want to join your youth programme specifically because they want to be part of what is going on for other young people.

Many young people with a learning disability may have limited social contact. They may go to a specialist school where their friends live far away from them. As little as 1 in 5 adults with learning disabilities are currently in paid employment so being involved in the community can help prevent the social isolation that results from not being an active member of the wider society.ⁱⁱⁱ



A young person with a learning disability may have limited access to transport. Parents may be overprotective of their disabled children until they are assured that they are in a safe environment where their specific needs will be met.

There is a high rate of bullying for young people with a learning disability with 8 in 10 people having experienced bullying in the last year.^{iv} They are twice as likely to be bullied as other children and the negative attitudes that society has towards them can heighten their sense of exclusion.

Barriers

Other barriers faced by young people with a learning disability include:

- **Having access to information**
- **Being included in youth programmes and other services**
- **Lack of choice**
- **What we think can be done instinctively often needs to be "taught" to people with a learning disability. For example, things that we would intuitively do such as asking for help or clarification.**
- **"Environmental" factors can really irritate someone with sensory issues, e.g. overpowering smells (disinfectant, perfume, etc), noise (e.g. alarm going off unexpectedly), touch (difficulty handling certain textures)**
- **Negative attitudes and perceptions directed towards young people with a learning disability**

Negative attitudes and perceptions directed towards young people with a disability result in:

- **Being segregated from others**
- **Being treated with fear and unease**
- **Being patronised**
- **Being treated differently**
- **Not having equal access to services**
- **Being pitied**
- **Having decisions made on their behalf**

Developing disability inclusive practice - working with young people with a learning disability

The following advice relates in general to working with young people with different learning needs as well as those with Autism. See the Appendix at the end of this chapter for advice relating to specific conditions.

Challenge attitudes

The biggest barrier that faces young people with a learning disability is often the negative attitudes of other young people. Remember to model good practice and show respect, acceptance and dignity to all young people, including those with a learning disability. It is important that you work with your group to challenge attitudes and break down stereotypes about all young people with a disability.

Focus on the person as an individual

People who have a learning disability should be treated as individuals defined by their potential and abilities as opposed to their disability. They have the same desires, expectations and ambitions as people without disabilities and they have a right to pursue their dreams as active citizens within a supportive and encouraging environment.



Be supportive

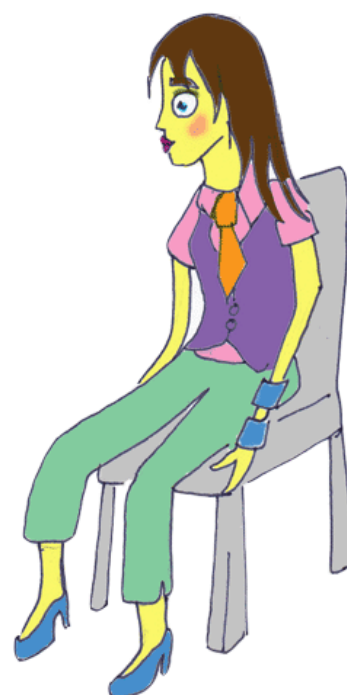
Supporting and involving young people with a learning disability can often be a challenge. The level of support someone needs is ultimately down to their individual preference. It shouldn't be assumed that two young people with a learning disability require the same level or style of support. Don't assume that all young people who are disabled require support as this may not be the case. It is important to ask them what they need.

Young people with a learning disability want to make their own decisions about the type of support they receive. Support might include assisting a young person to write, draw, and speak up in a group, find places or things or by simply building their confidence through encouragement.

Participation

Young people with a learning disability want to participate in activities on their own terms. It may take time for a young person with a disability to build enough confidence to take part. Pressure should not be applied to participate as some young people may be happier at the outset to be present rather than take an active role. Always consider what the young person might need in terms of support or adaptation of the activity. This might mean reducing the number of rules, breaking tasks or activities into shorter manageable bits giving frequent breaks and offering repetition to ensure understanding.

Planning and evaluation is a key part of leading activities. Involving young people in planning and evaluations and using their feedback to improve the way you work is an excellent way to make the service more young person centred.



- **Establish the young person's interests and use this to get to know them and develop skills and social interaction from this.**
- **Obsessions with certain objects or activity can be redirected by allowing them at certain times, e.g. "we'll finish off tonight's session with a basketball game" or " first we will play board games then snack time then you can have a choice between (something the person might be a bit obsessive about) and (something you know that really appeals but is not an obsession)**
- **Build on their strengths and appeal to their better ability e.g. put someone in goals (But not all the time!) as opposed to mid-field as they might be better able to play within a confined space and with a definite focus.**
- **If someone is reluctant to get involved, give them a job "Could you help me with this" something that builds confidence and gives a sense of success etc.**
- **Have fun!**

Communicating with your team

Share information between colleagues where appropriate to ensure they are fully aware of what support is needed for individual young people. Communication is also important so that when organising and planning new events or activities they are planned in a way that is inclusive of all young people - with and without a disability.



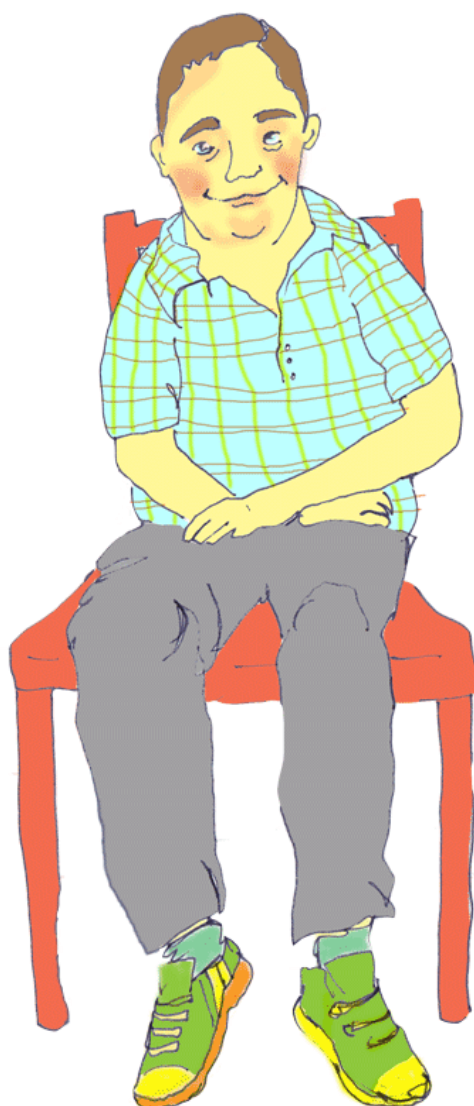
Build relationships

Young people with a learning disability might require support to build friendships and relationships with other young people. Barriers and discrimination need to be challenged so that forming friendships and relationships are made easier. This can often be a sensitive area particularly between the sexes or where there is a sexual attraction. It is important to offer support and where appropriate information but remember the young people are young people first relationships are difficult and painful for many young people. Young people with a learning disability may need some additional time and support to understand and learn from their experiences.

Take the time

Many young people with a learning disability have described situations where people have not taken the time to communicate with them or who treat them like a child. When asked about their views on communication young people say ‘talk directly to us, not to parents or carers’ and ‘take your time and make sure you understand what we said’.

Communicate with parents and carers when necessary. The parents and families of young people with a learning disability will often be a key source of information and support to you. They will have vital information on communication and support needs that will help you plan and carry out activities.



Communication

Remember - young people appreciate being spoken to directly as it makes them feel valued ultimately they are the experts in understanding learning disability. Young people who have a learning disability can and will communicate given the right support and resources. However, it is important to remember that long periods of communicating can be emotionally and physically exhausting for both the worker and the young disabled person. It can require a great deal of patience and effort. Several shorter individual sessions held on a regular basis can be more productive than fewer, longer sessions. Working with two staff to one young person can work well when trying to complete a complex task and establish good communication.

- **Find a good place to communicate in**
- **Ask open questions**
- **Give information in a clear, concise, concrete format. Check with the person that they understand what you are saying. A yes or no response is no indication that they understood fully what you are saying. Ask them to repeat in their own way what they have understood.**
- **If the person wants to take you to show you something go with them**
- **Observe the young person and use your intuition**
- **Learn from experience**
- **Take your time, don't rush your communication**
- **Use gestures and facial expressions**
- **Be aware that some people may find it easier to use real objects to communicate but photos and pictures can help too**
- **Try drawing or using digital photos of equipment, people, places etc**
- **If you are struggling to understand what someone is trying to communicate ask others such as their friends or other leaders who are**

more familiar with them to help you understand – don't feel embarrassed.

- **Check with parents if you have concerns about a particular activity**
- **Young people who also have Autism/ Asperger's syndrome can have difficulty with "small talk ", they will take things literally, find it difficult to understand subtlety, irony or innuendo. They can adapt socially if given a specific task, e.g. having a checklist to tick off, checking what people want to eat , what people's favourite films are etc.**

Some young people may use different forms of communication. Find out if the young person attending your group uses a different communication system and try to incorporate it into your work. Some examples include:

➤ **Makaton**

This is a system that uses gestures or signs together with visual symbols as an aid to communication. For more information see www.makaton.org

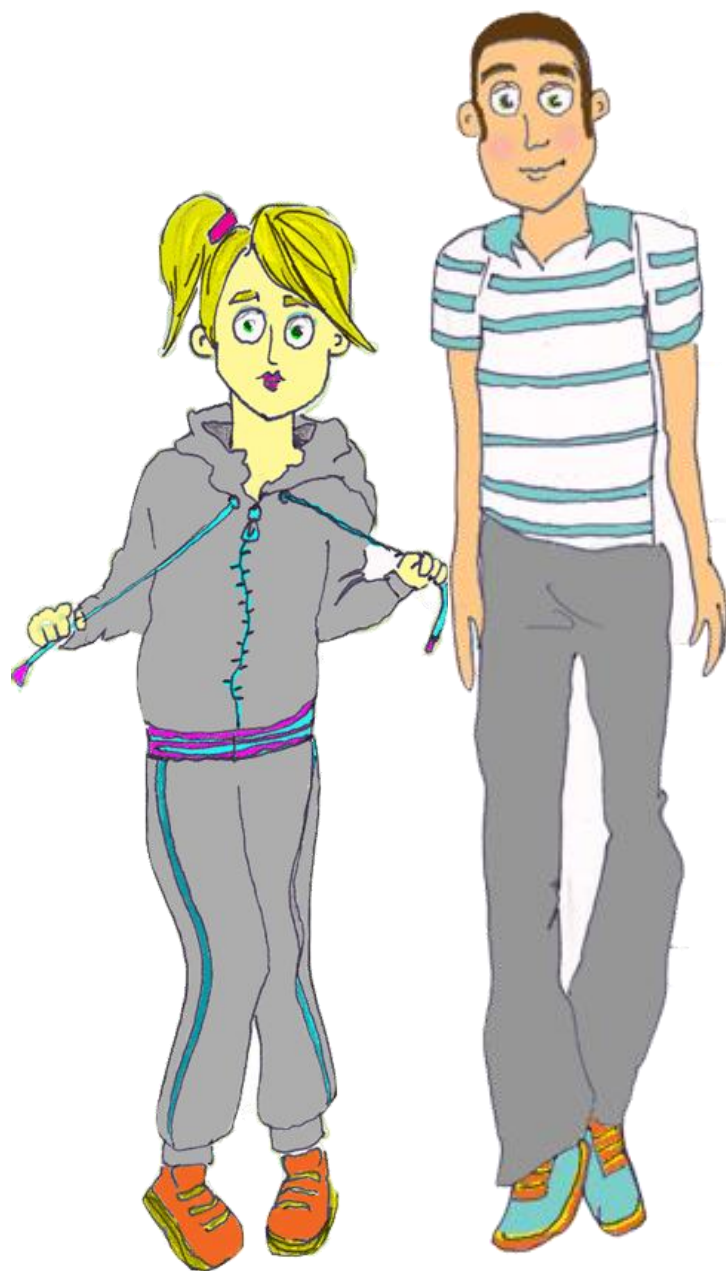
➤ **Talking Mats**

This is a low-tech, visually-based communication approach which uses Picture Communication Symbols (PCS) as a means of enabling people with communication difficulties, including those with a learning disability, to convey their views and feelings. They can be used, for example, to inform reviews or decisions about services

Become informed

Descriptions giving some specific information on the most common range of disabilities and related conditions that you might see, and how to address them are included in the Appendix at the end of this chapter. You can also consult the contacts at the end of this chapter for support and advice. In all

cases it is important to remember that the expert on a person's ability/disability is the young person themselves. Their parents/guardians will also have useful information that will help you to work with them.



Challenging myths about young people with a disability

One very practical way of challenging attitudes is to be aware of common myths about young people with a learning disability, and having the facts that debunk them. You can use these myths in your youth work activities. You can make sure the people you work with are aware of them. You can print them in large print and put them up for young people to see to increase awareness.

Myth 1 People with learning disabilities are helpless

Don't assume that someone with a learning disability needs your help. A young person who doesn't need help may (understandably) feel very frustrated that other people are constantly trying to take over tasks that they can do themselves. If you think someone needs help, ask them first. If they say yes, ask them what to do before you act. Most young people with a learning disability want opportunities to be independent and have control over their own life. They want to be able to look after themselves rather than be looked after.

Just because someone has a learning disability doesn't mean they don't have abilities. You might be surprised to learn that they have talents and abilities that other people might not have. Don't assume that someone with a learning disability cannot get involved or is not interested in getting involved with your program.



Myth 2 People with learning disabilities need sympathy

People with disabilities do not need sympathy or want pity. They also don't need to be told that they are brave or courageous for living with a learning disability. Some young people with disabilities are brave; some are not, just like everyone else. People with disabilities do not need to be treated as children, they need opportunities to maximise their independence.

Myth 3 People with learning disabilities are sick

A learning disability is not necessarily a sickness. Many people with disabilities are healthy.

Myth 4 All learning disabilities are obvious

Not all disabilities are obvious. In fact it is likely that some young people using your service have a learning disability that you don't know about. Don't assume that you need to know if someone has a learning disability.

Myth 4 People with learning disabilities only want to hang out with each other

The reason most of us make friends with particular people is because we get along well with each other and have common interests. People with learning disabilities are no different. Most like to have a range of friends including those with and without a learning disability.

Myth 5 All people with a learning disability are the same

People with a learning disability are individuals. Not all individuals are the same.

Checklist 6 - How accessible is your organisation to young people with a learning disability?

This checklist can help you to identify how you can improve your service for young people with a learning disability.

Programme planning and delivery

Our programmes are designed and delivered to include the diverse needs and identities of young people with a learning disability

Transport

- Our service considers the transport needs of young people who have difficulty in getting to our service and works to support them
- YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

Programmes

- Our programmes and activities are designed with all young people in mind including those with different skills and understanding
- YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

Policies and procedures

We have a written commitment to deliver an equal and inclusive service

- Our organisation has a written commitment to equality and inclusion that includes people with a learning disability
- YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

Public image

How we present our service to our community

Promoting our service

• All written information is easy to read, uses simple English and avoids using jargon	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Photos and drawings of young people we use in promotional material feature a range of young people, including young people with disabilities	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We involve young people in the production of our promotional material, including young people with a disability	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We network with and provide promotional material to a wide range of services, including disability services	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Young people can phone, text, email or fax our service	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Young people can use Facebook or Twitter to keep in contact with our service	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We use clear print in our printed material (see clear print guidelines in Chapter 5)	YES	PARTLY	NO

Partnerships and networks

• We have a referral list of disability services for young people and their families	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our service works in partnership with disability services to make our service accessible	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We provide information about our service to disability services	YES	PARTLY	NO

Professional development

Our staff and volunteers are trained and supported to deliver an inclusive youth service

Staff and volunteer awareness

• Our staff and volunteers are trained in basic learning disability awareness	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our staff and volunteers have strategies in place for promoting friendships among young people attending programs, such as group and team activities	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We employ an inclusion worker	YES	PARTLY	NO

Participation

We make sure we include the voices of young people at all levels of our youth service

- Young people with a learning disability have their views and opinions heard and are involved in decision making, such as having input about how services are run. They are involved in consultations at all levels of the organisation such as on the Board, on a youth committee or management committee and these are conducted in ways that are accessible and age appropriate etc

YES

PARTLY

NO

Useful contacts – Northern Ireland

Mencap

Segal House,
4 Annadale Avenue,
Belfast BT7 3JH

Phone: (028) 9069 1351

Web: www.mencap.org.uk

Mencap helpline: 0808 801111

The learning disability helpline is an advice and information service for people with a learning disability, their families and carers

Mencap works to gain support, education, housing, jobs, and recreational opportunities for people with learning disabilities. They also offer supportive services to their families.

Positive Futures

2b Park Drive
Bangor,
BT20 4JZ

Phone: (028) 91 475720

Email: info@positive-futures.net

Web: www.positive-futures.net

Positive Futures for people with a learning disability is a Northern Ireland charity that supports children, young people and adults with a learning disability.

Autism NI

Donard,
Knockbracken Healthcare Park
Saintfield Road,
Belfast
BT8 8BH

Phone: (028) 9040 1729

Helpline: (028) 9040 1729 (Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9.30am-1pm)

Autism NI is a parent led partnership organisation having been formed to promote positive collaboration between parents, professionals and individuals with Autism to address the need for appropriate services.

Cedar Foundation

Adelaide House,
Hawthorne Industrial Estate,
Belfast BT12 6SJ

Phone: (028) 9038 7040

Email: cse@cedar-foundation.org

Web: www.cedar-foundation.org

The Cedar Foundation delivers a range of services which empower and support people with disabilities throughout Northern Ireland to be fully included in their communities, ranging from accessible accommodation for people who have brain injury, physical disability and sensory impairment, as well as for people who have learning disabilities.

Useful contacts – Republic of Ireland

Enable Ireland

**32F Rosemount Park Drive,
Rosemount Business Park, Ballycoolin
Road, Dublin 11, Ireland.**

Phone: (01) 872 7155

Email:

communications@enableireland.ie

Web: www.enableireland.ie

Enable Ireland provides free services to children and adults with disabilities and their families. Their expert teams work with the individual and their family on a plan for each life stage. Their services cover all aspects of a child's physical, educational, and social development from early infancy through adolescence. Children's Services are based in Cork, Clare, Cavan, Dublin (Tallaght & Sandymount), Galway, Kerry, Kildare, Kilkenny, Limerick, Mayo, Meath, Monaghan, North Tipperary, Wicklow.

National Disability Authority

25 Clyde Road,

Dublin 4

Phone: (01) 6080400**Fax:** (01) 6609935**Email:** nda@nda.ie**Web:** www.nda.ie

The National Disability Authority is the independent state body providing expert advice on disability policy and practice to the Minister, and promoting Universal Design in Ireland.

The NDA website has resources, including a paper on the Quality of Life of Young People with Intellectual Disability in Ireland

National Federation of Voluntary Bodies Providing Services to People with Intellectual Disability

Oranmore Business Park

Oranmore

Galway

Phone: (091) 792316**Fax:** (091) 792317**Email:** info@fedvol.ie**Web:** www.fedvol.ie

The National Federation of Voluntary Bodies Providing Services to People with Intellectual Disability is a national umbrella organisation for voluntary/non-statutory agencies who provide direct services to people with intellectual disability. Their 62 Member Organisations provide services to 22,000 people with an intellectual disability and their families. The services are founded on the Principles of Inclusion, Choice, Dignity, Respect, Participation and Contribution. They take a rights based perspective that people with intellectual disability have the right to live full and active lives, and be active participating members of their own community.

Inclusion Ireland

Unit C2, The Steelworks,
Foley St,
Dublin 1

Phone: (01) 8559891

Fax: (01) 8559904

Email: info@inclusionireland.ie

Web: www.inclusionireland.ie

Inclusion Ireland is a national association for people with an intellectual disability. The vision of Inclusion Ireland is that people with an intellectual disability live and participate in the community with equal rights as citizens, and live the life of their choice to their fullest potential.

Special Olympics Ireland

Special Olympics Ireland is made up of 5 regional offices and a central office:

Central Office

4th Floor, Park House,
North Circular Road,
Dublin 7,

Phone: (01) 8823972

Email: info@specialolympics.ie

Web: www.specialolympics.ie

Special Olympics Ireland is first and foremost a sports organisation for people with an intellectual disability, but it provides athletes with far more than the physical benefits of sport.

It's about fun, friendships and team spirit; it's about a feeling of belonging, and ultimately improving quality of life.

Through sport, athletes develop both physically and emotionally, they make new friends, realise their dreams, and know they can fit in.

Disability Awareness Training

The Lilac Project

Fleming Fulton School
Upper Malone Road
Belfast
BT9 6TY

Phone: 028 9061 3877

Email: info@lilacni.org.uk

Website: www.flemingfulton.org.uk

The lilac project provides outreach support for disabled children attending mainstream schools.

Disability Sports NI

Adelaide House,
Hawthorne Industrial Estate,
Belfast BT12 6SJ

Phone: (028) 9038 7062

Web: www.dsni.co.uk

Disability Sports NI run a range of events, participation programmes, training courses and services, all designed to give local disabled children and adults the opportunity to lead a full and active lifestyle through sport and physical recreation.

Youth Inclusion Hub

Mencap
Segal House
4 Annadale Embankment
Belfast
BT7 3JH

Phone: (028) 90 691351

Email: Helen.mcvitty-ohara@mencap.org.uk

The Youth Inclusion Hub offers information and advice and free disability and inclusive awareness training both OCN level 1 and non-accredited for youth workers, volunteers, children and young people from across Northern Ireland along with Buddy training for non-disabled young people.

Resources

Information and resources about all aspects on learning disability:

Mencap Resources Centre

www.mencap.org.uk/all-about-learning-disability/resources-centre

KIDS – The disabled children’s charity Publications and Guidance

www.kids.org.uk/information/100428/100623/publications_guidance/

Kid’s charity is developing both the thinking and services that create an inclusive world for disabled children, young people and their families. There are publications and resources available to aid with inclusion

Arts 4 All – a resource pack of creative activities for working with children of mixed abilities

<http://ywicork.com/art4all%20resource%20brochure%20layout.pdf>

Basic Facts for Leaders Leaflets ‘Disability’. *The Boys Brigade*. NI. Millar, C. (2011)

Using Plain English and no jargon

Refer to NALA for advice.

Freephone: 1800 20 20 65

Web: www.nala.ie

A useful guide for “plain English” writing is also available at

www.plainenglish.co.uk/files/howto.pdf and at

www.dest.gov.au/archive/publications/plain_en/writing.htm

A guide to making information clear and easy to read for people with a learning disability www.mencap.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/2008-04/make%20it%20clear%20apr09.pdf

APPENDIX

Information and advice on working with young people with a learning disability or conditions associated with a learning disability ^v

Some people with a learning disability also have other physical and emotional conditions, and may receive more than one diagnosis. This could have an impact on the kind of support they and their families need in their day-to-day life. You can find out more about some of the conditions associated with learning disability below, and where relevant some specific advice on working with young people with these conditions. Please note these are general strategies – each young person is unique. Speak to the young person and their parents/guardians in advance to get a better idea of their individual needs.

Global development delay

The term 'developmental delay' or 'global development delay' is used when a child takes longer to reach certain developmental milestones than other children their age.

This might include learning to walk or talk, developing motor skills, learning new things and interacting with others socially and emotionally.

Someone with another condition, like Down's syndrome or cerebral palsy, may also have global developmental delay. In some cases, the delay will be short-term and can be overcome with additional support or therapy. However, in other cases the delay may be more significant and the child will need on-going support – this indicates they may also have a learning disability.

A diagnosis of developmental delay can be very confusing for parents – and it's important to remember that every child is unique and will develop at their own pace. Getting an early diagnosis can help to ensure the right support is put in place as soon as possible, to help each person to reach their full potential.

Down's syndrome^{vi}

A person with Down's syndrome may take longer than other children their age to reach certain milestones and to develop certain skills. They may also need on-going support for different aspects of their life when they become an adult. There are some health problems associated with Down's syndrome, such as heart problems and difficulties with sight and hearing. However, these will not affect everyone with the syndrome. Increased awareness and better healthcare also mean the health and wellbeing of people with Down's syndrome have improved greatly in recent years. More recently young people with Down's syndrome along with other young people with a learning disability have undertaken 3rd level education courses through specially designed access programmes.



Fragile X syndrome

Fragile X is a genetic condition that affects both boys and girls, although boys are often more severely affected. Of those with the syndrome, all boys will have a learning disability but only a third of girls. The learning disability could be mild, moderate or severe, which will affect the amount of support the person needs day-to-day.

Most people with Fragile X will need support with their speech and language, and with social and emotional interaction with others. Some people with the condition also develop epilepsy, and a small number have autism. This may also have an impact on the kind of support they need, both as a child and as an adult.

Advice on working with young people with Down's syndrome and Fragile X

- Be clear and explicit when explaining rules and routines
- Communicate directly to the young person, make eye contact, use facial expression and visual tools if it helps
- Leave time for the young person to process language
- Listen carefully – your ear will adjust to the young person's speech patterns
- If inappropriate behaviour occurs ask yourself:
 - Was I clear in my instruction – did he or she understand?
 - Was the activity/ task at an appropriate level?
 - Was the activity/ task too long?
 - Did he or she have the support they needed?

NOTE: Learning disability is the most common form of disability. Many people with a learning disability have other associated conditions. The information that follows is for conditions associated with a learning disability. These are not considered a learning disability in and of themselves.

Autism Spectrum Disorder^{vii}

The three main areas of difficulty which all people with autism share are:

- Difficulty with social communication
- Difficulty with social interaction
- Difficulty with social imagination

ASD can result in the inability to make friends. Young people with ASD often fail to understand words or phrases that are abstract – e.g. “we’ll go swimming later” or “I love you”; or that have a double meaning – for example, if the teacher says to a child with ASD, “clear the table” he may push everything off it. Or the person may interpret things very literally – e.g. “give me a hand”.

Individuals with ASD demonstrate varying degrees of the following:

- **Deficits in communication and language**
- **Intense interest in certain interests or activities**
- **Dependence on routine**
- **Sensory problems**
- **Behaviour problems**
- **Variability of intellectual functioning**
- **Uneven development profile**
- **Difficulties in sleeping, toileting and eating**

Specific advice on working with young people who have Autism Spectrum Disorder - Asperger’s Syndrome and Autism

- **Talk to parents to find out how their son/ daughter responds to different situations**
- **Prepare for any changes to your programme in advance**
- **Always refer to the young person by name**
- **Use visual lists to provide structure for an activity. Reduce the person’s anxiety by talking them through the activity before it happens**

- **Keep verbal instructions short and simple**
- **Be clear and concise in your instructions**
- **Do not bombard individuals with too many instructions at one time**
- **If needed, back up the spoken word with visual supports to give instructions and set tasks e.g. line drawings or a simple sketch - demonstrate what to do**
- **Remember to give individuals time to process the information and give extra time to respond**
- **Observe the person and take your lead from them**
- **Individuals may not know which words to use in a social situation, give examples of the words to use**
- **Develop a 'buddy' or mentor system - Prepare peers before asking them to help**
- **Allow time for discussion with buddies or mentors after the session**
- **Use the young person's ability to learn facts by rote to increase their self esteem**
- **Provide space and time out for the young person to calm down if they are agitated**
- **Small groups within a larger group work best.**
- **Don't expect eye contact and never force them to look at you**
- **Use stories to explain social communication/ instruction**
- **Consider lighting, noise which may be irritants**

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)^{viii}

ADHD is used to describe children and young people who display over active and impulsive behaviour. Young people with ADHD generally display some of the following:

- **Difficulty in following instructions**
- **Difficulty in completing tasks**
- **Difficulty 'sticking to' a task**
- **Easily distracted and forgetful**
- **Restlessness**
- **Talkative and chatty – often interrupting others**
- **Impulsive**
- **Difficulty contemplating consequences of actions**
- **Difficulty waiting their turn**

ADHD is five times more likely to be displayed in boys than girls and in more severe cases may be treated with medication (e.g. Ritalin)

Specific advice on working with young people who have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

- **Make eye contact when giving instructions**
- **Keep it short and simple**
- **Provide the young person with two choices rather than giving them an opportunity to say NO**
- **Set short achievable goals and reward them with immediate**

encouragement

- **Use checklists to help with completing activities or tasks**
- **Provide a space for ‘time out’ to calm down if tempers escalate**
- **Use large print text that is well spaced out on written communications**

Poor Concentration Skills^{ix}

Recognising young people who have poor concentration skills will help you adapt your approach and offer them support to be involved in your programmes.

Things to look out for are:

- **Easily distracted by background noise**
- **Easily distracted by what is going on around them**
- **Poor eye contact with the person who is speaking to them**
- **Very fidgety, difficulty sitting still**
- **Speaking out of turn**
- **Difficulty following instructions or responding to questions appropriately**
- **Disruptive/ Restless**

Poor concentration skills can affect language and impact on social and emotional development. A young person with poor concentration skills may also have another learning difficulty or disability.

Specific advice on addressing some of the effects of Poor Concentration Skills

- Keep background noise to a minimum
- Don't speak too fast or chop and change what you are talking about
- Use visual prompts to help with communication
- Make sure activities are at an appropriate level
- Pause regularly between sets of instructions
- Repeat, rephrase – check that the information has been understood

Expressive Language Difficulties*

Some young people with a learning disability may have difficulty expressing themselves. Things to look out for are:

- Over use of labels or non-specific words e.g. 'thingy'
- Over use of hesitations/ pauses or fillers e.g. 'em' 'Oh'
- Over use of gesture to describe something

Specific advice on addressing some of the effects of Expressive Language Difficulties

- Observe – pay close attention to the young person
- Wait – do not be tempted to talk or become involved too quickly – give the young person time to speak (count to 10 – or even 30 - if needs be in your head)

- **Listen – be an active listener and don't assume you know what the young person wants¹**

Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD)^{xi}

A young person with MLD with generally:

- **Find it difficult to concentrate**
- **Have low confidence levels**
- **Find it difficult to understand instructions**
- **Have difficulties with reading, writing, spelling and numeracy**
- **Have a low IQ (usually 70 or below)**
- **Can have behavioural problems (often used as a way to gain attention)**

Specific advice on addressing some of the effects of Moderate Learning Disability (MLD)

Some people with a learning disability do not have a single diagnosed condition and instead are referred to as having mild or moderate learning disabilities. Often these young people may receive some additional help in education but generally will not be eligible for services from Health.

- **Repeat instructions where necessary**
- **Provide visual prompts to help with understanding instructions**
- **Never directly ask a young person to read, always ask someone to**

¹ Hanen Early Language Programme (2011) *It takes two to talk*.

volunteer to read

- **Use a 'timeout' system if behaviour gets out of control**
- **Give tasks that are appropriate and attainable**
- **Always provide encouragement and reward achievements**

Dyspraxia^{xii}

Dyspraxia involves messages not being properly transmitted in the brain. It primarily affects movement and difficulty in coordination of movements. Approximately 1 in 20 young people display Dyspraxia. Four times more boys than girls display it.

General characteristics include:

- **Difficulties in coordinating movement**
- **Difficulties in throwing and catching**
- **Other activities can pose challenges** – e.g. following sequential instructions, getting dressed and handwriting
- **Confusion over left and right actions**
- **Inability to recognise potential dangers**
- **Can appear awkward or clumsy**
- **Can have difficulty concentrating**

Specific advice on addressing some of the effects of Dyspraxia

- Give clear and unambiguous instructions
- Always check whether the young person has understood an instruction
- Break down activities into manageable steps
- With some young people it might be necessary to avoid games and activities that rely heavily on coordinated movements
- Give regular encouragement and praise

Specific advice addressing the effects of general Mobility and Physical co-ordination difficulties

- Review the equipment you use - some items can be substituted to make games more accessible – a foam ball instead of a football can slow the pace of a ball game
- Introduce new rules – one touch football, tag team games
- Get in the experts – organisations like Disability Sport NI can give advice , deliver games/sports sessions and even lend equipment
- Introduce co-operative games and activities

Receptive Language Difficulties^{xiii}

Having poor, delayed or impaired language skills can impact on someone's social and emotional development. There are many different communication impairments and they can occur alone or with other difficulties (such as hearing loss).

A young person who has general receptive language difficulties may display the following:

- **Poor concentration**
- **Appear withdrawn**
- **Respond to non-verbal cues rather than responding to verbal instruction**
- **Provide answers which aren't relevant to the subject**
- **Repeat back what has been said to them**
- **Mask their difficulty by continuously talking**

Specific advice on addressing some of the effects of Receptive Language Difficulties

- **Keep background noise to a minimum**
- **Make sure you have the young person's full attention**
- **Emphasise key words when giving instructions**
- **Keep communication clear, simple and at a gentle pace**

Dyslexia^{xiv}

Approximately 5-10% of the population has Dyslexia. It affects someone's ability to read quickly and accurately. It can also hinder short term memory or mean that someone has difficulty in processing information. Young people with Dyslexia generally display:

- **Difficulty with recognising and remembering letter names**
- **Difficulty paying attention**
- **Poor short term/ long term auditory memory**
- **Difficulty with spelling, reading and writing**
- **Difficulty in sequencing events**
- **Prone to tiredness**
- **Often display behaviour problems due to frustration**

Difficult behaviour

Some people with a learning disability may demonstrate challenging behaviour. This may include over-reacting, tantrums, hitting or kicking out, throwing things or hurting themselves. For many people with a learning disability this can be a result of difficulty with communication and not being understood, it may be a sign of distress due to an unexpected change in routine, environment or in response to an event. It is not just a 'stage' that they will grow out of but requires consistent and appropriate support to manage it, together with support to develop and address communication needs.

References

- i Taken from Autism NI - [General Facts about Autism](#)
- ii Barron and Mulvany, 2005:20-23;
- iii [Mencap 'Facts about Learning Disability' 2011](#)
- iv [Mencap 'Facts about Learning Disability' 2011](#)
- v Material Adapted from:
 Millar, C. (2011) Basic Facts for Leaders Leaflets - 'Disability'. The Boys Brigade NI
- vi Adapted from Mencap UK
- vii Adapted from [Autism NI](#)
- viii Material Adapted from:
 Millar, C. (2011) Basic Facts for Leaders Leaflets 'Disability'. The Boys Brigade NI
- ix *ibid*
- x *ibid*
- xi *ibid*
- xii *ibid*
- xiii *ibid*
- xiv *ibid*

CHAPTER SEVEN

Working with young people with mental health issues

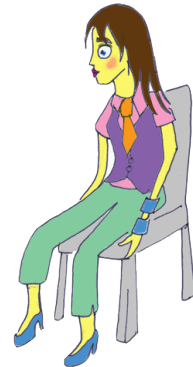
Introduction

You may be a youth worker who is working with a young person who tells you they are experiencing something that is affecting their mental health and well being such as bullying, stress, anger, depression, personal issues etc. You may have concerns about some of the behaviour that a young person is presenting with.



You may also know of a young person in your community that is experiencing a mental health issue who could benefit from being involved in a youth group. This section focuses on young people who have a mental health issue or problem. It presents demographics in relation to mental health, explains the varying needs and issues that young people may face and it offers practical advice on working with young people who have a mental health issue. It concludes with a list of resources that will help you in your work.

In the Republic of Ireland under the **Equal Status Acts 2000 and 2004**, it is unlawful to discriminate against a person on the grounds of their disability in the provision of goods and services. The definition of disability under the Equal Status Acts is broad. It includes physical, intellectual, learning, cognitive and emotional disabilities and a range of medical conditions. People with experience of mental health difficulties are covered by the disability ground.



In Northern Ireland the **Disability Discrimination Act 1995** and the **Equality (Disability) (Northern Ireland) Order 2000** gives disabled people rights in the areas of the provision of goods and services, education, sports, access to public facilities and accommodation and also in employment. Disability discrimination in education is covered by the **Special Education Needs and Disability (NI) order 2005 (SENDO), as amended**. SENDO applies to schools, education and library boards, amongst other further education bodies.

Terminology

This resource has been developed to be used by youth workers on the island of Ireland. At times it is necessary to make distinctions between our two jurisdictions and we had to choose a terminology to reflect this. We have chosen for the most part to use Northern Ireland (NI) and Republic of Ireland (ROI). At times we also use North and South. Additionally, where information is significantly different we have used coloured boxes:

Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland

As a youth leader you will most likely already be working with young people who have a mental health issue but you – and the young person – may not describe it as such. It may be described more particularly as depression, self-harm, mood swings, anxiety, stress, dietary issues, family problems etc. The following section will help you understand what is meant by mental health and mental health issues.

Good mental health is about having the skills to deal with everyday life – with relationships, with responsibilities and also with relaxing. When we feel confident, capable and able to cope in these situations we feel that we can live our life to the full and take on the challenges that we face on a regular basis. From time to time events in our life will cause us stress which may result in us feeling down. This is a natural reaction to difficult experiences such as the loss of someone close, being bullied or experiencing a setback in some part of our life. However if we have developed the skills and strategies to get us through these tough times we can learn from these experiences rather than allowing them to completely overwhelm us. We can do a lot of things on a daily basis to support our mental health. We are better able to cope with stress if we are physically healthy so our mental health can be improved by taking a number of practical steps, such as taking care of our diet, keeping physically fit, taking time out for ourselves, giving time to a goal, interest or hobby and spending time with people who make us feel good.



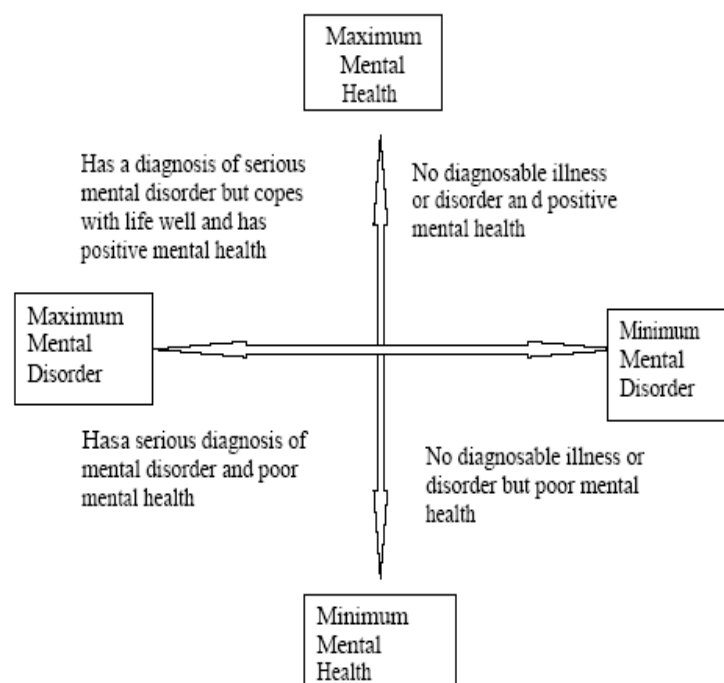
A **mental health issue,ⁱ or problem**, is where it interferes with a person's cognitive, emotional and/or social abilities, but to a lesser extent than a mental illness. Mental health problems are more common and less severe than mental illnesses, and generally of shorter duration. Although many young people may experience mental health issues, appropriate support can help them build resilience and overcome difficulties.

Mental illness is a clinical term for a diagnosed mental health issue such as clinical depression, body dysmorphia (leading to a severe eating disorder) or schizophrenia.

To understand your role in relation to working with someone with a mental health issue it is helpful to look at the continuum model that describes different possible situations that people might face in their life at different times.

The continuum model shows that a person can have no diagnosable illness but can have positive or negative mental health. This will depend on the circumstances that the person is in at any one time, for instance they may have had a bereavement, be facing a stressful time in school etc. which could put them in a situation where they are experiencing poor mental health. If things are going well however and the person is looking after their emotional, mental and physical health they may be in the good mental health quadrant.

Similarly, someone can have a diagnosed disorder but be experiencing positive or negative mental health depending on the supports, treatment and appropriate interventions that are in place. Youth work can play a significant role in offering timely supports.



Adapted from K Tudor (1996) "Mental health Promotion: Paradigms and Practice"

Given that people experience mental health problems in different ways and at different times in their life it is possible for someone to move within all the quadrants.

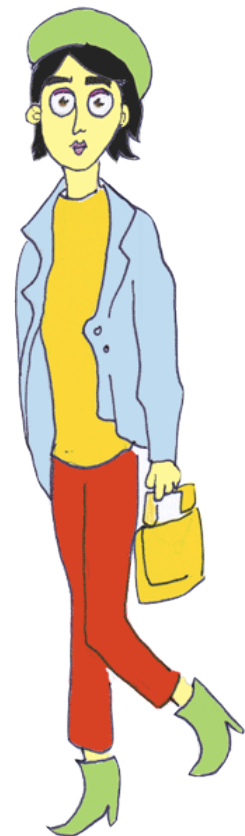
Recognising the changing nature of mental health can help us to look after our own well being and to play an understanding and supportive role to those who are experiencing poor mental health.

Stigma associated with mental health

In Ireland (North and South) mental health has traditionally been a topic not openly discussed. Due to the history of how people with poor mental health were treated and branded as outsiders, services and supports for mental health have been stigmatised. When discussing issues relating to mental health and well being, people often think of it only in the context of mental illness, particularly adults. Stigma surrounding all aspects of mental health, therefore, can be a major factor for young people accessing services or telling others how they feel. Stigma can inhibit an early diagnosis.

In **Northern Ireland (NI)** two thirds of 16-19 year olds responding to a survey did not want people to know if they had a mental health problem, although, 70% said they would avail of services if they were experiencing a mental health issue.ⁱⁱ

In the **Republic of Ireland (ROI)** a number of agencies have started addressing the issue of mental health and young people. They have shown that young people are keen to



explore how to improve their own mental health as well as improving mental health services and supports.

Simple approaches, such as opening up discussions around mental health, making it part of normal and ongoing conversations, and passing on relevant and up-to-date information, can have a positive impact on how mental health is viewed by young people.

Demographics

Evidence suggests that 20% of children will develop a significant mental health problem.ⁱⁱⁱ This can be understood as being that, at any given time, one in five young people are experiencing serious emotional distress. However, the numbers of those that will need highly specialised support delivered by a multi-disciplinary team and in acute cases, hospitalisation is roughly 2% of the population. As described earlier, the positive role that youth workers can play in supporting the 20% in distress is significant.

However, **Republic of Ireland** research shows that of the 20%, only a small minority are in contact with anyone from a helping agency.

Headstrong's pilot of 'It's My World' survey (in 2008) which asked a series of questions relating to young people's mental health and wellbeing, indicated that one in five young people have no-one to talk to about their problems and only 40% felt that they could cope well with problems. Furthermore, when young people do talk to someone research shows that it is mostly likely to a friend (63%).^{iv} Youth leaders need to let young people know that they are there to support young people through a mental health issue.



Similarly, 'Prince's Trust' reports carried out in the UK stated that 12% felt that life was meaningless, 47% were often or always stressed and 37% were often or always anxious. The main reasons for this were family relations and relationships with friends.^v

In 2008 the **Republic of Ireland** had the 4th highest rate of youth suicide (15-24 yrs) in the EU^{vi} and almost half of all presentations in Irish hospitals resulting from deliberate self-harm in 2005 were by people under 20 years of age.

In **Northern Ireland** 15-19 year olds are one of the main high risk groups for suicide and young people aged 15-25 are most likely to self-harm. Between 2000 and 2010 there has been a 69% increase in recorded suicides in Northern Ireland^{vii}.

Northern Ireland is a region emerging from conflict which impacts on the mental health of young people, particularly in areas of social deprivation.

Other factors such as child poverty and the impact of the economic downturn are likely to have an impact on young people's mental health, particularly with regards to career progression and job opportunities.

For instance, in a recent survey conducted in **Northern Ireland** it was found that 50% of people between the ages of 16-25 who were unemployed had experienced mental health problems triggered by joblessness. More than one fifth admitted to self-harming, one in three suffered from insomnia and a fifth had panic attacks. 15% said they were depressed all or most of the time.^{viii}



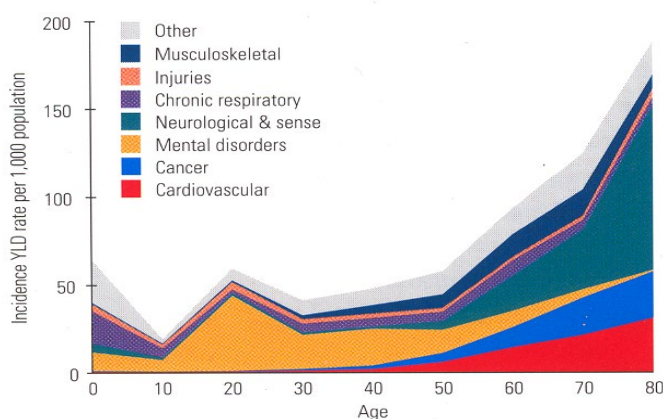
Needs and issues for young people with mental health problems

Mental health issues aren't necessarily long-term. If a problem occurs after a traumatic event or experience, if offered prompt and appropriate support, many problems can be dealt with. However, delays in getting support because of stigma, lack of knowledge about services or a lack of suitable services being available can hinder a fast recovery from a mental health issue.

Adolescence is a critical time of development in terms of social and emotional well-being. Youth is not just a passing phase where young people learn to be adults. Young people have to negotiate this time to explore who they are and also develop the skills and knowledge which will support them in adulthood. Challenges in developing a sense of identity during this period can pose particular questions for young people which impact on their mental health.

It is also during this phase of development, particularly mid-teens to early twenties that any underlying mental health issues are likely to emerge for the first time. An Australian study revealed that mental health is in fact the primary health issue for young people between the ages of 10 and 30, with mental health concerns peaking at age 20. See the chart below.

Figure 6 Incident YLD Rates per 1,000 Population by Age and Broad Disease Grouping, Victoria 1996



YLD = years lost to disability^{ix}

This chapter was developed with input from Elaine Kelly (Open Your Mind - a partnership project between NUS-USI and MindWise), Kevin O'Hagan and Siobhan Brennan (NYCI's National Youth Health Programme) for 'Access All Areas – a Diversity Toolkit for the Youth Work Sector' published by NYCI and Youthnet 2012

Risk factors and mental health

Life experiences affect mental health which puts certain groups at higher risk than others.

- In a sample study conducted by 'Open Your Mind' project amongst students in **Northern Ireland**, college/ university work was the main factor having a negative impact on mental health. Stress/ pressure/ anxiety was also identified as a factor leading to poor mental health followed by alcohol/drug abuse, family problems and relationship issues, and bullying/ peer pressure
- Young people in Northern Ireland with a Learning Disability are more likely to have a mental health problem
- Young asylum seekers and refugees have been shown to have higher levels of stress and anxiety including post traumatic stress disorder
- Young people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) have been shown to have higher instances of mental health issues.^x
- The highest rates of suicide are recorded amongst males from the Traveller Community. The rates are 6 times that of settled Irish males.^{xi}

See the chapters on 'working with young Travellers' and 'working with young LGBT people' in this Toolkit for more information.

If young people are not supported these issues can snowball, leading to poor transition into adulthood, education and employment and affecting their ability to develop and maintain relationships. Timely support can help them overcome problems and



This chapter was developed with input from Elaine Kelly (Open Your Mind - a partnership project between NUS-USI and MindWise), Kevin O'Hagan and Siobhan Brennan (NYCI's National Youth Health Programme) for 'Access All Areas – a Diversity Toolkit for the Youth Work Sector' published by NYCI and Youthnet 2012

build resilience; thus supporting them to develop problem solving skills that will help them face future challenges.

Young people facing mental health challenges may also need support in other areas of their life; in their relationships, family life, education, employment and accommodation.

Young people living with a family member with a mental health issue may also need additional supports as they can often assume the role of carer, particularly in instances of parental mental illness.

In many cases young people may confide in a youth worker with whom they have developed a trusting relationship with. Youth workers can then assist young people to seek appropriate care and support from qualified health professionals, if required.

Help seeking behaviour

Many young people are reluctant to seek help for mental health issues. Young people may not want to admit that something is wrong, they may be fearful of the unknown, they may not understand the nature of mental illness or they fear being labelled. These pressures mean that young people generally do not seek help early and their issues may only come to light as a result of a crisis.

Young people like to attend places that are informal, open during the



evenings, drop-in and young person friendly rather than appointment based. Services like freephone helplines and signposting to relevant services that are available at night is important for young people. Peer support in schools and youth clubs from peer educators and peer mentors has also been shown to be of value in addressing mental health issues.

Not knowing what services are available, barriers to accessing supports or services, and concerns for confidentiality can also impact on a young person's help seeking behaviour. Many young people have reported that they felt they had no-one and nowhere to turn for support when an emerging mental health issue arose. Some also reported having negative experiences in seeking support for the first time which made them reluctant to seek help again. It is important to keep in mind that the first time a young person seeks support may be the last if they find the person they talk to is not responsive to their needs.

In a survey conducted by 'Open Your Mind' in **Northern Ireland** a GP or family doctor was the main form of contact with regards to mental health problems. Friends were second and family members third. Other sources of support included counsellors and social workers.

Entry points into support and services

A young person with a mental health issue is likely to come into contact with a range of potential services and supports, including community-based supports such as youth work organisations. However, if a young person is seeking help for a mental health issue they will more than likely approach someone who they have a trusting relationship with, and this person may not have specialist mental health training.^{xii}



If you or a colleague is approached you may be able to provide immediate mental health support while starting the process of referring them on to mental health specialists - including counsellors or psychologists - or by referring them on for a further assessment if that is what is necessary.

You can also play a more preventative role. Being able to recognise early signs of mental distress among young people puts you in a position to offer early interventions, such as informal support, activities to help build confidence or programmes offering personal development opportunities. This level of support is often enough to help a young person develop the resilience to get them through tough times.

One of the key points to remember is that for many young people, this may be the first time they have opened up to anyone about issues they might be dealing with. In this instance, listening is one of the most critical skills a worker can possess. Young people do not necessarily want solutions but rather an opportunity to express to someone what they are currently experiencing.



Referral Pathways

The typical pathway into mental health services is either through the young person's GP or through Accident and Emergency services if it is a crisis. Traditionally, there has not been a strong relationship between mental health professionals and youth workers therefore youth workers may find it difficult to make a referral. However, they should support the young person and their family to access these services.

Making yourself aware of the services in your area, including locally provided services (including those provided by voluntary organisations), is an important task for any youth worker. This includes becoming aware of any

programmes/counselling services or support groups available. Find out how to refer a young person to services and supports and how to assist them in accessing them. These services may also be interested to know how to refer young people to your project.

Accessing services^{xiii}

Youth workers can support young people to access specialist services by providing practical support, such as helping them plan how they will get to their appointments or attending services with a young person if they do not feel confident enough to go on their own. Before accessing a service a youth worker should explain to the young person what to expect of a service (explain that not all services are youth friendly), and in turn what might be expected from them (some services demand that the person is substance clear). The following list outlines some of the barriers that exist for young people accessing services so that you can support them through it.

Barriers in accessing services:

- **Young people may be reluctant to access services if they are put on a waiting list or asked to make an appointment several weeks in advance**
- **The symptoms associated with mental health issues can result in young people feeling hopeless and helpless and this can reduce their chances of attending appointments and participating in assessment procedures**
- **Young people with mental health issues are often experiencing severe crisis, transition and upheaval in their life in addition to the challenges of adolescence**
- **Young people may face barriers from service providers if their behaviour is seen as 'disruptive' or if they have substance issues. A young person may be turned away from services without due consideration being given to their circumstances or alternatives for support**

The following section outlines the mental health service provision relating to young people in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Mental health services (Republic of Ireland)

The current system of mental health services and supports for young people in the Republic of Ireland is fragmented, difficult to negotiate and emphasises a medical model of treatment for mental health issues. In 2008, 247 children under 18 years of age were admitted to adult psychiatric wards due to lack of age appropriate services for young people. According to the 2008 CAMH's (Child and Adolescent Mental Health) first Annual Report there were 49 teams in place, staffed at 66.2% of the recommended level for these teams, to work with young people up to the age of 16.^{xiv} Between the ages of 16 and 18 young people fall between CAMH's and adult services thereby making it extremely difficult to access support unless individual health teams make an exception.

In describing what they would like from services young people have said that they would like:

- service providers to treat them with respect and understanding
- services provided in a welcoming and relaxed environment designed with young people in mind
- services that are not stigmatised and that their attendance at them will not lead to them being labelled
- services that are available when they need them
- services that are easy to access both logistically and in making an appointment
- services that are confidential and affordable (preferably free of charge)

Mental health services (Northern Ireland)

CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) in Northern Ireland are provided through a four-tiered model which includes a network of all children's services.

- Tier 4 Specialist residential, day-patient and out-patient services, severe eating disorders, severe affective disorder, severe anxiety/emotional disorder and severe obsessive compulsive psychotic disorder
- Tier 3 Multi-disciplinary teams that aim to see young people with more complex health problems
- Tier 2 Specialist mental health professionals working on their own
- Tier 1 School nurses, health visitors, social workers, teachers and youth workers, main role not in mental health

The Bamford report in 2006 reported the service in Northern Ireland is under resourced and lacking in strategic direction. It suggested a number of improvements to services in Northern Ireland. For example, the development of a specialist eating disorder team in all areas.

There has also been a new purpose built children and adolescent patient facility located in South Belfast.

Some further developments in crisis intervention have occurred but these haven't been equally distributed in all areas in Northern Ireland. Services that exist include crisis intervention, alcohol services, eating disorder services and independent advocacy.

CAMHS services in Northern Ireland have been heavily reliant on the community and voluntary sector.

Developing inclusive practice for working with young people with a mental health issue

The following is some practical advice which can be adopted within your organisation to make it a more supportive environment. It will also help you deal better with the concerns you may have for the mental health of the young people using your service.

Encourage positive mental health

Promoting positive mental health within your project, club or service can be done in many and creative ways in conjunction with the young people who access your organisation. Many of the activities provided to young people through youth work promote youth mental health indirectly and help develop 'preventative' or 'protective' assets in young people by helping to develop resilience. While this work does not replace the need for dedicated mental health promotion it does show how mental health promotion fits into a holistic youth work approach.

- **Providing a safe space for young people to hang out**
- **Running activities that develop inter-personal and intra-personal skills**
- **Promoting life skills and self-care programmes** - Life skills such as learning a new skill or competence builds confidence. Self-care builds independence and teaches about everyday coping strategies.
- **Providing opportunities to develop a trusting relationship with adult youth workers**
- **Providing activities that are physically active** - Recreation creates opportunities for encouraging activity, builds good habits around how to spend leisure time and gives opportunities for relaxation.

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Promote positive mental health messages

Opening up discussions around mental health and making it part of normal conversation can have a positive impact on how mental health is viewed by young people and how they access support.

See it in the context of your ongoing programme of activities

Promoting positive mental health can be done through many of the programmes and activities you already provide. Young people have identified a number of positive factors that can help promote positive mental health:^{xv}

- Talking to someone about how you feel
- Relaxation/ stress management techniques
- Eating healthily
- Exercise
- Hobbies
- Limiting alcohol use
- Visiting family/ friends



You can also be more proactive in promoting positive mental health by:

- Running programmes with a positive mental health theme
- Encouraging help seeking behaviour
- Making information on help lines and mental health websites available
- Having positive mental health literature available
- Inviting speakers in to discuss various aspects of youth mental health

Look at your whole organisation approach

- It's a cliché but first impressions last, so try and make it as easy as possible for a young person to make first contact with your organisation. Whether that be online, over the phone or the first time they call in. Talk to young people already using your service about how you could make it a more relaxed and welcoming environment for all young people
- Train all staff, including office support and caretaking staff, in how to listen to young people
- Consider how flexible your service is to the needs of young people, how easy it is for them to make an appointment with you or to talk to someone when they need to

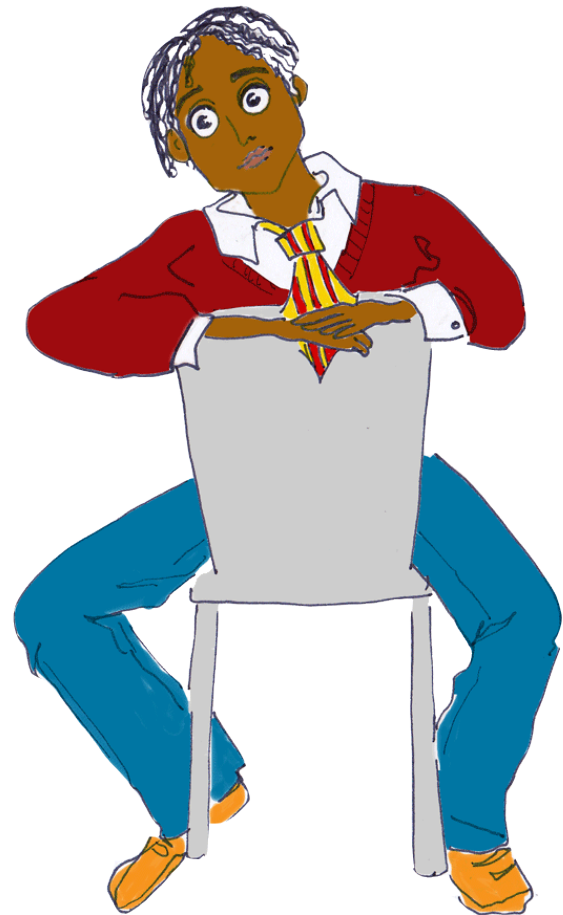
Staff training

There are several skills that workers can develop through training which will help them in their supportive relationships with young people going through emotionally distressing times. Skills in listening, identifying and understanding mental health issues, solution focused therapies and anger management are all examples of skills that youth workers find useful.

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In the **Republic of Ireland** there are many training courses available which will provide a basic introduction and proficiency in these skills including training provided through the National Youth Council of Ireland's Youth Health Programme (See useful contacts for full programme). ASIST training, which supports people to make an intervention with people who are suicidal, is available free of charge through the NYCI, Health Service Executive (HSE) and Aware.

Likewise, in **Northern Ireland** there are many courses available delivered by voluntary and community organisations, Health Trusts and other charities. ASIST training is available through the Health Trusts and a number of leading Mental Health Charities (for more information contact the Public Health Agency). Open Your Mind (a partnership project between the National Union of Students – Union of Students in Ireland (NUS-USI) and Mindwise) also provide a range of accredited courses including OCN level 2 training in 'Understanding Stress and Stress Management Techniques' and 'Understanding Mental Health'.



Policy

One of the key concerns for young people in discussing a mental health issue is confidentiality. Having a clear policy which is explained to young people when they first access your service is the best way to make them aware of your responsibilities in relation to their welfare and safety. Other areas for consideration include your referral policy, out of hour's supports, staff training and peer support to staff.

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Follow Up

Sometimes young people with mental health issues can find it difficult to consistently engage with a service. Allowing them some flexibility to re-engage and following up with them after a period of absence can help keep a thread of support available for the young person involved.

Include the family and other key relationships

Young people have many assets which help them build resilience and that support them through tough times. Included in these assets are young people's pre-existing relationships with their friends and family. Helping a young person identify these and others they have a positive or supportive relationship with, is a key task in supporting them through a difficult time. They may be reluctant to tell others what they are going through but having the support of others outside of your organisation will be important in the long run. You may have to provide some information to the family to help them understand how to best help the young person.



Network

Find out about local services or supports for young people or their families. Developing a relationship with existing services, either statutory or voluntary, will make it easier to find the appropriate supports for young people going through a difficult time.

In developing a good rapport with these services/supports some of the opportunities you could explore together are:

- Develop a referral system between your organisation and an external partner
- Have a skills swap or share the cost of training between organisations
- Co-ordinate your services better
- Explore opportunities for outreach
- Have appropriate posters and leaflets available in your meeting space



Running a mental health promotion programme

A mental health promotion programme consists of the following elements:^{xvi}

- **Mental health promotion programmes should focus on the wider aspects of mental health promotion and view the young person in a holistic way. For example programmes designed to prevent suicide may be detrimental to young people if not implemented within a structured and supportive environment. It would be more appropriate to develop programmes that help young people to cope with stress and anxiety.**
- **The content and presentation of mental health promotion programmes should be relevant to the context of young people's everyday lives.**
- **The focus of the programme should be on modifying known risk and resilience factors/protective factors. The programme should be directed towards influencing a combination of several risk or resilience/protective factors.**
- **Mental health promotion programmes should intervene at a range of different times, rather than a once off basis.**
- **There are a range of programmes that are based on skill development and competencies which can have a positive impact on young people's mental health such as:**
 - Problem solving skills
 - Assertiveness Skills
 - Self Esteem
 - Goal Setting
 - Decision Making
 - Anger management
 - Coping Skill
 - Relationship enhancement

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- Social Support Identification
- Emotional Intelligence
- In addition, there are a range of programmes designed to address specific topics which can impact on one's mental health such as: Substance misuse, Nutrition, Physical activity, Bullying, Sexual health.

Responding to early warning signs^{xvii}

Giving young people the opportunity to speak about how they are feeling, providing peer support to young people and promoting a positive message of mental health can all help young people to build resilience to face life's challenges. However, there will be times when young people experience poor mental health and where your timely and appropriate support and listening skills will be necessary.

Some general signs for poor mental health to look out for are:

- Variation in mood
- Feelings of anxiety
- Disturbed sleep
- Low self-esteem
- Loneliness
- Tearfulness
- Short-temperedness
- Negative feelings about the future
- Change in weight/ appearance
- Changes in personal circumstances (e.g. parental separation, pending court appearance, bereavement, questioning their sexual orientation, relationship break up etc)

Early warning signs of more serious mental illnesses often appear during adolescence. In your work with young people you may notice some of these signs. Early intervention in mental health issues is extremely important. Early intervention is likely to result in more effective treatments, less trauma for the young person and a reduction in the severity of the mental health issue.



Diagnosis and treatment can only be carried out by a qualified health professional so it is important that you encourage the young person to see a doctor or mental health service as soon as possible. Be aware that due to waiting lists you may need to support the young person for a time before they can access a service. Therefore, you may need to look to some of the resources listed in this chapter for information in how to best help the young person while they are waiting for their appointment.

Common Warning Signs...^{xviii}

...for Depression

- Persistent feelings of sadness
- Losing interest in activities previously enjoyed
- Losing appetite
- Difficulties sleeping or staying in bed for a long time
- Feeling tired, lacking energy or motivation, or alternatively feeling anxious
- Feeling bad, worthless or self critical
- Negative pessimistic or gloomy thoughts

...Bi-Polar Disorder

People with bi-polar disorder experience extreme mood swings.

At the low end of the mood scale they may experience:

- **Difficulty concentrating or making decisions**
- **Loss of interest in things they usually enjoy**
- **Sleep problems**

At the high end they may:

- **Talk very fast about ideas which they do not follow through**
- **Feel little need for sleep**
- **Have an inflated sense of power or confidence**
- **Behave in a reckless manner**

...Eating Disorders

- **Preoccupation with body weight and control over weight and food**
- **For anorexia: preoccupation with controlling the amount of food eaten**
- **For bulimia: feeling out of control with the amount of food eaten**

...Self Harm

- **Deliberately hurting body, e.g. punching a brick wall**
- **Self-cutting, e.g. cutting upper arms or wrists**
- **Overdosing on prescribed or illegal drugs**
- **Self-burning with cigarettes or lighters**

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...Suicide

People who are considering suicide may:

- Feel hopeless
- Write or talk about suicide
- Have an overwhelming sense of guilt, shame or reflection
- Lack interest in the future
- Give away their possessions or put their affairs in order
- Self-harm

...Schizophrenia

- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Not sleeping well
- Neglecting appearance or hygiene
- Deteriorating performance at school or work
- Difficulty concentrating, following conversations or remembering
- Talking or writing about things that don't make sense
- Being extremely anxious, panicky or depressed
- Reacting inappropriately
- Fearing, without reason, that others are monitoring or watching them or planning them harm

...Anxiety Disorders

- Persistent worry and fear, out of proportion with the situation
- Social isolation
- Poor sleep
- Inability to relax
- Avoidance of feared situations

...Psychosis

- social withdrawal
- loss of energy
- reduced concentration or attention; memory problems;
- feeling thoughts have been speeded up or slowed down
- emotional changes, e.g. depressed mood, anxiety, irritability, anger
- sleep disturbance
- suspiciousness
- skipping school or work
- 'something not right'

If you notice some of these early warning signs and feel concerned for a young person, approach them sensitively and calmly. Remember they might not be able to articulate what is going on for them or might not have noticed these changes themselves. You can further inform yourself by approaching the appropriate services included in the resource section of this chapter.

If you have networked successfully with other services they may be able to offer you further support.

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If you choose to act on a concern you will have to engage the young person's family as their doctor will have to refer them onto statutory services. However, in some communities there may be counselling or other supports available through voluntary organisations which will not require a referral from a GP.

If you feel the young person is facing a crisis they can enter the service through the Accident and Emergency unit in your local hospital.

With all of these options young people or their families may still need support in accessing these services or keeping appointments.



Checklist 7 - How accessible is your organisation to young people with mental health issues?

This checklist can help you to identify how you can improve your service for young people with mental health issues.

Public image

How we present our service to our community

• Our service actively considers its youth 'friendliness'	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We state that we have a mental health promotion programme in our literature and when communicating with schools etc.	YES	PARTLY	NO

Programme planning and delivery

Our programmes are designed and delivered to include the diverse needs and identities of young people with a mental health issue

• Our service is flexible to accommodate the needs of young people with mental health issues	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We have a mental health promotion programme in place	YES	PARTLY	NO

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- We consider the suitability of materials prior to using them with particular groups (e.g. we consider literacy, cultural sensitivity, personal circumstances etc) **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

Promotion :

- Our service has youth mental health promotion material available and on display in our project **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**
- Our service has identified local mental health services and supports and developed links with them **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

Connecting young people to services:

- Our service has developed an understanding of the referral process into statutory service **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**
- Our service has identified local mental health services and supports and developed links with them **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

Professional development

Our staff and volunteers are trained and supported to deliver an inclusive youth service

- Staff and volunteers have an understanding of mental health issues **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

• Staff and volunteers know about the early warning signs of mental illness	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Staff and volunteers have effective skills in engaging young people	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Staff and volunteers have trained in mental health promotion	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Staff and volunteers speak openly about mental health topics	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Staff and volunteers promote positive messages about help seeking behaviour	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Staff and volunteers receive training in managing challenging behaviours	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Staff and volunteers receive support and supervision (e.g. team meetings, one-to-one formal supervision etc)	YES	PARTLY	NO

Policies and procedures

We have a written commitment to deliver an equal and inclusive service

• Our service has a critical incident plan	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We have a mental health promotion policy	YES	PARTLY	NO

We have a policy that covers:

➤ Drugs and alcohol	YES	PARTLY	NO
➤ Bullying	YES	PARTLY	NO
➤ Equality (including sexual harassment)	YES	PARTLY	NO
➤ Child protection	YES	PARTLY	NO

Participation

We make sure we include the voices of young people at all levels of our youth service

• Our service consults with young people about how mental health issues can affect their engagement with youth services and on how youth services can support young people with mental health issues	YES	PARTLY	NO
-

Useful contacts (Republic of Ireland)

Mental health (ROI)

Aware

Phone: 1890 303302

Website: www.aware.ie

Aware Supports those who are directly affected by depression and operates a helpline from 10am to 10pm Monday to Wednesday and 10am to 1am Thursday to Sunday. The Aware helpline is a non-directive listening service for people affected by depression, either as sufferers or as family and friends. The helpline offers a non-judgmental listening ear to people who may be distressed or worried, or just need someone to talk to. You can also call the helpline if you are worried about someone who may be depressed or for information about depression or Aware services.

Bodywhys (The Eating Disorder Association of Ireland)

Phone: 1890 200 444

Website: www.bodywhys.ie

Bodywhys core services centre on providing confidential, non-judgmental support for people affected by eating disorders. The helpline is open for two hours each weekday. Callers can access names of local health professionals, details of all Bodywhys support services and other voluntary organisations where appropriate. Bodywhys also offers support groups, including an online support group and email support.

Childline**Phone:** 1800 66 66 66**Website:** www.childline.ie

Childline is 24-hour service for children and young people up to 18 years of age.

Childline is open 365 days a year (even Christmas Day!). It offers support to young people through the Childline listening service over the phone. You can call Childline for a chat or to talk about any problems you might have. Calls to Childline are confidential and they don't have caller ID or trace any calls. It won't cost you anything to call Childline and their number won't show up on the phone bill.

Teen-Line Ireland**Freephone:** 1800 833 634**Website:** www.teenline.ie

Teenline Ireland is a national helpline for teenagers. Teen-Line provides a listening and support service 7 days a week. They also provide talks to schools and youth groups. Helpline is open:

Mondays 8pm - 11pm

Tuesdays 8pm - 11pm

Wednesdays 3pm - 6pm

Thursdays 9pm - 12 midnight

Fridays 9pm - 12 midnight

Saturdays 8pm - 12 midnight

Sundays 8pm - 11pm

Let Someone Know**Website:**www.letsomeoneknow.ie

'Let Someone Know' is an interactive website designed to support and give information directly to young people on issues relating to mental health. It is a HSE supported initiative.

Samaritans**Phone:** 1850 609090**Website:** www.samaritans.org

Samaritans is a confidential emotional support service for anyone. The service is available 24 hours a day for people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those which may lead to suicide.

Shine Ireland**Phone:** 1890 621631**Website:** www.shineonline.ie

Shine Ireland is the national organisation dedicated to upholding the rights and addressing the needs of all those affected by enduring mental illness including, but not exclusively, schizophrenia, schizo-affective disorder and bi-polar disorder. The helpline is open 9am to 4pm Monday to Friday. Shine Ireland runs support groups, provides counselling and has a resource centre in Dublin.

GROW**Phone:** 1890 474 474**Website:** www.grow.ie

GROW is a mental health organisation which helps people who live with or are recovering from mental health problems. GROW has a national network of more than 130 groups throughout the country. Members attend a weekly meeting lasting about two hours. Members provide mutual support in undertaking certain tasks that encourage a healthy change in thinking, behaviour and/or relationships. Each group is supported by a fieldworker, many of whom have experienced GROW first hand.

Irish Advocacy Network**Phone:** 047 - 38918**Website:**www.irishadvocacynetwork.com

IAN is a growing network providing support and advocacy to those using mental health services.

National Youth Health Programme**National Youth Council of Ireland**

3 Montague Street

Dublin 2

Phone: 01 – 4784122**Website:** www.youthhealth.ie

The National Youth Health Programme is a partnership between the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI), the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA). It runs the following training courses on youth mental health:

- ASIST
- Safetalk
- Mindfulness
- Mindout
- Good Habits of Mind

Information (Republic of Ireland)**Spunout****Website:** www.spunout.ie

Spunout provides information, support and advocacy opportunities to young people throughout Ireland. Their website provides hundreds of fact sheets on all aspects of youth health and culture including mental health, suicide and sexual health as well as a searchable database of help contacts, moderated discussion forums and an advocacy platform for young people to be heard.

Headstrong**Phone:** 01 - 6607343**Website:** www.headstrong.ie

Headstrong is a non-profit organisation supporting young people's mental health in Ireland. Headstrong works with communities and statutory services to empower young people to develop the skills, self-confidence and resilience to cope with mental health challenges. Their vision is to give every young person in Ireland somewhere to turn to and someone to talk to. They also work with the government, media and direct community outreach to change the way Ireland thinks about youth mental health. Headstrong supports youth mental health by three ways

- Service Development (Jigsaw)
- Research
- Advocacy

Reachout**Website:** www.reachout.com

Reachout is a web-based mental health information service. It provides information on a broad range of issues relating to mental health.

Suicide and Bereavement (ROI)

Console**Freephone:** 1800 201 890**Website:** www.console.ie

Console supports and helps people bereaved through suicide. The national freephone helpline provides a confidential listening service for people bereaved through suicide. This service provides callers with the space and safety to speak about their loss. Callers are given the opportunity to express how they are feeling and coping, or not coping, as can sometimes be the reality. Callers will be offered contact details of counselling services

and support groups as near as possible to the location of the caller.

Useful contacts (Northern Ireland)

Mental Health Awareness and Support (NI)

Action Mental Health

Mourne House
Knockbracken Healthcare Park
Saintfield Road
Belfast, BT8 8BH

Phone: 028 - 9040 3726

Website: www.amh.org.uk

Action Mental Health aims to enhance the quality of life and employability of people with mental health needs or a learning disability

Mindwise

Wyndhurst
Knockbracken HealthCare Park
Saintfield Road
Belfast, BT8 8BH

Phone: 028 - 9040 2323

info@mindwisenv.org

MindWise (formerly known as Rethink in Northern Ireland) is one of the largest voluntary sector providers of mental health services in the province, we support approximately 1500 people a year and together we work to ensure that all those at risk of, and affected by severe mental illness and other mental health difficulties have choice, hope, support and the opportunity to recover a better quality of life

NIAMH

80 University Street
Belfast, BT7 1HE

Phone: 028 - 9032 8474

Email: info@niamhwellbeing.org

Web: www.niamh.co.uk

Niamh, the Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health, is the longest established mental health organisation in Northern Ireland. Niamh is a group consisting of three elements, Compass, Beacon and Carecall

Threshold

432 Antrim Road
Belfast, BT15 3GB

Phone: 028 - 9087 1313

Email: info@threshold-services.co.uk

Web: www.threshold-services.co.uk

Threshold is a key provider of specialist therapeutic services for children, adolescents, adults and the elderly who suffer from mental health problems

Mind Yourself

15 Magazine Street
Derry/Londonderry, BT48 6HH

Phone: 028 -7126 3461

Email: mindyourself@tiscali.co.uk

Self-help mental health organisation made up of peer advocates in mental health who participate in, and consult with and for, decision making bodies

Depression/ Bi polar (NI)

Northern Ireland Agoraphobia and Anxiety Society

29-31 Lisburn Road,
Belfast, BT9 7AA

Phone: 028 - 9023 5170

Web: www.praxiscaregroup.org.uk

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Aware Defeat Depression

Philip House,
123-137 York Street
Belfast, BT15 1AB

Phone: 028 - 9032 1734

10 Clarendon Street
Derry/ Londonderry, BT48 7ET

Phone: 028 - 7126 0602

Helpline: 0845 120 2961

Email: help@aware-ni.org

Website: www.aware-ni.org.uk

Aware Defeat Depression is the only charity in Northern Ireland which works exclusively with and for people with depression. Most of us have an understanding of the illness through caring for someone affected or from personal experience. We believe that the people who use our services should have a say in how they are developed and delivered, so we employ people with depression at every level in the organisation, including the Board of Directors.

STEER

13 Pump Street
Derry/ Londonderry, BT48 6JG

Phone: 028 - 7127 9995

Email: info@steer.eu.com

Website:

www.steermentalhealth.com

STEER is a voluntary sector organisation that provides a range of community mental health services for adults

MDF (Bipolar Disorder Charity)

Email: mdfbelfast@googlemail.com

Website: www.mdf.org.uk

Suicide and Self-harm (NI)

Lighthouse

187 Duncairn Gardens
Belfast, BT15 2GF

Phone: 028 - 9075 5070

Helpline: 0808 808 0000

Email: info@lighthouseireland.org

Website: www.lighthouseireland.org

Lighthouse (previously known as PIPS: Public Prevention of Suicide and Self-Harm) is an organisation committed to providing support services to families who have lost loved ones and people in crisis

RAYS Crisis Centre

16 Woodvale Road,
Belfast, BT13 3BS

Phone: 028 - 9031 9333

Reduce Your Risk of Suicide and Self-Harm (RAYS) group is based on the Shankill Road, Belfast and provides support to families coping with the trauma of a loved one taking their own life

Niamh Louise Foundation

Western House,
3 Dungannon Road
Coalisland,
Tyrone, BT71 4HP

Dungannon Office

Phone: 028 - 8722 6217

Email: info@niamhlouisefoundation.co.uk

Website: www.niamhlouisefoundation.co.uk

The Níamh Louise Foundation is a charity recently formed to create awareness on suicide prevention, intervention and post-intervention for the families in the areas of Tyrone and Armagh in Northern Ireland.

Zest NI

15a Queen Street
Derry/ Londonderry, BT48 7EQ

Phone: 028 71 26 6999

Email: zestni@yahoo.co.uk

Website: www.zestni.org

Zest exists to address the problems which lead to suicidal behaviour and direct and/or indirect self-harm in young people and adults. Zest is a voluntary organisation that will give supportive care to people suffering emotional pain and hurt

24/7 Helplines (NI)**Samaritans**

Phone: 0845 790 9090

Website: www.samaritans.org

Saneline

Phone: 0845 678 000

Lifeline

Phone: 0808 808 8000

Website: www.lifelinehepline.info

Frank (Drugs Helpline)

Phone: 0800 77 6600

Email: frank@talktofrank.com

Drinkline

Phone: 0800 917 8282

Severe Mental Illness (NI)

Mindwise

Wyndhurst,
Knockbracken Healthcare Park,
Saintfield Road,
Belfast, BT8 8BH

Phone: 028 - 90402323

Email: info@mindwisenv.org

Website: www.mindwisenv.org

MindWise works to support those at risk of, and affected by, severe mental illness and mental health difficulties

Useful Websites (NI)

Minding Your Head

Website: www.mindingyourhead.info

Heads Away Just Say

Website: www.heads-away-just-say.com

Suicide Awareness

Website: www.stampoutsuicide.org.uk

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https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/youthaction/pages/190/attachments/original/1449108844/opening_doors.pdf?1449108844
- ^{xiv} Child and Adolescent mental health (CAMH) Teams Annual Report (2008). HSE
- ^{xv} Open Your Mind Project (NUS-USI)
- ^{xvi} Adapted from ‘Good Habits of Mind’, a mental health promotion initiative for those working with young people in out-of-school settings developed by the National Youth Health Programme, NYCI 2004
- ^{xvii} YAPA and the Nepean Access Project Reference Group for the Nepean Better Futures Strategy (2006) Opening Doors “A Do It Yourself “Access and Equity Manual For working with young people. NSW Department of Community Services.
https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/youthaction/pages/190/attachments/original/1449108844/opening_doors.pdf?1449108844
- ^{xviii} Ibid

This chapter was developed with input from Elaine Kelly (Open Your Mind - a partnership project between NUS-USI and MindWise), Kevin O’Hagan and Siobhan Brennan (NYCI’s National Youth Health Programme) for ‘Access All Areas – a Diversity Toolkit for the Youth Work Sector’ published by NYCI and Youthnet 2012

CHAPTER EIGHT

Working with young people involved in the Juvenile Justice System

“The most basic of all human needs is the need to understand and be understood.

The best way to understand people is to listen to them.

They may forget what you said, but they will never forget how you made them feel.”

Aristotle (384-322 BC) - Greek philosopher

Introduction

This section focuses on young people involved in the Juvenile Justice System. It outlines the varying needs and issues of young people who have become involved in, or are at risk of becoming involved in, offending behaviour. It explains how the Juvenile Justice System works and it offers practical advice. It concludes with a list of contacts that will help you in your work with young people who have become involved in the Juvenile Justice System.



It is important that young people attending Youth Diversion Projects or other specialised services are included and supported to stay involved in other community-based youth groups.

Terminology

This resource has been developed to be used by youth workers on the island of Ireland. At times it is necessary to make distinctions between our two jurisdictions and we had to choose a terminology to reflect this. We have chosen for the most part to use Northern Ireland (NI) and Republic of Ireland (ROI). At times we also use North and South. Additionally, for clarity, where information is significantly different we have used coloured boxes:

Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland

The Garda Diversion Programme and Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) Youth Diversion Scheme are first level responses for young people who admit their involvement in a criminal offence. They are early intervention programmes.

Youth Diversion Projects (NI and ROI) are a project-based intervention for young people who are deemed to be at risk of becoming involved (or further involved) in criminal and/or anti-social behaviour.

The Irish Youth Justice Service (IYJS) (ROI) funds youth organisations and projects to provide services to young people aged under 18 years who find themselves in conflict with the law. Staff are known as Youth Justice Workers.

The Youth Justice Agency Northern Ireland aims to prevent offending by children. In doing so, it delivers a range of services, often in partnership with others, to help children address their offending behaviour, divert them from crime, assist their integration into the community, and to meet the needs of victims of crime.

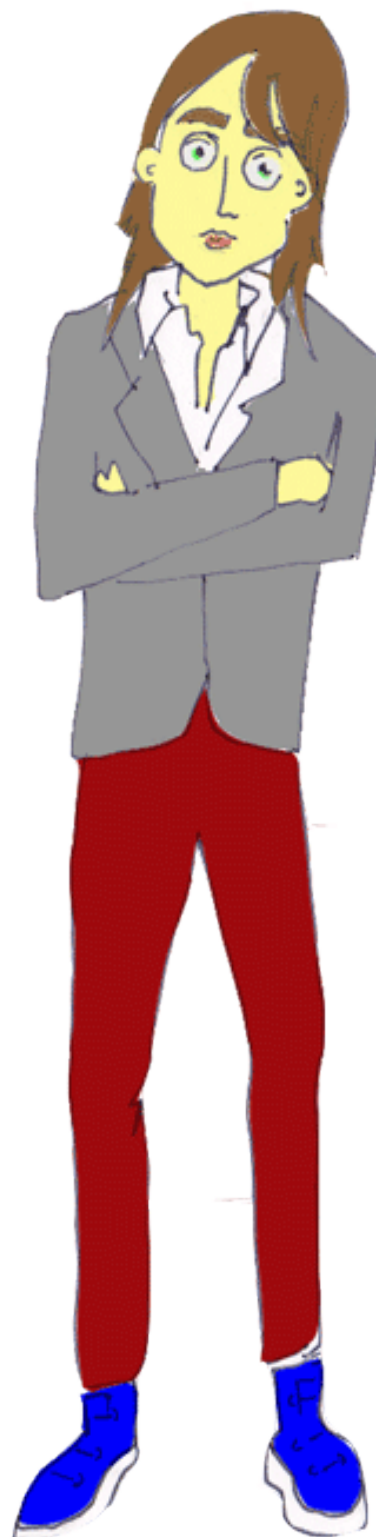
Youth Justice Work differs from general youth work in that it focuses on engaging with a young person to deal with the issues surrounding their offending behaviour and the need for behavioural change and making positive life style changes.

Juvenile Justice System

It is important to understand how a young person might find themselves in conflict with the law, how the Juvenile Justice System operates and what interventions exist for these young people.

In a recent Garda Public Attitude Survey in the **Republic of Ireland (ROI)**, respondents rated Juvenile Crime as a major national problem [76%], secondary only to drug-related crime and violent crime. They rated 'lack of parental' control as a significant cause of crime in Ireland. However, as noted by Hough and Roberts (2004) the public tends to have a more pessimistic view of youth crime than is justified by official crime statistics.ⁱ

For instance, a study conducted in the UK indicated that many adults felt youth crime was increasing over time despite the fact that the figures are generally static for most forms of crime committed by young people. The four most common forms of anti-social behaviour perceived to be enacted by young people were 'being loud/ rowdy', 'drinking', 'swearing' and 'being a general nuisance'ⁱⁱ



In the **Republic of Ireland (ROI)** primary legislation has been introduced to respond to such concern. The Children's Act 2001 (as amended) establishes an overall statutory framework for dealing with troubled young people and young people in trouble with the law. The Act attempts to reconcile the need to hold young people to account for their offending behaviour and the need to protect the public from offending behaviour; it builds upon the viable premise that most young people mature into adulthood and cease offending.ⁱⁱⁱ

In **Northern Ireland (NI)** the youth justice system is quite distinct and different to that in the rest of the United Kingdom or the Republic of Ireland. The most recent and fundamental changes have taken place over the past few years and many of the changes are still coming into effect. The Department of Justice commissioned a review of the Youth Justice System in 2011 and is currently consulting on the findings. The report is available from their website www.dojni.uk



Legislation

The Children's Act 2001 (Republic of Ireland):

- is a primary piece of legislation governing Juvenile Justice in Ireland
- replaces the outdated Children's Act of 1908 – it moves away from a theme of punishment and encourages a range of community sanctions
- states age of criminal responsibility in Ireland is generally 12 years old. For serious crimes such as rape or murder it is 10 years old
- puts the Garda Diversion Programme on a statutory footing in an effort to 'divert' young people from further offending
- recognises the role of the family in supporting young people in conflict with the law and allows for a number of different conferences:
 - Family Welfare Conferences (HSE)
 - Family Conferences run by the Gardaí under the Diversion Programme
 - Family Conferences ordered by the Children's Court and run by Probation and Welfare Service^{iv}

The Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002:

- sets out principles that all of those working within the justice system must follow
- outlines the principle aim of the Justice system as protecting the public by preventing re-offending by children
- proposes a conference model to be termed a 'youth conference' based in statute for all young persons (including 17 year olds) subject to the full range of human rights safeguards
- places a restorative justice approach as central to how young offenders are dealt with in the criminal justice system
- states age of criminal responsibility as 10 years old, which means that from age 10 you can be charged with criminal offences and brought before a court

The Criminal Justice (NI) Order 2008:

- Outlines a range of provisions including:
 - powers around the purchase and consumption of alcohol and combating alcohol-related disorder, increased penalties for knife crimes, amendments to prison law, 'ASBO' and youth justice law
- Outlines a number of adjustments to the youth justice legislation including:
 - Youth conference orders, reparation orders and community responsibility orders, and issues relating to custody

Interventions (Republic of Ireland)

Under the framework of the Children's Act (2001) there are a number of interventions designed to respond to young people who have offended.

Direct interventions include:

- **The Garda Diversion Programme**, the first level of response, involving early intervention by a Garda Juvenile Liaison Officer, for young people who admit to their involvement in a criminal offence
- **Garda Youth Diversion Projects** for young people who are deemed to present with added risk of further offending
- **The Probation Service** for young people appearing before the courts for their offending behaviour and
- **Children's Detention Schools** for young people whose offending is either repeat or serious in nature

These, and other indirect interventions, are explained in detail at the end of this chapter in the Appendix A 'Understanding the Juvenile Justice System in the ROI'

Interventions involving the Irish Youth Justice Service (Youth Justice Workers)

The Irish Youth Justice Service (IYJS) has lead responsibility for driving coordination and reform in the area of Youth Justice. It has been given responsibility to lead a national strategy 'To create a safer society by working in partnership to reduce youth offending through appropriate interventions and linkages into services'. It was established in 2005 and is an executive office of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. It operates within the strategic scope of the Department for Children and Youth Affairs.

The Irish Youth Justice Service (IYJS) funds youth organisations and projects that provide services, including Garda and Probation Projects, to young people under 18 years who find themselves in conflict with the law. Staff from youth work organisations funded under the IYJS are referred to as Youth Justice Workers



Interventions (Northern Ireland)

The Youth Justice Agency, the Probation Board, Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), the Court Service and Voluntary Organisations all have a role to play in providing interventions to children and young people at risk of offending. This co-operation across the sector has been formalised in a [‘Charter for Youth Justice’](#). The Charter sets out a series of statements which describe the type of system they aspire to, the principles of how this might be achieved and priorities for collective action.

Direct Interventions include:

- **Youth Diversionary Scheme (YDS)** - early intervention by PSNI YDS Officers for young people who are deemed to be at risk of offending. YDS Officers monitor nuisance behaviour and take action to make sure it doesn't go any further
- **Discretionary Disposal** – The PSNI have been given discretionary disposal measures for low level, first time offences as a means of diverting young people from entering the juvenile justice system. The victim must consent and may include, for example, the young person apologising to a shop owner
- **Diversionary Conferences** - provide a forum of discussion with the offender, the victim, and anyone else affected by the crime
- **Custodial Service** – Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre for children and young people referred to it by the court system

These, and other interventions, are explained in detail at the end of this chapter in the Appendix B ‘Understanding the Juvenile Justice System in NI’

Early Interventions involving the Youth Justice Agency

The Youth Justice Agency works to prevent offending by children. Much of this work is done within the local community with a range of partners, for example, Social Services, voluntary organisations, etc., to provide support to young people who may be at risk of offending, and to their families.

A range of services are provided, tailored to the individual needs of young people and their families. These address the reasons behind the young person's problem behaviour such as low achievement in school, family difficulties, substance misuse, etc. Services are often delivered through a range of early intervention and diversionary programmes which aim to engage young people's interests and, by enhancing their knowledge, life-skills and experience, contribute to giving young people the best chances of leading a crime-free life.

Needs and issues of young people involved in the Juvenile Justice System

Youth workers in many youth services have participants in their groups and programmes who are engaged in or at risk of becoming engaged in the Juvenile Justice System. While the young person may attend a Youth Diversion Project it is invaluable that youth services also link these young people with non-offending peer groups. Forming trusting and stable relationships with youth workers can further reduce the risk of a young person re-offending or of not progressing into the Juvenile Justice System.

It is generally accepted that young people who are involved in the Juvenile Justice System are attempting to address needs and issues within their own personal circumstances. Criminal or anti-social behaviour is often interpreted by youth/community workers as symptoms; and not the problem itself.

However, according to research there are a number of factors that make up the typical profile of a young person in the Juvenile Justice System, just as there are a number of factors that increase the likelihood of young people becoming involved in crime.

Research looking at risk factors related to youth crime identifies a number of features which potentially increase or decrease the likelihood of offending behaviour. It is argued that these risks occur in various dimensions of a young person's life.



Risk factors:

1. Individual risks
2. Risks associated with family
3. Risks associated with school performance
4. Risks associated with the neighbourhood that a young person lives in^v

Risk factors do not cause crime, nor do they excuse crime. Risk factors increase the risk of becoming involved in crime. By targeting the known risk factors we can be confident that we are preventing and reducing crime.^{vi}

Understanding the needs of young people at risk of becoming involved in crime

Every person has needs, which we aim to fulfil through a variety of channels, e.g. relationships with family and friends, social interactions with peers and adults, sports, education, jobs, etc. If a young person's needs are not being met, they will often seek out alternative channels that are easily accessible to them. This can result in the young person getting involved in anti-social or criminal behaviour in an effort to satisfy their needs.

There are two types of basic needs - personal and developmental as follows:



Personal needs

- To be accepted
- To feel safe
- To feel wanted
- To give/share
- To impress
- To perform
- To gain recognition
- To release
- To survive (economically and socially)
- To conform
- To be different
- To rebel/revolt
- To have fun etc.

Developmental needs

- Supports: Family, friends, school, wider community, etc.
- Education, training, work experience
- Positive role models
- Knowledge and information
- Reassurance and encouragement
- Structures and routine
- Reflection and review opportunities
- Real alternatives, etc.

How we as Youth Workers can help young people in the Juvenile Justice System to meet their needs

- Ensure the young person understands why they are involved in your project and the benefits of being in this youth project
- Understand and identify each young person's needs and personal situation
- Work with the young person on how to meet those needs in a positive and pro-active way
- Encourage and facilitate education/training achievements and help the young person visualise and aim for future events e.g. getting a job, going to college

Anti-Social Behaviour

The [Criminal Justice Act 2006](#) (ROI) and the Anti-Social Behaviour (NI) Order 2004 introduced new provisions within criminal law for dealing with anti-social behaviour by young people who are between 12-18 years of age in the Republic of Ireland and 10-18 years of age in Northern Ireland.

What is Anti-Social Behaviour?

A young person behaves in an anti-social manner if he/she causes, or in the circumstances is likely to cause, to one or more people who are not living in the same house as the young person, either:

- Harassment
- Significant or persistent alarm, distress, fear or intimidation



- Significant or persistent impairment of their use or enjoyment of their property

So, for example, if a young person or young people were constantly playing football outside your house and this was causing you discomfort or annoyance, this would amount to significant or persistent impairment of your use or enjoyment of your home. This therefore amounts to anti-social behaviour.^{vii}

What is a Behaviour Order?

In the **Republic of Ireland** an anti-social behaviour order or ASBO is issued by the Children's Court when a member of the Garda Síochána (not below the rank of Superintendent) applies to the court for an order which prohibits a young person of 12 years or above from doing anything specified in the order.

In **Northern Ireland** applications for ASBOs are also made to the magistrates' court by 'relevant authorities'. These include the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, the Police Service of Northern Ireland and local councils. It remains a civil order irrespective of it being issued by the court. In Northern Ireland the orders are the same for young people and adults but are used disproportionately for under 18s.

In **Northern Ireland** ASBOs contain conditions prohibiting the offender from specific anti-social acts or from entering defined areas, and is effective for a minimum of two years. The orders are not criminal penalties and are not intended to punish the offender. However, there is much debate as to the effectiveness of ASBOs and the impact that issuing these have on children and young people's contact with the justice system. A report by NGOs in 2008 stated:

'ASBOs, instead of being a measure in the best interests of children, may in practice contribute to their entry into contact with the criminal justice system'^{viii}



Anti-Social Behaviour Measures

Anti-social behaviour measures offer an alternative way of dealing with a young person who acts in an anti-social way, other than going through the criminal process. In the **Republic of Ireland** the anti-social measures for young people are different to those designed for adults.

In the **Republic of Ireland** the key features for young people are:

- A series of stages occur before an anti-social behaviour order (ASBO) can be sought, including a warning, a good behaviour contract and referral to the Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme.
- Involvement by parents is required, particularly in the case of a good behaviour contract.^{ix}

All of these provisions are designed to allow the Gardaí to deal effectively with anti-social behaviour while keeping the young person out of the criminal justice system.



Developing inclusive practice with young people involved in the Juvenile Justice System

Applying a structured approach when working with young people – 4 useful areas to consider:

1 Individual plans

- Each young person is unique and has different needs
- Design an initial short-term programme plan to allow time to get to know the young person and to establish a trusting, co-operative relationship and to familiarise yourself with their situation (family and friends)
- When ready, together with the young person (and their family and friends, where appropriate) design a programme plan:
 - in which the young person is actively involved and responsible for their personal development
 - which aims to initiate behavioural change
 - Identifies positive channels to meet their needs.
- Engage the support of parents, schools and other local agencies



2 Actively encourage positive behaviour

- Identify gains and losses of certain behaviours – how can the same gains be achieved with positive actions/ how can losses be eliminated?
- Discuss real options and choices on how to handle various situations that the young people may find themselves in. Use examples/stories to reinforce points
- Involve friends and peers in programmes - it may reinforce positive behaviour (often members of the peer group may be equally at-risk as the young person who is referred). Reward and encourage good behaviour
- Assist the young person to consciously and actively follow a path of positive behavioural change and personal development
- Encourage the young person to get involved in alternative activities. Focus on education/training achievements
- Empower the young person to make the right decisions. The young person needs to decide and believe that positive behaviour is good for them and will improve their personal circumstances

3 Education and Employability (Sense of purpose)

Education/Training

If the young person is involved in education/training:

- Liaise with school/youth/training centre
- Support the young person in their learning

If the young person is not involved in education/training, encourage and promote their involvement:

- Liaise with schools/centres/colleges to attain a place

- Provide resources if necessary, e.g. Back To Education Initiative (BTEI) in the Republic of Ireland or Training for Success in Northern Ireland

Employability

A lot of people describe themselves by their profession or daily activity. This can be connected to a person's sense of self-worth as it helps them identify a purpose for themselves in society (e.g. I am a mechanic/student etc.)

- Promote the importance of training/qualifications
- Establish links with local businesses – work experience/jobs club
- Establish links with local training centres, colleges e.g. SOLAS (FÁS) in the Republic of Ireland, Steps to Work in Northern Ireland or Further Education Colleges on behalf of young people in the project

[For more information on education and training see chapters 10A and 10B working with Early School Leavers, and those who are NEET in this Toolkit.](#)

4 Tools and Programmes

There are a number of programmes you can introduce into a young person's programme plan which could be very beneficial and could trigger and encourage behavioural change. Sample programmes include:

- Copping on Programme, Gains and Losses
- Family Support
- Back to Education Initiatives (BTEI) in the Republic of Ireland or 'Training for Success' programmes in Northern Ireland
- Jobs club, responsibility, structure, work experience
- Engage local Gardaí/ PSNI in programme activities
- Enrol volunteers (train and support them)

- Involve local role models
- Big Brother, Big Sister programmes or mentoring programmes
- Other varied personal development programmes that use drama, art, sports etc.



Managing Challenging Behaviours

- Model the type of behaviour that you expect from the young person
- Take active steps to develop a friendly and welcoming atmosphere
- Simple steps such as remembering the name of a young person and greeting them by name can show that you value them
- Take time to build (professional) relationships with young people. Be prepared to offer long-term support with a consistent worker, rather than a range of workers
- Treat young people with respect and as individuals
- Understand cultural differences, for example body language
- Give praise, recognition and reinforcement of acceptable behaviour
- Consider the physical layout of your service and the activities you provide. Encourage young people to contribute to the physical environment, e.g. paint a mural, pick out furniture etc.
- If you run a number of programs, don't mix too many young people who have challenging behaviour in the same group
- Have clear rules/policies at your service which have been developed with young people. Ensure that all staff and volunteers are aware of your service policies and apply them fairly and consistently
- Ensure that young people are aware of the rules of your project/organisation. Implement consequences for inappropriate behaviour in a fair and consistent manner
- However, on occasion, young people are present in youth projects as a result of not keeping rules. Be realistic with rules – DO NOT set the young people you work with up for failure

- Also remember that staff and volunteers are the adults – address situations calmly, professional and reasonably

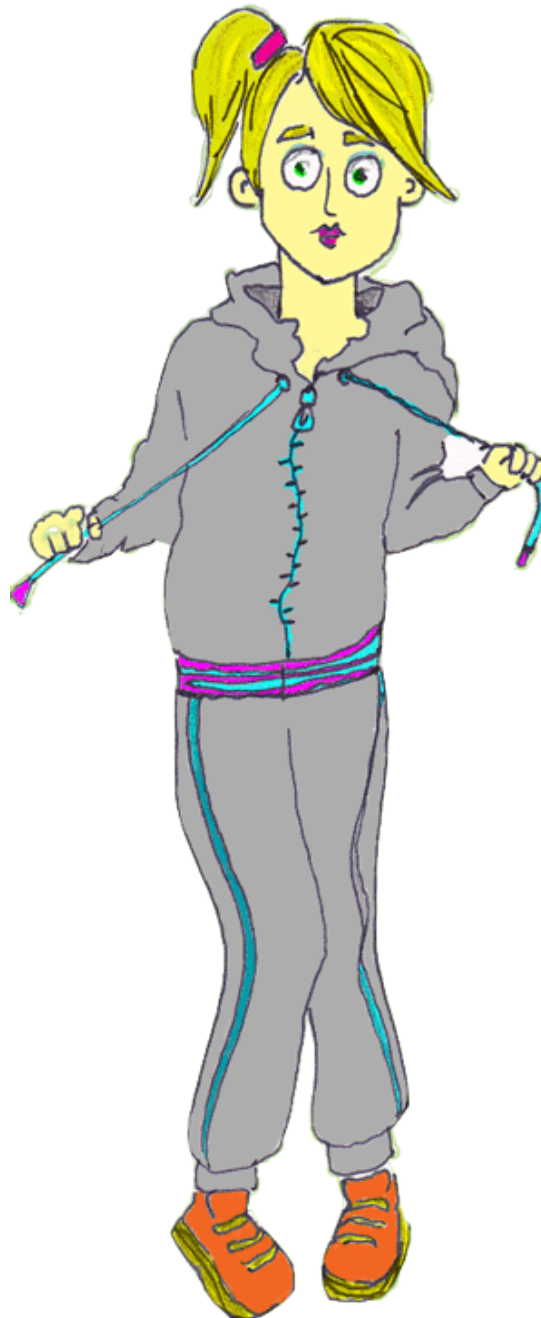
If a young person exhibits challenging behaviour:

- Much of young people's difficult behaviour is not a result of inadequate morals or faulty reasoning; it is the consequence of over-aroused emotions. Attempting to reason with someone in a state of heightened emotion (angry, hyper, etc.) will not be very productive. Calming this person down is the best idea. Sometimes that involves leaving them alone. Being quiet. Giving them space, or a football or time to shout. Sometimes this calming down process lasts for weeks, even months in the project. Keeping a person calm constantly is impossible and is not the responsibility of staff, but it can be achieved at times
- Do not present a young person with an ultimatum – this may be interpreted as a challenge. Try to reason calmly – compromise!
- Model the type of behaviour that you expect from the young person.
- Use reflective language when listening to the views of the young person and try to understand why they are upset
- Try to remove the situation from bystanders
- If a young person refuses to follow an instruction, offer them choice. For example you can either let the young person have his turn or leave the centre and come back tomorrow. This allows the young person to save face, particularly if there are other young people present

Challenging myths

Myth – All young people involved in the Juvenile Justice System have committed a crime

Not all young people involved in the Juvenile Justice System are offenders (i.e. guilty) so use this terminology with care. Juvenile Justice is also about diverting young people who are at risk of becoming involved in anti-social criminal behaviour.



Checklist 8 - How accessible is your organisation to young people in the Juvenile Justice System?

This checklist can help you to identify how you can improve your service for young people involved in the Juvenile Justice System.

Public image

How we present our service to our community

Partnerships:

• Our service has close links with the local Gardaí/ PSNI and local Juvenile Liaison Officer/ Youth Diversionary Officers	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our service has partnerships with other services that assist with young people involved in the Juvenile Justice System	YES	PARTLY	NO

Policies and procedures

We have a written commitment to deliver an equal and inclusive service

• Our service has clear policies and procedures in relation to our work with young people who are referred to our youth project	YES	PARTLY	NO

Programme planning and delivery

Our programmes are designed and delivered to include the diverse needs and identities of young persons in the juvenile justice system

• Our programmes include individual and group work in supporting young people in our service	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our programmes address the issues of behavioural change and personal development	YES	PARTLY	NO

Professional development

Our staff and volunteers are trained and supported to deliver an inclusive youth service

• Staff have an overall understanding of the Juvenile Justice System and services within	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our staff are trained and supported to deliver specific behavioural modification programmes to our participants	YES	PARTLY	NO

Participation

We make sure we include the voices of young people at all levels of our youth service

• We ensure that we include and consult with our participants at all levels of our youth service	YES	PARTLY	NO

Useful contacts (ROI)

Web Sites

An Garda Síochána:	www.garda.ie
Children's Act Advisory Board (CAAB):	www.caab.ie
Citizens Information:	www.citizensinformation.ie
Court Service of Ireland:	www.courts.ie
Department of Health:	www.dohc.ie
Department of Justice and Equality	www.justice.ie
Foróige:	www.foroige.ie
Health Service Executive:	www.hse.ie
Irish Prison service:	www.irishprisons.ie
Irish Youth Justice Service:	www.iyjs.ie
Department for Children and Youth Affairs:	www.dcyh.gov.ie
Office for Social Inclusion:	www.socialinclusion.ie
Probation Service/Young Persons Probation:	www.probation.ie
Young Person Protection Services:	www.hse.ie/en/FindaService/HealthServices/Catagory/YoungPersonProtectionSocialWorkServices
Youth Work Ireland:	www.youthworkireland.ie

Publications/Legislation (ROI)

OMC (2007) Agenda for Children's Services: A Policy Handbook

www.omc.gov.ie

Children's Act 2001: www.justice.ie, www.oireachtas.ie, www.omc.gov.ie

Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children

www.dohc.ie

National Children's Strategy: Our Children – Their Lives (2000 – 2010)

www.dohc.ie

Designing Effective Local Responses to Youth Crime

www.iyjs.ie/en/IYJS/Executive%20Summary.pdf/Files/Executive%20Summary.pdf

National Youth Justice Strategy 2008 -2010

www.iyjs.ie/en/IYJS/Strategy%20PDF.pdf/Files/Strategy%20PDF.pdf

Useful Contacts (NI)

The Youth Justice Agency contains an overview of the youth justice system in NI

www.youthjusticeagencyni.gov.uk/

Youth Organisations (NI)

Youth Action Northern Ireland Youth Action is a voluntary youth organisation which works to enable young people to achieve their full potential. 14 College Square North, Belfast, Northern Ireland, BT1 6AS Phone: 028 - 9024 0551 Website: www.youthaction.org	Include Youth Include Youth is an independent organisation which actively promotes the rights, best interests of and best practice with young people in need or at risk Alpha House, 3 Rosemary Street, Belfast BT1 1QA Phone: 028 - 9031 1007 Website: www.includeyouth.org
Opportunity Youth A regional youth organisation helping young people make the most of their life's opportunities and be the best they can be 30-34 Hill Street Belfast, BT1 2LB Phone: 028 - 9043 5810 Website: www.opportunity-youth.org	Challenge for Youth Challenge for Youth (CFY) exists to engage and support young people who for a range of reasons find themselves outside of, or excluded from mainstream / community youth provision 112-114 Donegal Street, Belfast BT1 2GX Phone: 028 - 9023 6893 Website: www.challengeforyouth.org/

NIACRO

NIACRO believes child offending can be reduced through diverting children and young people to services which help them to make positive changes in their lives. Our services are open to young people in different areas of Northern Ireland, of different age groups and with different needs. NIACRO aims to move children and young people out of the criminal justice system or better still help them not get into it in the first place. Our current projects include the Caps Project, MOVE, Youth Employability, Independent Visitor Scheme and the Independent Representation Project

Amelia House

4 Amelia Street

Belfast BT2 7GS

Phone: 028 - 9032 0157

Website: www.niacro.co.uk/

Princes Trust

The Princes Trust works with 13 to 30-year-olds who have struggled at school, have been in care, are long-term unemployed or have been in trouble with the law.

Head Office, Block 5, Jennymount

Court, North Derby Street

Belfast BT15 3HN

Phone: 028 - 9074 5454

Website: www.princes-trust.org.uk/

The Bytes Project

The Bytes Project offers drop-in facilities with free access to ICT resources as well as structured personal development and job ready learning programmes

Unit 5, The Filor Building

155 Northumberland Street

Belfast BT13 2JF

Phone: 028 - 90288810

Website: www.bytes.org

EXTERN

Extern works directly with children, adults and communities affected by social exclusion throughout Ireland. The majority of our work is with children and families. Society and government now realises the importance of tackling exclusion and preventing young people getting on the treadmill of poverty, unemployment and crime.

Hydepark House
3 McKinney Road
Newtownabbey, BT36 4PE

Phone: 028 - 9084 0555

Fax: 028 - 9084 7333

Email: info@extern.org

Criminal Justice Links (NI)

Community Safety Unit

www.nidirect.gov.uk/index/information-and-services/crime-justice-and-the-law/crime-prevention/community-safety.htm

The (Northern Ireland) Act 2002 outlined in detail via the HMSO website

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/26/contents

Northern Ireland Prison Service

www.niprisonservice.gov.uk/

OFMDFM Victims Unit

www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk/index/equality/victims.htm

Police Service of Northern Ireland

www.psnipolice.uk/

Prisoner Release Victim Information Scheme

www.nidirect.gov.uk/index/information-and-services/crime-justice-and-the-law/prison-and-probation/prisoner-release-victim-information-scheme.htm

Probation Board for Northern Ireland

www.pbni.org.uk/site/Home.aspx?x=eTyoYPm5488=

Youth Justice Board

www.yjb.gov.uk/en-gb/

Appendix A

Understanding the Juvenile Justice System in the Republic of Ireland

In order to provide a responsive service to a young person who has come into conflict with the law it is important to fully understand the Juvenile Justice System. There are a wide range of interventions designed to respond commensurately to young people who have offended.

The Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme^x

The Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme provides an opportunity to divert juvenile offenders from criminal activity. It is the first level of response, involving early intervention by a Garda Juvenile Liaison Officer for young people who admit their involvement in a criminal offence.

The Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme is administered by specially trained Gardaí called Garda Juvenile Liaison Officers (JLO). These Gardaí are specially trained to deal with young people and their families in relation to crime-prevention, the operation of the diversion programme and all other areas involving young people and the criminal justice system. Each Garda District in Ireland has a Juvenile Liaison Office. The Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme employs such strategies as formal and informal Cautions, Supervision, Restorative Cautioning and Conferencing, Community Policing and referrals to Garda Youth Diversion Projects. Once cautioned a young person is usually monitored for a year.

Any young person who has been admitted to the Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme is protected from prosecution for the criminal behaviour which resulted in his/her admission to the programme. Any acceptance by the young person of responsibility for their criminal behaviour in respect of which they have been admitted to the programme will not be available in any civil or criminal proceedings against that young person. However, under Section 126 of

the Criminal Justice Act 2006, it may be used where a court is considering the sentence to be imposed in respect of an offence committed after admission to the programme.

There are two types of caution:

Informal

The informal caution is given for less serious criminal behaviour. It may be given at the young person's home or in a Garda station. It is administered by a JLO. The only persons obliged to attend while the caution is being given are the parents or guardian of the young person.

Formal

The formal caution normally takes place in a Garda Station to highlight the seriousness of the situation to the young person. Those present when the caution is delivered must include the young person, the young person's parents or guardian and a JLO. The officer who gives the caution normally discusses the criminal behaviour and highlights to the young person the seriousness of his/her actions.

Supervision

Every young person who receives a formal caution through the Garda Diversion Programme is placed under the supervision of a JLO for twelve months. The level of supervision is normally a matter decided by the JLO.

Garda Youth Diversion Projects^{xi}

The Garda Youth Diversion Projects' baseline analysis falls under the Goal of the National Youth Justice Strategy: 'To work to reduce offending; by diverting young people from offending behaviour'. More specifically:

"To make existing intervention measures more effective in reducing offending behaviour. In doing so, promote good practice in the delivery of the Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme and the Garda Youth Diversion

Projects”.

A Garda Youth Diversion Project is a community based, multi-agency crime prevention initiative which seeks to divert young people from becoming involved (or further involved) in anti-social and/or criminal behaviour by providing suitable programmes and activities to facilitate personal development and promote civic responsibility.

The Garda Youth Diversion Projects are funded by the Irish Youth Justice Service and administered through The Community Relations Section of An Garda Síochána. It is important to note that Garda Youth Diversion Projects – which are run by youth organisations and youth projects - operate alongside other Garda (and complimentary) initiatives aimed at reducing youth crime. The young people who attend a Youth Diversion Project may be involved with [An Garda Síochána](#), the [Probation Service](#) and/or the [Courts Service](#).

What does a Garda Youth Diversion Project do?

Garda Youth Diversion Projects have clear and distinct roles aimed at engaging with young people at risk of, or at the onset of becoming involved in, offending behaviour:

1. To divert young people from becoming involved in criminal or anti-social behaviour
2. To provide suitable activities to facilitate personal development and encourage civic responsibility and work towards improving the long-term employability prospects of the participants

In achieving the above, projects seek to support and improve local Garda and community relations and enhance the quality of life in the area.

There are 100 Garda Youth Diversion Projects in operation providing interventions for approximately 3,600 young people.

Children's Court

The first contact a young person or their family will have with the Probation Service is probably after they have been before a court and either they have accepted responsibility for the offence or the facts have been proven. If they are under 18 years of age and their case is before the Children's Court the Judge may refer them to the Young Persons Probation Service.

The Probation Service - Young Persons' Probation

Young Persons' Probation (YPP) is a specialised division of the Probation Service with dedicated resources to work with young people aged 12 to 18 who come before the courts.

YPP aims to promote the use of community based sanctions and restorative justice in order to reduce re-offending and deals with approximately 600 young offenders nationwide. The work of the YPP involves:

- preparing pre-sanction assessments for the courts
- supervising offenders in the community who are referred by the court
- supervising offenders released conditionally from custody
- providing a counselling service to offenders and their families^{xii}

Community Sanctions

A young person who has been to court and convicted of a crime may receive a community sanction, which allows the young person to stay in school and in their community. Community sanctions can be used instead of detention and are operated by the Young Persons Probation (YPP) division of the [Probation Service](#).

Community sanctions have to address the consequences of the actions of the

young person and, in some cases, can be used to help strengthen relationships in the family. The sanctions include a range of measures such as community service, intensive supervision, mentoring and restorative justice.

If a community sanction is being used, the young person will be told why it is being used and what they have to do. The parents, or guardians, are expected to support and encourage the young person to complete the sanction and stay out of trouble in the future.

10 community sanctions are available to the courts:

- **Community Service Order:** A young person of 16 or 17 years of age agrees to complete unpaid work for a set total number of hours
- **Day Centre Order:** A young person is to go to a centre at set times and, as part of the order, to take part in a programme of activities
- **Probation Order:** This places a young person under the supervision of the Probation Service for a period during which time the young person must meet certain conditions which are set by the court
- **Training or Activities Programme Order:** A young person has to take part in, and complete, a programme of training or similar activity. The programme should help the young person learn positive social values
- **Intensive Supervision Order:** A young person is placed under the supervision of a named probation officer and has to attend a programme of education, training or treatment as part of their time under supervision
- **Residential Supervision Order:** This is where a young person is to live in a suitable hostel. The hostel should be close to where they normally live, attend school or go to work
- **A Suitable Person (Care and Supervision) Order:** With the agreement of the young person's parents or guardian, the young person is placed in the care of a suitable adult

- **A Mentor (Family Support) Order:** A person is assigned to help, advise and support the young person and his/her family in trying to stop the young person from committing further offences
- **A Restriction of Movement Order:** This is basically a curfew order supervised by the Gardaí. A young person is required to stay away from certain places and to be at a specific address between 7pm and 6am each day.
- **A Dual Order:** This combines a Restriction of Movement Order with either supervision by a probation officer or attendance at a day centre.^{xiii}

Children's Detention Schools

The Court can order a young person to either a detention school or to St. Patrick's Institution in Dublin because of the type of offence committed and the particular circumstances of their case. Before sending a young person to detention, the Court will try to make sure that no other option is available that would address the offences which the young person has committed. The Children's Act 2001 (as amended) makes it illegal to order the detention of a young person (with effect from 1 March 2007) under 18 years old to a prison. There are currently four detention schools where the Courts can detain a young person. These are:

- Trinity House, Lusk
- Oberstown Boys School, Lusk
- Oberstown Girls School, Lusk
- Finglas Young Person and Adolescent Centre^{xiv}

St. Patrick's Institution

The Irish Prison Service manages St Patrick's Institution. It is a closed, medium security place of detention for males aged 16 to 21 years. It accommodates

both remand and sentenced prisoners. Plans have been made for separate accommodation for the majority of 16 and 17 year-old boys, pending the further development of the [Children's Detention Schools](#).^{xv}

Restorative Justice

Restorative Justice is a victim and community-oriented approach requiring the perpetrator to face up to the harm he or she has caused and repair or make good the damage done; and resolve the underlying problems which caused it. It also focuses on finding ways that offenders can make things right for victims and others affected by their crime. Restorative Justice puts the victim at the centre of the process.

A Restorative Conference

A Restorative Conference is a meeting involving the young person and members of his/her family, the victim/s and relevant others. It is used within the auspices of the Garda Youth Diversion Programme and the Young Person's Probation Service. At the Restorative Conference, the young person's offence will be discussed with regard to its effect on the victim, the community and on the young person's family.

The conference will explore ways that the young person can take responsibility for their behaviour and where possible, put things right by making good the damage.^{xvi}

Appendix B

Understanding the Juvenile Justice System in Northern Ireland

The youth justice system in Northern Ireland is quite distinct and different to that in the rest of the United Kingdom or Ireland. The most recent and fundamental changes to youth justice in Northern Ireland have taken place over the past few years and many of the changes are only just coming into effect.

These changes follow the recommendations of the Criminal Justice Review which was set up in June 1998 under the Agreement signed in Belfast on Good Friday of that year (known as the ‘Good Friday Agreement’ or ‘Belfast Agreement’).

The Review recommended that a restorative justice approach should be central to how young offenders are dealt with in the criminal justice system. It proposed a conference model to be termed a ‘youth conference’ based in statute for all young persons (including 17 year olds), subject to the full range of human rights safeguards.

Youth Diversion Scheme

One of the aims of the Youth Diversion Scheme (YDS) in Northern Ireland is to discourage young people from getting involved in crime in the first place. This means that YDS officers will monitor nuisance behaviour and take action to make sure it doesn’t go any further. However if a young person has committed a crime the police will take into account a number of factors, including the seriousness of the offence, whether or not there is an admission of guilt, previous offending history, etc., in deciding how to deal with it.

There are three possible outcomes:

Informed Warning

A young person may receive an informed warning for offences that are considered to be less serious because of the circumstances. It will be delivered by a trained police officer in the presence of the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the young person. An informed warning is not a conviction, and will only remain on a criminal record for 12 months, unless further offending takes place.

Restorative Caution

A young person may receive a restorative caution for more serious offences, which will be delivered by a trained facilitator who can be a police officer, a representative from a partner agency, or a community representative. It provides an opportunity for the young person who has offended to gain a greater understanding of the impact of their behaviour and its consequences, and to help them take responsibility for their actions through meeting their actual victim. The process provides an opportunity for the victims of crime to be involved in how their case is dealt with and will be recorded for 2½ years on a criminal record, unless further offending takes place. It is not a conviction.

Referral for Prosecution

A young person may be referred for prosecution for offences which are considered very serious and/or where you deny the offence, or have 2 or more recorded 'disposals' within the system. The Public Prosecution Service will consider each case and decide whether to:

- refer back to the police for further investigation;
- refer for diversionary conference;
- prosecute; or
- close the case without prosecution.

In the case of young people who have offended, prosecution will be the exception rather than the rule as the majority of cases will be dealt with through a diversionary approach.

The decision whether or not to refer a young person to a diversionary conference is for the Public Prosecution Service to make, but these conferences can only take place where the offender has admitted the offence.

A diversionary conference is a meeting or a series of meetings held to consider how a young person should be dealt with for an offence. A conference plan will be produced, which will be presented to the prosecutor for their approval. If the prosecutor accepts the plan, it must then be complied with by the young offender. However, if the young offender fails to comply or the prosecutor doesn't accept the plan, then the prosecutor can refer the case to court.

Diversionary Youth Conferences

These are organised by the Youth Justice Agency. The aim is to provide a forum of discussion with the offender, the victim, and anyone else affected by the crime. Discussions at the conference provide the opportunity for victims to explain the impact of the crime on their lives, and for the offender to make amends and be held accountable for their offence. The conference plan could consist of one of the following:

- an apology to the victim;
- reparation to the victim or to the community;
- payment to the victim in compensation;
- supervision by an adult;
- work or service for the community;
- participation in activities designed to deal with offending behaviour, or to offer training or education, or to deal with problems such as drugs or alcohol;
- restrictions on conduct or whereabouts, eg. curfews;
- treatment for mental problems or for alcohol or drug dependency.

Youth Court

If a young person is charged with an offence, they will usually appear before a youth court. However, if he/she is charged jointly with an adult, the trial may be held in the magistrates' court or, for more serious offences such as murder, in the Crown Court.

The Youth Court is a less formal and more open section of the magistrates' court. The young person and their family will be encouraged to participate by appearing in court. Members of the public are not allowed in a youth court to listen to the case, nor can the identity or photograph of any young person concerned in the trial be published in the press. However the victim of the crime may, on request to the court, attend the hearing if they want to do so.

The court has a number of options for dealing with a young person's case:

Absolute discharge

This may be imposed where punishment is considered inappropriate. The offender is found guilty but no further action is considered necessary.

Conditional discharge

The young person may be discharged, on the condition that they stay out of trouble for a set period of time between 6 months and 2 years. If another offence is committed during this time, the court can look at the old offence as well as the new one.

Fines

This involves paying a sum of money to the courts. There are limits on the amount a young person can be fined according to their age.

Deferred sentence

This is when the magistrate imposes a sentence, but defers it for up to 6 months. If the young person stays out of trouble or makes some effort to

repair any damage to the victim, the magistrate may reconsider the case in a positive light.

Attendance Centre Orders

This order requires the young person to attend their Youth Justice Agency Area Office for a set number of hours. The hours of attendance can be from 12 to 24. They will normally be completed over a number of weeks, through planned sessions of between 1 and 2 hours at a time, and will not interfere with school or work. There will be a mixture of individual work, family work, group work and activities which will:

- address issues relating to the offence;
- heighten awareness of the impact of the offence on the victim;
- look at ways to prevent offending; and
- make constructive use of time.

Community Responsibility Orders

This is a court order which requires a young person to attend their Youth Justice Agency Area Office for a period of 20-40 hours. The hours of attendance will be completed over a number of months through planned sessions of between 2 and 4 hours at a time – these sessions will not interfere with school or work. Each session will be used to help the young person:

- understand their responsibility to the local community;
- understand the impact of the offence on themselves and others;
- understand the reasons for their involvement in the offence;
- look at ways to prevent re-offending;
- look at other areas of need which will improve the situation;
- where appropriate, undertake practical activities to make amends.

Reparation Order

A reparation order is a court order which requires the young person who committed the offence to complete an agreed activity carried out to the benefit of the victim, or the community at large, for up to a period of 24 hours. The Youth Justice Agency has responsibility for overseeing the discharge of this order through its Area Offices.

Court Ordered Youth Conference

Youth Conferences were introduced by the Youth Justice (NI) Act 2002. The aim is that most young offenders are referred to a conference, although they cannot be referred without their agreement. In exceptional cases, referral is not an option. The Court retains discretion on these matters, but must explain their decisions in open court.

The Youth Justice Agency will organise a meeting between the young person and anyone else affected by the crime including the victim (if they consent) to try and agree an action plan which aims to meet the needs of the victim and prevent further crime.

If the court order arising from a youth conference is breached, the court may either deal with the breach or decide to re-sentence for the original offence.

Community Service Order

This order may be given to young people over 16 for an offence which is punishable by detention or imprisonment. This would mean undertaking unpaid work in the community for between 40 hours and 240 hours.

Probation Order

This order puts the offender under the supervision of a probation officer for a period of between 6 months and 3 years, during which time probation staff will assess and manage the risk in order to assist the offender to avoid re-offending. A probation order can be made in relation to anyone over the

age of 10, although if you are over 14 you must give consent to the order being made.

Electronic Monitoring

Electronic monitoring or “Tagging” is a new option available to the youth courts in Northern Ireland. It is a system using electronic devices to determine where an individual is. Typically the individual will wear a small electronic transmitter on their wrist or ankle.

Juvenile Justice Centre Orders

This is an order which is normally for a period of 6 months but can be for up to 2 years. Half of the time is served in a Juvenile Justice Centre and with the remaining half served under supervision in the community

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CHAPTER NINE

Working with young parents

Introduction

This section focuses on young parents. It presents demographics relating to young parents, explains the varying needs and issues that young parents may face and it offers practical advice. It concludes with a list of contacts that will help you in your work with young parents.

Your role as a youth worker may be to support a young person who is about to become a young parent. While they may access specialised services it is important that they are also fully included and supported in other community-based youth groups and they feel welcome to continue their involvement in your youth group.



In the Republic of Ireland under the **Equal Status Act 2000** and the **Equality Act 2004**, it is unlawful to discriminate against a person on the grounds of their family status (a parent of a child under 18 years of age) or their marital status in the provision of goods and services, education, sports, access to public facilities and accommodation.

In Northern Ireland under **Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998** public bodies are required to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons with dependants and persons without.

Terminology

This resource has been developed to be used by youth workers on the island of Ireland. At times it is necessary to make distinctions between our two jurisdictions and we had to choose a terminology to reflect this. We have chosen for the most part to use Northern Ireland (NI) and Republic of Ireland (ROI). At times we also use North and South. Additionally, for clarity, where information is significantly different we have used coloured boxes:

Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland

Teen parent is a young parent - male or female - aged between 13-19 years.

Young parent is a young parent - male or female - aged 13-25 years.

Solo-parent/lone parent refers to a person parenting alone

One Parent family is a family headed by one parent whereby the second parent does not live in the family home.

Family form is the way a family make-up can be described; for example a one-parent family, a blended family, a nuclear family etc.

Throughout this section ‘young parents’ also includes young women who are pregnant and their partners



Demographics

Young Mothers

In **Republic of Ireland (ROI)** 14% of all registered births were to mothers under the age of 25 (2008). In **Northern Ireland (NI)** 5% of registered births were to mothers under 20 years old (2010). Almost 80% of these births in Republic of Ireland and 97.5% in Northern Ireland were outside marriage; either to solo-parents or co-habiting couples. This compares to 33% of births outside marriage for all age groups.ⁱ

The number of teenage mothers has always been relatively small but it has been dropping further - from 4.4% in 1997 to 2.2% by 2007 in Republic of Ireland and from 6.8% to 5.7% in the North for the same period.ⁱⁱ

Those at risk of becoming young parents

There is a tendency for teenage pregnancy rates to be higher in areas of socio-economic deprivation. The numbers of solo-parents living in areas and communities where there are high levels of poverty is significant.ⁱⁱⁱ For example, the decline in teenage births in the Republic of Ireland between the mid-1980s and mid-1990s was not apparent in the Rotunda Hospital^{iv} which serves an inner-city population with a disproportionately high number of socially-disadvantaged women.

Furthermore, the proportion of lone-parent families exceeds 30% in some local authority housing estates in Dublin's disadvantaged inner-city and suburban localities compared to an Irish average of 13%.^{v,vi} The Republic of Ireland is not unique in revealing a distinctive social and spatial patterning of lone parenthood and teenage pregnancy.^{vii} Higher teenage pregnancy rates in Northern Ireland most often occur in areas of economic and social deprivation.

Needs and issues for young parents

Young parents can face isolation, negative social attitudes, stress, anxiety and low self-esteem. They can also miss out on education and employment opportunities. Many live on a small budget that does not allow for extras.

It is important to be aware that, in working with a young parent, both parent and child come as a 'package'. You will need to consider, and be clear about, the ways you and your organisation can support a young parent with their child.



Youth services have a lot to offer young parents especially in the areas of building confidence, offering non-formal education opportunities, personal development and being a place of welcome where they and their child/ren are valued and supported.

Youth services can also be a valuable space for giving the young parent personal time away from the responsibility of parenthood.

The Department of Health (ROI) recommends that youth services should develop guidelines on how best to respond to the needs of teenagers who become pregnant, especially those with little evident support.^{viii} If youth workers can support young parents to look at their own needs and help them to meet those needs it leaves the young parent in a much better position to meet the needs of their children.

Many young parents feel that they have to dedicate their life to their child. However, often by doing this, they are denying their own personal ambitions. They need to know that they have a right to personal achievement which will also lead to greater enjoyment in parenting.

Isolation and lack of support

Being a young parent can be difficult due to the lack of awareness of how to access support services. This can be particularly pertinent for one-parent families where a young parent does not have access to family or other informal support networks. Isolation and access to support can also be difficult for a young parent who works during the hours when services may be provided. Many solo-parents receive little support or help with caring for their children and the stresses of solo-parenting can take a toll on their health and well-being.

Isolation is a common problem experienced by young parents as it can be difficult to maintain former relationships with friends due to a lack of opportunities to socialise with them. They can feel they have become ‘out of touch’ with their friends’ concerns or interests. Isolation can have devastating effects on both the child and the parent and confidence levels can drop very quickly. Youth workers need to be aware of what options young parents have in accessing services which will help them when they feel isolated. They can play a vital role in supporting young parents to continue to engage with youth groups/programmes. For example, young parents can be encouraged to access general programmes such as drama, young women’s groups, community-based youth activities or more specialised programmes like Teen Parent Support Programmes.^{ix}

Added to the emotional challenges often associated with solo-parenting and the lack of public acceptance of one-parent families, life on a low income can make stress levels particularly high.

Life on low income

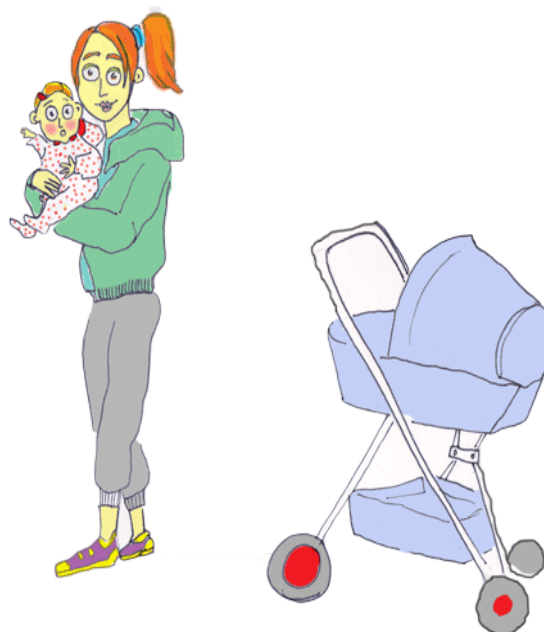
There are many misconceptions that one-parent families get a lot of state supports, particularly monetary support, which can often lead to one-parent families facing undue criticism.

In fact, lone-parent households remain the single most deprived household group in Ireland (North and South) with poverty rates among one-parent families being much higher than for other groups. In 2007, 37.6% of lone-parent families were identified as being 'at risk of poverty'.^x In 2010 almost half of all people in lone parent families were on low income in Northern Ireland.^{xi} Many sole parents work even though it can be more difficult for them to access necessary support such as childcare.

Young parents have difficulties accessing quality and affordable housing with many waiting disproportionate lengths of time for local authority accommodation, often living in overcrowded situations or in the high-cost private-rental sector in the meantime. Solo-parent families spend longer on the waiting list than other household types. 67% of solo-parents had been on the list for more than a year, compared to 62% of couples, and 52% of single person households.^{xii}

Attitudes to young parents in society

For many young people becoming a parent can have a very positive influence on their lives. Many find it a motivating factor in returning to or furthering their education or taking up employment. For many, having to assume responsibility for a child leads to them becoming more responsible for their own lives and their relationship with their child/ren can provide love and security that may have been previously lacking from their lives.



However, many young parents can feel they are being judged negatively by their family and community for becoming parents at such a young age. Although the “moral/religious” stigma attached to

unmarried parents has considerably decreased over the last few decades, many young parents, especially solo-parents feel that people judge them as being irresponsible and a drain on national resources through social welfare dependency.

Young parents often feel that other parents and society at large view them as inadequate parents. However, when young parents see themselves as capable of being good parents their children can grow up to be very happy, confident and successful members of society. If a young parent is not supported to form a positive image of their family then children are vulnerable to several forms of disadvantage. Children need to know from a very young age that their family is perfect just as it is. If they cannot be confident in their family form they can become open to bullying which can lead them to believe that they must have done something wrong not to have a perfect family. Every family is a unique family, one to be cherished and nurtured.

Self-image

Young parents, especially young mothers can find it difficult to maintain a positive self-image after the birth of their child and can suffer from low self-esteem, often due to loss of self-identity. This is especially true if the parent is not in education or employment. Low self-esteem can lead to young people feeling overwhelmed by their role as parents and is also linked to unhealthy sexual relationships, drug and alcohol misuse and depression.



It is important that young parents are encouraged to recognise their value as parents and as individuals and to look positively at the skills they already possess and their achievements so far. Social networks, friendships and involvement in youth groups can help a young parent foster a sense of purpose and achievement.

Health

Depression is commonly associated with pregnancy in young mothers, possibly because of the emotional strain of coping with personal development alongside the responsibilities of parenting. Young parents who are isolated are more at risk of becoming depressed. This can prove adverse for both mother and child. Studies have found that 40% of teenage mothers developed clinical depression in the first year post-delivery.^{xiii}

Negative public attitudes and stereotyping, lack of social networks, poor housing conditions, economic deprivation, lack of access to employment and childcare and inadequate diet or self-care can contribute to physical and mental ill-health amongst young parents.



For more information on supporting a young person with mental health issues see chapter 7 in this Toolkit on 'Working with young people with mental health issues'

Education

Young parents represent a particularly vulnerable group within the education system. The full-time nature of education and training courses can be prohibitive to young parents, especially those parenting alone. Other factors that influence a young parent's decision to remain in or return to education include:

- levels of family support
- cultural norms or community values regarding mothering
- stigma

- a negative experience of school
- transport
- social welfare restrictions
- childcare issues

The response of a school to a young mother's pregnancy can greatly influence their decision to remain in education. However, opportunities that do exist for the young parent to return to education offer a gateway to greater autonomy and the potential for greater financial independence.

Services should also respect the right of mothers to be full-time mothers. Many young women feel that being there for their children as they grow takes precedent over current educational or employment needs.

[See Chapter 10A and 10B of the Toolkit for more information on working with early school leavers and those not in training or employment. Also see the Useful contacts section at the end of this chapter.](#)

Recreation

At a time when most of their peers are out and about enjoying their life, young parents are coping with the daily demands of being a parent. While being a parent is rewarding in many ways it can also be tiring, monotonous and stressful. Anyone who spends a lot of time with young children will realise the value of “me time” and for those parenting alone this is especially important.

Young Fathers

It is estimated that around a fifth of teenage fathers have never lived with their child.^{xiv} International research shows that teenage girls' attitudes towards pregnancy are strongly linked to their perception of the father's attitude.

This chapter was developed by Tracey Friel (Youth Work Ireland), Geraldine Brereton (One Family) and Niamh O'Carolan (Youthnet) with input from Tracy Healy (Shepherds View Young Parent's Programme) and Eliz McArdle (YouthAction NI) for 'Access All Areas – a Diversity Toolkit for the Youth Work Sector' published by NYCI and Youthnet 2012

Therefore we can support teenage mothers by supporting teenage fathers. Research shows that grandmothers - maternal grandmothers in particular - are key gatekeepers whereby their attitude to the father is crucial in influencing the future contact between the father and the child.

Young dads who are positively involved can be a hugely important resource for their children and also for the mothers of their children. Research shows that young mothers who feel supported by their baby's father adjust better to motherhood and behave more positively towards their children – for whom a good relationship with “my dad” proves to be a protective factor for the future.



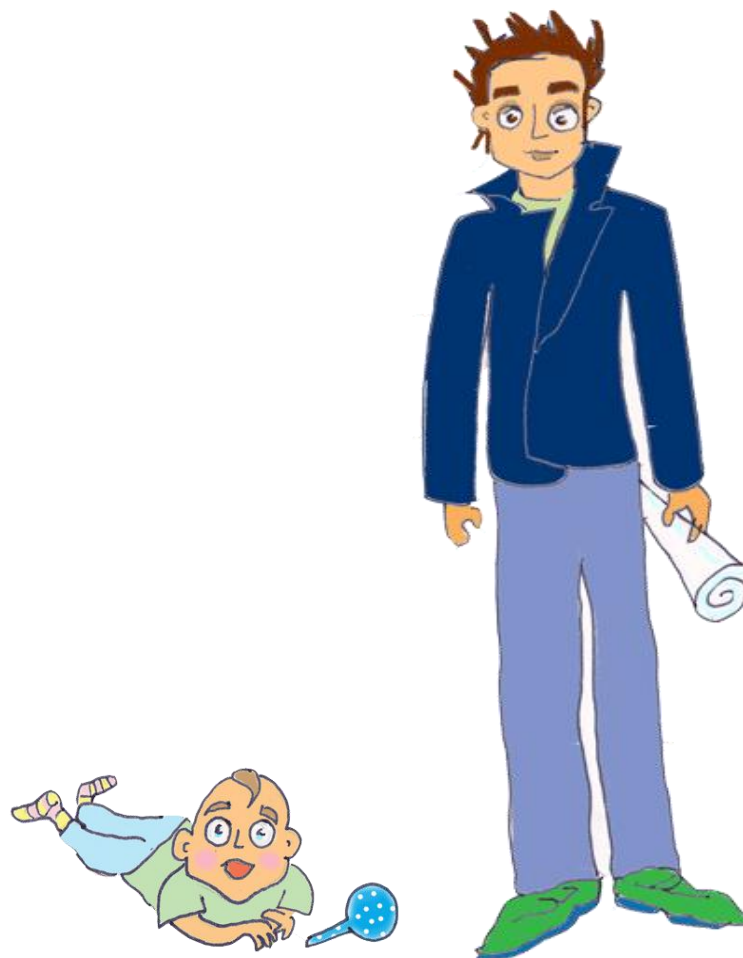
Young fathers need support around the following issues:

- **Values and attitudes in relation to relationships and parenting**
- **Taking responsibility (including sexual behaviour)**
- **Communication skills**
- **Decision-making**
- **Coping with discrimination**
- **Building a child's self-esteem**
- **Helping children learn**
- **Dealing with conflict and accessing available supports**

Supporting young fathers ultimately supports children to have a better life. Fathers need to be valued and told that they are valuable in their child's life. Fathers who are no longer romantically involved with the mother also need

support in looking at how they can be part of their child's life without being in a sexual relationship with the child's mother.

Young fathers need a lot of support in seeing parenting as a challenge they can do well in (rather than just engage in). They will need someone to talk to about how they feel. Often the young mum will block them out as they are so scared about what the future holds. They don't have room to support a young dad with similar anxieties. Young fathers need to be patient with the young mum. They need to know that they have much to offer their child but also to be sure that they want to stay involved. Being involved can be very difficult and take a lot of determination so it is important to give young dads long-term support (There is more information on how to support young fathers later in this chapter).

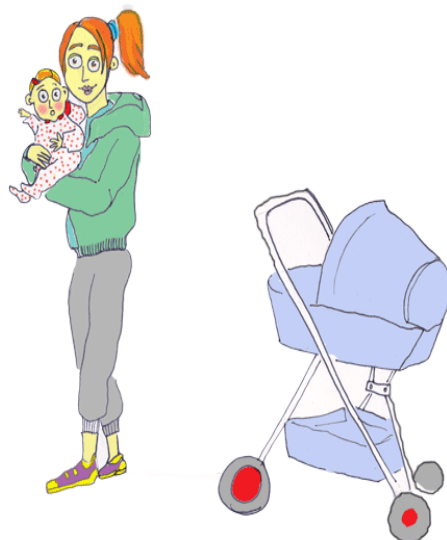


Developing inclusive practice for young parents

Young parents (**including those who are pregnant or their partners**) are often anxious about engaging with youth services or agencies due to lack of confidence or fear of being seen as unable to cope. The development of a trusting relationship is paramount in responding to their needs. Young parents need to know that you are behind them. They should not be patronised, preached to or offered heavy-handed advice on how best to parent their child. Your work needs to focus on promoting their strengths and developing their skills. Whether your group or service is staffed or volunteer-led there are ways in which you can proactively be inclusive of young parents. Consider the following guidelines and how you can best apply them to your situation.

Supporting young parents in a youth work setting

The first thing a youth service must understand when working with young parents is the concept of parent and child coming as ‘a package’. Youth services and programmes should take into account the particular needs and challenges of being a young parent and programmes should be planned with these in mind. Every young parent accessing your youth service is an individual and as such your youth service should try to be flexible enough to respond to their needs in a specific and practical manner. In addition, the experience of engaging with a young parent can lead to an increased number of conversations in your youth service about sexual health. This is an ideal opportunity to introduce a positive sexual health programme.^{xv}



Adapting your service to include young parents

Think about how your service is structured and promoted. Is it parent friendly as well as youth friendly?

- **List your youth service in local publications as offering youth services to young parents**
- **Advertise your group/youth service in places where young parents are likely to attend e.g. schools, colleges, health centres, community/social welfare offices and parenting websites**
- **Ensure the community is clear about what the youth service can offer. Build up positive relationships within the community (through schools, clubs, church, health services, etc.)**
- **Ensure a safe, nurturing and structured environment**
- **Consider your ability to be flexible about times, locations and programme content so that you can meet the needs of young parents**
- **Consider child-minding costs and availability and what support you can offer**
- **Create a child friendly welcoming place for young parents and their children e.g. have toys available for different age groups and a relaxed space in which to meet**
- **Ensure your service is accessible for buggies/prams and have baby changing and feeding facilities available**
- **Consider transport costs and accessible transport services to young parents and plan activities around this to ensure inclusion**
- **Ensure staff are sensitive to the needs of young parents including cultural and religious needs e.g. young Muslim woman requiring single sex provision**

Participation

Young parents need an opportunity to be involved with a youth service that listens and responds to their needs and involves them as active participants in their own development.

- **Treat young parents as adults, not as kids, allowing them to have ideas about life which may not be fully thought out**
- **Young mums vs. older mums - generally young mums have very different issues to older mums so it is best to work with them in separate groups**
- **Group-based programs can often produce more change than individual-based programs especially for high risk mothers but it must be recognised that many young parents will feel apprehensive about joining a group. Time should be given for individual sessions if necessary**
- **Look at the possibility of running gender specific activities and sessions to facilitate safe spaces for discussion**

On-going Support

Health Care

Youth services can help the post-natal parents by linking them with the relevant support, for example programmes for young mothers.



Post-natal depression

Depression is commonly associated with pregnancy in young mothers, possibly because of the emotional strain of coping with personal development alongside the responsibilities of parenting. Young parents who are isolated are

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more at risk of becoming depressed. This can prove adverse for both mother and child. Studies have found that 40% of teenage mothers developed clinical depression in the first year post-delivery. It may be necessary to refer a young parent to a specialised service for support. However, it is important that youth workers continue to support the young person through this process and the young mother has plenty of opportunities to keep in contact with their peers.

Parenting skills

The following are ways that you can support young parents.

- **Help young parents make decisions for themselves - don't tell them what to do**
- **Support young parents to manage stress**
- **Support a young person being a young person and also a mum/dad**
- **Young parents need support around caring for themselves so they can care properly for their child**
- **Help young parents to plan free time, social time and quality time with their child**
- **Offer information sessions on entitlements and back to education or employment opportunities**
- **Help young parents to look at what they want from life and how they can still get that if they decide to be a parent**
- **Explore parenting skills and how they will manage stressful situations, tiredness and responsibility**
- **Try to get the mum and dad talking if they are not already. They can plan together for their child even if they are not in a couple relationship. Help them explore what is best for their child**

- Home visits are recommended where possible, especially for young mothers who live in rural areas and find it difficult to access transport to your youth service
- Organise some fun family-friendly events where young parents can meet other young parents. Informal support is very important. At times also include family members which include grandparents, aunts, uncles and siblings. Remember many children have step-siblings and young parents may need support in managing this situation
- Follow up with the young parents as often one small thing can stop them returning to your service. Phone them and check in on how they are doing and make sure they feel welcome to come back at any time
- Create good links to other youth services and services which young parents need to access. Often young parents need a supportive person to go with them the first time to visit a new service
- Help the young parent identify, set and work toward obtaining goals

Involving families

Family support can have a hugely positive influence on the lives of young parents by offering practical and emotional support. Support young parents in communicating with their parents and other adults in their lives. They may not have fully got past being a teenager in the home and now they have to suddenly be an adult and communicate in an adult way.



Support for Fathers

- Adopt policies and outreach strategies to facilitate relationships between fathers and their children
- Assume that all men want to be involved with their children; do not equate the father's absence with not caring
- Create a “father friendly environment” by employing more men on staff, displaying photos of men with children, listing fathers on program enrolment forms and adjusting program schedules to fit work schedules

Early pregnancy support for young mothers

Not all pregnancies are crisis pregnancies but you may find yourself having to advise and support a young person experiencing a crisis pregnancy. If a young woman tells you that she may be pregnant it is important to consider the following:

- Allow them time to talk and try to pick up on hints they may be giving. It can be very difficult to say ‘I think I may be pregnant’. The initial disclosure may come as a partial disclosure or can begin as a series of indirect questions about pregnancy
- They will be experiencing a wide range of emotions in response to the pregnancy which can often be conflicting and traumatic. This can include fear, uncertainty with regard to what is involved, guilt, blame, embarrassment, confusion and anxiety about what lies ahead of them
- Help them to slow down and to look at what is happening to them. Talk to them about who in their family can be involved. Explain that they will need lots of support no matter what choices they make in the future

- Be clear with them around how they know they are pregnant. Discuss a GP visit to confirm the pregnancy
- If a young woman has chosen you to be the person they talk to about their pregnancy remember that this will have been a big decision for them. They already trust you so you must ensure that you are very honest with them around what support you can give them
- Ensure that the pregnancy is not a result of sexual abuse. If you suspect there may be sexual abuse then follow your child protection policy on how to proceed. Be aware of Our Duty to Care (NI) www.volunteering-ni.org or the HSE Children First Guidelines (ROI) found on www.dohc.ie/publications/children_first.html
- Allow a young parent time to tell you what has happened and who is involved and ask them how they would like you to help
- Talk to the young parent about what support services are on offer to them such as in school, hospital and other social care programmes
- Support a young parent in how they will talk to their parents or a family member about the pregnancy
- Ensure the young woman knows she can attend counselling services whereby all her options will be explained in full. Pregnancy counselling in the Republic of Ireland is available from Positive Options www.positiveoptions.ie or Freetext LIST to 50444. This service is free of charge and gives opportunities to young women experiencing a crisis pregnancy to explore their feelings and to discuss options that are open to them in confidence and privacy. (A list of organisations is also contained in the Useful contacts section at the end of this chapter)

Preparing for young parenthood

Youth workers need to help young parents **(including those who are pregnant or their partners)** to start preparing for the life changing events that are only months away.

Pre-natal care

Many young people don't feel comfortable attending antenatal classes which often comprise of older and married mothers. Young mothers often present to antenatal clinics late in their pregnancy.^{xvi} Some local hospitals may provide classes for young pregnant women. Youth services can play a vital role in encouraging young parents to attend check-ups and developmental screenings.

Forward planning

Discuss with young parents what lies ahead and who can help when the baby is born – such as family (including the new grandparents).

Encourage young parents to talk to their school principal about continuing in school. Also ask them to request information on other options such as home tuition, grants and financial assistance while in school or going forward to third level.



Support/encourage young parents to:

- Check out the services in the area (support groups, counselling, etc.)
- Talk to the midwife or doctor about how they are feeling
- Talk to the other parent about how he/she feels
- Get both families involved. Talk to them about how they could do this
- Arrange a family meeting with professional support
- Get other adults involved that they trust and who are supportive and can act as mentors or advocates if necessary. Remind them that this is too big to go through alone
- Use libraries for useful reading materials
- Talk to the medical social worker at the hospital or attached to the maternity unit. S/he will have experience of working with women throughout pregnancy and can offer emotional support and practical assistance
- Make a list of people who can help in an emergency and people with whom they can discuss issues and gain support from
- Source information and classes on pregnancy and childrearing
- Be aware that many local community groups and women's groups can be a source of support
- Let them know that they can revisit their crisis pregnancy counsellor during their pregnancy and after the birth of their baby
- Look out for signs of depression and encourage the young person to talk to their GP or a counsellor

Preparing Young Fathers

Help young dads to communicate clearly with the mum about what they have to give and what type of dad they want to be. Preparing to be a father is a daunting task. It may be helpful to encourage young dads to:

- **Attend a parenting class to learn some practical skills**
- **Visit the library to get some books**
- **Ask the mum if they can attend clinic appointments with her**
- **Be supportive to the mum even if they are no longer in a relationship**
- **Seek support in communicating with each other whereby they can put the baby first and learn to communicate clearly on what is really important**
- **Talk to their family about how they can be supportive when the baby comes**
- **See a counsellor if they need a supportive non-judgmental person to talk things through with**
- **Plan how they can be involved with the baby - from the labour through to adulthood**
- **Seek out peer support, family planning education, parent education and mediation youth services**



Young fathers should also become informed about their rights and responsibilities.

They need to know about:

- **Guardianship**
- **Custody**
- **Access**
- **Maintenance**
- **What it is like to care for a young baby**
- **How to support the mum**

Tackling childcare issues

Childcare is often the most significant barrier to young parents becoming engaged in education or employment. The high cost of childcare means that many young parents feel it is not financially viable to return to education or employment. This is especially true for those looking for unskilled or semi-skilled employment.

In many areas it is extremely difficult to secure full-time childcare places. Community crèches are limited. They can have long waiting lists and most only offer part-time childcare. Family members are often the main source of childcare for young parents; this is especially true in disadvantaged areas.



You can help young parents to think about whether they want to take time out after their baby is born to parent full-time or if they would like to return to school or work. If they choose the second option then they need to consider what childcare is available to them in their local area.

Advise them to ask themselves the following questions:

- **How much childcare will I need?**
- **How much will I be able to afford for childcare?**
- **Will I be able to apply to a local community childcare service where costs will be subsidised?**
- **How will I get to the service?**
- **Will I need childcare close to home or close to school or work?**
- **Would I like my baby to be cared for at home**
- **What back up do I have if my baby gets sick and can't attend childcare?**
- **Do I know and understand all the policies at work in relation to time off, sick leave and flexible working hours?**
- **Do I know other parents that I could talk to about their experiences of finding childcare?**
- **Will I be eligible for childcare financial support to help me return to work?**

Helping young parents understand welfare and state support

Many young parents rely on social welfare for income support. The social welfare system can be daunting for young parents due to its complexities. Many are not fully aware of their entitlements and can often feel intimidated by the level of bureaucracy and paperwork involved.

Many young parents who are parenting alone are not in receipt of maintenance payments from the child's other parent. Maintenance payments received for a child are subtracted from any social welfare payment the parent receives.

The One Parent Family Payment in the **Republic of Ireland** is the primary social welfare payment for someone parenting alone providing they are not co-habiting with a partner.

In **Northern Ireland** there is no specific payment for someone parenting alone but a wide range of financial help may be available. Support comes in the form of Child Maintenance, Jobseekers Allowance, Employment Support Allowance, and Income Support. It may be available whether the parent is working, looking for a job or unable to work.^{xvii}

Medical Card

It is very important that a young parent not only looks after their health throughout their pregnancy but also, in order to parent well, to continuously care for their well-being. Babies and young children can get sick frequently and it is important to seek medical advice when this occurs.



In the **Republic of Ireland** attending a doctor can be very expensive and young parents should apply for a medical card if they are eligible. A Medical Card covers the cost of medication and GP visits; a GP visit card meets the cost of the consultation only. Both cards provide cover for both the parent and child. If a parent is getting the One Parent Family Payment or is on a low income then they are likely to be eligible for a medical card.

In **Northern Ireland** all costs for GP visits and prescriptions are covered by the NHS. Dental treatment is free for the mother during maternity and for one year after the baby's birth and to those under the age of 18 years.

Accommodation

Some young parents live in Supported Accommodation. Transitional supported housing schemes, comprising family type accommodation and specialist interim accommodation facilities offer safe and secure housing and individual support to help people that are homeless overcome the barriers they face in relation to finding and sustaining a tenancy. Interim housing and community-based accommodation projects aim to help young people and families develop the skills to manage their own tenancies. Family Support Services can be very positive and can very often intervene before things get to crisis point regarding accommodation.

Rent Supplement / housing benefit may be payable to solo-parents living in private rented accommodation who need help paying rent. Rent allowance in **Republic of Ireland** is restricted to those who have been privately renting for at least 6 months. This effectively could 'trap' a young parent in their family home as few can afford to pay 6 months' rent. This means the young parent and their families may have to consider sharing accommodation in the family home. Young solo-parents need to talk to their family and decide if they can live at home with their baby.

It is important to encourage young parents to consider the following options

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and how it will affect the family already in the family home. Ask them:

- **Is there room for another person in the home?**
- **Do you need your own place? If yes what benefits can you claim?**
- **Are you ready and able to live alone?**
- **Do you need family support at all times or close at hand?**
- **What other responsibilities are you taking on by living alone?**
- **Are you ready for this along with a new baby?**

See the 'Useful contacts' section at the end of this chapter for organisations that can advise young parents on what they are entitled to.



Checklist 9 - How accessible is your organisation to young parents?

This checklist can help you to identify how you can improve your service for young parents.

Public image

How we present our service to our community

• We advertise our service and programmes in places where young parents are likely to see them e.g. doctors surgeries and health clinics, crèches, community welfare offices and to public health nurses	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our service promotes a positive image of parenting, through literature, posters etc.	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Activities/events which include young parents/families are provided and promoted	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our service is represented on local boards/committees relevant to young parents	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our service links closely with parents and family members of young parents	YES	PARTLY	NO

• Our service is listed in local publications as offering services to young parents	YES	PARTLY	NO

Policies and procedures

We have a written commitment to deliver an equal and inclusive service

• Our service has a childcare policy	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our child protection policy includes reference to young parents being supported through issues/referrals	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We have an equal opportunity statement referring to young parents	YES	PARTLY	NO

Programme planning and delivery

Our programmes are designed and delivered to include the diverse needs and identities of young parents

• Our service has up to date figures on numbers of young parents in our target area	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Young parents are involved with programme planning	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our programme schedule reviews and invites input from young parents with regard to changes	YES	PARTLY	NO

• Our service provides a crèche facility or provides funding towards childcare for young parents engaged in groups	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our service provides transport	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our programmes run at times suitable for young parents	YES	PARTLY	NO

Professional development

Our staff and volunteers are trained and supported to deliver an inclusive youth service

• Our service links with other organisations working with young parents	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Staff and volunteers are trained in matters of child protection, disclosure and law regarding provision of information to young people who are pregnant	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Staff and volunteers have an awareness of the issues faced by young parents	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our service has good links with local schools, school completion programmes and other educational providers working with young parents	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our service refers young parents on to more specific services depending on needs	YES	PARTLY	NO

Participation

We make sure we include the voices of young people at all levels of our youth service

• Young parents are consulted about service provision (including those who do not access our service)	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our service includes young parents in the decision making process e.g. inclusion on committees and boards of management	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Meetings are timed to allow for childcare arrangements/funding for childcare provided if necessary	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our service is accessible for prams	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our service provide a baby changing/feeding facility	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our service offers an outreach service	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our service actively encourages participation of young parents	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our service is child friendly	YES	PARTLY	NO

Useful contacts

Parenting Support & Referral Agencies (ROI)

One Family

askonefamily is a National Helpline for all one-parent families

Local Phone: 1890 66 22 12

Email: support@onefamily.ie

Web: www.onefamily.ie

One family offers a voice, support and action for one-parent families. Services include positive options counselling, ongoing support throughout and after crisis pregnancy, general counselling, information and support on a range of topics, parenting and self development courses, training for professionals, campaigning and lobbying.

One Parent Exchange and Network (OPEN)

The national network of local lone parent self-help groups

Phone: 01 - 8320264

Email: enquiries@oneparent.ie

Web: www.oneparent.ie

OPEN have also produced '[Everybody Knows ...](#)' – an information pack containing brief information sheets summarising statistics about one-parent families in Ireland aimed at dispelling myths about lone parenting in Ireland.

Treoir

Local Phone: 1890 252 084

Email: info@treoir.ie

Web: www.treoir.ie

Treoir have produced a series of booklets for young parents and their families

Community Mothers	Community Mothers is a support service provided by local women for parents living in their community. Parents are visited in their own home and support, guidance and information is offered. Talk to your Public Health Nurse to find out if the service is available in your area
Family Resource Centres Phone: 01 - 611 4100 Web: www.fsa.ie	Offer support, information and special services for those in need of extra family support. For details of your nearest Family Resource Centre and for a copy of the Support for Families Directory contact the Family Support Agency.
Teen Parents Support Programme Phone: 01 - 670 0167	Emotional and practical support and information for young parents. Contact the National Co-ordinator.
National Association for Parent Support Phone: (0502) 61666	Provides information and advice on parenting matters.
Cuidiú, The Irish Childbirth Trust Carmichael House, Nth Brunswick St, Dublin 7 Phone: 01 - 872 4501 Email: info@cuidiu-ict.ie Web: www.cuidiu-ict.ie	An organisation that provides support and education for parents together with information and classes on pregnancy and child rearing.

Parentline**Phone:** 01 - 8733500/878 7230**Local phone:** 1890 92 7277**Email:** parentline@eircom.net**Web:** www.parentline.ie

Is a support youth service for parents and guardians. They also have a face to face support youth service. They offer a helpline for parents experiencing difficulty or stress

Social welfare information is available from: www.welfare.ie or by phone

Maternity Benefit

phone: 1890 690 690

One Parent Family Payment

phone: 1890 500 000

Child Benefit

phone: 1890 400 400

Family Income Support

phone: 1890 92 77 70

Parenting Support & Referral Agencies (NI)

Parenting NI Phone: 0808 8010 722 Web: www.parentingni.org	Provides support to parents through a helpline, parenting education and a parenting forum.
Gingerbread NI Phone: 0808 808 8090 Web: www.gingerbreadni.org	Gingerbread works with and for lone parents and their children in NI.
Family Support NI Phone: 0845 600 6483 Web: www.familysupportni.gov.uk	The Health and Social Care Board for NI has developed the Family Support website which gives details of a wide range of organisations that provide help and support to families.
Brook Phone: 0808 802 1234 Web: www.brook.org.uk	Provides free and confidential information for under 25s around sexual health.
NI Direct Government Services Web: www.nidirect.gov.uk	One stop shop website for government services such as benefits and financial support, social housing, employment, education etc.
Family Planning Association Phone: 0845 122 8687 Web: www.fpa.org.uk	Provides straightforward information, advice and support on sexual health, sex and relationships

Social welfare information is available from:

www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Moneyandworkentitlements/YourMoney/DG_4003043

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Counselling (ROI)

Positive Options Website: www.positiveoptions.ie Freetext: LIST to 50444	This service is free of charge and gives opportunities to young women experiencing a crisis pregnancy to explore their feelings and to discuss options that are open to them in confidence and privacy.
One Family	See contact details above
The Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA) 60 Amiens Street, Dublin 1 Phone: 01 - 8069444 Fax: 01 - 8069445 Email: post@ifpa.ie	Provides sexual and reproductive health information, clinical youth services, counselling youth services, education, training and awareness raising. • Sexual and Reproductive Health Youth services • Pregnancy Counselling Youth service • Education and Training Youth service
Life Pregnancy Care Youth service Local Phone: 1850 281281 SMS (text): 086 6638253 Web: www.life.ie	Is an Irish organisation dedicated to counselling women with crisis pregnancies. They have five centres around Ireland.
CURA Local Phone: 1850 622626 Web: www.cura.ie/index.htm	Is a voluntary organisation which offers support and help to those who are faced with a crisis pregnancy.

Family Resource Centres See above	Offer low-cost and free pregnancy counselling services.
Irish Council for Psychotherapy Phone: 01 - 272 2105 Email: info@icpty.ie Web: www.psychotherapy-ireland.com	Details of psychotherapists are available on the 'Find a Psychotherapist' section of website.
Accord Catholic Marriage Counselling Service Phone: 01 - 5053112 Email: admin@accord.ie Web: www.accord.ie	Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP) Phone: 01 - 230 0061 Email: iacp@irish-counselling.ie Web: www.irish-counselling.ie IACP operates a telephone referral service.

Counselling (NI)

Family Planning Association	See above
Care in Crisis Phone: 38329900 Web: www.careincrisis.org.uk	Offers a professional, caring and confidential help and support to individuals, couples and families experiencing a range of problems and difficulties.
Relate NI Phone: 90323454 Web: www.relateni.org	Offers relationship and family counselling services.

Pregnancy Matters Phone: 90249414 Web: www.pregmatters.org.uk	Provides counselling and support services before and after birth.
Nexus Phone: 90326803 Web: www.patient.co.uk/support/Nexus-Institute.htm	Provide counselling and support to anyone over the age of 16 years, who has been sexually abused at any time in his or her life. They offer one-to-one counselling, group therapy, support groups and a range of client workshops.

Mediation (North and South)

Family Mediation Service Phone: 01 - 6344320 Email: fmsearlfort@welfare.ie	A free mediation service for couples who have decided to separate or divorce.

Family Mediation NI Phone: 90243265 Web: www.familymediationni.org.uk	Mediation service to help parents communicate, reach agreements and focus on the child's needs.

Mediators Institute of Ireland Phone: 01 - 2828952 Email: info@mediatorsinstituteofireland.ie Web: www.mediatonireland.com	The professional association for practitioner mediators mainly in the Republic of Ireland.

The Crisis Pregnancy Agency

4th Floor, 89 – 94 Capel Street,
Dublin 1

Phone: 01 - 814 6292

Fax: 01 - 814 6282

Email: info@crisispregnancy.ie

Web: www.crisispregnancy.ie

A planning and co-ordinating body established to formulate and implement a strategy to address the issue of crisis pregnancy in Ireland through education, advice, counselling and such other health youth services for the purpose of providing support, after crisis pregnancy

Childcare (ROI)**Pre-school Officers**

Web: www.hse.ie or
www.dcy.gov.ie

A information leaflet for parents of pre-school children is available from the Health Services Executive (HSE) or Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA)

City/County Childcare Committees

Phone: 01 - 635 4000

Web: www.pobal.ie or
www.dcy.gov.ie

County Childcare Committees will have lists of registered childcare services for your area. Local Childcare Committees can be contacted through your Local Authority.

The Border Counties Childcare Network (BCCN)

Phone: (047) 72469

Web: www.bccn.ie

BCCN operates in the counties of Monaghan, Meath, Louth, Cavan, Donegal, Sligo and Leitrim. BCCN supports the development of a coordinated approach to the delivery of high quality, accessible, affordable early childhood services.

IPPA - The Early Childhood organisation Phone: 01 - 463 0010 Web: www.ippa.ie	IPPA, the Early Childhood organisation, is a nationwide practice based organisation, representing members including playgroups, parent and toddler groups, full day care groups, after-school, out-of-school groups and individual members.
The Childcare Directory Web: www.childcare.ie	The Childcare Directory Ltd provides information on finding childcare solutions in local areas.
The National Children's Nursery Association (NCNA) Phone: 01 - 460 1138 Web: www.ncna.net	The National Children's Nursery Association provides advice, support and training for member nurseries as well as raising public awareness regarding issues affecting the childcare sector.

Childcare (NI)

Childminding Ireland Phone: 01 - 287 8466 Web: www.childminding.ie	Childminding Ireland, the National Association for Childminders, is the only organisation in Ireland dedicated to working for childminding; providing information, advice and support to childminders and parents
Family Support NI	See contact details above

NICMA (NI Childminding Association) Phone: 0871 200 2063 Web: www.nicma.org	Delivering a high quality childminding experience to children and families in NI
Employers for Childcare Phone: 0800 028 6538 Web: www.employersforchildcare.org	A registered charity and not-for-profit organisation, set up to assist working parents by encouraging businesses to invest in employer-supported childcare

Education

Aontas Web: www.aontas.com/inforeferrals.html	The National Association of Adult Education offer an internet based information referral service.
Treoir	See above
Local Employment Service (LES) Phone: 01 - 607 050 Web: www.fas.ie	Contact the employment services officer in your nearest FAS office.
The Adult Education Officer/VTOS coordinator/The Adult Education Guidance Service in your local Vocational Education Committee Phone: 01 - 8690 715/6 Web: www.ncge.ie/adult_details.htm	24 Adult education guidance projects are available throughout the country. To find out if there is a project near you telephone the National Centre for Guidance in Education.

Youth Information Centres (YICs)www.youthinformation.ie/

Can provide young parents with information. Check out the website to locate your nearest YIC

The Education Coordinator in your local Partnership Company.**Phone:** 01 - 240 0700

To find out if there is a Partnership Company in your area call Area Development Management (ADM)

EGSA (Educational Guidance Service for Adults)**Phone:** 90244274**Web:** www.egsa.org.uk

Aims to encourage all adults to engage in learning and manage their careers.

Legal**AIM family services****Phone:** 01 - 6708363**Email:** aimfamilyservices@eircom.net**Web:** www.aimfamilyservices.ie

AIM is a voluntary organisation which offers non-directive counselling, legal information, and a family mediation service to people experiencing marital, relationship and family problems

Free Legal Advice Centres (FLAC)**Phone:** 01 - 874 5690**Email:** info@flac.ie**Web:** www.flac.ie

The Free Legal Advice Service is a non-governmental organisation which campaigns for full and equal access to justice for all

Legal Aid Board**Phone:** 066 - 9471000**Web:** www.legalaidthboard.ie

This chapter was developed by Tracey Friel (Youth Work Ireland), Geraldine Brereton (One Family) and Niamh O'Carolan (Youthnet) with input from Tracy Healy (Shepherds View Young Parent's Programme) and Eliz McArdle (YouthAction NI) for 'Access All Areas – a Diversity Toolkit for the Youth Work Sector' published by NYCI and Youthnet 2012

The Courts Service**Phone:** 01 - 888 6000**Web:** www.courts.ie

The Court Service is a statutory body set up to manage the courts and provide information on the courts to the public.

Citizens Advice Bureau**Phone:** 90261970**Web:** www.adviceguide.org.uk/nireland

Is the largest advice charity in NI and helps people resolve their debt, benefits, housing, legal, discrimination, employment, immigration, consumer and other problems

NI Legal Services Commission**Phone:** 90408888**Web:** www.nilsc.org.uk

NILSC aims to promote fair and equal access to justice in NI in its provision of publicly funded legal services

Other Web-Based Resource Sites

www.teenparents.ie/iopen24/

www.rollercoaster.ie - pregnancy and parenting website, including forum on parenting issues

www.solo.ie/

www.mammy.ie/

www.youngfathers.net/

www.young-fathers.org.uk/

www.da-youngfathersproject.co.uk

www.studyofadolescence.org.uk/research/projects_completed/young_fathers.html

www.barnardos.org.uk

www.youngminds.org.uk

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www.amh.org.uk (Action Mental Health)

www.mindwisenv.org

www.housingadviceni.org

www.brysongroup.org

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CHAPTER TEN A

(This chapter is specific to the Republic of Ireland)

Working with Early School Leavers

Introduction

This chapter focuses on early school leavers. It presents demographics relating to early school leaving, explains the varying needs and issues that young people may face if they leave school early and it offers practical advice on working with them. It concludes with a list of contacts that will help you in your work with early school leavers.



Terminology

The legal definition of early school leaving in Ireland is ‘non-participation in school before a young person reaches age 16 or before completing three years post-primary education, or whichever is later’.ⁱ However, another useful definition is ‘leaving the education system without a minimum of five passes in the Leaving Certificate or equivalent qualification’.ⁱⁱ

Early school leaver is the acceptable term to use. Avoid using the term dropout because it may be perceived as derogatory. Many early school leavers have not ‘dropped out’ of education. Instead they may have made a conscious decision to pursue education and training in other forums - such as Youthreach or apprenticeships.

‘Early School Leavers’ are not looked at as a specific group in Northern Ireland policy and so a comparable chapter for Northern Ireland (10B) ‘Working with young people outside of education, employment or training (NEET)’ has been written separately. Nevertheless, there is significant overlap between the 2 groups and the ‘needs and issues’ and ‘developing inclusive practice’ sections in this chapter would be helpful to youth workers in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Demographics

The School Leaver’s Survey Report 2008 shows that 14% of young people left school without completing the leaving certificate. While this figure is improving each year the level of progress is slow.

However, the number of young people that stay on to complete the junior cert is improving considerably with only 2% leaving school before doing the junior certificate.ⁱⁱⁱ

These figures only relate to those who have actually transferred from primary school to secondary school. There is a small but significant number who do not make this transition. 53% of early school leavers will continue their education in facilities such as Youthreach.^{iv}



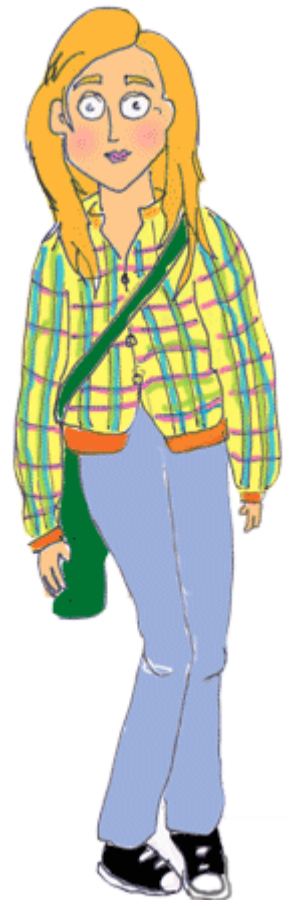
Changing patterns of Early School Leaving

The legacy of Early School Leaving within Ireland has been significant. While there has been a growing decrease in the numbers of young people leaving school early, figures from the Central Statistics Office in 2008, showed that 14% of the total Irish population aged between 15 and 64 had an educational attainment level of ‘primary or below’ thus pointing to a significant prevalence

of low educational achievement within the population at large. In addition, literacy levels in Ireland are alarmingly high with 1 in 4 having difficulties in reading and writing. This is largely due to a legacy of early school leaving in the past and people 'being out of practice' due to various life circumstances.

Throughout Ireland, school retention rates vary considerably. For example, in 1999 County Leitrim had the highest Leaving Certificate retention rate of 91.2%, while Dublin City had the lowest retention rates at 72.1%.^v The considerable variation in retention rates across Ireland highlights the fact that early school leaving requires localised and community-based interventions as well as interventions on a national level.

From a European-wide perspective, Ireland is currently ranked 19th out of the 27 EU member states for levels of early school leaving.^{vi}



Needs and issues of Early School Leavers

Economic overview

The ‘Celtic Tiger’ had a massive effect on educational trends. With the construction industry booming in Ireland, the trend of leaving school early to pursue an apprenticeship became prevalent in Irish society. For many, this decision led to the chance of training, a full time job and job security for a number of years. In 2006, only 5% of early school leavers were unemployed. This has risen dramatically and early school leavers are the most vulnerable group of those attempting to enter the labour market.^{vii viii} This is as a result of the employment market becoming increasingly competitive and the Leaving Certificate is the minimum level of education required for many occupations.



A negative economic climate also affects retention initiatives run within school systems. The services that provide extra support to young people at risk of leaving school early suffer severe funding cutbacks in times of recession. Psychological services, special needs teachers, English language support teachers, Guidance Counsellors, the Visiting Teacher for Travellers Service and Home School Liaison Officers have had resources considerably reduced or cut completely in recent times in Ireland. With a decrease in support systems together with a moratorium on employment the young people who should reap the benefits from extra services are left with reduced support. Similarly, vital links between home and school, facilitated by Home School Community Liaison Officers, have been diminished due to non-replacement of staff. Together with delays and restrictions in accessing educational psychology services resulting in a wait of months for an assessment, and longer still before acquiring critical educational support,^{ix} there is a clear danger of further

marginalisation for some young people which could lead to them opting out of that education system as a result.

Understanding Early School Leaving

Early school leavers should not be viewed as a homogenous group. In order for a young person to leave mainstream education early, a myriad of needs and issues will have been faced by the young person and failures to meet these needs will exist. These needs and issues are as varied as they are numerous. One of the main perceptions that exist about early school leavers is that they were somehow academically incapable of completing mainstream education and ‘toeing the line’. However, in reality the current system cannot cater to the catalogue of diverse needs of young people today and because of this, early school leaving is a prevalent and pressing issue for many communities.



Many young people who have left school early feel that they are viewed as ‘wasters’ or ‘losers’ by the community at large. Paradoxically however, for many young people leaving mainstream education is the bravest and the most positive course of action to take. With ever-decreasing support in schools and ever-increasing class sizes, many young people fall through the cracks and are isolated in mainstream schools. 53% of young early school leavers will continue their education in facilities such as Youthreach where they can receive necessary support and continue a more participant-centred form of education.^x We must appreciate the right of a young person to receive their education in the medium that they feel is most appropriate. Mainstream education may not be the most appropriate form of education for all.

A negative stereotyping toward early school leavers exists and creates a stigma

around the issue. It is important when working with an early school leaver to recognise this and respond sensitively to the reasons why they left school early if they decide to share these with you.

Impact of Early School Leaving

The impact of early school leaving can be very disruptive to a young person's development and it can have a detrimental effect on their socio-economic standing in the future. The stage at which a young person decides to leave school is of utmost importance, the earlier a young person leaves, the more problematic this can be in their future. Those who fail to obtain five or more passes in their Junior Certificate will experience greater trouble in finding employment than those with a full Junior Certificate.^{xi} In addition to this, many employers or training courses require completion of the Leaving Certificate at a minimum.



The attainment of the Leaving Certificate provides a formal qualification and although necessary to demonstrate educational achievement it does not convey the social and personal attributes that are gained by completing the secondary school experience. Leaving school early or being habitually absent from school due to truancy can be detrimental to social and personal development as well as affecting academic development and attainment. Leaving school early may prevent the development of specific skills that will allow a person to 'function within certain environments'.^{xii} In school we not only receive academic tuition but we are taught important social skills such as, how to work and function within a group environment, and how to behave within pre-existing social and institutional boundaries. The school environment also exposes us to people of many different ethnicities, personalities and to many different points of view. Therefore, there is a risk that a person who leaves school early will be deficient of the skill-set needed to participate in society to their full potential.

There is a real risk of long-term socio-economic disadvantage for an early school leaver. For many, leaving school early will lead to narrower employment opportunities and an increased likelihood of poverty and unemployment.^{xiii}

Early school leaving can also lead to an increased chance of teenage pregnancy, criminal activity and psychological issues such as depression and anxiety.^{xiv}

For more information see the chapters in this Toolkit on 'working with young parents', 'working with young people involved with the Juvenile Justice System' and 'working with young people with mental health issues).



Why do some young people leave school early?

There are many reasons why some young people do not stay at school. The important thing to remember when working with an early school leaver is that their decision to opt out of mainstream education is a symptom of the wider range of issues that they are facing. These issues may fall into a number of categories such as personal, social, family, economic or school-based problems. 62% of early school leavers attribute their decision to leave school to school based issues, 60% to economic and 14% to family issues and 5% to health factors (respondents could tick more than one answer).^{xv}

A number of common reasons why young people leave school early are outlined below but this list is not exhaustive and is only a guide to what potential problems the young person may be experiencing or have experienced. There is no archetypical early school leaver and stereotyping should be avoided.

Personal:

- Low self esteem - which may be exacerbated by an ineffectual school policy in dealing with low levels of literacy and numeracy
- Substance misuse/abuse^{xvi} - which may cause lower levels of motivation and also lead to truancy and behavioural problems
- Learning difficulties which are undiagnosed or may not be supported effectively
- Lack of motivation - which may be due to a negative perception of the importance of education and its relevance to 'real life'

Social:

- Life style – the includes substance abuse or misuse, negative sleeping patterns and anti-social behaviour
- Poverty - there are higher levels of early school leaving in areas of lower-socio economic standing.^{xvii} Young people may opt out of school due to high participation costs
- Young offenders - 40% of young offenders have left school before the age of 14.^{xviii} The question is whether the prelude to offending behaviour was leaving school early or if leaving school early led to the offending behaviour

Family:

- Parental attitudes toward education i.e. clash of home and school cultures
- Family conflict or change (e.g. death or separation)
- High school participation costs
- Family poverty - a young person may feel the need to opt out of education in order to help support their family

Economic:

- Celtic Tiger and its legacy – there is more pressure to achieve wealth within an affluent society.^{xix} This can lead to increased pressure on young people who may have left school as a result. Also the draw of apprenticeships during the ‘boom years’ encouraged young people to leave school early

School:

- Low levels of literacy and numeracy leading to poor performance and decrease in self esteem or behavioural problems
- Age differences - when the student is older/younger than their classmates^{xx}
- English being a foreign language
- Negative relationships with teachers leading to increased bad behaviour or suspension on a regular basis
- Absence of counselling services in school
- Perceived lack of suitability of curricula - the perception that the curriculum is “boring”^{xxi} and is not relevant to their real lives
- Poor achievement in school leading to lack of motivation

Which young people are at risk of leaving school early?

Gender bias

Gender differences in figures for early school leavers are stark. 15% of males aged 18-24 were identified as early school leavers in 2008 compared to only 8% of females from the same age group.^{xxii} As a general rule across the country, there are two male early school leavers to every female early school leaver. Males participate in more apprenticeships and labouring positions than

females which may go some way to explain the gender bias.

Travellers

Many young people from the Traveller community leave school early. In 2008, just 50% of Travellers completed their Junior Certificate^{xxiii} with 13% continuing on into the senior cycle. The Visiting Teacher for Travellers Service that was dedicated to facilitating and supporting education for Travellers up to third level is no longer in existence.

[For more information please refer to the chapter on 'working with Young Travellers' in this Toolkit.](#)



Young mothers

There is a strong correlation between teenage pregnancy and early school leaving; this correlation is especially strong for young mothers. Teenage mothers have only a 49% probability of having their upper secondary qualifications.^{xxiv} However, in the relationship between early school leaving and teenage pregnancy it is difficult to outline where the cause and effect lie.

[For more information please refer to the chapter on 'working with young parents' in this Toolkit.](#)

Young Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Undocumented Migrants

A number of asylum seekers and refugees will have missed out on schooling in their home countries due to war, conflict and displacement. In Ireland those under 18 will be given places in Irish schools. However, due to a probable disruption in their schooling, possible difficulty with English language and high stress levels, their ability to settle, concentrate and achieve good results can be

compromised and may lead to difficulties completing their Leaving Certificate. While refugees can avail of all courses similar to any Irish citizen, both asylum seekers and undocumented migrants who reach the age of 18 have difficulty accessing further (3rd level) education as they are no longer entitled to free state education after this age. (Some schools make exceptions and accept over 18's.) Post Leaving Cert courses are unavailable to these young people unless they pay international fees to attend a course. This can be a de-motivating factor for these young people that can lead to early school leaving.

Nevertheless, asylum seekers, undocumented migrants and refugees are usually very keen to learn and catch up on their education and many excel. For others who are struggling, short term courses, computer based courses and single subject courses are often the best means of achieving success and building confidence.

For more information please refer to the chapter on 'working with young people from a minority ethnic background' in this Toolkit.



Developing inclusive practice with Early School Leavers

Work with schools

One of the best ways to assist early school leavers is to help prevent young people from leaving school early. Due to the schools duty of care and an increased focus on the holistic care of young people, schools are under increased pressure to address the range of social, psychological and personal issues affecting young people today. This is often done with very limited available resources. For example, many schools do not have a full-time Student Counsellor, Home School Liaison Officer or Educational Support Worker who can often help retain potential early school leavers within the formal education system.



Youth services are in an ideal position to provide support to at-risk young people. The youth work sector has a unique responsibility within communities to attempt to reconcile formal and non-formal education. One of the most effective methods is to work in partnership with schools. Many youth services have the staffing and resources available to provide case management and support for young people at risk of leaving school early.

Some potential programmes that may be offered are:

- **Stress management and relaxation workshops**
- **Family support and liaison services**
- **Anger management programmes**
- **Peer mediation**
- **Case management**
- **Breakfast programmes**
- **Lunch programmes**
- **Practical assistance with sporting programmes**
- **Homework help**
- **Referrals to certified counsellors in order to complement the work of the school counsellor**
- **Referral to appropriate community agencies**
- **Intensive support for students who truant, are suspended, excluded or expelled**
- **Support for particular groups of young people such as young parents, young refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and young Travellers**
- **Transfer programmes between primary and secondary school**

Retention initiatives such as the above may be pre-existing within local schools. Alternatively programmes may need to be developed in partnership with the schools. When working with schools on programme development, an understanding of the school's policies, guidelines and referral procedures is essential. The development of a protocol which outlines roles, responsibilities, agreements and communication channels can be a strong foundation for a school and community service partnership. An amicable working relationship with local schools is essential in meeting the challenge that early school leaving presents.

Best practice programmes for early school leavers:

- Listen to the views of young people and provide opportunities for them to have their say about programme design, management and evaluation
- Use a strengths-based approach to programme content - support young people in developing their specific aptitudes and strengths
- Ensure that programme content is delivered with varied media such as drama or games as well as written or verbal
- When possible use smaller groups when working with early school leavers
- Establish positive and respectful relationships between young people and supportive adults
- Build teamwork and cooperation between students
- Set fair rules and expectations which are consistently applied
- Encourage young people to take responsibility for their learning and behaviour
- Focus on skills that are practical and prepare young people for life and work and/or further education
- Provide support in developing and achieving their short and long-term goals where possible
- Adopt an holistic approach and liaise with family and relevant agencies where appropriate
- Emphasise achievement and not failure - use recognition nights if a programme has finished^{xxv}

Truancy issues

Your youth service should have a clear policy about opening hours and services for students who truant. Work with your local school to provide support for young people who truant, and ensure your programmes address the reasons for truancy behaviour.

Offer a quiet space for homework

Many libraries, community centres and youth services offer homework help or a quiet space for homework. The most effective of these services use qualified staff and volunteers who have experience in teaching and are familiar with the school curriculum.

If there is no homework help in your local area, develop a community action group in order to work with other community agencies to develop a safe and quiet place for after-school study.

Have a quiet space, computers and internet facilities available at your service for students completing assignments and homework. Many successful homework groups provide a snack at the start, a period for homework and a sport or art & crafts hour to add incentive for attendance.

Don't rely on literacy skills to advertise or run your programmes

Consider a range of verbal strategies for advertising that includes:

- **Outreach work: speak to young people face to face in areas where they hang out**
- **Outreach work in schools: speak at school assemblies or have a stand in the hall/ lunch area at break times**
- **Provide a phone information service and have regular updates on your answering machine about upcoming events**
- **Participate in local community radio interviews**

Young people with a low level of literacy may be nervous about attending your service because they may be conscious of exposing their lack of literacy skills. Therefore, when registration forms or other forms need to be filled out by a young person it would be good practice to provide a private place for them to do this and make it known to all participants that you can provide assistance in filling these forms out if necessary.

Make sure any information given in a written format to young people is also given verbally. Make use of the first few minutes of a group to give updates on any written information/new posters/groups available.

Check that young people can access your service without being able to read. For example, check that it is clear where your service is located if you are in a multi-purpose centre, or what time your service is open if you are away from the premises.

Try to avoid situations where young people feel stigmatised for not being able to read well, this includes reading/writing in group work, filling in surveys, taking notes at meetings.

Be very aware of the language used in promotion of groups or clubs as well as the language used to deliver instructions or to run programmes. Formal language may alienate those who do not have English as a first language or those who have low vocabulary levels due to literacy problems.



Incorporate literacy and numeracy skills into your programme

A good way of supporting students who experience learning difficulties is to incorporate literacy and numeracy skills into the fun programmes you run.

For example if you have a group of young people who want to run a band night you can work with them on:

- **Numeracy skills such as budgeting for the event, working out how many drinks to buy, ticketing, counting income, working out how many songs can fit into a play list for each band etc.**
- **Literacy skills such as writing a media release, writing information for flyers, writing an evaluation etc.**

Literacy and numeracy skills can be incorporated into just about any programme.

Consult constantly with young people

The promotion of independence and personal autonomy in groups is always a positive addition to programme design; however it also gives you an opportunity to run groups in direct consultation with the young people. Young early school leavers will have left the mainstream educational system due to a number of reasons; by allowing them input into the group many of these issues may be highlighted and thus addressed within the group.



Guidelines:

- Establish a consultation group of young people who are willing to express their views on a variety of issues
- Establish a management team or committee in each group
- Listen to suggestions within the group and act on these to reinforce the fact that their views are important. If a suggestion is not going to work talk through the potential problems with the group and let them problem solve
- Liaise with local agencies in order to establish an exchange of information on local issues in order to gain an understanding of needs and issues in the area

Help connect Early School Leavers back into education

There are a number of programmes which provide support to young early school leavers and to potential early school leavers.

Support for potential Early School Leavers

The National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) has a statutory function to promote regular school attendance, participation and retention and to tackle the problems of absenteeism and early school leaving. The Act also charges the NEWB with responsibility for children who are being educated outside of recognised schools, for example, those who are home-schooled, as well as 16 – 17 year olds who have left school to take up employment.

In order to provide an integrated and cohesive approach to early school leaving and chronic truancy, in 2009 the Board was given responsibility for the Home / School / Community Liaison scheme (HSCL), the School Completion Programme

(SCP), in addition to the Educational Welfare Service (EWS). Under the extended remit, the Board is obliged to devise a single approach to attendance, participation and retention.

The HSCL scheme seeks to promote partnership between parents, teachers and community in order to enhance pupils' learning opportunities and to promote their retention in the education system. HSCL focuses directly on the adults in children's lives, particularly parents, empowering them to take a more active role in their children's education. HSCL coordinators are appointed to designated schools and are members of the teaching staff.

The objective of the SCP is to provide a range of interventions and supports including breakfast clubs, mentoring programmes, counselling and other out of school initiatives. It is mostly but not entirely aligned to DEIS schools.

The NEWB's network of Educational Welfare Officers (EWOs) is the key means by which the Board delivers on its remit to ensure that each child benefits from an education. The EWOs monitor school attendance, and take a range of measures where children do not attend school and where parents are found to be in breach their legal obligations in relation to school attendance.

The EWOs also encourage and advise schools on developing school attendance strategies, codes of behaviour and other policies to create environments that encourage children to attend school regularly.

Information on who the EWO is for a particular school or area can be found by calling NEWB on 01 8738600 or by visiting to www.newb.ie.



The NEWB have also developed a useful resource for schools called ‘Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools’. It is a useful document for those working with young people who are under threat of suspension or expulsion from school as it outlines the legal and procedural requirements that should be met before these sanctions can occur. While each school will have its own individual Code of Behaviour, this resource outlines the basic rights of any young person in the Irish school system. It may also be very useful in developing codes of behaviour for groups within a youth work setting.^{xxvi}



Support for Early School Leavers

There may be a variety of programmes in your area but it is essential not to push a young person into a course when they are resistant. Youthreach, Solas (FÁS), Back to Education Initiatives and FETAC all provide different forms of education for young early school leavers. Contact details for all of these can be found in the contacts section of this chapter.

Keep up to date with relevant research

As with all statistics, it is important not to lose sight of the real world implications for the ‘numbers’ contained within them. Being aware of the implications of early school leaving for young people, the demographics involved and the potential reasons for it, will provide an opportunity to discuss the issue with a participant who has left school early. The ‘Economic and Social Research Institute’ regularly publishes research papers on the issue of early school leaving.

Policy

Your organisation should have a policy in place regarding the following:

- If a young early school leaver wishes to use the facility during school time, is this possible and does it affect your policy on truancy?
- If your organisation provides education services and support, what are the policies regarding enrolment and participation?
- If your organisation can not provide educational support, do you have a referral system in place to organise this for the young person?
- What policy, if any, is in place regarding behavioural issues of early school leavers?
- If behavioural issues are identified, do you provide personal development programmes such as anger management?
- Do you have policies in place for dealing with young people with literacy issues? Is there an alternative to written forms, or is help provided for them?

Checklist 10A - How accessible is your organisation to Early School Leavers?

This checklist can help you to identify how you can improve your service for early school leavers

Public image

How we present our service to our community

Partnerships:

- Our service has partnerships with local schools to help support young people at risk **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**
- We know the name of our local Education Welfare Officer **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

Participation

We make sure we include the voices of young people at all levels of our youth service

- Our service consults with young people from a variety of educational backgrounds to assess arising needs and issues **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

Professional development

Our staff and volunteers are trained and supported to deliver an inclusive youth service

- Staff receive training on equality issues and integration strategies **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

Policies and procedures

We have a written commitment to deliver an equal and inclusive service

- Our service has clear guidelines and protocols with our local school(s) relating to truancy and behaviour codes for school related programmes
- YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

Programme planning and delivery

Our programmes are designed and delivered to include the diverse needs and identities of young people with a disability

- Our service provides a homework help service or refers young people to other homework help services
- YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

Promotion :

- Our organisation uses a range of verbal communication strategies to promote our service
- YES** **PARTLY** **NO**
- Young people do not need to be able to read or write to access our service
- YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

Promoting literacy and numeracy skills:

- Our service incorporates literacy and numeracy skills into our programmes, including fun programmes
- YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

- Our service provides educational support **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

Connecting young people to education:

- Our service actively links young people back into education services such as school, Youthreach, Solas (FÁS) local partnerships **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**
-

Useful contacts

National Education Welfare Board

16-22 Green Street

Dublin 7

Phone: 01 - 8738700

Fax: 01 - 8738799

Email: info@newb.ie

Web: www.newb.ie

The NEWB has a statutory function to ensure that every child either attends a school or otherwise receives an education.

Youthreach

c/o Curriculum Development Unit

Sundrive Road

Dublin 12

Phone: 01 - 4535487

Fax: 01 - 4020438

Email: youthreachinfo@cdu.cdvec.ie

Web: www.youthreach.ie

Youthreach have over 100 centres around Ireland. They provide second chance education directed at unemployed young early school leavers aged between 15 and 20. Youthreach offers participants the opportunity to identify and pursue viable options within adult life and an opportunity for participants to acquire certification. Youthreach operate year-round.

Vocational training

VTOS National Office

c/o Curriculum Development Unit

Sundrive Road

Dublin 12

Phone: 01 - 4535487

Fax: 01 - 4020438

Email: siobhan.mcquirk@cdu.cdvec.ie

Web: www.vtos.ie

VTOS (Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme) offers programmes that are participant led, vocationally oriented and progression focused. They provide the opportunity to engage in learning at Junior and Leaving Certificate level as well as FETAC Level 3, 4 and 5 certificates.

Solas (FÁS) Community Training Centres

27-33 Upper Baggott Street
Dublin 4

Phone: 01 - 6070500

Fax: 01 - 6070600

Email: info@fas.ie

Web: www.fas.ie

Solas (previously known as FÁS) operate a variety of training and employment programmes as well as a recruitment service to jobseekers and employers.

Fáilte Ireland

88-95 Amien Street
Dublin 21

Phone: 1890 525525 or 01 - 884 7700

Fax: 01 - 855 6821

Email: courses@failteireland.ie

Web: www.failteireland.ie

Fáilte Ireland offer courses run in Institutes of Technology which promote careers in tourism and the hospitality industry.

Department of Justice Workshop Programmes

Please see www.probation.ie for contact details and details of a variety of community based projects and programmes.

Department of Education and Skills

Marlborough Street,
Dublin 1

Local: 1890 402040

Email: info@education.ie

Web: www.education.ie

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- ^{xxvi} www.newb.ie/codes_of_behaviour_guidelines/introduction.asp

Section TEN B

(This section is specific to Northern Ireland)

Working with young people outside of education, employment or training

Introduction

This section focuses on young people who, for a variety of reasons, have spent a considerable amount of time outside of education, employment or training (NEET). It presents demographics for these young people and outlines the varying needs and issues that they may face. It offers practical advice and concludes with a list of contacts that will help you in your work.

Terminology

In Northern Ireland (NI) the terminology for young people who have spent a considerable amount of time outside of education, employment or training is problematic. The recognised term used in policy and legislation is the term 'NEET' (Not in Employment, Education or Training). The term itself, however, can be viewed as pejorative and reinforces the negative labelling of these young people. In the absence of an alternative term that is recognised by youth workers and policy makers alike, this document will adopt the shorthand NEET for young people who are considered outside of employment, education or training.



‘Early School Leavers’ is not a recognised term used in Northern Ireland policy and so the demographic of this chapter differs to the subgroup identified within the comparable for the Republic of Ireland (ROI) ‘**Working with Early School Leavers**’. Nevertheless, there is significant overlap between the 2 groups and the ‘needs and issues’ and ‘developing inclusive practice’ sections in this chapter would be helpful to youth workers in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Demographics

Northern Ireland does not have a comprehensive data source for young people outside of education, employment or training. The current estimate for young people between the ages of 16-24 who are NEET is 18%. However this figure taken from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) excludes young people in part-time education and those attending non-government funded training. This is broken down further for the 16-19 age groups below and show a diverse group of young people considered to be in the NEET category.ⁱ



Category	Percentage	Number
Young people who are engaged in some form of activity which is not considered to be education, employment or training (This may include, for example, someone on a gap year or doing voluntary work*)	16%	2,240
Young people who are considered to have an 'identifiable barrier' to engaging in education, training or employment (Young people who fall into this category are considered to be the hardest to reach and most 'at risk' group)	18%	2,520
Young people who are considered to have no 'identifiable barrier' (Usually young people in this category have good qualification and skills levels but consider there to be a lack of suitable provision of opportunities in education, training or employment) ⁱⁱ	66%	9,240
Total	100%	14,000

* It should be noted that the fact voluntary work is considered in the NEET category is misleading and the value of voluntary work for young people and society cannot be overstated.

Unemployment

Unemployment levels for young people are at a record high in the UK with over 1 million young people out of work.ⁱⁱⁱ

The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) (2010) indicates that unemployment is highest in this age bracket for those with no qualifications, the worst affected group being young women with no qualifications and unemployment has increased by nearly 18% since March 2008.^{iv}

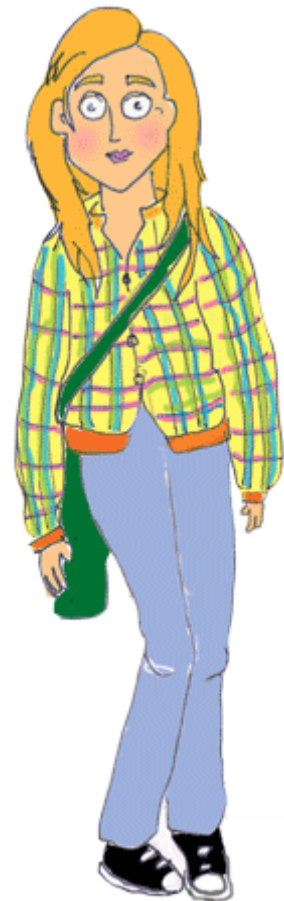
Northern Ireland didn't fare well when compared to the UK average for youth unemployment and against other countries in the OECD.^v

Poverty and disadvantage

Young people who grow up in poverty are considerably more likely to spend long periods of time outside of education, employment or training.

The three main factors that influence whether young people become NEET have been identified by the Social Exclusion Unit (1999) as educational under-achievement, family disadvantage and family poverty. In Northern Ireland child poverty levels are higher than other parts of the UK and there are a much higher proportion of children living in persistent poverty.^{vi}

The impact of poverty on a child's educational attainment, and as a consequence employment prospects, is well documented. Barnes et al (2008) found that secondary school children living in a family in persistent poverty were twice as likely as children living in temporary poverty to be suspended or expelled.^{vii} There is also evidence in Northern



Ireland that young people from low income families find themselves in a vicious cycle of being unemployed and unable to afford the travel costs associated with the poorly paid jobs available to them.

Impact of the conflict

In recent research the legacy of the conflict in Northern Ireland features prominently in discussions about education and employment^{viii}. Trans-generational trauma, interpersonal violence within families and communities, intimidation from paramilitaries (including recruitment and violence), forced exiling, economic marginalisation and social exclusion are all compounding factors for young people living in areas that have been most affected by the NI conflict.^{ix}

Often issues such as ‘difficulties in concentrating’ or ‘aggressive behaviour’ are regularly ‘misinterpreted by others, being seen as deliberately disruptive behaviour’ rather than as a result of multiple factors.^x



Needs and issues of young people who are NEET

Young people who are not in education, employment or training are far from a homogenous group. There are a wide range of needs and issues impacting on young people who fall into the NEET category.

Self-esteem and confidence

Lacking a sense of achievement

Low educational attainment, low expectations from teachers or family and a lack of positive input from adults or peers may all contribute to a low self-esteem. Young people note that failure at an early age in education greatly affects their confidence and self-esteem and that if they weren't doing well academically, they were forgotten about.^{xi}

Stigmatized

Many young people feel stigmatized and believe that they are instantly labelled as trouble makers (because of their background or life experience) which sometimes lead to unfair judgments about them and a lack of support or belief in them to achieve.^{xii}

Bullying and discrimination

Young people who have experienced homophobia, racism, sectarianism or another form of bullying in school or the work place are substantially more likely to drop out of school or leave work.



Mental Health

Poor diet, lack of sleep, unmanaged stress levels, breakdown of relationships and trauma all contribute to poor mental health in young people which affects their ability to concentrate and causes low motivation.

Pressure to achieve

A pressure on young people to achieve academically in order to make something of their life can be difficult to manage. Without adequate support young people can struggle to cope with stress resulting from pressure placed on them by themselves, their family, teachers or others.

Coping with a chaotic life

Many young people have complex needs and issues and may have unpredictable lives at home. Some young people come into contact with multiple professionals, from the health sector, housing sector, education sector and sometimes the juvenile justice sector. Each sector is working in isolation and often young people feel like they are being 'bounced around' services adding to their sense of instability.^{xiii}

Impact of unemployment

A correlation has been shown between increased unemployment and suicide rates. This presents a further concern for young people who lack the sense of worth and satisfaction found through employment.^{xiv}



Motivation and Opportunity

A sense of possibility and direction

Knowing what you are good at and what you want to do in life is not an easy question for anyone to answer. Many young people feel pressurised to make choices that impact on their future without any real sense of what they want or what's available to them. Others are hindered by a lack of ambition from those around them including parents, teachers, friends and the wider community.^{xv}

Opportunities

There are fewer work experience placements available for young people in the current climate and the opportunities available to young people transitioning from education to training or employment are highly dependent on the school they attend and the flexibility of options on offer. These transitions can be compounded by geography and a lack of access to the necessary finances for transport to and from training or employment.^{xvi}

Trust relationship with a significant adult

The support provided by a significant adult, whether that is a youth worker, teacher, or family member, is often the turning point for many young people. Unfortunately, not everyone has this and the lack of positive encouragement from a respected adult has negative consequences.^{xvii}



Social Environment

It's not enough to address young people in isolation but to understand the impact of the wider environment in which they live.

Peers

Young people can find it difficult to break out of the 'norms' of their social environment. For example, if all their friends have a negative perception of education or are unemployed it is difficult to challenge this in their own lives. The influence of peers positively and negatively is often cited by young people as a key factor in achieving in education, training or employment.^{xviii}

Parents

Research into the educational achievement of young people continues to highlight the environment at home as having a major role to play. If young people are supported and encouraged at home then it acts as a positive motivator. The antithesis is also true.

Community

Breaking out of community expectations is a challenge for young people.

"Where you come from plays a big part in it"

(Young Person).^{xix} Negative perceptions of school or work that pervade a community will inevitably feature in a young person's attitude. It requires a great deal of effort to walk against the tide.



Drugs and alcohol

Social pressures such as drugs and alcohol have been mentioned by young people as a reason for becoming NEET and as a barrier to escaping it.^{xx}

Experience of Education

Many young people who are at risk of becoming NEET have a negative experience of school and as a result are likely to disengage from education altogether or become excluded.

The Northern Ireland Curriculum Cohort Study found that low-attaining and low-engaged young people, coming towards the end of Key Stage 3, are highly critical of the relevance of the curriculum for their lives and of teaching methods used.^{xxi}



School and Teachers

Young people often feel looked down on by teachers who don't respect them, contributing to their reluctance to remain engaged in school and learning.

Learning environment

Often the set-up of the learning environment hinders children and young people's engagement particularly for those who learn through doing or who have a shorter attention span and require more breaks to stay engaged.

The inflexibility of the learning environment within school and a lack of awareness of the extent of pressure experienced by young people outside of school heighten their sense of isolation in a formal learning environment.

Numeracy and literacy levels

Young people who experience difficulties in literacy and numeracy often have multiple social and personal factors affecting their ability to learn. Disruption at home can place significant pressure on children and young people and a lack of support and space in which to do homework means that young people fall behind and slip into a cycle of missing school or disengaging from learning which results in low educational attainment.

External barriers

There are a number of external barriers impacting on a young person's engagement with education, training and employment.

Additional Support

Some young people require additional support and may not have access to the same level of opportunity in education, training or employment. For example:

- Young people with a disability
- Young people who have English as an additional language
- Young carers



Finances and resources

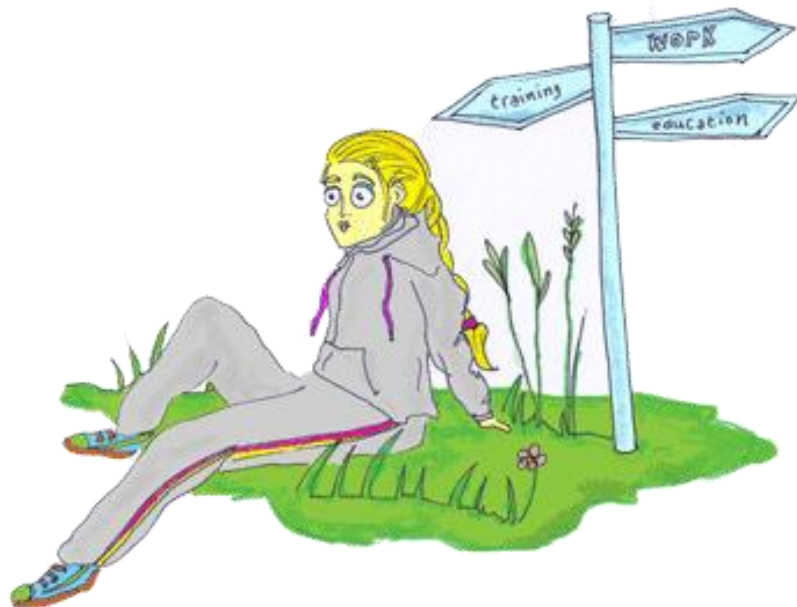
There are challenges for young people in accessing the financial support needed to travel to work or training which limits their opportunities. Also, there is the suggestion that many young people feel it is not worth their while to work because of the nature of the benefit system and the real possibility that low paid employment becomes financially unviable for them.^{xxii}

Young people in care

Young people in care are disproportionately represented in the NEET category. The unpredictability of 'home' life has a real impact on their education and consequently further employment and training opportunities.

Criminal record

Having a criminal record can be a substantial barrier to accessing training and employment opportunities. It is also increasingly difficult to obtain placements from employers who are reluctant to take young people on with a criminal record.^{xxiii}



Developing inclusive practice for young people who are NEET

There are five key elements to programmes that unlock the potential of young people who find themselves outside of education, employment or training.^{xxiv}

Recruitment

A youth work approach to recruitment may include street work, networking within communities and developing partnerships with other agencies.

Learning environment

Needs based, flexible approach to learning is crucial including group work, discussion based activities and ensuring the young person is an active participant in the learning process.

Support

Peer and individual mentoring with individual goal-setting, pastoral care and practical support systems in place have all found success.

Structure

It is important to have a small step, staged approach with modules that have credit value to suit the varied learning needs of the young person.

Follow-up

Sign posting and post programme support is crucial to ensuring young people continue to engage with education, training or employment.

Preparation

Work with young people before they become involved in a programme to identify support needs and get them to a place that they are ready to engage and take responsibility for their learning.

Outreach

It is important to think through how you connect with young people in advertising your programmes. Consideration needs to be given to publicising programmes through a variety of channels. Literacy levels and English language skills should be taken into account.

Identify support needs

Some support needs may relate to: mental health, physical health, experiences of education, literacy and numeracy skills, family background, homelessness, involvement in the juvenile justice system, influence of peers or community, cultural/ethnic/faith background.

Outline Expectations

Work with young people in advance to ensure they feel safe and agree on the nature of their involvement in the programme.

Establish trust

Pre-engagement is crucial to building up a rapport and to establishing a trust relationship between the young person and the worker.



Rebuild Confidence

Some young people will require one to one support to rebuild their confidence and ensure they have a 'readiness to engage'^{xxv} in your service. They will need a certain level of confidence and skills before being involved long term in any youth/training initiative.

Delivery of Programmes^{xxvi}

Even if young people are engaging on a limited basis with your organisation try to use the opportunities you have to work with them to set personal goals and provide them with a level of responsibility that allows them to rebuild their confidence and skills in a safe environment.

Participation

Support young people to take ownership and responsibility over their own learning. Encourage them in what they are already doing and communicate effectively the value of education and employment.

Provide a sense of purpose

Young people need to see the point of education, training or employment in order for them to engage with it. Youth workers can support young people to re-engage with education or employment by helping them develop a vision for what they can achieve.



Be flexible

A youth work approach provides a flexible alternative to formal education and training. It is important to vary the content of a programme to suit a variety of learning styles and be flexible in your approach. Allow for regular breaks and don't try and cover too much all at once.

Give responsibility

Provide opportunities for young people to put into practice their learning through taking on roles within your programme or setting up placements for them.

Follow-up

Ensure you finish any programme well and put in place adequate supports for young people to continue to engage in some form of learning or employment. If a young person leaves a programme then it is important to remain engaged with that young person at some level to provide opportunities for coming back on board.



Checklist 10B - How accessible is your organisation to young people outside of education, employment or training?

This checklist can help you to identify how you can improve your service for early school leavers

Public image

How we present our service to our community

Partnerships:

- Our service partners with local schools, training and education providers and local businesses to help support young people at risk

YES PARTLY NO

Policies and procedures

We have a written commitment to deliver an equal and inclusive service

- Our service has clear guidelines and protocols with our local school(s) relating to truancy and behaviour codes for school related programmes

YES PARTLY NO

Programme planning and delivery

Our programmes are designed and delivered to include the diverse needs and identities of early school leavers

- Our service provides a homework help service or refers young people to other homework help services **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

Promotion :

- Our organisation uses a range of verbal communication strategies to promote our service **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**
- young people do not need to be able to read or write to access our service **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

Promoting literacy and numeracy skills:

- Our service incorporates literacy and numeracy skills into our programmes, including fun programmes **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**
- Our service provides educational support **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

Connecting young people to education, training or employment :

- Our service actively links young people back into education services, training providers and employment opportunities **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

Professional development

Our staff and volunteers are trained and supported to deliver an inclusive youth service

- Staff receive training on equality issues and integration strategies

YES **PARTLY** **NO**

Participation

We make sure we include the voices of young people at all levels of our youth service

- Our service consults with young people from a variety of educational backgrounds to assess arising needs and issues

YES **PARTLY** **NO**

Useful contacts

Voluntary and Community Organisations

Include Youth

Include Youth, Alpha House
3 Rosemary Street
Belfast, BT1 1QA

Phone: 028 9031 1007

Web:

<http://includeyouth.org/giveandtake/>

The Give and Take Scheme works with 16 to 21 year olds from across Northern Ireland. Many of the young people have been in care or identified by social services as not ready to take part in mainstream training or employment.

YouthAction NI

YouthAction Northern Ireland,
14 College Square North,
Belfast, BT1 6AS

Phone: 028 9024 0551

Webs: www.youthaction.org/

YouthAction NI run a number of programmes including:

REACH – a bespoke opportunity for young people aged 16-25 years who are outside education, employment and training

Moving On – An accredited training programme for young mothers

Apprenticeship in youth work – is an important progression route for young leaders aged 18 – 25 years

The Bytes Project

Unit 5, The Filor Building
155 Northumberland Street
Belfast
BT13 2JF

Phone: 028 - 90288810

Email: admin@bytes.org

Web: www.bytes.org/

The Bytes Project offers drop-in facilities with free access to ICT resources as well as structured personal development and job ready learning programmes.

Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO)

Amelia House
4 Amelia Street
Belfast
BT2 7GS

Phone: 028 - 9032 0157

Web: www.niacro.co.uk/

NIACRO run a service for young people referred by the Youth Justice Agency and the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNi) called the Youth Employability Programme. They also assist people with a conviction get back into employment following a sentence through their Jobtrack programme.

Princes Trust

Head Office
Block 5, Jennymount Court
North Derby Street
Belfast BT15 3HN

Phone: 028 - 9074 5454

Email: webinfo@princes-trust.org.uk

Web: www.princes-trust.org.uk/

The Princes Trust xl programme runs in 108 schools and centres in Northern Ireland. These include special schools and EOATAS centres. This 2 year programme delivers five modules to underachieving 14 -16 year olds.

Opportunity Youth

Hildon House
30 - 34 Hill Street
Belfast
BT1 2LB

Phone: 028 - 9043 5810

Email: info@opportunity-youth.org

Web: www.opportunity-youth.org

Opportunity Youth programmes and services offer a range of support for hard to young people who are NEET. Some of these include:

- Training for Success
- Mentoring, advocacy, training and support for young offenders
- Bespoke programmes for alternative education projects, schools and communities

Rathbone

122 Donegall Street
Belfast
Phone: 028 - 90311570

Email: belfast@rathboneuk.org

Web: www.rathboneuk.org/

Rathbone's core programmes of learning focus on youth training linked to employability and skills. This has been focused on Entry to Employment Scheme (E2E) and Apprenticeships.

Springvale Learning

200 Springfield Road
Belfast, BT12 7DB
Phone: 028 - 90 242362

Email:
info@springvalelearning.com

Web: www.springvalelearning.com/

Springvale Learning is a dynamic, innovative and creative vocational learning centre for adults and young people. They deliver 'Training for Success' and 'Steps to Work' programmes.

Youth Service

The Education and Library Boards provide a number of youth services that address the needs of young people who are NEET through supporting voluntary and statutory youth provision across Northern Ireland.

Youth work in schools

Specifically with under achieving young people delivering both awarding body accredited qualifications such as the Princes Trust xl certificate (ASDAN), youth leaderships certificate (OCN) and programmes such as the GLAD project (separate paper attached).

Outreach/detached youth work

A targeted intervention youth work programme with young people in the 15-20 age range.

Apprenticeship/trainee youth worker model

As a longer term capacity building measure to enhance the employability of community engaged young people.

Growing, Learning and Developing (GLAD) Programme

The GLAD programme is targeted at 15 – 18 year old young people in Youth Groups and schools in the WELB who are disaffected with school, who are underachieving at school, or who have left school with few or no qualifications.

Western Education and Library Board (WELB)

www.welbni.org/index.cfm/do/YouthService

Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB)

www.belb.org.uk/Youth/

North Eastern Education and Library Board

www.neelb.org.uk/youth/

Southern Education and Library Board (SELB)

www.selb.org/youth/

This chapter has been developed by Ben Ewan (Youthnet) with input from Clare Conlon (YouthAction NI) and Joe Hawkins (Youth Council NI) for 'Access All Areas – a Diversity Toolkit for the Youth Work Sector' published by NYCI and Youthnet 2012

South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB)www.seelb.org.uk/**Youth Council of Northern Ireland****Youth Works Programme**

The 'Youth Works' programme aims to identify and engage a target groups of young people age 16 to 17 who are not in education, employment or training, have no formal qualifications. It is managed by the Youth Council of Northern Ireland and funded through the Department of Education and the International Fund for Ireland.

Alternative Education Providers**The Pathways Project**

174 Trust, Antrim Road
Belfast, BT14 6BP

Web: www.pathwaysproject-aep.org/

The Pathways Project is an Alternative Education Project (AEP) which aims to work with those young people who have been excluded, or have disengaged from mainstream education.

Newstart Education Centre

Unit 13/1 Blackstaff Mill, 77 Springfield Road, Belfast BT12 7AE

Phone: 028 - 90315674**Web:** www.newstarteducation-aep.org/

Newstart is a community based organisation that is an AEP that provides cross-community service for young people who are excluded or disengaged from the mainstream education system.

Conway Education Centre

5-8 Conway Street Belfast, BT13 2DE

Phone: 028 - 90248543**Webs:** <http://conwayeducationcentre-aep.org/>

Conway Education Centre and the Day School strive to provide an environment that is safe and secure for children, and where all are treated with dignity and respect.

Open Doors Learning Centre

8 – 30 Barrack Street Belfast, BT12 4AH

Phone: 028 - 9032 5867**Web:** www.opendoorslearningcentre-aep.org/

The Open Doors Learning Centre is an AEP which aims to work with those young people who have been excluded, or have disengaged from, mainstream education.

Education by Choice

The Bridge, 135 Ravenhill Road, Belfast BT6 8DR

Phone: 0759540669**Web:** www.educationbychoice-aep.org/

Education By Choice provides year 11 and 12 Students who are not attending School with another chance to gain an education.

Upper Anderson Community Forum
(UCAF) 37a Tullymore Gardens Belfast, BT11 8NE

Phone: 028 - 90 622201**Web:** www.uacf-aep.org/

Tullymore AEP is part of a wider social inclusion initiative to address the educational needs of young people.

Regional Colleges

Northern Ireland's six Regional Colleges operate across 40+ campuses and through over 400 outreach community locations. The Colleges offer a wide range of courses from entry level through to post-graduate.

Southern Regional College

Campuses: Banbridge, Armagh, Newry, Lurgan, Kilkeel and Portadown

Email: info@src.ac.uk

Web: www.src.ac.uk/

South Eastern Regional College

Campuses: Ballyboley, Ballynahinch, Bangor, Downpatrick, Holywood, Lisburn, Newtownards, Newcastle

Email: info@serc.ac.uk

Web: www.serc.ac.uk/

Northern Regional College

Campuses: Ballymena, Ballymoney, Coleraine, Larne, Magherafelt, Newtownabbey

Web: www.nrc.ac.uk

South Western Regional College

Campuses: Omagh, Cookstown, Dungannon, Enniskillen

Web: www.swc.ac.uk/

North West Regional College

Campuses: Derry-Londonderry, Limavady, Strabane

Email: info@nwrc.ac.uk

Web: www.nwrc.ac.uk/

Belfast Metropolitan College

Campuses: Titanic Quarter, Gerald Moag (Millfield), Castlereagh, Tower Street.

Phone: 028 - 90 265 265

Web: www.belfastmet.ac.uk

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- ^{xiv} Suicide and Homicide in Northern Ireland National Confidential Inquiry, Professor Appleby, 9/06/11 www.medicine.manchester.ac.uk/research/projectdetails/index.aspx?ID=1659
- ^{xv} YouthAction NI (Sept 2010) (Re) Gaining Self Worth and a Sense of Purpose
- ^{xvi} Include Youth (Jun 2010) Submission to inquiry into young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs)
- ^{xvii} *ibid*
- ^{xviii} YouthAction NI (Sept 2010) (Re) Gaining Self Worth and a Sense of Purpose
- ^{xix} *ibid*
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- ^{xxi} Horgan, G. Gray, A. Conlon, C. (2010) Young People not in Education, Employment or Training. Ark Policy Brief
- ^{xxii} Include Youth (Jun 2010) Submission to inquiry into young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs)

^{xxiii} *ibid*

^{xxiv} YouthAction NI (2011) A response to 'Pathways to Success' NEET Strategy Consultation (DEL)

^{xxv} Include Youth (2011) Response to the Department of Employment and Learning's
Consultation on Pathways to Success

^{xxvi} YouthAction NI (Sept 2010) (Re) Gaining Self Worth and a Sense of Purpose

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Working with young women and young men to challenge gender stereotypes

“Gender pervades every aspect of our existence and in so doing provides us with very powerful norms within which we as individuals are expected to behave. Gender conscious work ... is political as it challenges the status quo of women and men in our society. It is confrontational in that it disputes the validity of gender roles and stereotypes. It is painstaking as it deconstructs all that is known about masculinity and femininity. It is also reflective as it continually questions workers on how their practice promotes challenges of gender expectations.”ⁱ

Introduction

This chapter looks at working with young men and young women in a way that challenges stereotypes associated with their gender. It looks at what we can do proactively to improve the lives of young men and young women – to strive for the point where equality of condition is achieved and everyone’s full potential is realised. It does this by highlighting the different issues that young men and young women face and gives practical ways to challenge the social norms and expectations that often dictate their lives. It also provides a list of references that will help with this approach.



Terminology

Genderⁱⁱ	The word gender refers to the social differences between men and women that are learned, changeable over time and have variations both within and between cultures. For example, although only women can give birth (biologically determined), biology does not determine who will raise children (gendered behaviour determined by society)
Sex	Refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women
Feminism	The advocacy of women's rights on the grounds of political, social, and economic equality to men
Masculinity	Refers to the social roles, behaviours, and meanings prescribed for men in any given society at any one time
Patriarchy	A system based on the belief that men have the automatic right to power and to govern, regardless of merit
Role Models	People whose actions, behaviours and lives we look to and may model ourselves on

For more information on terms see the 'Glossary of Terms' section at the end of this chapter.

'Gender Conscious' Practiceⁱⁱⁱ

'Gender conscious' youth work is about engaging young women and young men in a way that proactively challenges societal issues related to gender, such as inequality and changing male/female roles. It involves interventions and programmes that directly challenge social norms about how young women and young men should live their lives. It can take place with young men and young women in either single sex or mixed sex groups as long as there is a gender specific focus.^{iv}

Some youth organisations may decide that single sex groups or activities are appropriate to meet the identified needs of the young people they work with. However, working with single sex groups does not necessarily mean you are doing 'gender conscious' work. For example, running beauty and make-up programmes for young women can re-enforce the stereotypes that young women experience rather than challenge them. Similarly, a football programme for young men may re-enforce stereotypes that they experience. It may be single sex work but not necessarily 'gender conscious' work.

Although gender is an important aspect to a person's identity other factors will also affect the needs of a young person such as their sexual orientation, their education, where they live, their family, social class, religion and cultural and ethnic background. These need to be explored as part of working with young men and young women.

'Gender conscious' practice requires youth workers to explore their own attitudes that they bring to their work and to reflect on their own values around gender.

In the Republic of Ireland, under the **Equal Status Act 2000** and the **Equality Act 2004**, it is unlawful to discriminate against a person on the grounds of their gender in the provision of goods and services, education, sports, access to public facilities and accommodation.



In Northern Ireland **Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998)** and the **Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976 (as amended)** make it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of gender

Demographics

Youth Sector

In **Northern Ireland (NI)** participation across the youth sector based on gender is relatively equal (51.1% male and 48.9% female). However, for age 16 -25 that figure goes down to 44% for female participation. Young women also participate in lower levels in the statutory youth service (43%) and community based youth clubs (44%).^v

In the **Republic of Ireland (ROI)** research from 2002 showed that across the youth sector in general there was equal gender participation in youth services, as well as gender equality in youth leaders. However, anomalies between services do exist^{vi} and participation rates need to be continually evaluated by individual youth services.

Wider society

Gendered assumptions, stereotypes and expectations impact upon various aspects of young women's and young men's lives from their family, home and social life; through education and employment to consumption, health, the law and participation levels in politics.

Employment and representation

One indicator of inequality is that women (North and South) are not proportionately represented at many of the senior decision making levels of society. Key positions in all layers of government, the judiciary, the mass media and other professions continue to be dominated by men. For example, while most teachers are women, at



least half of all school principals are men.^{vii} Furthermore, in 2011 in the **Republic of Ireland (ROI)** only 15% of those elected to the Dáil, 30% (18 out of 60) of the Seanad seats and 20% of cabinet positions were women.^{viii} Similarly in **Northern Ireland (NI)** only 18.5% of those elected to the NI Assembly are women and 26% (4 out of 15) members of the NI Executive are women.^{ix}

In all areas of employment women currently earn less than men. Even where gender differentials (i.e. differences in experience and education) are taken into account, a gap in earnings of 8% remains between men and women in Ireland (North^x and South^{xi}).

Unemployment

In the **Republic of Ireland**, 2009 statistics show that men are twice as likely as women to be made unemployed. However, current employment rates are nearly equal for men and women in the 15-19 age bracket and are higher for men in the 20-24 age bracket by 5%.^{xii}

In **Northern Ireland** for young men under the age of 24, unemployment increased by 240% between 2008 and 2010. For the same period unemployment for young women under 24 years increased by 205%.^{xiii}



Education

There is a sharp contrast to the educational attainment of young women versus young men. Girls (North and South) consistently achieve higher exam results than boys, including a higher proportion of top grades. Young women are also more likely than young men to complete State examinations. In the **Republic of Ireland** 86.5% of females in 2004 sat the Leaving Certificate compared to 82.4% of males. In **Northern Ireland** (2009-2010) 61% of girls achieved two or more A levels compared with 45% of boys and 78% gained at least five GCSE's Grades A*-C compared with 65% of young men.

Young women (North and South) are more likely to progress to further and higher education: 81% of young women compared to 69% of young men in 2009-10.^{xiv} In the **Republic of Ireland** in 2010, more major university awards were achieved by females than males (58% for females; 42% for males). Females also dominate in the graduate output of both Institutes of Technologies (56% are female) and Universities (61% are female).^{xv}

Gender conscious youth work gives opportunities to young people to discuss these variables and to look at what differences they can make in their lives to achieve more equal outcomes – both in educational achievement and subsequent employment opportunities. Youth work plays a key role in supporting young men and women to develop their confidence and skills and to find access to employment, training or education opportunities.

[See Chapters 10A and 10B in this Toolkit for more information on supporting young people around education, training and employment](#)



Mortality

The death rate for young men in the **Republic of Ireland** aged 15-24 is almost three times higher than that of young women and this is largely due to higher suicide and accident rates. In 2007, 378 males compared to 82 women died by suicide.^{xvi} More males in the Republic of Ireland die by suicide in Ireland than in road traffic accidents. In **Northern Ireland** 77% of suicides were found to be male. Significant links have been made between how young men express their masculinity and issues such as risk-taking behaviour, educational attainment, anger, suicide, and emotional intelligence.^{xvii} Living up to dominant images of masculinity can place immense pressure on young men.

Gender, marginalisation and multiple identity

It needs to be noted that, while marginalised living circumstances affect all young people, it can present extra challenges for young people who are dealing with other issues e.g. young parents, young Travellers, young people with a disability, minority ethnic young people, early school leavers and those from areas of economic and social deprivation. Furthermore, studies on poverty show that young women in these situations are at particular risk.^{xviii}



Needs and issues for young women and young men

Differences between young men and young women

Needs and issues for young women and young men are affected by a number of factors. Young men often live very different lives than young women. Different friendship groupings, experiences of education, childcare and domestic responsibilities affect the social behaviours, expectations and opportunities of young women and young men. Traditional or cultural values, limiting employment opportunities and a lack of understanding of gender identity can also contribute to social exclusion. Both young men and young women can experience low self-esteem linked to gender-related pressures which can further result in limited life choices.^{xix}

Needs and Issues of Young Women

Young women's experiences

Historically, women (and men) have experienced a patriarchal world that has left a legacy of gender inequalities behind. Despite robust social, legislative and policy changes in recent decades many inequalities still exist. In a youth work context young women participate in greater numbers than ever before, and are more involved in leadership roles. However, research shows that young women continue to miss out on opportunities in wider society. Some of this will be because of limiting expectations or outcomes that women can place on themselves that on analysis can be seen to be the result of social conditioning around gender. Having fewer opportunities is also a result of the lower value that is placed on many of the choices that a young woman might want to make. For example, caring and administrative professions, on average,



attract a lower salary than many of the professions that men are traditionally involved in. Lower income subsequently affects a woman's life choices – the home she lives in, the activities she takes part in etc. In striving for opportunities women often feel that they are not 'listened to' and that others do not afford them the same 'authority' as a man saying the same thing.

Women often respond to these experiences and what they see as a patriarchy-based society with anger, defensiveness and hurt. This is also likely to be influenced by the impact of feminism. These feelings can often be directed at males in the immediate social circle without considering that the same history of patriarchy can work against men also. It can result in everyone feeling 'put down', thereby lowering everyone's self-esteem and ability to manage relationships in a positive way. This can be particularly harmful during the teenage years when self-esteem is being developed.

Femininity

Femininity plays in a significant role in how young women see themselves. Media portrayals, role models and images can dramatically affect the way a young woman is perceived by themselves and society, what interests they may pursue and their expectations around body image. It can put immense pressure on young women to behave in prescribed ways. Peer pressure and women's preference for consensus and 'team work' rather than a competitive approach can put additional stress on young women to conform.



Body Image

Body image is an area of young women's experience that requires a high level of sensitivity. A surprising and worrying number of young women are dissatisfied with their body image and it may take some time to help them see what they like about themselves and to be comfortable to speak about their own bodies. A study of adolescent girls found that 68% of 15-year-old females are on a diet and of these, 8% are on a severe diet.^{xx} In a Northern Ireland survey in 2009, 16-18 year olds were asked what sort of things caused them emotional problems. 50% identified 'appearance' or 'body shape' as their greatest pressure; 64% of these were female.^{xxi} Addressing body image issues in youth work settings is important as negative body image problems are a factor in the onset and maintenance of many eating disorders. The prevalence of anorexia nervosa among adolescents stands at about 1%, and that of bulimia nervosa at 1.5-2%. About 10 times more females suffer from eating disorders than males.^{xxii}



Health and well-being

Alcohol

Young women are regularly portrayed in the media as 'lager laddettes' unconcerned with their own health and well-being. However, the reality of young women's attitudes to health and wellbeing often contrast with this. In a recent study of young women across Northern Ireland, few said that they drank a lot and many had a considerable grasp on safe drinking guidelines. Frequently the root cause of drinking alcohol was cited by the young women as stress or pressure to fit in.^{xxiii}

Smoking

Smoking for young women has only seen a 3% decrease over the last two decades while for young men smoking has decreased by 12% over the same period.^{xxiv} This has resulted in the number of women smoking coming much closer to that of men (52.5% men to 47.5% women).^{xxv} A Republic of Ireland study puts smoking prevalence at 1 in 7 for 15-17 year olds (14.2%). This rises to 1 in 5 (27.3%) for those aged 18-24.^{xxvi} Research shows that image, the building of status within the group and keeping yourself thin are factors in young women choosing to smoke.^{xxvii}

Stress

The demand on young women to achieve academically is often coupled with pressure to play a caring role within families, including the extended family. A recent study (Still Waiting, 2007) found that ‘talking to friends’ was cited as a way of coping with stress but further exploration revealed that young women were less inclined to share deeply-felt troubles with others. Getting on with things was perceived to be a strength and asking for help a sign of weakness.^{xxviii}

Sex and Sexuality

There is a concern that sexual health education within schools in **Northern Ireland (NI)** is inadequate, resulting in young women sourcing information on sex through the internet, friends or other informal sources. This raises questions over the reliability of the information that young women are receiving about sex.

In a recent study in Northern Ireland, embarrassment, fear and shame were noted as underpinning themes in young women’s accounts about sex. The report cites that this is likely to be a result of how gender, sex and sexuality are portrayed through the media and various other social institutions.^{xxix}

Consideration and attention needs to be given in youth work settings to healthy relationships, sexual identity and healthy sexual behaviours. Gendered expectations and stereotypes impact on the sexual relationships of young women. Where negative attitudes towards young women and sexuality persist these need to be challenged.



There is also an assumption of heterosexuality among society generally and among young women specifically. This can leave those who do not identify as heterosexual isolated and confused. A lack of reference to homosexuality within school, youth clubs and family settings gives a strong silent message that this identity is deviant.

Young women need to see their sexuality and sexual behaviour positively and opportunities need to be given for a more open dialogue on the issue of sex, sexuality and relationships.

[For more information on sexual orientation see the Chapter 3 of this Toolkit - working with LGBT young people.](#)

Training and Employment Opportunities

While well over one-third of women are in paid employment in Ireland (North and South), on average, women earn 8% less than men and over half of those earning below the minimum wage are women.^{xxx} Moreover, much of the other work in which women are involved, for example, housework, childcare and other caring roles, is unrecognised, unpaid and unquantifiable.

When youth leaders focus on increasing training opportunities and improved educational outcomes for young men, it is vital that young women are not left out of the debate on educational under achievement.^{xxxii} Young women have also been disproportionately affected by the recession and they are currently missing out on crucial opportunities for skills development and training that would allow them to compete in the labour market due to the emphasis being placed on upskilling young men.



Domestic and Sexual Violence

In **Northern Ireland (NI)** around 5 people are killed every year and over 700 families have to be re-housed as a result of violence in the home. It is estimated that one in five women and one in nine men will experience domestic violence in the course of their lifetime. A study in the **Republic of Ireland** indicated that 1 in 7 women in Ireland have experienced severe abuse, defined as ‘a pattern of physical, emotional or sexual behaviours between partners in an intimate relationship that causes, or risks causing, significant negative consequences for the person affected’ while 1 in 16 men had suffered severe abuse from a partner.^{xxxii}

Facts about domestic violence:

- Domestic violence often starts or escalates during pregnancy
- Young adults are more likely to experience severe abuse than older adults^{xxxiii}
- A growing feature of abuse is the prevalence of violence in relationships where a couple is not married or living with their partner^{xxxiv}
- There is a direct correlation between abuse and who controls decisions about money^{xxxv}
- There is a relation between violence and alcohol consumption and although not believed to be a trigger in itself there is concern that alcohol escalates the level and severity of the violence^{xxxvi}
- There is an increased risk of abuse where a partner is isolated from close family members and neighbourhood supports. This puts migrants in the higher risk criteria

The threat of sexual violence facing young women is very real, with 54% of rapes in the UK being committed by a woman's current or former partner.^{xxxvii} In the **Republic of Ireland** it was found that almost one quarter (23.6%) of perpetrators of sexual violence against women are intimate partners or ex-partners^{xxxviii} and the Rape Crisis Centre stated that only 7% of the sexual violence reported to them were committed by strangers.^{xxxix}

Sexual abuse also takes other forms. The technological developments of 'sexting' and the use of social media to degrade and exploit young women add an insidious dimension to the types of harassment and violence young women face.

Domestic abuse is not confined to women and this fact should be addressed in a youth work setting. In 2005 the National Crime Council of Ireland^{xi} published the first ever large scale study on the nature, extent and impact of domestic abuse against women and men in Ireland. They found that while the severity of abuse against women was at least double that of men and 8 times greater in the case of sexual abuse there were still highly comparable statistics when minor incidents of abuse were considered:

- 29% of women and 26% of men suffer minor domestic abuse
- 13% of women and 13% of men suffer minor physical abuse
- Only 1 in 20 men compared to 1 in 3 women reported the abuse to the Gardaí

The report alerts readers to consider the differing negative impacts that abuse has on its victims.



Needs and Issues of Young Men

“Research into young men’s issues is consistently highlighting that their lives are increasingly complex, contradictory and potentially dangerous to their well-being.”

Keeping gender on the agenda – YouthAction NI^{xli}

Masculinity

At the centre of young men’s personal development is the role that masculinity plays in their daily lives. It is what makes them behave in a certain fashion; get involved in certain activities and it is masculinity that portrays how young men are seen within the community that they live. Many young men struggle to find their place in a world experiencing rapid social and economic changes and developments. This has had a major impact upon young men’s expectations, behaviour, education, mental health and employability.

The changing role of young men in contemporary society can place significant pressure on them to conform to certain expectations of what it is to be a man. They experience pressure to ‘*become men*’ or ‘*act like men*’ which can lead to young men trying to *prove* that they are men through risk taking, deviant and stereotypical male behaviours.

Harland (2000) presents two expressions of masculinity – the public sphere and the private sphere. In the public sphere young men feel pressure to appear confident and macho believing this is the way to receive status and respect. To affirm their masculine identity, young men are dismissive of their emotional pain, withholding certain feelings and emotions in public. This notion of survival being seen as strong can mean young men are



less likely to avail of the support of others whether in friendship groups or from professionals. In the private sphere young men learn to cope with the anxieties and emotions they have suppressed in public.^{xlii}

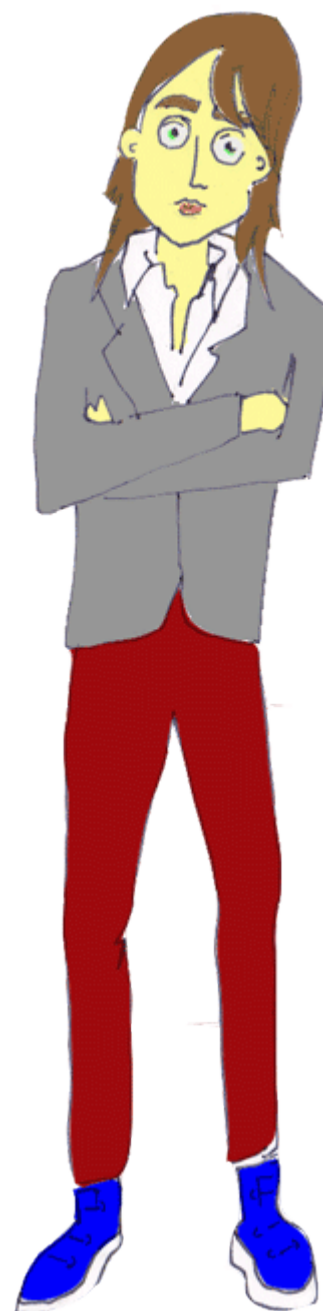
Health and well-being

Traditional masculine norms play a role in how young men address issues around their health and emotional well-being.

The stigma and messages portrayed around mental health issues in particular means that many young men don't address issues for fear of being labelled as weak and vulnerable to their peers. Social conditioning which promotes the suppression of emotions such as pain, fear, hurt, anger and frustration can be detrimental to positive mental health.^{xliii} Expectations on young men to be strong and resilient can mean they are slow to access the relevant support needed from medical and other professionals.

Youth workers, particularly male ones, need to address their own expectations around men's behaviour and how they demonstrate their feelings. They, as well as the young men they work with, need to understand that it is okay to engage with your emotions and feel things strongly.

Risk-taking behaviour amongst young men leads to higher mortality rates and injuries. Staying safe – both in physical and sexual activities - should be addressed by youth leaders.



Sex and Sexuality

Stereotypical images of the masculine ideal portray men as healthy, heterosexual and experienced. One outcome of this is that many men, in particular young men, fear contradicting this ideal because any divergence from this would lead to ridicule and vulnerability. Young men tend to talk about sex with their peer group through banter and bravado, giving the impression that they are sexually experienced. For many young men there are no opportunities to become comfortable with their sexuality.

The traditional portrayal of masculinity is not associated with men who identify themselves as gay or bisexual. This can present challenges for young men negotiating their masculine identity within the context of being gay or bisexual. Young men who identify other than heterosexual are also likely to find themselves at risk of homophobic bullying, isolation and suicide.

Research carried out by the Rainbow Project has highlighted the extent to which young gay men have actually attempted or considered suicide. 70% of respondents had thought about taking their own lives and 27% had tried to kill themselves. The suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts were directly linked to homophobic experiences and bullying.^{xliv}



Conflict

The media portrayal of violence and expectations around masculinity are deeply ingrained in the experience of many young men. For some young men conflict and violence is part of their lived experience. While they may dislike the pressure to get involved in violent behaviour or being the victim of violence, some are drawn to the excitement and 'glamour' of it, attempting to live up to the tough stereotype of being someone with the capacity to be violent when required.

Managing anger and aggression is something that young men need to learn. Their role models and experiences of masculinity will play a big part in how they deal with these emotions. Some young men may use aggressive behaviour when looking for physical contact or closeness as they don't feel comfortable demonstrating affection or being 'soft' or 'gentle' in public.



Political conflict

Added to social conditioning around masculinity and attitudes on the need to be 'tough' is the politically motivated violence that has dominated the lives of young men in many communities across Ireland, particularly in the North. Recent trends with dissent violence have placed extra pressure on some young men to look at how they 'defend' their communities from the 'other side'. Many young men feel that it is their duty to protect the community from this perceived threat.

Working to challenge gender stereotypes

Participation

Before you can effectively challenge gender stereotypes in your organisation you need to look at gender based participation in your programmes. Look at the statistics on the number of males and females who participated in your group over the past year. If significantly more young men or young women were involved you need to begin to explore why this is the case.

It will also be useful to observe patterns of behaviour in your youth setting.

- Do young women or young men dominate any of the activities you run?
- Which activities are young women or young men more/ less engaged with?

Observe the interactions between young women and young men. If either young women or young men are not attending or not participating equally in your service you may find that the best course of action is to implement strategies specifically aimed at including the under-represented group. This might involve having female-only or male-only programmes or adapting your current activities. Advice on adapting your activities is given in detail below.

If you decide to run male-only or female-only activities be careful not to stereotype interests. For example, young men may be interested in body image related activities and young women may be keen on bike maintenance. Genuine consultation with both genders will ensure that programmes do not reinforce the gender inequalities that you are attempting to challenge.

Challenging gender stereotypes and inequality

Giving space for gender work involves giving space and time for young people to explore topics such as feminism, patriarchy, masculinity, historical impacts on their lives, social conditioning, adapting to a changing world. It is proactive and a conscious attempt to influence change.^{xlv} In order to introduce these topics you might need to cultivate interest from the young people you work with by asking some exploratory questions:^{xlvi}

- Being a young woman/man is...
- I hate it when I can/can't...
- At the youth service boys/girls expect me to...
- It's not fair because...
- At the youth service it would be great if...
- At the youth service I would like to be able to...
- What activities would you like to see happen at the youth service just for young women/young men?
- The role models that I see regularly are...
- The role models that I look up to are...
- The messages about masculinity and what it means to be a man are....
- The messages about femininity and what it means to be a woman are....
- When I am upset I respond by...
- When I am angry I respond by

Adapting your programmes

Introduce policies and practices that ensure the participation of both genders in your organisation. Adapt popular activities so that both genders feel comfortable taking part.

If your service is dominated by loud or rowdy behaviour you may consider changing the activities you run. Perhaps your service has a pool table or other resources that are dominated by males while females take on a more passive or observant role? Alternatively, if you run an activity that is dominated by young women, think about how you can increase young men's participation.

Alongside your activities there is a need to be able to respond to situations that arise such as 'sexist language' or 'rough play' and create safe spaces for exploration of gender issues in order to challenge behaviour and attitudes, promote understanding and negotiate for change.



Gender issues will be prevalent in mixed gender settings as well as in single-sex work. They may manifest in the group dynamics and within individual interactions. These issues will reflect those prevalent in the wider society and as such will often reflect the contested space of gender. This usually looks like competition between the sexes which can become accompanied by more aggressive interactions.^{xlvii}

Become aware of your own attitudes and behaviour

Gender issues, like other issues, involves looking at our own value systems and beliefs and being open to attitudinal change. It is important that leaders address these issues for themselves before addressing them with young people. For leaders and workers involved in running programmes it is important to feel comfortable discussing issues with young people. When planning to work on gender-related issues it is good to personally work through any planned exercises in advance before doing them with the young people. This will help to alert you to your own values, attitudes and beliefs as well as your knowledge base and experiences around issues.^{xlviii} An important consideration is to listen to the language you use and what it says about your attitudes (and conditioning) about gender and to ask colleagues to reflect back to each other if they hear sexist language or attitudes being inadvertently used (for example saying 'he' in reference to a doctor or lawyer rather than 'he' or 'she', moaning about a woman earning more than her partner etc).



Consider your actions

In your position as role model the way you behave as a youth worker influences your organisation. It is critical that your behaviour is non-sexist at all times and that you value young women and young men equally.

Steps that you can take as a youth worker include:

- Promote a positive image of both men and women and their achievements. Think about your promotional material and the guest speakers who come to your service and how this reflects a gender specific image
- Celebrate International Women's Day/ International Men's Health Week and talk about the reasons for these celebrations
- Put programmes in place for young men and young women which challenge gender assumptions
- Challenging stereotypes, attitudes and language will often take place directly with an individual. Be clear and assertive in your message
- Provide education about physical and sexual violence
- Promote non-traditional career options for young women and young men such as nursing, beauty care, etc for young men; mechanics, building, plumbing, professional directorships etc for young women
- Encourage and support young women and young men to play equal and active roles in decision making at your service and at a wider community level
- Talk to the young men and young women who use your service about whether they want a programme just for themselves
- Challenge sexist behaviour and assumptions. This includes "jokes" – for example jokes about blonde women being stupid, women not being able to drive or men not being able to cook
- Model gender-conscious behaviour – men should be seen cleaning; women should be seen doing heavy work and encourage the young people to join you
- Provide accessible, youth oriented services to tackle issues such as body image, mental health etc. Computer-based education or treatment programmes using e-mail in youth centre settings has proved successful for problems such as bulimia or depression^{xlix}

Sexual harassment is against the law and you have a legal responsibility to prevent this from happening at your service. Make sure your workers and volunteers know how to respond to any sexual harassment they witness. You should have a section on sexual harassment in your equality policy with clear guidelines as to what staff and volunteers should do.

Gender in other cultures

Working on gender issues must be seen in the context of the society in which you live. In a society where gender equality and inclusion is clearly an issue, the youth worker must acknowledge their own role in challenging the inequalities that exist – for themselves, for the young people they work with and in society as a whole.

In the context of a multi-ethnic society embedding the principles of gender equality can present additional challenges. Some people from diverse cultural traditions may have different experiences and expectations in relation to gender and these may present themselves during debates, discussions, planning activities etc. Youth leaders – especially female youth leaders – can struggle personally with attitudes that they encounter. It is important to stand back emotionally in these discussions and to see that those with differing views are as highly invested in finding an integrated way to be in the world. It is also important to separate out issues of equality that would directly affect someone's human or legal rights and issues of equality that are to do with social practice.



Some prior knowledge of culture and context will help you be prepared for the attitudes that young people and their parents might present with. Where

strong disagreement arises try to find a common value in discussions that can be used as a platform for learning and understanding. For example, if a young man refuses to make a cup of tea because of his perceived cultural gender role, try and identify the value base behind this. Identify a common value for both e.g. respect. In his culture it might be a mark of 'disrespect' for a man to make a cup of tea, however, you can explain in your culture it is considered a mark of 'disrespect' for a young man to expect a young women to make a cup of tea for them. This can act as a starting point for further discussion and debate.

Tips for Working with Young Women and Young Men

Tips for working with Young women	Tips for working with Young men
➤ Your enthusiasm and motivation can inspire young women. Don't underestimate the impact that your intervention can have upon individual young women	➤ Role models are extremely important to motivate and inspire young men. Male youth workers can play a significant role in a young man's life
➤ Consider how important image can be young women. Think before asking them to do something that may appear foolish. Remember how easily embarrassed young women can get.	➤ Talk to young men about how they deal with embarrassment and what situations are embarrassing for them. Talk to them in particular about how this affects their health
➤ Talk to young women about the messages they receive about body image, sexuality, employment options etc	➤ Talk to young men about the messages they receive about behaviour such as drinking, driving, acting protectively (and how to do this), expectations to 'perform' sexually etc

➤ Talk to young women about the images they see of other women, femininity, men and masculinity. What does it say to them about being a woman and the limitations this puts on them personally	➤ Talk to young men about the images they see of other men, masculinity, women and femininity. What does it say to them about being a man and what limitations does it place on them
➤ Don't assume all young women are interested in beauty and appearance	➤ Don't assume all young men are interested in sports and machines
➤ Providing spaces for young women together to try out new activities will raise their confidence e.g. if you introduce a new sport or invite them to take part in a drama they might prefer to do it with no one watching until they feel they are good at it	➤ Providing space for young men to try out new activities will give you opportunities to talk about risk taking behaviour and the pressures that young men experience to 'perform'
➤ Just because young women don't ask for something doesn't mean they have no needs or have nothing to say. Try to recognise and understand both verbal and non-verbal communication and how young women often use silence or moodiness as a coping mechanism	➤ Just because young men don't ask for something doesn't mean they have no needs or have nothing to say. Try to recognise and understand both verbal and non-verbal communication and how young men often use bravado as a coping mechanism
➤ Take time to look around at how much your youth setting suits young women	➤ Take time to look around at how much your youth setting suits young men

➤ Think creatively about activities that will encourage collaboration and teamwork	➤ Think creatively about activities that will use young men's competitiveness in a healthy way
➤ Think seriously about what messages you as a worker give to young women consciously or unconsciously	➤ Think seriously about what messages you as a worker give to young men consciously or unconsciously
➤ For female workers, you should demonstrate your ability to step out of stereotyped female styles. You can best address issues of femininity if you have addressed them for yourself	➤ For male workers in particular, demonstrate your ability to step out of stereotyped male leadership styles. Male workers can best address issues of masculinity with young men once they have addressed them for themselves.
➤ Going out to meet young women on their own ground and finding out their interests is a practical means of attempting to actively engage them	➤ Going out to meet young men on their own ground is a powerful and practical expression of attempting to actively engage young men
➤ Strive to create a safe environment where young women feel secure enough to interact in a positive way	➤ Work from an understanding of the vulnerability of young men – contrary to an image of 'hardness' – and strive to create a safe environment where young men feel secure enough to interact in a positive way
➤ Make sessions real to the lives of young women	➤ Make sessions real to the lives of young men

Take time to talk and listen to young women and young men on their own – they will say things in single-sex groups they won't say together, especially around sexuality and sexual health issues

If the young men or young women aren't happy to talk about their own circumstances ask them to talk about young men and young women generally – how other young people they know are affected by the issues you are raising

Create opportunities for young men to hear what young women expect from them and vice versa

Discuss the changing roles of young men and young women. Support them to look at how they will adapt to changing roles for themselves

Inform and involve other agencies in the local area in your work with young women and young men on challenging gender stereotypes



Checklist 11 - How gender conscious is your work with young men and young women?

This checklist can help you to identify how you can improve your service for young men and young women.

Public image

How we present our service to our community

• We promote positive images and achievements of young women	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We promote positive images and achievements of young men	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our service promotes opportunities for young men and young women to develop their skills (including in non-traditional areas)	YES	PARTLY	NO

Programme planning and delivery

Our programmes are designed and delivered to include the diverse needs and identities of young people with a mental health issue

• We gather statistics on the gender breakdown of young people participating in your youth group	YES	PARTLY	NO

• Our service provides programs which respond to the specific needs of young women and young men	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We provide opportunities to look at aspects of gender, to challenge gender conditioning and to explore equality issues	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We implement strategies to increase the participation of under-represented genders in our service	YES	PARTLY	NO
• When necessary, our organisation changes the activities it provides to ensure that young women and young men get equal opportunities to participate	YES	PARTLY	NO

Professional development

Our staff and volunteers are trained and supported to deliver an inclusive youth service

• Staff and volunteers model non-sexist behaviour in the way they relate to each other, and in the way they interact with young people	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Staff challenge any sexist comments or behaviour from young people in their groups	YES	PARTLY	NO

- Our organisation provides information about physical and sexual harassment and violence

YES**PARTLY****NO**

Policies and procedures

We have a written commitment to deliver an equal and inclusive service

- Our service has policies and rules in place that deal with sexist comments or behaviour

YES**PARTLY****NO**

Participation

We make sure we include the voices of young people at all levels of our youth service

- Our service discusses with young women and young men about their needs as young women and young men

YES**PARTLY****NO**

Useful Contacts

- **Amen Helpline 046-9023718**

www.amen.ie

- **YouthAction NI – Gender Equality Unit**

Eliz McArdle

YouthAction Belfast Office

14 College Square North

Belfast BT1 6AS

Tel: 028 9024 0551

www.youthaction.org/gender-equality/latestnews.aspx?Author=GE

- **YouthAction NI – Work with Young Men**

Michael McKenna

YouthAction Armagh Office

St. Patrick's Trian

38A English Street

Armagh BT61 7BA

Tel: 028 37511624

www.youthaction.org

- **Gender Equality Unit (OFMDFM)**

Gender Equality Unit

Room E3.19 Castle Buildings

Stormont Belfast BT4 3SR

E: admin.gender@ofmdfmni.gov.uk

www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk/index/equality/gender-equality.htm

- **Woman's Aid**

www.womensaid.org.uk/

www.thehideout.org.uk - Women's Aid have created this space to help young people understand domestic abuse, and how to take positive action if it's happening to you.

GLOSSARY

Gender roles	Gender roles are determined by the systems and cultures in which we live. Because culture changes gender roles also change
Gender Mainstreaming ^{xix}	Gender mainstreaming can be defined as the process of incorporating gender equality issues into every stage of the development, implementation and evaluation of your policies in order to promote equal opportunities between men and women.
Sexist	Anything that discriminates on the basis on a person's gender
Sexism	Discrimination against people on the basis on their sex
Anti Sexist	Strategies and methods to counter the behaviour, language and policies which discriminate against people based on their gender
Non sexist	Anything which treats or portrays men and women as equal
Non sexist language	Language which includes women and does not for example use 'he' or 'men' or 'mankind' to refer to people of both sexes and vice versa
Non-traditional jobs	Jobs which have traditionally been denied to women or considered as male-only occupations, e.g. building, engineering, plumbing etc. Jobs that have traditionally been considered female-only occupations and therefore denied to men such as nursing, cleaning.
Feminist	A person who is actively working towards a society based on equality for all people, of either gender.

Sexual Harassment	Unwanted and uninvited sexual attention such as touching, comments, suggestions or pressure to have sexual intercourse
Sexual Orientation	How an individual expresses and directs his/her desire. People can direct their desire towards people of the same sex, towards people of the opposite sex and towards people of either sex.
Positive action	Actions that are taken to redress the balance between men and women such as reserving places for under-represented groups.

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CHAPTER TWELVE

Working with young people with caring responsibilities (young carers)

Introduction

This chapter focuses on young people with caring responsibilities (young carers). It presents demographics relating to young carers, explains the varying needs and issues that young people with caring responsibilities may face and it offers practical advice. It concludes with a list of contacts and resources that will help you in your work with young carers.

Youth work services are ideally placed to play a vital and positive role in supporting young carers as there are few specialised supports currently available. It is important that young people with caring responsibilities are involved in community-based youth groups and they feel welcome and supported. Your role as a youth worker may be to support a young person already attending your group who has a caring role. Your role may also involve finding ways to include and support a young carer, especially those who may have difficulty accessing mainstream services due to various constraints.

Young carers sometimes isolate themselves from mainstream youth groups as they feel other young people live very different lives from them. However, a



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flexible and safe youth work environment where their experiences are understood can make a huge difference in their lives. Youth workers can help by reaching out to other young carers in the community and offering young people the opportunity to meet and mix with others who share similar experiences. Alternatively young carers may join a youth group to have time out for themselves and leave their responsibilities behind for a while. Understanding their individual needs and what you can do in response is vital.

In the Republic of Ireland under the **Equal Status Act 2000** and the **Equality Act 2004**, it is unlawful to discriminate against a person on the grounds of their family status in the provision of goods and services, education, sports, access to public facilities and accommodation. Family status includes responsibility for a family member who needs care or support on a continuing, regular or frequent basis.



In Northern Ireland under **Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998** public bodies are required to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons with dependants and persons without.

Terminology

This resource has been developed to be used by youth workers on the island of Ireland. At times it is necessary to make distinctions between our two jurisdictions and we had to choose a terminology to reflect this. We have chosen for the most part to use Northern Ireland (NI) and Republic of Ireland (ROI). At times we also use North and South. Additionally, for clarity, where information is significantly different we have used coloured boxes:

Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland

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Young people with caring responsibilities are unlikely to describe themselves as ‘young carers’ or even ‘carers’ so it is important to use language that is understood by the young person. A ‘young person with caring responsibilities’ is the best terminology to use when speaking to young people. It is also important not to define these young people by the term or role of being a ‘young carer’ as they are also young people with all the hopes, desires, interests and concerns of other young people but with specific added responsibilities placed on their shoulders.

The term “young carer” is commonly used in literature, research and social care practice to refer to young people with caring responsibilities. ‘Young carer’ in this case is referring to children and young people up to the age of 18 years.ⁱ Those aged 18-25 with caring responsibilities are referred to as young adult carers. In line with good practice and in response to the recent My World Survey-National Study on Youth Mental Healthⁱⁱ it is important to support and include young carers in your youth group, where possible, up to the age of 25. In this chapter we will generally use the term ‘young carer’ to refer to all carers aged up to 25.



Young carers are described by The Association of Directors of Children’s Services (ADCS UK) as: “children and young people under 18 who provide regular or ongoing care and emotional support to a family member who is physically or mentally ill, disabled or misuses substances... a young carer becomes vulnerable when the level of care-giving and responsibility to the person in need of care becomes excessive or inappropriate for that child, risking impacting on his or her emotional or physical well-being or educational achievement and life chances.”ⁱⁱⁱ

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Young adult carers are young “people aged 18-24 who provide or intend to provide care, assistance or support to another family member on an unpaid basis. The person receiving care is often a parent but can be a sibling, grandparent, partner, own child or other relative who is disabled, has some chronic illness, mental health problem or other condition (including substance misuse) connected with a need for care, support or supervision”.^{iv}

Primary and Secondary carers: A **primary carer** is a young person who carries out the majority or all of the caring tasks described above. **Secondary carers** are the other young people in the family group whose lives are affected by the caring requirement. For example, in a family where a parent has a mental ill-health or substance abuse problem, all of the young people in the family may be dealing with issues of depression, volatile, possibly violent behaviour and unpredictable mood swings from the parent.



Tasks and roles young carers may take responsibility for can vary because of:

- the nature of the illness, disability or addiction
- the level and frequency of need for care and support
- the structure of the family as a whole
- the family's level of contact with health and social services
- the ethnic or cultural background of the family

Some young carers may undertake high levels of care, whereas for others it may be frequent low levels of care. Either can impact heavily on a young person depending on their individual characteristics, coping skills and the level/type of support the family and children receive. It is important to note

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that not every child who has a parent or sibling that is ill or has a disability is necessarily a young carer.

A young carer may undertake some or all of the following:

- Practical tasks, such as cooking, housework and shopping.
- Physical care, such as lifting, helping a parent on stairs or with physiotherapy.
- Personal and intimate care tasks, such as dressing, washing, helping with toileting needs.
- Managing the family budget, collecting social welfare and prescriptions.
- Administering medication and medication management
- Looking after or “parenting” younger siblings.
- Providing emotional support.
- Interpreting, due to a hearing or speech impairment or because English is not the family’s first language.^v



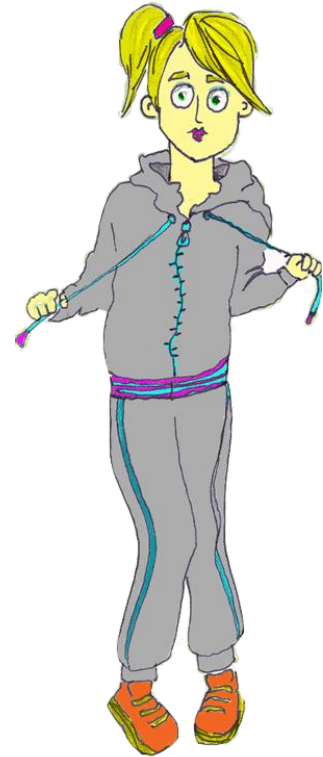
IPAC (Irish Practice Advisory Conference) on Young Carers is an open independent forum for workers, service providers, educationalists, researchers and others interested in engaging with young carers and young adult carers (see contact details at the end of this chapter).

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Demographics

In **Republic of Ireland** (ROI) the 2011 Census produced these figures^{vi}:

- 5,761 carers are aged 20-24
- 4,244 carers are aged 15-19
- 4,228 carers are aged under 15
- 1,838 carers of those aged under 15 are under 10 years of age



In **Northern Ireland** the 2011 Census produced these figures^{vii}:

- 3.4% of young people aged 5-19 (3% of males, 3.8% of females) have a caring responsibility. This equals 11,924 young people
- 6,465 carers are aged 16-19
- 5,459 carers are aged under 16 years old
- The average age of a Young Carer is 14 (However, the experience of Crossroads Young Carers project is that most young carers are identified to them around the age of 12)
- 1,324 young people provide care in excess of 50 hours per week

The figures identified in both censuses are likely to under-represent the numbers of young people providing care as they rely on families identifying a young person as having a caring role. For example, Saul Becker's work for a BBC national survey^{viii} concluded that 8% of all second level students were going home to a care-giving role. In 2010 the Young Life and Times Survey asked 786 16 year olds across Northern Ireland about their caring responsibilities. This survey identified that^{ix}:

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- 1 in 10 (10%) had a caring role – most frequently for their grandmother or their mother.

Very often families view caring as an ‘extension of family or personal relations’ rather than as a distinct type of ‘care giving’. Research has shown that in a situation where a young person may be caring for someone who has mental ill health or who misuses drugs or alcohol they are less likely to be identified as having caring responsibility within the family^x.

Findings from a 2009 NUIG study of young carers in Ireland and similar international studies have identified that:^{xi}

- The average age of young carers is 12 years old and getting younger
- The gender ratio is female 56% to male 44%
- 56% live with one-parent families
- Those caring exclusively for a parent tend to live in one-parent families.^{xii}
- 82% provide emotional support
- 10-14 hours per week was the average length of time spent caring
- 10% care for more than one person
- 25% care for a sibling with a disability – young people caring for a sibling are often overlooked.
- 63% are in a caring role for three years or more
- Young carers are more likely to be NEETs (not in education, training or employment) than their peers^{xiii}
- Young carers living with a parent with mental ill health are two and a half times more likely to develop a mental



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health issue than their peers^{xiv}

- 17% of respondents who said that their family was not well off had caring roles compared with 5% of respondents from very well off families^{xv}.

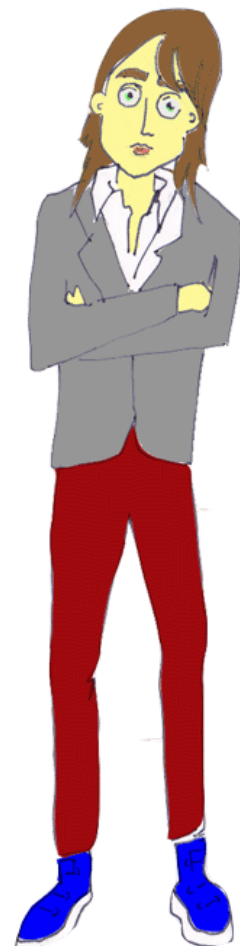
Recognition and identification

Recognition and identification of children and young people as ‘young carers’ is only in a developmental stage in relation to awareness, practice, policy development, and research in **the Republic of Ireland**. However, The National Carers Strategy (ROI), 2012 has named young carers as a particular area of concern. “Young carers have similar needs to carers of any age e.g. the need for a break and support for the person for whom they are caring. However, they may have additional needs, which include support in education to help them to achieve their full potential...both the number of children and young people with caring responsibilities, and the extent of the care provided by some, as evidenced by Census 2011, is a cause for concern”.^{xvi}

In response to their concerns The National Carers Strategy 2012 aims to:

- Raise awareness and understanding among education providers
- Encourage statutory agencies to review how they respond to young carers
- Identify support services for young carers and create mechanisms to link young carers to service providers
- Research and analyse the situation for young carers

In January 2006, the Department for Health, Social Services



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and Public Safety in **Northern Ireland** (DHSSPSNI) published its strategy for carers, 'Caring for Carers: recognising, valuing and supporting the caring role'. This strategy acknowledges the importance of providing young carers with 'recognition, understanding and support' and 'to afford him or her the opportunity to contribute, where appropriate, to the caring role in a way that does not compromise his or her own developmental needs'^{xvii}. Several recommendations are made^{xviii}:

- Carers' assessments under Health Boards and Trusts should ensure that young carers are identified and that services are put in place to ensure their education and development do not suffer.
- The information needs of young carers should be a specific consideration when looking at ways of improving information available on the internet about services to carers.
- The Department of Education should remind schools and teachers of their role in supporting young carers. The strategy cites The Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003 under which teachers have a responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all their pupils.



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Needs and issues for young carers

Various studies have clearly demonstrated the specific needs and issues affecting young carers. One of the key concerns is the ‘hidden’ nature of young people in caring roles.

Why are young carers hidden?

Many young carers receive little or no help. It is difficult to believe that their issues go unnoticed and unidentified but there are several reasons for this:^{xix}

- Adult support services often fail to recognise their client as having a parental role and children’s services often intervene too late when a young person’s caring role has already affected their well-being, or in some cases, when they are at crisis point.
- Adult’s and children’s services have historically struggled to work together effectively and have often failed to look at the needs of the whole family.
- Families are often wary of intervention by services and they conceal illness, particularly mental ill-health and substance misuse.
- Some parents don’t recognise their own child’s caring role.
- Young carers may feel they will be bullied if other young people find out about their caring role and family circumstances



Young carers’ support needs

A variety of studies show that young carers may present with some or all of the following needs:^{xx}

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1. Information about services that can help them and the person they care for
2. Help with school work and timetabling from teachers
3. Help in the home
4. Someone to talk to
5. Advice from adults with useful knowledge and skills
6. Time to be with friends and to take part in sport and other activities or interests

Young carer's worries and problems

In one study four out of ten young carers said that they worried about the person they looked after when they were away from them^{xxi}. The Edinburgh Young Carer's project have identified the following concerns:^{xxii}

Worries expressed by young carers	Problems expressed by young carers
• The health of the person being cared for (81%) • Their own health (67%) • Who will look after them (if their parent is hospitalised for example) (53%) • School work (68%) • Money (48%) • Bullying (36%) • Having no friends (35%)	• Sleeping Problems (60%) • Thoughts about suicide (36%) • Self Harm (34%) • Eating Problems (30%) • Problems with police due to parental drinking (25%)

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Young carers stress the need to be listened to, to be taken seriously and included in any care planning and decisions being made both for themselves and the person they care for. Many speak about the anxiety and frustration they feel from being ignored^{xxiii}.

Effects of being a young carer

Saul Becker of The Young Carer Research Group at Nottingham University has been at the forefront of research and development in this area for over two decades. Saul has identified five areas where the caring responsibilities may have an impact and adverse effect on the lives of young people.^{xxiv}

1. **Education:** failure to keep up with coursework and homework, persistent lateness and absenteeism, poor performance and its effect on future educational prospects. The corollary of this is that for many of these young people, school is their one refuge as they don't have to provide care there. Despite their workload, some may excel academically in school. However, many do not look forward to holidays and weekends as it may increase their workload.
2. **Health:** young people may provide physical care beyond their current abilities and training. Issues around poor nutrition and food poverty can also arise. Incorrect and inappropriate manual handling and bed movements may damage their backs in the long term.
3. **Social:** as these young people get older, many come to realise that they do not live 'ordinary' lives and some may be dealing with issues around mental illness and substance dependency. They may be singled out as 'different' by their peers with the potential for social isolation and bullying. The lack of time and opportunity for social interaction is commonly spoken of by young carers.



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4. **Emotional:** young people may experience feelings of being trapped leading to anger, frustration, guilt and confusion. Resentment towards the person cared for may also arise.
5. **Financial:** many of these young people live in low income families, often as part of a one-parent family leading to lower disposable incomes and limited access to outside activities; this further increases risk of isolation from their peers.

A recent Northern Ireland study shows that young people living long term with an adult with care needs have a higher risk of poverty^{xxv}. In addition, those who live with adults that have a longstanding illness or mental distress may show poorer cognitive, educational, behavioural and general health assessments^{xxvi}. This must be seen in the context that intervention that provides recognition, understanding and support can make a difference. It is important to note that in a 2011 survey seven out of ten young carers said that they enjoyed caring^{xxvii}.

Education

Rule of thumb: When it comes to their caring role versus school, caring will almost always win out.

In school the young carer is treated as a student, appropriate to their age, so it is often a place of sanctuary. Nonetheless, young carers are particularly vulnerable in school if they go un-identified and un-supported. This can lead to school becoming a place of conflict and stress. This poses a risk both in the 'here and now' as well as their future life prospects. The full-time nature of education and training courses can be prohibitive to young carers, especially primary carers. A young carer is more likely to be Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) than their peers.

It is also important to consider the educational needs of young carers in the context of legislation. For example, in the **Republic of Ireland**, the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 aims to promote and improve school attendance rates for

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children at primary and post-primary level education. In implementing this Act authorities may come into contact with young carers who are missing school.

See Chapter 10A and 10B of the Toolkit for more information on working with early school leavers and those not in education, training or employment (NEET). Also see the useful contacts section at the end of this chapter.

Health

A young carer's personal, emotional and physical health can all be affected by their family situation and their caring role. Their caring role may have both positive and negative effects and greatly depends on the child/young person's individual coping skills. Young carers often learn practical and caring skills at an early age. However, it is important to remember that they are young people with the same emotional needs as others their age.

These additional stresses may be present:^{xxviii}

- Stress, tiredness and mental ill-health are common for young carers.
- Young carer's physical health is often severely affected by: caring through the night; repeatedly lifting a heavy adult; poor diet; and lack of sleep.
- Many experience traumatic life changes such as bereavement, family break-up, loss of income and housing, or seeing the effects of an illness or addiction on their loved one.
- Inappropriate caring roles during childhood can impact later in life, affecting a young carer during the transition to adulthood or in adulthood itself. This can include the long-term impacts on physical or emotional health, further education and/or career opportunities.



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Youth services can help the young carer by linking them with the relevant support from Health and Social Care services in both the statutory and community/voluntary sectors. Many young people know what help they need, but they may not know the mechanics of how to access and get this help for themselves and their families. Some will find it difficult to articulate the help that they need as they may feel that the person they are speaking to will not understand them or won't take them seriously due to their age. In valuing the voice of young people and encouraging them to speak up youth workers are ideally placed to support these young people in developing the confidence to ask for and access help. This is particularly important for times when they are in or approaching an emergency or crisis situation in relation to the person they are caring for.

Social needs

The Young Life and Times Survey showed that lack of free time was an issue for 85% of young people aged 16 with caring responsibilities^{xxix}.

Young carers have identified their social needs as:^{xxx}

- **Having someone to speak to (100%)**
- **Meeting other young carers (88%)**
- **Getting out and taking part in groups and activities with other young carers (86%)**
- **Breaks from caring (84%)**

Many young carers are immensely proud and protective of their work and feel it is rewarding in many ways; but it can also be tiring, monotonous and stressful. Anyone who spends a lot of time with people who need care will realise the value of “me time” and for young carers this is especially important.

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Youth services can be a valuable space for giving the young carer personal time away from the responsibility of caring. Youth services have a lot to offer young carers especially in the areas of building confidence, offering non-formal education opportunities, personal development and being a place of welcome where they are valued and supported.

Isolation can have devastating effects on young people and confidence levels can drop very quickly. This is a common problem experienced by young carers as it can be difficult to maintain or form new friendships due to a lack of opportunities to socialise. They are also likely to have reduced access to the necessary funds needed to socialize or even attend youth groups as many young carers live on a small budget that does not allow for extras. If a youth service recognises young carer's needs, it can play a vital role in supporting them to engage with youth groups/programmes. Youth workers need to make young carers aware of what opportunities they offer and how they can support them to attend the youth group by, for example, covering transport costs or facilitating travel arrangements etc.



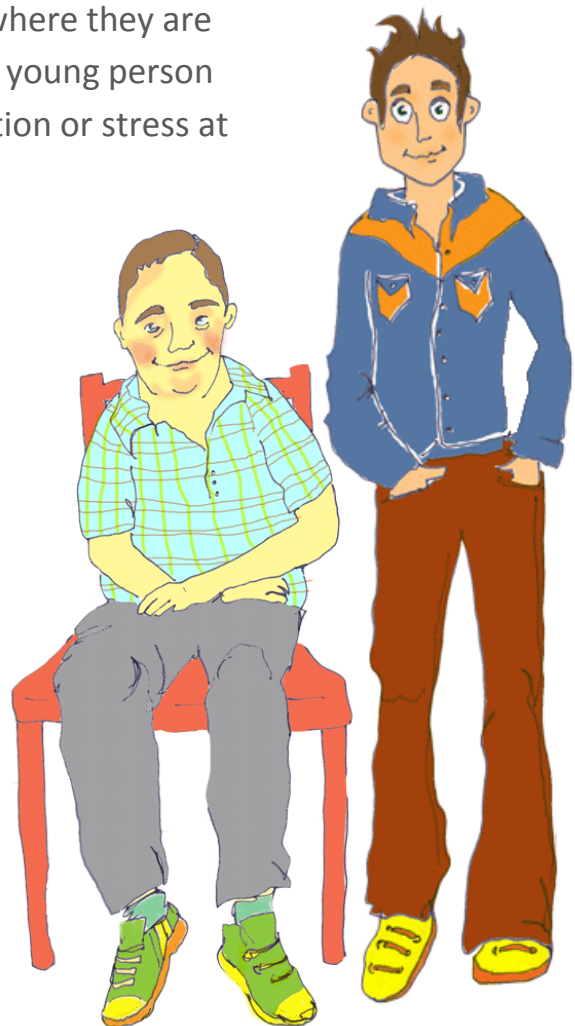
Emotional needs

Groups specifically set up for young carers can be very constructive for the young people involved. In addition to the positive value of youth work, it allows them to identify themselves as young carers. It also allows them to recognise that they are not alone; that there are other young people with the same needs and issues that they have. But it must be recognised that many young carers will feel anxious and apprehensive about joining a group initially.

Alternatively you may already be working with a young person that you have not previously recognised as a carer. Some of the signs that someone could be a carer include:^{xxxi}

- Anxiety or concern over an ill or disabled relative. A need to be in constant touch with home.
- Often tired, withdrawn, or stressed
- Isolated or a victim of bullying – either because of a situation in the family or because they lack the social skills when they are around their peers. In contrast they may be confident with adults. They may also adopt a caring role when they are with younger children.
- Behavioural problems – there is often a big difference between the young person who seems ‘mature beyond their years’ in their home environment, where they are very protective of a relative and the young person who takes out their pent-up frustration or stress at school or in a youth group
- Often late or missed days or weeks off from school or youth group for no apparent reason – secretive about their home life
- Suffering from back pain due to lifting heavy loads.

For more information on supporting a young person with emotional issues see chapter 7 in this Toolkit on ‘Working with young people with mental health issues’



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Involving families

Family support can have a hugely positive influence on the lives of young carers by offering practical and emotional support. Youth workers can support young carers in communicating with their families and other adults in their lives.

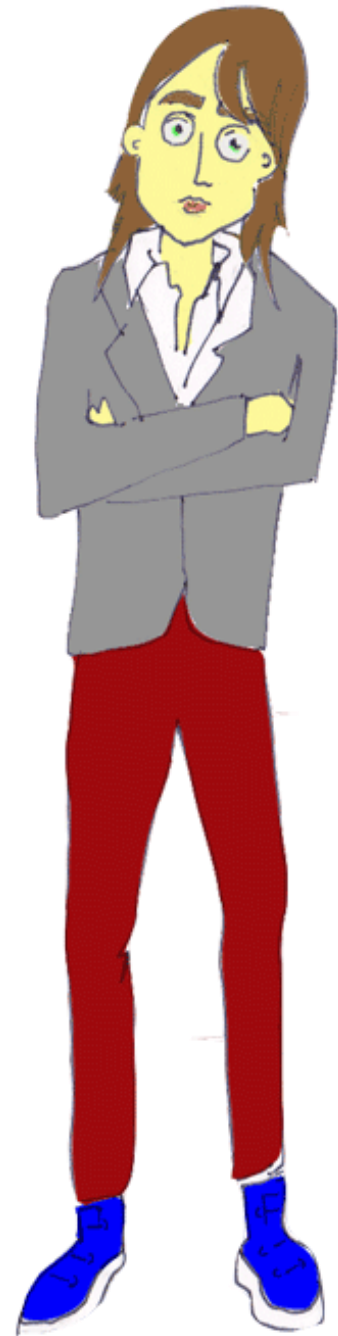
Home visits will help youth workers to build relationships with parents/guardians and gives a better understanding of the issues faced by the young person in their home life.

Youth workers could also support the young person to develop an emergency plan so they are fully aware what will happen to them in an emergency; where they will stay, how they will maintain on-going contact with their parent(s) etc. Download an emergency plan template here:

www.youth.ie/sites/youth.ie/files/YoungCarersEmergencyPlanTemplate.pdf

Financial needs

There are no financial supports paid directly to young carers in the **Republic of Ireland**. However, young adult carers can apply for and may qualify for the Carers Allowance payment and Respite Care Grants if they satisfy the criteria. Adult carers who leave work to care for someone fulltime may qualify for a Carer's Benefit^{xxxii}. The **Carer's Allowance** is a means-tested payment and the recipient must be the full-time carer and be 18 years or older. They may not be in paid employment or education for more than 15 hours per week. The **Respite Care Grant** may be given to



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recipients who are full-time carers. Those aged over 16 can apply for this grant.

In **Northern Ireland**, young carers aged 16 or over can apply for and may qualify for **Carer's Allowance** if they spend 35 hours or more a week caring for someone who is ill or who has a disability. However, they cannot claim this allowance if they are in full-time education, on holiday from education or if they earn more than £100 a week once they have paid for their expenses^{xxxiii}.

Transport may be the biggest barrier to young carers attending your service. Some cannot afford the transport and for other families the logistics of dropping off and picking up children is not possible due to their circumstances. Young carers in rural areas have the added barrier of access to public transport. These issues need should be dealt with in a supportive and sensitive way. You may need to find a way to cover transport costs.

Vulnerable times for young carers

Transitional phases present increased risks to young carers in relation to their health, education, well-being and life chances. Transitions refers to the phases of life that all children progress through; childhood to adolescence and on to young adults.



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Developing inclusive practice for young carers

Supporting young carers in a youth work setting

Whether you are working with one or more carers in a mainstream group or whether you decide to set up a specialised service there are resources and expertise available to support you. The Carers Association Young Carers Project has developed and adapted tools and resources to help any youth organisation identify and deliver a service to young carers. They have also established a uniform start point in language, tools and practice (see www.youngcarers.ie). In addition they have evaluation tools that allow you to measure the work with young carers that you undertake. (A list of downloadable tools and resources is available at the end of the chapter).



Crosscare and the City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDETb) have developed a training workshop for youth workers on working with young carers. The development of the IPAC Forum (Irish Practice Advisory Conference) to share practice **also** provides a vehicle to support further development of projects and services around Ireland.

In **Northern Ireland** Crossroads Caring for Carers (NI) Ltd Young Carers Project can provide awareness training to youth leaders about young carers. Contact them about availability (see contact section at the end of this chapter)

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Starting out

The starting point in supporting young carers is to raise awareness through staff and volunteer development days on the issues for young people with caring responsibilities.

Practical tips

Some practical ways that you will be able to support young carers include:

- **Create a safe environment where a young carer can relax and take their mind off home**
- **Help young carers make decisions that are practical for them**
- **Support them to recognise and manage stress**
- **Encourage the young person to talk to someone about how they are feeling. Look out for signs of depression and encourage the young person to talk to their GP or a counsellor**
- **Offer information sessions on entitlements and back to education or employment opportunities**
- **Help young carers to look at what they want from life and how they can still get that if they decide to stay in a caring role**
- **Explore caring skills and how they will manage stressful situations, tiredness and responsibility**
- **Home visits are recommended where possible, especially for young carers who live in rural areas and find it difficult to access transport to your youth service.**
- **Create good links to other services which young carers need to access. Often young carers need a supportive person to go with them the first time to visit a new service**

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Reaching young carers

Due to the nature of their caring responsibilities young carers might not be reached by your normal advertising and promotions. You will need to go to the places where young people are found and speak directly to them.

Undoubtedly, the place where you will have access to most young people will be in schools, and that will probably be where most of your initial work will be focused. In addition, you should promote your service/initiative to other agencies that work with young people such as other local youth organisations, faith based groups and Family Support Services within the social services.



Working within a community structure

To ensure that you are taking a community based approach you will need to make links with the various health and social care professionals, and other youth workers that come into regular contact with children and young people in your area. Many communities now have steering groups on youth mental health. Youth Diversion programmes and initiatives led by area drug task forces in your community may be useful contacts. Also make yourself aware of any relevant plans, such as those from the Local Authority, and community based health organisations that may affect young carers in the community. Once you have made these links you should have an idea of how your service can best be shaped to meet the needs of the young carers you have identified.

Other relevant organisations working with children and young people include: Educational bodies (ETB/VEC, Youthreach, Library Boards etc.), Children's

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services (Barnardos, Family Support Agencies, Youthreach) and condition specific organisations often already have links with young carers. In **ROI** these include organisations such as Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA), MS Ireland, Arthritis Ireland, Irish Motor Neurone Disease Association (IMNDA). In **NI** those such as Arthritis Care, MS Society, etc.^{xxxiv}

Working with schools

When working with schools, be aware that Principals and the Boards of Management in each school have autonomy over their school and youth workers can only suggest involvement in a young carers programme, not demand it.

A few tips and ideas:

- **On your initial visit to a school, have copies of any information available and be clear about the message you wish to give to pupils and teachers.**
- **Suggest that youth workers do a short presentation within the school to the teaching staff. Your presentation to staff should include what you can offer the school. It should last no more than 15-20 minutes. If necessary you can look for a longer slot in regularly scheduled staff meetings. Ask to do a whole school presentation.**
- **The follow up presentation to the whole school, ideally during an assembly will give students an explanation of what the term ‘young carer’ means and what your service can provide for them. Highlighting the issue directly to young people will show them that ‘help’ is out there and encourage self-referrals.**
- **Seek a nominated School Leader who will work in partnership with your service.**

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- Have a referral system in place – this questionnaire would be useful www.youth.ie/sites/youth.ie/files/ClassTalkQuestionnaire.pdf
- Take advantage of lunch times and ask permission to set up lunchtime drop-ins in common areas such as libraries or parent's rooms. Think about setting up young carers' lunch clubs/homework clubs after school.
- Aim to become part of the school's curriculum, which means you will have automatic access to each succeeding year's classes. Suggest presentations with individual classes to allow for more interaction between youth workers and pupils
- Think about linking with students to organise a Youth Health Fair in the school^{xxxv}

The Carers Association have produced a Toolkit for schools titled “Supporting young people with caring responsibilities in Ireland-School Resource Toolkit”. This toolkit supplies resources, including policy templates, forms, posters, leaflets and lesson plans and is available for download as a complete manual or in sections on the www.youngcarers.ie website. Also see the tools and resources links at the end of this chapter.

Supporting young people returning to school

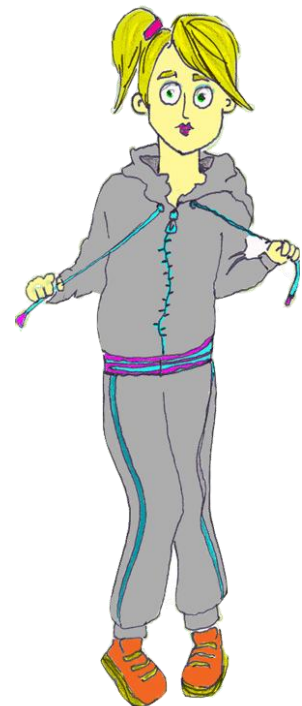
As part of your work you may also be supporting a young carer to return to education. The relationship you develop with schools will help you to support a young carer returning to school. Any opportunity that exists for the young carer to return to education offers a gateway to



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greater autonomy and the potential for greater financial independence. Youth workers can help advocate for a reduced or flexible school programme, provision of emotional support and signposting to Third Level Access programmes. Supporting young carers can also present an opportunity for youth services to develop their working relationship with local schools.

Youth workers should encourage young carers to talk to their school principal about their school attendance. Encourage them to request information on other options they might need such as home tuition, grants and financial assistance while in school or going forward to third level, remembering that the young carer's parent may not be able to support them in the way other young people receive parental support around career guidance, grant applications etc.



Remember some carers are hidden

Some young carers will not identify themselves for fear of being mocked, ridiculed or bullied. They may be afraid of social services splitting up the family home; afraid that the person cared for will not want anyone to know of their needs – particularly in cases of substance abuse or mental illness. Ensure young people know that your service is available to them on a private and confidential basis taking into account good child protection practice.^{xxxvi} Make certain that information on how to contact your service in confidence can be accessed easily. Remember to involve a 'link person' if you feel comfortable that the young people will relate to them.

Advice from young carers

A group of young carers in Merseyside have asserted the need for those who come into contact with them and their families to:^{xxxvii}

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- “Introduce yourself. Tell us what your job is and who you are.”
- “Give us as much information as you can.”
- “Tell us what is wrong with our mum or dad.”
- “Tell us what is going to happen next.”
- “Talk to us and listen to us. Remember it is not hard to speak to us. We are not aliens.”
- “Ask us what we know and what we think. We live with our mum or dad. We know how they have been behaving.”
- “Tell us it is not our fault. We can feel really guilty if our mum or dad is ill. We need to know we are not to blame.”
- “Please don’t ignore us. Remember we are part of the family and we live here too!”
- “Keep on talking to us and keeping us informed. We need to know what is happening.”
- “Tell us if there is anyone we can talk to. Maybe it could be you.”

Working with partners

Collaborative working with one or more partners may be the most effective way to provide support to young carers in your community. You should check the following before embarking into partnership:

1. Are there shared vision/ values and potential for achieving objectives?
2. Is there clarity of roles and accountability for each partner?
3. Have the boundaries and limitations of all partners has been established?
4. Is there an effective communication system in place?
5. Is there open access to each other’s information and resources?
6. Is there agreement on:

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- i. how evaluations will be done;
- ii. confidentiality; and
- iii. how, and if information will be shared with outside agencies

Child protection considerations

Raising awareness about young carers in the context of your child protection training would be considered good practice.

Useful tools for your work

To help you understand a young person's caring role, and the impact – both positive and negative - on their wellbeing you can use the templates on the following pages. The first is a self identification tool and this is followed with a questionnaire to help you identify the needs of young carers. Other tools can be found online – see links at the end of the chapter in the Resources section.

Self-identification tool to identify the extent of a young person's caring role^{xxxviii}

Self-identification/survey tool

Am I a Young Carer? - What does that mean?

A Young Carer is a young person whose life is affected in a significant way by the need to provide care for a family or household member who has an illness, disability, addiction or other care requirement. Think about the things you've had to do over the last month or so and ask yourself?.....



If you can answer "Yes" to any of the following questions then you may be a Young Carer.

Do you:	Yes	No
Care for a grandparent, parent, brother, sister or other family member?	Yes	No
Help someone to dress or undress because they cannot do it alone?	Yes	No
Help someone to walk, get up the stairs, or to get in and out of bed?	Yes	No
Help someone to use the toilet or have a bath or take a shower?	Yes	No
Help someone to eat and drink?	Yes	No
Give medicines to someone, give injections or change dressings?	Yes	No
Prepare special food or diet because of the medical needs of the person?	Yes	No
Do housework because an adult is not able to do it?	Yes	No
Provide emotional support for someone who is unwell?	Yes	No
Look after siblings because an adult is unwell?	Yes	No
Take on a supportive role for the main Carer?	Yes	No

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Needs assessment tool to identify what supports are needed

I am a young carer, I think supports like these would help me:

School and Youth Services could help me by giving me access to...

- ☐ One to one personal support
- ☐ Buddy system, Big brother Big sister, Peer mentoring
- ☐ Group support and opportunity do some fun stuff
- ☐ A chance to meet other young people in a similar situation
- ☐ An ID card/or other method I can use to let school staff know I need to get some time-out, to phone home, or to let someone know I need to talk
- ☐ Something else? Tell us here:

I think this type of support would help me....

(Tick as many boxes as you wish)

- ☐ Feel more confident
- ☐ Make new friends
- ☐ Feel happier and less isolated
- ☐ Be less anxious or worried
- ☐ Have someone to talk to
- ☐ Become involved with the local Young Carers Service
- ☐ Something else? Tell us here:

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Checklist 12 - How accessible is your organisation to young carers?

This checklist can help you to identify how you can improve your service for young carers.

Public image

How we present our service to our community

• We advertise our service and programmes in places where young carers are likely to see them e.g. doctors surgeries and health clinics, schools, community welfare offices, Family Support Agencies	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our service promotes a positive image of caring, through literature, posters etc.	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Activities/events which include young carers/families are provided and promoted	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our service is represented on local boards/committees relevant to young carers	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our service links closely with carers and family members of young carers	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our service is listed in local publications as offering services to young carers	YES	PARTLY	NO

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Programme planning and delivery

Our programmes are designed and delivered to include the diverse needs and identities of young carers

• Our service has up to date figures on numbers of young carers in our target area	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Young carers are involved in programme planning	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our programme does regular reviews and invites input from young carers with regard to changes	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our service provides transport	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our programmes run at times suitable for young carers	YES	PARTLY	NO

Professional development

Our staff and volunteers are trained and supported to deliver an inclusive youth service

• Our service links with other organisations working with young carers	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Staff and volunteers have an awareness of the issues faced by young carers	YES	PARTLY	NO

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• Our service has good links with local schools, school completion programmes and other educational providers	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our service refers young carers on to more specific services depending on needs	YES	PARTLY	NO

Participation

We make sure we include the voices of young people at all levels of our youth service

• Young carers are consulted about service provision (including those who do not access our service)	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our service includes young carers in the decision making process e.g. inclusion on committees and boards of management	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Meetings are timed to allow for care arrangements (e.g. ensuring substitute care)	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our service offers an outreach service	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our service actively encourages participation of young carers	YES	PARTLY	NO

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Policies and procedures**We have a written commitment to deliver an equal and inclusive service**

- We have an equal opportunity statement referring to young carers

YES**PARTLY****NO**

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Resources

Useful tools you can use in a youth work setting

Policy templates, resources, tools, forms and posters are available for download from our **Republic of Ireland** young carer's website www.youngcarers.ie and on www.youngcarers.net for those in **Northern Ireland**. Resources and tools can also be downloaded here:

- **Class talk questionnaire -**
www.youth.ie/sites/youth.ie/files/ClassTalkQuestionnaire.pdf
- **Am I a Young Carer Survey –**
www.youth.ie/sites/youth.ie/files/AmlaYoungCarerSurvey.pdf
- **Young Carers Emergency plan template –**
www.youth.ie/sites/youth.ie/files/YoungCarersEmergencyPlanTemplate.pdf
- **Evaluation tool -**
www.youth.ie/sites/youth.ie/files/YoungCarersSupportEvaluation.pdf
- **Measuring impact tool -**
www.youth.ie/sites/youth.ie/files/ManualforMeasuringCaringActivities&Outcomes.pdf
- **Crossroads Survival Guide for Young Carers -**
www.youth.ie/sites/youth.ie/files/CrossroadsSurvivalGuideforyoungcarers.pdf

International research and practice provide excellent pathways to establish support for young carers in Ireland. Over two decades of research from a team at the University of Nottingham led by Dr. Saul Becker has been at the forefront of these efforts. Additionally The Princes Royal Trust for Carers (Carers Trust), The Children's Society and many individual young carer projects across the UK and beyond, have produced practical guides and tools including numerous multi-media, video and initiatives. For example: www.youngcarers.net, and the Usual Suspects-Young Carers. An annual young carer festivals for England-Wales and a similar event in Scotland further add to the continuum of their support

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www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z66lNI2ha94) and www.erycandtrayc.com.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=rIWv3NHLZuo.

Youth Advisory Panels: Many young carer groups in the UK actively encourage the development of skills and abilities of their young carers in evaluation and planning activities through Youth Advisory Panels (YAPs). See www.plan-uk.org/resources/documents/42604/

Information Pack for Youth Services www.youngcarers.ie/infoforyouthservices

Leaflets that explain what a young carer is and how young carers can access support are available from the Young Carers Project. A blank space at the back of the leaflet can be used to provide your own group's contact details. The Young Carers Project can help groups to obtain and use all the referral forms and support materials that you might need.

www.youngcarers.ie/researchersteachers [howyoucanhelp](#) [PostersandLeaflets](#)

Researchers Library: An array of national and international research material around young carers www.youngcarers.ie/researchersteachers [library](#)

www.youtube.com/YoungCarersIreland This is a video wall channel that we add video to regularly. This is an opportunity for you to make videos focussing on young carers in Ireland and post them here. Although the accents on the current videos are not Irish, young people are the same the world over.

An e-learning module from New South Wales Carers on young carers that can be completed online in about 45 minutes. It is a simple user-friendly course that covers the main issues. It is a very good introduction and is easy to follow. You register and start right away. It is good for anyone who wants to get a good understanding of the issues and you can get a Certificate at the end.

www.youngcarers.nsw.gov.au/pages/elearning.php

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A Welsh **video called Giving Confidence** gives youth workers a very good idea of where they fit into the whole support area for young carers. It is available on <http://youngcarerstoolkit.co.uk/engaging/young-carers-groups>

COPMI (Children of Parents with Mental Illness) is also based in Australia. This website is a treasure trove of information. The link above to the eLearning course will also provide you with a good insight into the issues around supporting families where someone has a mental illness.

www.copmi.net.au/professionals/professional-tools/kfc.html

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Useful contacts

Support & Referral Agencies (ROI)

The Carers Association Phone/Careline: 1800 - 24 07 24 Web: www.youngcarers.ie	The Carer's Association offers lots of information and advice for young carers and young adult carers in the Republic of Ireland
Care Alliance Ireland Phone: 01-874 7776 Email: info@carealliance.ie Web: www.carealliance.ie	Care Alliance works with organisations to provide information and support to Family Carers. They also commission relevant research that supports focussed and quality interventions in the lives of Family Carers.
IPAC (Irish Practice Advisory Conference) Email: ipacyoungcarers@gmail.com Phone: 01-836 0011 Rosemary Daynes (Crosscare) 086 022 9607 Gary Rutherford (The Carers Association)	Open independent forum for those interested in engaging with young carers and young adult carers to share and develop practice
Crosscare Carer Support: 01 - 8360011 ext. 113 Teenline Ireland: 1800 - 833 634 (7pm-10pm)	Crosscare is the social care agency that delivers direct services within the greater Dublin area. It uses innovative approaches to meet new and emerging needs.

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St Patricks Hospital Phone/Information Line: 01 - 249 3333 Web: www.stpatrickshosp.ie/support-information-service Email: info@stpatsmail.com	The Support & Information Service is a telephone and email service staffed by experienced mental health nurses 9-5 Monday to Friday with an answering and call-back facility outside hours. You can contact the service by phone or by emailing your query.
The Samaritans Phone: 1850-60 9090 Text: 087-260 9090 Web: www.samaritans.org	Samaritans Ireland provide non-judgemental, anonymous 24 hour support for anyone in distress
Childline Phone: 1800-666666 Web: www.childline.ie	Childline is there 24 hours a day to help any young person who needs someone to talk to
Reachout Web: http://ie.reachout.com	ReachOut.com is an online service dedicated to taking the mystery out of mental health
Jigsaw Web: www.jigsaw.ie	Jigsaw offer a network of community supports for young people
Family Resource Centres Phone: 01 - 611 4100 Web: www.fsa.ie	Offer support, information and special services for those in need of extra family support. For details of your nearest Family Resource Centre and for a copy of the Support for Families Directory contact the Family Support Agency

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Support & Referral Agencies (NI)

Crossroads Young Carers Project (NI) 7 Regent Street Newtownards BT23 4AB Phone: 028 - 91814363 Email: ycarer@croadscare.co.uk	Crossroads Young carers project believe that children and young people acting in a caring capacity within their families should enjoy the same life chances as all children. They provide services that include befriending, practical help, respite care to enable education
Carers Trust Northern Ireland Web: www.carers.org/northern-ireland	Carers Trust is a support service for family carers in Northern Ireland. It has two network partners – Belfast Carers Centre and Newry & Mourne Carers.
NI Direct Government Services Web: www.nidirect.gov.uk	One stop shop website for government services such as benefits and financial support, social housing, employment, education etc.
The young person's GP	The young carer's GP will be a key contact

Support sites for young carers (ROI and NI)

The Samaritans Phone: 1850-60 9090 Text: 087-260 9090 Web: www.samaritans.org	Samaritans Ireland provide non-judgemental, anonymous 24 hour support for anyone in distress

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Childline Phone: 1800-666666 Web: www.childline.ie	Childline is there 24 hours a day to help any young person who needs someone to talk to
Reachout Web: http://ie.reachout.com	ReachOut.com is an online service dedicated to taking the mystery out of mental health
Jigsaw Web: www.jigsaw.ie	Jigsaw offer a network of community supports for young people
Family Resource Agency Phone: 01 - 611 4100 Web: www.fsa.ie	Family Resource Centres offer support, information and special services for those in need of extra family support. For details of your nearest Family Resource contact the Family Support Agency
Riprap Web: www.riprap.org.uk/	Support site for young people when their parent has Cancer
COAP Web: www.coap.org.uk/	An online community for young people living with a family member's addiction to drugs, alcohol or behaviour such as gambling
The Samaritans Phone: 0845 790 9090 Web: www.samaritans.org	Samaritans Northern Ireland provide non-judgemental, anonymous 24 hour support for anyone in distress
NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) Phone: 0808 800 5000	

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Northern Ireland directory of counsellors

Web: www.counselling-directory.org.uk

Stress Management Society

Phone: 0844 357 8629

NIAMH

Web: www.niamh.co.uk

Mental health website that gives advice on how to keep a healthy mind

Cruse Bereavement

Phone: 0844 477 9400

Education (ROI and NI)**Aontas**

Web:

www.aontas.com/inforeferrals.html

The National Association of Adult Education offer an internet based information referral service.

Local Employment Service (LES)

Phone: 01 - 607 050

Web: www.fas.ie www.solas.ie

Contact the employment services officer in your nearest Solas/FAS office.

Youth Information Centres (YICs)

www.youthinformation.ie/

Can provide young carers with information. Check out the website to locate your nearest YIC

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DELNI (NI) Web: www.delni.gov.uk	DELNI offers information on what educational options are available once the GCSE's are completed. They also explain about funding options.
UCAS Web: www.ucas.ac.uk	UCAS offers a list of universities in the UK and what courses are on offer and how to apply.

Legal and advice services (ROI and NI)

AIM family services Phone: 01 - 6708363 Email: aimfamilyservices@eircom.net Web: www.aimfamilyservices.ie	AIM is a voluntary organisation which offers non-directive counselling, legal information, and a family mediation service to people experiencing marital, relationship and family problems
Citizens Information Board (ROI) Web: www.citizensinformation.ie Phone: 0761 07 4000	The website and your local Citizen's Information Centre provides information on public services and entitlements in Ireland
Citizens Advice Bureau (NI) Phone: 028 - 90261970 Web: www.adviceguide.org.uk/nireland	This is the largest advice charity in NI and helps people resolve their debt, gives information and advice about benefits, housing, legal, discrimination, employment, immigration, consumer and other problems. There are offices throughout Northern Ireland

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NICCY (Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People)

Phone: 028 - 90311616

Web: www.niccy.org

NICCY is set up to make sure Government keeps their promises to young people of Northern Ireland. They provide legal support and advice and work towards bringing change on issues that may be of concern to young carers.

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[http://post.queensu.ca/~hh11/assets/applets/The Quality of Care How Can it Be Assessed - Donabedian.pdf](http://post.queensu.ca/~hh11/assets/applets/The_Quality_of_Care_How_Can_it_Be_Assessed_-_Donabedian.pdf)

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References

The authors are indebted to the Carers Trust, Scotland. Much of the material in this chapter is adapted from their guide 'Supporting Young Carers - A Resource for Scottish Secondary Schools'.

ⁱ Carers Trust Scotland 2012 Supporting Young Carers-a resource for Scottish Secondary Schools

ⁱⁱ My World Report UCD/Headstrong 2012

www.headstrong.ie/content/myworld?gclid=CMrEo9Gv3rgCFcNP4QodAFgATg

ⁱⁱⁱ ADASS, ADCS and The Children's Society (2012), Working together to support young carers and their families, www.adcs.org.uk/download/position

^{iv} Becker, F. and Becker, S. (2008) Young Adult Carers in the UK: Experiences, Needs and Services for Carers aged 16-24. London: The Princess Royal Trust for Carers

^v Carers Trust Scotland (2012) Supporting Young Carers-A Resource for Scottish Secondary Schools; Children's Society (2013) Hidden from View-The Experience of Young Carers in England

^{vi} This is Ireland Highlights www.CSO.ie

^{vii} <http://www.nisra.gov.uk/census/2011census.html>

^{viii} www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-11757907

^{ix} Young Life and Times Survey is from Devine, P.& Lloyd, K. 'Young Carers Too' in Research Update Number 76. Economic and Social Research Council. June 2011.

^x Becker, S. 'Global Perspectives on Children's Unpaid Care giving in the Family: Research and Policy on 'Young Carers' in UK, Australia, the USA and Sub-Saharan Africa'. Global Social Policy 2007; 7;23. P. 27

^{xi} C. Dearden, S. Becker (2004) Young Carers in the UK: the 2004 Report

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^{xiii} Childrens Society (2013) Hidden from View-The Experience of Young Carers in England

^{xiv} Cowling, V. (Ed.) (2004). Children of Parents with Mental Illness 2: Personal and Clinical Perspectives. Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research.

^{xv} Young Life and Times Survey is from Devine, P.& Lloyd, K. 'Young Carers Too' in Research Update Number 76. Economic and Social Research Council. June 2011

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- ^{xvi} National Carers Strategy, 2012
- ^{xvii} Caring for Carers, Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, January 2006.p.27
- ^{xviii} Caring for Carers, Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, January 2006.p.27 -29
- ^{xix} Carers Trust Scotland (2012) Supporting Young Carers-A Resource for Scottish Secondary Schools
- ^{xx} NUIG (2009) Study of Young Carers in the Irish Population UCD School of Psychology/Headstrong
- ^{xxi} Young Life and Times Survey is from Devine, P.& Lloyd, K. 'Young Carers Too' in Research Update Number 76. Economic and Social Research Council. June 2011.
- ^{xxii} Edinburgh Young Carers Project fact sheet; <http://www.youngcarers.org.uk> Young Carer Identification
- ^{xxiii} Blake Stevenson (March 2012) Review and analysis of existing training and education for NHS and social care staff working with carers and young carers-Final Report NHS Education for Scotland
- ^{xxiv} Young Carers-Good Practice Guide published by The Princess Royal Trust for Carers (2009)
- ^{xxv} Northern Ireland Executive: Improving Children's Life Chances: The Child Poverty Strategy. March 2011.p.24
- ^{xxvi} Sullivan, A et al. The Consequences of childhood disadvantage in Northern Ireland aged 5. Published by OFMDFM June 2010.p.2.
- ^{xxvii} Young Life and Times Survey is from Devine, P.& Lloyd, K. 'Young Carers Too' in Research Update Number 76. Economic and Social Research Council. June 2011.
- ^{xxviii} Carers Trust Scotland (2012) Supporting Young Carers-A Resource for Scottish Secondary Schools
- ^{xxix} Young Life and Times Survey is from Devine, P.& Lloyd, K. 'Young Carers Too' in Research Update Number 76. Economic and Social Research Council. June 2011.
- ^{xxx} Edinburgh Young Carers Project fact sheet; www.youngcarers.org.uk Young Carer Identification
- ^{xxxi} Young Carers Project www.youngcarers.ie
- ^{xxxii} www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social_welfare/social_welfare_payments/carers/
- ^{xxxiii} www.nidirect.gov.uk/carers-allowance-eligibility?source=most-popular
- ^{xxxiv} See www.disabilityaction.org for a list of their members
- ^{xxxv} Carers Trust Scotland (2012) Young Carers-Good Practice Guide
- ^{xxxvi} <http://static.carers.org/files/4089-yc-outcomes-manual-spreads-sb-6261.pdf>
- ^{xxxvii} See Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011
- ^{xxxviii} HSE 2011 Child Protection and Welfare Practice handbook P. 69
www.hse.ie/eng/services/Publications/services/Children/WelfarePractice.pdf
- ^{xxxix} Young Carers Project www.youngcarers.ie

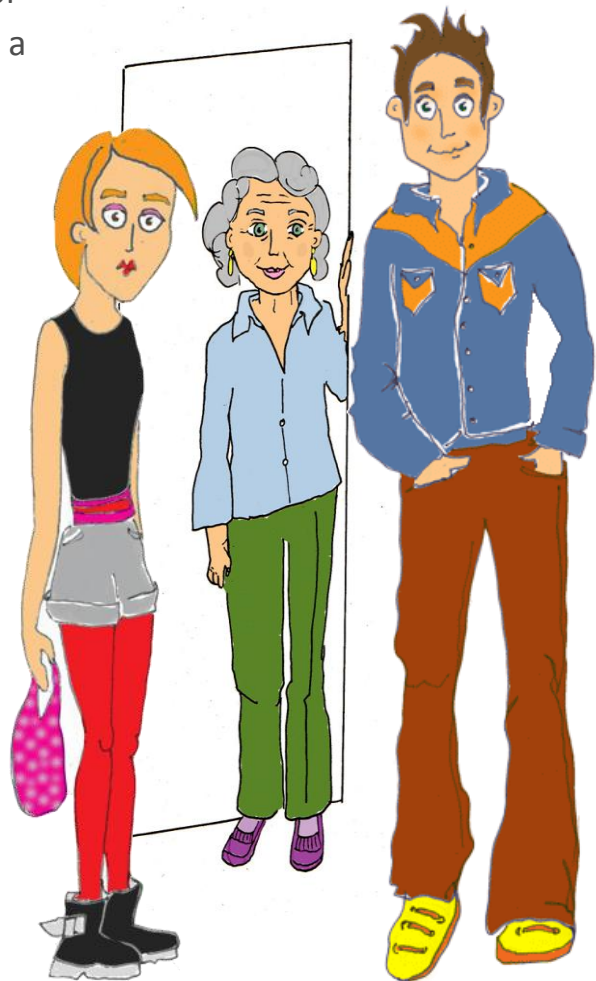
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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Working across the generations (intergenerational practice)

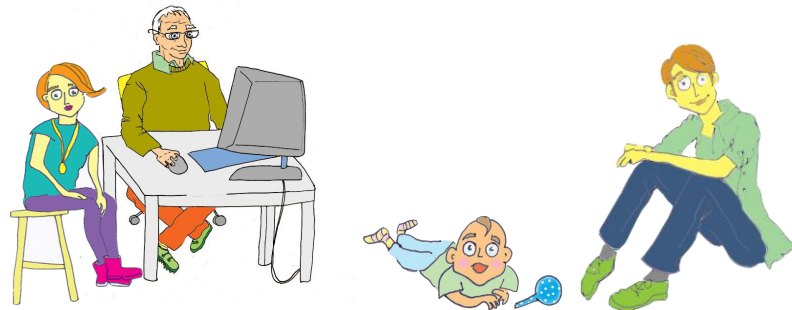
Introduction

This chapter looks at working with people from different generations in the community in a way that promotes understanding and respect, challenges stereotypes associated with age and strengthens communities. It looks at what we can do proactively to build sustainable relationships that promote a sense of security, confidence and well being for all. It encourages youth groups to adopt a life cycle approach in programmes such as health, relationships and sexuality, development, education, physical activities, participation and youth arts etc. It does this by defining what intergenerational work is, offering advice on good practice and highlighting some of the issues it can address including the value of working across the generations and its applicability to youth work. It gives practical guidance on undertaking this approach in your youth work setting and it provides a list of contacts and resources that will help you.



This chapter was developed by Anne Walsh (NYCI), Vicki Titterington (Linking Generations Northern Ireland), Keelin McCarthy (Age Action), and Cathrina Murphy (Postgraduate Scholarship Student, Dublin Institute of Technology) for 'Access All Areas – a Diversity Toolkit for the Youth Work Sector' published by NYCI and Youthnet

In the **Republic of Ireland** under the **Equal Status Act 2000** and the **Equality Act 2004**, it is unlawful to discriminate against a person on the grounds of their age in the provision of goods and services, education, sports, access to public facilities and accommodation. Age in this ground refers to those over 18.



In Northern Ireland **Section 75 (a)** of the **Northern Ireland Act 1998** requires public bodies to have due regard to the need for promoting equality of opportunity across nine equality groups including ageⁱ. In addition **The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006** makes it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of age in relation to employment, training or education. A review is currently under way which seeks to extend this legislation to cover the provision of goods, services and facilities. The current debate is whether this should apply to all ages or only to those over 18.

Terminology

This resource has been developed to be used by youth workers on the island of Ireland. At times it is necessary to make distinctions between our two jurisdictions and we had to choose a terminology to reflect this. We have chosen for the most part to use Northern Ireland (NI) and Republic of Ireland (ROI). At times we also use North and South. Additionally, for clarity, where information is significantly different we have used coloured boxes:

Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland

Intergenerational practice can be understood as any activity that “aims to bring people together in purposeful, mutually beneficial activities which promote greater understanding and respect between generations and contributes to building more cohesive communities”ⁱⁱ.

Life cycle approach

The life cycle approach (also sometimes called the life course approach) recognises that ageing is a life-long process that starts in childhood and continues to old age. Different generations in our families, friends and communities are not all different groups of people but rather people at different stages of the same journey through life. Ageing throughout our lives, therefore, is something that is common to us all and should be something that we are all aware of no matter what age. In recognising this, it then becomes important to consider that the decisions we make and how we live our lives when we are younger will have an effect on us as we get older e.g. decisions we make around health, lifestyle, education, employment. The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA) in Ireland, carried out by Trinity College Dublin, has published findings to this effect and more information can be found on their website (www.tcd.ie/tilda). Intergenerational work aims to promote the benefits of taking a life cycle approach in encouraging awareness about ageing and increasing greater mutual understanding and solidarity among generations across the life cycle.



Ageism is the discrimination of people because of their age. It can impact on anybody, at any time in their life, and can be experienced by younger as well as older people. It refers to negative opinions and often unrealistic perceptions of older people and the ageing process, or younger people and their youth, resulting in age discrimination, prejudice and stereotyping. Age stereotyping

occurs when fixed beliefs are applied to all members of a particular age group. An example of this would be demonization of young people by the media and the portrayal of older people as weak and vulnerable members of society.

As youth workers, although aware of ageist attitudes towards young people, we may not be aware of our own ageist attitudes towards older people. By using words such as “Senior Citizen”, “Old Folks”, “The Elderly”, “Old Age Pensioners” or “OAPs”, we are ageist. These words portray older people to be somewhat feeble and in need, when in fact many older people are vibrant and active with much to offer society. Unconsciously these words often translate into how we think, speak and act towards older people and can result in us overlooking the skills and experiences older people have to offer. When referring to older people avoid terms that are judgemental which stereotype older people such as those mentioned above. For example, you can use the term older people, which may be vague but does not imply negativity.



We can challenge ageism towards older people by:

- Examining our own attitudes to older people and the terms we use to describe older people.
- Discussing ageist attitudes with young people and question the language they use.
- Being open to friendships with people regardless of age and letting young people know it is okay to have an older friend.

- Providing opportunities for younger people to interact with older people in a positive environment through intergenerational projects or simply sharing facilities/resources.

Different ways of speaking about intergenerational practice

The term ‘intergenerational’ is often regarded as academic and removed from most people’s day to day language or lived reality, especially those who are most likely to be involved in intergenerational practice.

This is evident in the names given to intergenerational initiatives such as:

‘Generations together’ (Age Action Ireland’s intergenerational initiative) and ‘Linking Generations Northern Ireland’ (LGNI is a Northern Ireland initiative managed by Beth Johnson Foundation set up to promote and support the development of intergenerational practice).



Building ‘solidarity between generations’ is also commonly used terminology and the 29th of April each year has been designated the European Day of Solidarity between Generations. You may be doing intergenerational work already without naming it as that. Indeed by its very nature youth work can be described as ‘intergenerational’ in that it involves building positive relationships between people from different generations.

A Dublin Primary School headmaster explains it in this way:

“Adults have always been involved in our school in reading, sculpture and boat making projects but it is only in recent years that this has been labelled ‘intergenerational’. May spent every day here when her children went into school. We had the parents’ room and we had personal development groups, first aid group... knitting classes... exercise, keep-fit. You name it; we’ve done it all here for years. The older residents currently use the computer room for their computer classes and every couple of weeks the kids come in and show them a few tricks and shortcutsⁱⁱⁱ.”

Despite the complexity around terminology, intergenerational practice is an accepted generalised term and for consistency we will use it throughout this chapter.

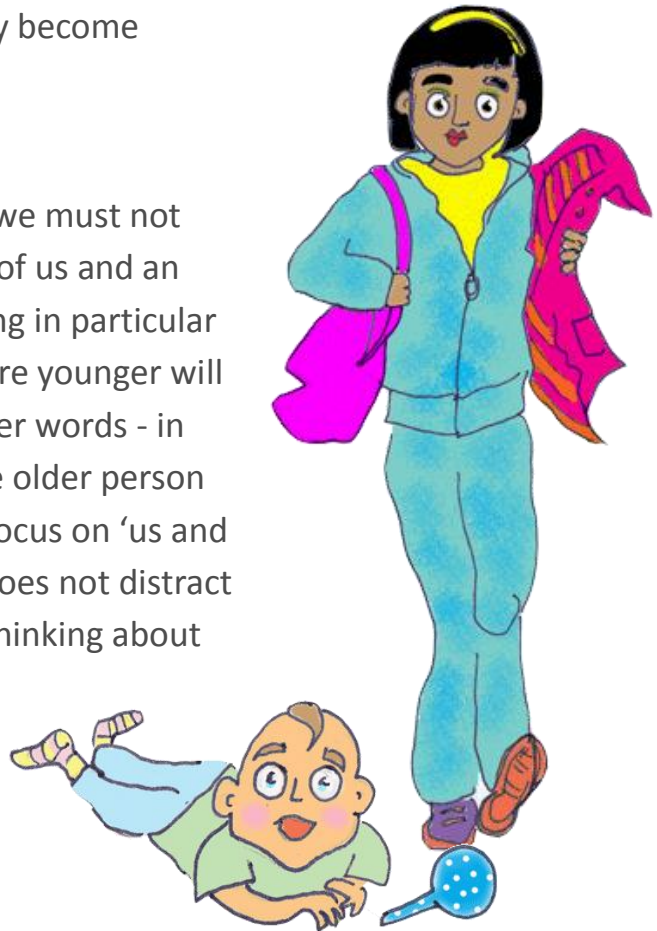
Who are the ‘generations’ in intergenerational practice?

The term intergenerational practice refers to working with ‘younger people’ and ‘older people’ and although it is not easy to define people by their age group as being ‘young’ or ‘old’, intergenerational practice is about bringing together those generations who due to the nature of our society don’t have many opportunities to interact. ‘Younger’ and ‘older’ also implies that there is a middle generation who are not involved. Research suggests that in order to allow relationships to develop between younger and older people, it may be necessary to omit the middle generation from projects, at least initially because the presence of the middle generation can prevent interaction. One project where parents were present resulted in the older participants communicating with the younger people through their parents^{iv}. While intergenerational practice does not replace activities where everyone in a community is engaged and involved such as local festivals and celebrations, tidy town initiatives, street parties, special interest projects etc. successful intergenerational projects and activities can enhance multigenerational events as younger and older people

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are more at ease in each other's company. Research suggests that as intergenerational practice becomes embedded in organisations and communities, it can result in activities becoming multigenerational as the community become involved^v.

When focusing on two age groups, we must not forget that ageing is common to all of us and an issue for all generations – recognising in particular that how we live our life when we are younger will impact on us as we get older. In other words - in our youth we are also becoming the older person we will be. We must ensure that a focus on 'us and them' (older and younger groups) does not distract us from this more complex way of thinking about ageing and the way we live our lives. Intergenerational practice in youth work should seek to address this concept. While much of the practice may start with thinking about bringing older and younger groups together it is important to keep in mind the end goals of supporting personal development alongside enhancing greater community cohesion and adopting a life cycle approach.



The range of intergenerational practice

Intergenerational 'projects' will manifest in a variety of ways. However, intergenerational 'practice' has specific aims and criteria, and intergenerational contact alone is not enough. Intergenerational practice aims to:

- Promote understanding
- Promote respect

- Strengthen communities
- Address ageism

Projects should:

- Ensure participants are engaged on equal status
- Be positive
- Be purposeful
- Involve working towards a common goal
- Be mutually beneficial in its outcomes

The range of intergenerational projects and activities and levels of contact varies immensely and all have a contribution to make in achieving the aims outlined above. The Beth Johnson Foundation has suggested that there is a continuum of contact levels from low level (1) to high level (7) which can lead to sustainable intergenerational practice^{vi}. The following framework is a useful conceptual tool for differentiating between different activities that involve bringing different generations together. It also advances our understanding of the outcomes we can expect from our projects.



Level	Example of work
1 low contact	Involves participants learning about the lives of other age groups but there is no direct contact
2	Contact is from a distance such as letter writing, exchanging videos, or sharing artwork
3	Involves a once-off meeting such as a group of students visiting a nursing home
4	Involves contact on an annual or periodic basis for an established event such as a Christmas party
5	Intergenerational projects where generations meet on a regular basis to undertake a shared activity
6	Contact occurs in intergenerational programmes which have come about as a result of successful lower level contact which in turn lead to intergenerational activities becoming part of general programmes within the organisation
7 high contact and sustainable	Contact occurs because intergenerational practice has become embedded in the community. Activities are designed to accommodate all ages and recreational interests

Research conducted on intergenerational practice concurs with the Beth Johnson Foundation which maintains that higher level contact is a result of successful lower level contact^{vii}. Higher level contact is where more fundamental change takes place at a community level. This may result in a reduction in anti-social behaviour, greater involvement across the generations within the community, and an enhanced sense of well being.

Needs and Issues

Understanding the origins of intergenerational practice

Intergenerational practice emerged in the United States in the 1960s as a response to a growing distance between the generations. It later developed to tackle social, cultural and economic needs such as school dropout, drug abuse and issues of social exclusion of older people. Although informal intergenerational activities occurred in Ireland for many years through helping and befriending initiatives in schools and youth work, planned intergenerational activities first emerged here in the 1990's.

While familial relationships across the generations in Ireland remain generally positive there is a real sense that relationships across the community are no longer strong. Intergenerational practice is seen as a useful tool in combating this perceived distance between the generations as a result of changes such as family structure, increased mobility and advances in information technology.

People from different generations can experience life quite differently

and there is a perception that different generations increasingly have little in common. Stereotyping from both older and younger generations toward each other is also evident. In a survey conducted in Ireland in 1986, 46% of young people over the age of 15 thought older people regarded them as vandals



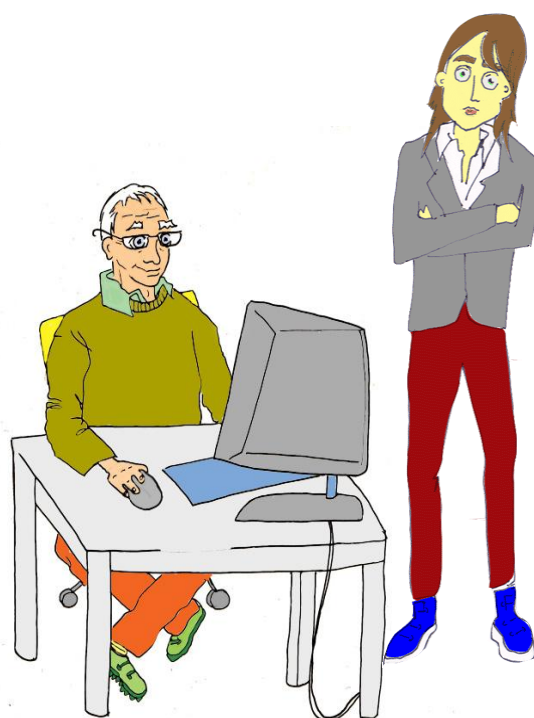
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and 42% thought that older people regarded them as disrespectful and rude^{viii}. Meanwhile, older people are often regarded as grumpy, weak and a burden.

As intergenerational practice has developed, it has become evident that it has significant potential. Each generation have much to offer the other and by bringing the generations proactively together greater social cohesion can be attained. Older people have acquired valuable life skills and insights based on experience and can act as positive role models and provide support and advice. Young people on the other hand, “offer new perspectives”^{ix} in a world where rapid changes in technology and the provision of services via technology can often result in difficulties and isolation for older people. Younger people have the skills to help older people navigate the new technologies and access services which can enhance their lives. Both age groups also have much in common as they experience ageism and stereotyping and can equally be marginalised in decision making. While older people often experience a sense of being of little importance, younger people often experience a sense of being voiceless, ignored and dismissed^x. Older people offer an important link to the past for young people whilst young people are society’s older people of the future.

Skills sharing and the premise of mutual benefit

It is important that the sharing of skills is not based on stereotyping and in fact many older people may be well versed in IT and may have skills other than “knitting” to offer. It is therefore, important to ensure that skill sharing meets the specific needs of each participant in an intergenerational encounter – someone from an older generation may well pass on their ITC



skills to someone younger and someone from a younger generation might share their particular life skills with an older person.

Community

When we talk about building cohesive and stronger communities through intergenerational practice we need to understand that ‘community’ can mean different things to different people. There is much talk of the ‘loss of community’ but many researchers argue that this relates to a nostalgic view of the traditional community and that “perhaps communities are just as prevalent now as we supposed them to be in previous times and other social circumstances, but we are failing to see them, because they take different forms or are more covert”^{xi}. So rather than focussing on the re-establishment of traditional communities, perhaps it is more important to concentrate on finding the value of personal relationships by "supporting... direct, face to face contacts"^{xii}. Whatever our own idea of community is, intergenerational practice has a significant role to play in facilitating these face to face contacts and the building of relationships between the different generations in any community in which we work – whether it is geographical or a special interest group such as an LGBT community, Traveller community, minority ethnic community etc.



Youth work and its role in intergenerational practice

Youth work is significant within community development and is an important site for intergenerational practice. Youth work aims to

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build self-esteem and confidence of young people and help them develop social awareness and a sense of social solidarity. These are key themes of intergenerational practice.

Intergenerational practice also has a role to play in any aspect of youth work where ageing has relevance such as making decisions that will have a long term affect. For example, in your work on health and well being, on promoting positive mental health, on supporting healthy relationships, on drug and alcohol awareness, inter-cultural understanding, global justice, conflict management and vocational training, support or advocacy. This supports the life cycle approach that sees ageing as a continuum from birth to death that should factor into all decisions and practices we adopt. We already do this when we do work on tobacco use, sexual health etc.

Intergenerational practice brings a more conscious awareness to that aspect of our ongoing work and thereby can proactively support positive attitudes around ageing. At the same time, dedicated intergenerational projects can more effectively challenge the negative attitudes that prevail which result in ageism, stereotyping, lack of trust and confidence and isolation.



Young people frequently feel stereotyped by the association of youth with crime and deviance^{xiii}. While older people perceive young people hanging around as a threat and have referred to them as vandals and abusive^{xiv}.

Younger people are keen to change the negative attitudes people have towards them and intergenerational projects can allow this to happen.

Linking in with schools can be an effective way to extend intergenerational work into the community as the integration of formal and non-formal education (youthwork) alongside community development can result in a sustainable programme of intergenerational projects.

In the **Republic of Ireland** the CSPE (Civic, social and political education) module and Transition Year are both opportunities where intergenerational work may feature. For example, many schools offer the 'Log on, Learn' intergenerational computer learning programme in Transition Year. Ensuring an intergenerational focus is present in both formal and non-formal education can help to support efforts to embed the practice in the community.

Before embarking on an intergenerational project it is important to first become aware of our own attitudes and behaviour – reflecting on what we carry with us because of our own social conditioning about age.

Benefits of doing intergenerational work

Research provides evidence of the many benefits of intergenerational practice such as:

- Increased self-confidence (this is the most commonly reported advantage cited by all generations involved)
 - Research has found that self-esteem and confidence increases as participants' knowledge and contribution to society is validated and they feel they are 'useful'^{xv}.
- Participation in intergenerational projects often leads to increased participation within the community, in other learning opportunities and volunteering.
- New skills development.
- Mutual understanding can strengthen social cohesion as younger and older participants are more at ease with each other and more likely to stop and speak to each other in the community and greet each other as friends^{xvi}. In this way it has a wider impact on the community than people usually expect.
 - It can result in better use of public space^{xvii}

- Intergenerational projects can bring about a reduction in fear of crime amongst older participants^{xviii}
- Positive interaction between the generations can promote empathy and enables each generation to understand the challenges faced by older/younger people
- Direct positive contact with older people can be effective in changing young people's attitudes about older people and the ageing process thus dispelling myths and stereotypes^{xix}
- Intergenerational projects that explore the life cycle approach have the potential to raise awareness for young people about the impact of their life choice, around health, education, career development etc.
- Taking part in a project often results in older people talking more about their positive experience with young people thus 'drowning out' other voices in the community that would otherwise be negative. It also gives young people an opportunity to dispel myths about themselves that they know are prevalent in the community
- Physical benefits can accrue from projects designed to improve the environment leading to greater satisfaction by all residents of the community.
- Intergenerational practice is a useful tool in addressing Government priorities such as promoting active citizenship, volunteering and building cohesion and social capital.



- Increased active citizenship occurs as participants become more involved in the community and facilities such as schools and community centres are put to better use.
 - One of the benefits of intergenerational practice has been the release of older people's "potential to contribute positively to their community"^{xx}
 - Research indicates that older participants often take on other voluntary roles following participation in intergenerational projects^{xxi}, as do younger people as they "are very committed to making a positive social contribution to their local and national communities"^{xxii}.
 - Intergenerational projects can lead to safer neighbourhoods and more sustainable communities.
- Communities can benefit from Intergenerational projects where projects highlight deficiencies in the community such as:
 - Lack of internet facilities for older people who have no access to computers at home.
 - Inadequate time to cross the local roads due to timing restrictions on traffic lights.
 - Lack of shared community facilities or space where younger and older people can interact informally while they use the same space or facilities.
 - Community development is founded on the process of empowerment, especially of those who may be marginalised such as younger and older people. Younger and older people often feel misunderstood and excluded in decision making. The empowerment of older and younger participants can be achieved by being given an opportunity to have an input, as equals, into the implementation of projects.
 - Intergenerational practice has the potential to raise awareness of serious issues such as elder abuse, stereotyping, isolation and in so doing encourage younger and older people to speak out.

Some comments from people who have previously been involved in intergenerational projects^{xxiii}:

“I now have more respect for older people and feel I have things in common with them.” (younger participant)

“The young people were more obliging than I thought they would be and took time to listen to my point of view.” (older participant)

“I liked the good banter and chat we had with the older people and that they respect us more now.” (younger participant)

“It was very well planned and would be of interest to people of all ages. It broadened my way of thinking.” (older participant)

“As a result of this project relations between our school and local churches have improved, fostering a greater sense of community spirit. Although many older people in our group felt they had no skills to offer, our project helped them see that they did.” (teacher)

“As a social work student on the project it was great to see this happening. I felt the project increased the young people’s support networks.” (social work student)

Intergenerational work and challenging social conditioning

A key aspect of intergenerational work is its focus on challenging stereotypes based on age. Challenging stereotypes entails understanding where they come from. The following section looks at this topic in more detail.

Social conditioning around ageing

In the post-war years academic thinking on ageing was shaped by 1) health and social policy concerns for older people; and 2) the political and economic view that the ageing population was a social problem. A biomedical study of ageing constructed age as a process of decline and dependency which resulted in a needs-based approach to ageing policy. This has resulted in further reinforcing negative stereotypes around ageing where ageing is seen as a problem rather than as an asset. Intergenerational practice works to challenge this notion of ageing and to reconfigure ageing as positive, and rich in assets and opportunities.

Social conditioning and elder abuse

Elder Abuse causes harm or distress to an older person and/or it violates their human rights. It can be a single or repeated act, or lack of action and happens in relationships where there is an expectation of trust. The incidence and perpetuation of elder abuse can occur where there is a climate of ageism - of negative stereotyping - that allows discrimination to flourish. Elder abuse can continue due to a collusion of silence, denial or tacit justification, as a result of isolation, and due to a lack of awareness.

Intergenerational practice seeks to raise awareness, reduce isolation and build confidence. Building confidence to be heard and to speak out about elder abuse (by both younger and older people) would be a positive result of intergenerational practice.



Social conditioning relating to younger people

Younger people are often seen as ‘hanging out’ and subsequently stereotyped as anti-social and vandals. However, research conducted in 2006 on the leisure needs of young people living in areas designated as disadvantaged found that young people actually felt ignored and excluded within their own community and marginalised from the wider community^{xxiv}. Hanging around was often the only leisure option open to them due to a lack of amenities and lack of money to pay for alternative activities^{xxiv}.

Older residents frequently complain about young people ‘hanging around’ and although older people are less likely to become victims of crime than other groups, they do fear crime. Lack of trust of younger people is one factor which can increase fear of crime among older people. This perception can have as much effect on the well-being of older people as the experience of crime itself often results in older people restricting their activities or withdrawing from social life altogether^{xxv}. This puts older people at further risk of social exclusion and isolation^{xxvi}.



Intergenerational practice needs to acknowledge these perceptions and work toward developing new and positive ways for both younger and older people to look at aspects of youth and ageing. Although research suggests that following participation in intergenerational projects newly positive attitudes are directed only towards those on the project and do not necessarily translate to the wider population of younger or older people^{xxvii}, long-term sustainable intergenerational practice (level 7) may have the potential to change this.

In Northern Ireland intergenerational work has been seen as a positive and in some cases an early intervention method for addressing community safety issues. The Department of Justice NI have made a commitment to support and promote intergenerational approaches within their current 'Building Safer, Shared and Confident Communities' strategy as a method of addressing anti – social behaviour and fear of crime.

Intergenerational work with different cultures

Intergenerational work with diverse cultural groups can raise a number of issues. As children become more independent and divisions between the generations start to occur (as they do for most families) additional concerns can arise for parents and grandparents from minority ethnic backgrounds:

- The older generations may be concerned that younger people are losing or 'diluting' their cultural heritage
- Some cultures expect greater levels of respect from younger people and can be shocked by our relatively non-hierarchical approach to age in Ireland. This can manifest in a number of ways such as calling older people by their name (in Ireland) rather than their title (in other cultures). Divisions may be especially pronounced for cultural groups where wisdom and decision making resides with older people in the community and accepting any inherent wisdom of, or importance in listening to, young people is very difficult. Respect in some cultures may be shown by not looking older people in the eye which can often be misinterpreted by Irish people as guilt or evasion. This can lead to misunderstandings and both cross-cultural and intergenerational conflict.
- Intergenerational conflict can be difficult to manage when it disrupts the traditional ways of doing things. In Traveller culture it



was traditional for older people to be listened to, especially in dealing with feuds and interfamily conflict. Due to cultural change in the wider community some older Travellers have noticed that their authority is no longer respected as much. Without another culturally relevant 'authority' emerging it has led in some instances to greater levels of fighting as this would be a culturally appropriate alternative to managing conflict amongst some Travellers. Other options are now being implemented by Traveller groups to tackle this issue in a culturally relative way including the need to do intergenerational work.

Please see chapters 2 and 4 for more details on working with young people from minority ethnic backgrounds and young Travellers



Developing intergenerational practice

When developing your intergenerational project/event/initiative there are many elements that need to be considered and good planning and implementation are key to a successful project. The following steps will guide you through developing and delivering an intergenerational project.

Step 1 Project planning

A planning group should be in place to manage the project ideally involving at least one or more partners. This group will create and agree on the structure and delivery of the project. They will take into account the needs of all the participants. It can be helpful to identify and involve someone who is familiar to both younger and older people from the groups you are bringing together. It is also important that younger and older



people are represented on the planning group. These people will be a key contact in the development and delivery of the project and can be invaluable in building trust within their peer group about the proposed project and other participating groups.

The planning group should draw up a programme of the project, detailing session activities and times, so that everyone knows what to expect.

- Be clear to identify common goals and interests and how you will work towards them and what role you each have.

Watch out for these possible pitfalls in your planning:

- Find a suitable time when both or all groups can come together. Different generations are often not available at the same time as they have different schedules and time constraints.
- Find a suitable space where people can come together. Younger and older people tend to socialise in different settings so there may not be a natural shared space that can be used for joint activities or to sustain relationships on an ongoing basis. In the absence of shared space it is a good idea to share each other's spaces. This will allow both groups become familiar with each other's 'space' and dispel myths of certain space being 'no go' or forbidden areas which can often be the case with young people in particular being told they can't go near (or hang out in) certain places in the community.
- When planning a project be aware that there may be drop-offs.

In the **Republic of Ireland** the best routes for making contact with groups in your area is through Family Resource Centres, your local Community Development Programme, your local Community Hall committee who will know which groups meet regularly, especially retirement groups. You can contact national bodies such as Age Action to link in with their members. Age Action run a Generations Together programme to support intergenerational work and provide guidance and training to those who wish to run an intergenerational initiative. Other national groups with links to relevant groups throughout the country are listed at the end of this chapter. Many nursing homes also have an interest in intergenerational work.

In **Northern Ireland** Linking Generations NI are the point of contact for advice on good practice and project development. LGNI would advise accessing older people to participate in projects through contact with local community groups, community networks, churches and membership organisations such older people's forums and Age Sector Platform.

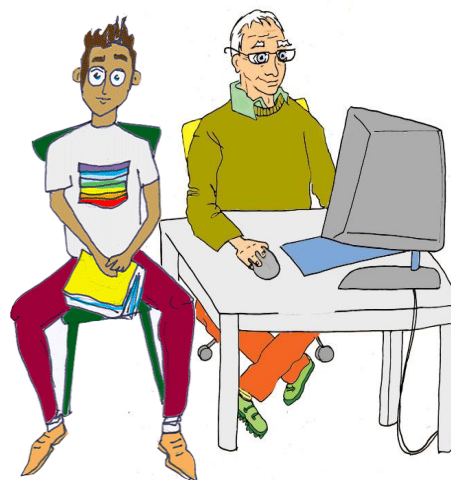
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An example of taking a partnership approach - Digital Age Project

The Digital Age Project brought several organisational partners together to deliver a digital inclusion project focusing on the technological advancement of older people in sheltered accommodation. The partners included Worker's Educational Association (lead partner), LGNI, NI Federation of Housing Associations, AVEC Solutions and the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education. By adopting an intergenerational and partnership approach it ensured that older people would be enabled to become digitally included and also be more connected to their communities and the resources young people have to offer. LGNI supported the intergenerational element of the project by providing training and advice for facilitators and creating linkages between youth and older peoples groups.

Step 2 Project aims

Ideally, the project should address an issue that all of the participants can connect with. It might be a local community campaign, it might be producing a piece of art work or it might be coming together to address a particular local problem which involves both age groups (such as fear of crime/negative portrayal of young people). If both age groups feel they are working together for a common goal, relationships are more likely to be built. Both groups should have equal participation. Mutual respect between the age groups is an essential part of what should be a two way process. So a project that, for example, involves younger people serving tea or performing for older people might also have the older people providing a similar service for the young.



An example of addressing a shared issues - The BIG Gay Lunch

The Big Gay Lunch' was organised by Gay and Lesbian Youth NI, QueerSpace and Linking Generations NI to bring younger and older members of the LGBT community together to celebrate the 29th April EU Day of Solidarity between Generations. The event offered the opportunity for both age groups to share personal experiences about coming out, sexual health and stigma whilst enjoying food, friendship and fun.

Step 3 Group preparation sessions (single identity work)

Project leaders should meet with each age group separately before the intergenerational project starts to prepare them for meeting up. Information about how each group views the other can be gathered at this session and can inform a 'before and after' type of evaluation. Suggestions for this session might include discussions around these questions:

- What do you think of when you hear the words young people/old/elderly etc?
- How often do you have contact with an older/younger person who isn't a member of your family?
- Drawings of stereotypical images of the other age groups.

Use this opportunity to:

- Understand the needs and abilities of each group.
- Introduce groups in advance to any unfamiliar settings you might be working in and tell them what to expect.



- Introduce groups in advance to all the project leaders so that there are familiar faces present when the groups first meet up. Try to have someone involved who is known and trusted by people in the community.

Step 4 The first session

- Be prepared with any materials, handouts, food etc that you will be using. If there is instruction have handouts as people can easily forget what they have learnt between one session and the next.
- Ensure everyone knows what to expect, and what their contribution is. Give people an opportunity to ask questions.
- Organise transport or give clear directions that gets people from door to door.

The first session should involve ice-breakers and allow time for getting to know each other. The aim is always to provide a positive environment where relationships can develop.

Suggestions for this first session include:

- Review of the single age group session.
- Speed dating format.
- Show and Tell – bring an object and talk about it.
- Arts and crafts.
- Human bingo.

Be aware of and responsive to group dynamics when you bring groups together. This advice from people who have run intergenerational projects may be relevant:

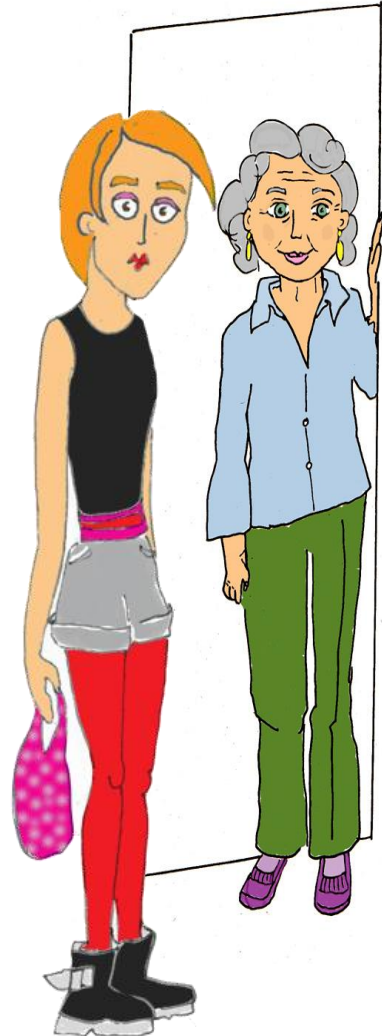
- Make sure that initial introductions and relationship building is managed and not left in the hope that it will happen naturally. People may be uneasy and will tend to stick with their own age groups so mingling does not easily happen.
- When groups meet first treat the ‘visiting’ group as guests.

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- Create opportunities for informal chats between members of each group such as tea breaks etc. This is when genuine relationships start to develop and mutual interest in one another lives happens. Small group work of mixed age groups encourages interaction. It is also important to meet regularly to build relationships over time.

Step 5 Duration of project

The longer the better! A key feature of successful projects is that genuine and lasting friendships were formed between older and younger people. This takes time and the sessions should allow time within the plan for purely social interaction. LGNI advise that sessions should last between 1 and 2 hours. Sessions running weekly or fortnightly seem to work best as it means there is enough contact to keep participants engaged but not too much or too little to lose interest.



Step 6 Evaluation

Evaluating is an important part of any project. (It is compulsory for an LGNI funded project.) Evaluation should be a continuous process throughout the project. LGNI recommend the following:

- Using LGNI evaluation forms (these can also be used in ROI)
- Take plenty of photos
- Note down any interesting comments participants make throughout the project

- Refer to the information gathered during the single age groups (single identity) sessions to provide 'before and after' information

Research has shown that it is sometimes necessary to prompt younger participants to reflect on their experience and interaction with older people in order to articulate any changes in their attitudes toward older people^{xxviii}. This shows the value of adding in a reflective aspect to intergenerational projects. Evaluations where possible, should seek to measure increases in self-esteem and confidence and also if participants themselves attribute this change to their participation in the project.

Note: Success should not be measured by the numbers in attendance but by the experience of the participants involved.



Step 7 Celebration

A celebration event is a great way to recognise the achievements of the project for both participants and workers. Here are some suggestions:

- Contact local papers to see if they will feature your project
- Invite local Councillors, politicians and special guests to the event
- Giving certificates to participants can be a motivating factor

- Use the celebration to launch anything you have produced such as a report, photo album, art work, DVD, booklet
- Celebrate!!

Step 8 Sustainable intergenerational practice

Intergenerational projects often result in a number of outcomes beyond the stated goals of the project. In doing your evaluation it is important to recognise and record un-anticipated outcomes:

- As relationships develop younger and older people can find things in common such as an interest in activities outside of the scope of the project (chess, history, music etc)
- Intergenerational projects can provide older people with a means to contribute to society and give them a renewed sense of purpose thereby building their self-esteem.

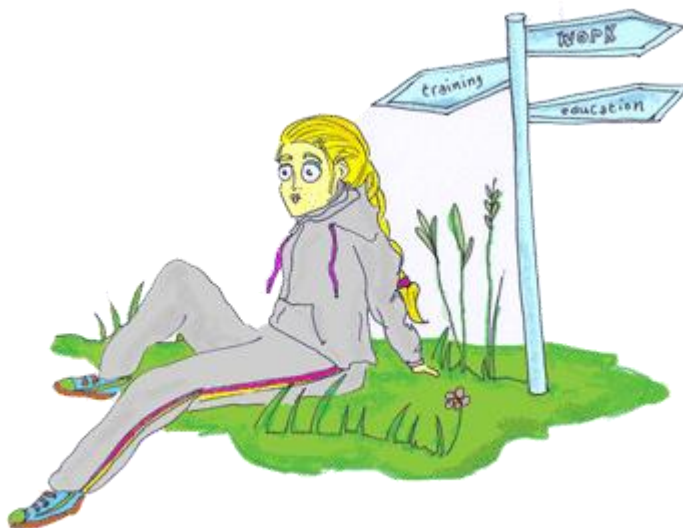


However, it is important to see these outcomes in the context of whether they are maintained into the long term and across society. To obtain long term benefits, intergenerational projects need to extend beyond a limited timeframe into sustainable intergenerational practice that is community wide and long term. Therefore, as part of your annual planning with your own group, arrange to meet with a group from another generation to come up with new ideas for projects you might want to do together.

Research indicates that a number of key elements are required to ensure that progression takes place from one-off intergenerational projects to sustainable intergenerational practice. These elements include:

- The need to embed it in an educational or community development context which allows the practice to evolve along the continuum of contact levels and
- The commitment of key people with an understanding of intergenerational practice: teachers, community development workers, youth workers and volunteers who work closely together^{xxix}.

Schools and youth groups that open themselves up to the community can be at the heart of intergenerational practice. By running parent, grandparent and adult education classes and activities alongside school or youth activities, and by making the school or youth centre a community-based asset and opening up the gym, kitchen, art rooms, computer rooms etc to the community and actively encouraging involvement from all generations at a social and educational level, a sustained focus on intergenerational practice in a community can be maintained.



Age-Friendly cities and counties

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has established a Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities that encourages active ageing by optimising opportunities for health, participation and security. The Age-Friendly Programme is applicable to all ages and intergenerational approaches. It can play a significant role in achieving sustainable intergenerational practice at a strategic and practice level. In Ireland, The Age Friendly Cities and Counties

Programme is affiliated with the WHO Global Network of Age Friendly Cities. The initiative in Ireland is aimed at developing age friendly cities and counties in all Local Authorities in the country with the assistance and alliance of local authorities, the health service, the Gardaí, the business community, voluntary organisations and academic institutions. The Programme has already brought about imaginative changes at a local level such as the establishment of Men's Sheds, Bogus Caller Cards, Age Friendly Business Recognition Schemes and lengthened traffic light crossing times. While the Age Friendly Programme currently only targets older people in its consultation process, these fora have identified that intergenerational practice has the potential to resolve some of the issues that are key to developing age friendly communities. As such, your intergenerational projects can have a role to play in making communities more age friendly and you should link in with your own Local Authority to see what is happening under their Age Friendly Programme.



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Participation in decision making

Sustainable intergenerational practice will ensure that different generations take part in decision making processes. This parallels the core principle in youth work that participation is central to young people's rights. By hearing the voices from across generations, everybody's rights can be collectively maintained and strengthened. Participation in decision making processes needs to take place at policy and government levels as well as community level.

Northern Ireland Youth Forum and Age Sector Platform Partnership – an LGNI project

LGNI has brought together two organisations that promote the voice of younger and older people respectively to engage in dialogue on cross generational issues. Since 2009 the partnership has hosted intergenerational events and projects opening dialogue on issues such as ageism, employment, mental health and peace building. Reports of the events hosted by this partnership 'Is it Fair?' and 'Have Your Say' can be viewed on LGNI's website www.centreforip.org.uk/northern-ireland

When Belfast decided to become an Age Friendly city LGNI partnered with the City Council to engage the Youth Forum and Greater Belfast Senior Citizen's Forum in consultation. This process enabled an intergenerational perspective to be included in the Age-Friendly Belfast action plan and strategy. A further development of this project was to take a cross-border focus linking with a similar intergenerational group from Dublin through Age Action Ireland to host a learning exchange trip.

Practical tips

Encouraging engagement

Workers say it often takes some persistence to persuade people to get involved initially. The following advice may help:

- Research shows that people tend to take part in something because they are asked to do so, or are encouraged by someone in the community they trust such as a leader or someone in their peer group. Research would indicate that having a positive opinion of young people prior to being asked may even be a pre-requisite for the participation of older people in intergenerational projects^{xxx}.
- Also, older people often self-impose restrictions on themselves in the activities they take on due to fear of crime and lack of confidence and as such are may need a little persuading to get involved. Also remember, not all older people want to be involved and this should be respected.
- Older people and younger people will undoubtedly look for different things in a project. It's important to meet all needs. Different generations may also appraise each other by different criteria. For example, older people will often comment on the manners of the young people while younger people will talk about whether the older people were 'nice', how capable, and how open they are.
- It can be harder to engage older men in intergenerational projects. Competitions and special interest projects work best.

Furthermore, it is necessary to ensure that sufficient information on the project/activity is available to potential participants to avoid misunderstandings about the project. For example, in recent research on computer skills-sharing projects, where sufficient information was not available during the recruitment process to allow suitable participants to be recruited, it resulted in:

- Participants dropping out of the project.
- Participant's skills not being matched to the level of the course. For example, many older people already have good computer skills and might be looking for higher levels of instruction than are being delivered.

This can put extra pressure on their young person who has prepared a specific lesson and who cannot easily adapt to deliver other information^{xxx}.

Multiple identity

Remember that people cannot be defined by one aspect of their identity. No-one is just younger, or older. They will have an ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, varying abilities or disabilities, different life experiences, belief systems and diverse family circumstances. Take all of this into account when developing your project. Use it to find commonalities, connections, and special interests. Ensure flexibility where necessary (for example around literacy levels, someone's physical ability, or pre-empting disagreements). Take account of various needs - such as cultural practices around food, times etc.



Child protection

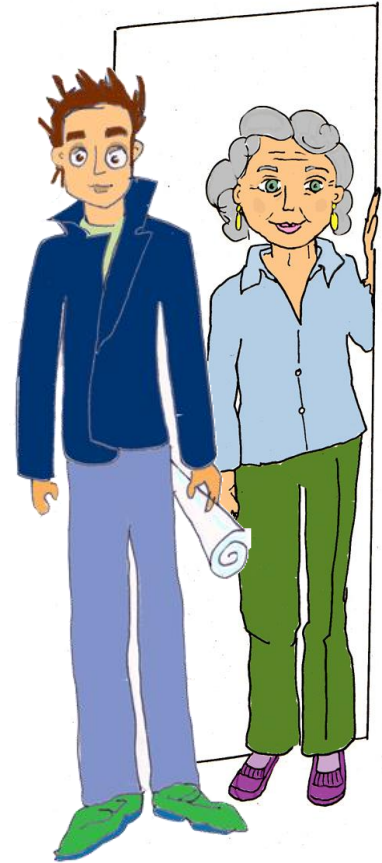
Organisers usually overcome child protection concerns by ensuring that young people are never left alone with the older people on a one-to-one basis. If they are fellow 'participants' in a project Garda vetting is not mandatory for the older people. However, older people may be uncomfortable about having informal contact with young people. Recent research suggests that older people are afraid to chat to young people for many reasons including fear of allegations of improper behaviour. One older participant in the research mentioned speaking to a young boy who said to her "I am not supposed to talk to strangers" and walked away. For her, "it was an awful slap in the face"^{xxxii}.

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Prevent reinforcing stereotypes

Interaction between younger and older people will not always result in challenging negative attitudes. Research suggests that exposing young people to nursing home residents who are mostly passive can result in an increase in negative attitude^{xxxiii}. In order to change negative attitudes it is necessary to provide opportunities for young people to interact with a diversity of older people on equal terms.

Negative attitudes may also be reinforced where an imbalance of power exists between the age groups^{xxxiv}. It is essential to ensure both groups are equal in any intergenerational activity and everyone has a say in what they are going to do. Ensure that each group have something tangible to offer so that they are each given respect.



Evaluation is particularly important in order to pick up undesired outcomes such as an increase in negative attitudes.

Intergenerational projects often result in a gender divide with older men and the boys working together such as competing in the darts and snooker competition, while older women do projects with younger girls such as sharing crafts and skills. It is important not to let these gender divides reinforce gender stereotypes while tackling stereotypes based on age.

See chapter 11 of [Access All Areas – Working with young women and young men to challenge gender stereotypes](#)

Examples of intergenerational practice

The range of intergenerational projects is vast. Many result in publications, calendars, exhibitions etc. Projects that have been run (in ROI and NI) include:

- ICT projects – learning new computer skills, using digital cameras, getting the most out of mobile phones etc.
- Learning to play music, bingo and Wii games
- Taking part in dancing
- Sharing sewing, knitting, and crochet skills
- Learning and playing sports, often in competition with each other - table tennis, chess, snooker, darts, cycling etc
- Sharing cookery skills and household management
- Joint lobbying on common issues
- Involvement in ideas/activities that assist the creation of Age-Friendly Communities
- Quizzes
- Art projects – creative writing, visual arts, silk painting, felting and other textile arts, photography, puppetry
- Local history projects
- Gardening projects
- Special interest projects on themes such as global justice, tackling stereotyping, understanding sectarianism, racism and prejudice, challenging ageism, awareness raising and prevention of elder abuse
- Universities have set up intergenerational projects such as DIT's intergenerational Nutrition project. This project gives students an



opportunity to practise their communication, presentation and history-taking skills with older ‘volunteers’ and in turn students provide older people with advice on diet and nutrition.

- Travellers have set up skills sharing projects to impart traditional skills such as tinsmithing. They have also run intergenerational projects looking at Traveller identity and cultural change over time
- Oral history gathering projects are popular whereby younger people interview older people about the games they played when they were young, the food they ate, the clothes they wore and the toys they had. An unexpected outcome in one oral history project was the younger participants reading a book, an older participant read as a child. A book they were encouraged to read by the older person^{xxxv}
- Running a community festival can be very successful such as:
 - A Halloween festival involving all generations in the community in activities such as sharing local ghosts stories or going on a haunted walk to point out local areas of “ghostly” interest. All age groups making lanterns and masks for a parade has proved very successful in some communities.
 - A community Spring clean-up or Tidy Towns programme which includes fun and games.



Successful intergenerational projects similar to those above have resulted in many benefits including reducing negative stereotypes, challenging ageism, enhancing a sense of self-worth and confidence for both the older and younger participants and a reduction in fear of crime among older people in the community.

Information and reports on the projects/events described above and others mentioned throughout this chapter can be accessed online. **Northern Ireland**

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projects can be accessed via the LGNI website

www.centreforip.org.uk/northern-ireland. **Republic of Ireland** projects can be accessed on www.icsg.ie/intergenerational_mapping_exercise.

In **Northern Ireland** LGNI are happy to discuss your project and provide as much support as they can for its delivery, including training, whether you are receiving funding from them or not. Similarly, Age Action can provide support, guidance and training on intergenerational initiatives being held in the **Republic of Ireland**. They have both produced good practice guides – see links in the resources section at the end of this chapter. Strong cross border links have been made with Linking Generations Northern Ireland and Age Action and they both collaborate closely with NUIG, NYCI, Youthnet and the Youth Council for Northern Ireland.

In conclusion, given the contribution intergenerational practice has made to community development in various areas, intergenerational practice should be recognised as an integral aspect of community development work and advocated for wherever possible.



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Checklist 13 – How to promote intergenerational practice in youth work

This checklist can help you to identify how you have adopted a life cycle approach, how you challenge ageism, and ensured that intergenerational practice has a place in your service.

Public image

How we present our service to our community

• We use positive images that promote solidarity between generations	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our service promotes opportunities for different generations to meet with and build positive relationships with each other	YES	PARTLY	NO

Programme planning and delivery

Our programmes are designed and delivered to include the diverse needs and identities of different generations

• We gather information on the groups of people from different generations in the community that we can interact and collaborate with	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We gather information on any intergenerational initiatives in the community that we can get involved in	YES	PARTLY	NO

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• Our service provides intergenerational programs which respond to the specific needs of the different generational groups involved	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our service seeks to find ways to share facilities in ways that allow the different age groups in the community to meet	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We provide opportunities to look at aspects of ageing and to challenge stereotyping	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We implement strategies to increase our intergenerational work	YES	PARTLY	NO

Professional development

Our staff and volunteers are trained and supported to deliver an inclusive youth service

• Staff and volunteers model non-ageist language and behaviour in their work	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Staff and volunteers challenge any ageist comments or behaviour from people in their groups	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Staff and volunteers develop their understanding of and raise awareness about elder abuse	YES	PARTLY	NO

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Policies and procedures

We have a written commitment to deliver an equal and inclusive service

- Our service has policies and procedures in place that deal with ageist comments or behaviour **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

Participation

We make sure we include the voices of marginalised people at all levels of our youth service

- Our service discusses with young people and older people their needs in relation to our intergenerational work **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

Useful Contacts

Linking Generations Northern Ireland

43-45 Frances Street

Newtownards

BT23 7DX

Tel: 028 - 91813022

Email: Info@lgni.org.uk

Website: www.centreforip.org.uk/northern-ireland



Linking Generations NI



@LinkGenNI

Generations Together

Age Action

30 to 31 Lower Camden Street

Dublin 2

Tel: 01 - 4756989

Email: generationstogether@ageaction.ie

Website: www.ageaction.ie/generations-together

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Resources

The Beth Johnson Foundation

The Beth Johnson Foundation is a UK wide charity that works to make a positive impact on the lives of older people, to gain recognition for the valuable role that older people play in society and to challenge age discrimination and stereotyping. They do this by bringing together research, policy and best practice. Intergenerational Practice is a strong element of their work through the Centre for Intergenerational Practice. The Centre aims to support the development and promotion of intergenerational practice as a catalyst for social change based around the 'Age Friendly' concept. For more information go to www.bjf.org.uk

Linking Generations Northern Ireland (LGNI)

LGNI are the intergenerational initiative promoting and supporting the development of Intergenerational Practice throughout Northern Ireland. They have created a good practice guide drawing on their experience of developing and supporting intergenerational work over the past five years in Northern Ireland. This guide incorporates recommendations from the groups that LGNI have worked with over the past few years and can be found in their most recent publication on the LGNI website 'The Story so Far' along with good practice examples of projects and partnerships. They also have a range of published evaluation documents which can be accessed at www.centreforip.org.uk/northern-ireland including research called '**A Review of Intergenerational Approaches to Community Safety in NI**' and a range of community project case studies.

This chapter was developed by Anne Walsh (NYCI), Vicki Titterington (Linking Generations Northern Ireland), Keelin McCarthy (Age Action), and Cathrina Murphy (Postgraduate Scholarship Student, Dublin Institute of Technology) for 'Access All Areas – a Diversity Toolkit for the Youth Work Sector' published by NYCI and Youthnet

Intergenerational programmes in Ireland: An initial overview

The Irish Centre for Social Gerontology in the National University of Ireland, Galway in collaboration with Age Action Ireland and The Beth Johnson Foundation have put together a report on intergenerational projects in the Republic of Ireland. The report not only gathers necessary information about intergenerational activities in Ireland, but also helps to identify examples of best practice in relation to intergenerational programmes. It can be accessed on www.icsg.ie/intergenerational_mapping_exercise.

Age friendly cities and communities

The WHO has produced a guide and checklist for cities/communities to assess their positions and create action plans which take positive steps towards becoming more age-friendly. To view this checklist go to: www.who.int/ageing/publications/Age_friendly_cities_checklist.pdf. For more information on The Age Friendly Cities and Counties initiative in Ireland and how you can get involved in your county go to: www.agefriendlycounties.com

29th April is European Day for Solidarity between Generations

This day has been designated by the European Union each year and offers a platform to raise awareness and celebrate best practice at the community, organisational and policy level. A number of intergenerational activities take place around this time and initiatives such as LGNI and Generations Together advocate the celebration of this day throughout the relevant sectors. For more information on this European Day go to: www.age-platform.eu/age-policy-work/solidarity-between-generations/campaign

The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA), Trinity College Dublin

TILDA is a large-scale, nationally representative, longitudinal study on ageing in Ireland, the aim of which is to make Ireland the best place in the world to grow old. TILDA collects information on all aspects of health, economic and social circumstances from people aged 50 and over in a series of data collection waves once every two years. This study aims to provide an accurate picture of the characteristics, needs and contributions of older persons in Ireland that will feed into other areas such as policy, the voluntary sector (engaged in activities that seek to enhance the social integration of older citizens) and many private sector companies in the insurance and services industries.

Over 8,500 people took part in the first wave of TILDA in 2009 and 2010, the results of which are published and can be found here: www.tcd.ie/tilda/

European Map for Intergenerational Learning (EMIL) is a collaborative learning network that aims to provide a general overview of the role and status of intergenerational learning in Europe. They collect, exchange, and distribute ideas and resources about intergenerational learning and support regional, European and global networking strategies. They also bring together a range of partnerships promoting and supporting intergenerational learning in all its varied forms across Europe. To find out more and to view their map of intergenerational learning partners in Europe go to: www.emil-network.eu/

Training and small grants

- LGNI offer a range of intergenerational specialist services such as training, development support, small grant opportunities and the distribution of a newsletter. They are also keen to collaborate with others on project partnerships and proposals. To find out more about any of these services join their contact list, check out the LGNI website www.centreforip.org.uk/northern-ireland, find them on Facebook 'Linking Generations NI' or follow them on Twitter @LinkGenNI.

- Age Action also offer training and support for intergenerational initiatives and circulate a regular newsletter with news and events. Where additional funding becomes obtainable in the Generations Together Programme, opportunities to apply for small grant schemes may also become available. To find out more information or to sign up for the newsletter, please contact Generations Together at the details above.

Sourcing Local Groups in your Area

When looking for participants or local groups to take part in an intergenerational activity, the following places are a good place to start:

- Family Resource Centres: www.familyresource.ie
- Local and Community Development Programmes: www.ildn.ie and www.pobal.ie.
- Age Action: www.ageaction.ie
- Active Retirement Ireland: www.activeirl.ie
- Tidy towns committees: www.tidytowns.ie/links.php?id=65

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- ^{xxix} Murphy, p. 190.
- ^{xxx} Murphy, p. 160.
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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Working with young people in rural and geographically isolated areas

Introduction

This section focuses on working with young people in rural Ireland who experience isolation. This chapter presents demographics in relation to rural Ireland, explains the varying needs and issues that young people may face living in rural areas and it offers practical advice on working with these young people. It concludes with a list of resources that will help you in your work.

You may be a youth worker who is working with young people in a rural area or you may be working in an urban area that interfaces with a rural space and you may be aware of young people not accessing your service. The following section explains the varying needs and issues that rural young people may face and it offers practical advice on working with young people in a rural setting.



This chapter was developed with input from Claire Barkey (Sphere 17, formerly YWI Cavan/Monaghan), Alison Fox (Kildare and Wicklow ETB Youth Officer), Cora Horgan and Zoe Gogarty (YWI Tipperary) for 'Access All Areas – a Diversity Toolkit for the Youth Work Sector' published by NYCI and Youthnet.

Terminology

Rural area

There are many types of rural area; ranging from the very remote to more populated areas which interface between town and country. In addition to the open countryside, rural areas include large, medium and small towns. Each type of rural area experiences its own range of challenges, some of which are generic and others are place-specific.

Rural economies

Importantly, 'rural' should not be seen just in spatial terms as this does not take into consideration income variation and differences in social backgrounds. Furthermore, it does not convey the diverse nature of rural areas and communities in Ireland.

Importantly, while farmers and farming has in the past been synonymous with rural areas, the range of social occupation and social issues now evident in rural areas reveals the need for differing ways of working and new policy approaches than was



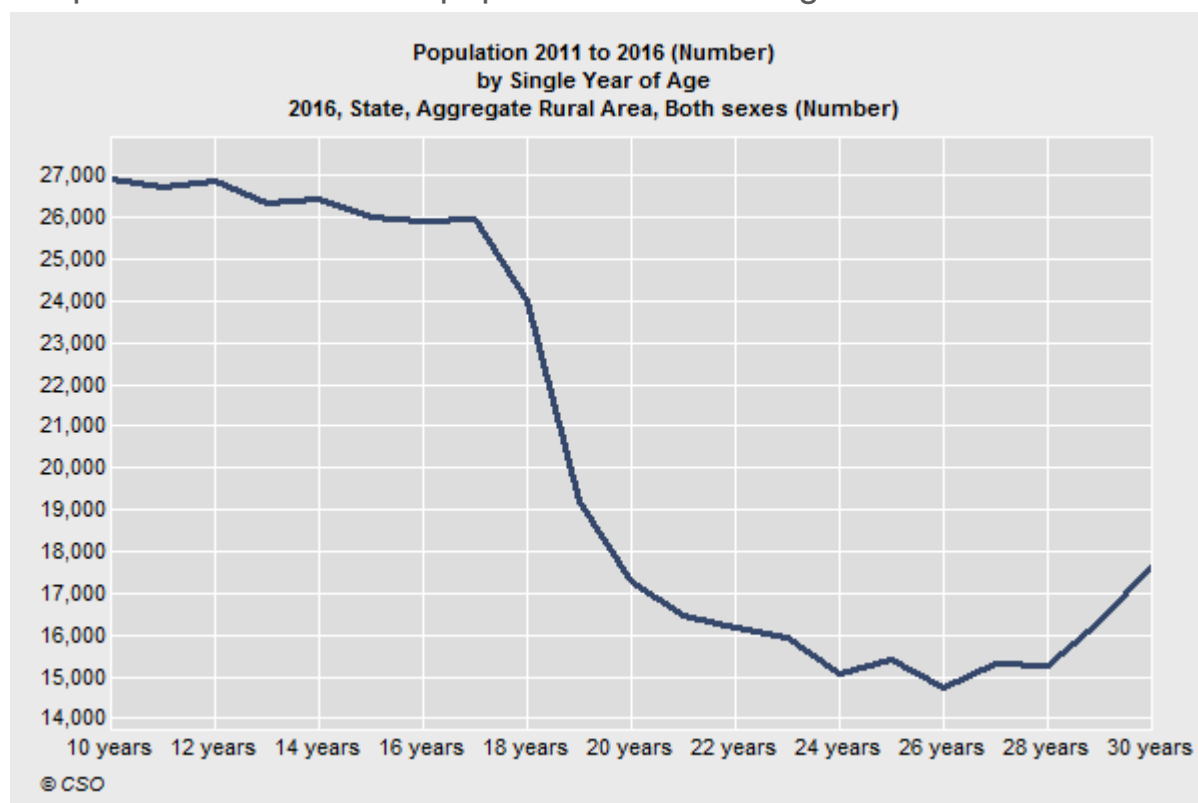
previously the case. The current model of rural development policy in Ireland has a dominant agricultural focus. Yet rural-urban interdependencies and increasingly complex economic and social inter-relations impact significantly on the economic lives of young people growing up in rural Ireland.

Demographics

The number of people between the ages of 10 and 30 living in rural areas in Ireland is 485,782. The corresponding figure for young people classed as living in town areas is 831,649ⁱ.

As young adults move away to study and work, the decline in persons aged 19 to 25 years in rural areas is a strong feature of the rural population (see Graph 1 below). The peak ages for those living in rural areas is age 45, and also age 8, reflecting a family oriented population structureⁱⁱ.

Graph 1 – decline in rural population for those aged 19-25



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Needs and issues for young people living in rural Ireland

Transport

Rural areas face a considerable lack of public transportⁱⁱⁱ. Transport that is available is often extremely limited in terms of routes travelled, running times, availability, affordability and accessibility. In many areas the only public bus may be the local school bus which runs on weekdays and only twice a day. Where a young person's home is not within accessible distance of local amenities it can lead to a real sense of isolation or a feeling of being trapped. Absence of avenues that allow young people to voluntarily and independently travel to, and participate in, social activities can negatively impact on their motivation or ability to develop independence. It can also impact on their ability to access specialised services, such as LGBTI+ youth groups, if they feel they are not in a position to share their chosen destination with their families or those who might have to drive them to meeting places.



Rural areas are therefore very car-oriented with most essential services in towns located some distance away from many young people's homes and these usually lack outreach options. Some counties cover a large geographical area and this impacts further on a young person's ability to reach services operating in distant parts of the county. Young people who are under 18, and those over 18 that do not have a license and access to a car, are heavily reliant on someone else, such as friends or family, for transport. While many families may have multiple car ownership, families with single car ownership or no car are directly impacted by lack of accessibility to services, including access to youth services and activities. Housing and access to services is a particular

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issue for families on low income who don't have access to their own transport and may have additional needs. Lack of transport also has an impact on access to education and employment opportunities (see below).

Scrutiny

Within small towns and rural areas, an intergenerational history of living in one area can be positive in terms of giving a young person a strong sense of identity and place. At the same time, it can also lead to a sense of being judged and labelled by others, not just for their own behaviour but by association where there is a negative association with other family members.

In addition, young people in smaller communities can often feel that they are under scrutiny and their confidentiality is compromised e.g. in accessing a GP or contraception service etc. This sense of being under scrutiny can impact on their help seeking behaviour, including mental health support (see Chapter 7 on 'Working with young people with mental health issues') or specialist services (see also Chapter 3 on 'Working with LGBT young people'). Young people seeking help who feel they are under scrutiny will often seek support from services outside their counties where they are assured of confidentiality.



Challenges to community & participation

In larger rural towns, particularly those in relative proximity to urban centres, a challenge to community cohesion is a growing social issue impacting on young people. The interface between urban and rural areas has grown with the spread of commuter belts as people commute more for work and school resulting in young people and their families connecting socially with nearby towns and cities more than with their residential community.



In addition, social differences in rural Ireland can often be masked but hidden poverty will impact on many families and young people's capacity to engage. More visible differences in social backgrounds and economic circumstances in an area can also negatively impact on community cohesion because of social divisions across various stratified groups.

Lack of knowledge about services or lack of services

A major barrier for rural young people is lack of information about services especially when they are not advertised on young person-centred on-line platforms such as Instagram, Twitter and Facebook. A related issue is lack of access to rural broadband which is a key accessibility barrier that impacts on young people throughout rural Ireland.

In addition, in many rural and geographically isolated areas there are no youth services at all. Where outreach or detached youth work services exist they only

operate in a limited or time bound capacity, making it more difficult for young people to know when and where they can see the youth worker.

Education and employment opportunities

Sustained high levels of unemployment and emigration among young people in rural communities has had a knock-on impact on community, economic and social life^{iv}. In addition, the lack of long-term investment in rural broadband and transport services^v, rural entrepreneurship and micro businesses all contribute to the challenges of living and thriving in rural Ireland.

Though youth unemployment has fallen, it remains high at 13.7% nationally as of January 2018^{vi}. In addition, the rate of unemployment in rural regions still above the state average with rural areas being over-reliant on primary industries such as agriculture, construction and low-level manufacturing^{vii}.

Furthermore, emigration is not an option available to all as considerable funds are needed to sustain young people until they find employment and housing overseas^{viii}. Some might wish to leave but cannot; at the same time, it is not an option that everyone wishes to pursue.

Activities and recreation

There is a lack of safe, supervised, affordable and accessible recreational opportunities for young people in rural areas. The GAA may offer the only recreational opportunity in many places leaving those young people that it doesn't suit with no alternatives^{ix}. There may be community halls in some areas but these are often not open to young people.



Adults in rural communities usually have some options for night time recreational activities such as restaurants, clubs, the pub or the movies. These options may not be open to young people because of age restrictions, lack of transport or lack of finances. Recreational spaces, such as skate parks and basketball courts often don't exist in small communities. Rural young people frequently cite 'somewhere to go' and 'something to do' as a priority need in their lives; rural youth have less access to youth clubs than their urban counterparts^x.

In addition, local youth groups rely on volunteers who play an invaluable part in delivering a response in rural areas. However, getting volunteers to provide support to youth groups can also be a challenge, particularly where smaller towns have been impacted by emigration. Until recently, it was also a challenge to ensure quality youth work engagement across all volunteer youth clubs especially where they were not affiliated to a local youth organisation. The ETB are now actively supporting registration for all youth groups and undergoing the National Quality Standards for Volunteer-led Youth Groups assessment.



Health

In terms of access to GPs, young people under 18 can experience different approaches in relation to their GP seeking parental consent. In larger towns, GP's may see over 16's without consent; in small towns this is less likely. In addition, accessing contraception can be difficult as young people may be observed by others they know in a local pharmacy or the pharmacy staff member may also be the local GAA coach which raises confidentiality concerns.

Young people may be reluctant to seek help for mental health issues and could fear being labelled. These pressures mean that young people may not seek help as early as they should. In addition, there is a lack of available youth mental health services in some areas and needs can build up^{xi}. The young person may therefore require one to one support prior to accessing youth groups.

LGBTI+ young people may fear negative attitudes, being labelled and discrimination from the local community. As a result, they may not access available support services such as counselling, support groups and sexual health services.

In addition, some rurally based GPs are not skilled in responding to young peoples' complex needs which can require specific expert knowledge.



Drugs and Alcohol

Life in present-day rural Ireland is influenced by prevailing social changes including the normalisation and acceptability of drug and alcohol use in youth subcultures. Linked with increased fragmentation of traditional rural family norms and values, the misuse of drugs and alcohol in rural Ireland and its penetration across all social groups is a growing issue.

Rural areas in Ireland are showing comparable drug availability and prevalence of use to urban settings, with the emergence of unique rural drug subcultures

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and the widespread availability of both drugs and alcohol; rural areas within the commuter belts tend to have higher availability of a range of drugs.

For those young people who do not want to engage in alcohol or drugs there can be increased stress in rural areas. Young people feeling the pressure to participate and 'fit in' socially while seeking to avoid alcohol and drugs can find it more difficult in areas with less alternative social outlets.

Accessing support and services

A young person in a rural area may not come into contact with a range of potential services and supports, including community-based supports such as youth work organisations. Therefore, targeted advertising and outreach activities is key (see whole organisation approach in next section).



Risk factors in a rural setting: Life experiences put certain groups at higher risk than others

- Young people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex + (LGBTI+) often find it more difficult to meet other young LGBTI+ people or access information in rural areas and this can make coming out more difficult^{xii}. In addition, young people may not want to be associated with an LGBTI+ group but may initially look for more focused one-to-one support. An important strategy in running LGBTI+ groups is to change the meeting times and day of the group and sometimes the location so that the young people attending feel safe.
- Young people from minority ethnic backgrounds, particularly those who are recently arrived and not linked in to youth services can be at risk of isolation due to lack of a social network. Their ability to engage with services, institutions and organisations may be additionally hindered due to language barriers, cultural differences and or access to interpreter services.
- Youth Mental health: Issues of self-harm and suicidal ideation in rural areas are linked to isolation and the non-availability of support and services. The cultural acceptance of alcohol and the stigma that still attaches to mental illness, as well as higher rates of suicide in rural Ireland (than in urban areas) are also considered risk factors.
- Young people with a physical or learning disability may have limited social contact. They may go to a specialist school at a distance from their home, not have access to their own transport or their parents may be over protective. As a result, social isolation can be a real issue for this cohort in rural areas.
- Youth Unemployment for those aged 18 – 24 is related to low educational attainment, limited job opportunities, marginal farming and dependency on social welfare payments. A lack of economic resources and low educational attainment could contribute to suicidal decisions.

Advocacy, referrals and barriers to access of services

It is important to be aware of the breadth of supports and services in an area and how to refer a young person to services and supports and to assist them in accessing them. Being involved in a referral network and seeking out new services to include in this network is key. Specialist services may also be interested to know how to refer young people to your project.

Where referrals take time, be it for education, training or health related issues, a holding relationship with a young person is an important strategy in countering this time barrier.

Barriers in accessing services:

- Young people may be reluctant to access services due to a fear of a lack of confidentiality in a rural area.
- With lack of access to transport, young people may face an access barrier where specialised services are only available in centralised locations.
- Depending on how a service is advertised, it may or may not be visible to a young person.
- They may also face virtual barriers in accessing information where there is a limited broadband capacity in an area.

Developing inclusive practice for working with young people living in rural Ireland

The following is some practical advice which can be adopted within your organisation to make it a more supportive environment for rural youth. It will also help you deal better with the concerns you may have for the young people.

See it in the context of your ongoing programme of activities. These ideas may take some planning but the methods are proving effective in addressing the inclusion needs of young people in rural areas.

Strategies in responding to identified issues

- Consider creating a mobile version of your service. Some organisations are using buses or transit vans as mobile centres to deliver short-term initiatives and to make contact. These spaces are designed to be youth friendly e.g. with couches, benches and computer space.
- Another way of being mobile is to use a tent to offer a space where young people gather e.g. at GAA training spaces which are attended by young people. Alongside weekly training, a youth service can develop a parallel weekly youth space.
- Plan outreach 'pop-up' initiatives which can respond to a particular need or interest group at a specific time.
- Build transport costs into planning the setting up and delivery of issue based groups.
- Partner with other agencies to share prohibitive transport costs etc.
- Question how accessible your service is to the needs of young people, how easy is it for them to make an appointment with you or to talk to someone when they need to, specifically in terms of ensuring

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confidentiality? Can they speak to someone who isn't from their immediate area if needed?

- Support volunteers involved in delivering services in rurally isolated areas and facilitate partnerships between youth workers and volunteers.
- Youth work volunteers are a critical part of a rural youth response. Ensure the package available for volunteers is worthwhile and links to their interests and skills. Linking volunteers into the regional and national network further facilitates their own development and sense of being valued.
- Plan relevant and targeted training and education responses in collaboration with other local services.
- Work in collaboration with national issue based groups to develop appropriate local responses e.g. Macra Na Feirme who worked with GLEN on producing a booklet, 'LGBT People in Rural Ireland' (2013).
- In working with young people who are 16+, work with local partners and employers to develop responses to youth unemployment e.g. Work Winner^{xiii}, Youth2Work^{xiv}.
- Work on improving your visibility across the rural space.
- Network with people who work in areas that young people frequent, such as the fast food outlets which exist throughout rural Ireland.
- Collaboration between community services and businesses (e.g. fast food outlets) can be a very powerful way of increasing information sharing and advertising. These spaces can also be important meeting places in terms of connecting with people where they are at.
- Regional ITs that offer training linked in to local employment opportunities are key to supporting relevant and obtainable employment options.
- Work with rural parents to provide alcohol and substance abuse education, build visibility of services, including family support for those experiencing problematic substance use.

- Regular house visits to families allows a youth worker to build a relationship with the whole family. Building relationships with families creates stronger ties in the community.
- Plan a flexible element to your service that can respond to changing issues and area based needs as they emerge.
- Don't be risk averse in trying new ideas.

Consider using a Detached Youth Work model^{xv}

Detached Youth Work is a distinct form of work with young people. As with all youth work it uses the principles and practices of non-formal education to engage young people in constructive dialogue within a broad agenda of personal and social development. The basis of the relationship between the youth worker and the young person is mutual acceptance and parity where traditional notions of adult power and authority are challenged. Detached youth work is distinct from all other forms of youth work as it works outside of the geographical youth work centre: detached youth workers work where young people have chosen to be, whether this is on the streets, cafes, shopping centres etc. Workers make contact with young people wherever they are.

The experience of many detached youth workers is that imposing an agenda acts as a barrier to working with young people, many of whom are already disengaged from formal learning. The agenda must, therefore, emerge from a mutually

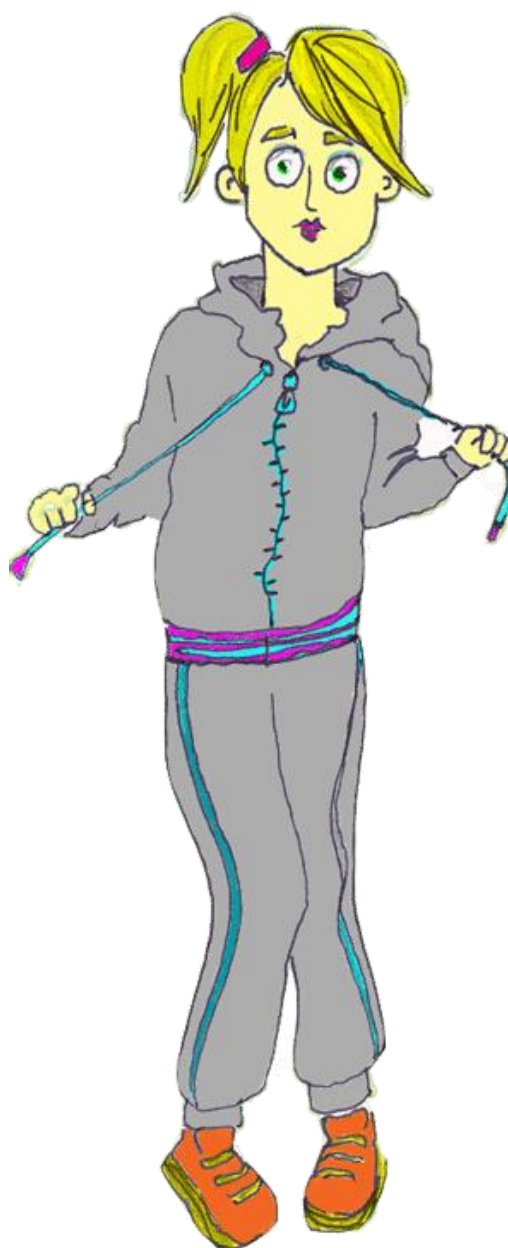


respectful relationship, where hearing the other's voice is as important as articulating one's own. Detached youth work is above all, about working flexibly.

The model, which has been supported as a way of engaging with rural youth in Cavan and Monaghan, prioritises work on Friday and Saturday nights between the hours of 7pm and midnight. Youth workers target “hot spots” where young people meet and they work on building relationships in these spaces where young people may be at risk of anti-social or criminal behaviour, risky sexual conduct and substance misuse; the success of youth work comes from supporting young peoples' capacity to make good judgments in relation to these risks and the possibility of creating more structured engagement with programmes and projects.

One of the identified challenges in delivering detached youth work services is in staffs' capacity to cover identified geographic areas and at the key time slots. This can be a particularly difficult where an issue arises in one area and time slot and it impacts on engagement at a later location and time slot. Extra funding will be necessary to ensure that you have a relief panel is available to keep the routes and time slots consistent each week in order to sustain trust and relationship building.

Notwithstanding the challenges, since the programme has been running in Youth Work Ireland Cavan Monaghan it has made



a significant impact on meaningful engagement with young people who had been previously excluded*.

*** Detached Youth Work project in Cavan Monaghan**

Detached Youth Work is part of the **Bounce Back Youth Service**^{xvi} which commenced in December 2016. It is a collaboration between the ISPCC and Youth Work Ireland to jointly establish a service to support young people in the areas of Bailieborough, Virginia, Ballyjamesduff and Belturbet. The ISPCC works with young people aged 10 – 18 through its rural resilience service, while Youth Work Ireland Cavan Monaghan supports young people aged 10 – 24 through its detached youth work programme, youth café and other youth programmes^{xvii}.

Checklist 15 - How accessible is your organisation to young people living in rural Ireland?

This checklist can help you to identify how you can improve your service for young people in rural and geographically isolated areas

Public image

How we present our service to our community

- Our service actively considers its youth 'friendliness'. **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**
- We advertise our service and programmes in places where rurally isolated young people are likely to see them e.g. doctor surgeries and fast food outlets. **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

Programme planning and delivery

Our programmes are designed and delivered to include the diverse needs and identities of young people in rural and geographically isolated areas

- Our service is flexible to accommodate the needs of young people in rural and geographically isolated areas. **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

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- We have outreach and mobile options in place to ensure we are reaching people who are rurally isolated **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**
- We run 'pop-up' initiatives to respond to a particular need or interest group at specific times **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**
- We use informal meeting spaces where necessary to engage with young people **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

Connecting young people to services:

- Our service has developed an understanding of the referral process into statutory service **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**
- Our service has identified local services and supports and developed links with them. **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**
- Our service has a strategy in place of staying in contact with vulnerable young people while they are waiting for a referral to come through. **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**
- Our service works transport costs into programme delivery and actively collaborates with other services to share these costs. **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

Professional development

Our staff and volunteers are trained and supported to deliver an inclusive youth service

• Staff and volunteers have an understanding of issues relating to rural and geographically isolated areas.	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Staff and volunteers have effective skills in engaging rural young people.	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Our volunteers are supported in their professional development and ongoing commitment to the work.	YES	PARTLY	NO
• Staff and volunteers receive support and supervision (e.g. team meetings, one-to-one formal supervision etc.)	YES	PARTLY	NO

Policies and procedures

We have a written commitment to deliver an equal and inclusive service

• Our organisation has a written commitment to equality and inclusion that is inclusive of rurally isolated young people.	YES	PARTLY	NO
• We recognise transport as a key access issue and work creatively to try and overcome this barrier.	YES	PARTLY	NO

Participation

We make sure we include the voices of young people at all levels of our youth service

- Our service consults with young people about how living in rural and geographically isolated areas affects their engagement with our youth services and on how our youth service can support them
- YESPARTLYNO

Useful contacts

Information on mobile youth work

KDYS Phone: 064 6631748 Web: http://kdys.ie Email: killarney@kdys.ie	KDYS delivers a Mobile Youth Café across the Kerry area. The Mobile Youth Café is also an information hub and a recreation space. It is currently used to help new youth clubs get established in their communities, attend community events and festivals across the diocese and acts as a hub for delivering youth work workshops in rural areas.
West Wicklow Youth Project Phone: 083 4445074 Website: http://www.kys.ie Email: tina.harper@kys.ie	West Wicklow Youth Project aims to deliver a Mobile Youth Bus across the West Wicklow area. With the WWYP Mobile Youth Bus, young people have access to an information and recreation space. It delivers a pop-up youth service in response to identified need and is important to assess emerging issues in rurally isolated spaces.

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Information

SpunOut

Web: www.spunout.ie

Twitter: [@SpunOut](https://twitter.com/SpunOut)

SpunOut provides information, support and advocacy opportunities to young people throughout Ireland. Their website provides hundreds of fact sheets on all aspects of youth health and culture including mental health, suicide and sexual health as well as a searchable database of help contacts, moderated discussion forums and an advocacy platform for young people to be heard.

Youth Work Ireland

YWI Member Organisations:

Web: www.youthworkireland.ie/who-we-are/member-youth-services

Many of the affiliated Youth Work Ireland member organisations operating around the country offer dedicated Information Services for young people. Check out 'Member Organisations' from the main website to get contact information on local services.

Other Youth Organisations may offer Youth Information Services. Check out national Youth Organisations that operate throughout Ireland at the National Youth Council of Ireland's website: www.youth.ie/members

Useful Reading Resources

Council of Wales for Voluntary Youth Services (2014). Detached and Outreach Youth Work Method and Resource Handbook for Youth Work Practitioners in Wales. CWVYS.

Dunne, S (2017). New youth work model to target at risk teenagers. The Irish Times, Sat, Oct 21, 2017:

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/new-youth-work-model-to-target-at-risk-teenagers-1.3264609>

Humphries, E (2015). Work Winner Evaluation: Report of quantitative analysis based on programme records maintained by Tipperary Regional Youth Services (YWI Tipperary).

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Mac Éinri, P (2016). For today's emigrants, home is where they are now. The Irish Times, Sat, July 2, 2016: <https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/abroad/generation-emigration/for-today-s-emigrants-home-is-where-they-are-now-1.2707069>

Macra na Feirme. Macra Youth Employment Resource. E-book: <http://www.macra.ie/what-we-do/community-involvement/youth-employment-resource>.

Macra na Feirme and GLEN (2013) LGBT People in Rural Ireland: Promoting Positive Mental Health.

National Youth Council of Ireland (2013). Time to go? A qualitative research study exploring the experiences and impact of emigration on Ireland's Youth. National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI).

The Children's Research Centre (2006) Research briefing: The free time and leisure needs of young people living in disadvantaged communities. Trinity College Dublin.

This chapter was developed with input from Claire Barkey (Sphere 17, formerly YWI Cavan/Monaghan), Alison Fox (Kildare and Wicklow ETB Youth Officer), Cora Horgan and Zoe Gogarty (YWI Tipperary) for 'Access All Areas – a Diversity Toolkit for the Youth Work Sector' published by NYCI and Youthnet.

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ⁱ E3004: Population 2011 to 2016 by Single Year of Age, Regional Authority, Sex, Aggregate Town or Rural Area and Census Year:

<http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=E3004&PLanguage=0>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cp3oy/cp3/urr/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Irish Rural Link Pre-Budget Submission 2018: <http://www.irishrurallink.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Irish-Rural-Link-Pre-Budget-Submission-2018-Final.pdf>

^{iv} Youth Employment and Education: www.macra.ie/youth-employment-education

^v Being a young adult Travelling in rural Tipperary: <http://youthworktipperary.ie/blog/being-a-young-adult-travelling-in-rural-tipperary/>

^{vi} www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/mue/monthlyunemploymentjanuary2018/

^{vii} Irish Rural Link Pre-Budget Submission 2018: www.irishrurallink.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Irish-Rural-Link-Pre-Budget-Submission-2018-Final.pdf

^{viii} National Youth Council of Ireland 'Time to Go'

www.youth.ie/sites/youth.ie/files/NYCI_Youth_Emigration_Report.pdf Mac Éinri also stated that a majority of emigrants had at least €2,500 available to them (two-thirds of those had more than €5,000) before leaving. (The Irish Times, 2016).

^{ix} Walking Against the Wind, a project developed by Merville and District Family Resource Centre in Donegal showed that 'while there was a huge will among young people to engage, they did not always have the channels or amenities to do so. For example, "the lack of facilities locally witnesses the need for young people who wish to box or engage in other sports to travel to other areas or towns, even into Derry...(and) a number of respondents suggest that they would be encouraged if 'there are groups other than sports'.

www.leargas.ie/blog/merville-watw/

^x The free time and leisure needs of young people living in disadvantaged community:

www.tcd.ie/childrensresearchcentre/assets/pdf/ResearchBriefings/ResearchBriefingIssue1PDF292kB.pdf

^{xi} Macra calls for fresh focus on youth mental health in rural Galway: <http://connachttribune.ie/macra-calls-for-fresh-focus-on-youth-mental-health-in-rural-galway/>

^{xii} Being LGBT in a rural area: <http://spunout.ie/life/article/being-lgbt-in-a-rural-area>

^{xiii} Youth Employment, YWI Tipp: <http://youthworktipperary.ie/youth-employment/>

^{xiv} Youth2Work Scheme: <http://cavanmonaghan.etb.ie/latest-news/launch-youth2work-scheme/>

^{xv} Detached Youth Work: <http://ywimonaghan.ie/detached/>

^{xvi} Bounce Back Youth Service: <https://www.facebook.com/pg/BounceBackYouthService/posts/>

^{xvii} Bounce Back Youth Service launched by Minister Katherine Zappone: <http://cavanmonaghan.etb.ie/latest-news/bounce-back-youth-service-launched-minister-katherine-zappone/>

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Working with young people who are affected by homelessness

Introduction

You may be a youth worker who is working with a young person who has been or who is currently affected by homelessness. You may also know of a young person in your community that is at risk of homelessness, who could benefit from your support.



Young people's journeys through and out of homelessness typically involve a range of events and experiences that extend beyond housing. A mixture of personal, social, educational, familial and economic transitions affect and 'shape' a young person's experience of homelessness¹. In this chapter we bring attention to how youth work can respond to the complex needs of this group. We present demographics in relation to homelessness as well as explaining the current policy context on youth homelessness. We also explain the varying needs and issues that young people may face and offer practical advice on working with young people who have been, or are currently, homeless or are at risk of homelessness. It concludes with a list of resources that will help you in your work.

This chapter was developed with input from Natalie Coen, (No 4 Youth Service, GDYS), Paul Kelly and Neil Forsyth, (Focus Ireland), Dannielle McKenna, (Rialto Youth Service), Allyson Coogan and John Paul Collins (Exchange House), Linda Lambert (East Wicklow Youth Service- Crosscare) and Sally Daly (NYCI) for 'Access All Areas – a Diversity Toolkit for the Youth Work Sector' NYCI 2019 .

Terminology

The ETHOS definitions of homelessness

Whilst there is no universally accepted definition of homelessness, FEANTSAⁱⁱ advocates for a broad understanding which encompasses rooflessness, houselessness and inadequate and insecure housing.

FEANTSA has developed ETHOS, the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion, in order to provide a common framework through which to discuss homelessness. It attempts to cover all living situations which amount to homelessness or housing exclusion:

- **Rooflessness** (people living rough and people in emergency accommodation);
- **Houselessness** (people in accommodation for the homeless, in women's shelters, in accommodation for migrants, people due to be released from institutions and people receiving long-term support due to homelessness);
- **Living in insecure housing** (people living in insecure tenancies, under threat of eviction or violence);
- **Living in inadequate housing** (living in unfit housing, non-conventional dwellings or in situations of extreme overcrowding).

ETHOS has been translated into most EU languages and is being used and accepted by more and more governments, researchers and organisations throughout Europe.

Demographics and Profile of Youth Homelessness

Census 2016ⁱⁱⁱ provides the most recent census data with age breakdown of people experiencing homelessness (see graph). Between March 2015 and March 2019, the number of homeless families has grown by 268%, with one in three people in emergency accommodation being a child^{iv}. While the majority of homeless families are

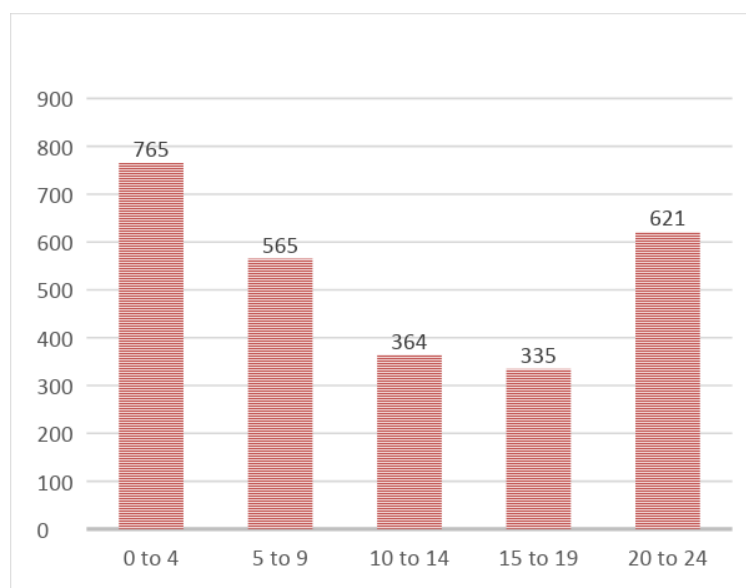


Figure 1 – number of young people homeless by age – 2016 www.cso.ie

located within the greater Dublin region, the crises has extended well beyond the capital and rates of family homelessness have more than doubled in less than two years, increasing from 165 in January 2017 to 436 families in March 2019, (with a total number of 1,733 families, including Dublin)^v.

In March 2019, there were over 888 young people aged 18-24 living in emergency homeless accommodation. This represents a 73% increase from March 2015^{vi}. However, this number does not include 'hidden homelessness' which refers to people who are living in squats or 'sofa surfing' with friends.

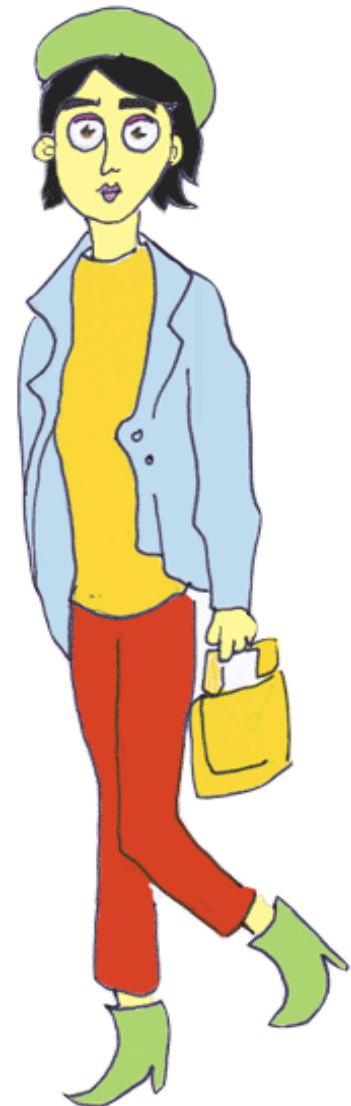
Young people as the hidden homeless

Until recently, a remarkable feature of policy responses to adult homelessness is that the specific **situation and needs of homeless young people** – different to those of older adults and families - have not been specifically or comprehensively addressed^{vii} and as such their presence and needs have been hidden from the policy agenda. **Youth homelessness** has now been identified as a separate area of policy concern reflecting work undertaken by the Irish Coalition to End Youth Homelessness (2019)^{viii} in response to the rise in youth homelessness.

There is little reliable information about young people who are 'officially homeless'. The Irish Coalition to End Youth Homelessness has identified three broad groupings, acknowledging that there is no information about the size or dynamic of each group:

- Young people who grew up in the care system, and who are in receipt of full welfare payments but unable to secure accommodation.
- Young people with limited or no links to the care system and who are on reduced rate welfare payments.
- Young people who are parents and are accommodated as the parent in a 'homeless family'.

Less is known about young people who are not included in the official figures but are considered



homeless under the internationally recognized ETHOS typology^{ix} (those sofa surfing, squatting, living in overcrowded accommodation, precarious situations or sleeping rough etc.). International evidence suggests that a higher proportion of homeless young people are likely to be ‘unofficially homeless’ than is the case for older homeless people^x. Moreover, of all age groups, young people are the least likely to present to services or even know where or how to get help.

Young people with families in emergency accommodation

Young people who are homeless with their families will most likely be housed in emergency accommodation. This includes hotels and family hubs. Some hotels are used exclusively to house homeless families while other have a mix of commercial use and homeless accommodation. These are primarily for families but can be provided to single people if they have special medical or social needs depending on availability. Bed and breakfasts are also used for families and individuals but they may be required to book the bed and breakfast accommodation on a night by night basis

Family Hubs

Family hubs are used for families with children experiencing homelessness and offer on-going placement that a hotel might not provide. Hubs also have separate bedrooms and may have spaces for play and homework. Hubs either provide a communal kitchen or meals.

In addition to accommodation support children under the age of 5 whose parents are homeless (or homeless transitioning to permanent accommodation) get 25 hours of childcare free a week. This includes 15 hours

of free pre-school, and a daily meal. Public transport is also free to those living in emergency accommodation to cover school journeys and family travel^{xi}.

Hostels as an emergency accommodation response

The most common places used for emergency accommodation for single people or couples are hostels. These can be used for long or short term, and some provide meals and other services. While there is a charge for most hostels the local authority can waive the fee on a case by case basis. Some people can be placed in a hostel on a night by night basis, they may also get a rolling booking on a weekly basis. A rolling booking is when the booking continues for a certain period until the hostel is told otherwise. Some hostels also provide 3 month placements, these are known as Supported Temporary Accommodation (STA). They provide workers to support the residents to transition out of homelessness.

The issue of homelessness amongst young people from the Traveller Community

The issue of homelessness for members of the Traveller community has grown as they continue to experience significant marginalisation in the area of accommodation. Within the community there are families with children growing up in homelessness, often living in temporary accommodation, secured on a day by day basis which is impacting on their sense of belonging and identity.

Family life is severely compromised where the focus of the parents is on securing accommodation with little space left over to support the emotional well-being of their children. Homelessness is becoming a way of

life for some, working against the bonds and support of the extended family.

Homelessness affecting young Travellers

The age of maturity can differ substantially for some members of the Traveller community. Young Travellers of 15 or 16 years will often take on adult responsibilities and included in this is a responsibility to find housing. Within the context of the current housing crises, this places an extra burden on young Travellers. In addition, poor mental health is one of the key issues for young Travellers with suicide rates being six times higher amongst Traveller men than in the general population with 65% of it occurring amongst those aged 30 years and younger (See chapter four on working with young Travellers). The factors that can lead to a young Traveller taking their own life are important in the context of a focus on homelessness.

In addition, cultural shame in terms of sexual orientation, drug use, and psychiatric illness are believed to be key issues impacting significantly on homeless risk for young Travellers.

The following section will help you understand the complexities involved in working within this context and the issues that are involved in supporting a young person who has experienced or is at risk of homelessness.

Needs and issues for young people affected by homelessness

When you consider being homeless as a human experience, it raises a series of complex and often interrelated issues.

- Uncertainty
- Isolation
- Experiences of trauma
- Lack of privacy
- Rejection
- Chaos
- Lack of security and safety
- Vulnerability to crime



Many young people who are homeless live with some or all of the above.

In addition, experiencing homelessness can relate to other mitigating life factors including food poverty^{xii}, access to adequate health services and participation in education^{xiii}. Recent work has raised issues concerning the effects of homelessness on children and young people's' capacity to engage in school, educational outcomes and development^{xiv}. Moreover, the current phenomenon of homelessness is having a detrimental impact on children's participation and development of their rights^{xv}.

Needs and issues of young people affected by homelessness are further varied according to circumstance and age. Youth workers in many youth services have participants in their groups and programmes who are currently homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Some of the needs and issues encountered by youth workers are identified below:

Needs of under 18s:

- Young people may require early intervention to support their emotional and physical well-being i.e. some youth services are targeting their funding to include working with under 10s living in emergency accommodation or in overcrowded accommodation.
- Similarly, for others, because of the precarity of their homeless circumstances, they may not be attending school. Access to spaces to support their emotional and physical development is also critical for this group of young people.
- Having access to a space to do homework can be a key need for a young person i.e. some emergency accommodation locations don't have any space appropriate for homework. In addition, some homes are so overcrowded that there are not enough chairs for all the family to sit on and no quiet space for individual needs e.g. homework, emotional well-being.
- Some young people may be going through the difficult transition of leaving their home together with their family, thereby facing uncertainty, including a possible change of school. Maintaining an



ongoing relationship with a youth service during this transition can be a crucial stabilizing influence on that young person's life.

- Access to food that has a nutritional value is an identified need for young people in emergency accommodation and who are homeless more generally.
- Space to play, getting involved in activities and maintaining a social and community bond with other young people is critical for young people experiencing homelessness.

Needs of over 18s:

- For young adults, overcrowding can be a significant issue, particularly in urban areas. This will affect people differently, depending on circumstances:
 - For young mothers who are homeless and can't afford to rent, they may be caught in overcrowded accommodation at their 'family' home or alternatively in emergency accommodation. Their support needs include mental health support, dealing with the day-to-day reality of the insecure nature of their accommodation and the uncertainty of their future, while trying to provide security for their family unit.
 - For other young adults, though they may not be homeless on the street, they may be living in an overcrowded space with other adult siblings and no access to privacy or adequate living space.
 - For some young people who identify as LGBTI+, they may not feel safe in confiding in their family and feel that they have no option but to become homeless^{xvi}.



- Others may be sofa surfing to avoid difficulties at home, including overcrowding or they may have experienced violence in the home. For such young people, recognizing themselves as homeless can be an unidentified need.
- Some young people, including those from a migrant background, may have limited or no links into support services and may also experience cultural barriers to identifying as homeless.
- Young people living in hostels need different kinds of support including a safe space to socialise and interact with others. In addition, access to ongoing wider supports and services can be a challenge for young people in hostels.
- Some young people may opt to live on the streets rather than in a hostel where they may not feel safe. In addition, there may be no available emergency accommodation as is the case in some parts of the country.
- For some young adults looking to register as homeless, navigating the pathway to access services can be daunting. Access to homeless or housing services may also require transport to a different town, (particularly outside urban areas) and the cost can be prohibitive.

Another aspect of this phenomenon is that young adults out of home are in crisis and lacking experience of independent living. There may often be a wide range of additional needs and issues, stemming from adverse childhood experiences, including poor mental health, behavioural problems, problematic drug or alcohol use and often all in combination. Those leaving State care or detention,



those from migrant or ethnic groups, including from the Traveller Community or those who identify as LGBTI+, are disproportionately represented among this group.

Stigma associated with homelessness

Despite the escalation of homelessness and its effect on a broad range of people in our communities there is still a stigma associated with homelessness. Stigma can be a powerful tool of exclusion and prejudice and the fear of being stigmatised may prevent people from coming forward and seeking the help they need.

Stigma is associated with the following false assumptions:

- All homeless people are rough sleepers.
- All homeless people are drug addicts or alcoholics.
- It is the person's own fault that they ended up homeless.
- Most homeless people have a mental illness.
- Some people are not deserving of a house.

Associations between stigma, discrimination and social exclusion act as major barriers to:

- participation,
- health,
- well-being,
- inclusion and
- quality of life outcomes.

Homelessness as an internalised stigma

Many young people do not identify themselves as homeless. Having a roof provides access to basic shelter, yet, in an overcrowded living environment, in emergency accommodation and/or where sofa-surfing is an accommodation strategy, young people can be resistant to seeing themselves as having a housing need.

In many cases, young people who are homeless are attending school and youth services and continuing to interact with other young people through social media etc. Continuing such relationships is important to their sense of self and personal dignity but maintaining relationships can put extra pressure, stress and shame on a young person who may not want to reveal their living situation^{xvii}.



The lack of a stable home raises questions of belonging and community for young people e.g. “how do I stay connected with my community of friends/neighbours if I don’t have a regular place to call home?”. These questions impact on the mental health well-being of young people and add to the stigma of homelessness.

Young people leaving the care system

For young people leaving the care system, the transition to independent living often requires specific supports; the risk of homelessness arises where the young person cannot secure accommodation or where they do not have the

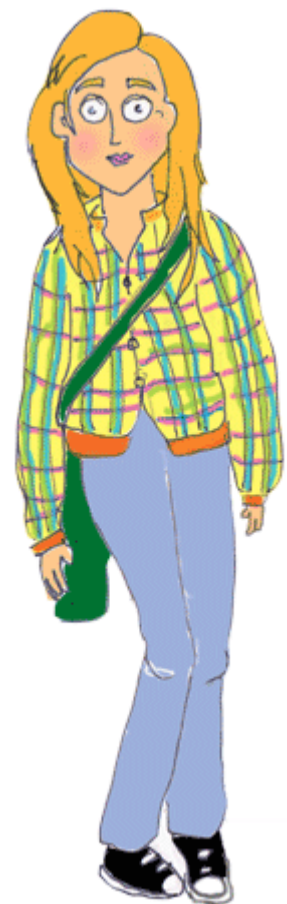
life skills to manage in their own accommodation. In addition, children in care almost always experience significant educational disruption, trauma and neglect of some kind, creating an academic and psychosocial skills deficit that can take years to address. They may often lack a social support network and positive role models^{xviii}. Some key issues identified by for young people leaving care include:

- The lack of adequate preparation (e.g. no aftercare plan in place, no allocated aftercare worker).
- The inconsistent provision of aftercare services throughout the country.
- Homelessness or risk of homelessness.
- Access to ongoing education or maintaining an educational pathway^{xix}.

Young people involved in the Juvenile Justice System

For young people involved in the Juvenile Justice System, including Garda Youth Diversion programmes, criminal or anti-social behaviour is often interpreted by youth/community workers as symptomatic; and not the problem itself. There are a number of factors that make up the typical profile of a young person in the Juvenile Justice System, just as there are a number of factors that increase the likelihood of young people becoming involved in crime (see chapter 8, ‘Working with young people in juvenile justice’).

Homelessness is one of these factors. Research looking at risk factors related to youth crime identifies several features, which potentially increase or decrease the



likelihood of offending behaviour. Stealing to meet daily food needs is one area where young people can get a 'criminal' label. Where youth workers often have good relationships with Community Gardai, they can help to mitigate outcomes for the young person where the crime might be to meet a basic need.

Timely support can help young people overcome problems and build resilience; such as, supporting the development of problem-solving skills that will help them to face future challenges. Young people facing homelessness may also need support in other areas of their life; in their relationships, family life, education, employment and accommodation.

For young people, coming out of prison, the prospect of homelessness can be daunting and overwhelming. Prison can offer a type of security, particularly where a young person has not had this experience in their 'home' environment.

To understand your role in relation to working with someone who is homeless it is helpful to:

- Know that should a young person under the age of 18 present as homeless you are obligated to report this to Tusla as a child protection concern.



- Recognise that homelessness can be a complex issue and the young person is often experiencing a range of challenges; not just being without a home.
- Ultimately, the young person has a right to their autonomy and engagement with youth work is a choice.

Trauma and homelessness

It is increasingly recognized that many people who are at risk of or are experiencing homelessness have been exposed to trauma. However, service systems are not always equipped with the necessary tools or the right responses to help people who have a history of trauma. Often this lack of understanding of how central the experience of trauma can be for young people experiencing homelessness results in service responses being inadequate^{xx}.

Help seeking behaviour

In the experience of youth workers, who work directly with young people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, they lack information about the services, which exist, in many cases relying on established relationships with other services e.g. youth services, to support them to navigate. Homeless support services report that a high proportion of people who become homeless seek no advice about their situation before they meet homeless services^{xxi}. Not being aware of available services



can influence a young person's help seeking behaviour. Young people have described having no-one and nowhere to turn for support when an emerging issue leading to homelessness arose. Many young people may fear being labelled or they may be apprehensive about the unknown. These pressures mean that young people may not look for help initially, causing their issues to spiral into a crisis. In other cases, depending on where they live, young people may have no access to emergency or hostel accommodation, i.e. outside urban centres such accommodation is less available.

Young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness need access to spaces that are informal, open during the evenings; services that are drop-in and young person friendly rather than appointment based. Services based on funding that requires a regular sign-in will be problematic for some young people whose habits are more erratic because of their circumstances. Services like free-phone helplines and signposting to relevant services that are available at night are important for young people.



Entry points into support and services

A young person with a homeless issue is more likely to approach someone with whom they have already have a trusting relationship, and this person may not have specialist training. This may be someone in a community or youth work organisation.

If you or a colleague is approached, you may be able to provide immediate support while starting the process of referring them on to the local authority

who have statutory responsibility in relation to the provision of homeless accommodation and related services for everyone 18 years and over.

You can also play a more preventative role. Being able to recognise early signs of family breakdown, financial difficulties and health issues among young people puts you in a position to offer early interventions. For young people who are recently out of home e.g. sofa-surfing, there may be a role to play in terms of youth mediation. Where a young person is over 18, a youth worker with an established relationship, can help the young person to acknowledge their homeless status and encourage them to register as homeless. In addition, where the young person is at risk of becoming homeless, the youth worker can support them to recognise that they have a housing need and that they are eligible to register as homeless.

Referral/Advocacy Pathways

Navigating the homeless/welfare system in Ireland can be very confusing and daunting. Advocating and accompanying young people to appointments or gathering paperwork that will support their referral can make the process a lot easier. Understanding the specific nature of appropriate people and services is key to realising successful outcomes and spending time in building these relationships is critical. Oftentimes, the work that takes place in a youth work environment and the trust that exists within that context can support outcomes in other areas.



Accessing services

Before accessing a service, a youth worker can help the young person to prioritise their needs, particularly where there are complex and inter-related issues presenting. They should explain to the young person what to expect of a service (explain that not all services are specialist youth services), and in turn what might be expected from them (some services demand that the person is substance free). The following list outlines some of the barriers that exist for young people accessing services so that you can support them through it. The section then details good practices in service delivery.

Barriers in accessing services:

- Registering with homeless services can be a daunting prospect for a young person. Not understanding the different aspects of homelessness and how it can affect outcomes as well as the specific service engagement required can be a barrier to service access.
- Eligibility criteria for accessing different services can be impacted by previous engagement e.g. aftercare support. Where a young person has not spent 12 months or more in a residential facility, they may not be eligible for aftercare support upon turning 18.
- Young people may be put off from accessing a service if it means they are put on a waiting list or required to make an appointment several weeks in advance, particularly when their lives are chaotic.
- Young people may face barriers from service providers if their behaviour is seen as 'challenging' or if they have substance issues. A young person may be refused a service without due consideration being given to their circumstances or alternatives for support.
- LGBTI+ young people may be concerned that services will not be supportive of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Developing inclusive youth work practice to support young people affected by homelessness

Practical support

Where there is an established relationship with a youth service, youth workers have reported that some young people actively choose not to access hostel/emergency accommodation, where it is available due to prior negative experiences. For young people in these circumstances, youth workers report that help can include providing access to food, heat and other basics including phone charging and clothes washing. In addition, support with transport costs and/or accompaniment when registering with homeless services and making referrals into other services are also key aspects of practical responses.

The following is some practical advice, which can be adopted within your organisation to make it a supportive environment and to help young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness in your community.



Ask yourselves key questions of your young people:

- Are there signs that a young person is at risk of homelessness.
 - Do they live in a volatile family situation?
 - Are they living independently on a limited income?
 - Have they a support network?
 - Are they in conflict with the law?
 - Does the young person have mental ill health?
 - Are there changes in personal circumstances? (e.g. parental separation, pending court appearance, bereavement, questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity, relationship break up etc.)
 -
- Is the service accessible to young people experiencing homelessness?
 - Do they need to register?
 - Can they drop-in?
 - Is it in a central location?
- What level of commitment is required by the young person and is this realistic given their circumstances?

Other jurisdictions are leading the way in establishing prevention and early intervention community-based collaborations to tackle youth homelessness such as the Geelong Project in Australia.

The Geelong Project^{xxii}

The Geelong Project is an innovative place-based ‘community of schools and youth services’ model for early intervention involving population screening for risk, a flexible practice framework, youth-focused family-centred case management, and longitudinal follow-up and support as required until social and educational outcomes have been achieved. It intervenes early with young people at secondary school level who are clearly identified to be at risk of disengaging from school and family and entering the homelessness and related service systems. These are young people who display warning signs such as running away from home; couch surfing, and regularly missing school.

Starting in 2013, a trio of schools screened all students for their risk of entering the homeless system or leaving school before 12th grade. The schools then connected students at greater risk with the public and non-profit and youth focused agencies that could provide services, rental assistance, mentorship, counselling, to keep them and their families housed, and out of streets, tents and shelters.

Identified young people and their families were provided with a key support worker to discuss their challenges at home and at school and work together to provide new opportunities for the young person aimed at re-engaging them with school, family and the community. It is an early intervention project that works across a range of services.

The Geelong Project ‘No Wrong Door Approach’^{xxiii}

‘To ensure that every young person that knocks on our door gets access to the help he or she needs.

Research indicates to us that young people:

- rarely come with just a single issue
- hate telling their stories over and over again
- get lost trying to find their way around the ‘service system’
- don’t come back if it’s all too hard, and we lose the chance to help

Our staff work towards identifying all the needs of the young person, rather than the needs only specific to housing. This holistic approach, together with the pathways available to the team for referring young people to other services, ensures that no door is closed on the young person and they receive the overall support they need.’

Addressing and targeting youth homelessness

The Irish Coalition to End Youth Homelessness (2019) identify three actions to address and prevent homelessness among young adults experiencing homelessness:

1. **Housing First for Youth:** ‘Housing First’ is acknowledged internationally as the way to address homelessness effectively and we recommend the introduction of a programme of Housing First for Youth in Ireland. Housing First for Youth makes securing a home, the first step in tackling youth homelessness, addressing other issues once a home is secured.
2. **Prevention and Early Intervention:** Homelessness is not random. Its predictors are empirically established and understood. They are identifiable at an early stage by health services, schools and other community-based services. Intervening when needs and issues arise,

before they become critical or entrenched, is a more efficient use of public resources and secures better outcomes for young people and their families.

3. Address policies that disadvantage young people: An adequate supply of housing is key to addressing and preventing homelessness and current government policies in this regard are welcome and must be accelerated. However, even with a better housing supply, young people will continue to be disadvantaged in accessing and maintaining tenancies if their right to live independently is not clearly recognised and supported in government policies.

A more detailed plan of action is available here:

www.endyouthhomelessness.ie/

Working within a community of coalition and action

Where a young person is in crises and experiencing trauma, collaborative networks offer significant potential to change a situation in a long-term way. This includes good governance and decision-making models; a shared vision and goals; and strong leadership that facilitates cooperation across services. Working in collaboration with local family support services, health services, homeless support services, welfare services, education, employment and training services and schools is part of creating a "community of action, a coalition". In addition, specialist services e.g. Traveller Organisations^{xxiv}, Minority Ethnic Support Organisations/NGOs and LGBTI organisations can offer expertise and insights to support young people from specific identity groups.

Working with the family and other key relationships

Young people may have many assets which can help them build resilience and that support them through tough times. Included in these assets are young

people's pre-existing relationships with their friends and family. Helping a young person identify these and others with whom they have a positive or supportive relationship with, is a key task in supporting them through a difficult time.

The importance of family

While difficult family relationships and /or family conflict are long understood to be causal factors in youth homelessness, it is only recently that we have come to understand that 'family connectedness clearly holds strong currency and meaning for young people who experience homelessness' and 'fractured family relationships can be mended and restored over time'^{xxv}.

Developing knowledge and understanding of families and family relationships calls for a greater appreciation and understanding of the diverse and dynamic ways in which young people engage with and understand the notion of family. Family occupies a significant space in the everyday lives of young people who are experiencing homelessness. There can be a lot of diversity in how they make sense of, (re) construct, and come to terms with family relationships.

Research points to family mediation as a key path for service intervention, along with a greater investment in family support aimed at helping young people and their parents resolve past and/ or current disagreements and conflict.

Youth mediation

Youth mediation has a critical role to play in interventions aimed at mitigating situations and avoiding escalation. Being capable of creating a safe space for those involved to reconstruct their relationship, and guide people to transform their view of conflicts (and therefore also life) in a more positive and constructive way is critical. Importantly, youth mediation should be thought of in a wider family mediation context i.e. involving other services and/or family members within a referral network, where this is possible.



Youth mediation skills also ask that the youth workers acquire a proactive attitude towards their own permanent self-development, so that they can constructively engage in mitigating conflict and invest in the young person's individual capacity, to be responsible for creating and constructing their own lives.

Youth Worker offering a consistent relationship

The nature of homelessness means that having a key person who will consistently support needs and model a strong positive relationship with the young person, can provide a key a transformative relationship model^{xxvi}. Every young person's needs will be different and that is the challenge in working with young people experiencing compound difficulties and blockages to realising their potential. Rarely is the development or progression of young people experiencing a range of barriers along a linear route. The task is to manage multiple journeys with patience, tolerance, persistence, resilience and a

willingness to overlook minor transgressions and start again, maintaining a commitment to the young person^{xxvii}.

Trauma informed responses to youth homelessness in practice

Homelessness impacting on learning and development

Interventions by a youth service:

“Homelessness is a traumatic experience for so many young people and in youth work, we try and mitigate the effects of trauma. The sensory needs of young people in emergency or overcrowded accommodation are compromised e.g. a lack of space for physical activity, a lack of space to process experiences. In addition, where some accommodation centres don’t allow access during the day, it exacerbates the sense of exclusion. There can also be feelings of shame for young people living in such spaces^{xxviii}.

We started a homework club with the five-year olds to support their needs*. We work with the schools and ask the question, “what does it take for a child to be present and to be able to learn that day? When a child is in trauma, no one is learning. What are their needs? For children to be in a place where they can learn, their sensory needs must be met.

We put two emoji jars in the room where they enter the homework club and invite them to put in how they are feeling so we can measure what is going on for the young people. Emotionally things are really tough. Anger and sadness are two of the biggest emotions for the children coming in. One of

our programmes is targeting emotional needs, we developed a special programme and we do mindfulness. Sensory needs are at the core of everything too; that includes movement of your body and occupational therapy on your body but how do you do that in emergency accommodation? We work with the local school on a universal programme introducing occupational speech and therapy with the school children. For homeless young people, occupational therapy is a key intervention.

For both the older children and young people, we do an assessment with them, side by side. That includes everything; around their confidence, experiences of education, experiences of loss, everything is taken into account. If homelessness is a need, we look at what the specific needs are and sometimes it can be about helping the young person to build a relationship with their family. There could be family breakdown and if we need to look at a whole family approach, we will start a cluster with other relevant agencies. We work within a strong network of agencies but importantly we will represent the young person and we will go to the other agencies to represent the other family members, if that is what they want.

Where a young person is homeless but has not come to terms with that fact yet, your role as a youth worker is to be there for them. It's about working with the young person through a process until they are ready to take the necessary steps. What it takes for a young person to go through the process is huge. There is trauma involved. It can take time but that is the commitment with youth work."

Danielle McKenna, Rialto Youth Project.

*The Rialto Youth Project secured mainstream funding to target work with under 10s as part of an early intervention strategy in their area.

Homelessness causing a crisis of attachment

Interventions by a homeless agency youth service:

“In youth work, there is the sign-posting work and understanding the layers of youth homeless, being able to differentiate between, fights (as rite of passage) and more entrenched situations. What we have missed though is taking a more psychological understanding of what homelessness is. It is a response to trauma and attachment. If you are reasonably attached, you have a level of resilience to respond to what life is going to throw at you; it also means, your parents are reasonably attached in response, so a child becoming homeless is a symptom of something else going on.

Youth work can support young people by teaching resilience and being more mindful of attachment theory^{xxix}. Having one strong positive relationship is very important but how do you go about building that relationship? The question is how do you put that into practice?

We need to find the language of the young person and talk to them in their language. A young person might have a different meaning for words than us as professionals looking to respond to them. We need to reflect on what is homeless and what ‘home’ means because, it means different things to different people. For many of the young people we work with, they do not have early experiences of security, stability and love that might be associated with ‘home’. When we say “we need to get you out of homelessness and this is what we want to get you into” that may be a foreign territory to a young person; the person may not just be experiencing rooflessness but also rootlessness.

Homelessness is a response to trauma and within the sector, we need to become more 'trauma informed^{xxx}.' For young people who have lived with homelessness for much of their lives, trauma may exist where they have never experienced a secure and safe home environment. Importantly, trauma is the consequence of not being nurtured in childhood; it then follows through in your inability to deal with something outside of yourself. Parenting is key here, but many parents do not have the skills and that is why family and youth mediation is so critical to outcomes that last."

Paul Kelly, Project Leader, Focus Ireland.

Look at your whole organisation approach:

- Look at what has led to the young person becoming homeless. By looking at the whole person, it will allow the youth worker to identify key issues that the young person may need help to overcome.
- By being consistent and being there a youth service/youth worker can prevent a young person from losing all sense of belonging.
- Train all staff, including office support and caretaking staff, in how to listen to young people and their complex needs. Consider the specific training supports that will resource your youth work staff to respond to needs presenting. (see Staff Training below).
- Supporting a young person to plan is key, particularly if there are signs of being at risk of homelessness and where a young person is not familiar with planning everyday practical tasks.
- Social media and Internet connectivity are essential tools for young people who are homeless in staying connected and mitigating what can be a profound experience of isolation. For that reason, ensuring up

to date and relevant social media platforms and information, is a key service response.

- Resource staff to support people to advocate for themselves; empowering young people to come to terms with specific aspects of the system that are affecting their lives and engaging in strategies to address key issues.
- Supporting emotional needs can be key to a youth service. Developing responses in co-operation with other services e.g. a sensory support programme/occupational therapy for young people in emergency accommodation.
- Consult young people already using your service about how you could make it a more relaxed and welcoming environment for others.
- Are there opportunities for them to engage in a variety of youth friendly activities?
- Homeless young people have the same hopes, dreams and ambitions as other young people. Youth services can provide them with a safe space to be a young person and not be defined by their challenges.
- Recognise that young people experiencing homelessness will likely make progress and regress. It is important that the young person feel that they can engage with the worker/service even if they have not followed through on an agreed plan or if they or their situation relapses.

Staff training

There are specific skills that staff can develop through training. Skills in listening, identifying and understanding issues, solution focused approaches are all important examples. Specific training to support young people experiencing homelessness include:

- Youth mediation and conflict resolution training (helps transform the way people look at conflicts, changing from something negative and avoidable to an opportunity for change and something that can be handled in a constructive way).
- Restorative practice^{xxx} as a key area that supports workers with capacity to be able to rebuild relationships where relationships have broken down.
- Crisis Intervention training can support youth work staff with meeting emotional needs and in responding to trauma.
- Training in reflective practice to support a whole organisation approach in working with young people in homelessness^{xxxii}.
- Emotional and sensory support training including in the context of an occupational therapy programme, in coordination with other services e.g. local schools.
- Training to increase life skills in young people at risk of homelessness e.g. the Pathways Programme for young people leaving care^{xxxiii}; and the STEPS Personal Development Programme^{xxxiv} which supports positive goal setting with young people.
- Train staff in understanding the complexities of the housing system.
- Intercultural competency training to support the specific cultural issues impacting on young people from minority ethnic backgrounds, including young Travellers.
- LGBTI+ training, specifically in relation to homelessness or risk of homelessness.

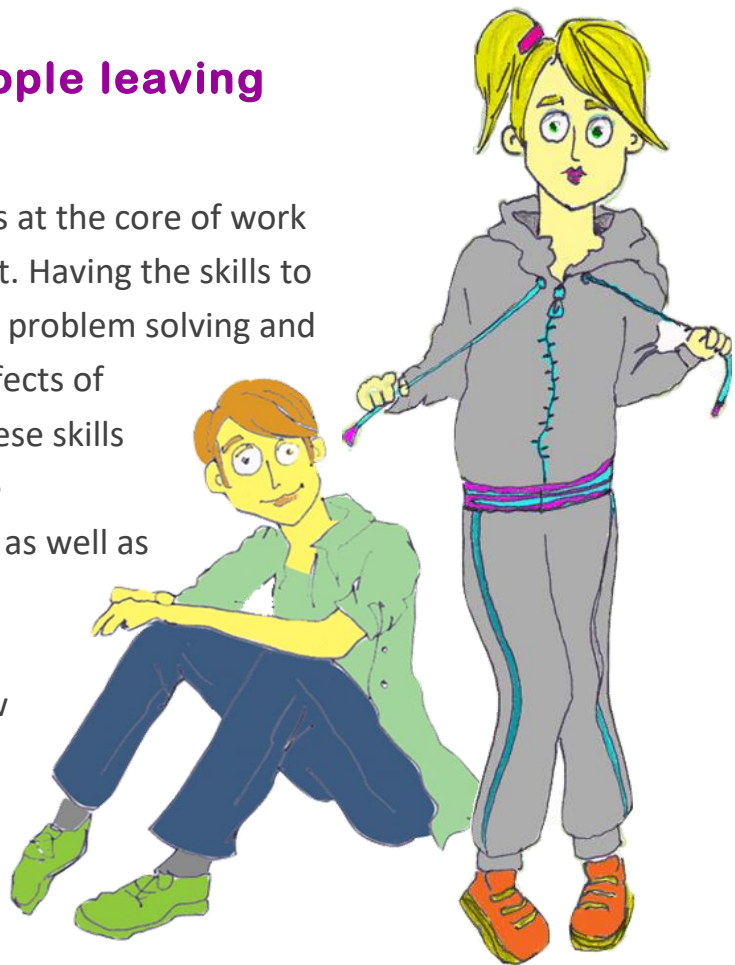
Working with young people with complex needs can be challenging for staff members. It is vital that staff members are secure in their role and are aware of the limitations of the youth service when supporting young people. Regular support and supervision are key for staff members to be able to continue their work to a high-quality standard on an ongoing basis.

Ensure you maintain a relationship

Sometimes young people who are homeless can find it difficult to consistently engage with a service. Building a practice where you allow some flexibility to re-engage and following up with young people after a period of absence can help keep a thread of support available for the young person involved.

Supporting young people leaving institutional care

Resourcing resilience internally is at the core of work with young people in this context. Having the skills to build resilience while developing problem solving and coping skills can minimise the effects of negative, stressful situations. These skills can allow a young person to face challenges and learn from them; as well as developing ways to make more healthy life choices and opportunities to understand how feelings affect behaviours.



Running a programme to support young people leaving institutional care

- The focus of the programme should be on modifying known risk and building resilience. The Pathways programme developed as a collaboration between EPIC, Focus Ireland and Empower is a key training resource here.
- Programmes based on skill development and competencies can have a positive impact on young people, supporting with risk management and resilience building skills including:
 - Problem solving skills
 - Assertiveness Skills
 - Self Esteem
 - Goal Setting
 - Decision Making
 - Anger management
 - Coping Skill
 - Relationship enhancement
 - Social Support Identification
 - Emotional Intelligence
- In addition, there are a range of programmes designed to address specific topics, which can affect young people such as Substance misuse, Nutrition, Physical activity, Bullying, Sexual health.

Checklist 14 - How accessible is your organisation to young people who are homeless?

This checklist can help you to identify how you can improve your service for young people who are homeless.

Public image

How we present our service to our community

● Our service is visibly welcoming for young people at risk of experiencing homelessness?	YES	PARTLY	NO
● Local services are aware of the support we provide, and the referral process we use.	YES	PARTLY	NO
● Your social media platforms are relevant and helpful to young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.	YES	PARTLY	NO
● Information on support services for homeless people is displayed in the service.	YES	PARTLY	NO

Programme planning and delivery

Our programmes are designed and delivered to include the diverse needs and identities of young people that face homelessness

● Our service is flexible to accommodate the needs of young people who are homeless including offering late opening times on at least on a part-time basis.	YES	PARTLY	NO
● We consider the suitability of materials prior to using them with particular groups (e.g. we consider personal circumstances etc.)	YES	PARTLY	NO

Connecting young people to services:

➤ Our service has a working understanding of the referral process into statutory services.	YES	PARTLY	NO
➤ Our service has identified good working relationships with services and supports relevant for homeless young people and has developed relationships with them.	YES	PARTLY	NO
➤ Our service has good working relationships with specialist support organisations e.g. migrant, Traveller and LGBTI+ support organisations.	YES	PARTLY	NO

Professional development

Our staff and volunteers are trained and supported to deliver an inclusive youth service

● Staff and volunteers understand issues relating to homelessness.	YES	PARTLY	NO
● Our service understands the signs that a young person is at risk of homelessness, including living in a volatile family situation, lack of a support network, conflict with the law, and changes in personal circumstances.	YES	PARTLY	NO
● Staff and volunteers have an appropriate range of skills and access to training opportunities to help young people respond to the various needs presenting.	YES	PARTLY	NO
● Staff and volunteers speak openly about mental health topics.	YES	PARTLY	NO
● Staff and volunteers promote positive messages about help seeking behaviour	YES	PARTLY	NO
● Staff and volunteers receive support and supervision (e.g. team meetings, self-care interventions, one-to-one formal supervision, etc.)	YES	PARTLY	NO

This chapter was developed with input from Natalie Coen, (No 4 Youth Service, GDYS), Paul Kelly and Neil Forsyth, (Focus Ireland), Dannielle McKenna, (Rialto Youth Service), Allyson Coogan and John Paul Collins (Exchange House), Linda Lambert (East Wicklow Youth Service-Crosscare) and Sally Daly (NYCI) for 'Access All Areas – a Diversity Toolkit for the Youth Work Sector' NYCI 2019 .

Policies and procedures

We have a written commitment to deliver an equal and inclusive service

- Our service has a critical incident plan **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**
- Our service has clear policies and procedures in relation to young people who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness e.g. on health promotion, drugs and alcohol use, bullying prevention, equality and inclusion, child protection, etc

Participation

We make sure we include the voices of young people at all levels of our youth service

- Our service consults with young people about how homeless issues can affect their engagement with youth services and on how youth services can support them, including how to make our space and service as welcoming as possible. **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**
- Young people feel that they can re-engage with the youth worker/service, even if they have not followed through on an agreed plan. **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

Useful contacts

Specialist Homeless Support Organisations

Focus Ireland:

Phone:

- **Dublin** 01 881 5900
- **Waterford:** 051 879 810
- **Limerick:** 061 405 300
- **Sligo:** 071 914 9974
- **Cork:** 021 04273646
- **Kilkenny:** 056 7794565

Website: www.focusireland.ie

Email: help@focusireland.ie

Focus Ireland provides information, support and advocacy opportunities to people experiencing homelessness in Dublin. Their website provides focused information on all aspects of homelessness. The Focus Ireland Prevention Hub includes information for frontline workers and a list of useful organisations.

Crosscare

Phone: 01 836 0011

Email: info@crosscare.ie

Website: www.crosscare.ie/contact-crosscare

Map of Services:

www.crosscare.ie/images/phocagallery/75years/general_crosscare2016/MAP-FINAL.pdf

Crosscare play a role in the provision of services to people affected by homelessness in the greater Dublin area. Great efforts are being made across the sector to improve the quality of service and environment on offer.

No 4 Youth Service**Phone:** 091 568 483**Website:** www.no4.ie/**Email:** youthservice@no4.ie

No 4 Youth Service provide a wide range of supports for young people aged 13 – 25 years, all of which are based on a youth work approach, ensuring that young people aid their own personal development. Support is provided for young people who are:

- homeless or at risk or homelessness;
- not in education, employment or training;
- from minority ethnic groups;
- without the supports of their families;
- in the justice system;
- live in or are leaving direct provision hostels.

EPIC**Phone:**

- **Dublin** 01 8727661
- **Cork:** 021 242 8434
- **Galway:** 091 395 605
- **Limerick:** 061 514518

Website: www.epiconline.ie/

EPIC is the only independent national organisation providing direct 1:1 advocacy support to children and young people in care; to enable them to have their views and concerns heard, to empower them to speak for themselves, to resolve the issues and problems they raise, to help them get the services and resources they need and bring about positive change in their lives.

Simon Community Ireland**Phone HQ:** 01 671 1606**Website:** www.simon.ie/home.aspx**Email:** info@simoncommunity.com(to contact local Community Offices go to www.simon.ie)

The Simon Communities are a network of independent Communities based in Cork, Dublin, Dundalk, Galway, the Midlands, the Mid West, the North West and the South East, responding to local needs and supported by a National Office in the areas of policy, research, communications and best practice. They support over 11,000 men, women and children each year.

Mental health Support**Aware****Phone:** 1890 303302**Website:** www.aware.ie

Aware Supports those who are directly affected by depression and operates a helpline from 10am to 10pm Monday to Wednesday and 10am to 1am Thursday to Sunday. The Aware helpline is a non-directive listening service for people affected by depression, either as sufferers or as family and friends. The helpline offers a non-judgmental listening ear to people who may be distressed or worried, or just need someone to talk to. You can also call the helpline if you are worried about someone who may be depressed or for information about depression or Aware services.

Childline**Phone:** 1800 66 66 66**Website:** www.childline.ie

Childline is 24-hour service for children and young people up to 18 years of age.

Childline is open 365 days a year (even Christmas Day!). It offers support to young people through the Childline listening service over the phone. You can call Childline for a chat or to talk about any problems you might have. Calls to Childline are confidential and they don't have caller ID or trace any calls. It won't cost you anything to call Childline and their number won't show up on the phone bill.

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- ⁱⁱ FEANSTA: www.feantsa.org/en
- ⁱⁱⁱ Central Statistics Office:
<http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=E5003&PLanguage=0>
- ^{iv} Focus Ireland: www.focusireland.ie/resource-hub/about-homelessness/
- ^v March 2019 Homeless Report:
www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/homeless_report_-_march_2019.pdf
- ^{vi} As above.
- ^{vii} *Living in Limbo: Homeless Young People's Paths to Housing*. Dublin: Focus Ireland. (Mayock and Parker 2017).
- ^{viii} 'The Irish Coalition to End Youth Homelessness was established in September 2017 as a way of consolidating the work of different organisations (including NYCI) who are trying to tackle youth homelessness. We hope that through the Coalition, we will be better able to draw attention to the issue and highlight our collective solutions.'
- ^{ix} See p.15 for the ETHOS definition.
- ^x Irish Coalition to End Youth Homelessness 2019
- ^{xi} This information is adapted from SpunOut.ie: <https://spunout.ie/life/article/apply-for-emergency-accommodation>
- ^{xii} *Food access and nutritional health among families experiencing homelessness in the Dublin region*. Dublin: Focus Ireland (Share and Hennessy 2017).
- ^{xiii} Homeless children and education: An evaluation of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 23(12), 941-969.(Biggar 2001).
- ^{xiv} *Home Works: A Study on the Education Needs of Children Experiencing Homelessness and Living in Emergency Accommodation*. Dublin: CRA.(Children's Rights Alliance 2018); *Thirty Five Pupils Homeless Every Two Days in February*. INTO Congress 2018, INEC, Killarney.(Irish National Teachers Organisation 2018).
- ^{xv} *Home Works: A Study on the Education Needs of Children Experiencing Homelessness and Living in Emergency Accommodation*. Dublin: CRA (Children's Rights Alliance 2018).
- ^{xvi} At the time of writing, Focus and BeLong To have commissioned a specific piece of research looking at the circumstances around the over representation of LGBTI in youth homelessness.
- ^{xvii} "I don't tell people I live here, it's a homeless hub... it's embarrassing. It's horrible, it's not nice". (Thomas, aged 16). From 'No Place Like Home' a report outlining children's views and experiences of living in Family Hubs. Dr Niall Muldoon, The Ombudsman for Children's Office, 2019:
www.oco.ie/app/uploads/2019/04/No-Place-Like-Home.pdf.
- ^{xviii} 'I grew up in State care, to say that University has changed my life would be an understatement':
www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/apr/17/i-grew-up-in-state-care-to-say-that-university-has-changed-my-life-would-be-an-understatement?CMP=share_btn_link

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^{xix} *Submission to TUSLA on Review of National Leaving and Aftercare Policy 2011*. EPIC.(EPIC, 2011).

^{xx} *Recognising the Link Between Trauma and Homelessness*. Belgium. FEANSTA (2017).

^{xxi} Focus Ireland <https://www.focusireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/information-guidebook.pdf>

^{xxii} The Geelong Project: www.thegeelongproject.com.au/early-intervention/early-intervention-model/

^{xxiii} The Geelong Project: www.thegeelongproject.com.au/early-intervention/no-wrong-door-approach/

^{xxiv} Exchange House Ireland National Traveller Service is available for presentations and training on Traveller culture. Discover the history of Travelling People in Ireland and what it means to be a Traveller in today's society. Explore the legal reforms that have impacted this nomadic community and learn about the effect these changes have had on the determinants of good mental and physical health. Presentations will help you gain an understanding of the most pressing concerns facing Travellers and develop cultural competency and strategies for effective interventions. Contact Exchange House Ireland National Traveller Service as 01 524 0173 for more information.

^{xxv} "They're Always Complicated but That's the Meaning of Family in My Eyes": Homeless Youth Making Sense of "Family" and Family Relationships. *Journal of Family Issues*, 1-31 (Mayock and Parker 2018, 26)

^{xxvi} The structural issues leading to youth homeless are identified at 'Addressing and Targeting Youth Homelessness' on page 20.

^{xxvii} Adapted from 'Youth Works: How to Use this Framework' . Nora Greer and Joe Hawkins. YCNI (2013).

^{xxviii} "I don't tell people I live here, it's a homeless hub... it's embarrassing. It's horrible, it's not nice". (Thomas, aged 16). From 'No Place Like Home' a report outlining children's views and experiences of living in Family Hubs. Dr Niall Muldoon, The Ombudsman for Children's Office, 2019: www.oco.ie/app/uploads/2019/04/No-Place-Like-Home.pdf

^{xxix} Bowlby's Attachment Theory explained by The School of Life: www.youtube.com/watch?v=3LM0nE81mIE

^{xxx} 'Many youth are exposed to traumatic events, including those in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems, as well as those who experience homelessness; an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.' *Implementing a Trauma-Informed Approach for Youth across Service Sectors*

https://youth.gov/docs/Trauma_Informed_Approach_508.pdf

^{xxxi} Restorative Practice: www.restorativepracticesireland.ie/

^{xxxii} Reflective Practice in youth work: http://youthworkireland.ie/images/uploads/general/Siobhan_mcgrory.pdf

^{xxxiii} **PATHWAYS** is an aftercare guide that has been created for young people who are preparing to leave care by young people who have left care. It is a joined initiative between EPIC, Focus Ireland and Empower Ireland: www.epiconline.ie/pathways-guide-to-leaving-care/

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^{xxxiv} STEPS Personal Development Programme: www.talktotom.ie/the-steps-programme.html

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