Guide to Youth Work

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Chapter 1: What is Youth Work?

Youth work can be extremely varied. It is delivered:
- To anyone aged from 10 to 25.
- By state organisations, charities, or voluntary organisations.
- By other young people, staff or volunteers.
- By facilitators with little training or extensive training and professional qualifications.
- In dedicated youth centres, community centres, converted buses, outside in fields, or in any other location where there's space to engage a group.
- On topics as diverse as cooking, soccer, civic engagement or politics, or no specific topics at all.

Despite this variance, a report into youth work across 27 countries of the European Union found a "strong convergence of what is understood to be youth work in most EU countries." (European Commission, 2014, p53-54)

The Resolution of the Council of the European Union on youth work from 2010 gives the following definition of youth work:

Youth work takes place in the extracurricular area, as well as through specific leisure time activities, and is based on non-formal and informal learning processes and on voluntary participation. These activities and processes are self-managed, co-managed or managed under educational or pedagogical guidance by either professional or voluntary youth workers and youth leaders and can develop and be subject to changes caused by different dynamics." (European Commission, 2014)

In Ireland, the Youth Work Act 2001 defines youth work as *"A planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young people through their voluntary involvement, and which is complementary to their formal, academic or vocational education and training and provided primarily by voluntary youth work organisations."*

The key features of youth work identified by the European Commission (2014, p55), based on analysis of reports for 27 countries are:

"Youth work offers young people **meaningful activities** based on young persons' needs and interests. Key features of the methods used by youth work are:

- Non-formal or informal learning.
- Participatory and/or experiential pedagogy.
- Relationship-based activities (learning as a social activity with others).
- Mentoring and/or peer support.

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Youth work aims at young person's **personal development**. In particular, it leads to:

- Self-determination
- Self-confidence
- Self-esteem
- Socialisation

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Personal development should lead to:

- Empowerment
- Emancipation
- Tolerance
- Responsibility

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These should in turn result in:

- Participation in democratic societies.
- Prevention of risk behaviour.
- Social inclusion and cohesion."

This implies that the ultimate goal of youth work is to offer young people meaningful activities to strengthen their personal development, which then enhances their positive participation in society.

The 2014 European Commission study asked 110 interviewees from 27 countries to give the ten words that most defined youth work for them, and produced the representation of these words shown in figure 1.1. This shows clear consensus that aside from the developmental aspects, youth work should above all be enjoyable.

Figure 1.1 Main characteristics of youth work. (European Commission, 2014)

Types of Education

So what is meant by "non-formal and informal learning processes"? Three categories of education were defined by Coombs and Ahmed in 1973, and although subject to much discussion since, are still relevant and useful for defining the space that youth work operates in.

Formal Education is state provided, planned and structured education that takes place in a structured environment, usually with the aim of a teacher delivering teaching to students. This usually involves schools and universities, and in most countries is mandatory until a certain age. Learning in formal education is intentional and typically leads to certification.
Example: Julia attends her local school and will take the state exams next year.

Non-Formal Education also consists of deliberate educational experiences, but takes place outside the formal education system, for example, run by community and youth groups. Participation in non-formal education is usually voluntary. The learning that takes place in non-formal education is intentional.
Example: Outside of school hours, Julia attends a youth club where they have just completed a photography project.

Informal Education describes the learning that takes place without a structured plan, on an informal basis, through social interactions and daily experiences. The learning that takes place in informal education is usually unintentional.
Example: At home Julia helps her family prepare meals, and is therefore learning new recipes and cooking skills.

Youth work is primarily concerned with non-formal education, providing planned and structured learning experiences in an out of school environment with voluntary participation. However, youth work also provides many opportunities for informal learning to take place, for example in youth cafes, in providing safe spaces for young people to relax, and in the time before, between, or after more structured group times. It is therefore very important that youth workers consider these informal opportunities for learning, and ensure that the messages they give are consistent between the non-formal and informal learning times. Treacy (2009) recommends that because of this, "youth workers should strive for a good level of personal awareness regarding their own beliefs, values and attitudes."

Values and Principles of Youth Work

Youth work is:

- **Person Centered**: Youth work holds the young person as the most important part of the engagement. Where possible young people should be involved in the design and delivery of programmes, and youth work services should respond to the strengths and needs of young people.

- **Voluntary participation**: Young people have to choose to engage in youth work, they must not be compelled to.

- **Protection and Safety of Young People**: The safety and protection of young people is paramount in all youth work activities. Policies must be in place for child protection, insurance, and health and safety.

- **Education and Development**: The purpose of youth work is to help young people to develop, and to provide opportunities for learning, both non-formal and informal, planned and unplanned. Young people should be empowered by their engagement in youth work.

- **Equal and Inclusive**: Youth work activities promote diversity, equality, and inclusiveness, and should be accessible to all.

- **Dynamic and Dedicated to Positive Outcomes for Young People**: Ongoing reflection, evaluation, and an openness to change is necessary for youth work. Practitioners must be able to adapt their work to the young people engaging with their services, and be willing to innovate and develop in line with best practice.

(OMCYA, 2010)

Self-Reflection

What are the values and principles most important to you in youth work?

How can you make sure that you apply these principles to your youth work practice?

Benefits of Youth Work

Participation in youth work can have many benefits for young people. In a comprehensive report on the value of youth work in the European Union (European Commission, 2014, pp 137-140), the benefits of engagement in youth work are divided into three categories. Young people:
- Develop certain skills and competences;
- Strengthen their network and their social capital; and
- Change certain behaviours.

The skills and competences that young people can develop through engagement in youth work are many and varied, and include: Social skills such as communication, relationship, and interpersonal skills; Self-awareness and regulatory skills such as resilience, ability to self-regulate, and belief in their ability to control and achieve goals; Life skills such as confidence, leadership, planning and organisational skills, and problem solving; and Mastery skills in performance or other abilities.

The development of positive relationships with others, both peers and youth workers, is another benefit of participation in youth work for young people. This can aid a sense of social support, which is linked to resilience and positive health and wellbeing. It also allows young people to broaden and strengthen their social networks, and benefit from social connections and trust between people. (Dolan & Brady, 2012)

Youth work also has the capacity to not only reduce problematic behaviors, but increase and reinforce positive ones. This can be seen in health related areas, such as programmes developing cooking skills and encouraging healthy eating, or drug education and prevention programmes, but also in programmes aimed at reducing anti-social behaviour or encouraging active citizenship. (European Commission, 2014, p140)

Engagement in extra-curricular activities such as youth work is also associated with improved school and academic attainment. The non-cognitive skills developed through participation in youth work, such as task persistence, following instructions, dealing with authority figures and fitting in with peers aid with participation in formal education, and positively influence academic attainment. (European Commission, 2014, p143)

For communities and society youth work can provide opportunities for intergenerational cooperation and chances for adults and young people to work together. Youth work also has the potential to combat disadvantage, enhance civic engagement, and to help build stronger and brighter communities, with better amenities and services. (Devlin & Gunning, 2009)

> *Self-Reflection*
>
> *Can you think of other benefits of youth work?*
>
> *What are the benefits for staff or volunteer youth workers?*

Child Protection

The safety and protection of all young people involved in youth work should always be a priority. Laws vary from country to country, and guidelines may vary between different organisations. It is important to ensure that all staff and volunteers working with young people are familiar with and understand the child protection policies in place for their organisation. Whilst guidelines are given here, youth workers should defer to the child protection policy of their organisation.

> ***Recommended resources:***
> *Our Duty to Care: The principles of good practice for the protection of children and young people. Department of Health and Children, Ireland (2002). Available at: http://www.dcya.gov.ie/documents/publications/ODTC_Full_Eng.pdf*
>
> *Protecting our Children and Young People: An NYCI Toolkit for Youth Work Organisations to design, review and evaluate their child protection policy. National Youth Council of Ireland, 2012. Available at http://www.youth.ie/sites/youth.ie/files/Protecting_our_Children_and_Young_People_NYCI.pdf*

Note: The word child/children is used in these guidelines to refer to any young person aged under the age of 18, and therefore legally a child.

Principles of Good Practice (Department of Health & Children, 2002)

"Adopting the following principles in your organisation will help to create an environment in which children are listened to, given a sense of belonging, and kept safe; parents are supported and encouraged; and staff and volunteers who work with children and young people are supported and protected.
All organisations providing services for children should:

- Acknowledge the rights of children to be protected, treated with respect, listened to and have their own views taken into consideration.
- Recognise that the welfare of children must always come first, regardless of all other considerations.
- Develop a child protection policy that raises awareness about the possibility of child abuse occurring and outlines the steps to be taken if it is suspected.
- Adopt the safest possible practices to minimise the possibility of harm or accidents happening to children and protect workers from the necessity to take risks and leave themselves open to accusations of abuse or neglect.
- Adopt and consistently apply clearly defined methods of recruiting staff and volunteers.
- Develop procedures for responding to accidents and complaints.
- Remember that early intervention with children who are vulnerable or at risk may prevent serious harm from happening to them at a later stage.
- Remember that a child's age, gender and background affect they way they experience and understand what is happening to them.
- Provide child protection training for workers. This should clarify the responsibilities of both organisations and individuals, and clearly show the procedures to be followed if child abuse is suspected.
- Develop a policy of openness with parents that involves consulting them about everything that concerns their children, and encouraging them to get involved with the organisation wherever possible.
- Co-operate with any other child care and protection agencies and professionals by sharing information when necessary and working together towards the best possible outcome for the children concerned.
- Make links with other relevant organisations in order to promote child protection and welfare policies and practices.

- **Remember that valuing children means valuing workers as well; insisting on safe practices, eliminating the necessity for staff to take risks and providing them with support will make for a healthier and safer organisation.**"

Suggested Code of Behaviour for Youth Workers with Young People
(Department of Health & Children, 2002)

- "Workers should be sensitive to the risks involved in participating in contact sports or other activities.
- While physical contact is a valid way of comforting, reassuring and showing concern for children, it should only take place when it is acceptable to all persons concerned.
- Workers should never physically punish or be in any way verbally abusive to a child, nor should they tell jokes of a sexual nature in the presence of children.
- Workers should be sensitive to the possibility of developing favouritism, or becoming over involved or spending a great deal of time with any one child.
- Children should be encouraged to report cases of bullying to either a designated person, or a worker of their choice. Complaints must be brought to the attention of management.
- Everyone involved in the organisation should respect the personal space, safety and privacy of individuals.
- It is not recommended that workers give lifts in their cars to individual young people, especially for long journeys."

Youth Worker Case Study: Maura, Ireland.

How long have you been a youth worker?

I started in my current job nearly 18 years ago, in 1997. Before that I'd worked as an art teacher, running workshops in the community with young people, adults, and elderly people, and this brought me in to youth work. I worked with some young people in a residential home too.

My main role is in an after school youth project, initially set up to prevent early school leaving. We work with 10 to 17 year olds, and in recent years young people who were involved in the project have been coming back as adult volunteers. It's lovely to have and helps keep the project running.

Why did you become a youth worker?

I've always got on with young people. I want to enable young people to become happier, mature and confident in themselves. I believe that young people have talents and abilities that sometimes go unrealised, and I like to see them do the best that they can and progress positively in their lives.

What was your first experience of youth work?

My first experience of youth work was a group art workshop that I facilitated in North Dublin city, and then I moved on to more individual work. I completed a Postgraduate Diploma in Youth and Community Work in Maynooth, and as a part of this I worked with young people on a placement, and that drew me to youth work from more general arts teaching.

What's been your worst experience, and how did you overcome it?

I had a good relationship with one of the young people on the project who was living in a high risk situation, and was going through a bad patch and was suicidal. That was tough and I was very worried about them. We were lucky to have a part time therapist in the project and together we all put a plan in place, and thankfully the young person came through.
For me, outside of work I'm an active person, and I went out walking a lot, and I was doing a little meditation at the time, and those activities helped to keep me balanced.

What's been your best experience?

I've had lots of great experiences as a youth worker.
In the early years of the project when we had more money than we do now, we had a group that was graduating, and we fundraised with a bag pack, and brought the group to London to see a West End show. Some of the young people had never flown anywhere, and some had never been to a live show, so seeing the expressions on their faces was wonderful. We were able to give them an experience they otherwise wouldn't have had. Being able to bring them away, and to see their maturity and be able to trust them on the trip was wonderful. Coming home we nearly missed the flight and had to run through the airport to make it on to the plane. We were the last people on!

Can you briefly describe a typical week in your job?

My week is a big mix of things - I might start off with a big food shop for the project, and prepare for group sessions. I run transfer programmes some mornings, to help young people with the transition from primary to secondary school. After school time I have a number of group programmes - some include Real U (relationships and sexuality), Leadership, and NFTE (youth entrepreneurship). Right now I also have individual sessions with two young people, one focusing on creative skills with artwork and cooking, and the other guidance and setting personal goals.
We're lucky and have volunteers working in the project at the moment, so they will come in before the groups to get set up, and will stay on afterwards so that we can check in. Then I'll also have meetings with other staff, or colleagues in other organisations, like Home School Liaison Officers who work to keep young people in school.
There's also plenty of administration, for example session plans, timesheets, and record keeping, and keeping track of the project budget. At the moment I'm also planning for the activity weeks that we run during the school holidays. There's lots to do!

What do you think is the most important characteristic for a youth worker?

From my point of view, the most important characteristic is an understanding of people, in order to connect with them. You need patience, communication and listening skills, and you need to be able to stay in the space and stay focused on the young people. A positive outlook is really important. If things don't work out you need to be able to just keep going, and move on to plan B. It's important to understand where the young people are coming from and to know that they need boundaries.

For a project, it's good to have a mix of different programmes on offer. Some young people might not go to a general after school group, but would get involved in a youth entrepreneurship programmes, or in individual mentoring, for example. Having a premises or base for the project is good. The young people feel a sense of belonging for the space, and it can help to add stability into their lives.

Chapter 2: Models of Youth Work

A European Commission report on the value of youth work in the European Union (2014, p65) frames youth work as falling on two main axes, as outlined below in figure 2.1.
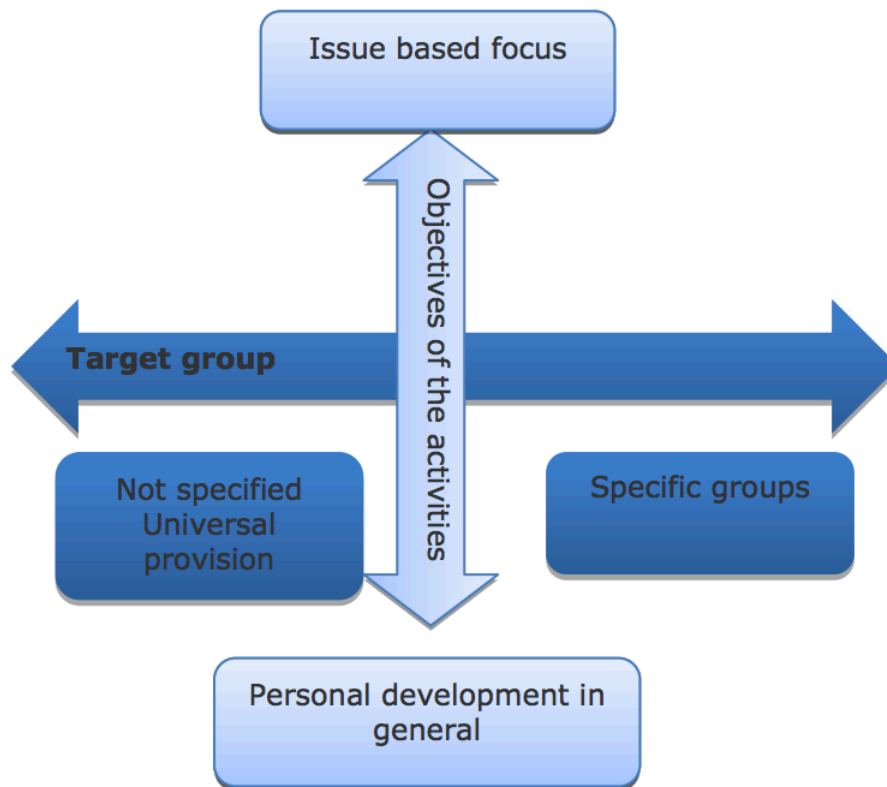
Figure 2.1 A typology of types of youth work

The two main axes in this diagram show youth work as fitting anywhere on a continuum from providing services to a specific, targeted group of young people, to a universal provision open to all. The objectives of the activities may range from programmes with a specific issue based focus to more general personal development programmes, although it should be noted that participation in even the most specific issue based programme will progress personal development.

Hurley and Treacy's (1993) four theoretical models of youth work provide a useful framework for considering a youth work programme, and having a clear understanding of different purposes. The framework includes four models: Character building; Personal Development; Critical Social Education; Radical Social Change.

Character Building Model

The character building model prioritises the needs of society over the needs of the individual, with the aim of encouraging young people to participate in society in a positive way. Young people should learn to abide by the cultural consensus and accept the dominant moral values of society, and need to have their energy and drive directed in a constructive fashion.

Process and role of youth worker:
- The youth worker acts as a role model.
- Youth workers guide young people to act in a way deemed acceptable by society.
- Adults determine the nature of the relationship and establish group rules.

Outcomes for young people:
- Young people will be able to accept and behave within moral norms.
- Young people can contribute to society and be a productive member of a group or social institution.

Programmes and activities include:
- Civic responsibility programmes.
- Sports and games with an emphasis on compliance with rules.
- Programmes designed to divert young people from challenging behaviour and rule breaking.

Personal Development Model

The personal development model focuses on the individual young person and their development, preparing young people to take on an active role in society and to have the skills necessary to take on the responsibilities of adult life. Young people develop respect for themselves and others and have the ability to build and maintain relationships. Importantly, young people feel in control of their lives and believe that they can succeed.

Process and role of youth worker:
- Young people are treated as equals to adults.
- The youth worker acts as a mentor or confidante.
- Young people take part in all aspects of the programme structures and decision making.
- The relationship between young people and youth workers supports personal development.
- Adults maintain a veto on decisions.

Outcomes for young people:
- Develop respect for themselves and others, and a positive self image.
- Feel in control of their lives and believe that they can succeed.
- Prepared for an active role in society, and with basic leadership skills.
- Have the ability to build and maintain positive relationships.

Programmes and activities include:
- Personal development programmes.
- Programmes exploring values and choices, social awareness, and leadership skills.
- Arts and creativity programmes, allowing the young person to express themselves.
- Social and political awareness programmes.
- Opportunities for recreation.
- Vocational training.

Critical Social Education Model
The critical social education model is based on the idea that society is unequal, and structured in a way that can restrict the development and life chances of young people. Young people need to learn about how institutions work and their position in society, and develop the skills to look for changes in this.

Process and role of youth worker:
- Young people and adults are partners in the process.
- Youth workers wish to transfer power to young people, supporting them in self-managing groups.
- Young people are actively involved in identifying, exploring, and understanding issues of concern to them.
- Analysis and reflection lead to action.

Outcomes for young people:
- Young people are actively involved in identifying, exploring, and understanding issues of concern to them.
- Young people are able to analyse and assess alternatives.
- Young people are active in mobilising groups to seek changes within existing structures.
- Young people 'know' and understand their position in society, and have the skills to change this if they wish.

Programmes and activities include:
- Programmes exploring values and choices, and leadership skills.
- Arts and creativity programmes.
- Social and political awareness programmes.
- Programmes and activities to raise awareness of social exclusion and to be able to challenge this.

Radical Social Change Model
The radical social change model views young people as an exploited group in society, where the interests of more powerful economic and social groups marginalise young people and reduce their life chances.

Process and role of youth worker:
- Youth worker supports and builds anti-establishment views in young people.
- Young people are viewed as political, and are recruited on to campaign groups.

Outcomes for young people:
- Young people are skilled lobbyists and campaigners for social transformation.
- Young people believe that they can effect change.

Programmes and activities include:
- Political education and campaigning programmes.

Self-Reflection

What do you think of each of these models of youth work?

Which model do you most identify with as a youth worker?

Do you think it's possible to combine two or more of the different models?

What might be the advantages and disadvantages of combining several approaches?

Other theories and models that influence work with young people are those that are concerned with well-being and safety, for example Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and Resilience Theory.

<u>Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs</u>

Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs is widely regarded as a useful theory for understanding human motivation and personal development. This theory suggests that each need must be satisfied in turn, so a person must have their basic physiological needs met before they are able to focus on higher level personal development needs.
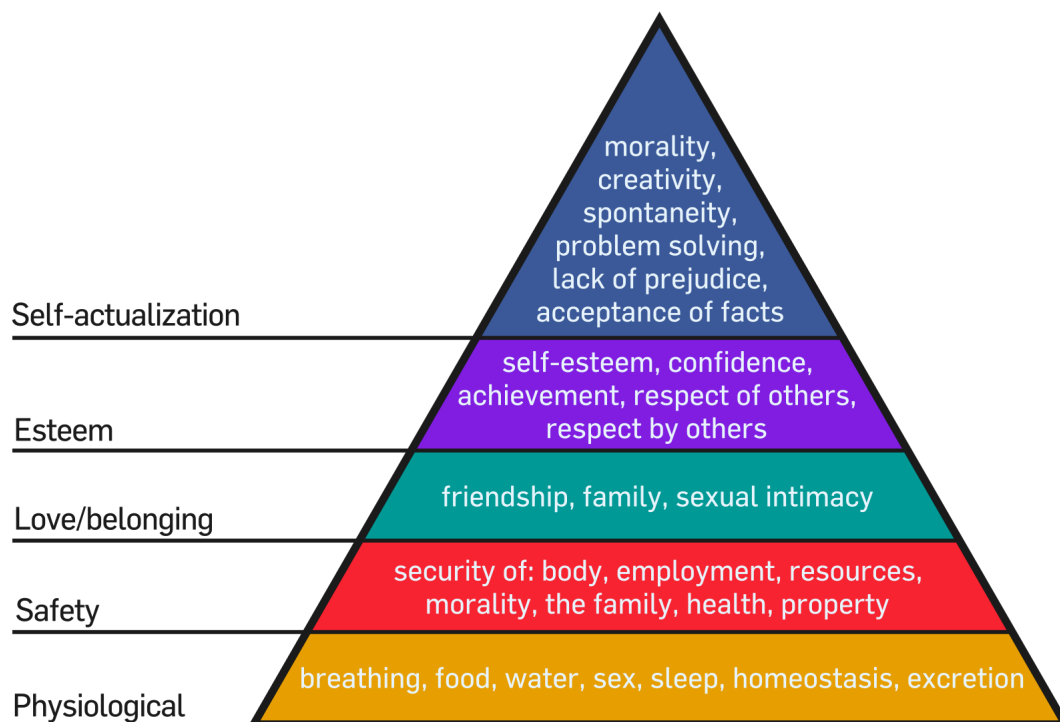
Figure 2.1 Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs

In youth work, personal development programmes help young people to develop the higher level needs, such as positive relationships, self-esteem and creativity. However, youth work can also help meet the safety and physiological needs of young people by providing education and support on topics like healthy eating and general health and wellbeing, and educating young people on their rights and responsibilities in relation to issues of safety, including a right to housing, and support in securing employment.

Resilience Theory

The resilience approach to youth work is based on the principle that all people have the ability to succeed and overcome adversity, in spite of their circumstances. It is a strengths based approach, based on providing supports and opportunities to promote success. By providing young people with caring relationships, high expectations and opportunities for meaningful participation we meet the developmental needs that allow young people to become happy and successful and develop their strengths. (Greene et.al., 2004)

Risk and protective factors play an important role in resilience and the ability of people to bounce back from adversity. Some examples of common risk and protective factors for young people can be seen in figure 2.3. Youth work has the potential to strengthen some of young people's protective factors and help mitigate against some risk factors, but may not be able to impact on all. Nevertheless, it is important for youth workers to develop a good understanding of these factors in a young person's life to understand what may be affecting them.

Risk factors		Protective factors
• Difficult temperament • Low self esteem • Negative thinking style	**Child**	• Easy temperament • Good social and emotional skills • Optimistic coping style
• Family disharmony, instability, or break up • Harsh or inconsistent discipline style • Parent(s) with mental illness or substance abuse	**Family**	• Family harmony and stability • Supportive parenting • Strong family values
• Peer rejection • School failure • Poor connection to a school	**School**	• Positive school climate that enhances belonging and connectedness
• Difficult school transition • Death of family member • Emotional trauma	**Life events**	• Involvement with caring adult • Support available at critical times
• Discrimination • Isolation • Socioeconomic disadvantage • Lack of access to support services	**Social**	• Participation in community networks • Access to support services • Economic security • Strong cultural identity and pride

Figure 2.3 Common risk and protective factors for young people. (Spence, 1996, model adapted from Commonwealth of Australia, 2012)

Youth Participation

Young people's meaningful participation is a process, not just the application of isolated participation activities or events. Youth participation should not just be at the level of a youth committee, but should be embedded in youth work practice to ensure that every young person's voice is heard.

Young people's right to participate in decisions that affect them is enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), article 12, which states:

Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child. (UNCRC, 1989)

Hart's (1992) Ladder of Participation, shown below in figure 2.4, contains eight steps, each representing increasing degrees of participation by young people. The lowest three levels on the ladder represent tokenistic or manipulative forms of non-participation, rather than genuine participation. The higher levels detail increasing levels of participation by young people.

8	**Young people and adults share decision making**	Young people have the ideas, set up the project and invite adults to join them in making decisions. They are equal partners.	*Young people decide they need a new road crossing in their community. They partner with adults and together lobby the local council.*
7	**Young people lead and initiate action**	Young people have the initial idea and decide how the project is carried out. Adults are available but do not take charge.	*Young people decide to run a community fun day. Young people make the decisions and adults are available for support when requested.*
6	**Adult-initiated, shared decisions with young people**	Adults have the initial idea, but young people are involved in making decisions, planning and implementation.	*A youth worker asks young people for ideas for a summer activity. Together, the young people and adults plan the activity.*
5	**Young people are consulted and informed**	Adults design and facilitate a project, and young people's opinions are considered in decision making.	*A council runs a consultation event for young people to find out their views on the local park. The council lets the young people know how their views affected decision making.*
4	**Young people are assigned and informed**	Adults decide on a project and young people volunteer for it. Young people understand the project and adults respect their views.	*Two spaces at a conference are assigned for young people. As a group they decide who will represent them, and adults ensure that they understand their role.*
3	**Tokenism**	Young people are given a limited voice and little choice about what they can say and how they can communicate.	*A young person sits on an interview panel. They are given questions to ask and are not involved in the decision making process.*
2	**Decoration**	Young people take part in an event in a very limited capacity, and have no role in decision making.	*A conference involves young people for a photo shoot and press release but young people do not present or attend the event otherwise.*
1	**Manipulation**	Adults have complete or unchallenged authority and power. Adults use young people to support causes, pretending that the causes are inspired by young people.	*A publication uses young people's images but the content is written and controlled by adults.*

Figure 2.4 Hart's (1992) Ladder of Participation

Lundy's (2007) Theory of Participation, shown in figure 2.5, focuses on article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This model includes four main elements, which each follow on from the other:

- Space - Young people must be given safe, inclusive opportunities to form and express their views.
- Voice - Young people must be facilitated to express their views.
- Audience - The voice must be listened to.
- Influence - The view must be acted on as appropriate.

Figure 2.5 Lundy's (2007) Theory of Participation
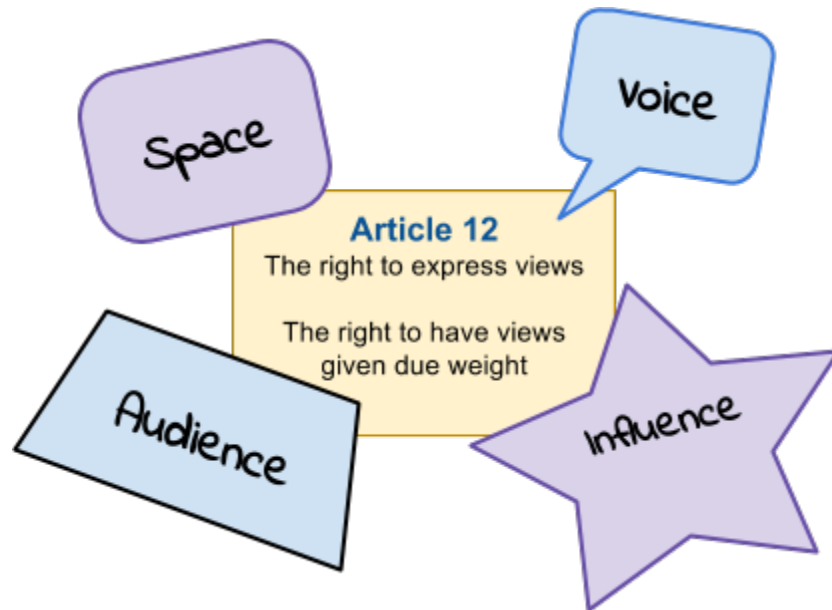
Self-Reflection

Why do you think that effective youth participation is important?

Do you think that youth work should always aspire to the highest level of Hart's ladder? Can you think of times when some of the lower levels might be more appropriate?

How can you ensure that the four elements of Lundy's theory of participation become embedded in your youth work?

Chapter 3: Adolescent Development

The term adolescence describes the the period in human growth and development that occurs after childhood and before adulthood, between ages 10 and 19. This is a period of great growth and change, and forms one of the critical transitions in the lifespan. (World Health Organisation, 2015) Increasingly, the period of late adolescence to early adulthood between 19 and 25 is included in youth development and support programmes, as young people complete education and move towards independent living at a later point.

Physical changes and puberty often mark the beginning of adolescence, but there is great variety in the onset of puberty and the speed of physical changes between individuals. These physical changes and puberty are also accompanied by hormonal changes and brain reorganisation, and one of the effects of this is an increase in interest in sexual and romantic relationships. (Smith, Cowie and Blades, 2011). Peer groups change and develop as small, same sex friendship groups move into larger mixed sex groups, providing opportunities to develop skills and build confidence with possible partners. (Sugarman, 2001).

The brain undergoes significant changes during adolescence, with a remodelling of dopamine receptors around puberty that may lead to increased sensation seeking and reward seeking, followed by an increase in white matter and myelination in the prefrontal areas of the brain, which improves the ability to think and plan ahead. Throughout adolescence there is an increase in connections between cortical and subcortical areas which may improve cognitive control over emotional responses. (Smith, Cowie and Blades, 2011). While these changes can make adolescence a challenging time, they also show that the brain is continuing to develop, and as a result engagement in youth work has the potential to impact on these changes in a positive manner.

The view of adolescence as a time of "storm and stress" was popular in the 1960's and 1970's, which coincided with periods of social change and protests. In the late 1970's and 1980's this view was played down somewhat by researchers, suggesting instead that adolescence was a relatively period of development. However, more recent research suggests that there are in fact stresses that are specific to the adolescent period (Smith, Cowie and Blades, 2011). More recently the positive psychology movement has advocated a strengths based approach to adolescence, focusing on positive youth development.

Arnett (1999) reviewed the "storm and stress" view, theorising that it is a real experience for many adolescents and their parents. The stresses of adolescence can be broken into three categories: Risk behaviour; Conflict with parents; and Mood disruption (Arnett, 1999). Steinberg (2008) argues that adolescents are not lacking in their understanding of risks, but may struggle with the balance between cognitive control and impulsivity, and may also be more easily influenced by their peers.

Adolescence forms the bridge between childhood and adulthood, and because of this it is a time of increasing independence and preparation to enter the adult world. Relationships with parents and significant adults may be re-defined, and relationships with peers may change and become more important. At this time young people have a need both for security and boundaries, but also opportunities for independence and exploration, and this conflict of needs can be challenging. (Sugarman, 2001). Developmentally appropriate boundaries for young people are necessary at this time to support their development in a safe environment.

Erikson (1980) theorised that development through the lifecycle spanned eight distinct stages. Adolescents, from age 12 to 20, are facing a crisis between identity and role confusion, where they are establishing their identity and sense of who they are, and becoming more independent. During this time, adolescents will explore different roles, and settle on who they would like to be, as they begin the next stage and the crisis of early adulthood: intimacy versus isolation. Erikson suggested that young people who are not able to establish their identity are left unsure of who they are and where they are going, and that this confusion can be linked to risk taking behaviours (O'Brien, 2013). Youth work activities can support young people in establishing their identity at this time through exploration of the self and their values.

McAdams (1997) is also concerned with identity development, and suggested that adolescence is a time of defining the beliefs about what is right and true. The personal narrative that is formed during adolescence may be at times unrealistic and egocentric, and will emphasise the young person's perceived uniqueness, but this is reworked and developed on the basis of experiences to form the belief system that will be taken on to early adulthood. (Sugarman, 2001). Youth work can assist this process of identity development by providing opportunities for young people to experiment with different roles, and through personal development activities that help young people to determine their beliefs and values.

Normal, healthy adolescent development can be uneven. A young person may be advanced in physical development but less advanced in their cognitive and social development. This can result in their being mistaken for being more socially mature than they are. Equally, another young person may be less physically developed than

some of their peers, but may be more cognitively and socially advanced. However, they may miss out on opportunities that they could benefit from emotionally as their physical appearance deems them to be not ready. It is therefore important for youth work to take a person centred approach, to treat each young person as an individual, and to consider where they may be in their personal developmental journey.

Key Characteristics of Youth Development

Adolescent development is:
- **Ongoing**: It is a continuous process. It doesn't just take place through youth work, or through school, or through family interactions. Individuals develop and progress all the time.
- **Uneven**: Development varies between different young people, and within an individual. Physical changes may not match cognitive development, and progress is not smooth and consistent.
- **Complex**: Development spans five growth areas - physical, cognitive, social, emotional and moral development, and progress in each of these areas can affect progress in the others.
- **Influenced by the environment**: This includes the physical environment and the quality of the settings in which young people live, learn, play and contribute to.
- **Triggered by participation**: Opportunities for learning, young people actively engaged in their development and that of society.

<div align="right">(Pittman, Irby, Tolman, Yohalem & Ferber, 2003)</div>

Self-Reflection:

What challenges can the uneven nature of adolescent development present to youth work?

How can youth work support young people through this developmental period?

Positive Youth Development

The positive youth development approach to adolescent development focuses on the strengths of adolescents and the positive qualities that they can develop. The five Cs model of positive youth development outlines the psychological, behavioural and social characteristics developed in a thriving adolescent (Bowers, Li, Kiely, Brittian, Lerner & Lerner, 2010). The five Cs are outlined in figure 3.1 below.

C:	Description:	How to develop it:
Confidence	A sense of self worth and mastery. A sense of self-efficacy - the belief that you can succeed.	Provide opportunities for young people to experience success.
Character	Responsibility and a sense of autonomy. A sense of right and wrong. Understanding of principles and values.	Provide opportunities to develop and increase self control. Model and explore morality and principles, and acknowledge positive behaviour.
Connection	Positive bonds with other people (friends, family, community). A sense of safety, structure and belonging.	Build and strengthen relationships between young people and their peers, youth workers, family, and community.
Competance	The ability to act effectively and improve knowledge, skills, and behaviour.	Provide training and opportunities to practice and learn, and receive positive feedback.
Contribution	Being able to participate in the family and community. Being able to have an influence and make a difference.	Provide opportunities for young people to contribute to their community. Involve young people in decision making.

Figure 3.1 The 5 Cs of Positive Youth Development (Pittman et al., 2003. McNealy & Blanchard, 2009)

A complementary approach to positive youth development is the Circle of Courage framework, based on resilience research and how children are valued in tribal communities. Resilience is the ability to "bounce back" after adversity - to cope with challenges and move on. The circle of courage framework outlines four growth needs of children and adolescents, outlined in figure 3.2 below. Each of these needs should be met for positive youth development to take place. A lack in one of these areas may cause challenging behaviour, which can be addressed by meeting the growth need. (Brendtro, Brokenleg & Van Bockern, 2005).

Resilience Research	Circle of Courage
Attachment: Motivation to form relationships and social bonds.	**Belonging**: A sense of community and the opportunity to establish trusting connections.
Achievement: Motivation to work hard and achieve, and to receive recognition for this.	**Mastery**: Being able to solve problems and meet goals.
Autonomy: The ability and opportunity to manage self and exert influence.	**Independence**: Making own decisions. Opportunity to build self control and responsibility.
Altruism: Opportunity and motivation to help others.	**Generosity**: The opportunity to show respect and concern, and to be able to give to others.

Figure 3.2 The Four Growth Needs in the Circle of Courage (Brendtro et al., 2005)

Example:
Joanna is a youth worker who works with a group of ten girls aged 13 to 15. They are going to enter the national civic engagement awards run by the organisation that Joanna works for. The girls have been part of the same group for a year now, and have just finished a team building programme. (Connection, Attachment, Belonging). Joanna facilitates a group discussion where the girls are able to talk about how they think they could make their community environment nicer. They decide that they would like to collect litter and plant a new flowerbed in the local park. (Autonomy, Independence). First they contact the council, and learn that they are not allowed to plant a new flower bed because the park is a public space, but they can collect litter. This is frustrating but they discuss the reasons with Joanna and understand. They make a plan to collect the litter, and decide to ask other people in the community to help them, by putting up posters. They learn about how to collect litter safely. (Character, Competence, Achievement, Mastery).

On the day that they have chosen they meet Joanna at the park, along with a person from the council who will help them. They work very hard for the morning, clearing up the rubbish from the park. (Contribution, Altruism, Generosity). At the next group meeting, they review what they have achieved and make posters to show at the awards. There are lots of people at the awards ceremony and the girls talk to them about what they did and what they learned. (Confidence, Achievement, Mastery).

Self-Reflection:

How can you apply the principles of positive youth development to your practice as a youth worker?

The four growth needs outlined by Brendtro et al. (2005) apply to all individuals. How are you meeting these growth needs in your own life? What can you do to strengthen them?

Chapter 4: Challenges in Adolescence

As outlined in chapter 3, adolescence is a time of great growth and development, and this can bring with it stresses that are particular to the adolescent period. (Smith, Cowie and Blades, 2011). Whilst the majority of young people negotiate adolescence with little difficulties, some young people may require extra support and guidance as a result of different challenges they may face and challenging behaviour that they may exhibit.

Health and Wellbeing

The Action for Adolescent Health study group (WHO, UNFPA and UNICEF, 1997) identified adolescence as a time of rapid development when young people acquire new capacities and are faced with lots of new situations. This presents opportunities to progress but can also present risks to health and wellbeing. The study group also identified the teenage years as "the gateway to the promotion of health" (WHO, UNFPA and UNICEF, 1997), and youth work activities with teenagers therefore present an opportunity for positive health promotion, and the chance to address risky behaviour.

The Four Dimensions of Health

Health and wellbeing can be divided into four dimensions, and all four should be given attention to ensure a healthy lifestyle. The four dimensions of health (O'Toole and Kropf, 2010) are:

- **Physical Health**: How the body functions, physical senses, being physically active and having healthy hygiene routines and eating habits. Sexual health and puberty. Topics that can be addressed by youth work to help young people develop healthy habits and attitudes for physical health include sleep, exercise, nutrition, hygiene, and information about physical development.

- **Mental Health:** A state of well being where a person is able to cope with the normal stresses of life and can work productively and contribute to their community. Youth work can help young people to develop good self esteem, the ability to problem solve, and how and where to ask for help and support when it is needed.

- **Social Health:** Meaningful social connections and positive relationships with others. Youth work can help develop communication skills, address bullying, and create safe spaces for young people to socialise with their peers and other significant people.

- **Spiritual Health:** Having a connection to things, being able to appreciate and be grateful for what is good in one's life. Youth work can help develop positive spiritual health through relaxation, arts, or mindfulness, and by holding a focus on kindness and compassion.

> *Self-Reflection*
>
> *What do you think of the importance of each of the four dimensions of health? Are some areas more important that others?*
>
> *Can you think of ways to support young people in developing positive health and wellbeing in each of the four dimensions?*
>
> *How can you ensure that you are looking after all four dimensions of health yourself?*

The **Health Belief Model** outlines how a health belief is based on the information a person has about the benefits or drawbacks of an object or action. Information people receive can influence their beliefs, and this in turn can influence their behaviour.

For behaviour to change, individuals must:
- Have an incentive to change.
- Feel threatened by their current behaviour.
- Feel a change would be beneficial and have few negative consequences.
- Feel able to make the change.

(Naidoo and Wills, 2000)

Promoting healthy behaviour in young people is therefore dependent on supporting these four elements. Young people must be motivated to make a change, must feel that a change will be positive for them, and must feel able and equipped to make the change. Behaviour change is not always easy - a person's health behaviours are also influenced by the attitudes and behaviours of peer groups and family, the social environment, and their own characteristics. (Foroige, 2013)

Example: Peter is 13, and is sexually active with different partners. He is not in a relationship. According to the health belief model, he needs to have an incentive to change his behaviour and feel threatened by his current behaviour. Through a broad relationships and sexuality education programme his youth worker explores positive relationships and the benefits that these can bring, and Peter is able to reflect on what he would like from a relationship. He decides that being in a relationship might be nice, and that while sex may form part of that relationship, sexual activity does not have to happen right away. The group learn about contraception and sexually transmitted diseases, and possible consequences of early sexual activity.

The group also learns about consent. Peter has not thought about consent before, and can now think of times where he has not sought consent, and other times where he has not given consent.

In order for Peter to change his behaviour he must feel able to do so. As a part of discussing consent the group practice communication skills, saying no and respecting other people's right to say no. Peter also thinks about the situations he is in where he engages in sexual activity, and works out a plan for how to manage in these situations. The group also talk about peer pressure, and develop strategies for how to cope with this.

The **Transtheoretical Model, or Cycle of Change** (Prochaska and DiClemente, 1984), shown in figure 3.1 depicts the stages that people move through in order to change behaviour. This model is often applied to drug and alcohol use, but is also useful for understanding behaviour change in general, for example in increasing exercise, stopping nail biting, or reducing offending behaviour.

Figure 3.1 The Cycle of Change (Foroige, 2012)

This model shows that individuals move from being comfortable with their behaviour, to considering that they need to make a change, preparing to change, putting the change into action, and then maintaining the new behaviour. Once the new behaviour is maintained the individual moves off the cycle, unless they relapse. The model acknowledges that relapse can be a normal part of behaviour change, and that this does not mean that change is impossible.

Introducing young people to the cycle of change can be helpful, to demonstrate where they feel they are in terms of making changes to their behaviour, and to help show that change is possible.

Case study: Patrick.

Patrick is a 15 year old boy taking part in a health and wellbeing group. As part of the programme covering physical health, the group are talking about hygiene and daily routines, and are asked to think of one thing they could do to improve their hygiene. Patrick says that he hasn't been to visit a dentist for many years, and brushes his teeth about once a week, and he thinks he would like to change this. He is now in the contemplation stage. Through talking with his youth worker, Julia, he thinks he will try to brush his teeth in the morning when he first gets up and goes to the bathroom. Although Julia has explained that everyone should brush their teeth two times a day, Patrick thinks that this would be too much of a change all at once for him. He works out a plan to buy a new toothbrush and some toothpaste. He is now in the preparation stage.

Once Patrick has his new toothbrush he finds it easy to move into the action stage, and in the first week he remembers to brush his teeth for five days out of the week. The second week he brushes his teeth every day and is very pleased with himself. Then he stays in bed too long one morning and is in a rush to get to school and forgets. The same happens the next day, and the next, and Patrick has moved in to relapse.

The next week the group are reviewing their goals, and Patrick thinks he would like to try again. He has moved back into contemplation, and is able to move back into action again very quickly. Eventually brushing his teeth in the mornings becomes a normal habit for him and he moves off the cycle of change for brushing his teeth.

Self-Reflection

Can you think of a behaviour that you would like to change in yourself?

Where are you on the cycle of change in relation to this?

What steps can you take to progress?

Youth Offending Behaviour

As adolescence is a time of personal and social experimentation, some young people may become more vulnerable to experimentation with drugs or alcohol, or becoming involved in offending behaviour. Offending behaviour includes criminal activity, but also anti-social behaviours that may not be pursued through the criminal justice system. Other young people may be in similar situations but may be more resilient to stressors and risk factors.

Although there is some debate about the usefulness of risk factor models, an understanding of risk and protective factors linked to youth offending behaviour can be helpful for youth workers to enable a greater understanding of the young people they are working with, to help formulate an effective response (Foroige, 2012). Risk factors signify an increased probability of offending behaviour. They should be considered alongside protective factors that can mediate the effects of the risks.

Risk Factors
Farrington and Welsh (2007) identified a number of risk factors that predict offending behaviour in young people:
- **Family factors:** Family involved in criminal or anti-social behaviour; Parental conflict; Poor child rearing methods e.g. poor supervision and discipline, low involvement and rejection; Abuse or neglect; Large family size.
- **Socio-economic factors:** Low family income; Poor housing; Unemployment or unstable employment.
- **Community factors:** High levels of poverty; Inner city, public housing; Neighbourhood disorganisation.
- **School factors:** High levels of distrust between students and teachers; High punishment and low praise; High delinquency rate; Unclear or inconsistent rules.
- **Peer factors:** Peer rejection; Peer influence.
- **Individual factors:** Low intelligence and attainment; Personality and temperament; Poor empathy; Impulsiveness; Poor cognitive social skills.

Protective Factors

In addition to a simple absence of the risk factors outlined above, protective factors can help increase a young person's resilience and lessen the probability of their involvement in offending behaviour. Some protective factors can be strengthened by involvement in youth work, for example opportunities for involvement, recognition and praise, and development of good social skills.

Protective factors include:

- **Family factors:** Strong attachment with one or more parents; Stable, warm and affectionate relationships.
- **Community factors:** Opportunities for involvement, recognition and praise; Positive, appropriate and healthy norms; Adults and peers with pro-social attitudes, values, and beliefs.
- **Education factors:** Positive, warm relationships with teachers; Positive attitudes, recognition and praise.
- **Peer factors:** Pro-social attitudes, values and beliefs; Positive behaviours.
- **Individual factors:** Female gender; Resilient temperament; Sense of self-efficacy; Positive and outgoing disposition; High intelligence; Good social skills; Good reasoning and problem solving skills.

(Youth Justice Board, 2005)

Effective Interventions

The Ministry of Justice New Zealand (2005a, 2005b) undertook a comprehensive evaluation of interventions for youth offending behaviour which enables youth workers to make informed decisions about programmes and interventions for use with young people. "What works", and "what doesn't work" are outlined below.

What works to reduce offending by young people

1. Build skills. Actively teaching young people new skills can reduce offending behaviour, but the skills need to be the ones related to offending. There should be a focus on management of impulses, thinking ahead, anger reduction, and identification of personal triggers for offending. Youth workers can model these skills, help young people learn how to use them, and praise young people when they try the skills themselves.
2. Meet the right needs. The right needs to focus on are those that relate to the offending behaviour - the criminogenic needs. The risk factors outlined above cause these needs.
3. Build on strengths. Strengths that can have an impact on offending behaviour include good reasoning, problem solving and conflict resolution skills, contact with pro-social peers, a positive attitude to education, and stable relationships with family members. These are all strengths that can be developed through engagement in youth work.

4. Target the right young people. Young people who are unlikely to re-offend should not be mixed in groups with young people who do regularly offend, as this can put them at greater risk of offending in the future. Equally, young people who are very high risk with very complex issues and a high risk of reoffending may not be good candidates for engagement in group youth work programmes.
5. Strengthen families. Working with families to increase positive communication and affection, improving rule setting and reasonable discipline, and improving family relationships is proven to have an impact on youth offending.
6. Make intervention comprehensive. A comprehensive intervention plan that involves several areas of a young person's life, and addresses several strengths and needs will have a greater impact on offending behaviour than those focusing on only one. Youth work may be one of several interventions if different agencies are able to work together.

Case study: Daniel is 13. His father is in jail and his uncles are involved in criminal actvity. He has a close relationship with his mother, but they do not have stable housing, and move between friend's houses, sometimes sleeping in a car. This means that he's not always able to attend school, but he likes some of his teachers when he is there. Recently Daniel has been spending more time with his uncles and has been helping them with some jobs.
Daniel attends a local youth project, where he takes part in a group working through a personal development programme and is part of a civic engagement group that is planning a day to tidy up the area around the community centre. He also spends time in the youth cafe some evenings. The school organises individual support for Daniel through a children's charity, and he talks about his family there. A social worker helps Daniel's mother to find stable accommodation.
The comprehensive support that Daniel receives involves a counsellor, youth worker, social worker, and his school, all working in different areas to improve Daniel's situation.

7. Reduce violence. Actively teaching the behaviour and thinking skills needed to control anger and impulses can reduce violence. Increasing skills for communicating with others, respecting others, and being able to understand another person's point of view is also effective in reducing anger and violence.
8. Make involvement easy. Reducing barriers to attendance makes it easier for young people and their families to be involved in programmes, which increases positive outcomes. Centres should be easy to get to, groups should meet at times when participants will be able to attend, and programmes should have positive instead of negative titles.

9.   Protect programme quality. Offending behaviour programmes need to be based on research on what works. It is also important that youth workers don't amend programmes in a way that could endanger their effectiveness, for example by leaving out sections that they may not like, or adding in well intentioned but harmful activities.

10.   Get residential treatment right. Residential treatment can be very effective if it is done in the right way - with trained staff, effective programmes, and following the other "what works" guidelines.

11.   Use effective staff. Staff should be able to help young people find constructive solutions to problems, respond positively to desired behaviour and should understand effective ways to teach skills to others.

12.   Train staff well. Good training is essential for staff to be able to provide effective interventions. Ideally training will be based on a manual or guidelines to clearly set out how programmes should run.

13.   Not too little, not too much. The ideal time frame for interventions is for contact to take place every day for six months. This is not always possible in a youth work setting, so a minimum of two contacts per week for six months is recommended.

14.   Go wild to stop crime. While wilderness programmes themselves are not the most effective method for reducing offending, when they are effectively run and combined with targeted interventions focusing on reducing offending behaviour they can be effective.

(Ministry of Justice New Zealand, 2005a. Foroige, 2012)

What doesn't work to reduce offending by young people

1. Getting tough. Interventions that focus only on deterring, supervising, and punishing rarely have an impact on offending by young people by themselves.

2. Looking for the magic bullet. There are many things that lead to offending, and many ways of reducing offending. There is no single intervention that will be effective for all young people. Instead, it is important to take a comprehensive approach to meeting the needs of the young person, and not to rely on one thing only.

3. Aiming at the wrong targets. Targeting needs, strengths, and problems that do not relate to offending doesn't impact on crime. These include increasing self-esteem, building fitness, and creating a fear of punishment. Instead, programmes should focus on the criminogenic needs as outlined in points one and two of "what works" above.

4. Vague and unfocused interventions. Programmes need to have clearly stated outcomes, and a clear plan in place for how these outcomes will be achieved. Programmes that are unclear in their aims, or in how any aims will be achieved are less likely to be effective. For offending behaviour, this includes

programmes that are vaguely aimed at 'helping', but do not directly focus on reducing the offending.

5. Ineffective staff. Youth workers who lack skills, who cannot relate well to young people, or who are careless in the way they implement programmes are less likely to be able to make an impact. In contrast, youth workers who can build a rapport with young people while maintaining boundaries and acting as a positive role model, and who run effective programmes, can make a positive impact on offending.

6. Giving young people the boot. The boot camp approach to youth offending, where young people experience military style discipline and hard physical work, is not effective in reducing offending.

7. Curfew. Requiring young people to be off the streets by a set time is not in itself effective at reducing offending. However, in partnership with clear and fairly implemented rules, and positive an affectionate parenting, setting a time for young people to be home in the evening can be effective.

8. Restitution alone. Having young people make amends to their victims has little impact on offending by itself. However, when combined with other programmes, it can help. Interventions in a youth work setting can include modelling desirable behaviours, practising problem solving skills, and encouraging pro-social behaviour, alongside restitution.

9. Long periods of incarceration. By themselves, long periods in custody are ineffective in reducing offending once a young person leaves custody. Residential programmes with a focus on rehabilitation can be effective, however.

10. Peer power. Programmes led by other young people are less effective at reducing offending than those led by adults. Peers are better at influencing each other to behave badly but not as influential in encouraging good behaviour.

11. Intensive supervision on its own. Staff spending a lot of time supervising a young person heavily, and being very strict about rule breaking, is not enough to reduce offending. Teaching and encouraging new attitudes and skills is also necessary.

12. Scaring them straight. Some popular interventions for offending behaviour involve bringing young people to visit a prison, or bringing a current or former prisoner to talk to young people about life in prison. 'Shock probation' involves a short stay in prison followed by a longer period on probation. Neither of these approaches reduce offending, and some studies have found that they lead to an increase in offending. These approaches should not be used in youth work.

13. Drug testing without treatment. Random drug testing does not have an impact on offending. It can start to have a positive impact when appropriate treatment is also involved.

(Ministry of Justice New Zealand, 2005b. Foroige, 2012)

Bullying

Bullying involves a person or a group repeatedly trying to harm someone they see as weaker or more vulnerable (McNealy & Blanchard, 2009). It is common during childhood, adolescence and adulthood, with the 2011 EU Kids Online report finding that 19% of 9-16 year olds had been bullied, and 12% had bullied someone else (Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig & Ólafsson, 2011). Bullying can take many forms, including physical harm, verbal bullying, exclusion, cyber- or online bullying, sexual bullying, racial or homophobic bullying.

Cyberbullying is use of the internet, mobile phones or other technology to intimidate, embarrass or manipulate someone e.g. sending nasty or threatening messages; posting upsetting photos or videos; impersonating another person online as a means of intimidation. A study in Ireland found that 14% of 12–16 year olds reported that they had been cyber bullied in the preceding couple of months, with 20% of students found to be involved in cyberbullying, either as a bully, victim, or both (O'Moore, 2012).

Hate speech is speech that attacks other people on the basis of, for example, their race, religion, gender, or sexuality. This can include other forms of communication to speech, including graffiti, videos, images etc, and abusive and threatening behaviour as well as just offensive statements. 78% of the respondents of an online survey stated they had encountered hate speech online on a regular basis. The three most recurrent targets of hate speech were: LGBT people (70%), Muslims (60%) and women. (Council of Europe, 2012).

Young people who identify as LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) are at a high risk of experiencing bullying, with 50% reporting experiencing verbal bullying, 25% being physically threatened by their peers, and 34% reporting hearing homophobic comments from their teachers and other adult professionals (Mayock, Bryan, Carr & Kitching, 2009).

Although the common perception is that bullies are insecure and unhappy, adolescent bullies are often confident and have a high social status among their peers. While this does not necessarily mean that they are popular, it can make it harder for their bullying behaviour to be challenged. Bullies are often copying behaviour that they have seen or experienced in their home (McNealy & Blanchard, 2009).

The impact on the targets of bullying can be very harmful. Bullying is a dominant theme reported by young people as an issue that 'hurts' in relation to their mental health, with the effects of bullying being reported as feeling scared, worthless, depressed, isolated, wanting to self-harm, or feeling suicidal (OMCYA, 2009).

Bullying needs to be tackled at a number of different levels, and a whole organisation approach to bullying is recommended. This includes:

- Ethos and Environment:
    - Creating a "culture of telling" within an organisation, where young people, youth workers, and management feel able to report bullying and will be taken seriously.
    - Youth participation, so young people have a voice and can take an active role in tackling any issues.
    - Valuing and celebrating diversity, which allows everyone to fully participate and feel supported.
    - Creating a safe and supportive social environment, where everyone can feel comfortable.

- Policies, Procedures & Guidelines:
    - Policies and guidelines may vary at an organisational level, but these can include anti-bullying policies and reporting procedures.
    - At a group level, charters of rights, codes of behaviour, and group contracts can be developed to provide clear expectations and guidelines.

- Partnerships & Services:
  - Strong links with partner organisations and referrals to other services where necessary.
  - Peer support, for both young people and youth workers.

- Programmes, Activities, Events:
  - Activities promoting shared experiences, integration, and working together.
  - Events taking a stand against bullying or hate speech.
  - Programmes to promote holistic health & wellbeing, and resilience for young people.
  - Developing young people's social and communication skills.
  - Specific anti-bullying programmes.

(NYCI, 2007)

Self-Reflection:

How can you model positive anti-bullying behaviour as a youth worker?

As a youth worker, which of the four areas of taking a whole organisation approach can you impact on? How can you do this?

Youth Worker Case Study: Rita, Ireland

How long have you been a youth worker?

I've been a youth worker for six years, since 2009.

Why did you become a youth worker?

On finishing my degree I was looking at various jobs to apply for and when the job for youth worker came up I couldn't think of a better fit for the type of person I am. I'm young at heart! I really feel that youth work creates the opportunity to make huge impacts on people's lives. Also I feel that young people have an unbelievable amount of potential. Youth workers have the capacity to give young people the time they deserve in developing their interests and creating opportunities for them to excel in areas they are really interested in.

What was your first experience of youth work?

I was a member of a Foróige youth club as a young person. I started attending at around 12 years old. At the time I didn't really know it was youth work. I just saw it as a place to go to hang out with my friends. In hindsight I can really appreciate what the club did for me from a youth work aspect. It gave us the opportunities to work together as teams, gave us responsibility for different tasks and provided opportunities for our work and talents to be recognised through various events…fond memories!!

What's been your worst experience, and how did you overcome it?

My worst work related experience has been and always will be public speaking! It is something that we as youth workers need to do from time to time. There was one particular time I completely froze and forgot what I was supposed to be saying in front of a large group. It completely threw me and I didn't recover well! I still find public speaking difficult but have learned to be very well prepared for anything I present, to know my subject matter and to ground myself. The best tip I have received around this is the 'fake it til you make it' advice. It actually works a treat!

What's been your best experience?

The best experience for me has been seeing the impact of the work that we do first-hand. There is generally a light-bulb moment for a young person when they grasp a concept that is being delivered or witnessing a shy introverted young person demonstrate more confidence through participation in a programme. The difference this makes in the lives of the young people we work with makes it all worthwhile.

Can you briefly describe a typical week in your job?

The week consists of group work (facilitating group work for programmes such as leadership, youth participation, health and well-being programmes, techspace groups), meeting with staff and volunteers around planning and evaluating the groups, training / upskilling (youth workers need to keep up with new programmes, trainings, methods of working with young people etc.), meetings with other agencies in the community around information sharing and interagency work (It's great to pool as many resources together as possible to roll out better quality programmes for the young people we work with), facilitating training for staff and volunteers in programmes we deliver, administration (record keeping, budgeting, report writing etc), promoting our services (recruiting young people and

volunteers through schools, Youthreach, third level colleges etc), one to one work with young people if the need arises.

What do you think is the most important characteristic for a youth worker?

The ability to connect with young people where they're at. Engaging young people with our services is the most important aspect of our work. This won't happen if the youth worker is not approachable, friendly and comes across as likeable to the young people. The voluntary aspect of youth work means that the youth worker and the type of programme they are offering really needs to appeal to the young people.

Youth work is a very rewarding and fun job. There is also a lot of variety in the type of work we get to do. It gives youth workers the opportunity to be really creative in the programmes they provide for young people.

Chapter 5: Facilitation Skills

> *Self Reflection:*
>
> *What do you think of when you think of facilitation?*
>
> *In what different situations do youth workers use facilitation skills?*

What is Facilitation?

Facilitation enables and empowers people to carry out a task or perform an action. The facilitator does not perform the task, but uses their skills to allow participants to reach their decision, set their goals or learn a skill (Prendiville, 2008). Good facilitation encourages greater participation and responsibility for decisions. Through this, group members come to value and develop their own expertise and skills.

Inherent in facilitation are the principles of equality, inclusion, participation and affirmation. In group terms this means recognising the value of each person's contribution, encouraging the active participation of each group member in identifying and utilising their skills, experience, creativity and analysis (Prendiville, 2008).

Principles of Facilitation

Listening: Facilitation means listening to what people are saying and tuning in to what they are not saying. The facilitator needs to be aware of both verbal and non - verbal means of communication.

Confidentiality: To participate fully, people must be confident that everything of relevance can be discussed freely without inappropriate reporting outside the group. Group members will usually decide what level of detail can be shared with those not in the group. Restrictions to confidentially for child protection should be very clearly explained to participants.

Respect: A facilitator must acknowledge and respect each individual and prevent other group members from undermining the basic respect that should be accorded to each individual in the group.

Equality: Each person within the group is regarded as having an equal right to contribute as another. Equality also relates to respect, valuing of personal experience and participation.

The value of personal experience: Each member's contribution is equally valid and valuable.

Agreed goals: Members must share an agreed goal if they are to develop a belief in and sense of ownership of the group.

Group Process: Facilitation requires paying attention to how the group operates. This includes attempting to resolve conflict or any other difficulties that might arise in the group.

Trust and safety: To ensure maximum participation, the facilitator must encourage the development of trust and safety in the group. This can sometimes take time.

The importance of positive experience: This requires the facilitator meeting realistic individual needs and/or being aware of and challenging unrealistic expectations of the group or the facilitator.

Participation: Consultation with group members on direction, pace, content and method with an openness to change is vital (Prendiville, 2008).

> *Self-Reflection:*
>
> *How would you rate your facilitation skills?*
>
> *What areas do you think you could improve on?*

Styles of Facilitation

Facilitators use a wide range of styles with groups, depending on:
- The task or activity
- The number of people involved
- The time available
- The needs of group members

Different styles enable different matters to be addressed most effectively, and effective facilitators are able to modify their style to meet the group's needs. One activity may involve several different styles of facilitation.

For a task, a facilitator's approach may be one or a combination of the following:

- **Directive**: Giving people information, instructing them on how to do something. *e.g. This is how to write an action plan.*

- **Exploratory**: Asking questions, encouraging people to voice their experience and ideas. *e.g. What do you think about…?*

- **Delegating**: Assigning tasks, roles or functions to individuals. *e.g. I'd like you to make the posters and you to write the leaflet.*

- **Participative**: Taking part in the discussion, sharing personal experiences (where appropriate) and encouraging others to do likewise. *e.g. When I'm nervous it helps me to...* (Prendiville, 2008).

Self-Reflection

What are the advantages and disadvantages of each approaches to facilitating a task with a group?

Which approach do you think is used most often in youth work?

Which approach do you feel most comfortable using? Do you think that this is the most appropriate for youth work?

For the process, a facilitator's approach may be one or a combination of the following:

- **Interpretive**: Putting other words on a contribution or helping someone to find the words to express what they mean. *e.g. So what you're saying is that...*

- **Cathartic**: Encouraging and modelling the expressions of feelings and emotions as they emerge by asking questions. *e.g. And how did you feel about that?*

- **Evaluative**: Assessing what someone says, providing a statement of value in relation to behaviour. *e.g. That seems to have worked well for you.*

- **Sharing**: Encouraging the sharing of past and present feelings and those about future events. *e.g. Does anyone else feel this way?*

- **Directive**: Guiding participants as they explore their feelings and begin to express them. *e.g. Lets take a few moments to sit quietly and think, before we all share one feeling.* (Prendiville, 2008).

Facilitating a Group

Youth work is usually delivered in a group setting, so being able to facilitate a group is an essential skill for a youth worker. Some key points to remember when facilitating:

- **Be grounded and fully present.** Make sure that you are fully attentive and available to your group. They deserve your full attention, and a facilitator should not be distracted by phones or other tasks.

- **Listen actively and attentively.** This seems obvious but is very important! When listening, suspend your own judgements and ideas. Focus on hearing what is being said, and reflect this back to the group. *e.g. So you're saying that…* Most importantly, remember that youth work is about the young people, not about the youth worker. If the youth worker takes over the group, or talks about themselves and their opinions too much, it will be harder for young people to participate and develop.

- **Allow silences.** If you ask a question, allow participants time to think before looking for an answer. This can mean some periods of silence, but that's ok.

- **Check for understanding.** Sometimes you need to check that you understand what a young person is saying. Do not assume that you always know what someone else means.

- **Summarise key points.** At different stages in a discussion, summarise the main points of what is being said and feed them back to the group. This is a good way of focusing the discussion.

- **Ask open questions.** Open questions can't be answered with just a yes or no, and because of this they promote good discussion. *e.g. What do you think about…? How could you…?*

- **Encourage participation.** Be conscious of possible barriers to a young person participating in a group. Think about ways to include everyone in a discussion. This could be by asking everyone to answer a question rather than looking for volunteers, or by asking specific individuals for an answer if you notice that they find it hard to interject. If one person is taking over the group or being disruptive, try to think about what might be causing that behaviour.

- **Encourage naming emotions.** Young people may not always have the language to express the emotions that they experience. Naming emotions with young people can be a method for dealing with possible tension in the group. It is important not to assume that you know what emotion a young person is experiencing. Instead, offer some suggestions and ask the young person for their thoughts. Being mindful of boundaries and appropriate information to share with the group, it can be helpful for the youth worker to be honest about their emotions.

- **Appreciate the individual.** Allow for different personalities. For example, some young people might be comfortable jumping straight into a task, and others may be shy and prefer to spend some time in a group before they speak. Be mindful of any young people in the group who have special educational needs. This may mean adapting activities where necessary. A young person with dyslexia or difficulties writing may not want to write on a flipchart in front of a group, but equally, the group may be a safe place for them to practice this. A young person with autism may like to know the structure and content of group activities in advance. The best way to find out how to make the group as comfortable as possible for a young person with special educational needs is to ask the young person what you can do. They are the expert on themselves.

Facilitating with a Manual

Youth work programmes are increasingly being run with manualised programmes. These allow for consistency within a programme so that outcomes can be evaluated, and that programmes can be selected for young people based on knowledge of the outcomes and content. However, youth work should also be personalised and engaging, and it is therefore important to consider how to facilitate using a manual.

- **Prepare.** While manualised programmes can significantly reduce the amount of preparation needed for a group, it is still essential to prepare. Preparation means that you do not need to read directly from the manual, and that you have a good understanding of the aims and outcomes of an activity and how it is run.

- **Be yourself.** Explain activities in your own voice. Facilitate the activity in the way that you are comfortable facilitating. It is important to be genuine.

- **Adapt to the needs of your learners.** If a discussion is going well, and is constructive and on topic, keep going along with it. If an activity is not working with a group, and you have tried to engage them in it, consider moving to the next activity sooner.

- **Allow participants the opportunity to process the activity.** Many youth work activities include processing questions, either as a group discussion about the activity or as individual questions for reflection. This is an important part of the learning process and should not be left out.

Dealing with Challenging Behaviour

Challenges and difficult behaviour may arise in a group situation for lots of different reasons including group dynamics, lack of clarity around tasks, previous negative experiences, individual aims and outside events. It is the youth worker's responsibility to deal with these appropriately and to ensure a positive and comfortable learning experience for all young people. In any challenging situation the facilitator must be prepared to:

- Stay calm

- Monitor the behaviour initially

- Confront the challenging young person, where appropriate and safe to do so. This can sometimes be more effective outside of group time.

- Resist manipulation by group members

- Face anger unafraid

- Be objective towards each group member and their position

- Not be defensive
- Take an open and honest approach to dealing with difficulties
- Talk to members outside of the session about issues where appropriate
- Be fair

Some common challenges to facilitation include:

Young person is quiet, doesn't contribute and appears shy.
Try to draw out a quiet participant without putting them on the spot. Make eye contact so it is clear that you would like them to contribute. Look for nonverbal cues that indicate that they are ready to speak. Often shyer participants will feel more comfortable in a later session or in smaller group discussions and will begin to participate without much intervention. When someone comes forward with even a brief comment after staying in the background for most of the time be encouraging and convey genuine interest in what they are saying.

Young person appears unwilling to engage and seems bored.
How to respond to this situation will depend upon what is motivating the behaviour. If they are bored because the topic is uninteresting to them, try to engage them by asking for their opinion of what has been discussed up to that point or by asking them a thought provoking question. If on the other hand it is a very experienced person who is bored because the topic is not new to them, first acknowledge their experience in the area, and then ask for their views on what is being discussed. Be careful not to overdo this as it may cause some resentment within the group.

Only a few young people participating, nobody wants to talk, there is a lack of enthusiasm in the room.
This can be a very common situation in youth work, especially at the beginning of a group. It is important as a youth worker not to be influenced by this, and to remain positive. A lack of enthusiasm in the group may occur if the facilitator is talking too much or is not giving participants enough time to respond to questions. People need time to think, reflect, and get ready to speak up. It may help to pose a question and go around the group until everyone has a chance to respond. If the energy in the room is low consider using an energiser activity to get people moving around and interacting. Where appropriate this may change the atmosphere and encourage people to participate more.

One dominant person takes over the discussion.
It is the responsibility of the facilitator to manage domineering participants. Once it becomes clear what this person is doing it is important to intervene and set limits. Start by limiting your eye contact with the dominant speaker. Remind the group that you would like everybody to participate; "Let's hear from some of you who haven't had a chance to speak yet" or "That's an interesting point, now let's see what the group thinks about it". If necessary, you may wish to speak to the person by name. "John, we've heard from you; now let's hear what Mary has to say." Be careful to manage your comments and tone of voice. You are trying to make a point without offending the speaker. Do not embarrass them. Their eagerness to contribute may be an asset later.

Tension or open conflict between members of the group.
If there is tension it should be addressed directly. Remind participants that appropriate disagreement and conflict of ideas is useful in teasing out ideas and enhances learning for all. Outline that for conflict to be productive, it must be focused on the issue: it is acceptable to challenge someone's ideas, but personal attacks are not acceptable. The facilitator must interrupt personal attacks, name-calling, or put-downs immediately. This will be much easier to do if a group contract has been established setting out ground rules which encourage respect and tolerance for other points of view. As a last resort, consider taking a break to change the energy in the room. This can provide an opportunity to talk one-on-one with the participants in question.

> *Self-Reflection:*
>
> *Think about a situation that you have found challenging to facilitate in, or a behaviour in young people that you find challenging when you are facilitating:*
>
> *Why do you think this situation or behaviour is challenging for you?*
>
> *How do you usually respond?*
>
> *How could you respond differently?*

Chapter 6: Group Processes

The classic model of group development that is applied to youth work is Tuckman's Action Based Model (Tuckman, 1965), which outlines five stages that a group goes through over the course of its lifetime. These stages can apply to groups formed for shorter programmes, such as targeted interventions that may take place over six weeks, but also to longer running groups such as youth clubs that may run for several years with the same group of young people. Knowledge and understanding of these stages can help youth workers to understand how young people may be feeling and behaving, and to plan activities and supports that are appropriate for the stage.

<u>Action-Based Model: Stages of Group Development</u> (Tuckman, 1965)

Forming Stage. Participants may appear shy and nervous at this stage. This is where the first impressions of other group members are made. The group begins to develop as the ground rules are laid out. Roles within the group may become evident.
Example: Maria is quiet and doesn't talk much during the first meeting of the group. She agrees with the group contract but doesn't suggest any rules herself.
Role of Youth Worker: Run icebreaker / get to know you activities. Work with young people to design a group contract. Begin to establish a relationship with the young people in the group. Create a safe environment for the group for young people to feel secure and confident.

Storming Stage. Participants need to feel comfortable and secure within the group. They need to feel that their participation is valuable to the group and this will enable them to learn more. Conflict or non-cooperation may occur at this stage between group participants, or between participants and the youth worker, as some participants may not be ready to move on. Once this has been worked through participants will feel greater ownership with the group.
Example: Patrick makes sure that he joins in every activity, and answers any question put to the group. He disagrees loudly with anyone who has a different opinion to him.
Role of Youth Worker: Maintain boundaries and clarity of expectations of the group. Name emotions and paraphrase where necessary to minimise conflict.

Norming Stage. Each of the participants needs to be recognised for their participation. Some members may take on leadership roles. Participants undertake the task in hand, rising to challenges in a positive way as they occur.

Example: Maria and Patrick work together to solve a problem for the group.
Role of Youth Worker: Provide opportunities for participants to take on leadership roles and offer praise and positive recognition for achievements.

Performing Stage. Participants become involved in group facilitation. Deeper relationships begin to form within the group. Rational attitudes to and about the group are formed by participants. Participants accept the roles people have taken on within the group.

Example: Patrick is part of a sub-group researching community needs, so that they can decide on an action to help their community.
Role of Youth Worker: Guide and support the group in achieving their goals.

Adjourning Stage. Participants may feel a sense of loss as the group is coming to a close. It is important that the group acknowledges what has been achieved and looks forward to new beginnings.

Example: Maria is sad that the group is finishing, but proud of herself for joining in and taking an active role. She has plans to join another programme with two of her new friends.
Role of Youth Worker: Lead reflection, evaluation, and celebration of work undertaken.

Self-Reflection:

Think of a group that you have either worked with or been a part of. How did your group progress through each of the stages?

How can you as a youth worker support young people through each of the stages?

What are the first steps you should take with a group?

Beginning a Group

At the beginning of a group the main task of the youth worker and the group is to get to know each other and to establish the ground rules for how the group will function. "Icebreaker" activities that provide opportunities for participants to share information about themselves and to work together are ideal for this stage. Additionally, a group contract should be written during the first group meeting.

Building positive relationships with and between participants in the group is an important first step for a youth worker. This can be achieved by:

- **Taking part in games and activities along with young people.** This can help young people to see youth workers in an informal and relaxed setting and to build trust. Sharing appropriate information during these activities allows young people to get to know the youth worker as a fellow human being rather than a distant authority figure. This does not mean sharing everything personal and private, and youth workers need to consider their personal boundaries as well as their position as a model of appropriate behaviour.

- **Setting up opportunities just to chat.** Having times for informal chat gives young people the opportunity to get used to just talking and expressing themselves. This can make general group participation easier but also establishes a communicative relationship between the youth worker and young person, making it easier for the young person to look for support or ask questions in the future. This can be as simple as chatting while the young people arrive for or leave a group, or having set break times where informal chat can take place.

- **Involving young people in the group.** Involving young people in tasks and roles in running the group from the beginning helps to develop a positive trusting relationship with the young person, but also gives a sense of responsibility and ownership of the group.

Group Contracts

Establishing a group contract enables young people to understand clearly what is expected of them, and what they can expect from their youth worker. Young people should be active participants in designing the contract, with input and guidance from the youth worker. The youth worker should also take an active role in this. This means that everyone has ownership of the contract, understands why the rules are in place, and is in agreement about expected behaviour.

Areas to consider for a group contract include:

1. **Respect**. For each other, self-respect, for the premises.

2. **Listening**. What does it mean to listen?

3. **Timing**. When does the group meet? Break times. Punctuality.

4. **Goals**. What is the group trying to achieve?

5. **Behaviour**. What is and isn't acceptable behaviour.

6. **Confidentiality**. This may include participants not talking about the personal experiences of non-group members within the group, and not talking about the personal experiences or private information of group members when outside the group. However, participants should feel able to share their learning and experiences outside the group.

If confidentiality is included as a group rule, which may be appropriate for many areas of youth work, the limits to confidentiality (e.g. in the case of mandatory child protection reports or legal issues) should be very clearly explained to the group.

Self-Reflection:

What rules or guidelines do you think are essential for a group contract?

How would you explain the need for these rules to a group of young people to ensure that they were happy with their inclusion?

Roles Within the Group

Young people can find themselves taking on different roles within a group, and this can affect their participation in the group as well as the group's overall achievement. An understanding of the roles commonly found in a group can allow a youth worker to use the positive roles to help the group achieve, while minimising the impact of the negative roles.

Some roles within a group may be transitory, and may change over time. For example, a young person may take on a role as a *questioner*, trying to draw out other participants' thoughts and feelings, but later take on a *leadership* role. Other positive roles include *encouraging*, *harmonising*, *clarifying*, and *challenging*. Negative roles that may emerge include a young person *blocking*, by being negative and resisting any progress by the group, a *critic*, finding fault in everything, an *avoider*, not participating in the group, and a *dominator*, who tries to assert their authority and makes it hard for others to participate.

Other group roles may be longer lasting, and may be assigned by the group to a person or be assigned to a young people in all their group interactions based on their previous experiences and personality. These may also be positive or negative, and include:

1. **Scapegoat**: Tends to be unfairly blamed for things that go wrong, or not allowed to have an individual view.

2. **Leader**: A young person that others in the group admire and follow. This can be both positive or negative, for the group and for the individual.

3. **Nurturer**: Takes on responsibility for encouraging or supporting others. While this can be positive for the group, it is a responsibility that should be shared by all group members rather than falling to one person.

4. **Child**: A young person seen as not capable of taking on responsibility within the group, but instead bringing fun and laughter. (Prendiville, 2008)

While taking on roles is a natural part of group development, a youth worker should be mindful of these roles, and should provide opportunities and encouragement for young people to experiment with different roles, and to support them in moving out of negative roles they may have taken on in their life. This could be as simple as asking someone who does not usually have the opportunity to take on a leadership role to do so for a task.

It can be very easy to become 'stuck' in a role, and unable to move out of it. A young person who is seen as always being positive and being a high achiever may struggle to express themselves if they are feeling unhappy, or may have difficulty if they are unable to succeed at something. Equally, a young person who may make lots of jokes and take on a role as a group 'clown' may struggle to be taken seriously when there is something they care about.

Case Study: James

James is 14, and has a reputation for not taking anything seriously and for joking around. He is popular, and makes his friends laugh. All his friends call him by his nickname, Sid, and the only people who call him James are his mother and his youth worker, Tom. At school James is known by the teachers to be the class clown, and is often blamed for any disruption to lessons, even if he was not the instigator.

James has joined the committee who run the youth cafe, and he would like to take on more responsibility there, as he thinks he would like to work in a cafe when he is older. However, the other young people on the committee won't let him take charge of any of the important jobs like looking after the money, doing the shopping, or planning special events, because they don't think he will take the job seriously. When his friends come in to the cafe they expect him to give them free drinks, and to talk and joke with them instead of helping run the cafe. Tom notices this, and talks to James about it. They decide that James will set up and run a monthly movie night, with special snacks on sale. When Tom is printing the duties lists prepared by the cafe committee he writes James instead of Sid. One of the other committee members notices this and starts using James's correct name too.

Tom supports James in running the movie night by making sure that the other committee members do not take over and that James is allowed to take responsibility for it. He praises James for his organisation in the committee meeting. James starts to be taken more seriously by the other group members.

Self-Reflection:

Think of roles that you have taken on in groups. Were you comfortable in these roles? How did you move out of them?

Ending the Group

Ending is a natural stage in the lifecycle of a group, whether the group is together for an afternoon, a week, several months, or many years. Ending can cause feelings of loss and uncertainty in young people, and this may lead to challenges in behaviour as participants process these feelings. There can be a need to mark the ending of the group, acknowledge achievements, and look forward to new beginnings and challenges. (Prendiville, 2008)

A youth worker's role at this time is to facilitate the celebration of the work the group has achieved and the development that individuals have undertaken in their time with the group. Activities that promote reflection and evaluation can be used, and these can help young people to recognise their achievements, as well as helping the youth worker to see strengths and weaknesses in a programme and opportunities for improvement.

Celebratory activities can include:
1. Presentation of certificates of programme completion.
2. Recognition events to present the work of the group to a wider audience.
3. Graduation ceremonies.
4. Participation in a fun activity planned by the group.
5. A meal together as a group.

Case Study:
Joanna, a youth worker, facilitated a youth leadership programme with a group of 10 sixteen year olds, meeting once a week for fifteen weeks. In the final session the group discussed what they had learned about leadership, and what they planned to do after the group had finished to demonstrate good leadership in their community. Participants reviewed a self-reflection worksheet they had completed at the beginning of the programme to see how they had progressed, and took part in activity where each person received compliments about themselves. Joanna ordered pizza for the group, and they ate a meal together. After the meal Joanna presented each person with a certificate to recognise their achievement in completing the programme.

Self-Reflection:

What feelings might a youth worker have as a group they have facilitated ends?

As a youth worker, how should you express these feelings to the group, being mindful that the group is about the young people, and not about you as a youth worker?

Chapter 7: Planning

Planning is essential in youth work to ensure that desired outcomes are worked towards and achieved. The starting point for planning is to ask:

What should the young person achieve as a result of their engagement in this club/project/activity?

Being able to answer this question allows for educational experiences to be planned, for a positive and supportive environment to be created, and ensures that the young person's development remains the priority. Failing to plan can lead to haphazard or unfocused interventions and ineffective youth work.

> *Example: If the overall goal is for a young person to experience a safe environment in which to socialise with a positive peer group, a priority for planning is to ensure that the young person is able to access the space, that it is a positive social environment for that young person, and that there are opportunities provided for the young person to engage with others in a positive manner.*

> *Example: If the desired outcome is for a young person to be able to better manage their anger, a specific anger management programme may be appropriate, focusing on recognising triggers, the appropriate expression of emotions, and techniques for managing anger more effectively.*

Focusing on the desired outcomes for a young person also means that it is easier to communicate the benefits of youth work to others, be they the people funding the work, other professionals, or members of the public. Youth workers are able to see the positive changes in young people as a result of their engagement in youth work, but it is also important to be able to communicate this to others. For example, taking a group of young people on a day trip out could be interpreted as rewarding negative behaviour with a fun experience, when the outcomes are actually that young people will be able to better respect their environment, plan an activity, communicate with and demonstrate respect for people in an authority position, and be able to explain the benefits of physical activity. It is important that these outcomes are clear and transparent so that the purpose of youth work is not misunderstood.

A focus on outcomes in youth work does not mean that the process is lost. The process of youth work, building relationships, and young people taking an active role in programmes and interventions is essential for anything to be achieved. A successful process leads to achievement of outcomes, but without knowing what the desired outcomes are, the process can be unfocused and disorganised.

To use the analogy of baking a cake: If you don't know what type of cake you are hoping to make, you won't know where to start with the mixing. If you don't pay attention to the process, you won't end up with a successful cake either! Both elements are equally important.

> *Self-Reflection:*
>
> *What outcomes do you think young people can achieve through youth work?*
>
> *What outcomes can youth work have for communities?*
>
> *What is important for the process of youth work to be successful?*

Writing Outcomes

The language used for writing outcomes should outline specific, measurable indicators of success. The outcomes should clearly specify the changes in participant's knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviours, or conditions.

Some examples of recommended verbs to use:

Avoid words and phrases like:	Use words and phrases like:
• Know... • Understand... • Be familiar with… • Be interested in… • Be aware of… • Have information about… • Learn the basics of...	• Describe… • Explain… • Evaluate… • Identify... • Summarise… • Compare… • Give examples of...
These terms can be vague and hard to measure.	These terms are concrete and clear.

Useful verbs in the thinking domain:

Knowledge	Comprehension	Application	Analysis	Synthesis	Evaluation
Define	Describe	Demonstrate	Compare	Compose	Confirm
List	Explain	Prepare	Criticise	Create	Evaluate
Name	Identify	Produce	Examine	Make	Prioritise
Recognise	Outline	Relate	Investigate	Organise	Research
State	Summarise	Use	Question	Plan	Resolve

Useful verbs in the valuing domain:

Responding	Valuing	Characterising
Attempt	Encourage	Debate
Communicate	Guide	Empathise
Describe	Praise	Negotiate
Participate	Respect	Persist
Respond	Support	Question

Useful verbs in the skills domain:

Apply	Illustrate
Construct	Participate
Demonstrate	Perform
Examine	Prepare
Identify	Use

(Foroige, 2013)

Self-Reflection:

What are the benefits of having a clearly defined outcomes for a youth work programme?

Think of a youth work programme or activity that you have run or would like to run. What are some of the specific outcomes for young people from taking part in this programme or activity?

Learning Experiences and Activities

Once the desired outcomes have been defined, learning experiences can be planned to meet these outcomes. The Tyler Rationale (Tyler, 1949) outlines four stages of curriculum development, and provides and simple and straightforward model for curriculum planning:

- What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?
- What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?
- How can these educational experiences be effectively organised?
- How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained?

Translated into modern youth work planning, this becomes:
- What outcomes should the youth worker seek to attain?
- What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these outcomes?
- How can these educational experiences be effectively planned and run?
- How can the youth worker determine if these outcomes have been achieved?

Planning a programme with a focus on the desired outcomes also allows for flexibility and change based on the needs and interests of the young people taking part, and practical restrictions on programme choices such as cost and location, while not losing sight of the overall purpose of the youth work programme.

> *Example: If the overall situation is that young people lack patience and the ability to follow instructions, some desired outcomes may be that:*
> *On completion of the programme, participants will be able to:*
> *Follow simple instructions.*
> *Participate in a group activity.*
> *Demonstrate patience.*
> *Communicate respectfully with adults.*
>
> *These outcomes could be achieved through many different activities. A soccer programme is one possibility, in which case the activities could focus on training drills presented by a coach, working together as a team, and listening to and respecting the referee. This programme would also have additional positive outcomes for the young people taking part, such as improved physical health and planning. However, these are not the primary outcomes to meet the identified situation/need.*

However, if the young people do not enjoy soccer, or there is no suitable venue, a different activity could still meet these objectives. A fishing programme would meet the desired outcomes, and would also help with stress management, a sense of calm, and an appreciation and respect for the environment. Cooking would also meet the original desired outcomes, and have the addition potential outcomes of improving literacy, planning and budgeting, depending on the needs of the young people and the focus of the activities.

In this way, focusing on the desired outcomes allows a youth worker to remain flexible if the programme needs to change. Different activities may take place, but the outcomes should still be achieved. It also means that the focus of any activities is on achieving the desired outcomes. Soccer practice becomes a learning experience when the priority is practicing following instructions and speaking respectfully to people in authority, instead of simply kicking a ball around for an hour.

Tyler (1949) also advocated for the active and experiential learning that forms the basis of youth work interventions, stating that "learning takes place through the active behaviour of the student; it is what he does that he learns, not what the teacher does." (Tyler, 1949, p63) Put simply: young people learn by doing.

Smith (1980, p16) outlined three assumptions behind the concept of learning by doing:
- People learn best when they are personally involved in the learning experience.
- Knowledge has to be discovered by the individual if it is to have any significant meaning to them or to make a difference in their behaviour.
- A person's commitment to learning is highest when they are free to set their own learning objectives and are able to actively pursue them within a given framework.

This means that young people should take part in the learning activities themselves, and should be supported and guided to draw learning conclusions from activities rather than be told what they have learned. In addition, participation in a specific youth work programme should be voluntary, and lead by the young person. This does not mean that the young person is responsible for designing the specific programme content and educational activities, but means that they should decide that they want to develop their skills or interests in a certain area, and a youth worker can then provide the framework for learning.

Experiential learning is more than just taking part in an activity. Reflecting on and processing the experience is necessary for conscious learning, and for understanding of the purpose of the activity. Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle outlines the process of knowledge developing from experience in four stages:
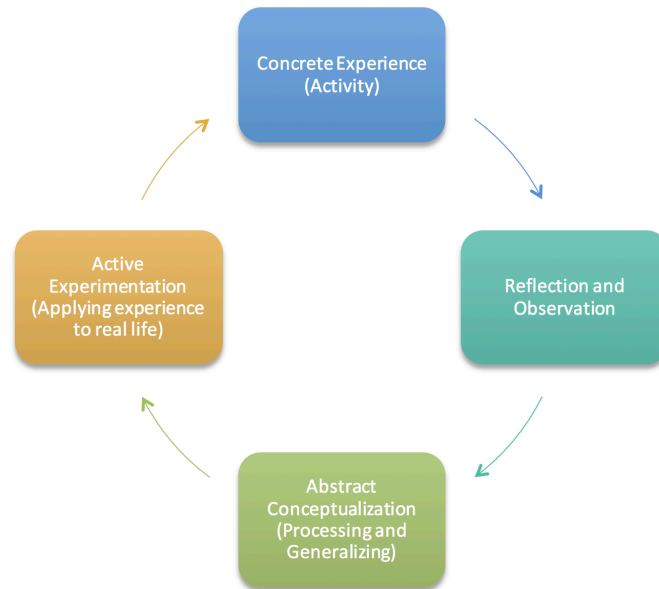

Figure 7.1 Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984)

Applied to youth work, this means that activities should be followed by reflection and processing, to allow the young person to develop their understanding of what they have taken part in, so that their learning can be active and conscious. This reflection and processing can be individual, or completed as a group, through discussions, questions from facilitator, or learning journals if appropriate.

> *Example: After playing a ball game where the person with the ball must tell the other participants what to do (jump on one leg, make a noise like a sheep etc), the youth worker asks the group to sit in a circle, and asks what it was like for the person with the ball, and what it was like to be told what to do. The group then discusses power and responsibility. In this way young people are able to experience power over others in a safe manner, to think about and process what this was like, and to consider how this may apply out of the group environment.*

Logic Models

For programme planning, a logic model is simply a framework that shows the key information about the programme: why you are running it, what resources you need, who it is for, what it involves, and the outcomes that it should achieve. It outlines everything together to enable the programme to be easily communicated to others.

There are many different ways to display a logic model. Below is a simple structure for a programme plan:

Situation / Need: *This is where you outline the reason for the programme. Why do you think that this programme / group / intervention is needed? Using a needs assessment to inform this can help identify the actual issues rather than assumed issues.*

Example: Young people would like to be involved in making their community a better place, but have very limited opportunities to do so.

Inputs	Outputs	Outcomes
Inputs are what you need to put into a programme to make it work. This includes the human, financial and community resources needed to run the programme.	*Outputs can be divided into two columns: Activities and Measurables.*	*Outcomes are the specific changes in participants' knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviour or conditions that occur as a result of the programme or intervention.*
Example:	***Activities** explain what the programme does: The interventions used.*	*Outcomes can be broken down into short and long term outcomes, or short, medium and long term outcomes.*
Trained youth worker and volunteer.	*Example:*	
Room at the community centre.	*Active experiential learning with sessions on:*	*Example:*
Programme manual.	*1. Communication*	*Participants will be able to:*
Training materials (paper, pens etc).	*2. Civic Engagement*	*Research needs in their community.*
Organisational support and guidelines.	*3. Planning*	*Undertake a group project and communicate effectively with their peers.*
	Completion of community project as a group.	*Outline opportunities and supports available to young people in their community.*
	Presentation of work at showcase.	*Present their work to their peers and community representatives.*
	***Measurables** show the numbers: Details of the participants and frequency and duration of sessions.*	
	Example:	
	15 x 90 minute sessions with 12 young people (6 male and 6 female) aged 14-16 years.	

Completing a logic model for a programme is an excellent starting point for planning. The first step is to establish the situation or need behind the programme. Following this the logic model can be completed in any order. An ideal starting point is to begin with the outcomes. What should the programme achieve for the young people who take part? A programme may have restrictions due to the resources (inputs) available, or the target young people (outputs).

As a logic model is simply a framework, when used for planning it outlines all the details of the programme as expected at the time it is completed. It may need to be revised as the programme develops or if available resources change. Having all the necessary information together means that the impact of any changes can be seen across the logic model. For example, if the time available to run the programme is reduced, this may have an impact on the activities that it is possible to run, and therefore on the outcomes that it is possible to achieve.

> *Self-Reflection:*
>
> *Think of a programme that you have run or would like to run, and complete a logic model for the programme.*

Chapter 8: Evaluation

What is Evaluation?

Evaluation is the use of social research methods to systematically investigate the effectiveness of social intervention programmes or initiatives. (Rossi, Lipsey & Freeman, 2004). It usually involves looking at one or more of the following:

    The need for the programme or intervention.
    The design of the intervention or programme.
    The implementation and delivery of the programme or intervention.
    The impact or outcomes of the programme or intervention.
    Programme or intervention efficiency.

(Rossi et al., 2004)

Young people, youth workers, youth work organisations, and the organisations that fund youth work engage in and support youth work with the understanding that it will have a positive impact on young people and communities. Evaluation is therefore necessary to ensure that programmes, interventions, and youth work services are effective and are having the intended positive results. While it may be disheartening to discover that a programme is not having positive results, it is better to know this and to make changes to address any problems than to continue to run an ineffective intervention.

Evaluating work enables us to:

    Identify progress towards our aims.
    See if the methods we used are working.
    Highlight difficulties in our work and recommend changes to our practices.
    Encourage participation and feedback from all stakeholders involved in our work.
    Describe and have a written record of the work we have undertaken.
    Advocate for resources and account for funding received.
    Manage a project more effectively.

(Brady, Canavan & Landy, 2011)

Kirkpatrick's four levels of evaluation form a useful model for considering the effectiveness of a programme. The model was first published in 1959 and has been updated several times since then. (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006). The four levels can be seen below in figure 8.1.
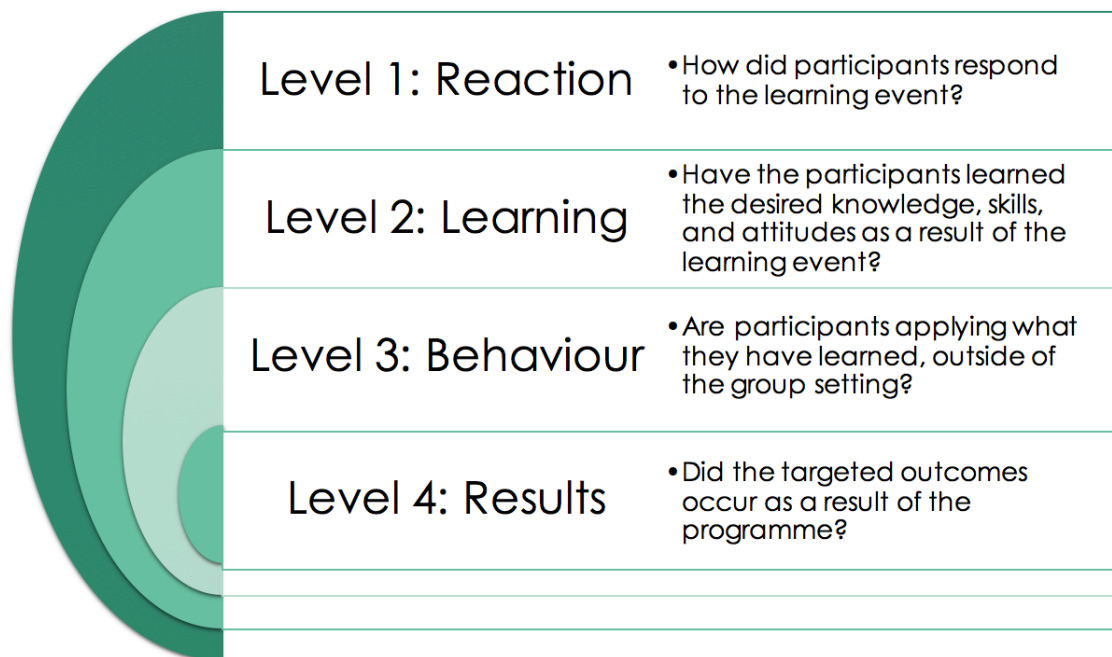
Figure 8.1 Kirkpatrick's Four Levels of Evaluation (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006)

Applied to youth work, **Level 1: Reaction** is about measuring how the young people responded to the learning activities. Did they enjoy it? Did they feel they learned from it? Will they come back? Measuring reaction both during and at the end of a programme helps to show what it working well and what could be improved on. Reactions can be measured by observation, interviews, focus groups or surveys - simply by asking the young people.

Level 2: Learning is about measuring the change in knowledge, skills, or attitude as a result of the intervention. If no learning has taken place, it is unlikely that the desired behaviour change or overall results from the programme will be achieved, so it's important to measure this. Learning can be measured by quizzes, discussions, and question and answer sessions. In a formal academic setting tests can be used, but for the non-formal environment of youth work, quizzes and discussions can be more appropriate.

Level 3: Behaviour relates to how the new knowledge, skills, or attitude are translated into actual behaviour. This can be harder to measure, and in a youth work setting may be based on self report from the young person in interviews or focus groups, or by observation.

Level 4: Results involves measuring how successfully the desired outcomes from the programme have been achieved. Some outcomes may have concrete indicators, such as the number of young people taking part in a community forum, while others may require more comprehensive evaluations to measure.

Self-Reflection:

What questions would you ask a group of young people to establish the success of a programme for each level of Kirkpatrick's model?

Reflective Practice

Reflective practice involves youth workers reflecting on their work, and learning from this reflection in order to improve their practice, leading to better outcomes. (Canavan, Cohen, Dolan & White, 2009)

Questions to consider throughout a programme:

How was this session?

Were the young people engaged and involved?

Do I fully listen to the ideas and concerns of the young people?

Do I enable the young people to come up with their own solutions?

How am I facilitating the young people to achieve their outcomes for themselves?

Is there anything I could do differently to improve the process or outcomes?

Can I access support to make improvements? From whom?

Does the programme need to change? How?

Self-Reflection:

Why do you think it is important for youth workers to engage in reflective practice?

Process Evaluation

Process evaluations measure the implementation of a programme. They look at how successfully a programme is running, if it is providing services at the quantity and quality required for it to achieve its desired impact, and if the target group of young people are being reached. (Rossi et al., 2004)

The first step in undertaking a process evaluation is to identify the important parts of the planned programme implementation. If a logic model was used in programme planning, this can help to inform the process evaluation, as a programme logic model clearly shows how a programme is planned to be run, the inputs needed, and the planned outputs.

Some example questions for use in a process evaluation of a programme include:

How many young people took part?

How many were from the target population? (This may include details such as age, gender, ethnicity etc.)

How often did the programme take place?

What learning activities took place?

Were organisational policies followed?

Continuous monitoring of a programme implementation can form part of the process evaluation. This allows for adaptations to be made to the programme if necessary, and for the youth worker running the programme to identify if a programme is running as it should be. (Rossi et al., 2004)

> *Example:*
> *Paul planned to run a creative writing group for 10 young people aged 14-16. He reserved a room in the library for Tuesday evenings from 5-6.30pm, put up posters in the library and visited the two local schools, and there was lots of interest in the group. The first week 12 young people attended, and Paul was very happy as this seemed successful. The second week 8 young people came to the group, and on the third week there were only 5 young people there.*
> *Paul didn't know why some of the young people had dropped out, so he contacted each young person individually. He discovered that one young person had changed their mind about the group, but the rest attended a school that had a theatre group with a performance the following month. The theatre teacher was running extra rehearsals on Tuesdays after school until 5.30pm. This meant that some of the original young people were now unable to attend. After speaking to the 5 young people who were still attending, and to the library about the room, Paul moved the creative writing group to Wednesdays. For the rest of the programme between 8 and 12 young people attended every week.*

Outcome Evaluation

Outcome evaluations measure the change that has taken place as a result of the intervention. As with the process evaluation, the use of a logic model for planning can help guide the outcome evaluation, as the desired outcomes would be clearly stated in the logic model. While a process evaluation can confirm that the expected number of young people completed a programme, an outcome evaluation will measure how many of those young people demonstrated a change in their knowledge, skills, or attitude as a result of the intervention.

One challenge of outcome evaluations is to demonstrate causality - that the changes are as a direct result of the intervention. Taking a baseline measure at the beginning of a programme, followed by the same measure at the end of the programme allows for changes throughout the programme to be established. The strongest form of experimental design for outcome evaluations is to use a random control trial. For this method, eligible participants are randomly assigned to a group who will take part in an intervention or to a group who will not. Results from both groups can then be compared, and changes seen in the young people receiving the intervention but not seen in the young people who did not can be ascribed to the intervention. (Brady et al., 2011.) This form of evaluation, while robust, is rarely practical for youth work given the time, expense, and ethical considerations involved.

A quasi-experimental design can be used where random allocation is not possible. Instead of randomly allocating participants to a group, a comparison group will be specifically selected to match the intervention participants as closely as possible. Theoretically, any differences in outcomes for the two groups should be attributable to the intervention. (Brady et al., 2011.) However, it can be very difficult to exactly match participants and their experiences over the length of the intervention, and again is rarely practical for small scale youth work evaluations.

Non-experimental methods are widely used for small scale evaluations, and are the most applicable to the youth work setting. These use a mixture of qualitative and quantitative data to provide a rich source of information about the impact of a programme, which can provide deeper understanding of any findings. (Brady et al., 2011.) For example, this could involve a combination of pre-group and post-group questionnaires, interviews with participants, stakeholder focus groups, and facilitator observations. This may be combined with findings from a process evaluation to give a complete picture of the successes and weaknesses of a programme.

Evaluation example:
Sara is a youth worker in a youth cafe. The young people on the youth committee that run the cafe tell her that they are worried about bullying in the cafe, and they would like Sara to run an anti-bullying programme.
Firstly, Sara worked with the young people on the committee to establish the desired outcomes from the programme. Then she developed a logic model for the programme the included the inputs needed, activities that would take place, and the desired outcomes.
She then designed a questionnaire for participants to complete at the beginning and end of the programme. This is the outcomes evaluation.
During the programme Sara kept a record of attendance so that she was able to monitor how many young people attended, and how many sessions were completed.

After each session Sara practiced reflective practice by thinking about how the session went, if there was anything she needed to follow up on, and if she needed to make any changes to the ongoing programme.

In the last session, Sara reviewed the process with the young people who took part in the programme. This is the process evaluation.

From the different strands of evaluation Sara was confident that the programme was effective, with a few changes to be made the next time she ran it. She was able to report the findings back to the youth committee, and also to the cafe funders.

Research Methods

Quantitative research emphasises the quantification of a phenomenon with precise measurements and variables. It is primarily concerned with numerical data and statistical analysis and uses methods such as surveys and questionnaires. Large sample sizes are generally needed, as this allows for findings to be extrapolated to the larger population. (Bryman, 2012. Brady et al., 2011.)

Qualitative research emphasises words rather than the collection and analysis of data and is more concerned with the meaning of experiences for different people. Smaller sample sizes can be appropriate for qualitative research, as the aim is not to extrapolate findings to the wider population. Qualitative research includes methods such as focus groups, interviews, and observation. (Bryman, 2012. Brady et al., 2011.)

Mixed methods evaluations use a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in a single study, which allows for the benefits of both approaches to be realised.

Surveys and questionnaires are a simple and cost effective method for asking participants a series of questions. Questions can require fixed responses, which provides data for analysis, or can be open ended to allow participants to use their own words and provide qualitative data. In a youth work setting, written questionnaires can be useful for quick pre-group and post-group assessments, and for establishing individual rather than group opinions, but attention must be given to the ability of participants to complete written questionnaires, in terms of literacy levels, attention span, and the necessity of holding participants' interest in the group and maintaining the non-formal environment.

Focus groups involve a group of people answering questions from a facilitator. Participants are free to talk and discuss answers among themselves. As many youth work activities involve group discussions, this can be a natural and unobtrusive method for evaluation.

Interviews involve one person asking questions of another. Questions may follow a specific structure with set responses, which allows for the data to be coded and analysed, or may take a qualitative approach, and be more open and flexible, allowing the interviewer to fully explore the interviewee's thoughts and experiences. (Bryman, 2012)

Participant observation involves the researcher taking part in the research setting in some way. This may involve structured observations, or unstructured note taking, audio or visual recordings, or photographs. (Brady et al., 2011.) Facilitator's observations can be useful in establishing if outcomes from a youth work programme have been achieved.

> *For example, if a desired outcome of a cookery programme was for participants to be able to follow simple instructions, a youth worker may observe that participants are unable to follow a 5-step recipe at the beginning of the programme, but at the end are able to accurately follow a more complicated 10-step recipe.*

Standardised measures are existing surveys that have been widely tested to ensure that they are valid and measure what they aim to. Standardised measures and assessment tools should only be used by individuals who are qualified to administer the measure and analyse the results. (Brady et al., 2011)

> *Self-Reflection:*
>
> *Think of a programme that you have run or would like to run with a group of young people. How would you measure the process?*
>
> *How would you measure the outcomes? What method or methods would you use? What questions would you ask?*

Ethics and Consent

Any research and evaluation undertaken in a youth work setting should consider values, ethics, and consent.

All participants should give consent for their inclusion in any evaluations, and where participants are minors, parents should also consent. This can be built in to initial consent and agreement to take part in a programme, but should be explicitly stated openly and honestly. Young people should not feel that they have to take part in any research in order to participate in the youth work activities.

Any research or evaluation should be guided by a respect for the rights of all participants in the process - for example, young people, youth workers and parents. Confidentiality should be respected at all times, but limitations placed on this for child protection purposes should be clearly established. Where possible participants should remain anonymous in any reports, and any data generated should be kept securely.

Evaluation and monitoring is a useful tool for youth workers to demonstrate a commitment to ongoing learning and improvement, and to providing the best possible service for young people. (Brady et al., 2011)

> *Self-Reflection:*
>
> *How can you ensure that any research and evaluation you undertake is ethical?*

Youth Worker Case Study: Linda, Ireland

How long have you been a youth worker?

I started volunteering in 2004 in a Homework Club with St Vincent de Paul in Inner City Dublin while I was at college. This confirmed for me that I wanted to become a youth worker when I graduated from my degree. I started working with Foróige in 2006, in a Community Youth Project in West Tallaght. In 2010, I moved into Youth Justice Work working with young people involved or at-risk of becoming involved in anti-social or criminal behaviour, where I still am today.

Why did you become a youth worker?

I was always interested in education, and initially had hoped to become a teacher. Throughout college though (and during my voluntary work) I decided that I would like to work in a more informal setting, like youth work. I had grown up participating in a youth group and appreciated the impact it had on me, and I like working with teenagers so it was a natural fit.

What was your first experience of youth work?

As a child, my first experience of youth work was the Scouts – participating in weekly Scout meetings was what I loved the most – being part of a group, making friends and having a social outlet; the hikes and camping were a bonus.

As a staff person, my first experience of youth work was summer programmes in Tallaght back in 2006. It was very overwhelming and terrifying; each day was so different from the day before but it was a great introduction to the role!

What has been your worst experience, and how did you overcome it?

The young people I work with can lead quite chaotic lives and have complex and challenging family circumstances. Because of this, we are sometimes faced with critical incidents and child protection concerns. Mental health and suicidal ideation is the biggest concern amongst the young people I work with. We're lucky because the young people seek our help and we can link them in with the right service, counselling and so on. It can be emotionally draining but it is all worth it when you see the young person begin to feel better again. Staff have the option of seeking support and supervision from outside agencies which can be really helpful.

What's been your best experience?

I can't pick one!

I love when ex-participants drop back into the project to say hello. One particular participant who was very at risk completed his Leaving Certificate last year and gained employment.

A group of 10-12 year olds won an award for their contribution to their community (Citizenship).

When our young people participate in the Leadership Programme and graduate from NUI Galway. Their parents come down, the young people dress up, and everyone is smiling and taking pictures. It is such a massive achievement and seeing the pride in the young people and their parents is amazing! This sense of achievement doesn't fade; young people who graduated five years ago still talk about it.

Because I work with smaller numbers of young people, I see all the tiny changes that they make, things that others might not notice; when they take turns, when you see them being fair to each other, when you start to see one young person take on additional responsibilities.

The community often see young people at their worst whereas I have the privilege of seeing them at their best

Can you describe a typical week in your job?

A typical week for me consists of group work, individual support with at risk young people, meetings with colleagues and other agencies about joint pieces of work, house calls to parents and administration e.g. report writing, session plans etc. Most weeks something will come up for a young person such as expulsion from school or family issues which we will have to manage.

I usually start the week with a meeting with my two colleagues to discuss our plans for the week. Then I spend some time preparing for groups and one-to-ones for the week ahead; session plans, materials, booking rooms or facilitators.

I have one or two groups every day; Leadership Programme, Youth Café, Impulse Control (via bike building), Tallaght Wide Soccer Tournament, Lunch Group, Active Youth Challenge (a sports programme), Gaisce Group (young people must complete 13 hours of physical activity, a skill and contribution to their community, ending with a 25k hike), Citizenship and REAL U (a sexual health programme).

I have a number of one-to-ones with young people who require additional support. I facilitate a cognitive behavioural programme with a number of young people which assists the young person to put into practice skills - such as problem-solving, consequential thinking and effective coping strategies - which they have learned in order to assist them in maintaining behaviour changes and prevent further engagement in anti-social behaviour. I meet two other participants individually to facilitate behaviour change and goal setting in relation to school as they are regularly suspended. I meet another young person to facilitate an anger management programme and another young person to assist them gaining their learner driving permit.

What do you think are the most important characteristics for a youth worker?

I think a belief in young people and in youth work is the most important thing. A lot of young people do not believe in themselves so it's about motivating them to reach their potential. Open-mindedness and a non-judgemental attitude are very important characteristics. Flexibility and adaptability are really important too. Interpersonal skills are essential; young people are very perceptive and you need to be likable and capable of building relationships with participants, their families and their friends easily. A youth worker also needs to be able to role model positive behaviour; with professionalism and strong boundaries.

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