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*Kilkenny and Carlow
Education and Training Board*



TOOLKIT



'I FEEL LIKE I AM HEARD'



A Youth Work Toolkit for Engaging
Young People not in Employment,
Education or Training



Carlow County
Development Partnership™



RESEARCHED AND WRITTEN BY CHLOE JOHNSTONE

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Introduction

Introduction

1.1 Toolkit purpose and background

Welcome to 'I Feel Like I'm Heard': A Youth Work Toolkit For Engaging Young People Not In Employment, Education Or Training'. This toolkit aims to help youth workers and other professionals to engage and support 'NEET' young people, and to help them achieve their goals in relation to work or education. The toolkit is based upon research undertaken by South East Technological University (SETU) in partnership with Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board (KCETB), Carlow County Development Partnership (CCDP), Kilkenny Leader Partnership (KLP) and Foróige.

The toolkit seeks to provide a comprehensive yet flexible guide for youth workers that is grounded upon a strong evidence base. To build this evidence base, the research team drew on international academic literature and on the expertise and experiences of youth workers and young people in Ireland. The latter was gathered by means of (i) a survey of youth workers across Ireland, and (ii) a case study of Foróige's Youth Skills Programme (YSP) which was funded by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth's Targeted Youth Employability Support Initiative (TYESI) scheme through KCETB between 2021 and 2022. An overview of this research is provided in section 2 below. The final research report sets out the research findings in more detail.

Because the experiences and perspectives of youth workers and young people played a key role in helping to build this toolkit, lots of quotations from them are included throughout the document. The research team hopes that this will help to bring each of the toolkit phases 'alive' and show the importance and impact of good youth work.


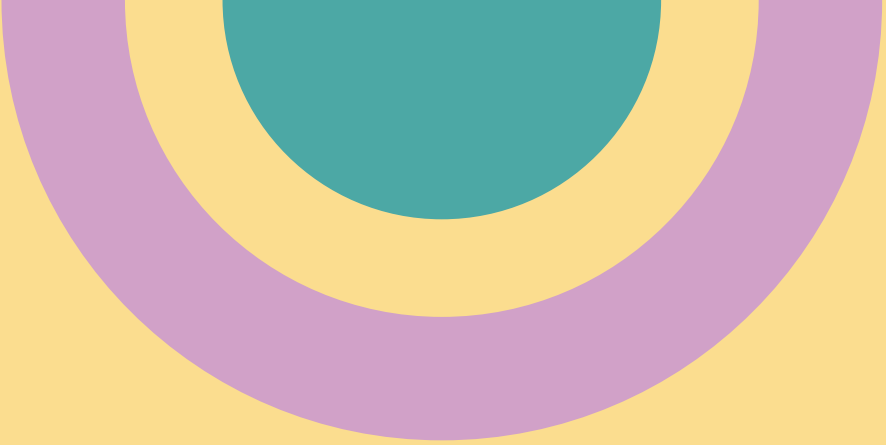
1.2 Layout of the toolkit and how to use it

There are two main parts to this toolkit. The first summarises key findings from research on 'NEET' young people (see section 2). In this, we explain who 'NEET' young people are, some of the issues faced by them, and what international evidence says about how best to engage with them.


The second part of the toolkit presents practical ways to implement what we have learned in the research. Section 3 outlines the principles underpinning the toolkit and the youth worker qualities that are valued by 'NEET' young people, while section 4 sets out a framework for engaging effectively with young people who face difficulties in engaging in work or education.

The framework is built around 6 phases, each of which contains strategies and tips for youth workers. At the end of each phase, there is a space for your own reflections on what you have read and how it might link to your own practice and professional development. The framework offers a relatively structured approach to working with young people and you are invited to familiarise yourself with each phase and approach the process fairly systematically. However, one of the key messages of the research upon which the toolkit is based is that 'NEET' young people are often emotionally or psychologically vulnerable and require highly sensitive, individualised responses from youth workers. Therefore, the process may not be wholly linear and each phase of the framework should be approached flexibly with no particular time limit placed on its implementation.

Further practical resources are provided in section 5. These focus particularly on matters like mental health and autism, as these are issues that are important when working with 'NEET' young people. If you would like more in-depth academic readings, these are listed in section 6.



**Working with 'NEET'
young people: evidence
from research**



Working with 'NEET' young people: evidence from research

This section provides a brief overview of some of the key messages from international academic literature and from data collected with young people and youth workers in Ireland in 2022.

2.1 Who are 'NEET' young people?

Generally speaking, the phrase 'NEET' is used to refer to young people between the ages of 15 and 24 who are not engaged in employment, education or training, though sometimes it is extended to people up to the age of 29 (Eurofound, 2016; Gardner et al, 2017). This category encompasses young people with a diverse range of experiences and backgrounds. For example, it can include those who have disengaged from paid work in order to volunteer. However, in social policy and in youth work, the term is often used to describe young people who are especially vulnerable to social exclusion, and who carry multiple forms of disadvantage including poverty, a low level of education, family difficulties and psychosocial challenges (Eurofound, 2016). Mascherini and Ledermaier (Eurofound, 2016) have categorised 'NEET' young people as follows:

- Re-entrants (i.e. those who will soon rejoin education or the labour market)
- Short-term unemployed
- Long-term unemployed
- Unavailable due to illness or disability
- Unavailable due to family responsibilities
- Discouraged workers (i.e. those who do not seek work because they believe no work is available)
- Other (those who do not fit into any of the above categories)

While such typologies are very helpful for guiding policy, some writers dislike the 'NEET' category on the basis that it stigmatises young people and their families and defines young people by what they are not (Williamson, 2010; Maguire, 2015; Boland and Griffin, 2023). This critique is very relevant to youth work which generally tries to adopt a strengths-based approach. In this toolkit we have tried to reflect this strengths-based ethos.

Concerns regarding 'NEET' young people have come to occupy a central place in social policy across Europe since the 1990s. The most important EU policy instrument relating to NEET young people is the Youth Guarantee (2013) which aims to ensure that all young people receive an offer of employment, further education, apprenticeship or traineeship within four months of becoming unemployed (Eurofound, 2016). This commitment is supported by funding from the European Social Fund's (ESF) Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (2014-2020) which funded the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI), a scheme specifically for 'NEET' young people.

In Ireland, the definition of 'NEET' is relatively inclusive, particularly in the context of eligibility for participation in the YEI, in which participants were permitted to have some earned income (Gardner et al, 2017). Other policies relevant to 'NEET' young people in Ireland over the last decade have been the Action Plan for Jobs, first developed in 2012, the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan for Ireland (2013) and the Youth Employment Support Scheme, launched in 2018. 'NEET' young people have also been named as a priority in Young Ireland: the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2023-2028, while the Youth Justice Strategy, 2021-2027 also aims to support young people to develop skills to help them engage in education, training or employment. Other strategies not specifically focused on 'NEET' young people, such as the National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision Making, 2015-2020 (currently being updated), are of course also relevant to any intervention with 'NEET' young people.

2.2 What challenges do 'NEET' young people experience?

It has been consistently shown across the literature that 'NEET' young people face a range of psychosocial challenges that derive from experiences in the 'microsystem' of their personal, familial and community relationships as well as from the effects of the broader institutional policy context (Lorinc et al, 2020). Among the challenges that are most relevant to

youth work interventions are those relating to mental health, social isolation and poor life skills. Research has shown that 'NEET' young people are at significant risk of mental health problems, often experiencing isolation, depression or anxiety, in addition to being at increased risk of substance abuse (Goldman-Mellor et al, 2016; Robertson, 2018; Barry et al, 2019). Such studies suggest that NEET young people do strive to find employment or participate in further education, but ongoing challenges they face significantly impact their mental health, and hence their capacity to engage.

Findings from our case study of Foróige's YSP indicate that participants came to the programme with experience of the following challenges:

- mental illness and difficulties in accessing mental health supports
- an extended period of disengagement from education or employment
- homelessness
- social isolation
- lack of motivation
- poor knowledge of support services
- difficulties accessing support services due to living in a remote location
- difficulties with emotional regulation
- poor literacy skills
- substance misuse
- lack of social networks and supports
- child protection and welfare concerns

Notably, results from our 2022 survey with youth workers in Ireland indicate that there are 'NEET' young people in communities without adequate services to support them. It also found that such young people may struggle to participate in general youth work programmes, unless such programmes are adapted for them. Finally the survey also found some evidence that young people under the age of 16 (i.e. below the age threshold typically used to define 'NEET' young people) have disengaged from school and that their needs are being inadequately addressed.

2.3 What approaches work best for working with 'NEET' young people?

Both Irish and international evidence suggests that effective youth work with NEET young people, especially with those who have significant psychosocial difficulties, should avoid short-term, prescriptive or compulsory programmes, and favour instead relationally focused interventions that go beyond 'just' training and professional development (e.g. Williamson, 2010; Miller et al, 2015; Beck, 2015; Goldman-Mellor et al, 2016; de Almeida et al, 2020). In particular, working with these young people requires:

- an unhurried, relationally skilled, and emotionally supportive approach
- principles of respect, dialogue, and transparency
- clear, co-created goals
- youth workers who 'go the extra mile' to address barriers like lack of access to transport, low motivation and other personal and family issues which routinely arise
- challenging the stigma around NEET young people.
- collaborative, inter-agency work
- personalised promotion and recruitment strategies

In section 4 of this toolkit, we draw on these insights to present a framework through which youth workers can support young people in this cohort to realise their potential and achieve their goals with respect to work and education.

OVER TO YOU!




REFLECTION

Are you aware of young people in your area who have disengaged from education or work?

Do you feel that your current programmes would be able to cater for their needs? If not, what sorts of changes might you need to make?

What are the barriers that young people in your area experience, preventing them from engaging with education, training and employment?

Do you feel your organisation can establish a dedicated programme for young people who have difficulties engaging with work or education? If so, what information, support or resources would you need?



Working with 'NEET' young people: principles, qualities and skills

3. Working with 'NEET' young people: principles, qualities and skills

3.1 Youth work principles

The framework that we outline in section 4 of this toolkit is consistent with the definition of youth work provided in the Youth Work Act (2010), which states that youth work is a 'planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young persons through their voluntary participation.' It is also consistent with the outcomes set out in Young Ireland: the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2023-2028 (DCEDIY, 2023), which include 'achieving in learning and development', 'economic security and opportunity', and 'connected, respected and contributing to their world'. In addition, the framework is underpinned by key youth work principles, which are relevant to all of its phases. The importance of these principles was confirmed by the research upon which the toolkit is based and they are consistent with the ethical commitments of youth organisations in Ireland and beyond (e.g. NYCI, n.d.; NSETS, 2016).

These principles are:

- build supportive, respectful, empathetic relationships with young people
- be young-person centred
- prioritise young people's participation and work in partnership with them
- maintain voluntary participation
- engage in experiential learning led by young people's interests
- meet young people where they are at
- be friendly, accessible and responsive while always acting with integrity

Best memory of being in this programme will probably be the trips afterwards. Just like having the time of your life, like with young people my age, and like everyone that works there (young person).

Yes, I feel like I have a say. It's not that big, it's just me and the youth worker ... So I do, I feel like I am heard. From experience, years of experience, I can tell you ... there's great difficulty in trying to be heard (young person).

3.2 Youth worker qualities

Youth workers' skills and qualities are core to the relational approach advocated in this toolkit. Young people who took part in our research said that they highly valued the following skills and qualities:

1

APPROACHABILITY

Be approachable and create an inviting atmosphere where young people feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and concerns.

2

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Demonstrate strong communication skills by actively listening, asking open-ended questions, and being responsive to the young person's needs.

3

RELIABILITY

Young people expect youth workers to be reliable, to keep their commitments and to follow through on their promises.

4

RELATABILITY

Establish connections by showing that you understand the young person's experiences and can relate to their perspective.

5

NON-JUDGMENTAL ATTITUDE

Avoid making judgments or assumptions about the young person's situation. Create a non-judgmental environment where they can express themselves freely.

6

IN-DEPTH KNOWLEDGE

Possess a solid understanding of the programme and of other services available to provide accurate information to the young person.

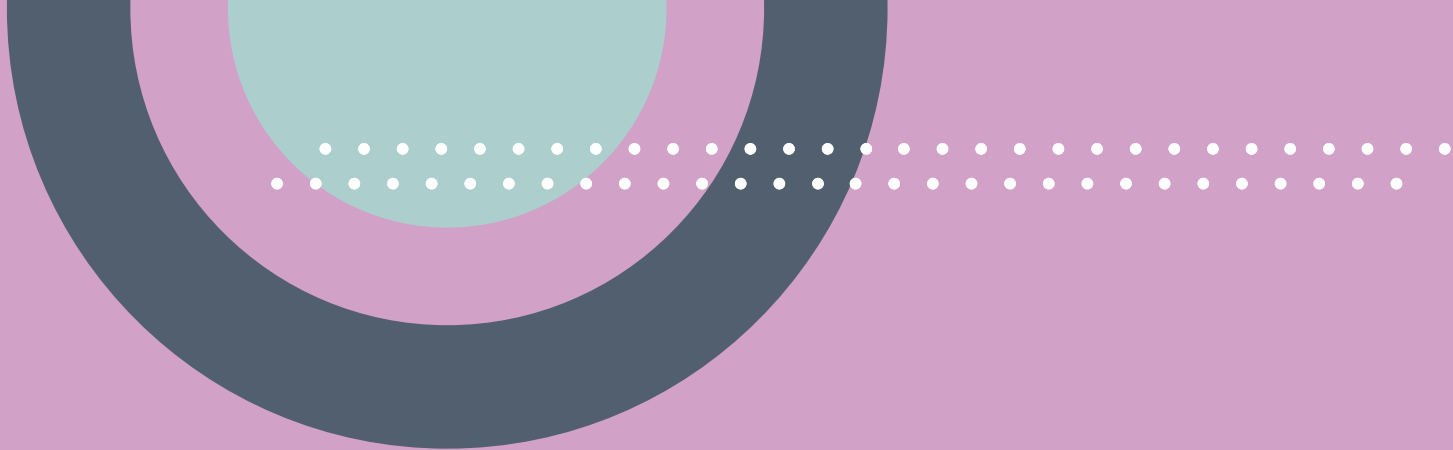
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EMPATHETIC

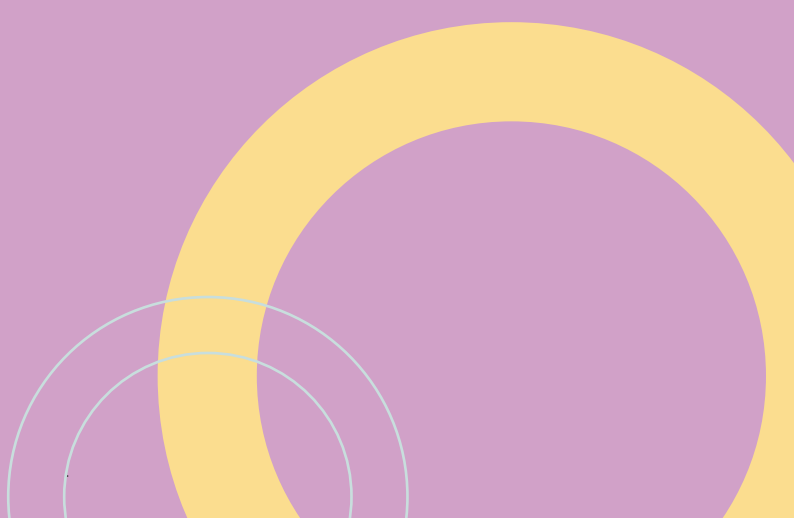

Demonstrate empathy by genuinely trying to understand the young person's emotions, challenges, and perspective.

I'd say the biggest thing is probably faith within [the youth worker] because if I trust with [the youth worker], I can trust what he's doing, and I trust what I'm doing because I'm doing what [the youth worker] [is] doing (young person).

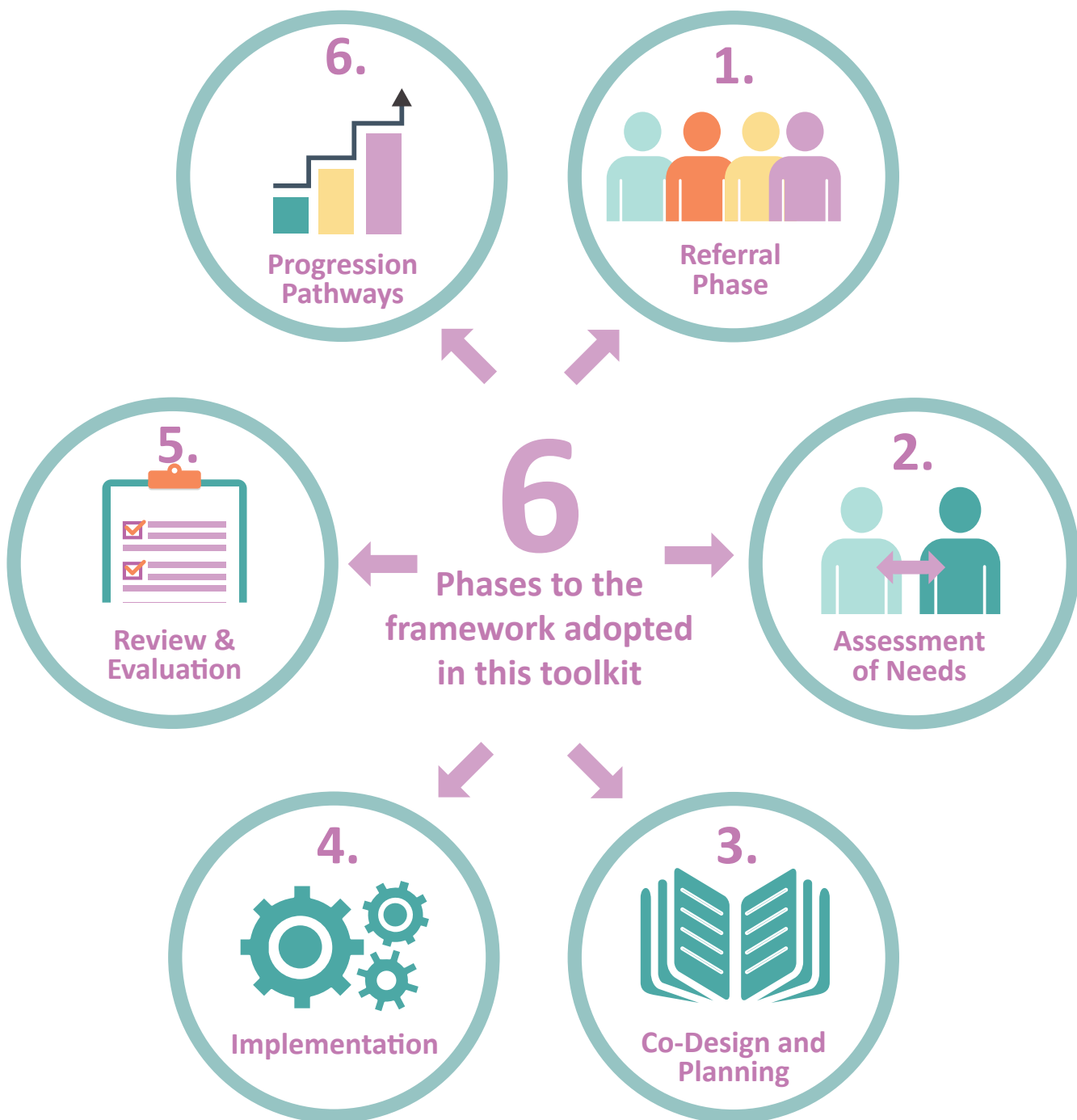
Consistent support and motivation given by youth worker. Showing that the youth worker cares (young person).



Engaging and supporting 'NEET' young people: a framework for practice



3. Engaging and supporting 'NEET' young people: a framework for practice



4.1 Phase 1: Referral

The referral phase highlights the need for clear pathways for young people to access the programme. This phase provides the foundation for effective engagement because it's about establishing a connection with the young person that is meaningful to them.

In thinking about recruiting people to your programme, remember that young people may be isolated and unaware of youth work opportunities. They may have had negative experiences of education prior to this. They may have migrated from another country or they may live in a geographically remote area.

Young people hear about programmes in lots of different ways. Some young people or their parents hear about it by word of mouth and contact the youth organisation directly. Others are referred by other youth work services or by agencies such as adult or children mental health services, Tusla's social work team, Tusla's Prevention Partnership and Family Support Service or Tusla's Education Support Service. This all means that it's important to have a systematic approach to promoting your programme and to helping young people to access it. Here are some possible strategies:

4.1.1 'Map' where young people who are having difficulties in engaging with work or education may be in your community.

4.1.2 Establish strong working relationships with community, voluntary and statutory organisations in your area, and promote your programme to them.

4.1.3 Connect with parents or guardians so that they are also partners in the process.

4.1.4 Develop personalised approaches to recruitment that will appeal to young people in all their diversity. Here are some promotion techniques that were suggested by participants in our research:

- get previous participants on the programme to share their experiences with prospective participants
- distribute leaflets and brochures (including materials in various languages)
- participate in information stands at job fairs, cultural events, or sports festivals
- post on youth-friendly websites, media, and online information campaigns
- use YouTube for vlogging or crafting narratives.
- develop live presentations on platforms, such as Instagram and TikTok

Most people they think, 'oh, I don't want to do that ...'. And I'm like, 'you're going to want to do it in two years' time'. I definitely feel like I'm progressing a lot faster. So I think it'd be a lot easier for me to advertise it [than someone else] ... [and] like say, 'oh, there's this thing you'd like ... cause you're like me' ... So we'd have shared similar experiences (young person)

I wrote in Facebook,... and I asked for opportunities and ... I met [the youth worker], and they told me about this programme (young person)

OVER TO YOU!

REFLECTION ON PHASE 1

What agencies in your area might be able to identify young people not in education training or employment?

How will you communicate the benefits of involvement in the programme to young people/parents or guardians?

What steps can you or your organisation take to establish a connection with young people who struggle to engage with work or education?

Do you feel the strategies suggested by the young people in our research would work in your context?

Do you feel you know all the relevant agencies who might be able to help you contact young people for your programme? How might you establish links with them?

What will the referral process look like? Do we have an existing referral form or should you create one specifically for this programme? If you are creating a new referral form, what information should it collect?

4.2 Phase 2: Assessment of needs

During phase 1, you will have begun the process of connecting with the young person and building their trust. Once the young person has indicated that they wish to do the programme and have given their consent, we move to phase 2. Phase 2 continues the process of developing the relationship and focuses on learning more about their strengths and needs. Here are the most important elements to consider during this phase.

4.2.1 Build the relationship

- Invest time in getting to know the young person and their interests
- Actively listen
- Young people value a comfortable, relaxed environment
- Maintain open communication with the young person throughout the needs assessment phase

4.2.2 Be open and transparent

- Help young people to understand the broad structure of the programme
- Explain the purpose and benefits of the needs assessment process
- Be transparent about the process (e.g. what assessment methods you will use) so that there are no surprises for the young person. This is a good principle of youth work but it is especially important for young people who may experience anxiety or other difficulties

4.2.3 Go at the young person's own pace

- Some young people may engage quickly, others will need time to get used to you
- Young people may need time before they are ready to tell you about their needs or to respond to standardised needs assessment instruments
- Getting to know young people's particular needs and challenges may take weeks or more

4.2.4 Tailor your approach to suit the needs of each young person

- Remember that each young person is unique; a one-size-fits-all approach to needs assessment won't work
- If you wish to use standardised screening methods, make sure to select assessment tools that are appropriate to the young person's circumstances. Conversations with the young person, their parents or other services might help to determine which assessment tools might be most appropriate

I think it's about impression. I think people have the wrong impression on what a youth worker actually is. I had the wrong impression on what a youth worker was. I think [the Foróige youth worker] has to think the way I think to understand where I'm coming from ... especially for me, when I came in, I didn't know what I was coming into, but I guess it ... was very clear what the story was after just the first meeting with [the Foróige youth worker] what the plan was about.

for capturing particular needs and may help you in knowing whether to refer the young person to other services

- Among the tools available are the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) and the PERMA model for measuring well-being

4.2.5 Use standardised assessment tools appropriately

- Ground assessment tools in supportive, empathetic conversations with young people that gently probe more deeply into what they are saying
- Remember that while tools like the SDQ and the RSE are psychometrically validated screening tools, they are not diagnostic tools. Their use is mainly to support discussion and reflection as well as providing some basis for capturing participants' progress

4.2.6 Be aware of mental health

- Mental health issues are common among young people in the 'NEET' category
- Be vigilant for signs and symptoms of mental health issues
- Promptly refer the young person to the appropriate services, if specialised support is needed
- Be aware of your programme's limits. If you cannot support the young person safely, refer them to someone who can

All of the issues addressed by these programmes support young people to engage more effectively in educational opportunities. For example, if a young person is experiencing difficulty in relation to a substance misuse issue this issue needs to be addressed first so that the young person is in a space where they can actively engage in education, training or employment (youth worker)

OVER TO YOU!

REFLECTION ON PHASE 2

What qualities and skills do you bring to youth work that would work well in building a relationship with young people?

How do you communicate the assessment process to young people and their parents/guardians?

How do you ensure that you get informed consent for carrying out assessments?

What sorts of approaches do you use for assessing young people's needs? Do you feel they would work with 'NEET' young people? What else might you do?

Where might you find resources to help you?

How well equipped do you feel to work with young people who have mental health difficulties?

What are the limits of your role with respect to mental health support?

4.3 Phase 3: Co-design and planning

This phase involves working closely alongside individual participants to identify their interests, set clear achievable goals and examine potential progression routes, taking into account the needs and strengths identified in the assessment phase. Here are some of the main things to bear in mind during this phase:

4.3.1 Foster participation, ownership and commitment: ensure that the young person is a full and equal partner in the development of their goals. Get their opinions, preferences and ideas about how best to build the programme.

4.3.2 Identify any barriers to the young person's engagement in the programme and how you will overcome them.

4.3.3 Recognise and build on the young person's individual strengths, creative talents and resilience.

4.3.4 Adopt a flexible schedule that supports the young person's needs.

4.3.5 Set specific, achievable goals in line with the young person's interests and aspirations.

4.3.6 Explore whatever tools work best for mapping the young person's plan, e.g. logic models.

4.3.7 Regularly review and, if necessary, adjust goals as the young person grows and evolves.

4.3.8 Design activities and interventions that align with the young person's interests and passions, fostering engagement and motivation.

4.3.9 Identify possible progression routes that align with the young person's interests and passions.

4.3.10 Set timeframes that are aligned with the young person's needs.

It is through intensive one to one support adopting a youth work approach and working with each young person to co-develop a case plan that is bespoke and focussed on their unique outcomes and needs that real change was made in creating improvements for the young person (youth worker).

They show me what my options are and if I don't feel comfortable in what they're telling me!

Before it was always ... someone's telling you what to learn instead of you choosing what you want to learn anyway, because it's always easier to learn what you want (young person)

I think you get more stressed when there's a time limit. Then I think you'd feel more comfortable and more able to breathe if you were told, oh, you know, take as you know, not as long as you want, but you have, there's no like rush on things. And there's no stress. So you can, you know, breathe, but you know, you can do this programme at the same time (young person).

OVER TO YOU!

REFLECTION ON PHASE 3

What communication strategies might you use to help young people set their goals?

What evidence-based responses exist to meet some of the needs identified?

What other services or agencies can provide support in achieving outcomes for the young person?

What skills and qualities do you feel you would bring to this phase?

What needs were identified in the assessment process?

What further training or mentorship might you require?

How might you address these needs?

4.4 Phase 4: Implementation

In phase 4, we dive into the practical implementation of the young person's plan. This phase is all about action, consistently adapting activities to fit the young person's current needs and interests. As always, good communication is key here. Be prepared to use active listening, motivational interviewing and other ways of encouraging and connecting with the young person. Here are some strategies and things to bear in mind during this phase:

4.4.1 Explore and facilitate activities tailored to the young person's goals and particular interests

There is no limit to the sorts of things that could happen here, but some examples include:

- Individual and/or small group programmes to build personal skills and competencies such as resilience, confidence and self-efficacy, emotional regulation, communication, leadership, problem solving and decision-making, and to equip them with the tools to identify the next steps into education, training and employment
- Employability skills programmes that are needed, such as Driver Theory, CV preparation/application form support, interview techniques, responsible online presence, entrepreneurship and leadership
- Support to identify and access training courses and opportunities available to them
- Referral and support to engage with other agencies to address additional needs such as mental health, substance misuse, learning difficulties, cultural issues etc.
- Provision of training courses in partnership with services such as the ETB, SOLAS or local area partnerships suitable to meet the needs of the young people
- Course taster sessions such as barista skills, barbering, eyelashes and nail techniques, music production, animation, and digital technology
- Work taster sessions with local employers
- Provision of volunteering opportunities (age 18+) to build skills, gain valuable experience and improve CV

So one of my guitar lessons, this just involves me and the guitar teacher. So for the first time, we were doing rhythm practice, right?...It wasn't like anything, you know, extreme, [it] wasn't like on the drums. It was just like a fun, boom-boom kind of thing. I was doing the same on the guitar just like dun-dun , and it was just that experience of getting to play with someone, I never got to do it. It's just a connection through like the music and how it worked ... I genuinely just came out of it and ... I guess it was like, 'wow, is that what it is [to] feel like to be satisfied with and like really happy about what you've just done?' (young person)

You know, I feel genuinely supported ... Just with the guitar every week ... I feel genuinely motivated and pushed to do it because I feel every week, every week [the youth worker] asks 'how is the guitar going?' Every week is the same. It's hard, but, you know you got to keep doing it. But it's the fact that he asks, that's why I feel like the support's there. It's extremely helpful to someone like me just hearing that. I don't feel like I exist, or feel like someone cares about me. Yeah... So it's nice.

4.4.2 Maintain consistent and proactive communication

- Reach out to the young person regularly, through phone calls or text messages
- Tailor the schedule to the young person's needs and offer gentle reminders of upcoming meetings

4.2.3 Respond and adapt to challenges that arise

- Remember that young people will encounter regular challenges such as lapses in motivation, anxiety etc. Support young people to stay motivated through reminder phone calls if necessary, encouraging chats etc.
- If transport is a barrier, explore solutions such as providing lifts or offering online alternatives
- There may be times where supporting the young person's family may be required in order to sustain the young person's participation and promote their wellbeing

4.2.4 Celebrate achievements

- Sustain motivation and encourage young people by actively celebrating milestones and achievements

I love every single Tuesday. I love when we have our lash course. It's, it's like my favourite, like I book off my calendar for it, like it's my favourite day of the week because I just love sitting down. It's like ... just so relaxing, like, it's so therapeutic, just sitting there doing it while I, like, I can't concentrate on things, but while I'm there, I will sit there, and I'll finish all the lashes. Like, I, I never do that, like ever. And I love it. Um, Other than the ... headsets, the VR. I think that's really cool. Like I really enjoyed that (young person).

They'll do [it] the way a young person wants them to do it., I actually, I love coming here. Like everyone's just so nice to me and I love it (young person).

OVER TO YOU!

REFLECTION ON PHASE 4

What resources does your organisation have for facilitating young people's learning and development?

What are the barriers to young people's engagement with the programme?
How can one be overcome these?

What skills or strategies would you use to help a young person stay motivated?

4.5 Phase 5: Evaluation

Phase 5 involves regularly assessing the effectiveness and impact of your engagement with the young person. The key focus is on looking back at the latest assessment of needs and goals and identifying what is working and what needs improvement. This phase overlaps with the implementation phase previously outlined. Regularly reviewing progress gives the young person the opportunity to acknowledge positive changes in themselves, fostering a sense of ownership and commitment to their journey. Here are some strategies and tips for this phase:

4.5.1 Review the young person's progress regularly

4.5.2 Adjust programme goals or activities in response to changes in the young person or their circumstances

4.5.3 If appropriate, link in with parents or guardians for participants under 18

4.5.4 When they are ready, help the young person to stretch beyond their comfort zone, e.g. gradually moving from small groups to larger group interactions

4.5.5 encourage young people to reflect on themselves and their progress

I think it helps as well because [the youth worker] kind of sets out a six month plan where they'll kind of say, 'oh, we have six months to achieve what you want to achieve'. So they're like, 'you know, like what would be your most thing that you want to look back on and say, oh, I'm glad I did that, you know, six months ago?', and I think, I think that's a good way I'm looking at it, because then you can see yourself and what you're building up [what goals you have reached] (young person).

I feel like I achieved being in groups like, I feel better in going into groups. Like if I was doing another programme with groups, I'm not as bad as I used to be when I was first started trying to get back into groups (young person)

Definitely confidence. Yeah, I think communication massively as well. Um, and it just kind of like, I think learning about myself more, and what I'm good at and what I'm not good at, and kind of the personality that I have as well. It just, I think it's just a massive learning curve for yourself in, in the programme. I think it, I think it does teach you a lot about yourself (young person).

OVER TO YOU!

REFLECTION ON PHASE 5

How do you know if the intervention is working?

Are participants making progress towards their outcomes?

Do you feel you would be able to recognise when a young person can be 'pushed' a little further and when you need to 'hold off'?
Explain

What opportunities are you giving young people to feedback on their experience and influence the direction of their intervention?

Are participants engaging well?

4.6 Phase 6: Progression pathways

This phase comes near the end of the young person's journey with the programme and involves helping them to transition to another education programme or to employment. It is linked to the goals set out in the planning phase and is informed by reflections from the evaluation phase. Here are some strategies and tips for effectively managing this phase:

4.6.1 Time discussions about progression routes carefully

- Building on the holistic evaluation carried out in phase 5, and in dialogue with the young person, decide whether the young person is ready to transition

4.6.2 Identify progression routes

- Make sure progression routes are aligned with the young person's interests, needs and agreed goals
- Ensure your organisation has good links with the local Education and Training Board's (ETB) Adult Education Guidance Service which is a good first port of call for advice on Further and Higher education and training opportunities at all levels
- Build awareness of the range of supported provision available to your people through the ETB
- Make links with local services such as Youthreach, Community Training Centres, Local Training Initiatives, and the National Learning Network
- Build awareness of vocational specific training such as Apprenticeships and Traineeships available
- Make use of FET databases such as fetchcourses. ie to identify training opportunities available in the locality
- Identify funding opportunities available to support progression into education
- Establish links with potential local employers for those young people who are ready to progress

4.6.3 Plan well for the young person's transition from the programme


- Recognise that the disengagement process is typically gradual and young people may step back from the programme over a period of 6 months or more as they transition to a new education or work context
- Implement a carefully planned series of check-ins over 4-6 months post-programme

I feel a lot more like confident about stuff. Because like, you know what, everything's not just one dimensional. Like it kind of used to be. There is so many other options that are just there, you kind of search for to find them. And you know, because of the Youth Skills [Programme], I feel like I'm better now in like social areas. Like in a group or leaving, and talking to someone, I feel like a lot more confident, and I feel like I'm way better at talking than I used to be (young person).

Before I came here, so. I didn't, I didn't know my options. I didn't know anything I could do, any way I could go. And when I came it was kind of just like a, I wasn't able for adulthood yet. So [the youth worker] helped me be able, like he got me ready for all that stuff and just prepared me really (young person).

OVER TO YOU!

REFLECTION ON PHASE 6



What would you do if a young person with whom you had been working experienced a 'wobble' post-programme? How might you respond to their uncertainty or worry about their new education or work experience?

How would you manage the process of stepping back to allow a young person to progress without them feeling abandoned or let down?

How do you ensure that the young person knows they can come back to you if things don't work out?

5. Useful Resources

For more resources on 'NEET' young people, see the [VET Toolkit for empowering NEETS](https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/neets/intervention-approaches) <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/neets/intervention-approaches>

For support in addressing young people's mental health and wellbeing needs, see [NYCI National Youth Health Programme](https://www.youth.ie/programmes/youth-health/). <https://www.youth.ie/programmes/youth-health/>

Guidance on working with young people with autism, is available in this [toolkit](#) for autism inclusive youth work.

Training on motivational interviewing is provided by [MI Ireland](https://wakelet.com/@YouthBorders). <https://wakelet.com/@YouthBorders>

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