CONNECT COLLABORATE EMPOWER

CONNECTED MINDS
EMPOWERING YOUTH PROJECT

Youth Well-being programme



TRAIN THE TRAINER MANUAL

Written and designed by **Miss Ugne Girciute**

The ResurgamTrust
Connecting Individuals Transforming Communities

SBNI
Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland

COMMUNITY FUND

I'd like to acknowledge and give thanks to all the people and young people that have made this training manual possible. The time and effort that has been poured into this project is invaluable.

Early Intervention Lisburn team - Mabel Scullion, Connor Crawford and Brooke Moorehead

Young people and staff of St. Patrick's Academy Lisburn

Young people and staff of Lisnagarvey High School

Young people of the Connected Minds Youth Committee

Staff and volunteers at The Resurgam Trust

The National Lottery Community Fund

Safeguarding Board Northern Ireland

Barnardos NI

contents

introduction
page 5

Model of Delivery
page 7

Implementation: Making a Plan Work
page 12

Programme Structure
page 15

Course Duration
page 16

Programme Delivery
page 19

Mental Health & Well-being
page 20

Dealing with Anxiety
page 30

Staying Motivated
page 42

Self Care
page 53

Dealing with Bullying page 63

Dealing with Loneliness page 74

Youth Voice & Participation page 90

Community Engagement - Volunteering Session page 99

Get Creative - Make Your Own Session page 105

Gameboard page 107

Support Services page 110

Glossary page 111

Bibliography page 114

Introduction



The Empowering Youth - youth well-being programme is a peer-led mental health and well-being programme which aims to reach out to young people and increase overall awareness on mental health and local support services in Northern Ireland.

The programme aims/objectives:

- Identify emotional health and well-being issues that matter to young people
- Increase the groups understanding of emotional health and well-being
- Increase groups awareness of where and when to seek help and support
- Giving young people the opportunity to lead on early support for mental health
- To empower young people with the knowledge, skills and confidence, to recognise mental health challenges early

Vision

To empower young leaders on mental health awareness and give them the chance to use what they have learnt to empower others.

Introduction

Why is this work important?

In Northern Ireland (NI) in 2021 the numbers of young people struggling with mental health is continuing to increase with 76% of young people in NI reporting experiencing mental health problems describing examples of anxiety and depression. (SSUNI) The impact that Covid-19 has had on young people, including other societal changes like the cost-of-living crisis, global insecurity and political stalemate has without a doubt made this a difficult time to grow up in for all children and young people. On top of this, longitudinal studies show young people are likely to feel a decline in happiness due to their experiences in school, pressures of body image and appearance, and not feeling listened to. Although we have come a long way with speaking out about mental health the stigma is still there, and an intervention is needed. In most post-primary schools, there are counsellors available for students to talk to, but the waiting times have become longer over the years with students reporting many accessibility issues.



76%

of young people in NI reporting experiencing mental health problems describing examples of anxiety and depression.



89%

of young people had said mental health related education should be added to the curriculum

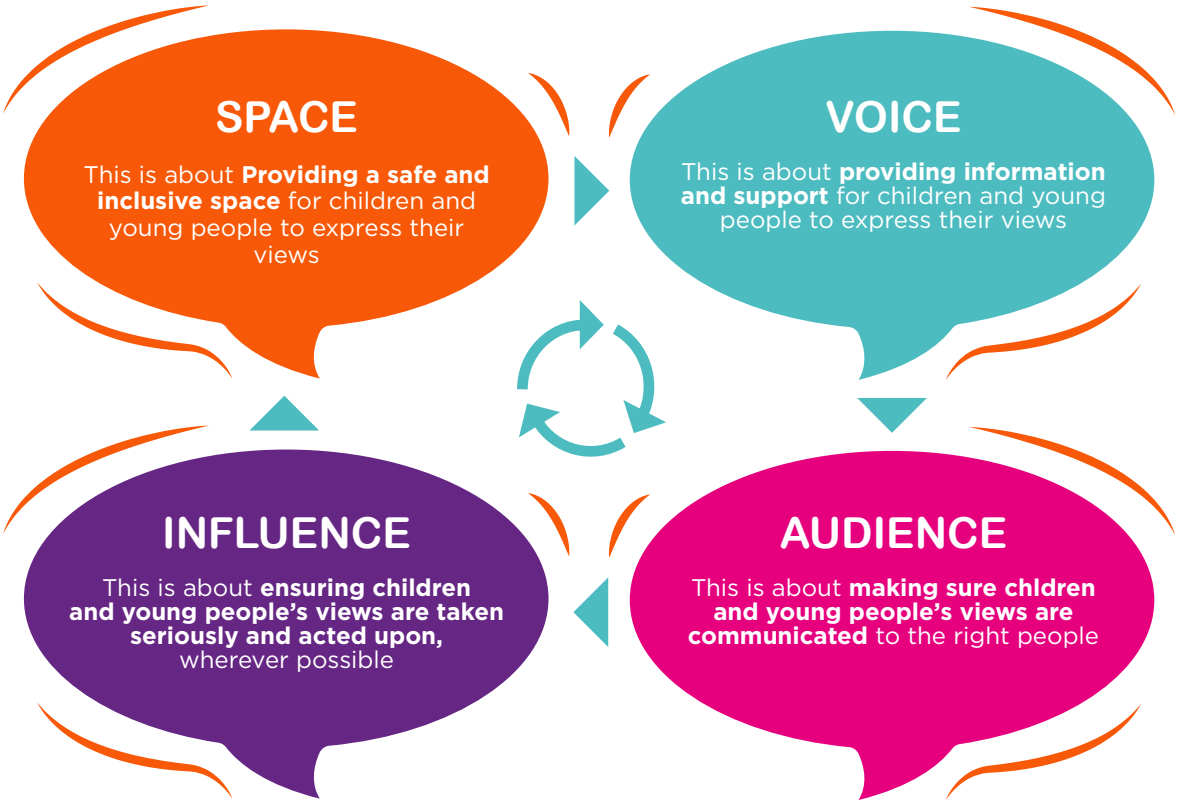
Whilst there is a dedicated curriculum period for physical education in post primary currently there isn't one specifically for emotional health and wellbeing giving the authority to the schools to decide. In the Mental Health Matters report, 89% of young people had said mental health related education should be added to the curriculum. This programme is a way to fill that gap which is missing and to give students the opportunity to be informed about their well-being. In no way is this programme a fix-it-all solution. It does not replace professional support, and it is not a diagnosis tool, but it is a way to spread awareness on mental health and give young people an opportunity to lead and empower others in their class or in their community. This programme targets post primary students but any person completing this training with confidence can deliver it to any youth group or even establish their own mental health committee within their school using the programme to support them in leading it.

SSUNI link:
SSUNI (2020) Mental Health Matters: Secondary school mental health reform in NI a report on Mental health and education in the COVID Pandemic [online] Available at:
https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5f242309f8a3f0421545e958/t/657b804dab28e237a42e687c/1702592592139/SSUNI+Mental+Health+Report.pdf

Barnardos:
Barnardos (2024) Changing Childhoods, Changing Lives Report.
https://www.barnardos.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-03/Changing%20Childhoods%20Changing%20Lives%20report.pdf

Model of delivery

Youth Participation



Young person is at the centre of this project – ref. Prof. Laura Lundy (2007) - Lundy's Child Participation Model

Space

Creating a safe and inclusive space is very important. However, sometimes you might be limited to a certain location like a classroom or a youth centre and that is okay. Giving a space doesn't necessarily mean just having a good location but you can make certain changes to a room to make it more comfortable and inclusive for the group you are working with.

For example if you are limited to a classroom, look around the room and see if you can make any changes. Can you move the tables and chairs and work in an open space or is it better to merge tables and let the young people sit in bigger groups? Is there posters or affirmations you can decorate the room with to make young people feel more welcome? Even small changes like that can make a big difference to a space.

Voice

During the sessions there will be lots of opportunity for discussion and a place where young people can share their thoughts, ideas and opinions. It's important to support them through these discussions and provide any information that would help them be more confident in making their voice heard.

For example, during group discussions or group activities make sure to go around the room and support anyone who is struggling to share their thoughts. Don't give them the answers straight away but challenge them with simple questions and prompts. Make sure the information provided to young people has youth friendly language and no hard to understand words or phrases. If there is any difficult words make sure to give a simple explanation or context if it is needed.

Influence

This is to make sure that young people's voices are taken seriously and acted on if it is possible. It is best to avoid making any promises.

For example, this can be seen across the programme, especially from the session feedback you get every week. If young people strongly express they enjoy group work or want more individual work then you can make changes to the next session to adapt to that. If young people express an issue that they want to work together to change, whether it be in a school, community or youth group, etc. This could be something you can create a session around and give students a chance to campaign and make real change.

Audience

This is about giving young people a seat at the table and getting in touch with the right people to listen and to take action on what young people feel strongly about, or an issue they are facing.

In the programme you will get a lot of feedback and see the progress through evaluation. This can be your chance to highlight some of the things young people are saying (with their permission) to adults with more responsibility like school leaders, youth leaders, politicians, mental health champions, community, etc. This includes giving young people the opportunity to in meetings/events express their views.

Most importantly, make sure to keep young people up to date with any action that is taken, even with the small things, whatever the outcome. Let them know the importance of their voice and the part they play.

Youth Work Approach



The youth-work element is important in this programme as it focuses on building relationships with young people using many activities and games. It creates the perfect balance between fun and serious to create that safe space in the classroom.

Youth-work promotes the values of inclusion, mutual respect, equality and youth voice. It's about building relationships based on trust and shared understanding, and using the strength of these relationships to develop a person-centred approach to the development of young people

Evaluation & Feedback

Feedback is very important because it gives you a lot of insight into the progress of the programme and also gives you a good idea on how the young people are getting on, what they are learning and taking away from the programme, but it also gives you opportunity to make your sessions the best they can be by including the views of young people into the design of the programme which makes the programme very inclusive.

For this programme we recommend:

- **Pre-Evaluation - mandatory**

The pre-evaluation is your starting point and helps you understand where the young people are at at the beginning of the programme. This evaluation needs to be done at the beginning of the programme and the same questions are used again at the end of the programme in the post evaluation. This will let you see how much the sessions have supported the young people including their progress of knowledge and understanding and if there are certain areas that need to be improved.

- **Programme Evaluation - mandatory**

The programme evaluation is slightly different from the pre-evaluation as it gives you feedback on the overall programme from a young person perspective. It is less about figures and more about opinion. This can be done at the end of the programme and it will let you see if the young people enjoyed the programme, identify strengths and weaknesses, find out if it met their hopes and expectations, what they would like to see more of and what they would change. This will support you in improving the programme for future delivery it which is equally important to you as a leader.

- **Sessional Evaluation - highly recommended**

The session evaluation focus on each session delivered. This needs to be done at the end of each session. It is a very useful evaluation as you can see what the young people took away from the session, if they found it useful, what they enjoyed and what they would change. This will help you make adjustments to other sessions to ensure young people are getting the most out of the programme.

Each group you work with will differ slightly so it is always good to have the sessional evaluations to read the room and figure out the what works best for the group and what helps them learn and focus best.

- **Staff Evaluation - recommended**

The staff evaluation is for teachers, classroom assistants, youth leaders or volunteers that work with you on the day. They can offer you another perspective and support you in the delivery of the programme. This can be done at the end of the programme.

- **Staff Briefing - recommended**

This is for yourself and other people delivering the programme with you. This can be done before and after each session. This will help you ensure you are prepared and organised, that volunteers know what their role and responsibilities are in the session but also it will be a tool to reflect on how the session went, what you could change and any other observations made by the team.

De-brief questions examples:

1. **What went well?**
2. **What did you learn?**
3. **What didn't go well?**
4. **What would you change?**



Implementation: Making a Plan Work

Implementation means putting a plan into action. It's about focusing on how to make it happen, not just what the plan is about.

It can involve bringing something new, like a programme, into a school or community setting. To make it work well, you need to take clear steps to ensure the programme fits into the setting and is done properly. Effective implementation takes time and effort.

There are four stages to follow:

Stage 1: Explore and Get Ready

1. **Understand the issue:** What's the problem? Who is affected? What needs to improve?
2. **Find a solution:** Choose a programme or idea that fits your needs, works well in your setting, and has been successful before.
3. **Build a team:** Get a group of people to help make it happen.
4. **Spot challenges and opportunities:** Think about what might help or make things harder. Check if your team or organisation is ready to start.

Example for the Youth Wellbeing Programme:
Decide if this programme is the right choice for your school or group. Make sure everyone involved, like teachers or managers, supports it and is ready to help.

Stage 2: Plan and Prepare

1. **Decide how to do it:** Choose the best ways to make the programme work smoothly.
2. **Make a plan:** Write down what needs to be done, when and where it will happen, how it will be done, and who is responsible.
3. **Track progress:** Plan how you will check if the programme is working.
4. **Get ready:** Train everyone involved, gather resources, and prepare for any needed changes.

Example for the Youth Wellbeing Programme:
Think about who will take part in the programme and the best time to start. Try to deliver the 7-week programme without breaks, but adjust if needed. Plan everything in advance, so you're prepared each week. Use checklists to stay organised.

Stage 3: Start and Improve

1. **Put the programme into action:** Start using it with a small group.
2. **Make improvements:** Get feedback every week and make changes as needed to improve the programme.

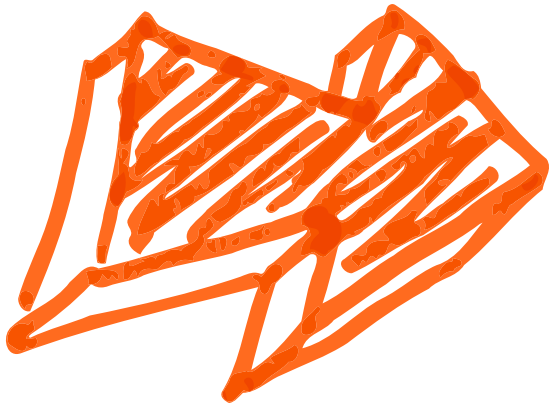
Example for the Youth Wellbeing Programme:
Start running the sessions and collect feedback after each one. Use that feedback to make adjustments for the next session so it meets the group's needs.

Stage 4: Keep Going and Grow

1. **Make it part of regular work:** Help everyone become confident in using the programme so it becomes a normal part of what you do.
2. **Expand it:** If it's working well, introduce it to more groups, schools, or teams.

Example for the Youth Wellbeing Programme:
Decide if this programme should be something you do every year. Train more people to help run it and expand it to other groups or schools.

By following these steps, you can ensure the programme is successful, makes a real difference, and becomes a valuable part of what you do.



Relationship & Communication

Building relationships with the school/youth setting and having strong communication is key to delivering a programme. Having a key person to go to is important. This can either be a teacher a member of the Pastoral/Safeguarding team or another staff member, but it would be preferable that they would have strong links with the Safeguarding Lead as they will be your main point of contact for any safeguarding concerns.

Agree a memorandum of understanding. This will be between you (the programme deliverer) and the host organisation. (For example, students delivering programme in their school will have a Memorandum between the student and school.) The memorandum includes the aims & objectives of the programme, scope and duration, roles and responsibilities, etc. See appendices for a template.

Safeguarding & Confidentiality

"Safeguarding children is the process of preventing impairment of children's health and development, and of ensuring they are growing up safely and securely and provided with effective care, all of which collectively enables them to attain greater success in adulthood.
Safeguarding also extends to protecting children from abuse or neglect, when it occurs, including the promotion and protection of children's rights"
(Safeguarding Board of Northern Ireland, 2012.)

Safeguarding a group is an important element of the programme, and you have a responsibility to pass safeguarding concerns over to the safeguarding lead for the school or setting. Safeguarding is there to protect the young people you're working with and to protect yourself.

Please use this statement before every session with your group.

The conversations we have in this room are confidential and will not leave this room. The only time this will not be the case is if a staff member thinks that you're at risk of hurting yourself or someone else.

You must go through this before doing any activities with sensitive topics. It outlines the confidentiality that is expected from young people. It also reassures the group that what they say won't leave the room unless there is a safeguarding issue and that there is risk of harm to themselves or to others, which is something you have to pass on to the safeguarding lead.

During the programme, you are not expected to deal with any safeguarding related situations. The setting/schools safeguarding lead will be responsible to deal with safeguarding concerns.

Programme Structure



Course Duration - 7 WEEKS

Mandatory

WEEK 1

Programme Session
The first week should always start as an induction week.
Summary
This is a very relaxed day where you meet with the young people, start to build a relationship and get to know them. Introduce the programme and let them know what is about. This is also an opportunity to do the activity below to get their hopes and expectations for the next few weeks. **Hopes & Expectations:** Give out each young person two sticky notes and a pen or marker. On one sticky note they must write about their hopes and on the other their fears. Help any young person that needs support with this. Let them know that these are anonymous. Stick them on a flipchart and discuss. This will let you know what the young people are hoping for, like more games, groupwork or going over specific topics. It will also be an opportunity to reassure them about any fears they have. Complete the pre-evaluation during this session.

Mandatory

WEEK 2

Programme Session
Mental Health & Well-being
Summary
We recommend that this topic is delivered first. The Mental Health & Well-being session covers some of the foundational elements of emotional health & well-being and will inform you on the level of understanding in the group. It includes finding a definition for mental health and looking at what good and poor mental health looks like.

Summary continued...

What I learnt: this is a great opportunity to challenge mental health stereotypes and to also remind young people mental health doesn't go in a straight line. Throughout a day we experience many feelings (good or bad), what's important is what we do when we don't feel good – building resilience is key.

Mood Graph: Let the students fill in a mood graph plotting their mood throughout the day. In most cases, we don't feel ten out of ten 24/7 and our mood fluctuates. It also shows resilience and how it can help make us feel better.

Chosen in Week 1

WEEK 3-5

Programme Session

First Chosen Topic

Summary

Start the delivery of the chosen topics chosen in week one from the list below:

Anxiety in School / Staying Motivated / Dealing with Loneliness Dealing with Bullying Self-care / Youth Voice & Youth Participation

If during the programme, the young people feel very strongly that they would like to complete other topics and extend the programme period, check if the school or organisation is able to facilitate this and do as many topics as the young people would like.

Mandatory

WEEK 6

Programme Session

Day Trip with Community Theme

Summary

This is the Volunteer session and a chance to get the young people out of their normal environment and meet local organisation that are there to support them and organisations offering opportunities for activities, volunteering, education and even employment.

Mandatory

WEEK 7

Programme Session
Celebration
Summary
The last week is run in a relaxed and informal style. In this session you can re-cap on what the programme has looked like and what sort of topics you covered. You will finish off your evaluations and most importantly thank the young people for participating, recognise their efforts and present their certificates.

Notes