Successful outcomes for youth at risk

A Resource Kit
Acknowledgements

Successful outcomes for youth at risk: a resource kit

This resource kit was developed in conjunction with a workshop program. Its purpose is to assist in the development and delivery of post compulsory educational programs that produce successful outcomes for youth at risk. The kit was developed with funding from Australian National Training Authority (ANTA).

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Purpose of the kit

Introduction

This Kit considers the educational needs of those young people who are identified as educationally ‘at risk’. These are young people whose circumstances or experiences have led to their being marginalised from a range of social structures and groups, including educational organisations.

Background: project history

The Kit is a major component of a project entitled ‘Assisting Education and Training Providers to Achieve Successful Outcomes with Youth at Risk’. The NSW Department of Education and Training, specifically the Adult and Community Education and Education Access Directorate and Access Educational Services Division, TAFE NSW, developed this project as a joint venture encompassing these three sectors:

- TAFE colleges
- community organisations funded under the Links to Learning Community Grants Program
- Adult and Community Education (ACE) providers.

The project has been funded by the Australian National Training Authority.

Changes to the conditions attached to the Common Youth Allowance have required young people to either be actively seeking employment and/or participating in full time education programs. This has led to increased participation of young people in programs, conducted by these three post-school education sectors. Programs that these young people attend include a range of general education and/or vocational education and training courses.

Why was a Kit developed?

The Kit has been developed to support the professional development of educators in post school contexts who provide programs for youth at risk. The Kit has been designed to provide professional development opportunities in conjunction with a workshop program and initial regional consultation workshops.

Potential users of the Kit

The potential users of the Kit include coordinators and staff in the three sectors. The materials in the Kit have been designed to support the professional development of teachers/ tutors who have an interest in providing programs for this target group. The Kit assumes staff have professional experience in teaching and/or youth work and want to explore specific education approaches that are effective with youth at risk.

We anticipate that the Kit will be used in different ways. For example:

- Staff members who have some experience in providing programs for this client group might use it as a prompt for reflection and further development of their practice - the Kit might be used to link key information and theoretical ideas to their day to day practice.
Project approach

The Kit has gathered information and resources from a range of sources. We gathered examples of successful programs from each sector (TAFE, Links to Learning providers and the ACE sector), reviewed the literature for success factors and principles underlying effective programs, explored websites and interviewed experienced practitioners.

In addition, regional consultation workshops were held in Sydney, Newcastle and Orange. Seventy-two people attended from TAFE, Links to Learning programs, ACE providers, NSW and federal government departments, health services and community organisations servicing youth. Groups at these workshops developed draft statements of principles, models and issues, which have been further developed by the project team and included in the Kit. This regional approach to collaboration was underlined as having particular potential for professional development as well as being a key factor in effective program delivery.

Rationale

The Kit and workshop program focus on capabilities in facilitating learning and designing programs for youth at risk. This target group is often found to be particularly challenging as they often require a lot of flexibility and emotional energy from staff. Program coordinators note that it is crucial to provide opportunities for teachers to reflect on their experiences of teaching these learners. The writers aim to promote some fresh thinking about the issues as we believe that reflection is the key professional development process that supports the development of expertise.

Therefore the information and resources have been included to provide opportunities to:

> Notice key features of your experience with these young people
> Review and reflect on your experiences, perhaps in new ways
> Link you to additional sources of information – eg in your local community, on websites and databases, reference and research materials
> Explore theoretical ideas which may have particular potential in relation to youth at risk

The structure of the Kit

The Kit is designed around a framework of information about the processes involved in establishing and conducting programs for youth at risk. The Kit is comprised of the following sections:

Introduction: The framework

This section outlines a summary of an operational framework for educators and trainers developing programs for youth at risk. It introduces some key under-
standings about youth at risk and outlines the process that needs to be followed to establish education programs that respond to their needs and circumstances. It also provides a summary of material in the Kit.

Part 1: The context – understanding youth at risk and program models

This section provides background information about the range of reasons that youth can be regarded as ‘at risk’ educationally. Program models that have been found to be effective with these learners are also described and a range of theoretical perspectives are introduced to explore these models.

Part 2: The principles – for working with young people

This section explores fundamental principles for working with young people who have had a disrupted education. The literature on success factors of programs and the regional consultations emphasise the central importance of these principles. Models, programs and organisational structures vary according to local requirements and resources but these principles have been found to be significant in all effective programs.

Part 3: The process

This section outlines the steps involved in establishing and conducting programs. A key factor is the importance of negotiation with the young people at every step of the process.

Part 4: Strategies for working with young people

The challenges that arise in conducting programs for this target group include addressing particular issues, such as drug and alcohol use and aggressive behaviours. This section outlines an approach to responding to issues such as these and points to some specific strategies that teachers/tutors have found useful.

Assessment materials

The materials in the Kit and workshop program support the development of competency as outlined in the unit of competency Manage Youth Programs in the Diploma in Community Services (Youth Work). This section provides assessment materials for people who wish to gather and submit evidence for this unit of competency. In addition, these materials provide a summary of the process of planning and implementing a program that could be of general interest.

Appendix

Additional information is provided.

Use of language

The Kit will be used by staff from a range of education organisations with different vocabularies. For example, the staff may be described as ‘teacher’, ‘tutor’, ‘youth education officer’, ‘coordinator’ or ‘trainer’. We have used a variety of terms when writing in order to reflect the different usage in different organisations.
The structure of the kit

PART 1: THE CONTEXT
Understanding youth at risk and program models

PART 2: THE PRINCIPLES
For working with young people

PART 3: THE PROCESS

1 Identify the Program
2 Plan, Prepare and Promote
3 Deliver the Program
4 Review and Evaluate

PART 4: STRATEGIES
For working with young people

Successful outcomes for youth at risk
Introduction: Framework

THE FRAMEWORK introduces some key understandings about youth at risk and outlines the process that needs to be followed to establish education programs that respond to their needs and circumstances.

The context – understanding youth at risk and program models

Early school leavers are not all the same

Both formal and anecdotal research indicates that young people leave school early for a variety of reasons. The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) study identified five types of early school leavers:

- Positive leavers
- Opportune leavers
- Circumstantial leavers
- Discouraged leavers
- Alienated leavers

Positive leavers and opportune leavers leave school early for positive reasons – to take up a job or an opportunity. They are rarely ‘at risk’ educationally, unless their plans fall through. Circumstantial leavers exit early because of social circumstances such as lack of family support, disruption of social networks, peer rejection, parenthood, family problems. Discouraged and alienated leavers leave because they have not had success as learners and their interest in education is low. These young people are likely to be most at risk, are often unrealistic about their goals or unaware of many options.

Holistic approaches

Educational risk is rarely experienced by young people as an isolated problem. Young people who are regarded as ‘at risk’ often have a wide range of needs and concerns. Some have urgent and immediate concerns about their survival and safety. Therefore formal education may be low on their list of priorities.

These young people’s lives are constantly in transition

For example, their needs and concerns when they arrive at an education program each day may include:

1. FAMILY CONFLICT, PROBLEMS AND/OR RESPONSIBILITIES
   Early school leavers are often experiencing problems at home – for example, family conflict, grief and loss.

2. HEALTH ISSUES
   The young person may be struggling to cope with physical or mental health issues. These health needs may be chronic or acute and coping with a major health problem at this stage may have significant impact on their sense of competence and belonging to their community.
3. HOMELESSNESS
The young person may not have a place to stay or may only have short-term accommodation arrangements.

4. ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS
Drug and alcohol use may be leading to health, behavioural and lifestyle problems.

5. VIOLENCE
Some young people may be experiencing violence within their home or community locale.

6. SEXUAL ABUSE
The young person may currently be experiencing sexual abuse or may be seeking to prevent abuse from recurring.

7. FINANCES
Some young people do not have money to buy food, clothes or other essential items.

These and other underlying problems may lead to some of their difficulties in meeting the challenge of education in addition to their lack of engagement with classwork. Therefore holistic approaches are recommended, where education providers work together with other health and community organisations.

Program approaches
Some young people who are circumstantial early school leavers do not require alternative program approaches. They need additional assistance to address the specific pressures in their lives to enable them to learn effectively. However, alienated and discouraged learners usually require alternative educational approaches and models if they are to re-engage with learning.

Engaging young people who are alienated from learning
Some young people in the local community are not only alienated from education structures, they are also alienated from learning. These young people have usually had negative experiences in education, home and/or community environments.

A positive emotional environment in education environments and home reinforces educational achievement while negative emotional environments create barriers to education achievement. Many young people who are alienated from learning respond well to an educational and community environment that is warm and without criticism.

Models of learning for those who are alienated from learning
Young people who have left school early because they have become severely discouraged or alienated from that environment often respond when alternative models of learning are provided. Such models are likely to have the following characteristics:

1. FOCUS ON REAL LIFE ISSUES
Programs need to be designed to be relevant to the immediate needs of the young people. Their needs and interests should inform programming and curriculum decisions. Curriculum decisions, however, should maximise entry to further educational pathways.
2. INDIRECT APPROACHES
Outcomes which are relevant to the young person are foregrounded while the curriculum and learning outcomes, although still present, are left in the background. Indirect approaches to learning are being found to be successful with the most alienated learners.

3. INTEGRATED APPROACHES
Many successful programs encompass a range of elements including:
> A range of integrated subject areas
> Experiences in their local community
> Work experience opportunities
> Intensive support to develop underpinning competencies

4. USE OF ACTIVITIES WHICH ALLOW SELF EXPRESSION
Many projects are focusing on engaging young people through creative communication projects in music, video, drama, photography and dance.

5. LINKING YOUNG PEOPLE TO KEY PEOPLE WITHIN THEIR COMMUNITY
Many programs support peer interaction and link young people with supportive peers and adults: for example, through setting up links with potential mentors.

Pathways: a process of progressive re-engagement
When consulting with post school providers of programs for marginalised young people, we found that they emphasised the importance of connection – connections between young people and their family, young people and education and young people and their community.

Program pathways were identified that suggest a continuum of focus from engagement through to formal education achievement.

The principles for working with young people

The relationship between the teacher and young person is the most important factor
The relationships formed between the teacher/tutor and the young person are central to the program’s success. The communication of the teacher/tutor provides messages to the young people about who they are, including:
> their abilities
> their capacity to make choices and take responsibility for those choices
> their capacity to respond to the concerns of other people about specific behaviours which have had negative impacts.

The importance of conversations
Teachers suggested that some of the most important learning occurs through unplanned conversations. Therefore it is very important for teachers to be able
to spend a lot of time with these young people and for the young people to get to know the teachers and develop trust. Key issues and needs tend to emerge at unexpected times and in unexpected places.

**Mutual respect**

Mutual respect is highly valued by young people as they often say that adults expect them to show respect but rarely show respect for them. Mutual respect in relationships with a teacher can provide them with a new experience of mutuality between adults and young people. Mutual respect must be genuine, and is often linked to the teacher’s capacity to notice the skills, capabilities and strengths of the young person.

The challenge is often to hold to this perspective and still provide the nurturing and support that many of these young people need. As educators in the Newcastle consultation workshop said “they often have adult problems and survival skills but their educational skills and emotional capabilities may be at the level of a young kid.”

**Choice and negotiation**

The young people can be provided with significant opportunities to make choices about their education. Educators may need to facilitate the development of the young person’s capacity to make choices by asking questions, providing information, exploring options with them and asking them about the likely implications of different choices. When a young person experiences negotiation about the education program, they experience being placed in a position of responsibility for their learning.

Rules and expectations can also be negotiated. When rules are imposed on young people who are rebelling against authority, an immediate clash is established. However when teachers negotiate rules on the basis of mutual respect and fairness, young people can learn about alternative forms of power relations.

**Assist young people to develop control about issues in their lives**

Young people may be faced with a range of problems or life issues, including issues in their education. Young people’s previous experiences in their family life, school life and community have influenced the degree to which they think that they can do something about a problem. Learning to think about what goes wrong in a learning activity, support for ‘hanging in’ and trying new approaches can assist young people to develop a sense that there is something they can do when things go wrong.

**Provide a new message about who they are and who they can be**

The students who are most alienated often have a range of negative images of themselves. Teachers noted that when young people participate in a program that provides new information about their image, their attitudes about themselves can begin to change. Therefore, we note that teachers have a role in building and reinforcing students’ attitudes to themselves.
For example:

> Successive experiences of failure show 'I can’t’ – opportunities to succeed show 'I can’
>
> Experiences of adults who never listen show 'no-one cares’ – a teacher who is committed and involved shows ‘some people do care’
>
> Experiences of peer rejection might show 'I am too different’ – experiences of peer acceptance might show 'there are others like me’
>
> Experiences of adults always deciding important things show ‘I am not responsible for my life’ – experiences where adults assist me to consider options and make a decision show me ‘I can decide and be responsible for my decision’
>
> Experiences of education structures requiring things to be done one way show 'I must do it this way if I am to participate’ – experiences of education structures that are flexible and adapt to individual needs could show ‘we can negotiate things in a way that makes sure my needs are met too’.

Some education providers can view the establishment of a learning group that is based on new messages such as these as a very radical step. Other education providers regard this learning culture as fundamental to the organisation’s educational philosophy and mission. Teachers who establish relationships that convey these messages to young people can therefore experience a range of responses from other teachers and staff in organisations.

The process: program planning and delivery

Consultation and negotiation: the key to effective planning

All programs that have been identified as successful have been based on effective negotiation with the young people who will undertake the program. The educator and the young people involved make joint decisions about the program content and approach.

In addition, consultation that occurs with other stakeholders develops a broad perspective of the young people’s needs, histories and community.

Using the community network

Education programs for young people at risk do not operate effectively in isolation from other community resources. Young people at risk have needs other than education and therefore holistic interagency approaches are regarded as essential for these young people. Effective referral throughout the service network depends on staff in organisations being aware of the services that are available in the local network.

Counselling, group support, mentoring, health education, referral to services and support by role models are often identified as useful strategies. Collaborative approaches that bring together a range of agencies are recommended.

Collaboration and partnerships

Programs are often provided through partnerships with other agencies or other collaborative arrangements. Partnerships may develop in order to:
Pool resources to conduct the program
Promote the program
Develop pathways between programs
Address non-educational needs of young people.

Collaboration between agencies and different professional groups has the benefit of bringing a wider and richer range of resources to these young people.

Program selection and program design

Programs are designed or selected to suit the young people's circumstances – there is no 'one best way'. Existing programs are customised extensively in order to suit these young people. The following principles are often used by educators to customise programs for this target group:

- Make the program experiential in style
- Foreground ways that the program is relevant to their interests and backgrounds
- Promote the program using a naming of it that suits the young people.

Program delivery

A low student/teacher ratio is crucial to enable sufficient individual attention to be provided. Many programs are conducted with 2 people co-teaching – this enables teachers to bring complementary skills. For example, combining one teacher who has skills in a specific subject area with a teacher with skills in language and literacy.

Short modular programs are recommended to enable young people to achieve completion, even if they have little 'staying power' and are unsettled.

Venue: a youth friendly environment

A range of venues have been found to be successful, depending on the particular group of young people and their perceptions. The key issue is that these young people feel comfortable with the venue. TAFE Colleges are sometimes perceived positively as they are associated with older teenagers and adults who are also attending. Community centres and venues that the young people already access are often essential if some young people are to attend. Many programs are held across two or more locations.

Timetabling

The total program hours are spread across a range of learning activities, rather than all the hours being spent in classroom type activities – for example, also including computer based activities, time with a mentor, excursions and community visits.

Flexibility and ongoing negotiation

Programs need to be very flexible because the teacher may need to totally change direction – what worked last time may not work with a particular group or a particular individual. Negotiation is an ongoing process, involving the young people in active decision making about their learning.
Teachers need to keep ‘an eye for opportunities’, considering what learning can result from unplanned incidents, actions and comments. Teachers act as facilitators, responding to the mood and possibilities of each session.

**Staff selection**

During the consultations, many people suggested that the most crucial factor in conducting a successful program is the teacher and the way that s/he relates to the young people. Further, program coordinators suggest that the best way of finding suitable staff to work with this group is to invite those who have a potential interest to participate and lead a session. No matter what people say about what they would do and no matter how well you brief them about what to expect, some teachers respond and adapt and others don’t.

**Staff support and staff development**

Continuity of staff leads to better outcomes for these young people. Strategies to provide support for staff are crucial if programs are to have continuity of staff. These young people require more from staff emotionally and in terms of relationships. If we expect staff to respond to this target group in emotionally effective ways, then organisations need to acknowledge these emotional demands and establish strategies to support staff.

**Linking with the broad organisation and community**

Staff who conduct programs for young people may have to negotiate issues with a range of other staff who are unfamiliar with young people. Although trouble shooting and negotiation about problems that arise is always likely to be required, preventative strategies that ease people's fears are often found to be useful.

Also, staff who conduct programs for youth at risk often have to advocate for the needs and rights of these young people to participate, if the dominant culture in the community or organisation is less welcoming. The best outcomes occur when the community and local organisations are able to provide cohesive and consistent messages to young people that:

- include them
- are responsive to their needs
- respect their capabilities and preferences
- expect fair behaviour.

**Evaluating programs**

Open ended evaluation models may be required since planned outcomes and goals may continue to develop over the length of the program. Valid indicators need to relate to the learning barriers of that particular young person. For example, if a young person continually truanted from school because of a mix of family problems and a history of being named as a ‘failure’ then regular attendance would be a valid indicator that these barriers had been addressed. However, indicators based on a prescribed set of outcomes may not identify alternative, significant learning achievements, or may underestimate how remarkable such a turnaround could be for a particular young person. Therefore, there is a challenge for stakeholders to reach agreement about realistic outcomes for young people with various circumstances and histories, and then to develop valid indicators for these outcomes.

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1 McIntyre J, Freeland J, Melville B & Schwenke C (1999) *Early School Leavers at Risk*  
Australian National Training Authority, NCVER, South Australia
What do we mean by the term ‘youth at risk’?

Introduction

> What do you mean by the term ‘youth at risk’?
> What do you think local community members mean by the term ‘youth at risk’?
> How would young people react to the term ‘youth at risk’?

This kit considers the educational needs of those young people who are identified as ‘at risk’ educationally. They are usually regarded as young people whose circumstances or experiences have led to their being marginalised from a range of social structures and groups, including educational organisations.

There are a range of definitions of youth at risk utilised by different youth services. Some are very broad, for example:

> The term ‘at risk’ has entered common parlance in reference to young people in recent years. In general it is used to describe or identify young people who, beset by particular difficulties and disadvantages, are thought likely to fail to achieve the development in their adolescent years that would provide a sound basis for a satisfying and fulfilling adult life. (Batten & Russell quoted in McIntyre J, Freeland J, Melville B & Schwenke C:9)

Other definitions are focused on the particular mandate of the service – for example, identifying the factors that lead to risk of offending, having high welfare needs, leaving education early, homelessness etc.

Educational definitions of ‘youth at risk’ reflect current educational expectations for young people. The NSW Charter for Equity in Education and Training (1997) states:

> All young people are entitled as a minimum, to be able to complete their school education to Year 12 or a vocational education equivalent.

Educational definitions of ‘youth at risk’ span those that include young people who leave school early, defined as before completion of Year 10 or 12, or who are likely to fail to achieve defined educational outcomes.

The definition of ‘youth at risk’ in the NCVER study focuses on the process of transition from school to adult life and work:

> Our definition of ‘at risk’ is that of not making a successful transition from school into adult life through work and study. (McIntyre J, Freeland J, Melville B & Schwenke C:8)
Early school leavers are not all the same

Both formal and anecdotal research indicates that young people leave school early for a variety of reasons. In the NCVER study, interviews were conducted with Year 10 school leavers from Wyong and Gosford. They identified a range of reasons about why a young person left school early. From these stories the study identified five types of early school leavers:

- Positive leavers
- Opportune leavers
- Circumstantial leavers
- Discouraged leavers
- Alienated leavers.

Positive or opportune leavers left school early for positive reasons – to take up a job or an opportunity. They are rarely ‘at risk’ educationally, unless their plans fall through. The transition to work may be successful but it is often uncertain – it may be interrupted by circumstances such as difficulty finding a job in the chosen field, family problems, job loss. These young people may still move in and out of paid work and study.

Circumstantial leavers leave early because of social circumstances such as lack of family support, disruption of social networks, peer rejection, parenthood, family problems.

Discouraged and alienated leavers leave because they have not had success as learners and their interest in education is low. They may also be alienated due to experiences of being regarded as a ‘problem’ or of being victimised, often in response to antisocial behaviour. The discouraged leavers are described as more passive in response and the alienated as more rebellious. These young people are likely to be most at risk, are often unrealistic about their goals or unaware of many options.

Circumstantial leavers, discouraged leavers and alienated leavers are almost always at risk educationally.

Further, our consultations with education practitioners suggest that there are some young people who, rather than having ‘fallen out of’ community networks, have never been in those networks. They have been marginalised for all (or most) of their schooling; they are young people who have never really experienced themselves as belonging to their community.

Questions for reflection or discussion

- What mental pictures come into your mind when you think of a young person described as ‘at risk’?
- What norms or ideals are these young people seen as being different from?
- Would the young people in your programs describe themselves as being ‘at risk’? How do you think that they would describe themselves?

So, in summary:

- What risks do the young people in your program face?
- What choices have they been making about their lives?
- What strengths have they exhibited in these choices?
Following up these issues further

1. NCVER Early School Leavers at Risk Study

McIntyre J, Freeland J, Melville B & Schwenke C (1999) Early School Leavers at Risk Australian National Training Authority, NCVER, South Australia

Publication copies are available from:
NCVER PO Box 115, Kensington Park, SA 5068
www.ncver.edu.au

Overview

This study investigates the links between school, vocational education and training and work for early school leavers. The key problem explored through the research was whether initial vocational education and training and support services were assisting early school leavers to effectively negotiate the transition from school to work. The study was located on the Central Coast, NSW.

The study investigates the experiences of those 15 – 19 year olds ‘at risk’ in the transition from school to work, due to leaving school early and given the youth labour market context of few full time jobs. The focus is on the pattern of transition, noting that young people often find it a fluid, “milling and churning” experience.

Issues

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the literature and covers issues such as definitions of ‘at risk’, who leaves school early and why, characteristics of early school leavers, services available to early school leavers, models of intervention, the labour market and young people, employment entry patterns, employer perspectives and the relationship between early school leaving and social disadvantage.

Strategies

They recommend collaborative approaches which bring together a range of agencies – for example, a ‘roundtable’ of the student, parents, teachers and advisors/counsellors to design some appropriate choices to offer the student.

Case studies of young people’s experiences

The study includes forty case studies of young people’s experiences. The case studies provide a snapshot of the reasons that the person left school, courses and work that they have done since, their views about work and education, the role of their family and their thoughts about the future.

2. Australian Centre for Equity through Education

Pat Thomson Against the Odds: Developing school programmes that make a difference for students and families in communities placed at risk

Thinking About Full Service Schools No. 4
Pat Thomson’s article provides a very straightforward exploration of many of the key issues related to providing programs for youth at risk. She includes a considered analysis of the use of the rhetoric ‘at risk’ which highlights the dangers in using this term uncritically. She outlines a set of principles for programs “that might make a difference” and continually presses educators to consider the redesign of curriculum.

Her article is particularly strong in the way it shows links between a consideration of the needs of an individual student and the ecology of the school. She discusses school cultures and structures that will support programs that can make a difference.

3. Web based resources

Providing Effective Schooling for Students at Risk
http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/students/atrisk/at600.htm

Who Are the “At-Risk” Students of the 1990s?
http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/rpl_esys/equity.htm
Educational programs – success factors

Introduction

> Do some young people need a different educational approach?
> What program models engage these young people?
> What is required to develop and conduct programs that are effective?
> What are the most important factors to consider when establishing a program?

Young people who are circumstantial early school leavers or discouraged or alienated early leavers often require alternative educational programs. A number of success factors have been identified in the literature and through the project consultation processes. A summary of these factors is included in the table below and there is a more comprehensive review in the appendix.

1. Coordination

> Strong links between agencies
> Developing local approaches to respond to local issues and opportunities
> Access to youth support and health services, links with local employers

2. Planning

> Organisational flexibility
> Location is not alienating – youth friendly environment
> Low student/teacher ratio
> Careful selection of staff
> Professional development and support for staff
> Get past the ‘cookie cutter’ thinking that imagines we can do the same thing with everyone
> Involve the students every step of the way

3. Program content

> Focus on basic educational skills – though these may be developed indirectly and in innovative ways
> Use of activities which allow self expression – music, video, photography
> Emphasis on informal learning
> Flexibility – responds to individual needs
> Use student’s strengths and interests as starting point
> Content and learning goals are negotiated with the student
> Developing learning outcomes and assessments across subject areas
4. Program approach and style

- Holistic approach – personal, social and educational goals
- Provides intensive support and nurturing – close relationship with a teacher, mentoring, coaching by past students, develop strong peer group support
- Small groups and one to one approaches
- Opportunities to make learning and success visible – eg presentation of certificates, performances, opening or launch of project product, developing computer based products

5. Relationships and interactions

- Encourage student to take responsibility for their learning and behaviour
- Opportunities to talk about issues and concerns
- Acceptance – including if student has a problem
- Mutual respect
- Assist young person to negotiate the challenges and barriers in their circumstances and to focus on options

6. Staff qualities

- Relationship skills are primary
- Committed and persistent
- Flexible and creative
- Able to see beyond an immediate crisis or problem
- Strong rapport and empathy
- Tolerant of mess and noise
- Welcome difference and cultural difference
Holistic approaches

EDUCATIONAL risk is rarely an isolated problem. Young people who are disengaged from education often have a wide range of circumstances that generate needs and concerns. Some have urgent and immediate concerns about their survival and safety. Therefore formal education may be low on their list of priorities.

These young people's lives are constantly in transition

What we view as important is not the same for them – the most pressing need we may have is picking up the children from child care, while theirs is where they are going to sleep tonight.

Education is a secondary goal – in order to learn, a young person must feel that they are worthy to learn.

Feedback from consultation workshops

For example, students’ needs and concerns when they arrive at an education program each day may include:

1. **Family conflict, problems and/or responsibilities**
   Early school leavers are often experiencing problems at home – for example, family conflict, grief and loss.

2. **Health issues**
   The young person may be struggling to cope with physical or mental health issues. These health needs may be chronic or acute and coping with a major health problem at this stage may have significant impact on their sense of competence and belonging to their community.

3. **Homelessness**
   The young person may not have a place to stay or may only have short-term accommodation arrangements.

4. **Finances**
   Some young people do not have money to buy food, clothe themselves or buy other essential items.

5. **Violence**
   The young people may be experiencing violence within their home or community locale.

6. **Sexual abuse**
   The young person may currently be experiencing sexual abuse or may be seeking to prevent abuse from recurring.
These and other underlying problems may lead to some of their difficulties in meeting the challenge of education, in addition to their lack of engagement with classwork. Some of the young people have been experiencing transitory and difficult life circumstances for many years.

Questions for reflection or discussion

- Think about some of the young people attending your program – they may be experiencing constant transition, uncertainty or turmoil in their life circumstances.
- Would you know if a student was experiencing a major health or life crisis?
- How would you know that a student may have concerns such as these?
- What behaviours might give a clue that a student is experiencing personal difficulties?

Teachers and tutors in the regional consultations emphasised the importance of being aware of the pressures that the young person may be experiencing, so that their behaviour is understood in its context. For example, if the teacher hears that the young person left home last night after an intense conflict with their parents, the teacher will have a more accurate understanding of why the student might be acting in a withdrawn manner. However, the educators that we consulted also emphasised the importance of working in collaboration with other services for young people, and connecting young people to additional support: “we are teachers, first and foremost”.

Needs and concerns of young people

Some health and welfare issues emerge or become more pronounced during adolescence. The following have been selected as some of the key needs and concerns of young people – additional information is available about these needs and other health and welfare needs through the websites listed at the end of this section.

Homelessness

Young people can become homeless for a range of reasons such as leaving a situation of violence or abuse, family conflict, power struggles, misunderstandings or rejection by their parents. The decision to leave home may happen very quickly in response to a precipitating crisis. Young people who have other supports to turn to, in their extended family or community, are less vulnerable than those who don’t. Youth refuges provide short-term and/or longer-term accommodation and prepare the young person and the family for their return home, or prepare the young person to establish an independent living situation.

Child sexual assault

Child sexual assault is not a rare occurrence. Most perpetrators are not strangers, but rather are members of the child’s family or people who are otherwise known and trusted by the child and family. Sexual abuse may occur over long periods.

Although studies show that there are more girls than boys assaulted, men have begun to speak out. The vast majority of perpetrators of sexual assault of girls and boys are heterosexual males. The most common perpetrators of assaults against boys are male adults (40%), males under the age of 16 (22%), fathers
(11%) stepfathers/de factos (6%) and other male relatives (15%). (Ref: Education Centre Against Violence, Who can a man tell?, Western Sydney Area Health)

Although rare, sexual assault of boys by women does occur.

Child sexual assault can have short and long term impacts on young people's health and wellbeing. Breaking the silence about sexual assault can be very difficult. The perpetrator may have tricked, bribed or threatened them, they may be confused and they may worry about what will happen to their family if they tell anyone. The young person may decide to tell someone that they have learned to trust or the 'secret' may erupt one day due to an overflow of emotion. The reactions of friends and community members are important – the young person needs to know that they are believed and that they are not blamed or held responsible for the assault having occurred.

NOTE: Information about child protection issues, and the responsibilities of educators, is included in Section 4 of the Kit.

**Alcohol and other drugs**

Young people whose lives are in turmoil or who are experiencing significant distress often use a range of drugs and alcohol, even if they are of an age for which that is illegal. Alcohol and tobacco are the most commonly used drugs by adolescents and marijuana is the illicit drug that is most commonly used.

The use of drugs may be creating no health problems for the young person, or creating moderate or major problems. Poly drug use poses particular risks. Health educators are keen to educate young people about the short-term risks, plus longer-term risks and ways to reduce these.

**Mental health problems**

Adolescence can be the time when a range of psychiatric disorders emerge such as schizophrenia, bipolar affective disorder (manic depression), eating disorders, depression and obsessive compulsive disorder. There is a higher prevalence of mental health disorders among young people in juvenile detention and among refugees, especially those who left situations of trauma.

Protective factors, and the ways that young people develop resilience in the face of traumatic and difficult situations, is an area of research in mental health. Some factors are found in:

- the child – such as problem solving, social competence
- the family – such as supportive parents, close relationship with a sibling
- the education context- such as positive climate, sense of belonging, opportunities for success
- life events – such as meeting a significant person, opportunities
- the community – access to support services, participation in community groups.

**Eating disorders**

The main eating disorders are anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa and compulsive over eating. Eating disorders do not have a specific cause but certain factors may impact on the risk of developing an eating disorder, such as:

- striving to be perfect
- feeling the need to gain control over one's life
> difficulty in expressing needs and feelings.

Eating disorders occur in young men as well as young women, and in young people across all cultural groups.

**Relationship violence**

Violence or abuse involves different forms of power that are used to control, hurt or humiliate another. These include:

> physical violence – harming or threatening to hurt someone is a criminal offence
> emotional abuse – including threats and put downs
> sexual abuse – using power to engage another person in sexual activity.

People often take a period of time to leave a violent or abusive relationship. They may believe the person when they apologise and promise it won’t happen again and the relationship may have many positive features during ‘honeymoon’ times. However the impact on the young person includes the undermining of their sense of self-respect, living in a state of constant tension, losing contact with other friends and supports and use of drugs and alcohol.

**Suicide**

Suicide is a leading cause of death among young people, second only to road accidents. In rural and remote areas of Australia, suicide rates for young men are nearly double that of young men living in capital cities. Although rates of suicide are lower for young women, they are far more likely to attempt suicide. Motives for suicide related behaviours include a desire for current experiences to cease, to interrupt experience for a while and to appeal to others to act or change their behaviour. Often people are unable to fully explain their intentions or motivations.

Suicide has a major impact on the young person's family, friends and acquaintances. For example, these significant others may feel guilty about not having realised the degree of distress that the young person was feeling or for not having been around at the time. They may also feel angry that the person has left them alone or perceive the suicide as punishment for having done something that distressed the young person.

**References and additional resources**

**Relationship violence and child sexual assault**

Information booklets, videos and professional development programs are provided by the Education Centre Against Violence, Western Sydney Area Health Service – this is a statewide service. Ph: 9840 3737

**Drugs, physical health, mental health and sexual health issues**

www.cyh.com is a South Australian site that has information on a wide range of topics

http://educ.indiana.edu/cas/adol is a US site that also has a wide range of information – for example, comprehensive site on AD/HD.
Program approaches

SOME YOUNG people who are circumstantial early school leavers do not require alternative program approaches. They need additional assistance to address the specific pressures in their lives, so that they can learn effectively. However, alienated and discouraged learners usually require alternative educational approaches and models if they are to re-engage with learning.

Images of learning

Questions

> Is there a distinct kind of pedagogy when educating discouraged or alienated young people?
> What kind of learning works best?
> What does it look like?
> What do you notice in the young people when they are most involved – what are they doing, what do you think they are feeling?
> What does it feel like for the teacher?

We asked people who attended the Orange consultation workshop to draw an image of learning that works with these young people. Here are some of their images:

Diagram 1

Each of our students is more like us than unlike us – they have learned their way of relating with the world, which they may cling to, especially if challenged by a new situation. Our challenge as teachers is to help students recognise their strengths and build on their strengths.

Norm Rowlands, Senior Counsellor and Jo Sedgers, Outreach Coordinator, Western Institute of TAFE
So often our clients come to us preconditioned with an “I can’t” attitude. We want to provide them with experiences that result in them shouting: “wow, I can!” But we need to redefine success and failure for them.

Peter Cooper, Time Out tutor, OCTEC Incorporated

Draw an image of a session that captured learning that works with these young people:
Engaging young people who are alienated from learning

SOME YOUNG people in the local community are not only alienated from education and training structures, they are also alienated from learning. These young people have usually had negative experiences in education, home and/or community environments, which they may describe as:

> School was boring
> Mum says ‘you’re a failure’
> Dad said ‘get a job or else’
> The pressure was too much
> My parents say they are ashamed of me
> I just needed to get out of there
> They just jam things down our throats
> The teachers wrote me off after I disappeared again
> I was simply unhappy at school
> I didn’t get on with other students
> The others were put off by my problems – they backed off

A positive emotional environment, in education environments and home, reinforces educational achievement, while negative emotional environments create barriers to education achievement. Young people may have experienced themselves as failing educationally or being excluded socially. The environments that they have experienced are often characterised by criticism and blame and/or emotional distance and disengagement. Therefore, they often respond well to an educational and community environment that is warm and without criticism. They may be hypervigilant to any signals that suggest that this educational environment will repeat past experiences.

Get alongside them.

They need affection and acceptance.

Establish closeness with them.

Feedback from consultation workshop at Orange

Negative experiences may have influenced a negative identity of themselves as learners. For example, they may describe themselves as ‘a failure’ or ‘dumb’. They are often positioned on the margins of their community and do not have an identity of themselves as connected to their community – rather they see themselves as ‘disconnected’, ‘on the edge’.

Some young people who are of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background, or from a non-English speaking background or who have a disability have often had particular experiences which affect their perceptions of themselves as a learner.
Following up these issues further

The link between learning and the development of identity


Wexler undertook studies of high schools in England and Israel in the 1980s to show that disaffection in schools leads to disaffection in the workplace. His focus is on social interaction, the social processes and social relations associated with disaffection. Wexler suggests that sometimes educators of young people have only concentrated on curriculum and knowledge and neglected to concentrate on the formation of identity among young people.

From his study, he found that students want to become somebody:

“When I tried to encapsulate what students were doing in these high schools, their words summed it up best: becoming somebody. They were not struggling to become nobody... They wanted to be somebody, a real and presentable self, and one anchored in the verifying eyes of the friends whom they came to school to meet. (p.7)”

Thus Wexler’s focus is on the identities being formed through experiences in education. Formation of identity is explained as an interaction between the personal resources that a young person brings and the responses of the education community. There is an audience of people who respond to the different personal resources of that young person – some personal resources are ignored, others are valued by some others, others are seized upon and used and thus collectively affirmed as valuable. Thus the responses of people within the educational community build up a sense of the young person’s identity.

Students thus develop images of self, based on how they define themselves and how others define them. Single words, behaviours and other signs are seen to represent that image. Sufficient occasions of these suggest that a student is on the track of a certain identity. Some identity tracks are regarded as positive and ‘good’, while others are regarded as ‘bad’.

Wexler suggests that the interaction between teacher and student is the key and, further, that compensatory peer based identity formation arises out a lack of emotional commitment and caring in the teacher – student relationship. He summarises the interaction as “nobody cares”. Wexler does not blame teachers for this, suggesting that it can become a mutual non-caring interaction of failure and withdrawal of each party.

Thus, Wexler highlights that the issue for educators is how to establish a relationship with a student at an emotional level when they are already in a pattern of withdrawal. He suggests that the main way that teachers counteract the student’s expectation, that ‘teachers don’t care’, is by paying attention, showing a willingness to listen to the young person and doing things with them:

“That is the key ... if you can get someone to listen when you talk, you have got the perfect system. But you can’t ... You look up to someone to find out if you did good or bad ... You are not going to look to someone your own age ... And if you can’t do that with someone, with an adult, then you are forced to do it with someone else.
A good teacher listens. He's fun. He listens. He says, 'Let's do this together'.

She would sit there and talk to you. She'd say ‘Why don’t you try this with me?’

Everyone's always yelling at you: 'Grow up! Do this! Do that! And you're tryin' and everybody's always yellin’ at you.

"Quotes from young people Wexler interviewed"
Models of learning for those who are alienated from learning

Introduction

YOUNG PEOPLE who have left school early because they have become severely discouraged or alienated from that environment, often respond when alternative models of learning are provided. Such models are likely to have the following characteristics:

- Focus on real life issues of immediate relevance to the young person
- Indirect approaches – outcomes which are relevant are foregrounded, while other outcomes are left in the background
- Integrated approaches – many subject areas are integrated into one session
- Use creative communication modes
- Linking young people to key people within their community

- Matching training experiences to their needs and interests.
- It must be made relevant to the lives that they are living.
- We must be aware that this will vary from group to group, sometimes dramatically.
- Get them to identify skills they have and understand that life experiences themselves develop skills.
- Experiential rather than academic focus.

*Feedback from consultation workshop at Granville*

- Do something interesting, not a subject.
- Solve real situations, out there, rather than in the classroom.
- Acknowledge their skills as the starting point and then provide an opportunity for them to broaden them.

*Feedback from consultation workshop at Orange*

- They had been turned off learning, and this way, they don’t know that they are learning at first.
- They have a lot of barriers within themselves and feel inadequate as learners.
- These young people are living real life – do we ignore that or respond to it?

*Feedback from consultation workshop at Newcastle*
Focus on real life issues

Programs need to be designed to be relevant to the immediate needs of the young people. Their needs and interests should inform programming and curriculum decisions. The views of the young people are therefore central in program planning and negotiation needs to be embedded throughout. Curriculum decisions, however, should maximise entry to further educational pathways. Options need to be fully discussed with the students.

The implementation of a narrow interpretation of pre-determined curriculum is rarely successful with the most alienated learners. However, once the young person is re-engaged with learning, they may welcome the opportunity to engage with more formal, traditional learning models, if they have sufficient support to enable them to succeed.

Indirect approaches

Indirect approaches to learning are being found to be successful with the most alienated learners. For example, some people call this "education in disguise" or "education by stealth". (Newcastle consultation workshop)

The program is designed to include key curriculum areas but knowledge is usually backgrounded, not foregrounded. Rather what is foregrounded is:

> The outcomes of the program (eg a performance, an excursion, a tangible object that they have made)
> Relationships with the teachers
> Relationships with the other students
> The experiences throughout the program.

The learning outcomes that the student achieves are often placed in a secondary position and identified afterwards. Curriculum areas and assessment are usually backgrounded and may be kept hidden.

Integrated approaches

Programs that have been found to be successful encompass a range of elements including:

> A range of subject areas that are integrated
> Experiences in their local community
> Work experience opportunities
> Intensive support to develop underpinning competencies.

Projects are often found to be a useful approach because they automatically include:

> Team work
> Time deadlines
> Clearly defined outcomes.

Use of activities which allow self expression

Many projects are focusing on engaging young people through creative communication projects in music, video, drama, photography and dance. The programs allow...
a lot of flexibility for the young person to explore the medium and then to use it to communicate about themes and issues that are important to them. Most projects have an individual component and a team component throughout, and the team usually works towards a performance or exhibition of its work.

Some young people have then moved into vocational programs in these fields. In addition, these projects allow some participants to explore and communicate about significant issues, experiences and feelings in a non-verbal mode.

**Linking young people to key people within their community**

Young people at risk may be isolated from the range of social relationships that provide connections with the community and support their development. Many programs support interaction among program participants in order to extend the young people’s network of peer relationships. These peer relationships are particularly important to the young people in addressing issues that concern them and to support them when commencing further education programs at new locations.

Programs also link young people with supportive peers who have completed programs previously and/or supportive adults. Programs often set up links with potential mentors in the community and business. For example, community cultural leaders may become involved with and provide an introduction to aspects of the young person’s cultural heritage.

**Foreground/background**

The overall conclusion that has emerged is that, in one way, learning models for youth at risk are not different to those used in schools with adolescents anywhere, or with adults in education programs anywhere. But, in another way, the models are different. During the discussions in the consultation workshops, we came to the conclusion that the same elements of education apply, but some are foregrounded more when providing programs for youth at risk.

Consider the following elements: curriculum outcomes, action learning – learning by doing, learning projects, relationship with the teacher, grading and marks, learning about life through conversations, problem based learning around real life challenges, written assignments and essays, immediate feedback, tangible rewards from participation, team work tasks, work experience, long term benefits, reading of set texts, experimenting with new equipment, text books, disciplinary knowledge.

Select those that are the most likely to be foregrounded in programs specifically developed for youth at risk. Select those that are most likely to be backgrounded in programs specifically developed for youth at risk.
Questions

> Why do you think the foregrounded items need to be emphasised for these young people?

> What kinds of theories of learning are we drawing upon when we design programs in this way?
Theories of learning

FORMALLY is a ‘snapshot’ of various theories of learning that you may wish to follow up further.

**Formal learning, informal learning and incidental learning**

Various adult education theorists are drawing attention to the distinction between formal, informal and incidental learning. This has developed in association with an increased awareness of learning that occurs within the workplace or local community.

Formal learning includes learning through programs that are organised around a formal defined curriculum, conducted by professional educators, in education buildings, leading to a qualification. Formal programs may be focused on different kinds of skills and knowledge eg they may be academic, technical or professional.

Informal learning includes learning through planned activities of various kinds, such as self directed learning projects, mentoring, networking, coaching, discussions with colleagues etc.

Incidental learning is learning that occurs incidentally to life and work – the learning is unplanned and unintentional and is often implicit or hidden in the actual experience. For example, learning by observing the experiences of others, trial and error learning and learning through public and private communications.

**Learning from experience**

Dewey’s theory of active learning has widely influenced education, even though he wrote in the 1930s. Dewey saw personal experience as the prime source of education. Recognising what is valuable from that experience requires formal or informal reflection – wondering, doubting and questioning.

Theories of learning from experience focus on learning that occurs when people are engaged with learning by a significant experience:

> Learning involves much more than an interaction with an extant body of knowledge; learning is all around us, it shapes and helps create our lives – who we are, what we do. (Boud D, Cohen R & Walker D:1)

The theories note the importance of triggers for learning – for example, through a new experience that raises doubt about previous assumptions. Most writers emphasise the importance of reflection in creating a bridge between experience and learning – through noticing experience, and rethinking experience, new conclusions can be made.

The experiential learning cycle outlines four stages of learning from experience – having an experience, reviewing an experience, concluding from the experience and planning the next steps. Further, various theorists of learning styles have suggested that people have different strengths and weaknesses in learning from experience, depending on the stages for which they are most suited. For example,
activists often learn best by trying new experiences and by active experimentation, but may not know how to reflect on what happened and draw out ideas from these experiences. Pragmatists learn best when presented with a framework of ideas and a process which they can then apply and test out. They may find it more difficult to learn when ‘thrown in’ to totally new situations.

**Problem based learning**

Problem based learning starts with a problem that is relevant to the learners. Through a series of investigations, problem solving and reflection the learners find out what they need to address the problem. Problem based learning reverses the traditional approach of commencing with knowledge and then later applying it. Rather, we start with a problem and then gather the knowledge, and knowledge gathering skills, that are required.

**Key competencies: an integrated approach**

Work contexts integrate key competencies and work specific skills. Thus, trends in key competencies and workplace communication point us to a more holistic view of work and education. The study by Hager et al (reference below) includes the following recommendations:

> Adopt an holistic and integrative training orientation
> Emphasise that the situation or context is crucial
> Use the key competencies as a vehicle for enriching training

They found that methods that work well include critical incident scenarios, problem based learning, and assessment tools that integrate the key competencies.

**References:**


Brunner DD (1994) *Inquiry and Reflection* State University of New York USA


Pathways: a process of progressive re-engagement

WHEN CONSULTING with post school providers of programs for marginalised young people, the central emphasis of the discussions was the importance of connection – connections between young people and their family, young people and education and young people and their community.

Program pathways were identified that suggest a continuum of focus from engagement through to formal education achievement.

**Programs focused on social engagement**
- Engaging with a supportive adult/teacher
- Engaging with peers
- Engaging with learning – often indirectly
- Engaging with communication

**Programs focused on the development of personal competencies**
- Maintaining relationships with a supportive adult/teacher
- Maintaining relationships with peers – team work
- Engaging with the community
- Development of confidence – I can do....., I can learn.....
- Development of goals for learning

**Engaging with a formal education program – 'youth at risk' specific**
- Maintaining relationships with peers
- Maintaining relationships with teachers
- Engaging with a formal curriculum adapted to their needs and preferences
- Achieving learning when provided with extra support
- Exploring further options

**Participating in formal education – mainstream/non specific program**
- Participating in a formal pre-set curriculum
- Relating with a wider range of teachers
- Participating with a learning group of adults and/or young adults
As young people are quite different in their needs they will move into this continuum and through this pathway in different ways and at different paces. Also there is no intention to suggest that all young people move through these stages sequentially. Also, it should be noted that programs can span some of these stages; for example, by drawing on the features of two of these stages.

Rather, these four stages draw teachers’ attention to the progressively increasing requirements on the young person to negotiate expectations and ‘fit’ within societal structures and norms. This pathway of gradual engagement can provide pointers to teachers’ decisions about whether a young person is ready for a particular program.

Consider the following:

> Paul is a 16-year-old boy who left school at 14 years, after a long time of irregular attendance. He found it difficult to concentrate at school and is really not at all interested in returning to a classroom. He lives at home with his mum, and although they often fight about money, it’s okay there. He has been spending time with a few mates around town, playing pool at the PCYC, and he likes video games.

> Maria is a 15-year-old girl living in a medium sized, regional town. She became pregnant 6 months ago and left school. She is currently unemployed and is finding that all the employers in the town expect someone to have the School Certificate. She is interested in staying in touch with other young people and, because she doesn’t want to be at home all day with her mother, wants to find a program. She decides to attend a course that will lead to the School Certificate as she knows she will need a job to support her baby.

> Tran is a 14-year-old boy who drops in regularly to the local youth centre. The youth workers have noticed that, although he is very uncommunicative, he often likes to pick up the guitar and start playing.

Questions

> What may indicate an area where each young person might be interested and motivated to learn?

> What kind of program may suit each person best, to start with?

> How would you start talking to each one about their learning options?
Some opening thoughts ...
what young people say

Young people’s comments

In a relaxed conversational way a number of young people were asked the following questions:

> what helps get you thinking?
> what helps you work hard?
> what helps you learn?
> what extends you, stretches you?
> what do you need to have fun?

If you want to get a feel for this process you might want to answer the questions yourself. You could also write up what you think your client group would say if you asked them and then go check and see if you have guessed correctly. This is what the young people surveyed had to say:

What ingredients do you need?

So that you start using your head, start thinking?

a. Not to be around negative people.
   b. Focus on life issues.
   c. Intelligent conversation.
   d. Things in the world.

So that you work hard?

a. Passion, interest, acceptance, achieving quality results
   b. Having no choice, that is, feeling like I have to do something.
   c. The big picture of the finished product.
   d. Having a dream of future goals.

So that you learn?

a. Effective teaching aids, methods. Interest in topics, memory and motivation, support, lack of delays between lessons on same subject.
   b. Have to be interested.
   c. I work hard naturally.
   d. Setting my mind to it. Get others to help. Concentrate.

So that you challenge or extend yourself?

a. Setting achievable but difficult goals; overcoming judgments of people.
   b. Competition with people same sex as me.
   c. Anything fast.
   d. The future is scary and can’t be predicted so you just have to go with the flow.

So that you have fun?

a. To be interested and focussed on the job at hand; have other people involved with different perspectives and attitudes.
   b. Spending money when I have heaps.
   c. New things.
The process of engagement

‘I’m sick of people being nice to me just so they can help me.’ (19-year-old female)

‘I ask myself what is this person’s motivation to care.’ (15-year-old male)

Introduction

In talking about engagement with those who work with young people, some words pop up constantly; words like honesty, mutual respect, and ‘youth friendly.’ It is unlikely that these words will be new to you. Yet the ideas continue to be important and so, in an attempt to breathe some new life into them, the following is presented conversationally for you to think about. It is a combination of comments from workers, comments from young people and questions for you. Most people made a distinction between what they might do at an initial meeting and what they might do subsequently. Both these are included below. The above two quotes seem relevant to this topic and so we opened with those.

Engagement: what is it?

Common to most definitions is some reference to the idea of ‘joining’ with another person, the process of forming a relationship, of getting to know each other in a way which is meaningful to what you might need to do together. Here are some of the ingredients that are likely to affect the process of engagement.
At the beginning of the process

Mutual respect

Not surprisingly, this idea surfaces over and over again with both workers and young people. It is at the top of the list here, as it is perhaps the most important ingredient and one which is intimately connected with the following ingredients. Working out what is and what isn’t respectful is a little tricky, but there seem to be elements of listening, of responding positively to the other person, and of demonstrating that you value who they are, what they do, what they have to offer, their culture, language, beliefs and values. Respect cannot be a formula or a demand. A person either feels respected or they don’t. Regulating that staff, for example, should ‘praise’ young people seems somewhat contrived. On the other hand an approach which constantly looks for and comments on the successes, the efforts, and the qualities of young people seems to be approaching the spirit of respect.

Questions

> How do you know that a young person feels respected by you?
> What tells you that a young person respects you?
> What tells you that young people are respectful of others they encounter?

Mutual interest

It makes sense to try to find common ground, subjects that interest both the worker and the young person. Many educators also feel it is up to them to become involved in things which interest the young person, not so much the other way around.

There is general agreement that it is not useful to pretend to find something interesting that you don’t. This comments sits well with the idea of honesty, which is mentioned below. An educator can be genuinely interested in a young person but not in what interests the young person. Some suggest continuing to search to find a topic you are both interested in.

Questions

> What do you do if a young person is passionate about something that does not interest you?
> What do you do if a young person is really interested in something that you morally or ethically object to?

Honesty

This is regarded highly by both staff and young people; a sense of being yourself, and of being open about yourself. It is also usefully thought about in connection with the idea of intimacy.
Degree of intimacy

Most workers say that on a first contact they will be aware of not intruding, of deliberately not asking certain questions, or raising certain topics. This may well include the worker being particularly sensitive about issues like sexual abuse, the young person’s use of alcohol and/or other drugs, family relationships or sexuality. Intimacy and honesty are clearly linked because workers may have to decide whether to reveal something personal about themselves as a conversation develops.

Questions

> How do you decide which topics to raise and which to avoid?
> How do you decide what to tell about yourself and what to keep private?
> What do you do if you feel you have given away something about yourself that you feel you shouldn’t have?
> What do you do if asked a question that you do not want to answer?

Who has what responsibility?

All staff spoken with were clear that the worker has more responsibility than the young person for the process of engagement, for the conversation, its content and how matters are taken up and discussed. At the same time, they also said that they would be directed by, or take their lead from, the young person.

Play by rules set by young person

This is an interesting ingredient because many educators feel that they have a large part of the responsibility to establish and maintain the conversation. At the same time, many feel it is important to leave lots of room for the young person to establish the rules or ‘feel’ of the conversation.

Open up pathways of communication

What happens in an initial contact can be followed up later. The initial contact is something that suggests a direction, opening up possibilities for more to come. An educator might get some idea of what interests a young person, what concerns or disturbs them. These things can be pursued at a later time. Engagement is about establishing a relationship that can continue, about finding a way to ‘work’ together.

The direction of the conversation

The educator may well initiate this, but will stay with what matters and interests the young person. This doesn’t mean pretending interest (see ‘honesty’) but it does mean attending to what seems of most interest to the young person. An educator may well introduce new topics to find out if these are of interest.
Negotiation and choice

This fits well with the idea of setting the rules. What a young person enters into and commits to needs to be clearly negotiated and needs to be chosen by the young person. This is more than consulting a young person. At the same time this does not mean encouraging a young person to do only what is comfortable. Development/growth is sometimes uncomfortable. Negotiation suggests that the educator and the young person both have input into what happens next, both in terms of what will happen and how it will happen.

Questions

> What things can be negotiated?
> Is there anything that cannot be negotiated?
> What do you do if you think something is important to a young person but they show no interest in this issue?

Information

If information needs to be obtained it should be minimal and about topics which are not intensely personal. More information can be obtained over time.

Questions

> What is the essential information that you or your service needs at a first contact?
> What do you do if you need to obtain information that a young person seems reluctant to give?

Freedom to leave

It seems important for a young person to feel free to leave. This refers to a feeling about a physical space, about projects and programs and about relationships. Some say 'young people need an escape route.'
Ongoing engagement – ingredients

The relationship

Many workers speak, in different ways, of ‘getting alongside’ a young person, of working with them. It is within the context of a meaningful, productive and respectful relationship that a young person is able to grow.

A positive experience

Many young people have had negative experiences of themselves. Part of the process of engagement is to help them connect with themselves (often through the relationship with a worker) in a positive way; to have a positive experience of themselves and another person.

Indirect learning

Young people who have had negative experiences of education sometimes respond to more indirect forms of education. This approach is still honest and open but, for example, may locate a learning experience within the context of music, or video or theatre projects. In terms of engagement, it is more likely to be the project rather than the actual learning which is attractive.

Needs (not necessarily problems)

As a young person becomes known to an educator and a service, it becomes possible to identify more accurately what needs this person has and to try to meet these needs. Here, there is an important distinction between needs and problems. The very description ‘at risk’ can be a label that encourages a person to live up to that label. Many educators prefer to talk in terms of identifying what it is that a person needs to achieve their life goals, what obstacles might exist and ways of dealing with these obstacles.

A ‘youth friendly’ environment/relationship

The idea of ‘youth friendly’ applies to more than the physical environment. This issue seems complex and fluid. People mostly agree that what defines ‘youth friendly’ may well change over time. If a young person is going to be able to grow or develop in some way, then maximum comfort may not be the most productive ingredient (see young peoples’ comments). The issue seems to be: What conditions are needed so that this young person can achieve their goals? What is ‘youth friendly’ in helping a person learn break dancing may be counterproductive to developing job interview skills. This seems to be a tricky idea, open to much discussion. Many people feel it is a process of ongoing review, and what will fit for one person may well not fit for another and may also change for the same person over time.
Responsibility

People agree that, as the educators, they continue to have the major responsibility in the development of an ongoing relationship that is useful to the young person.

Challenge

Many people feel that over time there needs to be an element of challenge to help a young person grow/develop.

Balancing aims with needs and wants

Many people speak of the ongoing issue (sometimes ‘difficulty’) of trying to interest a young person in those aspects of their life that the educator feels are important, but which the young person is reluctant to explore.

Questions

> What are you aiming to achieve with this person?
> What do you think their aims are?
> With this young person, what is their most important need right now?
> What is their most important longer term need?

Identifying pathways

As a young person’s goals become clearer to them and they feel more at home in a program, there are opportunities to help them identify what they would like to explore and how they might do this.

Questions

> Are there common needs or aspirations among your client group?
> Which of these needs are best addressed in group programs? Which ones by special projects? Which ones individually?
> Are there any major needs which cannot be met by your service, and how do you respond to these?
> What other agencies might be of use to this young person?

Maintaining boundaries

As relationships between staff and young people develop over time it is likely to increase in familiarity and closeness. It is important to ensure that, as this occurs, staff needs and those of young clients are kept quite distinct from each other.
Questions

> How do you make sure that your issues and needs do not become blurred with those of the young people you work with?
> How would you know if your values or views were unreasonably influencing a young person?
> Do you have opportunities for professional supervision to review your work practices?

Cultural sensitivity

Culture influences who we are and all we do. Being culturally sensitive includes doing as much homework as we can to try to develop an understanding of who we are relating with, while bearing in mind that, while each person has a culture, they are also an individual within that culture. In face-to-face situations it also means trying to get some sense of who this person is in front of us and what fits for them. If we genuinely and respectfully try to do this and proceed carefully, most people will forgive us if we occasionally get it wrong. Sometimes we also have to ask ourselves if we are in fact the right person for this topic or issue, or for this person. Perhaps someone of a different culture, sex or sexuality would be more appropriate.
Consultation and negotiation: the key to effective planning

ALL PROGRAMS that have been identified as successful have been based on effective negotiation with young people who will undertake the program. Negotiation involves the educators in paying close attention to the needs, interests, preferences and priorities of the young people. Programs are often very local in approach, reflecting local interests and locally available resources. The educator and the young people involved make joint decisions about the program content and approach.

In addition, consultation that occurs with other stakeholders develops a broad perspective of the young people's needs, histories and community. The education program developer gathers input from the range of community members and organisations that are committed to young people, developing a holistic view about how educational needs fit within their lives overall.

In this way, the program planning process is centred around the young people's views and contextualised with the input of the broader community. Involving the young person in the development, design, delivery and evaluation processes increases ownership and commitment to the program. It also enhances their view of themselves as having control over their own destiny.

Some of the keys to effective consultation are:

> Involving all relevant stakeholders
> Being prepared to dream first and consider the practicals later
> Being able to listen to young people
> Desiring to hear what they want
> Being ready to step outside of what's been done before
> Using formal and informal information gathering approaches
> Committing to dreaming with them
> Being able to work with them to plan a program that motivates them and captures their dreams as fully as possible
> Having time to reflect on the responses
> Understanding gender, cultural and sub-cultural issues
> Evaluating and asking yourself the 'difficult' questions, not just about what you did but what else you could have done
Remember: the time, place and language you use to find out these things depends on the individual or group you are working with.
Consider the keys to effective consultation listed on page 49 and the questions on page 50. Use these as prompts to develop a set of questions or a strategy for consulting with young people. The aim is to match your approach to the young people you need to consult or negotiate with. Variety and flexibility are important. You might like to consider: casual conversations, surveys, brainstorming, interview processes (e.g., video), creative dreaming, other unusual or creative approaches (e.g., drawing).

The challenge for experienced workers with programs that work is how best to build on what you know, and yet stay fresh and listen again with new ears. As the youth may have moved on or this group may vary from the last, so the existing program may be a ‘good’ fit but not the ‘best’ fit. Ongoing commitment to consultation and negotiation with young people leads to best practice programs that maximise ‘fit’.

The initial consultation data will form the basis for developing program objectives and goals. This development process should involve the stakeholders, particularly the young people, in negotiating all aspects of the decision making process. It is also an important point to consider what other services might be strategic partners who could contribute to and enhance the program.

Consultation and negotiation throughout the program should occur as ongoing processes that provide continual feedback to facilitate quality improvement and tailoring.
EDUCATION PROGRAMS for young people at risk do not operate effectively in isolation from other community resources. Young people at risk have needs other than education and, therefore, holistic interagency approaches are regarded as essential for these young people. The expertise of a range of professionals may be required at different stages throughout the program and to enable the young person to exit and move to their next step. Effective referral throughout the service network depends on staff in organisations being aware of the services that are available in the local network.

Counselling, group support, mentoring, health education, referral to services and support by role models are often identified as useful strategies. Collaborative approaches which bring together a range of agencies are recommended – for example, a ‘roundtable’ of the student, parents, teachers and counsellors to design some appropriate choices with the student.

Some young people may already be involved in a range of community services and programs. If this is the case, it is important for the services to work together or liaise to ensure that the young person’s needs are being met as efficiently and effectively as possible. Integrated holistic approaches that meet the broad range of young peoples needs, not just educational needs in isolation, have been found to be most effective.

Many young people however may be surrounded by services but not connected with any of them. The figure on the following page displays some of the variety of services that may be surrounding the young person. Of course, not all areas have all of these services available.

The consultation process for this project stressed the importance of providing pathways for young people that best meet their individual needs. To do this effectively, you need to consider the young person’s needs holistically. You might like to reflect:

> Does this young person need to be connected to other services while completing your program?
> Are there services that could be useful to refer prospective young people to before entering your program?
> What services could the young person articulate to, or move to, after they finish your program?

If, for example, the young person was already linked to a mental health service then liaising with that service will help provide the young person with a more holistic service. Close liaison will assist in ensuring that the messages conveyed by professionals working with the young person are consistent and reinforce their case management plan. It can also provide the opportunity for staff development and gaining further understanding of the needs of the young person.

You may need to gather information on what services are available in your local area. Then consider existing and possible future strategic links. A worksheet has been provided to start you on this process.
Some Possible Services

**Young Person**
The young person may be surrounded by services but not connected to many (or any) of them.
Just like the young person, your service may be surrounded by many services but not connected to many of them. The more services you are aware of and the more you are networked or relating to them, the better able you are to access referrals and to help young people connect to other services to meet their needs.

**Step 1:** Take a few minutes to reflect on the services listed on the previous page. Place a tick or highlight the ones where you currently know someone or have a contact.

**Step 2:** Draw below the services you have connections with. If you are already linked to a large number of community services, you may need a larger page for this exercise.

**Step 3:** Refer back to the services listed on the previous page and, using a different colour pen, add the services you would like to find out more about and/or develop future links with.

**Step 4:** Finally, think about ways to expand your links. One way is to join or expand your involvement in the local interagency. Another way is to get a local community services directory from your local council and contact specific services directly. You can also obtain a copy (for a small fee) of the “Cyrus” Youth Resource Directory of NSW from David Leary at the Come In Youth Resource Centre on (02) 9331 2691.
Collaboration and partnerships

PROGRAMS ARE often provided through partnerships with other agencies or other collaborative arrangements. Partnerships may develop in order to:

> Pool resources to conduct the program
> Promote the program
> Develop pathways between programs
> Address non-educational needs of young people
> Provide seamless service delivery to young people at risk

Therefore, education providers need to develop knowledge of the broader service network, especially services for young people, within their local community. Educators in the consultation workshops commented that awareness of other services enables them to remain focused on their role as educators, without trying to be everything that the young person might need. Further, they thought that their collaboration with others modelled positive messages to young people about the importance of working together with others, respecting the contribution of other people's skills and making decisions together.

The following diagram outlines some of the characteristics of good partnerships:

- Able to find common ground and mutual benefit
- Youth focused
- Time and resources
- Open communication and easy access
- Build relationships
- Negotiate an agreement or contract
- Often start small then grow
- Flexibility
- Set realistic outcomes and evaluation criteria
- Overcome barriers and take risks
Good partnerships – that meet the needs of young people

Are youth focused

Good partnerships focus on the needs of the young person. They are not primarily centre- or services-focused, but develop out of an idea or vision of how to better meet youth needs.

Are able to find common ground and mutual benefit

Good partnerships tend to develop when services perceive a way they can work together to create something neither service could achieve alone. The services need to find some common ground, their underlying philosophies need to be reasonably compatible and they need to perceive some mutual benefit or advantage in working together.

Have the time and resources to devote to partnership

A crucial aspect of working partnerships seems to be the investment of the resources to allow the partnership to work. Adequate time, especially in the face of competing pressures and needs, seems particularly important. Finding the right people is also a priority – each person will bring different skills. Flexibility and motivation are key.

Build relationships

Good partnerships value relationships, both the relationships with young people and those between the partners themselves. These relationships are characterised by openness and trust. To build up these relationships takes time and there needs to be continuity in staff and funding. As one worker put it, “Youth at risk are transient and high risk – they need ongoing commitment and stable staff – they don’t need us to reflect transience”.

Have open communication and easy access to each other

To work well, partners need to have open styles of communication and easy access to each other. If an issue arises, it is important that it can be readily resolved rather than giving rise to the frustration of leaving messages without contact.

Provide consistent messages

An agreed and consistent approach to the needs of the young person means that the partners do not send mixed or contradictory messages to the young person.

Value flexibility

Successful partners tend to think laterally and flexibly. As the participants at the consultation described it, “they think outside the circle – they are grey, not black and white”. They are not dogmatic; rather, they look for creative ways forward and new options.
**Often start small then grow**

When starting a new partnership, starting small can be beneficial. This allows bite-size steps that people can manage, while giving the partnership time to build and develop momentum. Partnerships take time and taking on too much can undermine potential outcomes and success.

**Overcome barriers and take risks**

Overcoming barriers and resolving conflict are essential skills in even the best partnerships. New programs will tend to have teething problems, unexpected situations will arise, challenges of working with this population will arise, and management and others may not be quick to support new initiatives. Productive partnerships often overcame considerable resistance in their early stages. New partners need to be very motivated and often persuasive in promoting their ideas to others. They also need to be skilled negotiators who don’t readily accept ‘no’ as the final answer. They need to understand that partners’ organisations may have very different cultures, resulting in different approaches to their work and to young people. Awareness of these differences can help to promote understanding and tolerance and aid in overcoming difficulties.

**Set realistic outcomes and evaluation criteria**

Outcomes need to be based on a thorough understanding of the young people involved in the program and their needs. Standard organisational outcomes may not be flexible enough to address their needs. For example, for some young people the decision to enrol is a big one – outcomes based on regular attendance may not be realistic given the other complex issues in their lives. Partners need to have the opportunity to collaborate to develop outcomes and evaluation criteria, and the flexibility to refine and alter the strategy in the light of changing needs and feedback.

**Negotiate an agreement**

Partners need to have a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities in the partnership. As mentioned above, ‘cultures’ in the partner organisations may vary and a way of resolving issues needs to be determined and clearly understood between partners. Some successful partners stress the importance of formalising relationships, of having an agreement or contract or at least a memorandum of understanding. This means, if staff do change, new staff will know what is expected. Other partnerships prefer to operate on verbal understandings that are flexible and easy to vary as needed.
Collaboration between agencies and different professional groups has the benefit of bringing a wider, richer and co-ordinated range of resources to these young people. Effective collaboration involves such factors as:

- Emphasising shared commitments to this client group
- Effective and regular communication
- Regular review
- Developing strategies to address problems/conflicts that arise
- Respect for different professional knowledge
- Developing policy and protocols to address issues in working together

Different partnership models

Models of partnership are as diverse as programs themselves. However some generic models do seem to exist. Some of these have been outlined in the table on page 60.

One critical aspect to consider when developing a partnership is whether the partners will equally share roles for the development and management of the program, or if one partner will take the primary role. Models in the field seem to fall along a continuum.

**Successful outcomes for youth at risk**

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**Advantages of interagency collaboration**

Headstart showed how the creative environment of music and art programs led to a natural development of language, literacy and numeracy skills. Headstart also demonstrated the many advantages of interagency collaboration.

**HOW IT WORKED:**

Eastern Suburbs Regional Evening College (ESREC) has worked for a number of years with the Sydney City Mission’s Creative Youth Initiatives Centre (CYI) as part of its HELP outreach strategy. Sydney City Mission’s status as a Registered Training Organisation allowed easy access to the formal VET system, in particular, accredited courses.

Both ESREC and CYI also wanted to strengthen existing strategic alliances with other youth service organisations servicing a similar target group.

Music and art activities provide meaningful contexts in which young people can explore the issues most relevant to them. Headstart linked youth health workshops with creative expression and proved to be an effective means of providing the young people with important information about sexuality, safe sex, relationships, mental health, drugs and alcohol, conflict resolution and dealing with feelings.

The collaborative approach of the project produced a comprehensive and holistic program that yielded positive results for both participants and the agencies themselves.

_Eastern Suburbs Regional Evening College_
However these roles are designated initially, they need not remain fixed over time. Models evolve and, as a less involved partner sees potential, they may move to provide additional time, ideas or motivation. Allowing opportunities for this fluid development allows partners to refine approaches and better meet the need of the young people they service. It also allows the model to change as the needs of young people change or as different young people enter the program.

The number of services included in the partnership may also change over time. As networks change or new staff take up roles in local services, the potential for partnerships change. A new coordinator or manager may be more responsive and so options for new initiatives may open up. Conversely, it is important to consider what could happen if one of the key partners experiences a restructure or a key member moves to a different position. Partnerships that are heavily individual-driven have difficulty surviving such shifts. Strategies need to be employed to insure against such events.

**Developing programs that create pathways**

Marrickville Youth Resource Centre offers a range of youth related services particularly targeting NESB and Aboriginal youth. They are also involved in a range of different partnership arrangements with other community organisations, government agencies, peak bodies and registered training organisations.

They have deliberately developed links and networks with other workers and agencies within the NESB and Aboriginal communities particularly with workers or interested community leaders. They then work often closely together sharing expertise, writing joint submissions, and establishing new initiatives. They also refer young people to services offered by each partner or by other linked services. These community organisations sometimes use the facilities at the youth centre for their events or programs.

They have recently provided input to a proposal being written by the Inner West Aboriginal Community Company (IWACC) to embrace the recommendations from the Aboriginal Youth Gathering 2000 and the Aboriginal Seniors Yarn Up conference. The IWACC assisted by MYRC hope to arrange a forum where Aboriginal elders and young people can meet and learn from each other.

They have also formed links with a range of different Registered Training Organisations to offer a variety of partnered initiatives. One of their programs is funded under the Links to Learning Community Grants Program. This program is offered in partnership with MTC Work Solutions and Sydney Institute of TAFE (Ultimo campus and Petersham college) and targets disadvantaged youth. In addition to individual case-plans, a range of vocational options and modules are offered to assist the young people to pursue career pathways.

They also partner with Sydney Institute of TAFE (especially the Ultimo campus and Petersham college) to offer Youth at Risk Initiative programs with tasters and accredited modules in Hospitality, Information Technology, Sport and Recreation and First Aid.

Where possible they establish articulation pathways as options in their programs. An Urban Art (Aerosol Art) initiative will begin as some informal workshops that lead to a TAFE Outreach program. It will be based at the youth centre using qualified youth/arts workers to deliver some of the training. The plan is for at least some of these students to eventually articulate to relevant mainstream TAFE Certificates.

Partnerships at Marrickville Youth Resource Centre, like many of their programs, are fluid and constantly under negotiation. This allows them to continually embrace new directions and initiatives as the need requires.
### Some Possible Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MODEL</th>
<th>NAME AND DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Co-operative or joint arrangements" /></td>
<td><strong>Co-operative or joint arrangements</strong>&lt;br&gt;Where both parties work jointly on the program, sharing the work in a mutually agreed manner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Coordinating arrangements" /></td>
<td><strong>Coordinating arrangements</strong>&lt;br&gt;Where one partner coordinates the project and links up with a number of bodies to offer the program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Linking arrangements" /></td>
<td><strong>Linking arrangements</strong>&lt;br&gt;Where one partner takes on the entire task of delivering the program and draws on the other partner to make it work well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Referral arrangements" /></td>
<td><strong>Referral arrangements</strong>&lt;br&gt;Where one partner completes the goals, and the client moves into the next stage provided by another partner, e.g., health, education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Articulation arrangements" /></td>
<td><strong>Articulation arrangements</strong>&lt;br&gt;Where a client completes a program or goal with a partner at one level and then moves to another partner for the next level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Multiple Collaborative Relationships" /></td>
<td><strong>Multiple Collaborative Relationships</strong>&lt;br&gt;Where a community agency with partnerships with a range of other community agencies develops a partnership with an education/training provider with a range of existing partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Supported Articulation" /></td>
<td><strong>Supported Articulation</strong>&lt;br&gt;Where a community, health or other organisation/agency provides ongoing support for a young person as they articulate through a range of educational providers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Emerging models" /></td>
<td><strong>Emerging models</strong>&lt;br&gt;What makes a good model is its potential to better meet young people’s needs. The more flexibility, the more opportunity to address unique individual needs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Adapted from: "It takes two" Adult and Community Education Provider and Neighbourhood Centres Partnerships 1999 Local Community Services Association and NSW Board of Adult and Community Education.

### Activity

Consider your program and see if you can draw your own model. What could improve your model? What other links are possible?
Program selection and program design

PROGRAMS ARE designed or selected to suit the young people's circumstances – there is no 'one best way.' We found that practitioners are cautious about whether it is useful to share resources, as the best programs have developed in response to very specific local needs and interests.

If the initial consultation has been thorough you will have collected information on the young people's needs and interests. This information is instrumental in developing, with the young people, the program aims and objectives. The young people's interests and preferences will suggest program content or possible themes.

If the program will be developed by a partnership, then both partners need to collaborate to design or select a program to best meet these needs. While other programs can help to generate creative thinking, replicating the program itself may not be useful. Wherever possible the emphasis is on individual programs that meet the individual needs of each young person.

Programs need to be designed to allow considerable flexibility so that teachers can respond to emerging individual or group needs.

To facilitate this consider how you can integrate ongoing consultation and negotiation with young people in the program plan.

When designing a good program, it is important to think about what pathway, career or work option it might lead to. Accredited training usually gives the students the greatest options for continuing their studies.

It may not be necessary to develop your own program, as there are many good programs that already exist that you can customise to meet your local needs. You may, however, need to undertake considerable research to find a program that

Snapshot

Thematic approaches to program development

Albury, TAFE has developed a thematic approach to the delivery of all subjects in the CGE course. All subjects have used water as a central theme. A themed course requires a great deal of time and effort to organise.

On top of the thematic approach is the concentration by the staff on developing a relaxed, easygoing and supportive culture for the students at the Albury campus.

MAIN REASONS FOR SUCCESS

- Thematic approach to learning.
- Teachers giving time to students outside of normal hours.
- Provision of access to student counsellors.

Albury TAFE

Stability and flexibility – rolling enrolments

The length of time the CGE course has run in Inverell was listed as a critical factor of its current success. What has made the difference is the stability of a core of experienced teachers, timetables and rooms now offered the students. It took time to gather experienced teachers, and the Coordinator notices the difference if the routine gets upset, e.g., radical changes in the teachers or the timetable.

Combined with the stability offered is the flexibility to meet the needs of the students. An example of this is the rolling enrolments offered. Numbers always drop off throughout a course, so at Inverell they enrol students in one subject on a trial basis. If they succeed, they can enrol in the whole course; if they choose not to go on, then they have not ‘failed’ completing a course.

Inverell TAFE
meets your needs. You may also be involved in considerable negotiation on obtaining the program, particularly if the curriculum is privately owned. As one coordinator put it, "once you find the best program don't take no for an answer. Just work out what could be in it for them." The curriculum owner may want financial reimbursement, or access to articulating students or promotion in the industry through media releases or newsletters etc.

**Program development**

Robinson Education Centre devised a highly flexible and individualised program for eight young Aboriginal students with high truancy rates and severe social and interpersonal problems. Literacy and numeracy skills improved as a result of the project, which focussed on arts activities and nutrition. The students subsequently had the opportunity to attend introductory horticulture and agriculture workshops conducted by Murrumbidgee Agricultural College.

The teacher set individual programs for each of the students. While this made her work more complex, it meant the students could work on activities which suited their moods and inclinations on any given day.

From an early stage, the Robinson Centre worked closely with a range of community and government agencies to develop the project. The interagency approach led to a holistic approach to assist the target group. Strong Aboriginal and community networks were developed and these have led to partnerships for new community initiatives.

One young student's attitude improved so dramatically that she is now seen as a role model for other Aboriginal students. In future, the Centre would engage local Aboriginal people where possible, as tutors, teachers or teaching assistants so that the students have suitable role models.

*Robinson Education Centre Inc*

The following snapshots demonstrate some of the ways that program coordinators are using indirect learning, project based learning and integrated learning approaches to design programs.

**Integrated outdoor learning**

Caving and outdoor activities create the focus of the Orange Timeout project. This provides ample informal learning opportunities, maintains high interest and allows integration of teamwork and literacy skills. Meeting the challenges also increases self-esteem and confidence.

*OCTEC Timeout project Orange*
Flexible Options for delivery

Brookvale TAFE teachers use OTEN modules to allow students to learn at their own pace in a friendly environment, clear of the pressures of face-to-face delivery. The flexible approach is based on the premise of having as few rules as possible, as “rules just don’t work with this group.” Instead, the approach of allowing students to come in on designated days and work on their own, with the support of a teacher if needed, has given this group the flexibility they require yet within a firm structure which they also need. The adjustment to this flexible approach for traditional teachers is enormous and support and assistance is needed.

However, other colleges need to be aware of the resources needed to set up this structure and the adjustment teaching staff must go through. Nevertheless, it shifts the paradigm away from disciplining behaviour, attendance and punctuality and into one of positive reinforcement, energetic achievement and student responsibility.

Brookvale College North Sydney Institute of TAFE

Integrated learning

Video Production and Event Management were combined as the medium to introduce team building and literacy skills in the Western Institute of TAFE.

Seven groups of students produced videos and organised a video festival and competition. They produced promotional material, developed a website and arranged sponsorship and prizes.

They embedded literacy skills within the video and management components. For example, the students designed assessment forms and Web Pages. They also developed literacy skills as they gained skills in management, multimedia and promotion.

Orange, Bathurst, Lithgow Campuses
Western Institute of TAFE

Developing creative programs that articulate

The Weldon Centre extended its HELP program by establishing a partnership with St George College of TAFE’s Outreach section to offer an introductory computer graphic arts course. Students responded enthusiastically to the creative elements of the program. Learning to use graphic arts software applications led to a noticeable improvement in their literacy and numeracy skills.

The project succeeded because it skilfully integrated creative activities within a bridging framework that incorporated effective links with the mainstream VET sector. TAFE staff helped to develop the courses that comprised accredited modules. Students received a TAFE Statement of Attainment at the end of the project. The creative nature of the project maintained the students’ interest, resulting in high attendance rates and low drop-out rates.

By undertaking part of the project in a community environment, the students realised it was possible to learn and gain a credential without attending a formal training institution. For one of the projects, participants attended the TAFE college and one module was run by TAFE staff at the Weldon Centre. The project provided a ‘user-friendly’ introduction to the TAFE system and vocational training in general.

Weldon–Church of England Children’s Home Burwood – HELP program
When designing a program it is important to consider how to select participants for the program. Are there organisational selection criteria or requirements? Will you set selection criteria? Will you use an interview system? Who will make the final decision? What options can be found for those who aren’t selected?

Promotional strategies also need to be carefully planned. Decisions need to be made about the best options for finding and attracting youth at risk. Knowledge of the local community is important – will word of mouth through other youth at risk work? Which other agencies could help? Would flyers or posters be useful?

Logistical issues also need to be considered. What additional resources will be required? Is additional funding needed? What timelines are realistic? How can this be achieved inside existing work hours? What will take priority? Can others share the load? This is where partnerships can help.

Some other program ideas from the consultation workshops included:

- Drama programs which focus on health, drug and alcohol, or life issues
- Arts programs that integrate literacy
- Video and music programs
- Computer, web and multimedia programs
- Hospitality programs
- Driver’s licence
- Range of work experiences – develop insight into the world of work
- Adapted adult literacy and numeracy program
- CGE and CAFE for Youth at risk
- Mentor program – support goals and transition
- Educational, leisure and recreational components
- Outdoor programs and high challenge activities
- Automotive courses – including creative restoration programs
- Aboriginal cultural programs

References

Tips for Rapid Instructional Design  http://thiagi.com/rid.html

THERE ARE also a number of National Training Packages developed by Industry Training Advisory Bodies (ITABs) that can lead to national qualifications. National Training Packages outline the competencies required by that industry. It is important to be aware of the qualifications available and consider how your program might develop the relevant competencies.

There are a wide variety of training packages now available. Information on them is available on the web on the National Training Information Services Home page (http://www.ntis.gov.au). Some possible training packages and qualifications that may be worth considering include:

**Information Technology and Telecommunications ITAB**

**Training Packages and Qualifications Developed:**

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Also developed: ICT97 Telecommunications

**FURTHER INFORMATION:**

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The Adult and Community Education Sector have developed a useful guide on using the IT Training Package. It is called the Implementation Guide for the ACE Sector Information Technology Training Package (ICA99). Further information is available by ringing (02) 9266 8004.

Cultural Research Education and Training Enterprise Australia (CREATE Australia)

Training Packages and Qualifications Developed:

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Also developed: CUE98 Museum and Library/Information Services

Coming soon: Film, TV, Radio & Multimedia Industries Training Package

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Email: create@create.aust.com
Web: http://www.createaust.com.au

The Youth Arts Training Kit, produced, written and researched by Arts Training NSW, is published by the Youth Assistance Strategies Section, Department of Education and Training, 1998. Phone (02) 9266 8072.

Sport and Recreation

Training Packages and Qualifications Developed:

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The options for program development are enormous but finding the program of best fit is an art. Looking for a creative and interesting program that works well is a challenge. Often the pressures of time and other priorities mean that pragmatic decisions are made. However, taking time to reflect on the options at this point is very important. This activity can be completed as a team activity and young people can be included.

**Step 1:** Take a few minutes to reflect on your local community, the consultation data and what resources are available. When selecting a program, which factors should you consider? Which principles should guide your decision? Which creative options are available? Can you generate another alternative or refine the current proposal?

**Step 2:** Find someone outside the immediate situation and bounce off them your reflections from step 1. You might like to do this with a number of people and include some young people at this point as well.
Existing programs are customised extensively in order to suit these young people. Educators are bold in their approach to adapting programs.

The aim of customisation is to tailor the material to local needs and individual requirements on the basis of consultation and negotiation. The approach is to make it more relevant to the young people's lives. It does not change the level of the material but aims to increase the interest level and increase opportunities for integrated and informal learning. Enhancing artistic aspects and including mediums that allow young people to express themselves and their creativity is often successful. When customising a program, you may also need to develop additional resource materials or even modules to supplement the existing program and meet the group's needs.

The following principles are used by educators to customise programs for this target group:

- Make the program experiential in style
- Make the program outcomes almost incidental to the event
- Foreground ways that the program is relevant to their interests and backgrounds
- Promote the program using a naming of it that suits the young people eg "Youth on the Go"
Program delivery

LOW STUDENT/TEACHER ratio is crucial to enable the level of individual attention needed. Many programs are conducted with 2 people ‘co-teaching’ – this enables teachers to bring complementary skills, e.g., one with skills in a specific subject area and one with skills in literacy.

Additional supportive adults are sometimes engaged in the program in non-teaching support roles; for example, as mentors or drivers. Previous students have also been used in some programs as mentors, role models, coaches or even as ‘co-teachers’ for some skills.

Short modular programs are recommended to enable young people to achieve completion, even if they have little ‘staying power’ and are unsettled.

Exploratory spaces/programs are needed where young people can gather information about options, explore different approaches, identify their interests and capabilities, develop patterns of regular attendance and then make an informed decision about how to proceed. Short program segments also allow a young person to try a course and see if it suits them, without being defined as failure.

Where feasible, flexible entry and exit points should be designed to allow students to enter and leave programs as their circumstances permit. For example, homeless young people who have to move from refuge to refuge find it difficult to attend a lengthy program when they may no longer be living in the area.

Options to vary hours and to study part-time can be important to some students. Some students prefer flexible delivery, external and self-paced learning programs. However, these don’t work unless the student is very motivated and self-disciplined. Successful flexible programs generally include components of staff support and regular informal tutorial sessions.

Involving the local Aboriginal community

The Moree Plains Shire Council sponsored a highly successful HELP project that addresses the literacy and numeracy needs of young people in the region. The young people had the opportunity to work with local Aboriginal artists and Aboriginal community members to develop a contemporary visual and performing arts program. The project used festival activities to develop skills in music, writing and dance over a period of 20 weeks. The project reached approximately 45 young people with a core group of 20. Work groups included a girls’ contemporary Aboriginal dance class, a boys’ traditional dance troupe, a visual arts group and a street theatre/music group.

Moree Plains Shire Council HELP project
**Program delivery factors**

- Relaxed attitude to rules.
- Loads of support for the students.
- Holding classes off campus (out of traditional environment).
- Flexible entry and exit points.
- Excellent staff.
- Holistic model of support for students.

*High Street Youth Centre and Granville College, South Western Sydney Institute of TAFE*

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**Blue Mountains CGE**

- Teacher(s) and youth worker(s) work and liaise closely together on behalf of students.
- Use of the "primary school" model – one or two teachers at most, same teacher(s) delivers whole course – consistency in staffing.
- Strong community networks/links.
- Flexible interpretation of the curriculum.

*Blue Mountains College, Western Sydney Institute, Outreach*
Youth friendly environments

TO FACILITATE educational success and reduce attrition for young people who have been marginalised and disconnected from education systems, potential barriers need to be addressed. Educators need to create environments that are comfortable and ‘friendly’ for these youth. Shaping the environment needs to occur at two levels. Initially characteristics of the venue itself need to be addressed, then the links and contact points in the broader environment need to be considered. Developing a wonderful room can be undermined if the security officer or local manager makes the young people feel uncomfortable or unwelcome. There are a number of key points to consider:

Youth friendly environment

- The venue
  - Welcoming atmosphere
  - Extra noise OK
  - Scope to set up the room

- Broader organisation and community
  - Create bridges and build relationships
  - Introduce young people by name
  - Provide information - problems experienced by young people
  - Provide information - program rationale
  - Scope for making own space
  - Scope to smoke and move around outside
  - Space to smoke and move around outside

- Extra noise OK

- Provide feedback about outcomes and successes
Venue:

A range of different venues has been found to be successful, depending on the particular group of young people and their perceptions. Venue selection is particularly important for programs specifically targeted to marginalised young people. The key issue is that these young people feel comfortable with the venue. The main factors towards this are:

- a welcoming atmosphere – from other people they come across at the venue, as well as the venue’s decor and design
- scope to set up the room to suit the program and use relevant props
- scope for the young people to make a space their own in some way
- space to smoke and move around outside
- venue where extra noise won’t be a problem.

TAFE Colleges are sometimes perceived positively due to an association with older teenagers and adults who are also attending. Community centres and venues that the young people already access are often essential if some young people are to attend. Many programs are held across two or more locations.

Youth Friendly Environment

The course is delivered in an old Penrith Council building. It has a drop-in centre downstairs, where young people can get assistance with pressing issues such as food, clothing and shelter, with the classroom set-up upstairs. The whole program is a joint venture between social welfare agency staff (e.g. JPET / Social Security and North St Mary’s Neighbourhood Centre) and TAFE.

Blue Mountains College, Outreach

Developing creative hands-on programs

At Deniliquin they are developing a program to address local needs. The young people have an interest in hands on activities with vehicles and creative flair. They hope to initiate a “feral ute program”. They will restore old utes mechanically and then decorate them artistically! They hope to integrate work skills with literacy in a very practical program that will lead to a TAFE Workskills Certificate. They hope the program may lead to possible apprenticeships.

Finley Campus, Riverina Institute of TAFE
Linking with the broad organisation and community

Staff who conduct programs for young people may have to negotiate issues with a range of staff who are unfamiliar with young people. For example:

- cleaners and grounds staff
- administration staff
- teachers in other programs
- managers
- other professional staff
- shopping centre retailers and management
- neighbours.

Although trouble shooting and negotiations about problems that arise are always likely to be required, preventative strategies that ease the fears of others are often found to be useful. Many of these strategies create bridges and reduce the strangeness and stereotypes associated with this target group.

For example:

- introducing the young people by name
- providing information about the program rationale
- providing information about the problems experienced by young people in some circumstances
- providing feedback about outcomes and successes.

However, staff conducting programs for youth at risk often have to advocate for the needs and rights of these young people to participate when the dominant culture in the community or organisation is less welcoming. The best outcomes occur when the community and local organisations are able to provide cohesive and consistent messages to young people that include them, that are responsive to their needs, that respect their capabilities and preferences and expect fair behaviour.

Creating a youth friendly atmosphere in this broader community can take energy and time. It may be necessary to provide staff development workshops or informal learning opportunities for these staff. It can also be important to build positive relationships yourself with these staff and to foster attitudes of support by including them (where appropriate) in program activities, e.g., graduation celebrations.
Timetabling

THE TOTAL program hours are spread across a range of learning activities, rather than all the hours being spent in classroom type activities – for example, also including computer-based activities, time with mentor, excursions and community visits. Program timetabling reflects the patterns of the young people's activities in that local community.

When developing timetables, it may be important to consider what resources you need and whether other stakeholders may need to be consulted or negotiated with. For example, if you need computer access you may have to negotiate a time suitable to the students and the timetable.

Timetabling may also require flexibility in terms of the needs and responsibilities and cultural practices of the participants.
Flexibility and ongoing negotiation

PROGRAMS NEED to be very flexible because the teacher may need to totally change tack – what worked last time may not work with a particular group or a particular individual.

In addition, no matter how much planning occurs before the program starts, ongoing refinement has to occur during delivery. You also need to find ways to incorporate feedback from students and other stakeholders. As part of your evaluation strategy you may need to proactively seek out this feedback information. Negotiation is an ongoing process, involving the young people in active decision-making about their learning. When the program has been negotiated from the beginning it is less of a ‘teacher driven’ process. Educators and participants need to regularly reflect on program direction and delivery, constantly making adjustments as required.

Often the need for program changes will occur unexpectedly. Teaching staff need to be ready to put aside planned material and respond to group dynamics. Teachers need to keep ‘an eye for opportunities,’ considering what learning can result from unplanned incidents, actions and comments. Teachers act as facilitators, responding to the mood and possibilities of each session.

Valuable informal learning will often occur when experienced staff capitalise on these windows of opportunity. These opportunities may come in many different ways. It may, for example, be something that has happened in the personal life of a student or a current affairs event that suddenly provides a platform for an insightful discussion or a challenging activity. Therefore, teachers need to be ready to negotiate the session activities each time and have a range of ideas and resources in their ‘kitbag’ to draw upon.

Negotiation also needs to occur about group rules and the way learning occurs. Decisions about these may be negotiated early in the program but flexibility in application can be important.
Staff selection

DURING THE consultations, many people suggested that the most crucial factor in conducting a successful program is the teacher and the way that they relate to the young people.

Further, program coordinators suggest that the best way of finding staff to work with this group is to invite those who could have a potential interest to participate and lead a session. No matter what people say about what they would do and no matter how well you brief them about what to expect, some teachers respond and adapt and others do not. New staff need time to ease into the learning group and develop their own coping strategies.

While it is impossible to list all the desired qualities of an ideal staff member, here are a few that were mentioned at the consultations:

> Open
> Very flexible
> Value relationships
> Engage youth
> Respecting
> Sense of humour
> Like young people
> Perseverance
> Mess/noise tolerant
> Courageous
> Networker
> Welcomes difference and cultural difference
> Negotiator
> Hopeful and optimistic
> Fair and non-judgemental
> Creative
> Patient
> Unshockable listener
> Empathic/cares/nurtures
> Believe in students
> Strengths-focused.

Staff

Learning by the mistakes of the past, Coffs Harbour TAFE staff have discovered that teachers of CGE groups succeed if they have a high school background but with at least one year’s experience in TAFE. This cocktail is an ideal foundation to provide this volatile client group with the freedom they need but within clear boundaries.

The staff at Coffs Harbour feel that teachers with this mixed educational background definitely cope better with CGE students. They have the skills and the experience to know what is not worth getting upset over and to have at hand a ‘bag’ of teaching techniques so as to move to something new if what they had planned just doesn’t work. These teachers also have empathy with this group of students and realise that some have difficult personal lives that may affect their behaviour in class.

Coffs Harbour Campus, North Coast Institute of TAFE

Snapshot

The cheerfulness of the staff has been an influential factor in the students’ success. Up to now they have been used to and reacted to teachers being continually angry with them.

Cessnock Campus, Hunter Institute of Technology
CONTINUITY OF staff leads to better outcomes for these young people. Strategies to provide support for staff are crucial if programs are to have continuity of staff. These young people require more from staff emotionally and in terms of relationships. If staff are to be expected to continue to respond to this target group in emotionally effective ways, then organisations need to acknowledge these emotional demands and establish strategies to support staff.

Strategies that have been found to be effective include:

- Co-teaching
- Co-leading sessions with someone with the skills you need to develop
- Mentoring and supervision
- Planning and reviewing sessions together
- Planning or reviewing plans with a consultant or expert in the area
- Availability of debriefing sessions/processes
- Critical incidents policies which include strategies to respond to staff stress
- Research and study using the Internet
- Policies to provide for staff safety
- Messages from management that these young people also have a right to participate in programs
- Acknowledgment by other staff of their skills and commitment to these young people.

Butler (1996) proposes a model of human action where reflection is central. He also suggests there is a continuum of development. He argues that transformation can occur as we reflect on:

- Public knowledge
- Professional practice
- Personal knowledge
- World view.

**Step 1:** Develop a set of questions that could initiate reflection on these areas

**Step 2:** Spend some time reflecting on these questions. What observations or insights do they generate?

**Step 3:** Based on these reflections and the professional development strategies suggested above, consider possible next steps.

**Links to Learning Community Grants staff development program**

The Links to Learning Program have a comprehensive professional development program based on the results of a training needs analysis conducted in 1999. A qualifications framework was developed relevant to the roles of coordinator and tutor. The qualifications framework identifies packages of relevant units of competency across training/education, youth work and community work and a range of relevant qualifications and professional development pathways. The qualifications framework is used to link the professional development initiatives that are provided each year.

The professional development program for 2000 provides a range of different strategies to address a variety of needs, levels of experience and learning styles, including:

- regional workshops titled *Working with Young People in Crisis*
- an induction Kit for new staff
- action learning projects
- a mentoring program for new or isolated coordinators
- a guide to using the qualifications framework to plan professional development of the team and/or seek recognition of prior learning
- an annual Forum

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**OTHER PLACES THAT OFFER TRAINING/RESOURCES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>CONTACT</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Centre for Community Welfare Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Planning Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>Centre for Education &amp; Information on Drugs &amp; Alcohol</td>
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<td>Youth Action and Policy Association Library</td>
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</table>
CONSULTATIONS suggest that the biggest challenge in relation to evaluating programs is the unrealistic expectations of stakeholders who require accountability through specific evaluation data, but do not understand this target group. Open-ended and qualitative evaluation models may be required, since planned outcomes and goals may continue to develop over the length of the program.

Valid indicators need to relate to the learning barriers of that particular young person. For example, if a young person continually truanted from school because of a mix of family problems and a history of being named as a 'failure,' then regular attendance would be a valid indicator that these barriers had been addressed. However, the indicators currently used to evaluate the attainment of the program goals may not identify significant learning achievements such as these or may underestimate how remarkable such a turn-around could be for that young person. Therefore, there is a challenge for stakeholders to reach agreement about realistic outcomes for young people with various circumstances and histories, and then to develop valid indicators for these outcomes.

If you feel the outcomes need to be reviewed you could consider ways to influence the process. Some ways might include:

- Raise this issue at staff meetings,
- Write a letter with case studies to the funding body,
- Arrange meetings with Educational Managers.

The other key issue for evaluating programs is the ways that the participants provide feedback about their views of the program. This is a continual process – from initial consultation, through to feedback about how the program is progressing for them, through to end of program review.

The views of young people who have left the program are crucial, as this information may point to the need for a program tailored to young people at a different point along the pathway continuum. For the same reason, the views of young people who don’t attend the program can provide crucial information about barriers that they have experienced or perceived.

Evaluation criteria need to be selected to meet the needs of all partners. They also need to directly relate to the course objectives. If the aim is to reconnect marginalised youth back into the community then measures may include getting involved in a community activity or group. Thorough evaluation will include reflection on all aspects of the program, processes and decision-making. For example: were the course objectives appropriate for the group and achievable? How could I have involved young people more in the decision-making? A range of these points for reflection is included on the following page. You might like to use these as a starting point for developing your own list.
Thoughts to ponder

How can I involve the young people in this evaluation?

Do I want to collect qualitative or quantitative (statistical) data?

How could this evaluation strategy be more creative?

Will I use a written, graphical or verbal approach?

How will evaluating this change my practice?

Did my strategy meet the stakeholders (including my partner’s) needs? What do I do if they don’t? How do I negotiate realistic/appropriate performance indicators?

Were the objectives met? How do I know? Were they the right objectives?

Is a longitudinal approach possible? (to find out how the program affected ex-students)

Why did students drop out? How do I find out?

When should I collect evaluation data (beginning? middle? end? weekly?)

Were the staff supported? What more could be done? Do the staff feel appreciated?

If we had not spent our resources, energy and time on this program what else could we have done?

What unexpected gains did we have?

How can we develop or capitalise on these for the future?

What new contacts do we have? What new partnerships can we form?

What new contacts do we have? What new partnerships can we form?

Have we promoted and consolidated our successes? How do we feedback to stakeholders?

What unexpected gains did we have?

How can we develop or capitalise on these for the future?

What is the next step/pathway for the students? How can I create more?

What did the young people gain?

Why am I evaluating? Is it to get better results, to meet funding requirements, to write a report?

What would I do differently next time? What areas can I improve? What new skills have I learnt? How has this stretched me? Where do I want to go next?
Introduction

The following section includes strategies that are designed to both engage with young people and address issues that commonly arise. With some careful thought they can be adapted to address such issues as:

- use of alcohol and other drugs
- abusive or violent behaviour
- child protection

Strategies to engage young people

ACTIVITIES IN GROUPS or with individuals can be extremely invigorating, touching or even liberating. They can also be irritating, embarrassing or disturbing. They are used to advance a process in some way, to create a feel or introduce an idea to be explored. Each activity described here needs to be used for a clear purpose, when it is appropriate for the people involved and at a time when it will be of most use. When using these activities you will need to bear in mind the principles discussed earlier. That is, think about how they can be used to develop a ‘conversation’ with a young person, to ‘get along side them’ in that conversation, to find out what matters to them and help them work out what they would like to do next with their life.

Together with strategies, you will find descriptions of what are called here ‘extraordinary statements’ and ‘intriguing questions’. Making sensitive use of these in a discussion that might follow one of the activities listed below can make for a powerful and interesting conversation. Two examples of these combinations follow the strategies.

Theatre activities

Theatre can be powerful because it can show things that are not quite ‘real’: possibilities, dreams, fears. It can add a sense of the surreal and take people into thoughts, feelings and actions that they would not otherwise consider. ‘Theatre’ here does not mean ‘terrific performance’, but activities and techniques which are often associated with acting and performing, which can be adapted for a variety of purposes.

When and how to use these activities

Theatre activities can simply be used to add fun and movement to a group. They can also be used to explore virtually any topic: what a person is thinking or feeling about life in general, about relationships, about their prospects in life, about themselves, about topics like drug use or dating.

The specific activities which follow develop from a simple movement and finish with creating poses (image theatre) to represent something of importance.
Hence there is a gradual build up of difficulty and risk-taking. The actual image theatre can be done playfully or seriously. These activities do require that you be comfortable with them and flexible in their use. So practising beforehand is always a good idea. They can be used to open a group or to explore some aspect of a topic as the group develops, they add colour and movement and they, of course, fit for people who are not especially verbal.

Theatre is different from role play

It may be more ‘theatrical’ in that there is more of a sense of performance.

> There may be directions: ‘Starting now. AND... action!’
> The players may be placed on a ‘stage’ with limited room to move.
> Players can ‘act.’ They are not rehearsing something real as in a role play.

It can deal with, and express, things that are not tangible. An emotion can be expressed as a word only, or a look. Dialogue can be removed altogether so that actions become the medium of communication.

Playing a person, and idea or a feeling can give some emotional ‘distance’ of safety to be able to take up an issue. The person is present and involved, but via the medium of the theatre.

Caution

Such activities can be done light-heartedly or much more deeply. They can remind people of intense moments or relationships and hence need to be done with considerable care. After using these activities it can be useful to check with people that they are okay, and remind them of the safe place they are in. If there is any danger of touching feelings which cannot be managed in the situation you are in, then arrange for back-up from work-mates for yourself or the young person. Or if there is real danger, do not use them at all.

Make a cross and a circle

> With one hand make a cross... Stop... With the other make a circle... Stop...
> Now do them together.

PURPOSE

> To introduce the idea of doing something difficult.
> To get used to the idea of doing things imperfectly and feeling okay about this. (This activity comes from Augusto Boal who has written numerous books. See below.)
**Image of the hour**

Show us what you are usually doing on weekdays at 7.00 in the morning... At 8.00 in the morning... At 10.00... At midday... At 3.00 in the afternoon...

**PURPOSE**

> To signal that speaking will not be the only means of communication in the process to follow.

> To develop an exchange between those present. (This activity also comes from Augusto Boal. See below.)

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**Image Theatre: Snapshots or Sculptures.**

The following two activities employ image theatre. This is just what it sounds like – an image. It is frozen. It appears like a snap-shot or a video on ‘freeze-frame’. The idea is to capture something – a thought, feeling, idea, an aspect of a conflict, of a dilemma, of a distressing event, of a fear or a desire – and represent it in the image.

The following example looks at how a person’s life has been lately. One person ‘sculpts’ (places others in a pose) to represent what they want to show. (Alternatively, the persons themselves can strike poses to show these feelings or thoughts.)

---

**What has it been like lately, to be part of your life/this group/this program/a certain relationship?**

> three people are ‘sculpted’, in one image, showing:

> one good thing.

> one not-so-good thing.

> one thing which seems to be a combination of good and not-so-good.

> show the image to the group.

> ask group members what they think is being presented:

> what comments do they have?

> what questions would they like to ask?

> what would they most want to show if they did an image?

**PURPOSE**

> to explore relationship dynamics.

> to explore desires and ‘stumbling blocks’ within relationships.
Version 2. Animating the images
Ask the sculpting person to place themselves in the image amongst the sculptured people. On the count of 3 ask them to ‘take one step’ towards what they want. That is, actually do what it is that they think they need to do to achieve what they would like to have happen; for example to achieve the goal, sort out the problem or move in life to where they want to be.

‘A View of a View’
Four images are created:
> How person 1 believes they are seen by the other.
> Similarly, how person 2 believes they are seen by the other.
> How person 1 would like to be seen.
> How person 2 would like to be seen.

PURPOSE
To develop understanding and empathy between individuals in groups, students in a class, work mates, those in a relationship; or members of a family. Or different groups; e.g., women and men, or different cultural groups.

Reference
Use of Image

This is not a test of artistry, nor is it art therapy. Image is used here as a way of inviting participation in a process. You can show a person an image and ask them to create a story with it, just what they think or feel, or comment if it has any special meaning for them. Or, of course, you can ask a person to draw something.

Create an image
Draw something to represent what your life/where you live/this group looks like when everything is fine... And when there is some tension/conflict/sadness.

PURPOSE
To create a visual representation of a person’s feelings. This can be added to, referred back to, or discussed.

An image of an event
Draw the story of an event: what happened, who was involved, the time of day, the place.

PURPOSE
To create a visual representation of an event so that key moments or key decisions can be identified.

What do you think?
People are asked to offer feedback about a program or group. They are asked to do this with a word or two, or an image. People are asked to say what they most want to tell us about the group.

PURPOSE
> To provide workers with feedback about their program.
> To give participants an opportunity to input into the program.

Further resources
Photolanguage.
Rating scales

Ratings are so useful because they touch on the ‘grey areas’ of an issue. There are endless ways of presenting such scales.

The obvious yet still very useful ones

Any anchor words can be used.

DREADFUL 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  WONDERFUL
WORST EXPERIENCE 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  BEST EXPERIENCE
NO FUN AT ALL 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  LOTS OF FUN

You can make comparisons

Imagine a happiness scale:

MISERABLE 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  ECSTATIC

Ratings give people room to move: “Today I’m a 4. Yesterday I was a 1.”

You can be creative

How would you describe your struggle to:

> give up......?
> argue less?
> actually have some fun in your life?
> be more in charge of yourself?

ABOUT THE SAME

I THINK I’M SLIPPING BACK  I THINK I’M WINNING
Extraordinary (sometimes outrageous) statements and intriguing questions

Sometimes, the most powerful form of communication is a conversation. The previous activities (and those which follow) are strategies for getting a person's attention and highlighting particular issues. This creates an opportunity for a 'conversation'. The more interesting, challenging and impactful this conversation is, the greater the opportunity for a person to learn, to extend themselves. Statements and questions which promote thought, self-evaluation and reflection can add to this experience.

The extraordinary statement

WHAT IS AN EXTRAORDINARY STATEMENT?
These statements are 'extraordinary' because they may well be unique, or provocative, or risky. They may be unexpected, or different from what a person has heard before. A statement may be 'outrageous' because it speaks that which is usually unspoken, or it names something that has not before been named.

> "I don't understand why you are arguing with your parents about going out, when you can just climb out the window and leave."

> "I'm not surprised you are finding this emotionally draining. But I am really amazed that you haven't been totally overwhelmed by your feelings and are not just lying on the ground in a heap!"

> "I find it extraordinary that there is so much emotion here in such varied forms. You scream and yell at each other and then laugh together."

> "I know it is terrifying for you living with the possibility that your partner may not be alive next year. But it also seems you just can't plan your life... and this must be just plain frustrating."

> "It's extraordinary that you haven't just gone completely bonkers with all that has happened!"

THE PURPOSE
The intention is to generate new thoughts and feelings in another person. When we are caught up in our lives and often with its difficulties, traumas, dilemmas, excitements and confusions, it is not always possible to know how to proceed. Something truthfully surprising can help illuminate some possible options. It can point towards something we might have overlooked, covered over, forgotten about, or not considered.

BEING GENUINE
To say that you find something amazing means that you really do find it amazing. If you are not genuinely impressed with what someone has said or done, then don't say that you are. You need then to find what it is that genuinely touches you in some way and comment on that.

Intriguing questions

THE AIM OF QUESTIONS
The purpose in asking a question may be to help a person find an answer. But it
may also aim to raise further questions. A person may feel moved to ask themselves:

> “How will I know if this relationship is still what I want?”
> “Am I just used to this part of my life, or is this really how I want things to be?”

In doing this, a question may highlight a dilemma or a potential choice:

> “I don’t want to change this but at the same time it really distresses my partner, and I really love that person.”
> “How can I get my anger under control so that this relationship can continue?”

A question that intrigues can be anything at all:

> “What would life be like if you really did make that decision?”
> “What could you do so that you actually surprised yourself?”
> “Which would be more painful... to stay as you are, or to make that change?”

‘Miriam is uncertain’

Miriam is 15 and lives at home with her family. She is finding it difficult to ‘fit in’ at the college. She is not being harassed so much as experiencing a sense of just not feeling part of things. She is a bright and imaginative young person who is keen to talk with you. Together you decide to be a little creative in how you explore the idea of ‘fitting in’. You ask Miriam to simply look around the room, noting all that is in it. While she is doing this you ask her to start to notice those things which seem to fit in and those that do not. You give her a few minutes to take in everything and you ask her some questions about what she sees and what she is thinking.

“Miriam, what seems to really fit here?”

“It all looks okay.”

“How does everything fit together? Do you notice anything at all that seems out of place?”

“There’s a paper clip on the carpet under your chair.”

“Really? You think the paper clip doesn’t seem to fit?”

“No, I don’t think it does.”

“What is it about it so that it doesn’t fit?”

“It just shouldn’t be there!”

“Really?”

“Oh you know... it’s in the wrong place. And, anyway, it’s the only really shiny thing here, it’s sort of harder than the other stuff, and it’s sort of twisted.”

“Miriam, it’s a paper clip! How would you expect it to be?”

“Shiny, hard and twisted!”
“Sounds like a paper clip! Any chance it could be anything else?”

“It could be a tooth pick if we sharpened it up!”

Using what Miriam has offered, you start to personalise the process more powerfully.

“Miriam, can we talk about you for a moment?”

“Okay.”

“Let me ask you a weird sort of question, but do you reckon you are anything like the paper clip?”

“Totally! Hard and twisted, but shiny I reckon!”

“What is about you that shines?”

“I'm actually creative. I reckon I have good ideas.”

“And what about the twisted bit?”

“That’s the creative bit too!”

“So if you were to ‘straighten out’ would you lose some of your creativity?”

“I don’t know…”

“Miriam, can I ask you about college?”

“Sure.”

“Does your ‘twisted’ bit keep you separate from other kids at college?”

“My ideas seem really different.”

“How are they different?”

“Oh, just about life and stuff.”

Where to from here?

The metaphor seems a playful and interesting way for the two of you to work together on the idea of ‘fitting in’. Together you can explore further just how important it is for Miriam to ‘fit in’. How important is her ‘creativity’ to her? What would it mean for Miriam if she continued to not fit in? Would she be distressed? Is there anything she can do herself that would help her fit in, but would not sacrifice any of her creativity? Does she need help to manage this? As a 15-year old, what can she influence and what is beyond her control?

(Adapted from ‘Youth works. A very practical book about working with young people.’ Peter Slattery. Yet to be published.)
CONTROLLING OUR DESTINIES

THE FOLLOWING quotes are from an interview aired on the ABC radio show 'The Health Report.' They raise some interesting questions for those who work with young people. These are edited quotes and the source for the complete interview is listed below, should you want to take a look. The quotes highlight the research which is finding that one of the major determinants of mental and physical health is a sense of being able to control our own destiny. It is also showing that social networks can be a really important way in which we can achieve this control.

Len Syme: "... I’m looking for the answer... My hypothesis is that it’s control of destiny... My argument was this is the most important finding in the last several decades. So I now understand why social support is seen to be important. I now regard social support as one of the ways that we use to control our lives. That is to say, if I challenge you with a problem and you look to others for advice and support, that helps you negotiate life's challenges."

Norman Swan: "How does it translate to the home and family?"

Len Syme: “If I challenge you... with a very difficult life challenge about which you know nothing, I know that you’re not worried about it... You’re going to talk to some other people, you’re going to make phone calls, and within a few days you’re going to work out a scheme to deal with it...That kind of confidence, and not only the confidence but the knowing how to go about solving the problem, is almost automatic... It's not a question of intelligence, it's a question of knowing that you can work it out and having the training and experience to work it out..."

Norman Swan: “So mastery is infectious- it goes across things. Once you’ve mastered your life you master the circumstances which confront you on a day-to-day basis, is that what you’re saying?"

Len Syme: “Yes, exactly.”

Source

‘Mastering the control factor, part one’, The Health Report ABC radio. 9th November 1998. This was one of four programs looking at the way people are able to take charge of their lives. http://www.abc.com.au

With the above in mind, the following four group outlines might be useful to you.
Four group outlines

The following outlines four groups, each of which asks participants to either go out ‘into the world’ or invite a guest into the group. Each is intended to provide group members with real interactions rather than role-played ones. You can, of course, mix and match or use any of the earlier activities as part of these groups.

AIMS
To enhance interpersonal skills.

INTRODUCTION
Introduce the purpose of the group. That is, for people to go out ‘into the world’ and interact with it by doing something such as asking about products in a shop, perhaps to negotiate a price. The degree of difficulty can be worked out with group members. People are also being asked to do this in pairs and to report back at the end of group as to how it all went.

NOTE
Where people go and what they do is not of the greatest importance in this activity. The purpose is to have an excursion outside the group room and to approach a serious topic with as much fun as possible.

Part A: Preparing for the expedition

‘THINGS I REALLY LIKE’ – PRACTISING ASKING QUESTIONS
Ask people in the group to name something that they really like. Write up the responses and invite group members to ask each other simple, polite but meaningful questions about what has been named.

DECIDING ON WHAT AND WHERE
Draw up two lists and ask the group to work out where they can go and what they can ask about.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHERE AND WHAT TO ASK ABOUT?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IN THE STREET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking directions to beach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking where the post office is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN A STORE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video shop about a video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking for T-shirt size</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WORKING OUT THE QUESTIONS
In the large group, in pairs or individually, ask people to work out the sorts of questions they might ask. Discuss these in the large group.

Part B. The expedition
Part C. Reviewing the expedition

MATERIALS NEEDED
Jelly frogs or snakes, or something similar for fun.

STORIES
This part is a general review of people's experiences. Make sure that no-one has had a bad experience. If they have, it can either be discussed in the group or the person offered a quiet moment in private with you.

Ask the group how it all went.
> What happened?
> Was it fun?
> Any funny stories?
> Any disasters?

REVIEW
Ask people to give each other feedback about how they went. Compare their own view of how they went with their partner's view.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS
> Was it easy/difficult to approach people?
> What do you think of your own skills in this process?
> Is your view of what you did the same as, or different, from your partner's view?
> Any surprises in what you did, or how you did it?
> What did you do well?
> What do you feel you might need to work on?

AWARDS AND REWARDS
It can be fun to make jelly snake 'awards' as people tell their stories; for 'the silliest moment', 'the bravest act', 'the most embarrassing comment', 'the most adventurous approach', or 'the craziest response'.

NEXT TIME
As a way of bringing this group to a close, ask them if they were to do something like this again:
> Where would they go?
> What would they ask about?
> Would they do anything different next time?

AND IN OTHER PARTS OF THEIR LIVES?
> Has anything caught your interest from today's experience that you can use in some other part of your life?
> Can you imagine other situations where you might do something like you have done here?
> If you wanted to work on your experience here today, what else could you do?

IS EVERYONE OKAY?
Make sure that everyone is okay after their experiences and bring the group to a close.
AIMS
For people to increase their knowledge and understanding of resources in the community and to practise contacting these resources.

NOTE
This group is a way for people to identify resources/supports they might find useful to them at some point in their lives. These might be agencies such as TAFE, the local Fitness Centre, a Yoga Centre, a Food Cooperative, or a reliable garage.

Part A. Preparing for the visit

IN THE FUTURE...?
This part of the group will depend on whether you have actually decided beforehand where to visit. If not, then ask the following questions. Ask people to imagine themselves living in the place they want to.

> What items will you need in your home?
> What will you want to do with others?
> What might you need if you were going to be studying?
> What might you need if you wanted to get really fit?
> What if you just wanted to have fun?
> What else might you want or need?

Write up headings on the whiteboard and take people's comments.

CHOOSING A PLACE TO VISIT
Ask the group to identify some local places they could visit which might be useful in terms of the above list.

PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES
Ask what people's previous experiences have been with these places, and record these too.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GOOD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonya</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WHAT DO PEOPLE WANT TO KNOW?
Ask people to come up with a list of things they want to know about this place.

PRACTISING THE QUESTIONS
Ask group members to decide which question/s they would like to ask. Once done they have an opportunity to practise these questions. If appropriate, practise these in the group.

> Does the question sound ‘right’?
> Is it clear?
> Is the tone of voice okay?
Part B. Go on the visit

Part C. Reviewing the visit

STORIES
Ask group members for a comment on how their visit was. Write up key words. This part of the group needs to make sure that everyone has had an okay experience. If anyone is upset in any way this can be discussed in the group or the person can be offered a private conversation if this seems more appropriate.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS
> Did you feel that you were welcome?
> What made it welcoming or not welcoming?
> How do you feel that you were personally treated?
> Do you feel that your questions were fair, polite and appropriate?
> What do you think of the answers that we were given to your questions? Were they fair, were they informative?
> Have you located any places you might want to visit again?

POSSIBLE OBSTACLES AND SOLUTIONS
Ask the group what might prevent them from using these resources. Write these up on the whiteboard and ask the group for solutions to these obstacles. Bring the group to a close.
AIMS
For people to develop skills in asking questions.

Part A. Preparing for the interview

BEFORE THE GROUP
Ideally, discuss with the group the sort of person they would like to invite to be interviewed and arrange for someone (if possible from the group) to invite them.

CHOOSING TOPICS AND QUESTIONS FOR THE GUEST INTERVIEW
Ask the group to decide on the topics they would like to ask the guest about. Write these up and develop some general questions for each topic.

Possible questions about the questions:
> Are they interesting?
> Are they intrusive?
> How do you think the guest will respond?
> What will you do if you feel the person is insulted? Or hurt?

OTHER PREPARATION
There are other tasks that can be allocated before the guest arrives:
> Who will welcome the guest? What will they say?
> Who will thank the guest? What will they say?
> Who will ask what questions?
> Who might ‘chair’ the event?

THE TASK OF ‘CHAIRING’
This is an opportunity for a group member to take on what can be a challenging task. The person will need to:
> make sure that the interview moves smoothly overall.
> make sure that the guest is not embarrassed by any questions.
> prepare some extra questions in case there is a slow spot.
> invite group members to ask additional questions or to make comments as the interview develops.

Part B. Interview the guest

NOTE
The interview may develop into a spontaneous event with questions being asked by the group, stories being told, or comments being made. On the other hand, it may be over very quickly. If this is the case, you might need to ask for the formal ‘thank you’ and bring the interview to a close.
Part C. Reviewing the interview

A GENERAL COMMENT
Simply ask how everyone thought it went. Make sure that everyone is okay after this event. If anything disturbing occurred then this can be discussed in the group, reviewing what happened, what may have caused it, people's parts in it, the impact on them and how they are feeling now.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS
> How well did people think they presented their questions?
> How useful and interesting were the responses?
> Are there any questions that occur to you now?
> What about the style in which they were asked? Friendly? Strong enough? Were any intrusive?
> Did the questions and style 'get at' the thoughts and feelings of the guest, and do so in a respectful way?

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS
How would the interview have gone differently if the person had been:
> a female/male?
> from a different culture?
> a person whose English is less than perfect?
> someone who is younger/older?
What different sorts of questions would you ask this person?

REVIEWING THE INTRODUCTION, THE ‘THANK YOU’ AND CHAIRING
How did all these go?

APPLYING THE LEARNING
Ask the group if the skills they have been practising today can be used in other situations.
> Would they fit in market research?
> Could they be used in other work situations?
> In personal situations?

NEXT TIME
Ask people what other issues might be interesting to explore, what other guests might be interesting to interview, and close the group.
AIMS
For people to enhance their social skills.

Part A. Preparing a survey

FINDING A TOPIC
> Explain the purpose of a survey.
> Find out from the group what things they have a genuine interest in.
> Select one or two of the most popular things.
> Ask the group what they would like to find out about each of these.
> Work out a series of questions.
> Ask the group to pair up to conduct the survey.

DECIDING ON WHERE
Ask the group where might be useful places for them to conduct the survey. These could include local shops, the street, and the agency where this group is being run.

NOTE
If pairs are not appropriate, the survey can be done as a whole group with you going with them to keep an eye on things.

Part B. Conducting the survey

Part C. Reviewing the survey

As with all such groups, make sure that all participants have had okay experience, discussing anything distressing in the large group; what happened, what contributed, how people responded and how they are now.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS
> Was it easy? Difficult?
> Did you find out anything that surprised you?
> Do you need to find out anything further?
> Do you feel you did it well? Politely? Assertively?

APPLYING THE LEARNING
Ask the group if the skills they have been practising today can be used in other situations.
> Could they be used in work situations? Which ones?
> In personal situations? How and in what circumstances?

NEXT TIME
Ask people what other topics they might like to survey, and close the group.
Approaches for responding to issues that may arise

Guidelines for managing:

> Use of alcohol and other drugs
> Abusive or violent behaviour
> Child protection

Many people are concerned, quite rightly, about how to manage incidents of violence or abuse (physical and verbal) and incidents of use of alcohol or other drugs by participants. Effective management of such incidents requires the establishing of clear policies and practices and skilled responses from the staff involved. While these are bigger issues than can be addressed in this kit, the following presents both a framework for approaching such events as well as strategies/actions to consider in terms of your response. Child protection can also be addressed within this framework but is a somewhat different issue, as it is encountered more often by staff as a case of disclosure rather than one of being a critical incident. In cases in relation to child protection, you must also comply with the NSW Government’s Interagency Guidelines for Child Protection Intervention.

This framework can be applied to events/incidents in relation to both abuse/violence and to use of alcohol and other drugs. However, there are also some issues specific to each of these and they are included in the following.

THE PARTIES INVOLVED

Your assessment and action in any event will need to take into account how you come to know of an event, as well as the various parties involved. You may come to know of an event because:

> you are personally involved in it
> it is reported to you by someone who was personally involved
> it is reported to you by someone who has come to know of it in some other way.

The various parties involved could include:

> the staff member involved directly or indirectly
> the person who is being abusive or using drugs
> the person/s who are the subject of abuse
> any supporters of the abuse
> any observers of the abuse
> the person who reports the abuse.
Prevention/risk reduction

CLEAR POLICIES AND PROCEDURES ARE NEEDED WHICH:
> suggest actions which will decrease the chances of an incident occurring
> suggest clear action if an event does occur
> meet legislative requirements.

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE
> Workers as much as possible need to know clients’ backgrounds and triggers
> Workers need to be aware of their own issues, views and triggers. At times, it may be necessary to ask a colleague to step in.

WORKERS NEED TO BE SKILLED:
> Able to assess the nature of behaviour
> Able to read the intensity of behaviour
> Respond appropriately.

IN TERMS OF ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS
Some agencies use the following policy guidelines:
> Do not take a person into the program if they have a drug or alcohol problem. (See * below).
> A&OD may not be brought to or used at the program.
> If a person is ‘caught’ using or distributing to another person, the response is time out or removal from the project.
> People cannot attend a program while under the influence of a substance. (see ** below).
> Workers will call an ambulance in the case of an overdose.
> Any young person using prescribed medication needs to alert the worker of this. (See *** below).

* This raises the question, ‘how do I know if the person has a problem?’ Some staff tell the young person up front that if it is discovered later they will have to leave the program.

** This always presents the problem of ‘how can I tell if someone has used?’ Some agencies say it is up to the worker to decide this. This is not police work and hard evidence is not required. Other agencies will suggest a discussion between the worker and the person to decide what should happen. Some agencies have the guideline of: ‘If I can work with the person they can stay’.

*** Some agencies require that medication be handed to a staff member who distributes it as required. A record is kept of any medication that is handed out.

IN TERMS OF CHILD PROTECTION
There needs to be clear policy and procedures in place and workers need to be aware of relevant legislation.
HEADING OFF PROBLEMS – A CHECKLIST

The following questions point to some of the issues that will impact on the likelihood of an incident taking place. If you go through this checklist, we suggest that you:

> do it together with a management member or other staff member
> add any other questions you would like to answer or ask of others in your program
> ask yourself what impact the presence or absence of these ingredients has on your face-to-face work with your clients.

1. PREMISES AND SAFETY AND SECURITY CHECK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>IS THIS IN GOOD WORKING ORDER?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does your premises have a security door?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you have bars on the windows?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is there a system for exit in case of fire?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is there an alarm security system?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is there an emergency button?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is there a ‘to-base’ alarm system?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you know what to do in case of fire?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does your agency have regular fire drills?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you have a fire extinguisher on the premises?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you have staff trained in first aid?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you have a first aid kit?</td>
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</table>

2. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES CHECK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does your service have a policy and procedures manual?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is the manual readily available to all staff?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are you familiar with what is in the manual?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are there regular updates of the manual?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is there a clear procedure to follow in response to a critical incident?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is there clear procedure to follow in terms of violence or abuse?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is there a clear policy to follow in terms of use of alcohol or other drugs?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is there clear policy to follow in terms of disclosure from a young person?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Is there clear policy to follow in terms of Occupational Health and Safety and Workcover?</td>
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</table>
3. THE ACTUAL ROOM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is the size suitable?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Is it free from ‘people traffic’?</td>
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<td>Is it laid out in a suitable manner?</td>
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<td>Is the furniture suitable and sufficient?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you have the equipment necessary to effectively deliver your program?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

4. THE PARTICIPANTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>YES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are the participants the appropriate ones for your program?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is there some form of interview or selection process?</td>
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<td>Is the group size appropriate?</td>
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<td>Is there a process for feedback from the participants?</td>
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<td>Is there a process for consulting with participants as to their needs?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is there a process in place if you feel that a participant does not fit with the program?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is there a complaints procedure for participants who are not happy with the program?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

5. THE STAFF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>PLEASE MAKE A COMMENT WHERE APPROPRIATE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is there a process in place for managing critical incidents?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is there an automatic debriefing procedure if there is a critical incident?</td>
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<td>Is there a system of recording critical incidents?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are management involved in the above procedures?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is there regular ongoing staff training?</td>
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<td>Is there regular supervision for staff?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is there regular staff and management contact?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are there opportunities for management to familiarise themselves in a meaningful way with work practices in the service?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are there ongoing and regular staff meetings?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do all staff members have written job descriptions?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is there a written code of conduct for staff?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is there an understood informal code of conduct?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is there a complaints procedure?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Assessment

WHAT IS REQUIRED OF THE WORKER

> Be calm and in control. This means being skilled and prepared.
> Assess what is happening.
> Decide on a course of action and take it. For example, do you stay and try to work through this situation? If so, how do you proceed? Or do you leave and take yourself and others to a place of safety?

IN TERMS OF ABUSE, OFFENSIVE BEHAVIOUR OR VIOLENCE

> What does this person need?
> Are they in control or out of control?
> Are they aware or not aware of what they are doing?
> Are they escalating? Have they reached their highest point? Are they on the way down to ‘normal’?
> What is influencing this behaviour? Is it because the person is afraid? Trying to intimidate another? Assessment includes being familiar with body language that indicates frustration, etc., and whether it is likely to escalate.
> Is this behaviour influenced by substance use?

IN TERMS OF USE OF ALCOHOL OR OTHER DRUGS

> What lies behind this person’s use?
> What impact is it having on them? On others?
> Do I need to contact the local D&A worker, for advice, services or other assistance?

IN TERMS OF CHILD PROTECTION

> What does this person need right now?
> Can I provide this?
> If not, who do I contact?
> What is my agency’s Child Protection Policy?
Response

DURING A CRISIS EVENT

> Avoid confrontation
> Avoid physical contact and keep your distance
> Avoid phrases like ‘Do as I say’
> Keep the issue of what is happening now, separate from other issues
> Do not make ultimatums you can’t keep
> Repeat your requests
> Assess what is happening:
  > Monitor your own feelings
  > Monitor what is happening with any others who may be present

IN TERMS OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE OR THE THREAT OF VIOLENCE

> Try to reason with the person.
> Do not try to physically stop them.
> Use short words and short sentences. Speak in the positive; that is, say what you want the person to do, not what you don’t want them to do.
> Ensure the safety of others. This may mean moving yourself and others to a safe place.

Verbal abuse

> Try to work out the emotional state of the person
> Try to work out what their needs are and respond to these
> Get the support of a colleague if possible

Phone threats

> Need to be taken seriously.
> Write a report of the call; time of day, details of the caller and what was said.

IN TERMS OF ALCOHOL OR OTHER DRUGS

> Some staff will raise drug use with a person if they think the person has used, irrespective of whether they have any evidence of use
> Some staff use the rule of ‘if I can work with this person then I do’, irrespective of whether the person has used.
> What is the agency’s policy?
> Is there room for individual staff members to make individual decisions about this issue?

CONTACTING THE POLICE

Workers have widely differing views about this. Some people will not ring under any circumstances. Others say that violence or abuse needs to be dealt with legally. Any action needs to be in response to the agency policy and procedures. In terms of illegal drug use, again people have widely varying views. As in all these issues, it is important for an agency to develop a policy including the extent to which individual staff members can exercise their individual judgement.
IF AN EVENT DOES OCCUR
> Advise management members
> Ensure there is a debriefing process for all involved

IN TERMS OF CHILD PROTECTION
> What do I need to do for this person here and now?
> Do I need to notify anyone?
> What help do I need myself?
> What is the agency's policy?

Debriefing

Debriefing

There are many views about debriefing and a number of ways in which it can be conducted. There are however two basic things about such events:

> Staff need be offered an opportunity to review the event and their response to it.
> It is important that debriefing is not another distressing event. It needs to help a person deal with what has happened and move forward.

ELEMENTS OF DEBRIEFING

> ‘Discuss’ what happened
> What was the staff member's/s' part in the event?
> What reactions did they have: physical, emotional and intellectual?
> What are they thinking and feeling now?
> What might they expect in the future in terms of these responses?
> How will they manage this: as a staff member in this agency? As a private person?
> How might they respond to a similar event in the future?
> Any other matters of importance?
Review

FUTURE WORK WITH THE PERSON/S INVOLVED

If an event does occur, part of any review is likely to include whether the person will be permitted to return to the service. This raises two fundamental questions:

> Is it safe to maintain the person within this service? Part of this is an assessment of the possibility of a future occurrence.
  - What is the nature and type of harm that is likely to occur?
  - How likely is it to occur?
  - What will be the impact and on whom? On staff? On clients? Others?
  - What will be the ‘consequences’ of the behaviour should it occur? What will be this agency’s response?

> Is this service able to work productively with this person? This question applies whether the issue is violence/abuse, substance use or any other issue. What do all staff think about this?

REVIEW OF THE AGENCY’S PREVENTATIVE PROGRAM

> Do staff need further training?
> Are all staff aware of the relevant legislation?
> Does the physical environment need any changes?
> Do there need to be any changes to selection procedures for clients?
> Do we need to deliver services differently?
> Did all our back-ups work? Was a person available to debrief with? Were management available?

REFERENCES

> Resource material from Links to Learning professional development program, ‘Respond to youth in crisis.’
Other considerations and sources of information

Programs for this target group may require additional legal and insurance considerations. For example:

- Workers compensation insurance may need to be arranged for work experience components of the program
- Insurance coverage of staff and students checked for off campus excursions and project work
- Child protection screening for all people coming into contact with young people under 18 years of age, e.g., mentors, drivers.

In addition to being aware of your organisation’s policy and procedures, it is important that services develop a network of contacts that can provide current information on issues and changes in the field.

For example, Child Protection Legislation has recently changed. Many government departments are revising their child protection policies and procedures in line with the new Act. For example TAFE employees will find relevant information on the DET website at:


If you are employed in a community based organisation you must comply with the provisions of the following NSW Acts once they are commenced:

- The Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998; and

You must also comply with the NSW Government’s Interagency Guidelines for Child Protection Intervention. Community based organisations must implement the new protocol known as the ‘Working with Children Check’ as detailed in the Working with Children Check—Guidelines for Employers, produced by the Commission for Children and Young People, May 2000. This protocol will be considered to apply to all your activities and all your employees and includes processes for screening preferred applicants seeking employment with you.

The following organisations can provide you with the latest information and resources: (You might like to use them as a basis for developing your own list of contacts)

**NSW DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES**

DoCS is the government department responsible for the provision of community services. Their website has information on EnAct, the new *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection)* Act 1998, as well as articles and resources to help with its implementation.

For further information: http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/

**THE COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

The Commission for Children and Young People is a special organisation set up to listen to children and young people and promote their interests. They also have responsibility for implementing the Working with Children Check. The Child Protection (Prohibited Employment) Act 1998 and the Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998 establish the Working With Children Check, as an important initiative for checking paid and unpaid employees, such as volunteers, working with children and young people in NSW.

NSW GOVERNMENT’S OFFICE OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE (OCYP)
Ensures Government policies related to children and young people are properly planned, developed and coordinated (e.g., developing a cross-government youth policy). Their website has a lot of information on legal information, alcohol and other drugs, housing, health, etc. They also have great links to sites with more detailed information.

ASSOCIATION OF CHILDREN’S WELFARE AGENCIES
The Association of Children’s Welfare Agencies provide information through their newsletters, library, and website on children and youth related issues. The website has a range of resources, including issues papers and links to the Community and Family Services Directory (http://acwa.asn.au/cfs/). Their website also includes numerous links to other websites with child protection information.
For further information: http://www.acwa.asn.au/

AUSTRALIAN CLEARING HOUSE FOR YOUTH STUDIES (ACYS)
Provides information on products and services for those working in the youth field and for anyone with an interest in youth.
For further information: www.acys.utas.edu.au/

COUNCILS OF SOCIAL SERVICE (ACOSS & NCOSS)
The Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) and the Council of Social Service of New South Wales (NCOSS) are peak bodies for the community welfare sector.

OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCE</th>
<th>CONTACT DETAILS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth Action and Policy Association Library</td>
<td>Suite 209/ 410 Elizabeth St</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Surry Hills 2010 Phone: (02) 9281 2344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre for Education &amp; Information on Drugs &amp; Alcohol (CEIDA)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ceida.net.au/">http://www.ceida.net.au/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth suicide and issues information</td>
<td><a href="http://www.reachout.asn.au/home.jsp">http://www.reachout.asn.au/home.jsp</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.infoexchange.net.au/dhs/youth/suicide/">www.infoexchange.net.au/dhs/youth/suicide/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Government based info for youth</td>
<td><a href="http://www.thesource.gov.au">www.thesource.gov.au</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dusseldorp Foundation Youth Site</td>
<td><a href="http://www.dsf.org.au">www.dsf.org.au</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Youth Forum Online</td>
<td><a href="http://www.egroups.com/group/yfo">www.egroups.com/group/yfo</a></td>
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<td>List of ABC Life Matters stories</td>
<td><a href="http://www.abc.net.au/rr/talks/lm/index/lmsubjectidx.htm">http://www.abc.net.au/rr/talks/lm/index/lmsubjectidx.htm</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Australasian Legal Information Institute</td>
<td><a href="http://www.austlii.edu.au">www.austlii.edu.au</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs</td>
<td><a href="http://www.detya.gov.au">www.detya.gov.au</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy and other materials</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Website</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>National Coordinators of Indigenous Education</em></td>
<td><a href="http://www.natsiew.nexus.edu.au">www.natsiew.nexus.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Aboriginal Affairs</td>
<td><a href="http://www.daa.nsw.gov.au">www.daa.nsw.gov.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission</td>
<td><a href="http://www.atsic.gov.au">www.atsic.gov.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAFE Libraries – Resources from Aboriginal Section</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Australian National Training Authority - Partners in a Learning Culture, National Strategy and Blueprint for Implementation</td>
<td>Resources and policy on delivering training to people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Encyclopaedia</td>
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Assessment materials

Introduction

THE UNIT of competency that is linked to this Kit and the workshop program held in conjunction with it is CHCYTH5A Manage youth programs. This unit of competency forms a part of the Diploma in Community Services (Youth Work). It addresses devising, setting up, coordinating, delivering and evaluating activities and programs for individuals and groups. A copy of the unit follows this assessment project.

The unit of competency requires submission of evidence of managing a program for a group and/or an individual learner on two separate occasions.

Assessment project

This assessment project involves you in planning a learning program for a group of learners, commencing with a process of investigation, consultation and negotiation. The following questions summarise the process and in answering them you will gather evidence for assessment of this unit of competency.

You can liaise with a Registered Training Organisation that has the Diploma in Community Services (Youth Work) in its scope – they can provide an assessment service and you can receive a Statement of Attainment for this unit of competency.

Alternatively, if you have already devised and managed a number of programs for young people, you could use these questions to gather and collate evidence for recognition of prior learning.
1. Identify the program required

What is the need? Why is there a need for the program?
- What is the need?
- Who has identified the need?
- What evidence confirms this need?
- How could a program effectively meet this need?
- What has led to community interest in providing a program?
- What do the target group need to gain through the program?
- What outcomes are required?
- Are existing programs in the local community sufficient? – if not, what else is needed?

Who is the target group for the program?
- What are their characteristics?
- What has been their history of education?
- How do they see themselves as learners?
- What barriers to learning/working are they experiencing?
- What is likely to engage them with a learning program?
- What cultural factors should be considered?

What programs are most suitable?
- Where can you look for programs?
- What features of the program are suitable for these young people?
- Which features would need alteration?
- What additional resources would you need to develop?

Decide if the proposed program is a feasible and appropriate response
- Is the program in line with the organisational mission, strategic directions, plans and other organisational criteria?
- Are appropriate and sufficient resources likely to be available?
2. Plan, prepare and promote: prepare program plan, identify and obtain required resources and promote program

How are you going to plan the program?

> Who are the stakeholders that will have expectations about the selection or development of a program?
> Who should be involved?
> Which community leaders should be involved?
> How are you going to communicate and link with them?

What are organisational and community expectations about program choice?

> What do funding or other policy guidelines indicate as essential features of a program?
> What organisational criteria are used to evaluate the effectiveness of a program?
> What are key outcomes expected by the range of organisational stakeholders?
> What are key outcomes expected by relevant community leaders?

Plan implementation

> Who is going to design, modify or tailor the program?
> What program delivery strategies will be used?
> How is the program going to be implemented – e.g., timeframes, times, personnel?
> What criteria will be used to select participants for the program?
> What is the process for selection? – how, who, when?
> What strategy will you use for those young people who are not selected?
> What statutory requirements must be addressed?
> How are you going to review the program?
> How will young people be involved in providing feedback?
> What is the plan for evaluation?

Plan operational arrangements and obtain resources

> What resources are required?
> Sources for resources – who will provide them?
> How do you gain access to potential resources?
> What are the organisational processes for submissions or negotiating about resources?
> What location/s will be used? – why is it suitable?
> How do you arrange use of locations?
**Promote program**

- How will you identify the potential users of the program?
- What are the main features of the program that you think will interest them?
- How will you promote the program?
- How will you evaluate the effectiveness of the promotion process?

**3. Deliver program**

**Deliver program in a flexible way**

- How will you plan the program with the young people?
- For this particular group of young people, what are the range of their needs and interests?
- How will you make sure that these different needs and interests are addressed?
- What refinements are needed to the program, now that you have met this group?
- How would you identify that you will need to change what you had planned for the day?
- What options do you have readily available to change direction?

**Relating to young people**

- What kind of relationship do you need to establish?
- What issues require rules to be negotiated?
- How did you negotiate rules about these?
- What are the cultural and family styles about relationships which guide the young people’s expectations – e.g., tolerance of structure, rules, role models, expectations about behaviour?
### Unit of competency: CHCYTH5A
Manage youth programs

Devising, setting up, coordinating, delivering and evaluating activities and programs for individuals and groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELEMENTS</th>
<th>PERFORMANCE CRITERIA</th>
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| 1. Identify the activity/program required    | • the need for a particular program is assessed from relevant evidence collected  
• a range of possible programs to meet the defined needs are identified and reviewed  
• selection of a program type is based on client needs, organisation’s criteria, and availability of resources |
| 2. Prepare activity/program plan             | • Appropriate strategic planning activities are undertaken, to ensure client needs are met  
• planning activities incorporate consultation with key clients and stakeholders  
• operational arrangements for conducting the program are determined and assessed for feasibility  
• appropriate implementation and evaluation strategies are included in the activity/program plan  
• planning activities reflect accepted good practice in working with young people |
| 3. Identify and obtain required resources     | • strategies are devised and implemented to obtain and utilise the necessary human, financial and physical resources  
• where required resources are not readily available, submissions are made to potential sources, in accordance with relevant guidelines  
• suitable locations for program implementation are evaluated, selected and arranged |
| 4. Promote activity/program                  | • potential program users are identified and appropriate information is designed and distributed to achieve maximum response  
• the effectiveness of promotional activities is evaluated, and changes made as indicated by response |
| 5. Deliver activity/program                  | • the program is implemented in accordance with the program plan, organisation guidelines and legal/statutory requirements  
• participants are provided with access to a range of activities suited to their needs and interests  
• flexible implementation plans are developed to suit a variety of contexts and to cope with contingencies  
• the program is adapted to the changing needs of participants as required  
• problems in program delivery are addressed promptly |
| 6. Evaluate activity/program                 | • criteria to judge the effectiveness of the program are defined in consultation with clients and stakeholders  
• appropriate evaluation strategies are used routinely during and after the program and used for revision and development  
• evaluation information is collected, organised and reported in a format which is accessible and meaningful to the clients and stakeholders  
• reports are prepared and presented as required |
Range of Variables

PROGRAMS MAY INCLUDE:
> activities designed to address needs of target groups
> activities designed to meet needs identified in research
> strategies to implement government/funding agency policy
> activities to extend the participation numbers in existing programs
> strategies to address exclusion, discrimination and alienation
> those directed at individual young people and their needs
> those directed at the general community which affect young people
> those initiated by the organisation, by community groups, by other organisations, or by community leaders and decision makers
> those designed to respond to social, economic and demographic changes

PROGRAMS MAY HAVE THE FOLLOWING FOCUS:
> education/learning/training, e.g., homework support and study
> personal development and support, e.g., life skills education
> music and performing arts, e.g., youth theatres, band, video production team
> research, planning and management, e.g., Aboriginal cultural camp, Scouts meeting
> community action, e.g., anti-violence group
> special interest causes, e.g., young people against nuclear disarmament
> enterprise development activities
> employment, funding raising, small business

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES MAY INCLUDE:
> discussion groups, e.g., about safe sex, religious beliefs
> sporting and recreation activities, e.g., basketball at the drop in centre, pool game, disco, bush excursion
> structured and unstructured social activities, e.g., party, shopping, visit to the cinema

PROGRAMS ARE PLANNED AND IMPLEMENTED FOR THE PURPOSE OF:
> providing immediate support
> promoting young people's participation and personal development
> enabling young people to use their time constructively, have fun and develop qualities of self reliance
> enabling young people to learn life skills, knowledge and attitudes
Evidence Guide

CRITICAL ASPECTS OF ASSESSMENT:
> target groups relevant to the worker and the activity or program
> consulting with relevant stakeholders
> working with individuals and groups
> abilities in autonomous work and team work

INTERDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT OF UNITS:
> completion of this unit removed the requirement to complete CHCCS3A ‘Coordinate the provision of services and programs’

UNDERPINNING KNOWLEDGE:
> a range of youth activities and programs
> legal and safety requirements as they relate to activities and programs
> relevant funding sources

UNDERPINNING SKILLS:
> research and consultation
> coordination and management of programs
> analysis of data, information and relationships
> advocacy
> provision of support to a diverse range of people/organisations
> conflict resolution/negotiation and mediation
> cross-cultural communication and negotiation
> literacy adequate to prepare a range of appropriate resource material
> working with and through community leaders

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:
> access to a workplace or to an accurately simulated environment where assessment may take place

CONSISTENCY IN PERFORMANCE:
> for at least two of the types of activities and programs identified in the range of variables
> for at least two of the purposes identified in the range of variables

CONTEXT OF ASSESSMENT:
> this unit is best assessed in the workplace or in a simulated workplace under the normal range of conditions
Appendix: education programs – success factors

1. Coordination
   > Strong links between agencies
   > Developing local approaches to respond to local issues and opportunities
   > Collaboration and coordination leading to optimal use of resources
   > Availability of non-school based options
   > Access to youth support and health services, links with local employers
   > Recognisable pathways
   > Pre-planned strategies to respond if students have difficulties – safety net.

2. Planning
   > Transition plans
   > Organisational flexibility, e.g., timetabling to suit group
   > Location is not alienating – usually informal and looks significantly different – youth friendly environment
   > Low student/teacher ratio
   > Careful selection of staff
   > Professional development and support for staff
   > Strategies to increase continuity of staff
   > Get past the ‘cookie cutter’ thinking that imagines we can do the same thing with everyone
   > Involve the students every step of the way.

3. Program content
   > Focus on basic educational skills – though may be developed indirectly and in innovative ways
   > Intensive assistance with basic skills
   > Use creative communication modes – music, video, photography
   > Emphasis on informal learning as well
   > Develop personal qualities of young person and generic employment skills such as communication, planning, organising and problem solving
   > Program that will develop qualities that employers are looking for such as confidence, persistence, appearance and a work ethic
   > Job seeking skills and work experience.
   > Create and show links between learning and experience of young person – a lifelong learning mosaic (e.g., community activities, volunteer work)
   > Employment preparation programs and short vocational courses to stimulate vocational interests in the person – must lead somewhere
> Flexibility – responds to individual needs
> Use students’ strengths and interests as starting point
> Use and acknowledge students’ cultural heritages
> Content and learning goals are negotiated with the students
> Goals are achievable
> Holistic approach – developing learning outcomes and assessments across subject areas
> Modular approach – one step at a time
> Flexible entry and exit points
> Projects and events – working together to create tangible outcomes
> Maximise opportunities to link learning to real life situations
> Observation and participation in life and work situations

4. Program approach and style

> Relaxed, easygoing and supportive environment
> Holistic approach – personal, social and educational goals are integrated
> Incentives for attendance which are tangible and immediate, e.g., food, transport
> Provide intensive support and nurturing – close relationship with a teacher, mentoring, coaching by past students, develop strong peer group support
> Communication with parents
> Small groups and one-to-one approaches
> Have a ‘bag’ of teaching resources and ideas and move to something new if needed
> Provide opportunities for young person to experience success – validation and recognition through what they do
> Provide opportunities to make learning and success visible – e.g., presentation of certificates, performances, opening or launch of project product, developing computer-based products.

5. Relationships and interactions

> Encourage student to take responsibility for their learning and behaviour
> Behavioural contracts
> Prevention of bullying
> Opportunities to talk about issues and concerns
> Acceptance – including if student has/had a problem
> Provide a chance to start again
> Mutual respect and adult learning principles
> Avoid ‘victim’ mentality
> Assist young person to negotiate the challenges and barriers in their circumstances – focus on options
> Freedom plus clear boundaries
> Don’t get concerned about ‘small things’
> Knowledge of cultures of the young people
> Feedback about disruptive behaviour that is clear, gentle and firm
> Understand the struggles of the young person at this stage of their lives.

6. Staff qualities

> Relationship skills are primary
> Committed
> Persistent
> Flexible and creative
> Able to see beyond an immediate crisis or problem
> Take time to develop relationship
> Able to listen to young people talking about any issue or problem
> Strong rapport and empathy
> Tolerant of mess and noise – doesn’t have “mess phobia”
> Use engagement strategies
> Cope with the demands young people at risk place on staff – how to respond to rubbish and swipes they direct your way
> Creative approaches to solving problems
> Capacity to be optimistic and have hope for the student – see room to move
> Believe that students can learn
> Welcome difference and cultural difference

References and sources

This table of success factors was developed from key references and through a series of consultation processes including the following:

2. Training needs analysis surveys and interviews – Links to Learning program coordinators and tutors July 1999
3. CGE implementation case studies
4. Success Stories, NSW Department of Education and Training
5. Project consultation workshops – Granville, Orange and Newcastle, August 2000
7. Project reference group meeting, July 2000