



Youth Work with Young People in Direct Provision and those Seeking Asylum.

Practice Guidelines to Support Youth Workers



Youth Work Ireland



An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth

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Development Process for Toolkit

The below is a brief description of the development process used to produce and finalise this resource

Who	Version/Document	How progressed	How Signed off	When
Working Group	Gina Halpin & Matthew Seebach, Youth Work Ireland National Office. Sarajane McNaboe County Longford Youth Service Miriam Nyhan CDYS Youth Work Ireland Shay Maloney, Limerick Youth Service Lisa Moroney Youth Work Ireland Meath. Sinead Arthurs KDYS Ger Hamill In Sync Youth & Family Services	Discussion at working group meetings. Circulation and agreement of suggested sections. Input into document as it progressed.	Working Group - Online Zoom Meetings	March 2021
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External Organisations

Throughout the development process of this document, we were very grateful for the input, advice and guidance of the of the following organisation -

[Irish Refugee Council](#)

[National Youth Council of Ireland](#)

[NASC](#)

[MASI](#)



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Foreword

Foreword

We welcome the publication of this timely and important resource. As a national federation Youth Work Ireland has been working with young people in Direct Provision Centres and others seeking asylum for many years and indeed well before there was a more organised State response. Much of this work has been done informally, on a shoestring budget with youth workers going beyond the remit of traditional youth work provisions to ensure this group of vulnerable young people are supported.

Effectively supporting young people in the international protection process is challenging and complex. **Claims for asylum are based on the experience of the abrogation of human rights.** Trauma may be present. Different age groups need different supports and young people face the additional challenges of a new country, language and culture. However, youth workers are uniquely placed and able to establish a trusting, effective relationship with young people in complex situations through tailored responses.

In Youth Work Ireland these responses include detached work (also known as street work and is a method of youth work delivery where youth workers connect with young people outside of youth work venues), the provision of quality and trustworthy youth information, targeted youth work (UBUs, Neighbourhood youth projects etc), community-based clubs or projects. In all cases the response is based on an integrated model of service provision. **Young people seeking asylum supported by youth workers achieve independence**, experience integration and access their rights. They often become leaders, advocates and champions for their peers and their communities.

In October 2020, the Advisory Group on Direct Provision published a report which recommended a replacement to the existing Direct Provision Centre system and the development of a long-term approach to the provision of supports to people seeking asylum. The report also made a number of references to youth services and their role in supporting young people seeking asylum. This along with the expanded remit of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to include **equality and integration created a need for Youth Work Ireland as a Federation** to take a closer look at the work that was taking place across services and develop a collective response.

This resource has been developed with the expertise and guidance of youth workers from across our Member Youth Services. It is informed by their practice experiences, and it allows us to understand the challenges faced by this group of young people and the role youth work has in supporting them. It will build the knowledge, skills, capacity and practices of youth workers and demonstrate how youth work practices and processes can be applied easily and effectively to working with young people from different cultures, religions and backgrounds.

Dr Patrick Burke
CEO Youth Work Ireland

Introduction

Introduction

[Youth Work Ireland](#) is a Federation of local youth work services who take a strengths-based and inclusive approach to achieving equality of outcomes and opportunities for all young people. Our [Integrated Youth Services](#) model ensures that when young people engage with our services, they are engaged with as a whole young person and our work is understood by them and their families.

The work of our [Member Youth Services](#) in supporting young people seeking asylum has been ongoing for many years and this cohort of young people present in different ways to different services – some at crisis point where their basic needs are not being met, and others through youth work practices such as detached work, participation in clubs or drop-in centres.

Youth workers have also articulated the need to become more aware of the legal frameworks around the protection system in Ireland and how to better deal with mental health and trauma so as to be able to contribute to a long-term inclusion for young people seeking asylum in Ireland.

The practical guidelines provided here are based on peer-reviewed evidence, practitioner experience, the voice of young people, theory and the requirements of binding rights instruments. The aim of bringing these sources into a usable framework is to facilitate youth workers within Youth Work Ireland Member Youth Services to provide effective, outcomes focused, and rights-based youth work supports to young people seeking asylum.

What is this resource?

This resource is a 'how to' to engage and work with young people seeking asylum and their families in Direct Provision centres and the community. It is informed by the practice experiences of youth workers. It allows us to understand the challenges faced by this group of young people and the role youth work has in supporting them. It will build the knowledge, skills, capacity and practices of youth workers and demonstrate how youth work practices and processes can be applied easily and effectively to working with young people from different cultures, religions and backgrounds.

Who is this resource for?

This resource has two audiences - the youth worker and the youth service. For the youth worker it provides practical advice, links and activities for building and sustaining youth work with young people seeking asylum. For youth services it outlines the procedures and supports needed at an organisational level to support the work.

The resource has two sections - General Information Resources and a Theory of Change Model. The General Information section contains an overview of the main areas identified by the working group in Youth Work Ireland, that workers need to be aware of whilst engaging with this group of young people.

The Theory of Change has been developed for both **Support and Advocacy Model** and **Service Provision** and will support youth workers in their practices and also youth services to ensure they have resources in place to support the work.

Introduction

How to use this resource

The document contains an Introductory Section followed by four sections each describing one of Four Stages of support and Engagement with young people seeking asylum.

The Four Stages of Support and Engagement each contain:

- A summary of the stage presented in a box at the top of the section.
- Information youth workers should know at this stage.
- Description of the work that youth workers undertake at this stage.

The introductory section consists of:

- **An overview of youth work with young people seeking asylum** which demonstrates the relevance of youth work to supporting this group of young people and provides a summary the approach, activities, and outcomes of youth work with young asylum seekers and those living in Direct Provision Centres.
- **A Theory of Change** – This provides a model of practice with key actions and tasks youth workers have found necessary to achieve outcomes with young people seeking asylum and is structured into
 - a. **Information** - Resources that support youth workers to understand the context they are working in are also listed.
 - b. **Guidance on key actions and tasks** – This provides steps and checklists for the key tasks that have been identified by youth workers that can be used while working at your desk, meeting with agencies in the community and having conversations with young people.

You can use this document by:

- **Reading the introduction and reviewing and understanding the theory of change**
- **Identifying and assessing where you are in relation to the four-Stage process of supporting young people seeking asylum.**
- **Focusing in on the knowledge and actions in the relevant section/stage of the document that you have or should have.**
- **Reviewing other sections, resources and background information provide in the documentation as needed**

Youth workers can dip in and out of the toolkit to support their work as they go, and services can use the Theory of Change to ensure their services are resourced and have the mechanism, policies, and procedures in place to provide effective support.

The four steps outlined in the theory of change will guide workers in their practice and offer a framework for reflection.

Introduction

Youth Work as a Support for Young People Seeking Asylum

It is important to mention at the outset that youth workers enter into this work at different stages. For some the young person is at crisis point and the role of the youth worker is in supporting them around their basic needs, while others engage with the young people in traditional youth work settings.

Youth work can offer a safe developmental space for young people seeking asylum to be young people and to enjoy various activities. It can also create a space for the young people to express themselves and participate in events and activities and for them to voice their ideas, concerns and aspirations.

Youth work acts as an important stakeholder in cross-sectoral co-operation between different areas, for example law, education, housing and employment. Youth work should not take over tasks that fall within

the remit of other sectors, but rather act as a complementary support to other services – [see our Integrated Youth Services' Model.](#)

The core values and principles of youth work are very much embedded in a social justice and human rights ethos so focusing on values, strengths-based approaches, equality, critical dialogue, empowerment, dignity, respect, and voluntary participation is the basis to how we work.

There are also more challenges in working to support young people seeking asylum, such as varying access to Direct Provision Centres, language barriers, navigating different cultures and traditions, trauma and sometimes being the only support system the young person has. However, youth work offers us a common set of values and principles based on human rights, social justice and inclusion which can guide this work and ensure the contribution and inclusion of young people seeking asylum.

Introduction

Theory of Change for Working with Young People Seeking Asylum

The Youth Work Ireland Support and Advocacy Model

This model describes a process of working with young people that is intended to have the following impact - ‘Youth workers will develop the capacity to better support young people seeking asylum and will be familiar with the mechanisms and resources needed to achieve effective outcomes.’

- The model is not necessarily hierarchical, the work of youth workers at every stage has value in the lives of young people.
- The model describes the development of a youth work relationship with young people seeking asylum (both those living in Direct Provision and the community).
- As this is primarily a process of developing relationships all youth workers have the skills and experience necessary to work in the ways described below.
- As in any relationship, progress will ebb and flow with circumstances in the service, or the young person’s life may move the relationship back to a previous stage, or leapfrog forward.
- For the same reasons, the entry point into the model may be at a later stage for some young people.

Using the model

Green Text ✿	Context, information and knowledge that youth workers should know in order to engage with young people seeking asylum.
Red Text ✿	Actions and tasks the youth worker can carry out in order to prepare themselves to support young people seeking asylum.

Youth workers engage with young people seeking asylum at various stages - so the process of using this document maybe not be necessarily linear. Youth workers are encouraged to dip in and out of the toolkit as needed to support their practice, reflection and learning.

STAGE ONE: INITIATING CONTACT

At this stage the young person is likely not to be attending the youth service nor does the youth worker have a relationship with the young person or their family.

Youth workers know -	Youth workers work to -	Outcomes
1.1 How youth work practice has prepared them to work with young people seeking asylum. 1.2 The role of youth work in accessing and advocating for Human Rights and Social Justice. 1.3 How to support young people in the context of a family. 1.4 Basic policy and legislation relating to the asylum-seeking system in Ireland.	1.5 Initiate relationships and develop connections with Direct Provision Centres and other relevant local and national organisations. 1.6 Connect with the young people and their families to begin to develop a mutual understanding of the role and benefits youth work can offer them	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A connection has been established with the centre manager and other relevant agencies in the local community.• Youth worker has identified ways that are effective in engaging and connecting with young people and their families.• Youth worker has identified young people and has some initial indication of any unmet needs.• Young people know who you are and what your role as a youth worker is.• Young person and their family are open to voluntary engagement and participation in the youth service.

STAGE TWO: IDENTIFYING STRENGTHS, NEEDS AND BARRIERS

At this stage the youth worker is able to identify the strengths, needs and barriers to engaging with the young person and their family, and they in turn are beginning to trust the youth worker and understand the offer of youth work.

Youth workers know -	Youth workers work to -	Outcomes
2.1 Tools to guide practice in an intercultural context. 2.2 How to work with	2.3 The understanding of the young person's access and knowledge of human rights and social justice. 2.4 Identify and address barriers to the young person's progress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Youth worker has a basic understanding of the young person's needs.• Young person and their family understand the offer of youth work and the boundaries.• Young people suffering from trauma are supported to access additional services if needed.• Young person is supported to understand how the protection system in Ireland works.

STAGE THREE: ESTABLISHING REGULAR CONTACT

Youth worker and young person establish an effective working relationship with regular connections and patterns of meetings.

Youth workers know -	Youth workers work to -	Outcomes
3.1 How to reflect and be aware of their own conscious and unconscious bias. 3.2 Theories and definitions of racism and how these impacts on young people's lives.	3.3 Group work activities to build relationships, support integration, and break down boundaries through recreational and social activities in the youth centre and in the community 3.4 Engage young women in youth work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The working alliance is established between the young person and worker and work is taking place in a youth work setting.• As the bond and trust is strengthened, the young person is more open to the possibilities of change and growth that exist• The young person's world is beginning to expand, and they are developing links with the community and have access to new supports and opportunities• Young person is becoming more resilient.

STAGE FOUR: OUTCOMES BEING REALISED

Outcomes are being realised as the young person works with the youth worker to achieve change and progress in their life.

Youth workers know -	Youth workers work to -	Outcomes
4.1 How to support a young person in the process of leaving Direct Provision. 4.2 General Principles of advocacy practices.	4.3 Develop an agreed plan of action. 4.4 Support the young person in self and peer advocacy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The young person has clarity about their rights and entitlements and so expectations and aspirations have evolved.• The young person has worked with the youth worker to develop a plan of action and is clear about the process of moving out of Direct Provision.• The young person has developed their own individual relationships in the community.• The young person is becoming empowered to advocate for themselves and their peers.• Peer support and solidarity is taking place.

STAGE ONE

INITIATING CONTACT



STAGE ONE: INITIATING CONTACT

Stage One in Summary

The current situation: At this stage the young person is likely not to be attending the youth service nor does the youth worker have a relationship with the young person.

Youth workers have knowledge about:

- 1.1 How youth work practice has prepared them to work with young people seeking asylum.
- 1.2 The role of youth work in accessing and advocating for Human Rights and Social Justice.
- 1.3 How to support young people in the context of a family.
- 1.4 Basic policy and legislation relating to the asylum-seeking system in Ireland.

Youth worker works to action:

- 1.5 Initiate relationships and develop connections with Direct Provision Centres and other relevant local and national organisations.
- 1.6 Connect with the young people and their families to begin to develop a mutual understanding of the role and benefits youth work can offer them.

The development of the relationship will be based on:

- Language barriers
- Trust
- Nonjudgment and openness
- Voluntary engagement
- Clear and identified boundaries

Outcomes of Stage One:

- A connection has been established with the centre manager and other relevant agencies in your local community.
- Youth workers have identified ways that are effective in engaging and connecting.
- Youth worker has identified young people and has some initial indication of unmet human rights and needs.
- Young people know who you are and what your role as a youth worker is.
- Young person and their family feel valued.
- Young person and their family are open to voluntary engagement and participation in the service.

STAGE ONE: INITIATING CONTACT

1.1 Youth work practice as a basis work with young people seeking asylum.

What you should know:

The [principles of youth work](#) and youth [engagement](#) remain the same irrespective of the different identities or backgrounds of young people we work with. As a youth worker you do not need to know everything

about different cultures, religions and ethnic backgrounds, but it is important for you as a youth worker to learn as much as you can about the cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds of the young people you are working with.



Trust the process, trust your learning, trust your instinct, and trust your ability to do youth work.

Young people are the experts in their own lives, so it is worth starting out with a sharing session so they can tell you what they feel you need to know about their culture, traditions and religion. You can have fun with this by doing [activities and icebreakers](#) to break down barriers and initial feelings of uncertainty. It is ok for you as a youth worker to ask what they think

you need to know about their lives in order for you to support them. It is also important to be honest, let the young people know that you are not the expert and that you may have preconceived and incorrect assumptions about their culture or religion(s). This also shifts the power to the young person as they become the educator and you the learner.

Youth Work Methodologies

An [inclusive, diverse, and responsive practice methodology](#) means working with young people in a way that is cognisant of the different identities young people navigate each day. This is particularly relevant to young people seeking asylum, as they may belong to two or more identities and experience multiple discriminations as a result. Young people seeking asylum face multiple challenges, due to the obstacles that they have to go through as they seek to integrate into a new society.

STAGE ONE: INITIATING CONTACT

Accessing Human Rights.

What you should be able to do:

Be able to explain how your skills and experience and how these are applicable to our work with young people seeking asylum. Try the following reflective exercise:

Principles of Youth Work	How I can apply these principles to my work with young people seeking asylum.
Young Person Centred: We recognise the rights of young people and holding as central their active and voluntary participation.	
Ensuring and promoting the safety and wellbeing of young people.	
Educational and developmental.	
Ensuring and promoting equality and inclusiveness in all its dealings with young people and adults.	
Dedicated to the provision of quality youth work and committed to continuous improvement.	

Adapted from Dr Rachel Hoare's presentation to NYCI's Lunchtime Conversation event on the topic of Migration, Refuge and Young People's Identity, July 2021.

Dr Hoare is a lecturer and researcher in the School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies in Trinity College, Dublin.

1.2 Accessing Human Rights.

What you should know:

People seeking asylum should receive all their rights, not just some of their rights. One of the main reasons for this resource is that young [people seeking asylum experience challenges in accessing their rights](#). This is despite the fact that they are specifically included in international human rights law (the [European Social Charter](#) or the [UN Convention of the Rights of the Child](#)).

Because of these challenges, often youth workers may find themselves in [Human Rights](#) include, among others:

- **Right to education**
- **Right to health**
- **Right to employment**
- **Right to non-discrimination**
- **Right to decent housing**
- **Access to leisure**
- **Access to information**

You should be able to [identify the rights](#) and the [common challenges that young people seeking asylum face](#) in Ireland today and you should be able to identify and put into action the everyday practices you can use to support these rights.

1.3 Supporting Young People in a Family Context.

What you should know:

Historically youth organisations have worked primarily with the young person as an individual in their own right and close contact with parents has often been limited. However, many youth workers working with young people in DP Centres recognise that there is a need to also support the families of the young people. While this is not a remit of traditional youth work, it is recognised that [working with the families achieves better outcomes](#) for some young people.

Some of this may be due to cultural differences and the fact that 'youth work' may not be clearly understood by families from countries where youth work in the traditional sense does not exist. Families can confuse youth work with childcare, so taking a family approach to engaging with young people may ensure that parents are more likely to allow their young people to take part in youth work activities. Nearly 50% of Youth Work Ireland Member Youth Services work with both young people and their families, while only 36% of work engagement is with young people alone (Youth Work Ireland DP Centre Audit, 2020).

STAGE ONE: INITIATING CONTACT

Best Practices to engage parents include (Access All Areas)

- Have clear information (where possible translated) about your service and the activities you run, how they will be run, at what times and where they will be run.
- Reassure them of the ethos of your organisation, the safety guidelines you follow and the benefits of youth work - remember many parents may be unfamiliar with the concept of youth work.
- If possible, go to the DP Centre so the parents can meet you and get to know you.
- Invite parents to get involved as volunteers.
- Be aware of different beliefs around gender and that in some cultural groups the father or male relative or elder in the faith community may have the final decision-making role.
- Be careful to allay parents' concerns about privacy; they may not want to share information about their personal background.
- If possible, ask a member of the ethnic community to engage the parents with you, this could be another young person who has already been involved with your youth service.
- Allay their fears that participation in youth groups won't clash with family responsibilities or negatively impact on their education.

1.4 Direct Provision Centre Policy and Legislation

About Direct Provision:

The [Direct Provision System](#) was originally introduced in Ireland back in 1999 as a temporary emergency measure to provide basic needs and support to young people seeking asylum while they waited on their claims for refugee status to be processed. This temporary system morphed into a longstanding arrangement which has been [widely criticized](#) as illegal, inhuman, degrading in how it restricts people's rights and opportunities. The average length of stay in DP Centres is 23 months, although many families remain in the system for longer periods - up to eight years in some cases - while their applications are being processed.

In 2022 there were 11,600 living between Direct Provision Centres and emergency accommodation. Of these 2,800 are children. More people have applied for international protection in Ireland in the first five months of 2022 than had been expected for the entirety of 2022.

The majority of DP Centres are also managed by 'for-profit' contractors on behalf of the State. This has led to criticism around inadequate living conditions such as overcrowding and culturally inappropriate food for residents. Many of the DP Centres are located outside of towns which again leads to issues around transport and isolation for residents. For young people wanting to take part in youth work activities this has proved a huge problem.

STAGE ONE: INITIATING CONTACT

The majority of DP Centres are also managed by 'for-profit' contractors on behalf of the State. This has led to criticism around inadequate living conditions such as overcrowding and culturally inappropriate food for residents. Many of the DP Centres are located outside of towns which again leads to issues around transport and isolation for residents. For young people wanting to take part in youth work activities this has proved a huge problem.

[The McMahon Report](#) published in 2015 highlighted a number of problems with the Direct Provision system and made 170 recommendations aimed at improving Direct Provision and many of these were in respect of families and children. In October 2020 the [Advisory Group on Direct Provision](#) made a number of references to the role of youth services in supporting young people in DP Centre and also more significantly it recommended a replacement to the existing DP Centre system and the development of a long-term approach to the provision of supports to people in DP Centres. In February 2021, the Government published a [White Paper](#) on transitioning people out of the current Direct Provision system, which proposes a two-year transition period out of the current system to a new international support service, led by the DCEDIY.

At this stage youth workers work to action:

1.5 Direct Provision Centre Policy and Legislation

About this task:

Prior to engaging with young people directly you should work to establish a knowledge of the supports available for young people seeking asylum and the gaps that may exist.

Establish contact with the Direct Provision centre in order to build an effective working relationship. Reach out to other relevant agencies in developing connections and knowledge about the situation for young people.

Guidance on this task:

Youth workers take a wholistic view of young people and are concerned for all their needs and aspirations. Most agencies have a remit to address only one dimension of young people's lives. For example, mental health, or housing. For this and other reasons, youth workers have found a lack of coordination amongst local agencies. Thorough investigative work on the part of the youth worker may be required to establish a comprehensive understanding of the agencies who are working with young people seeking asylum in their local area.

STAGE ONE: INITIATING CONTACT

Below are checklists that can assist you with this task:

When contacting the Direct Provision Centre, it can be helpful to:

- Write a letter introducing yourself and youth service and ask for an appointment.
- Explain what you and the youth service can offer (and what you can't).
- Be sure to explain that you will need to also engage with parents – bearing in mind that many young people seeking asylum may be unaccompanied.
- If the relationship with the Direct Provision centre has not been constructive look to engage an intermediary from another agency or local school (e.g., afterschool service, community liaison officer or Friends of the Centre).

When engaging with other agencies:

- Explain your role and remit.
- Ask for information about the young people.
- In areas where there are many agencies operating, it will be likely that agencies will be engaging with families, so engaging with these would be good.
- It is expected that in most cases the Direct Provision Centre will be known to local agencies.
- Ideally arrange for a regular, quarterly or every six months check in with all the agencies.
- If there aren't a lot of services in the area, it may be that the DP centre will be the best source of information.

STAGE ONE: INITIATING CONTACT

1.6 **Connect with the young person and their family to begin to develop a mutual understanding of the role of youth work.**

About this task:

In your initial engagement with the young person you will have begun to explain your role and remit. To progress the relationship, you will need to deepen the understanding with the young person and their family. Your aim is to ensure that they understand your role as a youth worker, including both the possibilities and limitations of your role.

You will also begin to ascertain the best ways of engaging with the young person and their family and the best opportunities for developing a working relationship.

Guidance on this task:

Beginnings can be tricky, and assumptions can lead to misunderstandings. This can particularly be the case in a cross-cultural context in which there may be language barriers and cultural barriers. Young people at this point may have no understanding of what youth work is. It is likely that there may not even be a mutual reference point with which to explain the concept of youth work. Care will need to be taken to explain who you are and what you can do and to address any assumptions on both sides of the relationship.

Your greatest asset in addressing these challenges will be your experience in youth work. Creating dialogue, establishing mutual interests, gently challenging assumptions and clarifying objectives are the basis for all your professional conversations. These methods will serve you in this context.

In many instances, the context for engaging the young person will be a family unit. The young person's needs and aspirations may be intertwined with those of their family to a greater extent. Likewise, they may make decisions mutually with their parents to a greater extent, or even have decisions made for them by their parents. These considerations will likely require an effective relationship to be established with a parent or parents.

Youth workers have often found that families in Direct Provision do not have experience of youth work. Given this lack of understanding and expectations, youth workers will need to provide information to both the young person and the families in order to acquire informed consent to the engagement in a programme of youth work – for example some leaflets on the service, posters of planned activities and maybe share the youth service's social media platforms and website so they can check out the services on their own time.

STAGE ONE: INITIATING CONTACT

Checklist of key steps and considerations

- Develop a written information brochure about the supports, services and particular role of the youth service and youth workers.
- Ensure that the brochure is in simple language and have it translated if possible.
- Develop a simple slide deck that can be used in information meetings that corresponds to the brochure
- Plan, promote and implement an information session at the Centre at which you present the slide deck and provide information brochures.
- When following up and engaging with the family consider the following:
 - It may be best to assume that no one is communicating in the family, so what may have been communicated and agreed with one member of the family may not be known and agreed by others.
 - Informed consent raises to a higher threshold in contexts where there may be unfamiliarity with the concept of “youth work,” “counselling” “group work” or any of the other elements of the youth service’s activities.
 - Establishing a rapport with the family is often based on a good relationship with the mother in the family.

STAGE TWO

IDENTIFYING STRENGTHS,
NEEDS AND BARRIERS



Stage One in Summary

Identifying needs and barriers: At this stage the youth worker is able to identify the strengths, needs and barriers to engaging with the young person and their family, and they in turn are beginning to trust the youth worker and understand the offer of youth work.

At this stage Youth workers find it useful to know about:

- 2.1 Tools to guide practice in an intercultural context.
- 2.2 How to work with young people who have experienced trauma.

At this stage the youth worker works to action:

- 2.3 The understanding of the young person's access and knowledge of human rights and social justice
- 1.6 Identify and address barriers to the young person's progress.

At this stage the youth worker is cognizant that their work might temporarily borrow from a social work model – but they work in a way that is informed (to the extent that is possible) by the principles and values of youth work which include:

- Strengths-based work
- Young Person Centred
- Empowerment
- Voluntary

Outcomes of Stage Two:

- Basic understanding of the young person's needs.
- Young person and their family understand the offer of youth work.
- Bond can sometime be established very quickly (for some young people the worker fills an important gap, and the engagement can become very intense very quickly).
- Young person has basic awareness that change is possible.

At this stage youth workers find it helpful to have knowledge about:

2.1 Youth Work Practice in an Intercultural Context

What you should know:

Intercultural and Self Awareness

Youth work can be a space for learning and sharing about different cultures. It can also play a role in addressing and calling out racism and discrimination. [Intercultural learning in youth work](#) is not about youth workers 'teaching' young people seeking asylum about the local culture. It is about creating an open and safe space where we can learn from each other and about each other. It is about accepting and celebrating our differences and finding common connections.

Young people seeking asylum face multiple challenges, due to the obstacles that they have to go through as they seek to [integrate into a new society](#). Leaving their own culture to arrive at a completely new place can be very disorientating. Many young people seeking asylum have to learn a new language, understand cultural habits and practices, get used to various traditions and differences in beliefs. They are also seen as people without a 'place' and the receiving country can try to categorise them by making them choose an ethnic identity which may not have any relevance to their own or home identity.

For workers [planning programmes and activities](#) it is important to be conscious of the [diverse backgrounds](#), experiences, [traditions, values and norms](#) of the young people and families we are engaging with. Before providing supports to young people from different ethnic backgrounds, it is worth checking in with yourself to tease out any [conscious or unconscious assumptions](#) you may have and identify any training or supports you need:

- Basic understanding of the young person's needs.
- How were minority ethnic groups represented when I was growing up?
- Am I cognisant of other minor groups, and their beliefs, customs, religions and practices?
- Are the activities run in my youth group based on the norm, values and beliefs of the majority culture in Ireland.
- How can I ensure that what I do includes and celebrates all groups?
- Do I need to run segregated groups for young women who otherwise may miss out in taking part in youth work activities because of traditions?
- What does valuing diversity mean in my practice?
- Have I considered how to navigate different gender or cultural norms?
- How should I engage with families who may not allow their daughters to attend activities where young men are present?

Supporting Positive Identity Development with Young People Seeking Asylum

CONNECT	Connect the young person with others = Practical advice and guidance
ENABLE	Enabled shared meaning-making = Tease out their skills and interests
EXPAND	Expand opportunities for witnessing and acknowledgement = Positively reframe their experiences and achievements
FACILITATE	Facilitate collective practices = Any activities that can be done in a collective e.g. sports, arts, music
OTHER	Offer opportunities for 'giving back practices' = volunteering, helping etc..

Further Resources - [Step by Step Participation](#)

2.2 Supporting young people seeking asylum experiencing trauma

What you should know:

Be aware that many young people seeking asylum may suffer from trauma. Youth workers have reported that they can find themselves in situations where they are a counsellor and the sole support system for some young people, leading to youth workers experiencing secondary trauma where they themselves need support. To support someone who has experienced trauma or post-traumatic stress the following guidelines are important:

- Do not ask the young person about their past experiences.
- If a young person starts to talk about a past traumatic event, bring them gently back into the present moment, to the activity they are doing now.
- If the young person persists and wants to speak to you about a past experience, recognise the courage that this takes, and reassure the young person that they are in a safe space. If necessary, you may need to encourage or refer the young person on to a professional counselling service.
- Some young people who experience trauma may see your engagement with them and your concern as a friendship whereas you will see it as a professional service. Explain your role and commitment clearly so that the young person's trust is not broken, and the professional relationship can be maintained.

[Further information about mental health challenges faced by young migrants and actions available to youth workers to assist can be found here.](#)

At this stage youth workers work to action:

2.3 Develop an understanding of the young person's access to social and human rights.

About this task:

The young person's urgent needs and human rights may need to be addressed prior to or concurrently with engagement in youth work personal development or empowerment activities. Young people seeking asylum, and particularly unaccompanied minors, experience many challenges in accessing their human rights, including:

- **Language barriers**
- **Cross cultural barriers**
- **Individual and institutional racism**
- **Poverty**
- **Experience of trauma**
- **Previous experience of hostile/human rights abusing state agencies/suspicion of state agencies**

Human rights are included in international human rights law ([the European Social Charter](#) or [the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, UN Declaration of Human Rights, Irish Constitution](#)), and also included in national level laws, procedures and services.

Human Rights include, among others:

- **The right to education**
- **The right to health**
- **The right to employment**
- **The right to non-discrimination**
- **The right to decent housing**
- **Access to leisure**
- **Access to information.**

Guidance on this task:

In everyday terms, young people have a right to have their basic needs addressed, including adequate nutrition, a place to sleep and schooling and necessities for daily personal hygiene. There's an assumption that everyone has these basic needs met. When working with young people seeking asylum there is a necessity to set aside all assumptions and establish [the facts about the young person's situation](#), their needs and their access to human rights.

The most effective way to do this is ask questions about the most basic aspects of the young person's life and their daily routine from the time they get up to when they go to bed without making any assumptions.

STAGE TWO: IDENTIFYING STRENGTHS, NEEDS AND BARRIERS

Below are checklists and supports that can help you in this task

Checklist of key steps and considerations:

- Write a letter introducing yourself and youth service and ask for an appointment.
- Before you begin, be certain that you have time scheduled to address the needs that will be identified.
- Be sure that you have first clearly established your availability and the appropriate ways for the young person to contact you.
- Find an appropriate opportunity situation to initiate a discussion with the young person about their immediate living circumstances and daily life.
- As a youth worker, you will have many techniques to open up discussions about the needs and aspirations of young people you work with. Given the very basic necessities that may be lacking for young people in Direct Provision, it may be helpful to open up a discussion about the young person's daily routine and the challenges/aspirations the young person experiences every day.
- As needs emerge, be sure to ground assumptions you may have about these. Unmet needs may be due to many reasons including lack of information, funds, transport, or policy/service barriers or other reasons. Be sure to understand what is the basis for unmet needs.
- In suggesting actions to address these needs, don't forget the young person's strengths and agency to address these for themselves.
- Be clear about what you are able to do, will do and can't do.
- Be clear about when you will follow up and how.

Below is guidance on supporting young people to access their human rights -

https://www.youthworkireland.ie/images/uploads/general/Step_by_Step_Social_Rights.pdf

2.4 Identify and Address Barriers to the Young Person's Progress in your Role as a Youth Worker Advocate

About this task:

The role of youth workers as advocates for young people is well established. Youth workers bring a [strengths-based and empowerment approach](#) to supporting young people who face barriers in accessing the services they need. This may include gaps in services, waiting lists and lack of joined up service delivery.

[Young people new to Ireland face additional barriers including institutional racism, language and unfamiliarity with the systems and process.](#) An empowerment approach entails supporting young people to be effective in this environment independent of youth work supports. As a youth worker, you

can support the young person to address these barriers and steps are provided below to guide you in providing this support.

It may be the case that the barriers are substantial enough to require your personal intervention. This can involve accompanying the young person in the role of an advocate, or even acting unilaterally as an advocate on behalf of the young person.

In some instances, your individual action may not be enough to address the barriers faced by young people. The change needed may require organisation, or collective community action to ensure that policies or service provision improve and human rights are addressed.

The task itself can be broken down as follows:

- It is almost certainly the case that any young person new to Ireland will benefit from assistance in engaging with services. This must be done in strengths-based manner, working alongside the young person to assist them in accessing services.
- If the young person does not achieve a satisfactory outcome, it may be necessary for you as a youth worker to escalate your involvement.
- It may be possible that in some instances young people are exceptionally capable and independent and your role may be to assist the young person to advocate for themselves.
- Acting formally as an advocate for the young person by engaging services directly.
- your advocacy support does not achieve a satisfactory outcome, it may be necessary for your organisation to become involved and as a collective work to bring about changes in policies and services. This may require moving from advocacy around an individual "case", the situation of an individual young person, to advocacy around a "cause," – changing the way the system works.

STAGE TWO: IDENTIFYING STRENGTHS, NEEDS AND BARRIERS

Guidance on this task:

It is important to listen to the young person when they are obstructed in accessing the service or support, they need, in order to understand whether the barrier they are facing can be addressed by them with your support. If you ascertain that they are unable to access the service they need without your support, then your direct advocacy may be needed. If there is a systemic barrier to young people in certain circumstances, it is likely that your service will need to become involved in an initiative to change policies and procedures.

In all the circumstances listed above, ongoing discussion and review with your supervisor is likely to be helpful.

Checklist of key steps and considerations:

One: Assisting the young person to effectively access services

In your interactions with young people, you can prepare them to successfully engage with service providers by doing the following:

Prior to the meeting:

- Encourage the young people to speak up for themselves and others in your daily interactions with them, not just when they are engaging with service providers.
- Encourage young people to ask for support in engaging with service providers when they need it.
- Prepare the young person prior to the meeting with the service provider, ensure they understand the meeting, what they wish to accomplish.
- Writing a letter, or a note describing their needs and the expected outcome from the service may help them to organise their thoughts and serve as an aid in the meeting.
- Role play forthcoming meetings with the service providers so that the young person has the opportunity to practice what they wish to say.
- Create spaces for the young person to be heard. Ensure that the participants in the meeting are aware of the purpose of the meeting – to hear and respond to the needs and aspirations of the young person. Ensure that the meeting circumstances and attendees are appropriate to the purpose.

At the meeting:

- Encourage the young people to speak up for themselves and others in your daily interactions with them, not just when they are engaging with service providers.
- Check that they have had an opportunity to have a say in decisions that affect them.
- Encourage young people to ask questions.
- Regularly pause the meeting to insist that the young person have a chance to have their say.
- Ensure that all information provided is understood by the young person.
- Agree with everyone that it is okay for young people to make mistakes in communicating their concerns and that space and time for them to clarify what they want to say be provided.
- Ensure that there is agreement on actions and follow up.
- Check that agreed actions directly address the needs and aspirations of the young person.

Following the meeting:

Discuss and assess progress achieved with the young person. Check that agreed actions directly address the needs and aspirations of the young person.

Checklists and further steps:

- If your regular discussions with the young person reveal an unsatisfactory outcome from engaging with a service provider, you will first need to understand the nature of the barriers they face.
- Make no assumptions when asking questions, the barrier may not necessarily be in the service itself, but rather with transportation to the service, or simple assisting with filling forms.
- Don't assume that necessary communications between services involved are taking place. Your initial contacts with the agencies(s) the young person is attempting to access should involve verifying that all parties are aware of the young person and their circumstance.

STAGE TWO: IDENTIFYING STRENGTHS, NEEDS AND BARRIERS

Acting as a service to advocate for young people

- When systems fail to support young people in your locality, youth work services have a role to play.

They can do this in the following ways:

- Create spaces for young people to be heard. If young people's concerns are not being directly heard and acted upon by services in the community, the youth service can create a safe space for young people express their needs and aspirations, identify the ways in which these are not being met, identify appropriate actions and changes.
- Care needs to be taken in setting out expectations of the results of such a discussion.

The documented concerns of young people can be:

- Presented to allies and champions in the community for the purpose of creating a coalition for change
- Be presented to service providers

Further Resources and supports:

Youth Work Ireland has a forthcoming publication on advocacy for young people in accessing services, drafts of the publication can be [accessed here>](#)

STAGE THREE

**ESTABLISHING REGULAR
CONTACT THROUGH YOUTH
WORK AND GROUP WORK**



Stage One in Summary

Establishing regular contact: At this stage the young person and the youth worker are connected and have established a regular pattern of meetings and the young person is supported to build relationships and knowledge about their new community.

At this stage Youth workers find it useful to know about:

- 3.1** How to reflect and be aware of their own conscious and unconscious bias.
- 3.2** Theories and definitions of racism and how these impacts on young people's lives.

At this stage the youth worker works to action:

- 3.3** Group work activities to build relationships, support integration, and break down boundaries through recreational and social activities in the youth centre and in the community.
- 3.4** Engaging young women in youth work.

They can do this in the following ways

- Moving away from a social work model to a youth work model based on youth work practices.
- Identify teachable moments that empower the young person.
- Support the young person to be empowered to challenge their circumstances – and being mindful to hand power back to young people, through making knowledge available to them – this is an empowerment model.

Outcomes of Stage Three:

- The working alliance is established between the young person and worker.
- As the bond and trust is strengthened, the young person is more open to change and has a greater sense of urgency.
- The young person's world is beginning to expand, and they are developing more links with the community and have access to new supports and opportunities
- Young person is becoming more resilient.

At this stage youth workers find it helpful to have knowledge about:

3.1 Reflection on our own Implicit and Explicit Bias

Racism exists. However, explaining racism presents a problem. It is a fact that the overwhelming majority of young people in Ireland believe that racism is a significant issue. People of colour in Ireland routinely report the experience of prejudice. These are facts.

It is also the fact that very few people in Ireland of any background will admit to being racist.

How can all of these statements be true? How can racism be prevalent, without anyone actually being racist?

Political scientists have in recent years explained this by proposing the existence of widespread implicit prejudice. People mean well, this theory goes, but most have a subconscious bias, which influences their treatment of people who look different from them. There are many tests, some of which can be found online that check for implicit associations which are said to evidence the existence of unconscious bias. The tests have consistently shown that it takes most people milliseconds longer to associate black faces with positive words, such as “good”, than

with negative words, such as “awful”. For white faces, the pattern is reversed. The extra time it takes is evidence of someone’s implicit prejudice – a prejudice the person may not even be aware of.

Unconscious bias exists. Unsupported, counter factual assumptions about young people in Ireland routinely feature in the interactions of young Irish people. For examples, see the [Stories of Equality>>](#)

However, it is also unquestionably the case that many people purposely and consciously (as opposed to unconsciously) formulate and act on racist thoughts. This is true despite the vanishingly small number of people who admit to being racist. This existence of numbers of such people is easily evidenced by the frequent appearance of racist slurs and slanders in social media, internet searches and internet posts originating in Ireland. The gap between the numbers of people who admit to being racist and the number of people who behave explicitly as racist can also be explained; many people who are racists are also people who lie to themselves and others.

Questions for reflection

Fundamentally, whether unconscious, or explicit, cultural bias and racism impacts on the judgements of people in power and affects the access of young people to their rights. Our focus in reflecting on bias should be on the judgments themselves and whether these judgments are influenced by bias.

- What judgments did you make about the young person?
- Were your judgements subjective or objective?
- Did you make objective judgements based on all pertinent facts?
- Does the service fully understand the facts related to the specific circumstances of the young person?
- Did you make objective judgements using identified, specific and relevant criteria and valid examples?
- Were any of your judgments based on assumptions, misunderstandings, or generalisations?
- Would you treat other young people in similar circumstances the same?

Further Resources

<https://inar.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Responding-to-racism-guide-FINAL-2.pdf>



3.2 Theories of racism and how it impacts on the barriers experienced by young person

Understanding Racism

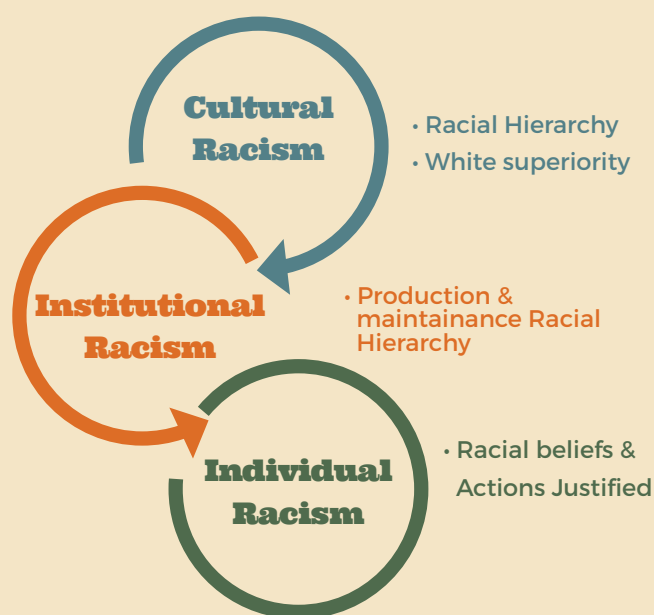
Racism is unfortunately something that many young people seeking asylum continue to face [growing up in Ireland](#). The impacts of racist incidents can be compounded severely by the lack of intervention and support from people present. A young person's identity and their lived experience of different forms of oppression and racism well as the specific risks and harms that they are subject to affect how they interact with professionals and services. It is important that youth workers are familiar with the types of racism, how it can manifest, are able to challenge it and can support young people who experience it. [Incidents of racism can be reported through INAR](#). There are also many [campaigns and actions](#) youth groups can get involved in to challenge racism in Ireland.

This is covered in detail in section 3.1

Definitions & Types of Racism

[Racism as defined by INAR](#) is an any action, practice, policy, law, speech, or incident which has the effect (whether intentional or not) of undermining anyone's enjoyment of their human rights, based on their actual or perceived ethnic or national origin or background, where that background is that of a marginalised or historically subordinated group.

Racism carries connotations of violence because the dehumanisation of ethnic groups has been historically enforced through violence. In other words, racism is when an individual, group, structure or institution intentionally or unintentionally abuse their power to the detriment of people, because of their actual or perceived "racialised" background.



It's important to understand that racism is an ideology from a colonial past which "holds one race superior, while another inferior" in the words [Bob Marley in his song 'War'](#).

Racism can be individual, structural, institutional, environmental or systemic and based on an ideology that holds one race superior and another inferior. The important thing is to understand racism as a system that is much more than something performed by racists in individual acts of bigotry.

Individual Racism refers to forms of racism expressed in the practice of social and political institutions; to the way institutions discriminate against certain groups, whether intentionally or not, and to their failure to have in place policies that prevent discrimination or discriminatory behaviour.

Structural Racism refers to the fact that society is structured in a way (including via cultural norms) that excludes substantial numbers of people from ethnic minority backgrounds from taking part equally in social institutions, or from having equal life outcomes in for example health, educational attainment, death rates, infant mortality rates, incarceration rates, arrest rates, employment rates etc.

Institutional Racism, also known as systemic racism, is a form of racism that is embedded in the laws and regulations of a society or an organization. It manifests as discrimination in areas such as criminal justice, employment, housing, health care, education, and political representation.

Historical Racism has to do with the specific histories of domination and subordination of groups in any given society. Different societies have different histories of conquest and domination, and so patterns of racialisation are distinct, if overlapping. These histories impact on the position of groups in societies today because they continue to be reflected in the structures and institutions of those societies, in their laws and legacies, and in the language and cultural attitudes which persist.

Theories of Racism

It will be helpful for the youth worker to have a general understanding of the theories of racism that impact on young people seeking asylum as they integrate into Irish society and how to be an advocacy with young people. While there are many theories of racism – Critical Race Theory, Racial Capitalism – an important one to consider is [Intersectionality](#). This is a theory we can use to better understand the everyday realities of those who are most marginalised in society, by acknowledging the different forms of oppression they face and how they interact and be attentive to this in our work. [An intersectional approach](#) is crucial as many young people seeking asylum will be simultaneously facing issues of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, disability, sexuality and more. These issues are interconnected and cannot be compartmentalised if we are to fully understand the context of these young people's lives. Truly inclusive practice seeks to resist all forms of oppression.

Impacts of Racism on Young People Seeking Asylum

In supporting young people around the issue of racism – the following reflection statements and questions have been adapted from NYCI's [8 Steps to Inclusive Practice](#) and are helpful

- Not to be afraid of what we do not know or understand – and to be ready to go on a journey of discovery with young people seeking asylum and their families where necessary.
- Remember and trust in our core skills and values as youth workers – our ability to stand with, listen and hear what young people are saying is what guides our practice and supports young people.
- Listening to what young people seeking asylum tell us about their lived and past experiences.
- Invest in learning how to use [restorative processes](#) when working with young people seeking asylum can people to bring a wholistic approach to practice.
- Progressing through the four stages can be a long journey in ahead – so as with all youth work a commitment to start where young people at and harnessing the motivation and energy of them will support them in their journey to empowerment and leadership.
- Being honest and brave, we have promised ourselves to continually explore our own racism – we live in a racist world – we cannot help but carry racism. And if we are white, we carry white privilege. We can learn to carry it with care. And if we are Black, Travellers and people of colour we figure out the deep impact of internalised racism and we start a healing journey.
- When a young person experiences racism it does not follow that they can explain it to us, or even figure it out for themselves; we have learned how to hold space for them mainly by using the core values of Social Justice as our moral compass and guide.

At this stage youth workers work to action:

3.3 Group Work Activities to Support Empowerment and Integration.

About this task:

Youth work in its truest form is empowerment in group settings. Once you have worked with the young person to ensure basic needs and human rights are being addressed, space is opened up to begin working with young people to develop their capacity and work towards goals through recreational and social youth work activities that provide opportunities for empowerment and connection.

The underlying assumption for work with young people seeking asylum is that social inclusion based on greater integration is a common goal. Integration as an end goal will be an ongoing journey and may involve working in minority ethnic groups.

Guidance on this task:

Youth workers need little guidance in developing and implementing social and recreational activities in a community youth work setting, as this is core to their work. The challenge is ensuring that these activities offer opportunities for intercultural learning for all involved. Like all groups, it is helpful to consider a programme block of eight weeks and set out learning objectives and outcomes. Breaking the group up as appropriate into age cohorts.

Below are checklists that can assist in ensuring that your youth work practice supports intercultural learning, empowerment and greater social inclusion.

Starting Off - Ideas for daily intercultural youth work practice.

- Explain the “obvious”. Even if things seem obvious to you, it does not mean they are for everyone. If they are, the young person will let you know. But if they were not, you provide a safe place for learning without having to ask which, for some young people, could be embarrassing.
- Ask about other cultures. By showing a curious, open attitude through questions such as “how do you do it back home? In your family? In your country?”, you give a space to their experience, and you value differences. This allows for dialogue, and maybe also enables you to better understand certain behaviours.

- Avoid imposing behaviours through the argument “This is how we do it here...”. This could lead to defensiveness and give the wrong message that there is only one way of doing something, which delegitimises young people who act differently.
- When proposing activities, consider cultural aspects, e.g., proposing an afternoon of physical activities during Ramadan may exclude certain young people from participating as they may be hungry or fatigued.
- Involve them in planning activities so that they can help local young people discover some of their games and leisure activities.
- Be ready to sometimes just be there and listen, without feeling the need to do something or intervene.

Some suggestions from youth workers on what has worked for them:

- Interagency work and linking in with other community organisations – it’s important to have a whole community approach to engaging with young people seeking asylum.
- Using text message to communicate.
- Understanding of the situation the young person is in and flexibility in meeting them where they are at.
- Soccer and recreation activities work well to engage young men in particular, and also works well integrating different nationalities.
- If they can come to the youth centre, it provides them with a friendly and kind space away from the DP Centre where they can be themselves and try new things.
- Taking them on trips to see other parts of Ireland or try new activities (pre-Covid).
- Empowering young people and providing opportunities for them to express themselves through drama and art programmes.
- Finding ways to support them to connect with the wider community.
- Working with the young people, building on their skills and allowing them as much control over the planned programme as possible.
- Linking in with centre workers, referrals, staff going out to centres to meet new young people.
- Using a positive and friendly approach, willing to listen to their answers.
- Accepting these young people and their culture and working with other communities.
- Groups run in the Direct Provision Centres or workers being physically present in the centres works well to engage and recruit the young people.
- Longer than normal group hours, so the group may be 3hrs and can provide food and snacks.
- Youth work approaches with small group work, outdoor environment, and music.
- Ongoing engagement and [communication with parents](#) is vital – see also section on page 9.
- Having a young volunteer from the DP Centre can help build the relationship with the young people. This volunteer can also ensure when a new family/young person moves into the Direct Provision Centre they can directly reach out to them to let them know about the youth club and invite them to come along.

3.4 How to Involve Young Women.

Engaging with young females seeking asylum can be difficult due to cultural and religious traditions as well as family dynamics. Depending on their situation and level of protection, some young females seeking asylum may often have limited access to participate in youth services and in certain cases, and especially when they come with family or community members, some are not allowed to participate in activities outside of the home and school and so are kept back from proper social inclusion. Young woman may have more family responsibilities in Ireland as families may not have a wider support to help with child minding, cooking etc..

In some cases, there is a lack of empowerment of young women due to traditional gender roles. Some of the young refugee women and girls grew up in a culture where women's activities were exclusively in the household, and therefore

youth work or intercultural interaction has never even occurred to them. In a lot of cases parents who have grown up in a different country and culture may have concerns about their daughter's safety in a new country – from racism as much as potential violence – this may result in girls having less freedoms in Ireland than in their original country.

In many cases, young females seeking asylum have different cultural codes, particularly in relation to gender roles and mixed societies, which can keep them from participating in social activities where young men are also present. Some youth workers have found that [setting up female only groups](#) and customizing the activities toward girls is a good way to break down barriers and get young girls into the youth service so as to develop their strengths and grow their self-belief.

Questions for Reflection

- How can youth work reach out to young refugee girls or women?
- Is there a need to engage with wider family members to discuss with them the practice and benefits of youth work?
- How can youth work contribute to creating safe spaces for young female refugees?
- Is there a need / resources for girls only groups?
- What are the limitations of youth work in including young females seeking asylum?
- Could your service encourage female relatives to volunteer at the youth group?
- Is there a need for specific training on intercultural awareness around gender roles?
- Can you target programmes to the needs and interests of particular groups of young females seeking asylum?

Further Resources: [Step by Step Young Women](#)

Youth Work with Young People in Direct Provision and those Seeking Asylum

STAGE FOUR

OUTCOMES
BEING REALISED



Summary of this stage:

Outcomes are being realised: At this stage the relationship between the youth work and young person is established and the bond is strong in terms of trust. The youth worker and young person are actively meeting outside of service providers and the young person is in the process of leaving or has left the DP Centre.

At this stage Youth workers find it useful to know about:

- 4.1 How to support a young person in the process of leaving Direct Provision
- 4.2 General Principles of advocacy practices

At this stage the youth worker works to action:

- 4.3 Develop an agreed plan of action
- 4.4 Support the young person in self and peer advocacy

The youth worker can:

- Signposts and makes connections to community and other resources.
- Helps young person to acquire specific skills.
- Recognises young person's achievements.

The youth worker is informed by the principles of:

- Empowerment model
- Advocacy principles
- Rights based thinking

Outcomes of Stage Four:

- The young person has clarity about their rights and entitlements and so expectations and aspirations have changed
- Young person has a plan of action and is clear about steps to take that will result in outcomes.
- The young person has developed their own individual relationships in the community.
- Work is taking place in a youth work setting
- The young person is empowered to advocate for themselves and their community.
- Peer support and solidarity is taking place

At this stage youth workers find it helpful to have knowledge about:

4.1 How to Support a Young Person in the Process of Leaving Direct Provision

What you should know: People face significant barriers when moving out of Direct Provision Centres and the actual process can take a long time. Barriers can include a lack of financial resources, knowledge of the Irish rental market, an inability to provide acceptable references, language barriers, discrimination, and racism. This is coupled with the already precarious situation of the housing crisis in Ireland, where waiting lists for social

housing are long and rental costs exceed amounts provided in rent supplements. The role of the youth worker in this instance is to support young people to understand how the system in Ireland works. They also need to ensure that the young people have realistic expectations given the complexities of moving out of protection services. It is helpful to begin to put a plan in place outlining what they need to know and do.

As a youth worker you will be meeting young people at various stages of their lives and if your first contact with a young person is when they are at this stage you will need to consider stages 1-3 alongside this.

In other instances, the young people might never reach this point while they are engaging with you but learning life skills in preparation is essential.

What to consider	✓	✗	?
Are they aware of service providers in their locality that can support them when they move out?			
Do they know where they would like to live?			
How will they support themselves financially and emotionally?			
Where can they go to find accommodation for rent?			
Do they have a support network in place?			

What to consider	✓	✗	?
Where can they access financial support (social welfare or employment)?			
Do they have people who will act as character references for landlords?			
Have they / can they apply for HAP or Rent Supplement Payments?			
Do they know how to budget?			
Do they understand the process of lease or tenancy agreements?			
Are they familiar with the different service suppliers?			
Have they got sufficient funds to pay a deposit?			

These issues are explored in more detail in the following resources

- [Transition from Direct Provision to life in the Community](#)
- [Guide to Living Independently](#)
- [Supporting the Transition from Direct Provision](#)

4.2 General Principles of Good Advocacy Practice

Knowledge of good practice and principles in advocacy work with young people will help to support the young person's ability to advocate for themselves. Those who advocate should:

- Act on the issues agreed with a young person and not be influenced by others.
- Act only as an advocate and not to represent the views or position of any other individual or agency.
- Be aware of the limits of confidentiality, if the law or the organisations policies and procedures require it and inform the young person of this.
- Be aware of the rights of young people.
- Be aware of one's own prejudices or that of the young person so the advocacy process is not negatively affected.
- Be clear that information about the young person will not be shared without their agreement, except in very specific circumstances.
- Support the young person to access the information they need.
- Knowledge of how to respond where they are concerned about a risk to the young person's wellbeing during an advocacy process.
- Do not do anything the young person does not want them to do, except where the law requires it and inform them if this is the case.
- Do not let personal opinions influence the young person's choices.
- Understand the relevant legislation and operate within said legislation at all times

At this stage youth workers work to action:

4.3 Develop an Agreeing Plan of Action

About this task:

Youth work is largely about supporting and empowering young people through transitions. The nature of the support will vary depending on individual cases. Progressing out of Direct Provision is a critical transition. Young people anticipating a major transition benefit from guidance and an opportunity to develop a considered plan.

Guidance on this task:

Youth workers regularly assist young people in developing and implementing a personal plan of action. Some of the unique skills of youth workers include the abilities to:

- Help young people to consider the strengths in their lives which they should include in their plan.
- Help them to understand the consequences of choices they make in their plan, and most importantly,
- Youth workers empower and assist young people to implement their plan.

Adopting a one-to-one approach to this part of the process will:

- Raise young people's awareness about their own personal development needs
- Help them to recognise and make use of their own resources
- Work on developing young people's reflection skills
- Guide them towards making appropriate choices and decisions in their lives
- Reinforce attitudes that encourage them to take responsibility for their own future
- Help them to move from focussing on problems to focussing on solutions
- Try to help them understand their ongoing learning process
- Find out what tools we can offer to help them shape their own learning process
- Support young people in creating a vision of their own future

For more information the Draft [Youth Work Ireland One to One Model](#) which provides guidance in supporting young people in this way

4.4 Young Person is an Advocate for themselves and their Peers

Self-Advocacy

About this task:

Earlier sections of this document described how youth workers can directly support young people in engaging with services. However, ultimately youth work should result in young people who are able to function independently. An empowerment approach entails supporting young people to be effective in this environment independent of youth work supports.

The below details steps that you can take to help young people become effective in engaging with services without the direct support of youth work advocacy. As in previous guidance, the below takes into account that young people are often not heard or listened to by service providers. It also considers the fact that young people new to Ireland face additional barriers including institutional racism, language and unfamiliarity with the systems and process

Guidance on this task:

Consider that learners progress most quickly when they are assisted in tasks that are slightly beyond their current ability. Create safety by ensuring the young person you will support them, while at the same time encourage the young person to take the lead in meetings with service providers.

Adopting a one-to-one approach to this part of the process will:

- Encourage young people to speak up for others in your daily interactions with them, not just when they are engaging with service provider.
- Encourage young people to ask for support in engaging with service providers when they need it.
- Prepare the young person prior to the meeting, ensure they understand the meeting, what they wish to accomplish.
- Writing a letter, or a note describing their needs and the expected outcome from the service may help them to organise their thoughts and serve as an aid in the meeting.
- Role-play forthcoming meetings with the service providers so that the young person has the opportunity to practice what they wish to say.
- Communicate that it is okay for young people to make mistakes.
- Follow up after the meeting to make sure that the expected outcome was achieved.

Peer Advocacy

About this task:

Young people will develop first-hand experience and expertise in relation to overcoming the challenges of transitioning from Direct Provision. Be certain to build on this strength to the extent that is appropriate by creating opportunities for peer learning and mentoring. Young people who are able and willing to become peer supporters can be an enormous resource to other young people in the process of transitioning from Direct Provision.

Guidance on this task:

Peer support is an established principle in youth work practice. Core principles of peer practice are well understood by youth workers. These includes effective relationships, boundaries and empowerment and establishing youth work activities in safe, supervised contexts.

Checklists and supports:

Peer support can happen informally but below is a set of principles set within a worksheet that can assist you to develop a plan of work to support peer relationships.

Stages	Best Practices	Are there adoptions needed
Work where young people are at and be creative in how you work with young people	<p>Choose mentors and mentees against clear criteria and consider best ways to reach these young people offering what young people want, and not what professionals may expect.</p> <p>Be creative and inventive - not everyone's a talker - they may prefer to dance or play football.</p> <p>Differentiate the offer according to age and abilities of the young people you are working with - not one size fits all.</p>	
Involve the right young people - think carefully about mentor and mentee requirements and recruitment	<p>Ensure your programme is what young people want, and not what professionals may expect.</p> <p>Don't work in isolation - look to build a team - be supported by your own colleagues.</p> <p>Ensure your youth service management is on board and supportive</p>	

Stages	Best Practices	Are there adoptions needed
Focus on Relationships – Build trust	Mentors need to be supported to develop the skills to build trusting relationships. This is key to enabling change.	
Encourage young people's ownership so they are part of all stages of the process	<p>For the programme to effectively engage the young people you are seeking to support there needs to be true co-production. A tick box consultation exercise does not work. Young people need to feel they have a sense of agency and ownership of the programme.</p> <p>Credibility and authenticity are essential to enable young people to walk alongside their peers.</p>	
Be Safe, Set Boundaries and Supervision	<p>Ensure through their training and regular supervision that the mentors feel safe and supported.</p> <p>Ensure you and your colleagues have access to regular support through supervision.</p>	

Reference and Resource

- [8 Steps to Inclusive Youth Work, NYCI, 2020](#)
- [A Family Belongs Together: Refugees' experiences of family reunification in Ireland, NACS](#)
- [Anti Rumours Resource Pack, Doras Luimní, 2019](#)
- [Access All Areas: A diversity toolkit for the youth work sector, NYCI, 2012](#)
- [Between Insecurity and Hope: Reflections on youth work with young refugees, Council of Europe and European Commission](#)
- [Bridges and Barriers to Unity: A toolkit for youth work to promote diversity and inclusion, NYCI, Youth Work Ireland Galway, World Vision, IHREC & Galway County Council](#)
- [Direct Provision: Life in Lockdown: Children's views and experiences of living in Direct Provision during the Covid-19 pandemic, Ombudsman for Children, 2020](#)
- [Getting Right to Work: Access to employment and decent work for international protection applicants in Ireland, DORAS & IHREC](#)
- [GloBall: A toolkit for youth workers working with young migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, SALTO](#)
- [Guide to the International Protection Procedure in Ireland, UNHCR](#)
- [One to One: Supporting Learning Face To Face, Youth Pass, SALTO-YOUTH](#)
- [Information Booklet for Applicants for International Protection, Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service, 2017](#)
- [Integrated Services in Youth Work Ireland, Youth Work Ireland, 2011](#)
- [Integrating Refugees Through Youth Work Activities, Institute for Policy, Research and Analysis, 2016](#)
- [Invisible People: The integration support needs of refugee families reunified in Ireland, NASC](#)
- [Mental Health and Direct Provision: Recommendations for addressing urgent concerns, DORAS, 2020](#)
- [Person or Number: Issues faced by immigrants accessing social protection, NACS, 2012](#)
- [Powerless: Experiences of Direct Provision during the Covid-19 pandemic, Irish Refugee Council, 2020](#)
- [Refugee Resettlement Toolkit, Doras, 2017](#)
- [Safe Haven: The needs of refugee children arriving in Ireland through the Irish Refugee Programme: An Exploratory Study, Children's Rights Alliance, 2019](#)
- [Safety and Welfare of Children in Direct Provision: An investigation by the Ombudsman for Children Office, 2020](#)
- [Step-by-Step Together: Support, tips, examples and possibilities for youth work with young refugees, Council of Europe and European Commission](#)
- [Steps Towards Inclusion: Developing youth work with separated children, NYCI](#)
- [Supporting the Transition from Direct Provision: Learning from the Refugee Support Grant Programme, St. Stephen's Green Trust, 2019](#)
- [The Contribution of Youth Work in the Context of Migration and Refugee Matters: A practice toolbox for youth workers and recommendations for policy makers, European Commission, 2019](#)
- [Transition from Direct Provision to Life in the Community, Irish Research Council 2016](#)
- [Welcome to Ireland's Asylum Process: Child friendly guide, Irish Refugee Council](#)
- [White Paper on Ending Direct Provision, DCEDIY, 2021](#)
- [Working Group on Improvements to the Protection Process in Ireland](#)
- [Working with Migrants and Refugees – Guidelines, Tools and Methods, SALTO, 2017](#)
- [Your Guide to Living Independently: An information booklet for people who have been granted refugee or subsidiary protection status, or permission to remain in Ireland, Dept. of Justice, 2017](#)
- [Youth Work Activities for Children and Young People – NYCI Interactive Map](#)
- [Youth Work Ireland One-to-One Model of Practice \(Draft\)](#)

Support Agencies

Action Aid

www.actionaid.ie

Amnesty Ireland

www.amnesty.ie

DORAS

www.doras.ie

Children's Rights Alliance

www.childrensrights.ie

Clare Immigration and Support Centre

www.clareimmigrantsupportcentre.com

Cultur Migrant Centre

www.cultur.ie

Every Child Ireland

www.everychildireland.org

Free Legal Advice Centre

www.flac.ie

Immigrant Council of Ireland

www.immigrantcouncil.ie

INAR (Irish Network Against Racism)

www.inar.ie

Irish Council for Civil Liberties

www.iccl.ie

Irish Human Rights & Equality Commission

www.ihrec.ie

Irish Refugee Council

www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie

NASC – Migrant & Rights Centre

www.nascireland.org

NYCI – National Youth Council of Ireland

www.nyc.ie

MRCI - Migrant Rights Centre of Ireland

www.mcrici.ie

Movement of Asylum Seekers in Ireland

www.masi.ie

Ombudsman for Children

www.oco.ie

Spirasi

www.spirasi.ie

Youth Work Ireland Member Youth Services

Canal Communities Regional Youth Service
www.ccrys.org

Carlow Regional Youth Service
www.carlowrys.org

CDYS Youth Work Ireland
www.cdys.ie

Clare Youth Service
www.facebook.com/clareyouthservice

Donegal Youth Service
www.donegalyouthservice.ie

FDYS
www.fdys.ie

In Sync Youth and Family Services
www.insync.ie

KDYS
www.kdys.ie

Limerick Youth Service
www.limerickyouthservice.com

Ossory Youth
www.ossoryyouth.com

Waterford & South Tipperary
Community Youth Service
www.wstcys.ie

Youth Work Ireland Cavan/Monaghan
www.ywimonaghan.ie

Youth Work Ireland County Longford
www.lcrl.ie/youth-service

Youth Work Ireland Galway
www.youthworkgalway.ie

Youth Work Ireland Laois
www.ywilaois.com

Youth Work Ireland Louth
www.youthworkirelandlouth.ie

Youth Work Ireland Meath
www.youthworkirelandmeath.ie

Youth Work Ireland Midlands
www.youthworkmidlands.org

Youth Work Ireland North Connaught
www.ncycs.ie

Youth Work Ireland Tipperary
www.youthworktipperary.ie

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Youth Work Ireland Member Youth Services



Notes:



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Youth Work Ireland



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Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth