

PROUD SPACES

Moving LGBTQI+ Youth Work Towards Promising Practices

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THEORY OF CHANGE:

The Theory of Change and explanations of values, principles and models provided in this resource have been informed by Youth Work Ireland's action research in developmental group work with young people in cooperation with South East Technological University and by Youth Work Ireland's research into youth work with young people living in direct provision centres.

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Youth Work Ireland

Youth Work Ireland's members are the largest providers of youth work services to young LGBTQI+ people in Ireland with over 800 young people participating in 48 groups each week¹. Our work is informed and guided by the principles and values of youth work and all activities are supported by trained and professional youth practitioners. Engagement with Youth Work Ireland member services staff reveals a specific and unique way of working with LGBTQI+ people based on sound youth work values and principles and embedded within Youth Work Ireland's Integrated Youth Services Model².

www.youthworkireland.ie

GrowSpace

Growspace is a Polish NGO who offers day-to-day activities, including a full range of training, workshops and training for young people in formal and non-formal education settings. Its chief expertise in relation to this programme is in relation to supporting the development of safe spaces for young LGBTQI+ people in schools. Its LGBTQI+ ranking programme widely promotes safe spaces and practices in Polish schools. In the most recent year the programme directly engaged 22,000 people in 2,500 locations across Poland.

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/growspace-poland/>

ECYC

ECYC represents a European network of youth work and youth club organisations that practise and promote open youth work and non-formal education. With 23 nationally represented organisations in 20 Council of Europe member states, reaching 1.8 million young people, the organisation has at its heart the support of youth clubs and other forms of neighbourhood youth work. Involving young people and helping them participate actively in their community is the leading principle of Open Youth Work as delivered by ECYC members. ECYC uses open youth work and non-formal education methods in providing young people with the skills and knowledge to make their own informed decisions.

www.ecyc.org

Youth Work Ireland Laois

Youth Work Ireland Laois is the only fully integrated youth service in County Laois, Ireland. They deliver quality programmes and projects to socially disadvantaged and universal young people living or attending school in the county through youth clubs and youth groups. Youth Work Ireland Laois is committed to a planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young people, through their voluntary participation, and which is complementary to their formal education or vocational education and training.

www.ywilaois.com

Executive Summary

We all want to know what works, why it works and to be able to demonstrate impact. We want our stakeholders, including young people, colleagues, parents, communities and funders to believe in the quality of the work we are doing together. The development and resourcing of new services, good practice and commitment from stakeholders requires this. When we looked at LGBTQI+ youth work practice, we found that the available literature didn't help us in establishing this knowledge.

The Proud Spaces project proposal was based on research on youth work practice in which we found that there was a wealth of evidence and research on the needs, life situations and challenges faced by young LGBTQI+ people. There was far less research or documentation describing outcomes, competencies and practices that achieve these outcomes in youth work settings. Our enquiry has focused therefore on working together with young LGBTQI+ people and youth workers to document and understand what kind of outcomes are taking place and what youth work activities bring about these outcomes.

This tool and the guidance within it was developed based on findings that are the result of the expertise, input and guidance of youth workers, young LGBTQI+ people and field experts. It is informed by their practice and personal experiences and allows us to understand the unique challenges faced by young LGBTQI+ people and the role youth work practices can and do play in supporting them. This resource will build the knowledge, skills, capacity and practices of those who work with young LGBTQI+ people in formal and non-formal youth work settings. It will also identify the behaviours, processes and methodologies that can be applied easily and effectively to achieve better outcomes for young LGBTQI+ people.

This tool establishes a vision of youth work with young LGBTQI+ people that is grounded in practice, supported by research and embedded in a clear set of values, competencies and principles that are essential to achieving better outcomes. The development of this tool marks the completion of the second project result and seeks to encourage youth workers to share the practices that have the potential to positively impact on the lives of young LGBTQI+ people, to share their experiences and ideas about measuring impact and move towards the creation of a body of evidence that will allow for a stronger claim that LGBTQI+ youth work has impact on the lives of young people we work with.



Background

Proud Spaces is the name of a three-year Erasmus+ funded project supported by national agency Léargas, that seeks to evidence the practices, processes, activities and methodologies that create safe and inclusive spaces for young LGBTQI+ people in formal and non-formal settings. The Proud Spaces project places a strong focus on human rights, social inclusion and promotes the participation and voice of young people and youth workers in the support of the LGBTQI+ community.

The current context in Europe is that many young LGBTQI+ people do not feel secure, accepted and safe. 43% of LGBTQI+ people declared that they felt discriminated against in 2019, as compared to 37% in 2012 according to the European Commission LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025³. The Proud Spaces project has been deliberately planned to address these concerns by focusing on European cooperation, youth work methods and values such as empowerment, shared learning and shared policy engagement which promote inclusion, human dignity and human rights.

The project seeks to develop tools to support youth work practitioners and others who work with young LGBTQI+ people to develop effective practices and policy resources that will create safe and inclusive spaces for young LGBTQI+ people. These tools will allow us to better support and respond to the needs of young LGBTQI+ people in Europe and those who work with and advocate for them, as well as influencing and informing European policy.

Objectives

The Four Project Results of the Proud Spaces Project:

- 1** Evidence review and identification of outcomes for young LGBTQI+ people⁴.
- 2** Development of a Practice Framework, Theory of Change and Competency Framework to support practitioners in their work with young LGBTQI+ people.
- 3** A policy initiative that will increase the awareness of policy makers across Europe of the outcomes of effective youth work practices with young LGBTQI+ people.
- 4** A tool to support young people to gauge their own inclusive spaces.

Development

This tool builds and iterates on the output of the first project result of the Proud Spaces project. This first phase saw the publication of an evidence review of current youth work practices that both young LGBTQI+ people and youth workers across Europe say have achieved positive outcomes. The evidence review was carried out by Youth Work Ireland Laois and consisted of online surveys, youth worker consultations and workshops with young people. The findings from the evidence review were launched in March 2023 and have informed and guided this publication. Particularly useful in constructing this publication was the Theory of Change and the descriptions of practice from young LGBTQI+ people and youth workers.



These results were then refined and revised through three cycles of a participatory Theory of Change development with practitioners and young people across Europe.

FIRST CYCLE

Young people in LGBTQI+ youth groups across Ireland took part in workshops to describe through arts, crafts and discussion “What does your dream Proud Space look like?” Once they had created a collective understanding of what “A Proud Space” was, they explored and understood the processes, activities that are unique to “Proud Spaces.” Then, 20 youth work practitioners took part in workshops which identified the context, needs, aspirations, activities, principles and outcomes of their work. The two respective workshop series informed the development of a draft Theory of Change which was first published in March 2023.

SECOND CYCLE

The emerging evidence and Theory of Change was presented and tested by 40 youth work practitioners at an International LGBTQI+ conference in Dundalk, Ireland in April 2023⁵. Based on the inputs of the 40 practitioners the Theory of Change and descriptive Model of Practice was refined.

THIRD CYCLE

The second draft of the Proud Spaces Theory of Change has been further tested and refined in interviews with key informants across Europe. In the third cycle of the Theory of Change development, we have focused in our discussion on two aspects of the Theory of Change and the Model of Practice. We discussed the evidence of impact and how outcomes can be measured. We also further developed the Model of Practice by discussing and understanding practice behaviours that are congruent with the Model of Practice of LGBTQI+ youth work.

Promising Practices Tool

What are Promising Practices?

Let's start with understanding what promising practices are; promising practices are programmes, activities, or processes that have produced measurable results and have reported some success, however, there is not yet enough research evidence to prove that the programme or process will be effective across a wide range of settings and people.

Our aim is to provide a resource that will bring practitioners closer to establishing promising practices and eventually provide substantial evidence of effectiveness in LGBTQI+ youth work. When youth workers use the tools within this resource, they will be implementing programmes, activities and processes that are consistent with an identifiable model of practice that is based on the existing practice of LGBTQI+ youth work and that is understood and familiar to most youth workers. The tool will help them work in ways that are consistent with LGBTQI+ youth work practices by giving them guidance on activities, behaviours and competencies. It will give them a set of outcomes to aim for.

Finally, the tool provides some simple questions that can be used to begin to develop evaluation data that can be measured and counted.

The development of this tool is only possible because of the rich descriptions of practice that youth workers working with young LGBTQI+ people have provided and the remarkable similarity in the descriptions of practice. Youth workers, young people and key informants participating in surveys, workshops and interviews reported many anecdotal accounts of the achievement of changes in young LGBTQI+ peoples' lives. There was a great deal of congruency in these accounts of practice and consistent themes have emerged. Importantly, the accounts consistently identified similar activities and outcomes that could be used to construct a Theory of Change. It is also notable that the outcomes named could be measured and/or tested through simple questions. Using a promising practices approach allows us to encourage youth workers to develop and share practices that have the potential to positively impact on the lives of young LGBTQI+ people



Using the Promising Practice Tool in LGBTQI+ Youth Work

THE TOOL IS EXPLANATORY

The Model of Practice is a narrative summary of the Theory of Change developed from surveys, workshops and reviews with young people, youth workers and key informants. The Model of Practice (pg. 10) assists you to explain to young people and others the ideas, actions, and processes in LGBTQI+ youth work, and to understand both your and their roles in the process.

THE TOOL GUIDES PLANNING

The Theory of Change (pg. 14) helps you to consider what actions to take with young people and in what sequence you will take these actions on your way to achieving outcomes.

THE TOOL ASSISTS IN EVALUATION

In addition to the usual elements of a Theory of Change, we provide specific evaluation questions (pg. 16) that will help you to assess the extent to which your application of the Proud Spaces model is successful and what kind of changes are taking place. These questions come from our engagements with key informants, who we worked with to identify simple questions that relate to the identified outcomes. In this way you can count or measure changes that take place, providing you with evidence of progress towards outcomes.

THE TOOL GUIDES EVERYDAY PRACTICE

Our key informants described for us what the model looks like in practice, by listing the actual behaviours and actions (pgs. 14, 15, 22 & 23) of youth workers that are consistent with the model.

THE TOOL PROVIDES KNOWLEDGE

The tool provides knowledge about foundational principles, values and models. Youth workers and key informants listed the principles, values, models and competencies that they believe contribute to creating safe spaces. In interviews with youth workers and key informants we asked them to identify the most commonly identified values, models and principles (pgs. 18 & 19).

THE TOOL GUIDES CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, STAFF SELECTION AND TEAM DEVELOPMENT

We worked with human resources and youth work experts to develop a Competency Framework (pg. 21) based on the activities and principles described by youth workers, young people and key informants. This competency guide can be used in supervision, in guiding professional development and identifying areas of further learning and considering which staff can best contribute to developing Proud Spaces.



Proud Spaces Model of Practice

Description of the Proud Spaces Model of Practice

When we discussed the Proud Spaces Theory of Change with youth workers and key informants in interviews and workshops, we asked them to help us to understand the larger processes taking place, the foundational principles, theories and models that underpin this work. Below is a narrative description including the Theory of Change that contextualises LGBTQI+ youth work within youth work practices.

To begin with, our discussions clarified that youth work with young LGBTQI+ people is underpinned and framed by traditional youth work values, principles and processes. However, youth work with young LGBTQI+ people has a uniqueness that is distinct from other youth work and goes further than inclusive youth work practices.

We have found in our research that youth work practices with young LGBTQI+ people vary across youth work settings. Some youth organisations provide dedicated spaces for young LGBTQI+ people, while others provide open inclusive spaces where all young people gather. There is value in both approaches, however our research has found that young LGBTQI+ people have additional needs⁶ which can be better provided for in dedicated spaces which:

- Has a greater focus on placing the young person as expert in their own lives. This requires questioning, listening and learning on the part of youth workers. When we discussed with key informants why this is, they explained that the situation of young LGBTQI+ people can be highly dynamic, with terms and ideas about identity changing very quickly. In this context, even LGBTQI+ youth workers who have come out in recent years themselves may have had a very different experience from that of the young people they work with. Youth workers must ask questions honestly and with good intentions, listen to, understand and accept the experiences and ideas that young LGBTQI+ people have about themselves;
- Responds to the needs, aspirations, and challenges of young LGBTQI+ people in a holistic way considering the whole young person and not one aspect of their identity;
- Empowers young LGBTQI+ people to address issues and concerns that affect and impact their lives;
- Consistently challenges words and behaviours that are disrespectful, bullying or motivated by hate and responds to any incidents in a way that provides an opportunity for learning and development with more serious incidents dealt with through a restorative justice approach;

- Links young LGBTQI+ people into wider local, national and international networks that support their personal and social development in a safe and inclusive way;
- Takes a holistic approach when engaging with young LGBTQI+ people - sometimes young LGBTQI+ people seek dedicated spaces because in these spaces they are accepted for who they are as LGBTQI+ and are therefore free to explore and develop other elements of their identities.
- Is facilitated by professional youth workers with competencies to support and work with young LGBTQI+ people.



Proud Spaces Model in Practice

No model is truly useful if it does not provide some guidance on the most practical aspects of youth work, such as how to think, speak and behave with young people. This guidance is provided below. Of course, many youth workers will have advanced practice knowledge and skills that exceed in sophistication the simple descriptions provided below. Nevertheless, for the sake of developing a full description of a Model of Practice and to provide assistance to those youth workers seeking to question and develop their knowledge of practice, a description is provided.

The description comes from our interviews with Key Informants in which we discussed at length the Theory of Change that the project has been evolving through workshops, surveys, interviews and research. All aspects of the Theory of Change were discussed, including the strengths and needs of young LGBTQI+ people (context), youth work activities (outputs) and the changes that take place within young people, youth workers, services communities and society (outcomes). We also discussed the youth work principles that informed this.

A surprising uniformity of views emerged within these discussions in relation to how to think, speak and behave with young LGBTQI+ people in order to be congruent with this Model of Practice. For that reason, we provide only a relatively brief list of findings as follows:

Things that youth workers are knowing:

- Practices and principles of youth work;
- Services and supports relevant to the young LGBTQI+ people they work with and how to link young people to those.

Things that youth workers are thinking:

- When young people are talking they are thinking about focusing on what young people are saying, what it means and how to help the young person expand on what is being said, so that they can fully understand what is being said;
- About their own prejudice and unconscious bias;
- About consistency and congruence between actions and values/principles;
- That the young person is the expert in their own lives, even if you are an LGBTQI+ individual, you won't have had the exact same experiences, or influences. The young person's experiences may have been more positive, or less positive than yours.
- That the young person has strengths that can be supported and built on so that the young person has agency and actively contributes to solving their own problems and reaching their own goals.



Things that youth workers are saying:

- Asking how young people are, repeating the answer back to the young person as a way of helping the young person open up and expand on their answers;
- Saying that we are learning from you and you are learning from us, we are able to laugh at the differences, and you need to say that every week;
- Ask them questions that help them use their voice to discuss themselves and their aspirations.

Things that youth workers are doing with young LGBTQI+ people:

- Listening more than talking;
- Active listening, not just pausing for the answer, listening to the answer in order to go deeper;
- Sharing power and decisions;
- Communicating openness and acceptance, looking the young person in the eye (not if neurodivergent) and focused on the young person, your eyebrows may be slightly raised; your face is turned towards the young person, you may be smiling, nodding, or otherwise signalling positive understanding and acceptance.

Things that youth workers are doing in the youth service and in the community:

- Continuously advocating with young LGBTQI+ people (when appropriate) for the young people and their rights and aspirations;
- Being focused on young LGBTQI+ people as rights holders in the face of those who do not respect/believe in those rights existing;
- Never failing to challenge comments or actions that are disrespectful of individuals or groups;
- Addressing these through restorative justice;
- Building networks with allies, peers and services.

Theory of Change

This Theory of Change provides a high level overview of a youth work process of working with young LGBTQI+ people – both in dedicated and inclusive/ally spaces. It describes what changes will happen and why. The activities and outcomes are as identified by key informants, young LGBTQI+ people and youth workers. The Theory of Change maps backward from the end result to identify appropriate interventions. A rigorous Theory Of Change will describe the interventions with specificity, for example how many sessions, etc. As we move forward, we expect to gather evidence that will allow us to become more detailed in our descriptions of LGBTQI+ youth work, providing for a stronger, more complete Theory of Change.

If we do the following things...

- Provide safe spaces;
- Facilitate peer support;
- Provide coming out support;
- Provide art therapy and creative activities;
- Provide holistic supports signposting and referral via integrated youth services;
- Provide opportunities for personal development;
- Do developmental group work, empowerment and social action;
- Provide one-to-one work, listening, guidance and support;
- Provide learning sessions around LGBTQI+ topics and history.

In the following ways...

- Rights based;
- Young person centred;
- Promoting the safety & wellbeing of young people;
- Promoting equality and inclusion;
- Educational and developmental;
- Dedicated to the provision of quality youth work and continuous improvement;
- Recognising and building on the strengths of young people.

Impact Statement:

Young LGBTI+ people access their rights, realise their aspirations, have their needs met and enjoy equality of outcomes.

We will achieve the following outcomes...

- Young LGBTQI+ people feel connected and accepted;
- Young LGBTQI+ people feel safer;
- Young LGBTQI+ people are empowered to participate meaningfully in decisions that affect them;
- Young LGBTQI+ people develop better coping skills to deal with anxiety and stress;
- Young LGBTQI+ are empowered to advocate for their community;
- Young LGBTQI+ people have knowledge about LGBTQI+ culture and history;
- Youth workers improve competencies required to support young LGBTQI+ people.

That can be measured and counted in the following ways...

- Young people are able to name peer and support connections in the service and in the community;
- Young people are able to identify the places they feel safe and secure and whether they always feel safe, sometimes feel safe, or never feel safe in these environments;
- Young people can identify decisions they have influenced/been involved in;
- Young people can identify the degree to which they have been involved, (informed, consulted, co-deciding, deciding on their own);
- Young people are able to name coping strategies and supports that they have developed;
- Young people are able to name an issue they feel ready to collectively address;
- Kirkpatrick questionnaire assesses knowledge of issues relevant to LGBTQI young people;*
- Workers are able to identify the number of relevant competencies they have.

** You can find resources relating to using the Kirkpatrick Training Questionnaire or Likert Scales at www.youthworkireland.ie/proud-spaces*

Using the Theory of Change

A Theory Of Change is often thought of as a high-level overview of what is happening and why. As such, the above lacks nuances and details that may be important to practitioners. However, it can help us by prompting us to identify, describe and reflect on these vital details. The value of a Theory Of Change is in providing a theoretical model describing the steps to take and what will result from taking them. As with all models, it will imperfectly fit your own real-world circumstances. These differences are also a valuable aspect of the Theory Of Change; it helps you to consider the important features of your practice setting and how these differ from this model, allowing you to better plan to address the needs and aspirations of young people. With this in mind, you may wish to adapt this model in cooperation with young people and colleagues to better describe, analyse and evaluate your youth work.

In this instance, the Theory Of Change is supplemented with the addition of a list of questions that could be asked of young people, colleagues and yourself to identify whether changes are taking place, to what degree or intensity these are occurring and to count instances of change. In other words, these questions provide a measure. Measuring our outcomes provides us with evidence. You can use these questions to gather evidence of the changes your work is bringing about in many ways.

- In informal discussions and workshops with groups of young LGBTQI+ people to gather their views on the extent to which change is taking place;
- As prompts for creative work, the results of which can be discussed, described and maintained as a portfolio of evidence;
- As the basis for more focused one-to-one discussions with young LGBTQI+ people to build case studies that capture the experiences, views and opinions;
- In a more formal, structured and rigorous way by creating a survey, which captures exact numbers and degree of agreement using Likert Scales*. By applying this survey pre and post engagement you can measure and evidence change over time;
- Or, use a variety of these approaches at the same time.

Using Evidence

It may be useful to remember that research and evidence from research changes conversations. Asking these questions will provide a clear picture of what is happening and why, or what is failing to change. That picture can be a powerful tool in many ways. It can be the basis for discussions with young people in order to capture and communicate their opinions about how the service, or community or policy makers can better support their needs and aspirations.

- It can help inform arguments for changes in services, funding, or policy;
- It can help you to be more effective in your practice and programme provision;
- It can help you to plan and identify strategies for your service.

Note: information on Likert Scales and other simple tools can be found at www.youthworkireland.ie/proud-spaces



Youth Work Principles

This section outlines the principles, values and competencies that underpin the practices youth workers say have brought about change for young LGBTQI+ people and achieve outcomes.

Principles

While the core principles of youth work practice apply to working with all young people; youth work with young LGBTQI+ people is distinct and unique in a number of ways and primarily guided by the following principles:

Strengths Based	Youth workers recognise that the young LGBTQI+ person has strengths that can be supported and built on. This is an empowering and sustainable way of working. It ensures that the young person has agency and is actively involved in solving their own problems and reaching their own goals.
Rights Based	The development of policies and services that positively affect the lives of young LGBTQI+ people has historically been linked to efforts to secure rights.
Young Person Centered	Our research has shown that youth work with young LGBTQI+ tends to have a stronger focus on advocacy and self-agency, with young people in the role of experts and youth workers in the role of facilitators. So, allowing space for the young person to move between the position of expert and participant is important. This also means that youth workers need to consistently question and listen to understand young people's experiences and views.
Safety & Wellbeing of Young People	We know that young LGBTQI+ people face more discrimination than others, therefore creating a safe space where trust and acceptance are the cornerstone of a service is vital to the participation and safety of young LGBTQI+ people. Empathy and non-judgment also create safe and supportive environments for young LGBTQI+ people.
Promoting Equality and Inclusion	Foster an environment of inclusion and equality where young LGBTQI+ people feel comfortable discussing their concerns, questions, and experiences. This can often involve creating open and accepting spaces where individuals can freely express their thoughts and feelings without fear of discrimination or stigma.
Educational and Developmental	Provide a safe space where young LGBTQI+ people can be empowered and supported in their social, educational and personal development through a combination of enjoyable, challenging and educational activities and programmes. Our research shows that the coming out process is the most challenging for young LGBTQI+ people, youth workers can support them in this to develop their voice, self of self, influence and place in the world.
Dedicated to the Provision of Quality Youth Work & CPD	Ensure you are up to date with professional practices, issues and topics relevant to young LGBTQI+ people. Consultations with youth workers as part of this project has shown that workers can sometimes be confused by the rapidly changing cultural landscape.

Values & Models

Values

Values that inform the work influence the outcomes.

EMPOWERMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE

- Young LGBTQI+ people are more advocacy driven.
- Leadership and particularly peer leadership is vital.

EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

- Value for the whole young person.
- Respond to any affronts to equality in a way that provides an opportunity for learning and development.

RESPECT

- Respect, non-judgement, trust and confidentiality are of the utmost importance when working with young LGBTQI+ people.

INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION MAKING

- Young LGBTQI+ people are the experts in their lives - allow them the space to make decisions that are age appropriate.

ANALYSE CRITICALLY THE WORLD AROUND THEM AND TAKE ACTIONS TO RESPOND

- Inequalities exist in societies, which youth work has the purpose of addressing. Youth work is concerned not just with the personal development of individual young people, but with making a contribution to the development of communities and of the wider society. This requires the critical awareness of youth workers and of all the young people involved in youth work.

PARTICIPATION

- The young person's participation in the service is voluntary - not just when they join but at every stage of their engagement with the service.

PARTNERSHIP

- This work is young person-centred, starts where the young person is at and work with them in their social and personal development.

Models

Models of Youth Work that Underpin Proud Spaces.

EMPOWERMENT MODEL

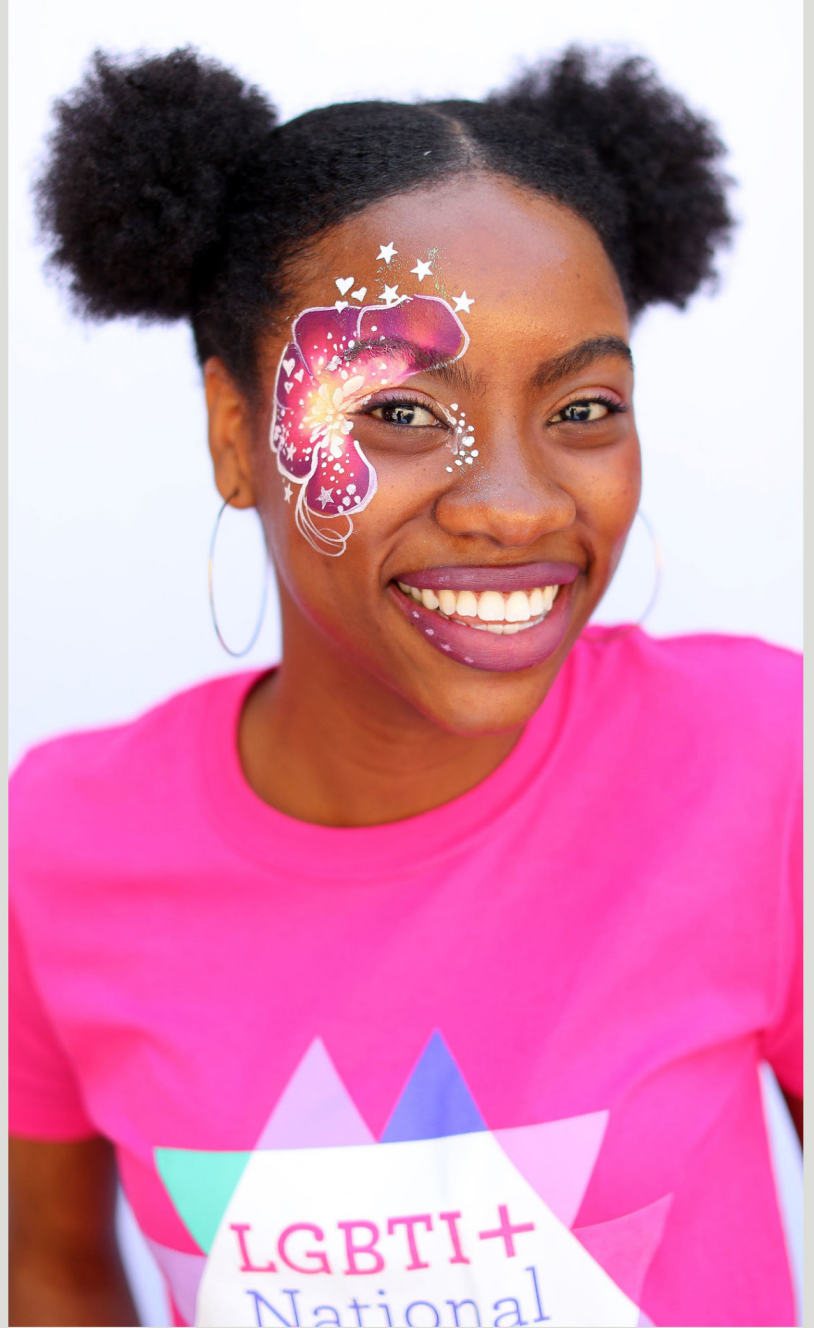
Empowerment models of youth work seeks to give young people more control over their lives, and adopts a more backseat role, meeting the young person where they are at and encouraging them to take the lead. This contributes to their personal and social development.

CRITICAL SOCIAL MODEL

If young people are aware of the social, cultural and political situation they are growing up in they will be motivated to seek change where they see inequalities or discrimination. The emphasis is on both personal development and social change. The role of the youth worker is to support the young person to define their world and act upon realising it.

PARTICIPATION MODEL

Participation with purpose means that when young people are involved in decision-making, their views are listened to, taken seriously and given due weight with the intention of leading to an outcome or change. The Lundy Model based on the Article 12 of the UNCRC is the most prominently used participation model.



Competence Framework

The Proud Spaces Competence Framework attempts to describe the main competences and competencies of those who work with young LGBTQI+ people and which achieve impact and positive outcomes. It also seeks to support practitioners' reflective practices and professional development in regard to the competencies. It was developed using the research and data gathered from the evidence review project result of the Proud Spaces project and it is hoped that it will be relevant to the delivery of quality youth work practices with young LGBTQI+ people in youth work settings. In this framework we focus on the following five competences and the competencies (attitudes, knowledge, skills and behaviours) practitioners should possess in order to achieve impact and outcomes with young LGBTQI+ people.

Definitions

- 1 ADAPTABILITY, OPENNESS AND INCLUSIVENESS.**
Understands and promotes the need to adapt practices to ensure the inclusion and active participation of young LGBTQI+ people. Is flexible about making and adapting practices when necessary, in order to achieve goals and outcomes. Can evaluate practices and are open to implementing change initiatives when necessary.
- 2 COMMUNICATIONS**
Cultivates an open, confidential and safe environment where discussions and exploration around LGBTQI+ topics and issues are encouraged and welcomed. Is open to alternative narratives and can express their opinions whilst listening to and respecting others. Can articulate thoughts and express ideas effectively using oral, written, visual and non-verbal communication skills, as well as listening skills to gain understanding.
- 3 INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY**
Looks at youth work practices in a creative, open and inclusive way, which allow for the introduction and implementation of new and innovative practices which create inclusive, proud and welcoming spaces. Operates in a space of continuous curiosity, creativity and learning. Can leverage social and cultural differences to create new ideas and increase innovation and quality of work.
- 4 PERSONAL AND SOCIAL LEARNING**
Recognises the importance of self-management and managing one's own learning in relation to LGBTQI+ topics and issues. Demonstrates empathy and understanding and builds positive relations. Recognises the role intersectionality plays in the lived experiences of young LGBTQI+ people.
- 5 TEAMWORK AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**
Works in a collaborative, open, flexible and sharing space to ensure objectives are met. Teamwork in this instance includes the active and encouraged participation of young LGBTQI+ people. When appropriate works in partnership with external agencies and service providers to support young LGBTQI+ people.

Competencies

ATTITUDES

The outlook and approach a youth worker should have when engaging with young LGBTQI+ people.

- Open and responsive to different perspectives and lived experiences (1, 2, 4 & 5);
- Empathetic, accepting and non-judgemental (1 & 3);
- Confident in their practices with all young people. (1, 3 & 5);
- Willing to learn about different gender identities and LGBTQI+ / queer issues. (1 & 4);
- Proactive in gaining new knowledge around LGBTQI+ issues, history & challenges (4);
- Willing to be challenged in their own views and knowledge. (2 & 4);
- Willing to challenge and address homo/transphobic incidents or language. (2, 4 & 5);
- Trusts young people and allows them to lead if they wish. (2 & 3);
- Works from a position of inclusivity. (1 & 5);
- Willing to work creatively with different groups. (3 & 4);
- Open minded, curious, and willing to learn (4);
- Committed to social justice and equality for all. (1 & 2);
- Believes that change is possible. (1 & 4).

KNOWLEDGE

The knowledge (gained or needed) by a youth worker to work effectively with young LGBTQI+ people to achieve outcomes.

- Knowledge of issues that impact and affect young LGBTQI+ people (4 & 5);
- Knowledge of different gender identities and why this is important (1 & 4);
- Knowledge of the values and principles of youth work practices (1 & 3);
- Knowledge of the theories, developmental group work processes and practices that underpin inclusive youth work (1 & 4);
- Knowledge of local and national networks and support (5);
- Knowledge of LGBTQI+ health related issues (or where to access this information) (5);
- Knowledge of crisis management and one-to-one support (5);
- Understands the importance of leadership among young LGBTQI+ people (3 & 4);
- Knowledge of practice / actions that promote the visibility of the LGBTQI+ community (flags, pronoun badges etc..) (2, 3 & 4);
- Knowledge of support for neurodiverse young LGBTQI+ people or where to access this information (5).



SKILLS

The skills a youth worker needs in order to work effectively with young people to achieve outcomes

- Able to assess the needs of young LGBTQI+ people (1 & 5);
- Can work creatively using a range of practices (1, 3, 4 & 5);
- Can choose the appropriate methods, processes and practices to engage with different groups (3, 4 & 5);
- Can support young people in crisis – particularly the coming out process (1 & 5);
- Can plan and problem solve (1, 3, 4 & 5);
- Can advocate for and with young LGBTQI+ people (2);
- Can build safe and supportive relationships with the young LGBTQI+ people they engage with (2, 4 & 5);
- Can support neurodiverse young people. (3, 4 & 5).

BEHAVIOURS

The behaviours, or traits a youth worker needs (or needs to be cognisant of) when engaging with young LGBTQI+ people.

- Is respectful to the views and lifestyles of others (1,3 & 4);
- Encourages active participation, acceptance and inclusion of young LGBTQI+ people in their groups (1 & 3);
- Gain satisfaction from working in an avocational way (1 & 4);
- Is self-motivated to strive for social change (4 & 5);
- Demonstrates leadership and courage when required to challenge homo/transphobia speech or behaviours (1, 2, 4 & 5);
- Is sensitive and discreet (1 & 2);
- Demonstrates openness, positivity and acceptance in their personal behaviours (1, 2, 3 & 4);
- Is committed to the principles and values of youth work (4 & 5).

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5. Youth Work with LGBTQI+ Young People: Purpose, Principles and Practice, NYCI & EA, 2023 <https://www.youthworkireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Youth-Work-with-LGBTQI-YP-Conference-Report-July-2023.pdf>
6. Research on the mental health and wellbeing of young LGBTQI people identifies they are 2 times more likely to self-harm, 3 times more likely to have attempted suicide and 4 times more likely to suffer from anxiety and depression in comparison to the general youth population (Dooley and Fitzgerald, 2012)

Notes:

Notes:

PROUD SPACES

www.youthworkireland.ie/proud-spaces