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Evidence Review Youth Work – Agency and Empowerment

Full Report

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Acknowledgement of Country:

The Research Centre for Children and Families acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Australians, whose lands, winds and waters we now all share, and pays respect to their unique values, and their continuing and enduring cultures which deepen and enrich the life of our nation and communities.

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Section 1 – Background and context

Overview

- 'Youth work' refers to a broad range of supportive and educative practices and activities conducted with young people across a range of different settings.
- Youth work is voluntary, participatory, responsive, and contextual. Authentic relationships built on trust and mutual respect form the foundation of good youth work practice.
- Contemporary youth work emerged in Western, English-speaking countries post-WWII. Practice in North America is characterised by a therapeutic approach, while practice in the UK is traditionally based on the principles of informal education. Youth work in Australia and Aotearoa (New Zealand) takes a rights-based approach based on the premise that young people should be empowered to make their own decisions, with youth-led or partnership approaches a key mechanism for creating positive outcomes for young people.
- While in principle youth work is open access and available to all young people, youth work is increasingly structured and targeted towards specific sub-populations of youth who are considered 'at-risk' or 'vulnerable'.
- Qualification and training opportunities and requirements for youth workers vary significantly across Western, English-speaking countries.
- Proponents of the professionalisation of youth work argue that professionalisation is necessary for the preservation of the discipline and will increase sector accountability and transparency.
- Professional supervision is an important component of good practice which enables youth workers to reflect critically on their practice and on ethical and theoretical considerations.
- Good youth work is culturally safe youth work. Conducting culturally safe youth work is holistic and nuanced undertaking.
- This scoping review found the following key approaches and theories to be central to conducting good youth work practice: anti-oppressive practice, trauma-informed practice, informal education, critical pedagogy, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory, rights-based approach and youth participation, civic youth work, strengths-based approach, positive youth development and the narrative approach. See 'Youth Work Approaches & Key Practice Ideas'.

Introduction

This document provides a background and context summary of contemporary youth work practice in Australia, Aotearoa (New Zealand), the UK and North America. A definition of youth work is provided alongside a brief overview of the post-WWII history of youth work and an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective on youth work. The current state of the youth work sector is then considered alongside arguments for and against the professionalisation of the youth work discipline. Finally, summaries of key practice ideas and approaches to youth work practice are presented with further reading options provided.

Youth work is increasingly moving beyond a deficit-oriented, risk-averse approach to support of young people and instead giving primacy to youth participation in decision-making and processes that shape youth organisations. The recent shift in Australia towards a rights-based approach and the recognition of youth voice and participation in decision-making have seen a number of programs emerge that variously empower youth by safeguarding their rights to participate in the processes that shape youth organisations (see Hall, 2020). These shifts in youth work policy and practice shed light on the concepts of agency and empowerment. While many programs and approaches seek to foster agency and empowerment, there is minimal attention in the literature to how these concepts are defined and recognised in research with young people (Spencer & Doull, 2015; Coffey & Farrugia, 2014). To some extent, these conceptual and definitional inconsistencies preclude an exhaustive or robust review of the evidence-base for programs that foster agency and empowerment in youth.

Nevertheless, synthesis of the available research showcases some of the varied processes by which young people are empowered to participate in democratic processes, develop a sense of control and self-esteem, a desire to contribute to community change and showcase leadership skills (see Ozer & Douglas, 2013; Zeldin et al., 2013, 2014, 2016; Schwartz & Suyemoto, 2013). Ultimately, many of the youth work interventions and approaches canvassed in this summary promote equitable relationships and increase youth participation in decision-making.

Methods

Scoping review

This scoping review involved a series of searches conducted across academic databases, youth studies journals and grey literature databases. Reference selection and characterisation were performed by two independent research team members. The searches yielded 696 references, varying in terms of purpose, methodology and detail of reporting. These references were screened according to established inclusion and exclusion criteria (documented in Appendix A), leaving a final 428 references included in this review. All included references were iteratively mapped into broad topics and conceptual categories, including 1) 'What is youth work?'; 2) 'Youth work interventions'; and 3) 'Youth work interventions that foster agency and empowerment'. The aim of this scoping review was to examine the extent, range and nature of research in the youth work space.

Certain aspects of youth work practice were out of scope for this review, to keep the review to a manageable scale. For example, youth accommodation work was excluded in part because in certain parts of the world (e.g. the UK), youth accommodation work does not fall within the purview of youth work practice (H. Sercombe, personal communication, September 15, 2022). The accommodation side of youth accommodation work may also integrated with other practices such as detached youth work or employment-based programs not necessarily within the ambit of youth work. In Australia, youth accommodation work represents a significant sector of youth work practice (Cooper, 2018). Given this, further research into the role played by youth accommodation work in the Australian context is warranted and would be an appropriate subject for its own evidence review.

The scope of this review is limited to interventions which could generally be categorised as 'early intervention'. Factors influencing this decision include commissioning requirements, the limited time

frame of the review and the volume of research literature available for specialist youth work practices such as out-of-home care. Categories of youth work that have therefore been excluded from this scoping review include those relating to housing and accommodation, practice occurring in intensive care settings such as residential care, psychiatric wards, emergency departments and juvenile or migration detention centres.

Background and context searches and results

General 'youth work' searches were conducted across the following academic databases:

- Social Services Abstracts
- Sociological Abstracts
- FAMILY-ATSIS
- Family and Society Studies Worldwide
- Informit Family & Society Collection
- JSTOR
- PsycINFO
- Google Scholar
- ERIC
- Web of Science
- Scopus

General 'youth work' searches were also conducted across the following youth studies journals:

- Child and Youth Care Forum
- Child and Youth Services
- Youth and Policy
- Journal of Youth Studies
- International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies
- Youth Studies Australia
- Journal of Youth Development
- Journal of Applied Youth Studies
- Children and Young People Now

Youth work search terms included "youth work*", "youth and childcare work*", "child and youth care*", "youth care" and "youth work practice". In addition to these general youth work searches, targeted searches for youth work theories were conducted across the aforementioned academic databases, youth studies journals and grey literature databases. Youth work search terms were combined with theory terms such as "theor*", "doctrine*", "ideolog*", "premise*", "approach*" and "principle*". Results were limited to English language, peer-reviewed literature published from 2000-2022. Seminal publications and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander literature published outside of this date range were also included.

The research team also conducted keyword and topic page searches across the following grey literature databases and peak body sources:

- Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (ACWA)
- Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS)
- Analysis & Policy Observatory (APO)
- Australian Research Alliance for Children & Youth (ARACY)
- Australian Youth Affairs Coalition AYAC
- Campbell Collaboration
- Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare
- CREATE Foundation
- Early Intervention Foundation
- National Youth Agency
- What Works for Children's Social Care
- Youth Affairs Council Victoria (YACVic)
- Youth Affairs Council Western Australia (YACWA)
- Youth Affairs Network Queensland (YANQ)

Child Family Community Australia (CFCA)	Youth Endowment Fund (YEF)
Closing the Gap Clearinghouse	Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT)
Cochrane	Youth Action
Council of Europe	Youth Coalition of the ACT

All search results were title screened according to established inclusion and exclusion criteria. The remaining results were then abstract screened for relevance according to review topics and organised into subcategories including: Who are 'youth?; What is youth work?; The history of youth work in selected countries; The youth work profession and youth work approaches and key practice ideas.

A call out for submissions from youth organisations in NSW was made to gather materials not publicly available and that speak to local work in this space. Youth organisations were not asked to prepare any materials specifically for this research, but rather, to send through relevant existing documents highlighting their programs, practices and approaches. Submissions received from youth organisations in NSW were screened for relevance to this review topic and included in the final number of references for this summary.

What did the scoping review find?

A total of 30 references were identified from the searches with relevance to the definition and history of youth work. This includes 9 journal articles, 9 books and/or book chapters, and 12 grey literature sources. A total of 147 references were identified from the searches pertaining to the youth work profession and professionalisation. This includes 69 journal articles, 26 books and/or book chapters, and 52 grey literature sources. Finally, a total of 73 references were identified from the searches relating to key concepts and theoretical approaches to youth work. This includes 51 journal articles, 17 books and/or book chapters, and 5 grey literature sources.

Additionally, of the 60 submissions the research team received from youth work organisations, 7 submissions pertained to the youth work profession and theory. No submissions were received relating to the definition and history of youth work. Submissions relating to the youth work profession and theory came from Weave, Project Youth, Humanity Matters and StreetWork Australia. These submissions included the following types of documents/resources: book (*n*=1), video (*n*=1), discussion article (*n*=1), practice standards (*n*=1), practice framework (*n*=1), practitioner resource (*n*=1) and report (*n*=1).

Who are 'youth'?

In Australia, 'youth' generally refers to persons aged between 10 and 25 years old. 'Youth' occurs between childhood and adulthood. Though youth is characterised as a stage of transition, "youth is not separate from adulthood. It is the becoming of adulthood." (Sercombe & Paus, 2010, p. 81). Youth remain in a state of transition between dependence and independence for increasingly longer periods of time due to extended participation in higher education, the increasing inaccessibility of the housing market and a more precarious employment market. Often families can support young people through this challenging transition, however this transition can become problematic if no support is available. This is where youth work occurs.

Further reading

To learn more about the history of the terms 'youth' and 'adolescence', and the construction of youth as a socio-political category, see Bessant, Sercombe & Watts (1998) Sercombe (2010; 2015) and Cieslik & Simpson (2013).

For the implications of late modernity on youth development and citizenship, see France & Wiles (1997).

To read more about the definition of youth work, see Sercombe (2010) and Davies (2012).

What is youth work?

Banks (2010) identifies three overarching definitions of youth work: youth work as an activity (working with young people), youth work as a specialist occupation (a 'youth worker') and youth work as an academic discipline that teaches the theories and practices of youth work. Youth workers in the US can also be called "youth development workers" (Banks, 2010, p. 6). Youth work as an activity covers a broad spectrum of practices that can be conducted virtually anywhere, from institutional settings such as schools to casual settings such as shopping centres.

From a research perspective, the breadth of practice that falls under the umbrella of 'youth work' is both advantageous and problematic. While this breadth enables flexibility and creativity for practitioners and youth, it also inhibits disciplinary cohesiveness. In their systematic review on the impact of youth work on young people, Mundy-McPherson, Fouché, Elliot found that evidence was "limited and disjointed" (2012, p. 213). Key recommendations for the youth work sector concluded by the review include: "more rigour in [research] design and consistency in the terminology of youth work."

The challenges of evidence-based youth work

Humanity Matters CEO Mary Malak speaks to the challenges of building a youth work evidence base (2020, p. 79):

Evidence based upon experimental or randomised control trial findings, are held up as the gold standard for validating the effectiveness of practice methods. Marginalised young people that can only be reached in highly unstructured settings and with flexible approaches, responsive to individual communities, results in a lack of evidence for streetwork both within Australia and internationally. Knowledge based on people's lived experiences is too often dismissed by funding departments as subjective and unreliable.

Youth work scholars note that youth work has been described as contested (Davies, 2010) and as difficult to define (Bradford & Cullen, 2014), particularly when those definitions are activity-based (Sercombe, 2010). Sercombe (2010, p. 22): argues that

> It isn't difficult to talk about what youth workers do, the literature is able to do that quite articulately. The difficulty is to say what makes youth work *distinctive*: different from what

> parents, police, schoolteachers, commercial leisure proprietors, psychologists and sports coaches do … we know that youth work is distinctive. You know youth work (and youth workers) when you see it, and it doesn't look like anything else.

He argues that the distinctiveness of youth work lies in the relationship with the young person, rather than exclusive claims over particular practices. He defines youth work as "a **professional** relationship in which the young person is engaged as the **primary client** in their **social context**" [original emphasis] (2010, p. 26)

Banks (2010) explains that youth work practice as occurs along a spectrum of services spanning from a universal, open access programming to specialist or targeted programming. Open access programs tend to be characterised by recreational or leisure-based activities, while targeted programs are characterised by more individualised activities that are care-oriented or instructive in nature (Banks, 2010).

Jeffs and Smith (2010, p.1-3) propose that youth work is defined by the following five qualities:

1. Voluntary participation
2. Education and welfare
3. Young people
4. Association, relationship, and community
5. Being friendly, accessible, and responsive while acting with integrity.

Youth Work Definition
Youth work is a practice that *places young people and their interests first*. Youth work is a *relational practice*, where the youth worker operates alongside the young person in their *context*. Youth work is an *empowering* practice that *advocates* for and *facilitates* a young person's *independence*, *participation* in society, *connectedness* and realisation of their *rights*.

[original emphasis]Australian Youth Affairs Council (2013, p. 3)

Fusco (2014, p. 50) confers that youth work is a relational practice and describes youth worker engagement as "participatory" and "responsive". Fusco frames the ideal youth work practitioner as a thoughtful and reflective individual who walks alongside young people to achieve the goals that they have set for themselves, as active "curators" of their own lives (2014, p. 50). In youth work, the trusting relationship that develops between a practitioner and a young person is the goal, not the vehicle (Mundy-McPherson, Fouché & Elliot, 2012; Davies, 2010). Youth workers aim, where possible, to meet youth 'where they are at' in settings that feels safe and familiar. This helps to balance the power difference between adults and young people which is conducive to building mutual respect (Tilsen, 2018).

In response to prolonged sector demand for a definition of youth work, the Australian Youth Affairs Council (AYAC), developed a definition of youth work (see text box), following an extensive consultation process with the youth sector.

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[original emphasis] Australian Youth Affairs Council (2013, p. 3)

While there are differences of emphasis and terminology, under the surface these definitions are broadly congruent. Where Fusco talks about young people being 'active curators', Sercombe talks about 'the primary client', and AYAC speaks of placing 'young people and their interests first'. Where Jeffs and Smith talk about 'Association, relationship and community', AYAC refers to the' social context', Each of these definitions stress the relational core of the practice. In Australia, the AYAC definition has wide national acceptance.

Section 2 – The history of youth work in selected countries

The following section provides a brief contextual history and overview of the current state of practice of youth work in Australia, Aotearoa (New Zealand), the UK and North America.

Youth work in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

Lucashenko (2010) states that 'youth work' has been practiced in Australia for thousands of years by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Raising young people into community-minded adults continues to be an important and highly involved process in First Nations communities (Lucashenko, 2010). The following list (adapted from Lucashenko, 2010, p. 6-7) details the traditional attributes and skills of youth raised in Murri cultures:

- Be good learners & good thinkers
- Respect themselves and elders
- Care for country
- Have self-control and patience
- Be part of a community
- Care for other youth
- Provide, build and make
- Trust and resolve conflict
- Be physically tough
- Behave in accordance with marriage and relationship Law.

Further reading

On the history of youth work in Australia, see: Bowie (2005) and Bessant (2012).

On the history of youth work in the UK and Western countries respectively, see France & Wiles (1997) and Sercombe, (2015a).

For the sociological and political underpinnings of various youth work models and practice, see Cooper (2012), Fusco (2015) and Cooper (2018).

The transition from childhood to adulthood generally differed between boys and girls in Murri culture (Lucashenko, 2010, p. 5-6):

> Everybody in the clan knew that at around or just before puberty, boys were normally selected to go through their first Law, if the older people in the clan felt they were ready … [a]nd everybody also knew that the girls would be taken aside by the older women when their time came to be made into women.

'Youth work' or raising youth in First Nations communities continues as a holistic process for all young people entering adulthood, not a deficit-oriented process that targets 'at-risk' youth.

Youth work in Australia, Aotearoa (New Zealand), the UK and North America

Prior to WWII, youth work programs in Australia, Aotearoa (New Zealand) and the UK were largely provided by voluntary Christian organisations such as the Young Mens Christian Association (YMCA). Generally, these programs centred on education, physical fitness or recreation and leisure activities and were provided universally. In reality however, these programs were only 'universally' available to

white youth (Brooker, 2014; Bessant, 2012). We know that in Australia, most early forms of youth work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were "patronising and punitive, based on the belief that eventually the native populations would either die out or be totally assimilated" (Bowie, 2005, p. 280).

Youth work that is most similar to contemporary practice in Western countries today emerged during the 1950s-1960s (France & Wiles, 1997; Bowie, 2005). In Canada and the US, youth work post-WWII was informed by a therapeutic care model, as a form of social welfare (Brooker, 2014). This therapeutic approach continues to characterise the Child and Youth Care sector in North America today. The Canadian Council of Child and Youth Care Associations defines the scope of practice for Child and Youth Care as follows (n.d., para. 1):

> The practice of Child and Youth Care occurs within the context of therapeutic relationships with children and youth who are experiencing difficulties in their lives. Intervention takes place within the family, the community and other social institutions, and centres on promoting emotional, social and behavioural change and well-being within the context of daily living.

Notably, that the participant age range for Child and Youth Care in Canada is 4-18 years old, (Brooker, 2014), which is younger than other comparable English-speaking countries.

Youth work in Australia is heavily influenced by work conducted in the UK (Bowie, 2005). Bradford and Cullen describe post-WWII youth work in the UK as "informal, experiential and participative" (2014, p. 94). Informal education is a defining element of what might be considered 'traditional' youth work. Informal education is delivered conversationally in non-traditional settings to empower youth to think critically about society as active, engaged citizens (see Informal Education). Where earlier forms of youth work were offered universally and were more informal, recreational, and group-based as discussed above, youth work today has shifted to a much more targeted and individualised practice (Forrest, 2010). This work is mostly conducted with young people considered to be 'at-risk' or vulnerable (Jeffs & Smith, 2002; Spence, 2004; Jenkinson, 2011), who are often disengaged from education and/or employment (Bradford & Cullen, 2014; Jones, 2012). Casework is a common approach in this more targeted practice (Slovenko & Thomson, 2016; Nurden, 2010; Brooker; 2014), and the individualised format enables workers to track a young person's progress towards specific goals, in line with the organisation's performance outcomes.

Youth work in Aotearoa (New Zealand) is also influenced by the UK, however as Aotearoa is a bi-cultural country, it is dually informed by settler and Māori culture (Brooker, 2014). Two models act as frameworks for thinking and practice in Aotearoa (New Zealand); the "Circle of Courage" (informed by Positive Youth Development and Western values) (Brooker, 2014, p. 141) and the Māori health model: "Te Whare Tapa Wha" (Brooker, 2014, p. 142). Both models comprise four key parts that are essential for the development and care of healthy, happy, and engaged youth. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (see Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory) is a third key influence woven into the youth work framework in Aotearoa (New Zealand) (Brooker, 2014). Youth development and wellbeing as understood through the lens of ecological systems theory informs practice that is both holistic and contextual.

The youth work profession

National accreditation / registration body	Professional association	Qualifications	Other
Australia			
No.	Yes - Western Australia and NSW and Victoria all have state-based professional associations for youth workers.	Training is available at certificate and diploma levels. Limited youth work qualifications at the degree level, mostly located in universities in Western Australia and Victoria.	Youth Workers Australia, whilst Victoria-based also assumes some national responsibilities (H. Sercombe, personal communication, September 12, 2022)
Aotearoa (New Zealand)			
No.	Volunteers and paid professionals can become Korowai Tupu members which holds them account to a code of ethics and requires an ongoing commitment to professional development (Ara Taiohi, 2022).	Training is available at a certificate, diploma, degree and postgraduate certificate levels (Ara Taiohi, 2022).	Large voluntary (unpaid) workforce and a small number of qualified workers. All graduates must hold first aid certificates and pass a police check (Brooker, 2014).
England			
No.	Yes – Institute for Youth Work.	Training is available at a certificate level (via apprenticeship), diploma level or degree / masters level. University level qualifications widely available across England (National Youth Agency, n.d.).	The National Youth Agency produces key resources for the sector including a national curriculum and Safeguarding and Risk Management Framework.

USA			
Yes – Child and Youth Care Certification Board. 3 levels of certification available in USA: entry, associate and professional (CYCCB, n.d.).	Yes - The Association for Child & Youth Care Practice.	Few higher education programs focus exclusively on child and youth care (Roholt & Rana, 2011; Freeman, 2013). Many entry-level practitioners have degrees in related fields (Freeman, 2013).	N/A.
Canada			
Yes – Child and Youth Care Certification Board. Only the professional level of certification is available in Canada (CYCCB, n.d.).	Yes - each province (except Saskatchewan) has its own professional association for Child and Youth Care practitioners (CCCYCA, 2022).	Training is available at diploma and degree levels across the country (Freeman, 2013).	The Child and Youth Care Educational Accreditation Board of Canada maintains quality standards for post-secondary education (Freeman, 2013).

Youth work education and professional development

Youth Work educational and accreditation requirements differ substantially between different countries, as depicted in the table above. Youth work, as a specialist field of social care, is not offered uniformly at a degree level in the Western countries listed above. As a result, scholarship within the youth work discipline, though robust, is lacking in cohesion. A 2012 systematic review of the impact of youth work for young people revealed two key barriers to the collection of data about youth work interventions: imprecise terminology and a lack of rigorous methodologies (Mundy-McPherson, Fouché & Elliot 2012). A profession that lacks a strong disciplinary foundation risks de-prioritisation and defunding from universities, the ultimate consequence of which is de-professionalisation (Bessant & Emslie, 2014; Emslie 2012).

Australian scholars Bessant and Emslie (2014) posit that whilst VET level training (TAFE) provides students with the technical knowledge and competencies to practice youth work, it does not provide students with the ideas, knowledge and context that inform youth work as a discipline. Bessant (2012, p. 65) argues that:

> A critical test of a good youth work education is whether it helps equip graduates to exercise good judgment about where on the continuum between the paternalistic approach typically expressed as the need to override a young person's human agency and the need to support them to make their own choice and then to have the capacity to know what kind of support they need to achieve what they chose to do or be.

When university-level training is not available to youth workers, professional development can be an alternative way to deepen practice and learn new skills (Roholt & Rana, 2011). In a study exploring how youth workers learn in a professional development context, Ranahan and Alsaieq identified that "efforts to develop specific content knowledge … must begin with an acknowledgement of professionals' experiential knowledge" (2019, p. 595).

Professionalisation

Arguments both for and against the professionalisation of youth work exist in the literature, however arguments in favour of professionalisation are dominant. Emslie (2012) argues that the professionalisation of youth work would lead to an increase in the number of qualified youth work professionals which would help to stem the worker shortage in regional Australia. Emslie (2012) further highlights that professionalisation increases the accountability and transparency of the youth work sector. Emslie (2012) argues that this increased accountability could, in turn, contribute to the prevention of harmful practice with young people in Australia, against a backdrop of historical institutional child abuse in the care sector.

Arguments against the professionalisation of youth work highlight perceived risks posed by the rigidity of standardised practice frameworks which may threaten the responsiveness, creativity, and spontaneity of youth work practice (Fox, 2019; Cooper, 2013). Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt acknowledge the potential of professionalisation to stymie "alternative and innovative practices" (2013, p. 15), however they retain hope that the discipline can professionalize *and* preserve the diverse and innovative ways of working.

Practice resource

Wiedow (2018) provides a practical resource for youth work managers seeking to integrate professional development into everyday work activities.

Challenges that cut across the youth work sector include, but are not limited to the following:

- The impact of short-term funding contracts that prohibit long-term service planning and programming (Jones, 2014) which spurs competition rather than collaboration between service providers (Malak, 2020)
- The national housing shortage and affordability crisis (Youth Affairs Network Queensland, 2013)
- Insufficient resourcing to conduct culturally safe and informed work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Myers and Knowles, 2021)
- Burnout among workers due to the stressful nature of working with persons experiencing crisis and/or distress (Barford & Welton, 2010)
- High staff turnover (Myers and Knowles, 2021)
- Feelings of being misunderstood and undervalued as professionals among youth workers (Ranahan, 2018)
- Youth work interventions and programming are increasingly subject to positivist, scientific evaluations and monitoring that are ill-equipped to measure their true efficacy (Fusco, 2013; de St Croix, 2017; Slovenko & Thomson, 2016).

Youth work approaches and key practice ideas

The following theories and practice ideas reflect the key findings of this scoping review. This is not an exhaustive list of the theories and influences of youth work and readers are encouraged to access further readings where noted.

Youth work ethics

Like most caring professions, youth work is underpinned by ethics; a moral code that describes the values in which a group believes (Davie, 2011). There is no international code of ethics for youth work, however, the Commonwealth Alliance of Youth Workers Associations has developed Guidelines for Establishing a Code of Ethical Practice. Youth work codes of ethics developed in Western countries are generally drawn from "principle-based ethics" and "character and relationship-based ethics" (Banks, 2010, p. 18). The Australian peak body the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition is working towards the national adoption of the Code of Ethics developed by Sercombe in 2002 and endorsed with commentary by Youth Action in 2004 (Sercombe, 2004).

Further reading

AIFS (2014) provides a comprehensive Practitioner Resource for the supervision of youth workers.

For more on supervision see Wood, Westwood & Thompson, 2015.

Herman (2012) offers a supervision model using participatory action research to integrate evidence-based-practice in real-time.

Sercombe is also the author of seminal text *Youth Work Ethics* (2010). The fourteen components of the Western Australian code are (Sercombe, 2004):

1. Primary Client
2. Ecology
3. Non-discrimination
4. Empowerment
5. Non-corruption
6. Transparency
7. Confidentiality
8. Cooperation
9. Knowledge
10. Self-awareness
11. Boundaries
12. Self-care
13. Duty of Care
14. Integrity

Supervision and reflective practice

As in social work and psychology, a youth worker's ability to reflect on their practice is an important component of good practice. Emslie (2009) however, highlights a lack of literature on how to teach reflective skills to youth workers in training, and Herman (2012) points out that supervision or reflective practice can often be de-prioritised in busy practice settings. Supervision is a place for professional development and for working through any challenges that may arise in the context of care work. Supervision provides a space for practitioners to reflect on their work and to think critically about the power dynamic between themselves and the young people with whom they are working. The settings and participants for supervision can vary; supervision can be conducted in a one-to-one setting with a manager or external consultant, in a team or as a peer-led activity among colleagues. Two key influences on youth work supervision are drawn from social work (Kadushin, 1976 as cited in

Wood, Westwood and Thompson, 2015) and counselling (Proctor, 1987 as cited in Wood, Westwood and Thompson, 2015) respectively.

In the adapted list below, Wood, Westwood and Thompson identify three core components from these practitioners that continue to inform supervision today (2015, p. 138):

- "Administrative/normative": the assignment and assessment of work and the promotion of compliance with workplace procedures
- "Educational/formative": the professional development and growth of the supervisee as a youth work practitioner
- "Supportive/restorative": assists the youth worker with stress management.

In addition to the standard form of supervision described above, practitioners working closely with persons from a culture different to their own should seek cultural supervision. Cultural supervision provides youth workers with support and guidance to work in a respectful and meaningful way with First Nations youth. Cultural supervision belongs to a holistic range of practices required to conduct culturally safe youth work, discussed below.

Culturally safe youth work with First Nations youth

A rapid evidence review conducted by Zulumovski et al. (2021) found six common elements critical to establishing cultural safety in the literature. These elements include (Zulumovski et al., 2021, p. 4-5):

1. Recognising the importance of culture
2. Self-determination
3. Workforce development
4. Whole of organisation approach
5. Leadership and partnership
6. Research, monitoring and evaluation

Good Practice in NSW

Our Place: Stories about good practice in youthwork with Aboriginal young people by Reed-Gilbert & Brown published by South Sydney Youth Services (now Weave) is essential reading for practitioners working with First Nations people.

Sources identified in this scoping review echo the findings of Zulumovski et al. (2021), particularly the recognition of culture, workforce development and partnership. Multiple authors highlight the recognition of culture as key when working with persons whose culture is different from one's own (Walker & Grant, 2011; Lucashenko, 2010; Reed-Gilbert & Brown, 2002). In practice, this requires the development of self-awareness and the ability to reflect upon one's own culture, beliefs and values. Youth work practitioners are strongly encouraged to learn about the cultures of the persons with whom they work and about the communities where they live and practice.

Every young person has different needs, goals, and desires and those may or may not relate to their cultural identity. There are, however, some cultural differences of which youth workers and youth work organisations should be mindful when working with First Nations young people. In Western cultures, individual rights are held in high regard, however in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, there is a stronger emphasis on collective rights and the sharing of resources (Lucashenko, 2010). Family and culture are central to the identity and wellbeing of First Nations people (Reed-

Gilbert & Brown, 2002; Lucashenko, 2010). Youth workers can honour these values by involving community members, family and elders in their work with youth as often as possible (with the consent of the young person). Practitioners should also be aware of the different communications styles among some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. While in Western cultures a lack of eye contact for instance might be perceived as rude, this is the opposite in some First Nations communities where young people actively avoid looking their elders in the eye as a sign of respect (Reed-Gilbert & Brown, 2002).

Cultural Safety & Wellbeing: Evidence review

The findings of the Cultural Safety and Wellbeing Evidence Review conducted by Gamarada Universal Indigenous Resources Pty Ltd and the Social Policy Research Centre can be found via the NSW Department of Communities and Justice Evidence Portal.

The 'Evidence to Action Note' provides helpful, evidence-based guidance for practitioners to work in a culturally safe way with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families, and communities.

With respect to workforce development, sources identified in this scoping review highlighted two dual needs. Organisations need to both hire Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Reed-Gilbert & Brown, 2002; Zulumovski et al., 2021) and they need to enable those staff members to sustain their connections with communities, and access professional development and training (Reed-Gilbert & Brown, 2002). It is important for First Nations young people to have access to workers they can trust who are also role models with shared cultural histories.

Finally, partnership was identified as an important aspect of cultural safety. Establishing and maintaining genuine partnerships with First Nations leaders and community members is of central importance to good youth work practice. To illustrate, Reed-Gilbert & Brown (2002) highlight that First Nations people often report being consulted about various projects or issues without a follow up plan in place to provide them with necessary updates about their contributions. To work towards cultural safety through the establishment of genuine partnerships, youth work practitioners and organisations must ensure that a feedback and follow up process is enacted after consulting with cultural experts. Tokenistic consultation does not help to build intercultural trust. Against a colonial history of systemic oppression often presented under the guise of 'welfare', First Nations communities have good reason to distrust care professionals such as youth workers. Working with authenticity and honesty is especially important when working alongside First Nations young people. Reed-Gilbert and Brown offer the following advice in developing trust (2002, p. 35):

"The rule is time: trust takes time"

Rights-based approach and youth participation

In 1990, Australia signed and ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Article 12 of the Convention (see text box) secures the rights of children and young people to express their views and to be taken seriously. To enable children and young people to freely express their views, individual workers and organisations must prioritise authentic and meaningful participation. Collins, Sinclair and Zufelt (2021) argue that for practitioners to incorporate youth participation as a routine and everyday aspect of their practice, youth participation must be a central and consistent element of youth work educational curriculums.

Article 12, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989

Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the view of the child being given due weight in accordance with age and maturity of the child.

Collin, Lala & Fieldgrass (2018) provide the following examples of youth participation in action:

- Youth advisory boards
- Surveys
- Consultation roadshows
- Workshops
- Youth positions on boards and committees
- Youth leadership programs

Wood, Westwood, Thompson pose a series of generalised questions that might be used by youth workers and their organisations to enhance youth participation in their practice (2015, p. 218):

- What opportunities are there for young people to shape and influence the organisation's work?
- How do young people feel about participation?
- What evidence is there that participatory practice has been part of the work of the
- organisation?
- What mechanisms or approaches are used to listen to young people?
- How might my own work be enhanced if I adopt a co-production approach?
- What barriers might limit young people's opportunities to influence the organisation?
- How might young people have a say beyond the organisation?

For participation to be authentic, participation of young people must be voluntary. Not all youth will want to contribute or will want to contribute in the same way. The task of the youth worker is to adapt their approach to meet youth where they are at. Collins, Sinclair and Zufelt highlight that fair representation is an important factor to consider when conducting participatory work (2021, p. 289):

> While young people's participation in general tend to be overlooked, young people in racialized communities, with disabilities, in the criminal justice system, discriminated due to their gender and sexual identities, or who have displayed aggressive/challenging behaviours are even less likely to be heard and have their opinions valued and listened to by others.

Finally, where youth have been invited to participate, co-create or have been otherwise consulted, follow-up is essential. Following up demonstrates to young people that their involvement has been meaningful and not tokenistic as part of a 'tick-a-box' exercise (Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia, 2016).

Anti-oppressive practice

An anti-oppressive approach is essential to conducting youth work that is just and non-discriminatory. Daniels draws on Kumashiro (2000) to define anti-oppressive practice as that which understands "the importance of challenging systemic injustices that have come to be embedded in everyday practices, policies, procedures and thought patterns" (Kumashiro, 2000, as cited in Daniels, 2021, p. 11). Oppressive systems include discrimination based on gender and sexuality, racism, colonialism, ableism, ageism and poverty. Anti-oppressive practice prompts practitioners to develop an understanding of how the different identities of a person can overlap and intersect to produce different outcomes (Crenshaw, 1993 as cited in Daniels, 2021), the result of which is sometimes a compounding of different forms of oppression. Unsurprisingly, persons experiencing systematic oppression in one or more forms "can experience a significantly diminished quality of life" (Daniels, 2021, p. 125).

To successfully practice in an anti-oppressive way, practitioners must be reflective and willing to interrogate their conscious and subconscious biases (Wood, Westwood & Thompson, 2015) which can be an uncomfortable but deeply necessary process. Wood, Westwood & Thompson (2015) offer a range of practical strategies for combatting oppressive behaviours in a youth work context, including disrupting discriminatory humour, changing the environment and/or providing a wider range of resources (e.g. allocating an all-gender/unisex bathroom or providing information and brochures in Easy English and in other languages spoken in the local community).

Anti-oppressive resources

Youth Affairs Network Queensland provides a guide for youth workers and youth organisations: Involving Young People with a Disability: Effective Practices for Engagement, Participation & Consultation.

AIFS provides a guide for inclusive communication with LGBTQIA+ young people.

Trauma-informed practice

Youth work is increasingly targeted towards young people who are classed as 'vulnerable' or 'at-risk' (Jeffs & Smith, 2002; Spence, 2004; Jenkinson, 2011). It follows then, that young people receiving youth work services are likely to have experienced trauma. The impact of trauma on the everyday functioning of an individual is significant. Research has shown that experiences of trauma are effectively 'stored' in the body, which cause measurable physiological changes that can directly affect one's behaviour (van der Kolk, 2014). When trauma is passed down between generations of a family or community, this is called intergenerational or transgenerational trauma. Brokenleg speaks to the impact of intergenerational trauma in the context of his First Nations Lakota community in US (2012, p. 10):

> In some form, this cultural trauma affects every Native person. It sculpts how we think, how we respond emotionally. It affects our social dynamics and, at the deepest level, impacts our spirituality. Intergenerational trauma has wounded us deeply.

Reed-Gilbert and Brown (2002) highlight that internalised intergenerational trauma in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in Australia may present as anger or 'acting out' through behaviours such as drug taking or self-harm. For persons experiencing cultural forms of intergenerational trauma (First Nations, refugee and asylum seeker youth), work that reconnects with culture can be healing (Lucashenko, 2010; Brokenleg, 2012). When working with young people who have experienced trauma, intergenerational or

otherwise, consistency and reliability (Reed-Gilbert & Brown, 2002) are important qualities for youth workers to embody to foster trust and stability.

It is important to note that trauma-informed care should also be used to support staff. Youth workers can experience vicarious trauma (Babic, 2015) during their work with youth who may be in crisis or experiencing distress. Preventative steps should be taken to minimise the risk of vicarious traumatization. A healthy workplace and organisational culture that prioritises staff wellbeing can support workers' resilience during tough times.

Good practice in NSW

Project Youth have developed a comprehensive Trauma Informed Practice Framework that serves as a foundation for practitioners and the organization broadly.

The Framework is a living document that also functions as an audit tool for tracking progress towards best practice in the delivery of trauma-informed care.

Informal Education

Informal education informs traditional British youth work practice (Slovenko & Thomson, 2016; Davies, 2012a), which has influenced youth work practice in Australia and Aotearoa (New Zealand), as Commonwealth countries. Jeffs & Smith define informal (sometimes called 'non-formal') education as: "the process of fostering learning in life as it is lived. A concern with community and conversation; a focus on people as persons rather than objects" (2005, p. 11). Crucially, informal education is voluntary in nature and has a strong pedagogical commitment to "democracy, fairness and truth" (Gee, 2020, p. 108). Improvised, yet meaningful conversation that is guided by the young person characterises informal education. Practitioners of informal education challenge young people to think critically, with a view to empowering them to act and make change (Corney et al., 2021).

Wood, Westwood and Thompson (2015) identify a series of techniques that illustrate how practitioners enact informal education. These techniques include "catching the moment … steering the conversation [and] creating a talking point" (Wood, Westwood & Thompson, 2015, p. 54). 'Catching the moment' describes the information imparted by the youth worker to a young person at an opportune moment during conversation. For instance, a young person might disclose feeling hungover, so the youth worker 'catches the moment' and instigates harm reduction by explaining 'safer' drinking practices such as drinking at a slower rate or drinking a glass of water between each alcoholic beverage (Wood, Westwood, Thompson, 2015). 'Steering the conversation' is a more direct approach that enables the practitioners to guide or steer the conversation where learning can occur through discussion and the exchange of viewpoints (Wood, Westwood, Thompson, 2015). 'Creating a talking point' might entail, for instance, the youth worker wearing a t-shirt with an eye-catching statement (Wood, Westwood, Thompson, 2015) intended to prompt learning by sparking conversation among young people.

Informal education is characterised by practitioner improvisation, conversational and experiential learning. This way of working does not lend itself to the measurability and outcomes-tracking required of evidence-based practice favoured by policy makers and funding bodies. For this reason, Slovenko and Thomson

(2016) propose social pedagogy (see below) as a viable framework to replace informal education as the dominant form of youth work in the UK and other Commonwealth countries.

Social pedagogy

'Social pedagogy' is alternatively known as 'social education', 'critical pedagogy' or "critical social education" (Batsleer, 2013, p. 229). Social pedagogy underpins European models of youth work (Slovenko & Thomson, 2016). The term 'pedagogy' refers to a particular kind of approach within education and teaching. The 'social' component of social pedagogy acknowledges that education and personal growth does not occur in a vacuum, rather within the context of a community within society (Slovenko & Thomson, 2016). Social pedagogy is informed by critical theory and philosophy which emerged from the Frankfurt School in Germany during the twentieth century. Scholars of influence to social/critical pedagogy in youth work include Paulo Freire, Antonio Gramsci, Karl Marx and Michel Foucault (H. Sercombe, personal communication, September 12, 2022).

Social pedagogy in action…

Weave Project/Group Worker Kate Munro illustrates critical pedagogy in action in describing her partnerships with young people (Weave, 2018, 1:52):

I've had some really awesome experiences around things like art-space projects and music-space projects- because I'm not- I have none of those skills, so, I'm looking at young people going: 'I can't do this! You're gonna have to do this! You're gonna have to figure this stuff out, how are we gonna do it? [I]ts about me having to step back as a professional and not kind of trying to put my five cents in every two seconds.

Slovenko & Thomson argue that social pedagogy shares the spirit of informal education, sharing key characteristics including "inclusivity, equality, work with groups (as well as individuals) and … treating young people with respect" (2016, p. 21). Most importantly, a social pedagogy framework enables the development of strong, trusting relationships between youth workers and young people.

Social pedagogues believe both that an individual is shaped by their environment *and* that an individual has the power to determine their own path (Slovenko & Thomas, 2016). The goals of social pedagogy are two pronged: the development of capable, independent, self-determined individuals and the development of community-minded citizens (France & Wiles, 1997; Slovenko & Thomson, 2016). Social pedagogy is informed by humanistic principles which compel practitioners to support disadvantaged members of their community, by helping them to live up to their full potential (France & Wiles, 1997).

In practice, social pedagogues favour creativity and co-production, where practitioners work alongside young people as equal partners in the completion of a task or project (Hatton, 2018, Slovenko & Thomson, 2016). Social pedagogy is a holistic practice which perceives learning to be an ongoing, lifelong process (Slovenko & Thomson, 2016) which justifies the positionality of the practitioner as equal, learning in partnership with young people. Creativity in social pedagogy is a vessel through which to enable young people to "maximise their potential, increase their ability to make decisions and improve their life chances" (Hatton, 2018, p. 157).

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory has a significant and continuing influence of youth work practice today (Derkson, 2010). Ecological systems theory understands human development as occurring within the context of one's environment. Shelton explains: "the person exists in a system of relationships, roles, activities and settings, all interconnected" (2019, p. 10). The theory proposes that power and change are multidirectional and complex – as the environment can change a person, a person can change their environment.

Further reading

For more on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, see Bronfenbrenner's seminal works: The Ecology of Human Development (1979) and Making Human Beings Human: Bioecological Perspectives on Human Development (2005).

Also see: The Bronfenbrenner Primer: A Guide to Develecology (Shelton, 2019).

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems framework is often depicted as a series of concentric circles starting with the individual at the centre moving outwards to the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem and the chronosystem. The microsystem captures persons and settings that are interrelated to the young person (Shelton, 2019); friends, school, their soccer team, for instance. The mesosystem functions as a porous boundary between the microsystem and the exosystem. Shelton explains that the mesosystem "incorporates all the settings, and the microsystems they contain, *in which the person actively participates"* [original emphasis] (2019, p. 71). The exosystem refers both to "the settings a person does not participate in, but that are consequential in development, and … the relationships of those settings to each other and to the settings in the person's mesosystem" (Shelton, 2019, p. 91). For example, while the young person at the centre of the model does participate in the production of mass media in the exosystem, that young person's fashion sense is likely influenced by depictions of popular fashion in mass media. The macrosystem comprises the overarching culture and ideas within which a society is organised. In Australia, Christianity and democracy would be two major ideologies located within the macrosystem. Finally, the chronosystem refers to time. Each individual and the systems that surround them also exist within a specific period of history which denotes specific levels of sociological and technological development. See the 'Further reading' box for more information on Ecological Systems Theory.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems model contradicted developmental psychology narratives (Derkson, 2010) of the 1970s which effectively pathologised youth (Sercombe, 2015). Unlike developmental psychology, which posits a highly individualised theory of human development, Ecological Systems theory understands young people in the context of their environment. Ecological Systems theory acknowledges both the impact of one's environment on their development *and* the agency of that individual to alter their environment.

Civic youth work

A civic youth worker seeks to empower young people to act on issues that matter to them in their community. Civic youth work is conducted with groups of young people, where the youth worker acts as facilitator whose actions are led by the goals and decisions made by the group of young people to undertake a project of their choosing (Roholt & Cutler, 2012). Roholt, Hildreth & Baizeman describe civic youth work as an "embodied invitation" (2007, p. 165) which invites young people to identify the issues they care about and to decide *if* and *how* they wish to address those issues.

Civic youth work is a democratic way of working that fosters active citizenry in young people (Roholt & Cutler, 2012). This practice is grounded in the belief that children and young people are inherently valuable members of society whose ideas and opinions are worth listening to taking seriously (see also 'Rights-based approach and youth participation'). This belief challenges the idea that young people are not mature enough to be active citizens (Roholt & Cutler, 2012). Civic youth work instead empowers young people to construct or re-construct their identity as a person who is engaged in their community and capable of meaningful change. The very process of planning, setting goals and taking action can help young people to express "how they want to be in the world" (Roholt & Cutler, 2012, p. 175).

As a type of group work practice, young people involved in civil youth work must learn to negotiate group dynamics with other young people with whom they may not ordinarily interact. In addition to working well with others, young people also learn key vocational skills during their project (Roholt & Cutler, 2012). These skills may include public speaking, engaging with authorities or public officials and developing an understanding of bureaucratic processes. Finally, civic youth work provides young people with a safe place to practice their newly acquired skills and to explore the intended and unintended effects of their project. In this space, youth can work together to become articulate in their arguments for change and to consult the youth worker facilitator for explanation and guidance where required (Roholt & Cutler, 2012).

Strengths-based approach

Youth workers who work from a strengths-based approach prioritise the existing skills and agency of young people above the 'problems' or 'deficits' for which they have been identified. The strengths-based approach can be found across a range of human service professions, including youth work. Most theories and approaches to youth work identified in this scoping review are underpinned by a strengths-based approach. Strengths-based youth work is sometimes also known as 'asset-based' youth work.

A strengths-based approach actively rejects practice which emphasises assessment of risk and organises care around the elimination of risk rather than on the holistic growth and wellbeing of the individual. Wood (2018) explains that strengths-based practitioners do not disregard risk factors, rather they seek to place an equal, if not greater, emphasis on protective factors, or strengths. By focusing on strengths, a youth worker can gather more information to better inform their work (Wood, 2018). Asking a young person what is going well for them and about the relationships that are important to them might reveal a hidden support network or speak to the hopes and dreams of a young person that they may not have otherwise mentioned. Knowing the strengths of a young person can help a worker to tailor solutions to support a young person in a way that is meaningful and sustainable, because it is designed to fit in with the young person's life and goals. In practice, a strengths-based approach can empower young people: "[w]hen a youth worker works from a strength based (as opposed to a deficit) model, power is shifted to the young people themselves and they are able to utilise existing skill sets" (Couch, 2018, p. 223).

Positive Youth Development

Positive Youth Development (PYD) is a strengths-based approach to youth work (Nolas, 2013). PYD draws on the principles of positive psychology, with PYD programming designed to "maximiz[e] the positive aspects of youth character and increase engagement through encouraging a sense of belonging and

purpose, leadership, and formation of strong attachments within the community (Lerner et al., 2005 as cited in Maletsky & Evans, 2017). Like other youth work approaches such as informal education or civic youth work, PYD lacks a set curriculum and is better understood as philosophy that underpins youth work.

As per the strengths-based approach, PYD steers clear of a deficit-based view of young people, instead perceiving risk to be a result of the challenging circumstances and lack of resources affecting the young person (Moensted, Day, Buus, 2020). PYD seeks to address 'risks' by countering negatives with positives. PYD programming is characterised by the development safe and supportive relationships with adults and fellow peers. Within the context of these supportive relationships, young people can develop prosocial behaviours and develop lifelong skills and competencies (Moensted, Day & Buus, 2020; Meschke, Peter & Bartholomae, 2011).

Nolas highlights that PYD is used in UK youth work as a targeted intervention to address "a range of youth problems including educational outcomes, substance misuse, delinquent behaviour and civic orientation" (2013, p. 2). While PYD can be employed in a targeted way, it is also suitable for more universal types of youth work. Meschke, Peter & Bartholomae explain that PYD is a form of "developmentally appropriate practice" (2011, p. 90) that highlights "the importance of psychosocial development and life course theory in promoting the health and well-being of youth" (Kurtines et al., 2008; Montgomery et al., 2008 as cited in Meschke, Peter & Bartholomae, 2011).

Despite the popularity of the PYD, multiple criticisms of the approach are identified by Nolas (2013). Though PYD acknowledges risk as a product of environment and resources, some authors argue that the approach still endorses harmful neoliberal ideas (Sukarieh and Tannock, 2011; Shildrick & MacDonald, 2006 as cited in Nolas, 2013). Specifically, critics claim that the PYD approach "promotes a decontextualised approach to youth and ignores the socio-economic landscapes that impact on young people's leisure practices … and continues to universalise and individualise personal change" (Nolas, 2013, p. 2).

Narrative approach

A narrative approach to youth work seeks to promote a positive conception of self in young people through the act of deep listening and re-framing by the practitioner. Hartman, Little and Ungar explain that "[n]arrative practices are concerned with the stories that make up individuals', families' or groups' identities" (2008, p. 47). When a young person speaks about themselves, their lives and their history, practitioners using a narrative approach will listen closely for an alternative reading of the young person's narrative which highlights their strengths (Tilsen, 2018; Hartman, Little and Ungar, 2008). This simultaneous process of listening to the young person and listening out for alternative interpretations is called "double listening" (White, 2000, as cited in Hartman, Little and Ungar, 2008). White posits that the narrative work is a way of "co-constructing meaning with young people to mobilize new understandings and create the conditions for them to live into preferred storylines and futures" (2018, p. viii). It is important to note that narrative approaches do not seek to minimise real risk or to excuse harmful actions, rather they function to help individuals rebuild self-worth and self-belief.

Further reading

Tilsen's 2018 text Narrative Approaches To Youth Work: Conversational Skills for a Critical Practice offers a comprehensive and practical guide for practitioners.

A narrative approach can also be applied to narratives told *about* young people at an organisational level (Hartman, Little and Ungar, 2008). A narrative approach can be used to counter the often deficit-based professional jargon and terminology that plagues the care sector. For example, instead of a practitioner describing to a young person as 'borderline', using a narrative approach the practitioner would describe the young person as having received a diagnosis of borderline personality disorder. Using a narrative approach to shift our language helps to disentangle an individual from their perceived problems and reinstate personal agency (White, 2018).

Faith-based youth work

Youth work is grounded in religious, specifically Christian roots in the Western world, however this kind of youth work is not what we refer to when we talk about 'youth work' today. Faith-based youth work that is delivered in religious settings or within a religious framework is usually explicit in its' intention to develop or strengthen a young person's connection to faith. In Australia, faith-based youth work is usually delivered in a 'youth group' format comprising young people of a similar age who attend the same place of worship.

While targeted youth work is conducted by major religious corporations in Australia today (e.g. Wesley Mission, The Salvation Army), service users and staff are generally not required to participate in any religious activities. For more information on faith-based youth work, see (Green, 2010).

Limitations

The selected findings presented are intentionally brief and are provided for practitioners as a 'jumping off point' to conduct their own further reading or to pursue further professional development and/or education.

Youth work looks very different in practice across different parts of the world. The practices highlighted in this scoping review are conducted in Western, English-speaking countries. Youth work in Europe and the Global South was not within the scope of this review. This scoping review also generally focuses on youth work categorised as 'early intervention' for the sake of scope. Categories of youth work that have been excluded from this review include those relating to housing and accommodation and practice in intensive care settings such as residential care, psychiatric wards, emergency departments and juvenile or migration detention centres. These are specialised kinds of youth work which would require their own separate reviews.

One major limitation to this scoping review is the lack of research cohesion that characterises the youth work discipline. Without a shared disciplinary language, frames of reference and international codes and practice standards, the professionalisation of youth work remains an ongoing challenge for practitioners. With respect to inclusivity, this scoping review did not capture sufficient data about youth work with LGBTQIA+ populations and for young people living with disability.

Section 3 - Types of youth work interventions

Overview

- Youth work interventions have a dual focus on transformation of both the young person in their social and environmental context, and transformation of that context.
- Synthesis of literature and sector responses relevant to 'Types of youth work interventions' revealed a number of predominant subcategories of youth work interventions. Some of these subcategories captured a procedural aspect of a youth work intervention category, while others coalesced around their focus on a particular subset of vulnerable youth.
- Types of interventions, programs and practices (by procedural qualities) include:

Creative youth work	Crime prevention and diversion youth work
Outdoor or physical activity-based youth work	Case management youth work
Education or learning-based youth work	Mentoring youth work
Digital, remote and mobile youth work	Detached youth work

- Types of interventions, programs and practices (by targeted subset of vulnerable youth) include interventions targeting:

Runaway, homeless or street-connected youth	Youth at-risk for suicidal ideation or suicide
CALD youth	Youth transitioning out of out-of-home care or custody
Youth affected by domestic or family violence	

- There is a lack of research exploring youth work interventions for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people. A number of references targeting this cohort were identified and interventions classified into those distinguishable by their procedural elements, and by target outcomes respectively.
- Overall recommendations for best practice principles and approaches are synthesised in the concluding section.

Introduction

Youth work practice is focused on addressing and responding to a young person's needs and personal development goals in a variety of contexts and circumstances. Some young people are considered vulnerable or transitioning through a sensitive life stage. This may be due to a range of contextual and individual risk factors such as educational disengagement, neighbourhood disadvantage, abuse or neglect coalescing to reduce the capacity of young people to achieve positive trajectories and socio-emotional wellbeing (Moensted, Day & Buss, 2020).

Evidence on risk-taking among young people suggests that risk-taking behaviours such as sexual activity, smoking, alcohol consumption and illicit drug use increase from childhood to youth, reaching its peak during youth, before decreasing during adulthood (Holmes et al, 2017). Holmes et al, (2017) explored risk-taking

behaviours among young people growing up in rural and regional settings in NSW, Australia and found, in line with national (Redmond et al, 2016) and international (Curry et al, 2012) research, that the transition from primary to high school is a period of increased risk-taking for young people. This finding indicates the importance of early and collaborative intervention between youth work stakeholders and schools: 'Cross-cutting early intervention and prevention involving youth work as well as education, health and social work which builds young people's resilience is likely to assist in development of health-protective behaviours' (p. 143). These risk-taking behaviours have negative short- and long-term health impacts. In these contexts, youth work practice tends to move beyond a deficit-oriented view of youth and risk-taking behaviours and instead, considers young people's behaviours in their social and environmental context and foregrounds transformation of that context.

This summary presents a synthesis of youth work interventions, programs and practices that target young people aged 10-24.

What did the evidence review find?

Methods

Scoping review

This scoping review involved a series of searches conducted across academic databases, youth studies journals and grey literature databases. Reference selection and characterisation were performed by two independent research team members. The searches yielded 696 references, varying in terms of purpose, methodology and detail of reporting. These references were screened according to established inclusion and exclusion criteria (documented in Appendix A), leaving a final 428 references included in this review. All included references were iteratively mapped into broad topics and conceptual categories, including 1) 'What is youth work?'; 2) 'Youth work interventions'; and 3) 'Youth work interventions that foster agency and empowerment'. The aim of this scoping review was to examine the extent, range and nature of research in the youth work space.

Youth work interventions searches and results

In addition to general 'youth work' searches conducted across academic databases, youth studies journals and grey literature databases, targeted searches for youth work interventions were conducted across the following academic databases:

Social Services Abstracts	JSTOR
Sociological Abstracts	PsycINFO
FAMILY-ATSIS	Google Scholar
Family and Society Studies Worldwide	ERIC
Informit Family & Society Collection	Web of Science

Youth work terms including "youth work*", "youth and childcare work*", "child and youth care*", "youth care" and "youth work practice" were combined with intervention terms including intervention*, program*, treatment*, service*, activit*, practice* and "program evaluation". Where applicable, results were limited to English language, peer-reviewed literature published from 2000-2022.

The research team also conducted keyword and topic page searches across the following grey literature databases and peak body sources:

Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (ACWA)	CREATE Foundation
Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS)	Early Intervention Foundation
Analysis & Policy Observatory (APO)	National Youth Agency
Australian Research Alliance for Children & Youth (ARACY)	What Works for Children's Social Care
Australian Youth Affairs Coalition AYAC	Youth Affairs Council Victoria (YACVic)
Campbell Collaboration	Youth Affairs Council Western Australia (YACWA)
Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare	Youth Affairs Network Queensland (YANQ)
Child Family Community Australia (CFCA)	Youth Endowment Fund (YEF)
Closing the Gap Clearinghouse	Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT)
Cochrane	Youth Action
Council of Europe	Youth Coalition of the ACT

All search results were title screened according to established inclusion and exclusion criteria. The remaining results were then abstract screened for relevance according to review topics and organised into subcategories including: types of interventions (general), interventions focused on agency, empowerment, advocacy or participation, and interventions focused on relationships. Note, this summary reports on the literature organised into the 'types of interventions (general)' category. The results from this targeted search were combined with all other searches conducted as part of this review to accrue all references that speak to types of youth work interventions.

A call out for submissions from youth organisations in NSW was made in July-August 2022 to gather materials not publicly available and that speak to local work in this space. Youth organisations were not asked to prepare any materials specifically for this evidence review, but rather, to send through relevant existing documents highlighting their programs, practices and approaches. Submissions received from youth organisations in NSW were screened for relevance to this review topic and included in the final number of references for this summary.

Key findings

Cumulatively, 310 references were identified from the searches with relevance to types of youth work interventions. This includes 200 journal articles, 10 books and/or book chapters, and 100 grey literature sources.

Additionally, of the 60 submissions the research team received from 17 youth work organisations, partnerships and individuals, 33 submissions pertained to youth work interventions in NSW and were categorised into the 'types of interventions (general)' subcategory. These submissions were received from the following youth work organisations, partnerships and individuals:

Blue Mountains Women's Health Resource Centre	Project Youth
CREATE Foundation	Save the Children
Fairhaven	SSI (Settlement Services International)
Headspace, SCARF Refugee Support & MCCI (Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra) [partnership]	STARTTS (NSW Service for the Treatment & Rehabilitation of Torture & Trauma Survivors)
Humanity Matters	Soulgen
MCCI (Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra) & Multicultural Health Service (Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District) [partnership]	Southern Youth and Family Services
North Sydney Youth Health Promotion (under NSLHD)	StreetWork
NSW Multicultural Health Communication Service & SSI [partnership]	Weave Youth & Community Services
Peter Slattery	

Submissions received included the following documents/resources: Submissions received included the following documents/resources: evaluation report (*n* =10), video (*n*=6), webpage (*n*=6), practice framework/standards (*n*=5), book (*n*=4), flyer/brochure (*n*=4), journal article (*n*=4), practice paper (*n*=4), program outline (*n*=3), summary document (*n*=2), factsheet/infographic (*n*=2), application form (*n*=1), case studies (*n*=1), logic model (*n*=1), magazine article (*n*=1), service overview (*n*=1), project evaluation (*n*=1), scoping report (*n*=1), training materials (*n*=1), media release (*n*=1), and online news article (*n*=1).

Synthesis of the 343 references (including 33 submissions) relevant to 'Types of youth work interventions' revealed a number of predominant subcategories of youth work interventions. Some of these subcategories captured a procedural aspect of a youth work intervention category, such as *Education/learning-based youth work* which involves informal learning activities undertaken with vulnerable young people. Others coalesced around their focus on a particular subset of vulnerable youth such as *homeless or street-connected youth.*

Youth work interventions by procedural category

Creative youth work

Youth work interventions that fall within the *Creative youth work* category comprise a creative component with relational or experiential learning. For example, a global youth work project that aims to engage young people in social issues via hip-hop activities was found to increase consciousness for global social issues while developing self-esteem among participant youth (Brown & Nicklin, 2019). Similarly, Wilson, Perez-y-Perez and Evans' (2017) exploration of hip-hop activities across youth work sites in Christchurch, New Zealand found hip-hop activities run by youth trusts working with young people in the community to include graffiti, dance or music production practices. This variety of activities diversified programs' appeal to

different groups of young people and most activities incorporated both informal gatherings and formal events (Wilson, Perez-y-Perez & Evans, 2017, p1398).

Blue Mountains Women's Health Resource Centre: Artspace – *a clinical program combining creative arts with physical and mental health care for young women*

What is it? Artspace comprises weekly visual arts sessions alongside a youth health clinic offering drop-in appointments with a nurse, GP and counsellor.

What are its impacts for young people? A qualitative evaluation undertaken by Brooks, Hooker & Barclay (2019) was conducted between 2016 and 2017. The evaluation demonstrated particularly beneficial outcomes for clients with considerable exposure to social adversity and trauma, and who were experiencing related serious health impacts. Participation in Artspace facilitated their recovery by enabling equitable access, social inclusion, creating a 'holding environment' and through therapeutic benefits of artist-led arts practices.

These studies have highlighted the capacity for an activity with widespread appeal among young people, such as hip-hop, to bring diverse and heterogeneous young people together. The importance of bringing young people from different backgrounds together was also foregrounded in an evaluation of a cross-jurisdictional, collaborative theatre project which took place in Hong Kong, Australia and New Zealand (Aubrey, 2015). This theatre project, CLICK, facilitated exploration of issues of diversity and identity via arts education and theatre activities.

This selection of *Creative youth work* programs and interventions suggests that combining creative program components with experiential or relational learning can bring together diverse groups of young people in the pursuit of 'expressive and authentic conditions for learning' (Howard, 2021) that are grounded in young people's experiences.

Outdoor or physical activity-based youth work

Outdoor or physical activity-based youth work involves learning, play, exercise and recreational activities that take place in outdoor settings.

Sports participation programs, including interventions involving organised sports or physical activity as a platform for engaging youth in additional interventions, have been found to promote positive youth development, build self-esteem, prosocial behaviours, social networks and facilitate advancement of life skills and academic achievement (Gaffney, Joliffe & White, 2021a). A systematic review of studies (n=61) reporting on the efficacy of secondary and tertiary sports interventions for young people found that sports interventions have a significant positive impact on offending, externalising behaviours and aggression (Gaffney, Joliffe & White, 2021a). This review also documented increases in self-esteem and academic performances and reductions in internalising behaviours. Heterogeneity among the reviewed studies meant that the overall evidence rating for these evaluations was relatively weak.

An earlier synthesis conducted by Ware and Meredith (2013) focused on the effectiveness of a range of sports and recreation programs for supporting and building healthy communities across diverse geographic regions. The authors noted the substantial body of evidence linking sports activities with improvements in

physical and mental wellbeing, social cohesion and educational engagement (Ware & Meredith, 2013, p. 4). Crisp (2020) sought to understand 'what works' in effective sport intervention programs via interviews with experienced sport coaches (n=10). These interviews highlighted the capacity for sports interventions to develop leadership roles and community level empowerment among young people which in turn facilitates individual behavioural changes.

Outdoor play and learning programs, including forest and nature schools, wilderness therapy and 'walkshops', allow for growth and development through outdoor learning experiences. Forest and nature schools include nature-based games and exploration, and inquiry-based learning that can be unstructured or facilitated. For example, in Canada, children in forest and nature schools often attend a half-day or multiple full-days in an outdoor setting and engage in student-centred activities that revolve around play-based learning (Harper, 2017).

STARTTS: Youth Camps – indoor and outdoor program that aims to bring young people of refugee background together to learn communication and interpersonal relationship skills

What is it? The Youth Camp program involves residential camps for young refugee people that run for 3 nights during school holiday periods. Aims of this program include: develop social skills; encourage teamwork; enhance self-esteem and confidence; promote positive relationships with other individual youth and camp leaders; engage participants in a range of positive recreational and educational activities; and develop young people's sense of responsibility.

Research has shown that children and young people from vulnerable backgrounds who attend outdoor programs experience improved wellbeing and resilience (McArdle, Harrison & Harrison, 2013). Positive impacts on stress, competence, social relationships and attention have also been reported (Chawla, Keena, Pevec & Stanley, 2014). In an Australian context, Indigenous bush knowledge programs such as the Wanga Indingii Program established in 2006, involve camps for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth incorporating traditional activities like spear-making and storytelling (Korff, 2021). The program aims to 'get kids off the street and actively involved in things' and establish positive role models in the youth's lives. The Wanga Indingii Program monitors young people's school attendance and behaviour, and assists youth facing problems at school or at home via life-skills and leadership training (Korff, 2021).

A more targeted experiential learning approach is encapsulated in Spier's (2013) evaluation of a park design 'walkshop' in which young people participated in a simulated consultation walk designed to engage them in the hypothetical redevelopment of an urban park. Spier found, from consultation with the young participants, that the walk enabled a creative sensory-based experience prompting consensual discussion and ideas for improving the park (2013, p. 19). The students also reported that the walk enabled them to realise their creative agency as actors empowered to shape public spaces. Cumulatively, these studies demonstrate the benefits of incorporating outdoor settings and contexts into learning programs.

Informal education and learning-based youth work

There has been considerable research demonstrating the efficacy of informal youth work in building 'democratic education' via youth-centred dialogue with young people on the streets and in community-based settings (Sercombe, 2010; Coburn and Wallace, 2011). A qualitative study of informal education

delivered by youth workers or as college-based further education in Scotland revealed that young participants (n=10) were able to access individually tailored supports not otherwise provided to them in formal school environments (McPherson, 2020). Similarly, research evaluating community-based youth work in educational spaces outside of formal school contexts including after-school programs, out-of-school programs and youth educational organisations has found that these informal learning programs are able to engage students via relevant and culturally responsive curricula (Baldridge, 2018; Baldridge, 2020).

An evaluation of a community-based, peer-led youth program conducted with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in Australia found that social learning was achieved via simple, repetitive and conventionalised practices brokered by peers (Buus & Moensted, 2022). This delivery mode allowed young participants to recognise and address their own and others' vulnerabilities.

In light of the reported benefits of community-based youth work and informal learning, there has been a push for stronger partnerships between formal and informal learning sectors as a means of embedding youth work in otherwise formal learning environments (Deuchar & Ellis, 2013). Deuchar and Ellis (2013) explored the impact of a school and youth work partnership focusing on data from a small-scale educational intervention for young people (n=35) with a history of disengagement, criminal behaviour and school exclusions in Glasgow, Scotland. This intervention involved youth worker-facilitated workshops conducted in school environments where young people explored social issues and developed moral reasoning and team-building skills. The authors found that youth participants demonstrated a change in their self-reported participation in anti-social behaviour and an overall increase in social capital (Deuchar & Ellis, 2013). These findings substantiated previous research that demonstrated the capacity for school and youth work partnerships to improve young people's ability to work in a team, collaborate effectively and increase self-esteem and social and emotional capital (Scottish Executive, 2007).

Research has been conducted in Australia looking at the experiences of disadvantaged and marginalised students who attend alternative education schools that cater to youth excluded from mainstream schools. The research found that when youth workers treat schooling disengagement as a product of socio-economic deficit rather than an individual deficit, students achieve positive outcomes (McGregor, 2017; also see Mills & McGregor, 2016).

Digital, remote and mobile youth work

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a growth of digital and online forms of youth work. Digital youth work offers youth workers an alternate mode by which they can deliver one-to-one support or outreach by using technology. Youth workers also support young people to develop their digital literacy and a positive online presence (Cohlmeyer, 2014).

Pre-COVID-19, digital youth work primarily supplemented in-person programs and services. An evaluation of a youth work intervention combining offline counselling with online group activities for young people not in employment or education in Finland found that the online counselling component was most beneficial for youth who identified as lonely and had difficulties participating in in-person group activities (Kivijarvi, Aaltonen & Valimaki, 2019). This research demonstrates the potential benefits of online delivery modes for

young people whose circumstances, personal preferences or geographic location make difficult or preclude, in-person contact.

Since COVID-19, youth work organisations have had to pivot their services from in-person, relationship-based service models to remote and digital modes of engagement. An exploration of one youth work organisation's transition to COVID-constrained services found that service model innovation impacted both delivery and service orientation with staff working more with families at a basic level of intervention (Shaw, Brady & Dolan, 2022).
Earlier research undertaken in the UK draws attention to the gap between adult perceptions of youth and technology, and young people's relationship with the digital world (Jaynes, 2020). While a quick transition from in-person to online service models is likely to reveal issues with how digital technologies are negotiated and articulated in professional practice, research has generally highlighted the benefits of online youth work for vulnerable young people (see Szekely & Nagy, 2011; Blazek & Lemesova, 2011).

Save the Children Australia: Our Voice and Journey of Hope – an online adaptation of the Our Voice and Journey of Hope services

What is it? Our Voice foregrounds the voices of children and young people in discussions around emergency preparedness, response and recovery involving local councils, service providers and communities. Young people who have experienced disasters are able to give feedback about local emergency management and share ideas about what would work best for their peers in the community.

Journey of Hope is a school-based group-work intervention for young people who have experienced a collective trauma such as a natural hazard or disaster. The program aims to help them identify and process emotions and identify positive coping strategies that can be used to manage current and future emotional challenges.

What are its impacts for young people? An evaluation report undertaken by Mavros et al, (2021) presents outcomes, lessons learned and recommendations from the Our Voice and Journey of Hope services jointly delivered by Save the Children Australia and the Paul Ramsay Foundation between August 2020 and July 2021. This report concluded that Our Voice represented an innovative and promising approach to promoting the voice of children and young people in emergency planning and recovery. Additionally, the authors found that children were able to engage in difficult conversations in online group chats in the Journey of Hope online adaptation which assisted with the overall aim of facilitating collective healing from trauma.

Mentoring

Youth mentoring in the context of youth work is characterised by a consistent, prosocial relationship between a young person and youth worker intended to support that young person's positive development. Youth mentoring is often divided into informal mentoring, involving 'natural' mentors such as family members, acquaintances and older peers, and formal mentoring, involving structured or unstructured programs with a mentoring component.

Quality mentoring, contingent in large part on the relationship between mentor and mentee, is associated with a range of positive outcomes, including enhanced mental health and reduced delinquency (Gaffney,

Farrington & White, 2021b). Additionally, positive outcomes associated with mentoring include: improved relationships with adults, academic functioning and performance, positive behavioural choices, and feelings of self-worth and life skills (New Zealand Youth Mentoring Network, 2016, p. 24).

Streetwork Australia: KickStart Mentoring Program – program that provides support to vulnerable young people

What is it? KickStart Mentoring Program provides unique support to every young person engaged with StreetWork via one-on-one mentoring and case management. StreetWork works with at-risk young people aged 11-18 who are experiencing challenges including: suicidal ideation, self-harm, severe disengagement from school, youth homelessness, substance misuse and youth crime.

What are its impacts for young people? Research by PwC indicate that 85 percent of StreetWork's young people graduate from the program and achieve their goals (from a study of the 2020 cohort). Additionally, a 2021/2022 Social Impact Report documents outcomes from young participants between 2017-2022 and found that participants in the program significantly improved in life skills factors including employment, education, housing, daily life skills as well as financial management and goal setting. Positive shifts were also documented in resilience factors including determination, pride, passion, managing setbacks, increased sense of meaning

Crime prevention

A number of different interventions, programs and services that fall within the remit of youth work have been documented to have a diversionary effect on youths' criminal behaviour. A systematic review of evidence-based programs that divert young people from gang involvement and violence found that skills-based programs were among the most robustly evaluated and effective approaches for preventing criminal behaviours among vulnerable youth (O'Connor & Waddell, 2015). The skills taught included demonstrations, practice and activities and family-focused programs including home visiting and parent training. The authors identified mentoring programs, community engagement and gang-specific approaches as promising but with limited evidence; and deterrence and disciplinary approaches as potentially harmful (2015, p. 14). A more recent systematic review explored the efficacy of afterschool programs for reducing delinquency among disadvantaged young people and found these programs to be moderately effective (Gaffney, Farrington & White, 2021a).

Finally, an evidence and gap map (EGM) that documented research exploring diversionary approaches for children at-risk of violent behaviour identified a number of critical gaps in the evidence-base for what works in crime prevention with young people (YEF, 2021a). From a synthesis of over 2000 evaluations and systematic reviews, this EGM found substantive research and evidence documenting effective approaches for working with parents and carers, mental health and therapeutic interventions and socioemotional wellbeing programs (2021a, p. 6). Conversely, the evidence base is lacking in areas of contextual safeguarding (i.e., an approach to safeguarding that responds to young people's experiences of harm outside of the home); child criminal exploitation; child-focused criminal justice approaches; and approaches that consider systemic changes to services and systems that engage children and young people.

Interventions for particular subsets of vulnerable young people

Interventions targeting runaway, homeless and/or street-connected youth

A number of studies examined interventions and programs targeting young people who had run away from home, were homeless or street-connected. For example, Gwadz et al, (2018) conducted a cross-sectional qualitative descriptive study of programs for runaway and homeless youth in New York, USA. The authors found that effective services for these populations needed to be specifically tailored to their circumstances and needs. A systematic review found no significant differences between the outcomes observed for 'standard services' including drop-in centres and case management compared with therapeutic interventions with this cohort (Coren et al, 2019).

STARTTS: Project Bantu Capoeira Angola – program for refugee youth at risk of developing psychological and behavioural complications

What is it? Project Bantu Capoeira Angola aims to assist refugee youth better settle into school life and build resilience via kinaesthetic movement and an individual-strengths-based approach to personal growth and recovery. Capoeira Angola provides training in a mix of dance and martial arts grounded in an ancient art form with a rich cultural heritage. To maximise accessibility of these services, STARTTS works in close partnership with the education system and with school communities via the Schools Program.

What are its impacts for young people? A qualitative evaluation undertaken by Momartin, Miranda, Aroche & Coello (2018) sought to establish the program's impacts on young participants' psychological and social issues. The authors reported positive changes observed by participants and teachers to refugee young people's resilience, self-esteem, interpersonal relationships and school attendance.

Interventions targeting culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) youth

Southern Youth and Family Services: Approaches to reducing youth homelessness and disadvantage – an online adaptation of the Our Voice and Journey of Hope services

What is it? This study explores effective practice for assisting young people to avoid or exit homelessness and contributes to the evidence on what works well in supporting young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

What are its impacts for young people? The Southern Youth and Family Services (SYFS) operating model offers multiple interventions with dispersed entry points and pathways across more than 40 services including youth specialist and family-centred practices as well as whole-of-community engagement. Evaluation of this model found that past SYFS clients' current housing circumstances are significantly improved.

Young people from CALD backgrounds may face unique challenges associated with feelings of displacement, recovery from trauma, discrimination, migration stress and lack of social supports (Kaur, 2014). Conversely, young people from CALD backgrounds may benefit from protective factors that build resilience such as kinship, hopefulness and cultural identity (Babic, 2015). These risk and protective factors are not homogenous across all CALD youth. Consequently, youth work interventions and services targeting these cohorts must consider the individual circumstances of each young person. There are numerous interventions, programs and services that can support CALD youth to thrive (see Babic, 2015 for an overview of evidence-based reports, resources and practice examples for working with CALD young people as well as resources to support professionals in child, family and community welfare sectors).

Interventions targeting youth at-risk for suicide

A systematic review undertaken in Australia demonstrated the positive impact of increased employment of youth workers in schools and extension of school-based youth work programs and online virtual youth services on reductions in suicides among school-aged youth (Cooper, 2015).

Interventions targeting domestic violence-affected youth

Specialist youth services for youth who have experienced or been affected by domestic or family violence have been shown to benefit young participants' socioemotional wellbeing. For example, Coburn & Gormally (2014) evaluated a youth service for domestic violence-affected youth in the UK and found that one-to-one support and group work sessions assisted the youth to foster empathy, better understand domestic abuse and feel safe about working through their emotions and making prosocial connections.

Interventions targeting youth transitioning out of out-of-home care or custody

A systematic review assessing effectiveness of interventions that improve outcomes for young people leaving out-of-home care found that the overall evidence-base was not robust enough to draw any conclusions or recommendations. Certain policies and programs such as extended care showed promise (Tyler et al, 2021).

WEAVE: Creating Futures – intensive support service for young people leaving custody or involved in the criminal justice system

What is it? Creating Futures is an intensive support service for young people leaving custody or otherwise involved in the criminal justice system on bail, community orders or court diversion. It provides court support and advocacy and wraparound casework tailored to the needs and goals of each young person.

What are its impacts for young people? An evaluation report undertaken by Schwartz & Terare (2020) demonstrated that the Creating Futures program had positive impacts on recidivism rates among its clients, as well as supporting more than half of them in areas of brokerage, court support and housing.

Interventions targeting Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people

There is a paucity of evidence evaluating youth work interventions targeting Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people. This is partially attributable to limitations in the area of youth work scholarship more generally (see Limitations section) and partially a reflection of a general lack of research exploring issues impacting, and programs targeting Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander youth and communities. The section below documents a number of interventions organised by their procedural elements and by their target outcomes, which are geared towards supporting Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people.

Interventions distinguishable by their procedural elements

Sports and recreation programs: The Closing the Gap Clearinghouse has published a number of evidence reviews exploring particular youth work interventions and programs and their effects on Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander youth. One such review synthesised findings from over 30 studies evaluating a range of sports and recreation programs and their impacts on surrounding communities (Ware & Meredith, 2013). The authors found that sport and recreational programs have been shown to benefit Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander youth in areas of school retention, physical and mental health and wellbeing,

connection to culture, crime reduction, attitudes towards learning, social and cognitive skills, and social inclusion and cohesion. Importantly, Ware and Meredith (2013) noted that sport and recreation activities linked with traditional culture, such as hunting, are more likely to be engaging to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander youth.

Arts programs: A more recent review similarly reported on the benefits gleaned from a range of arts programs on supporting and building healthy communities (Ware, 2014). This review found that arts programs involving Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander youth have improved physical and mental health and wellbeing, increased social inclusion and cohesion, as well as validation of, and connection to culture, improved social and cognitive skills and had some observable impacts on school retention, attitudes towards learning and crime reduction. As with sport and recreation programs, the efficacy of arts programs is hypothesised to be attributable to their capacity to divert youth from otherwise antisocial behaviours and provide alternative and safe opportunities for risk-taking.

Mentoring programs: Mentoring programs that consider and are grounded in Indigenous teaching and learning styles have been heralded as a culturally appropriate intervention for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander youth. A review of mentoring programs in Australia found that mentoring integrated with other interventions generate a greater level of positive change including impacts on behavioural, academic and vocational outcomes for at-risk youth, and contact with juvenile justice systems (Ware, 2013). The relationship between mentor and mentee is at the crux of successful mentoring programs.

Interventions distinguishable by their target outcomes

Socioemotional wellbeing and mental health: A mixed-methods study of a pilot Family Wellbeing program designed to foster socioemotional wellbeing among young Aboriginal men found positive impacts on capacity to manage relationships, engage in education and employment as well as mental and physical health (Whiteside, 2016). Additionally, one Closing the Gap Clearinghouse review focused on programs that foster socioemotional wellbeing among Aboriginal people of all ages (Dudgeon et al., 2014); and one book chapter extracted effective elements of programs that deliver social and emotional learning to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth (Dobia & Roffey, 2017). Dudgeon et al. (2014) examined effective strategies to strengthen the mental health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people via a review of Australian literature and government health, mental health and social and emotional wellbeing policies and programs. The authors found, firstly, that there is minimal research relating to the mental health and socioemotional wellbeing of Aboriginal Australians. Second, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people view mental health and social and emotional wellbeing differently to non-Indigenous Australians. Differences in traditions, values and health belief systems as well as the social and cultural circumstances surrounding health and wellbeing can mean that policy and service provision are not always culturally appropriate for Aboriginal cohorts. Despite these limitations, the authors noted a number of program and service delivery principles that are common amongst effective health and wellbeing programs. Swan and Raphael's guiding principles contained within the *National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People's Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing 2004-09* (SHRG, 2004) remain critical in guiding design and delivery of these programs. The principles emphasise the importance of:

- Focusing on the physical, spiritual, cultural, social and emotional connectedness of the individual, family and community

- Strengthening cultural values and commitments, systems of care and control and responsibility;
- Working in partnership with the Indigenous community-controlled sector
- Recognising the profound effects of colonisation as the starting point for addressing Indigenous people's grief, loss, transgenerational trauma and ongoing stress and dislocation.

WEAVE: Speak Out – program for young people with coexisting challenges related to mental health and alcohol and other drug use

What is it? Speak Out works with young people aged 12-28 with co-occurring mental health and alcohol and drug-related challenges, and uses a holistic model of care that responds to the issues identified by young people as their priorities. The program includes supports around housing, justice system engagement, employment and education, family relationships and social and cultural connection in addition to supports for achieving mental health and alcohol and drug outcomes.

What are its impacts for young people? An evaluation report undertaken by Ryan & Gold (2021) found that approximately 75% of Speak Out clients identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. According to program participants, Speak Out is successful in achieving improved access to services, reduced problematic alcohol and other drug use, improved self-management of mental health and wellbeing and improved engagement with education and/or employment.

Dobia and Roffey's (2017) chapter on social and emotional learning with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth summarised an evaluation of the Indigenous adaptation of the KidsMatter initiative. KidsMatter is an evidence-based social and emotional learning program for children and young people. One of eight schools that underwent pilot evaluation for an Indigenous adaptation of the KidsMatter program was demonstrably successful in engaging Aboriginal students in social and emotional learning. This was attributed to their adoption of a cooperative learning strategy framed around four core agreements that foster respect and inclusion (Gibbs, 2006). This approach was seen to benefit young people who were shy, and facilitate inclusion and responsible behaviours. Other aspects of the program delivery that were seen to be effective include:

- Program flexibility was found to be essential to support engagement
- Active involvement of Aboriginal facilitators was similarly essential for engagement and for development of social skills and responsible behaviour
- The 'right to pass' or offering students a choice in whether and when they wish to contribute to group discussion was found to be valuable for overcoming shyness and encouraging ownership and agency
- Acknowledging and working with differences in communication and relationship styles
- Sharing planning and co-facilitation between Aboriginal and non-Indigenous teachers.

Limitations

It is well-established that youth work scholarship is limited by a lack of documentation and synthesis of practice-oriented knowledge (Moensted, Day & Buss, 2020). Veerman & Van Yperen (2007) partially attribute the paucity of experimental studies in youth work academic literature to difficulties associated with evaluation of non-standardised interventions that characterise much youth work practice. These gaps in available literature preclude this summary from being an exhaustive outline of available youth work interventions and programs. For example, a number of references respectively exploring case management and detached youth work interventions were identified in this review, however, due to the small number of these references, these interventions were not canvassed in this summary. Additionally, it is highly probable that many additional, and effective, youth work interventions operate to support vulnerable young people, but that these interventions have not been evaluated or identified in our searches of academic databases, grey literature and stakeholder submissions. These deficits in youth work scholarship are particularly pronounced for youth work targeting Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people, and CALD youth more generally.

Best practice principles in youth work

The findings of this summary have implications for the design and delivery of youth work interventions for vulnerable young people. A number of studies have sought to synthesise components of best practice in youth work. For example, Bruce et al (2009) explored youth work targeting 10-19 year-olds in Christchurch, New Zealand to identify key practices that enhance work in the youth sector as well as gaps and needs in service provision. From a series of focus group discussions and interviews with youth advisors and stakeholders, the authors distilled four components of best practice in youth work. These include:

- Connectivity: development of programs and services that are long-term, sustainable and relationship-based birthed and sourced from within the community
- Strengths-based approach: embracing notions of independence and autonomy among services for young people
- Capacity building: ability to build capacity in terms of staff professional development, effective research, evaluation and information gathering and sharing, and leadership in the area of governance and management
- Contextual and systemic considerations: consideration of macro-contexts including economic, political and social and cultural factors.

STARTTS: STARTTS in Schools strategy – program providing trauma-informed and recovery-focused individual and group work interventions to young people with refugee backgrounds

What is it? The STARTTS in Schools strategy (SIS) comprises a School Liaison Program which operates as an interface between NSW schools and STARTTS' programs and facilitates systemic changes at the school environment level that support SIS aims. SIS is delivered through internal collaboration with the School Liaison Program, Child and Adolescent Counsellors and the Youth Team, and external partnership with the Department of Education and Catholic Education Office. This integrated delivery model expands STARTTS' reach across schools and students in NSW. Supports provided through SIS include: individual and trauma-informed group-work interventions, professional learning for school staff, development and support of clusters of schools to promote partnerships and implement whole-of-school approaches, and personalised consultation for school staff.

What are its impacts for young people? In line with Bruce et al (2009) outline of 'effective youth work practice', STARTTS' approach involves connected services, adopts a strengths-based approach, is focused on capacity building and facilitates contextual and systemic changes to the school environment.

Considerations for service design and delivery

From this analysis, the authors developed a non-exhaustive series of guideline questions that can be used to determine the extent to which youth work programs reflect this model of best practice:

1. 'Is the youth service community-based, birthed and sourced?
2. Is the youth service one that has worked with young people for a significant period of time and which has, during that time, sought to develop strong relationships with young people and other youth sector stakeholders?
3. Are there signs of community life, connectivity and collaboration?
4. Does the youth service have a strengths-based approach to working with young people in terms of helping young people develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes that will benefit them
5. Does the youth service seek to develop independence/autonomy within young people through empowerment and youth participation?
6. Does the youth service foster acts of generosity and social responsibility?
7. Is the youth service place high value on the training of youth workers, leaders, etc.?
8. Is the youth service committed to capacity building?'

These principles of best practice youth work outlined in Bruce et al (2009) are reflected in youth work scholarship more generally. For example, Moensted, Day & Buus (2020) conducted interviews with 12 youth practitioners as well as a focus group with an additional 8 practitioners to explore their work in supporting positive transitions with and for disadvantaged young people in Australia. The authors found that having an ecological focus, encouraging personal agency, and fostering alternative possibilities were components of

best practice youth work and critical to facilitating practitioner dialogue and supporting young people's positive life trajectories.

Best practice principles have also been identified in for youth work with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people by Reed-Gilbert and Brown (2002, see adjacent text box, 'WEAVE*: Our Place').

WEAVE*: Our Place: *stories about good practice in youth work with Aboriginal young people*

Reed-Gilbert and Brown's text, 'Our Place: Stories about good practice in youth work with Aboriginal young people' offers practical best practice tips for youth workers and organisations working with First Nations young people and communities. For example:

- Cultural and historical awareness: Non-Aboriginal workers must be aware of both the cultural values and norms they bring to their work as well as those of the First Nations communities with whom they work. Where possible, workers should involve the elders and community members in their work with young people (subject to young person's consent). Additionally, workers must understand the nature of intergenerational trauma resulting from the ongoing systemic oppression experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia.
- Communication: Several key differences exist between First Nations and Western communication norms. In some Aboriginal cultures, it is considered rude to look elders directly in the eye when speaking to them. Conversational styles can also vary and be less direct than Western styles. Workers need to commit to spending time yarning and building authentic trust with young people rather than trying to rush into identifying a 'problem' and 'solution'.
- Learning styles: Western learning traditions characterised by individuality and learning through written and spoken instruction are not always a good fit for First Nations people with different ways of knowing and learning. Traditional ways of learning are typically experiential and less structured than that of a classroom setting. Youth workers need to be flexible and creative in their work to ensure that provision of information is inclusive and accessible to all.

*Book published under 'South Sydney Youth Services', now known as 'Weave'.

Section 4 - Youth work interventions that foster agency and empowerment

Overview

- Youth work consciously moves beyond a deficit-oriented, risk-averse approach to support of young people to an approach that gives primacy to youth participation in decision-making and processes that shape youth organisations.
- This summary presents findings from a scoping review of youth work interventions that foster agency and empowerment in participant youth.
- Our searches identified 69 references with relevance to youth work interventions that foster agency and empowerment. This includes 32 journal articles, 6 books and/or book chapters, and 31 grey literature sources.
- Additionally, the research team received 24 submissions pertaining to youth work interventions in NSW that foster agency and empowerment in young people.
- Synthesis of these references revealed that many youth work interventions directly or indirectly foster empowerment and agency in their young clients. These programs were organised into the following conceptual categories for the purposes of this summary:
    - Relationship-based youth work;
    - Youth participatory action research;
    - Youth-adult partnerships;
    - Youth organising; and
    - Needs-led youth work.
- While these programs and approaches vary in structure and format, they converge in their goal of improving youth outcomes by involving youth in activities that are meaningful and promoting equitable relationships and participatory practices.

Introduction

Youth work moves beyond a deficit-oriented, risk-averse approach to support of young people and instead gives primacy to youth participation in decision-making and processes that shape youth organisations. The recent shift in Australia towards a rights-based approach and the recognition of the need to give primacy to youth voice and participation in decision-making have seen a number of programs emerge that variously empower youth by safeguarding their rights to participate in the processes that shape youth organisations (see Hall, 2020). These shifts in youth work policy and practice shed light on the concepts of agency and empowerment. While many programs and approaches seek to foster agency and empowerment, there is minimal attention in the literature to how these concepts are defined and recognised in research with young people (Spencer & Doull, 2015; Coffey & Farrugia, 2014). Programs that foster agency and empowerment are variously geared towards youth's participation in democratic processes, development of a sense of control and self-esteem as well as leadership skills, and contribution to community change (see Ozer & Douglas, 2013; Zeldin et al., 2013, 2014, 2016; Schwartz & Suyemoto, 2013). To some extent, these

conceptual and definitional inconsistencies and limitations have been mitigated in this evidence review via inclusion of multiple search terms to capture the diverse ways in which programs can foster agency and empowerment in young people (see Appendix A for a detailed summary of search terms and strategies). This synthesis of the available research showcases some of the varied processes by which agency is fostered and young people are empowered. Ultimately, many of the youth work interventions and approaches canvassed in this summary promote equitable relationships and increase youth participation in decision-making.

What did the evidence review find?

Methods

Scoping review

This scoping review involved a series of searches conducted across academic databases, youth studies journals and grey literature databases. Reference selection and characterisation were performed by two independent research team members. The searches yielded 696 references, varying in terms of purpose, methodology and detail of reporting. These references were screened according to established inclusion and exclusion criteria (documented in Appendix A), leaving a final 428 references included in this review. All included references were iteratively mapped into broad topics and conceptual categories, including 1) 'What is youth work?'; 2) 'Youth work interventions'; and 3) 'Youth work interventions that foster agency and empowerment'. The aim of this scoping review was to examine the extent, range and nature of research in the youth work space.

Youth work interventions that foster agency and empowerment searches and results

In addition to general 'youth work' searches conducted across academic databases, youth studies journals and grey literature databases, targeted searches for youth work interventions that foster agency and empowerment were conducted across the following academic databases:

Social Services Abstracts
Sociological Abstracts
FAMILY-ATSIS
Family and Society Studies Worldwide
Informit Family & Society Collection
JSTOR
PsycINFO
Google Scholar
ERIC
Web of Science
Scopus

Youth work terms including "youth work*", "youth and childcare work*", "child and youth care*", "youth care" and "youth work practice" were combined with intervention terms including intervention*, program*, treatment*, service*, activit*, practice* and "program evaluation" as well as agency and empowerment terms including "youth advoca*", "youth participat*", advocacy, participation, agency and empower*. Where applicable, results were limited to English language, peer-reviewed literature published from 2000-2022.

Our research team also conducted keyword and topic page searches across the following grey literature databases and peak body sources:

- Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (ACWA)
- Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS)
- Analysis & Policy Observatory (APO)
- Australian Research Alliance for Children & Youth (ARACY)
- Australian Youth Affairs Coalition AYAC
- Campbell Collaboration
- Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare
- Child Family Community Australia (CFCA)
- Closing the Gap Clearinghouse
- Cochrane
- Council of Europe
- CREATE Foundation
- Early Intervention Foundation
- National Youth Agency
- What Works for Children's Social Care
- Youth Affairs Council Victoria (YACVic)
- Youth Affairs Council Western Australia (YACWA)
- Youth Affairs Network Queensland (YANQ)
- Youth Endowment Fund (YEF)
- Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT)
- Youth Action
- Youth Coalition of the ACT

All search results were title screened according to established inclusion and exclusion criteria. The remaining results were then abstract screened for relevance according to review topics and organised into subcategories including: types of interventions (general), interventions focused on agency, empowerment, advocacy or participation, and interventions focused on relationships. Note, this summary reports on the literature organised into the 'interventions focused on agency, empowerment, advocacy or participation', and 'interventions focused on relationships' categories. The results from this targeted search were combined with all other searches conducted as part of this review to accrue all references that speak to interventions that foster agency and empowerment.

A call out for submissions from youth organisations in NSW was made to gather materials not publicly available and that speak to local work in this space. Youth organisations were not asked to prepare any materials specifically for this research, but rather, to send through relevant documents highlighting their programs, practices and approaches. Submissions received from youth organisations in New South Wales (NSW) were screened for relevance to this review topic and included in the final number of references for this summary.

Key findings

Cumulatively, 69 references were identified from the searches with relevance to youth work interventions that foster agency and empowerment. This includes 32 journal articles, 6 books and/or book chapters, and 31 grey literature sources.

Additionally, of the 60 submissions the research team received from youth work organisations, 24 submissions pertained to youth work interventions in NSW that foster agency and empowerment in young people. These submissions were received from the following youth work organisations, partnerships and individuals:

Blue Mountains Women's Health Resource Centre	Project Youth
CREATE Foundation	Save the Children
Fairhaven	SSI (Settlement Services International)
Headspace, SCARF Refugee Support & MCCI (Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra) [partnership]	Soulgen
Humanity Matters	Southern Youth and Family Services
MCCI (Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra) & Multicultural Health Service (Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District) [partnership]	STARTTS (NSW Service for the Treatment & Rehabilitation of Torture & Trauma Survivors)
North Sydney Youth Health Promotion (under NSLHD)	StreetWork
NSW Multicultural Health Communication Service & SSI [partnership]	Weave Youth & Community Services
Peter Slattery	Project Youth

Submissions received included the following documents/resources: evaluation report (*n* =10), video (*n*=6), webpage (*n*=6), practice framework/standards (*n*=5), book (*n*=4), flyer/brochure (*n*=4), journal article (*n*=4), practice paper (*n*=4), program outline (*n*=3), summary document (*n*=2), factsheet/infographic (*n*=2), application form (*n*=1), case studies (*n*=1), logic model (*n*=1), magazine article (*n*=1), service overview (*n*=1), project evaluation (*n*=1), scoping report (*n*=1), training materials (*n*=1), media release (*n*=1), and online news article (*n*=1).

A content synthesis of the 93 references (including 24 submissions) revealed a number of subcategories of youth work interventions and approaches that directly or indirectly foster agency and empowerment in participant youth. These programs were organised into the following conceptual categories for the purposes of this summary:

- Relationship-based youth work;
- Youth participatory action research;
- Youth-adult partnerships;
- Youth organising; and
- Needs-led youth work.

Relationship-based youth work

The importance of the relationship between youth work practitioner and young person is foregrounded in much of the youth studies literature. For example, McMillan, Stuart and Vincent (2012) interviewed a number of students (n=7) attending an alternative school program supported by youth care practitioners in Canada to explore how these youth view the work of the practitioners and its effect on them. The

young interviewees attributed the relationship between practitioner and young person as the basis for effective work and positive academic and socioemotional outcomes from the program. Additionally, these students emphasised the **importance of constant engagement via both passive and persistent engagement strategies employed by the youth care practitioners as key to effective work between themselves and the practitioner**.

The importance of continuity and consistency in the relationship between practitioner and young person was also highlighted in a study exploring young people's experiences in and out of care and with youth services in Belgium (Naert, Roets, Roose & Vanderplasschen, 2019). In this study, the authors interviewed 25 young people to explore their perspectives of the care and support they had received and found that three major themes emerged: 1) a need for footholds in moments of existential chaos; 2) the importance of timing of interventions to correspond with youth's perspectives; and 3) the importance of youth's impact on their own care pathways. These recurring themes emphasise the **importance not only of a reliable and consistent relationship, but also one that is responsive and adaptable to the needs of the young person at particular points in time, and that foregrounds their own voice in decision-making processes**. Overall, these studies highlight the need for a more nuanced understanding of youth work relationships and provision of support that considers a young person's personal identity formation and development, their circumstances and their voice.

The literature also emphasises the significance of professional support and supervision for youth workers that considers the practitioners' personal and professional identity in relation to the youth with whom they are working. A case study of the relationship between a Black male youth worker and a young Black man in the UK sought to explore how the employment of male youth workers promotes desistance from crime among young men (Harris, 2022). Harris found from this case study, that the men's investments in different discourses of masculinity were more significant than their similarities in racial or class backgrounds for promotion of desistance. Consequently, Harris emphasised the importance of professional support and supervision of male youth workers that foregrounds their own personal and professional identity so as to better understand their resources of masculine and street capital in relation to the young person they are seeking to engage. Finally, the **importance of trust, rapport and a boundary-enabled relationship are also highlighted in the literature as critical to an effective relationship between practitioner and young person**. For example, Crisp (2020) interviewed 10 sport coaches with experience in community coaching to explore their perceptions of 'best practice' in sport intervention programs with young people. From these interviews, Crisp found that development of a trusting, boundary-enabled relationship between coach and the young people was the key to the success of effective programs.

Challenges in relationship-based youth work practice: Maintaining appropriate boundaries

Establishing and maintaining a relationship between practitioner and young person that is conducive to their personal development and growth has particular challenges. Much of the youth studies literature in this space focuses on strategies for setting, maintaining and/or blurring professional boundaries in relational youth work practice. Sercombe (2007) offers an outline of best practice strategies in managing professional boundaries. More specifically, Murphy and Ord (2013) discussed the appropriate use of worker self-disclosure which frequently occur in youth work practice.

Hart (2017) similarly advocates for a more nuanced understanding of professional boundaries in youth work practice, suggesting that relationships are multifaceted and fluid and do not easily conform to rigid professional boundaries and arbitrary guidelines or rules. An earlier ethnographic study undertaken by Hart (2016) that explored four youth clubs operating in north-east England found that young people are adept at maintaining boundaries and demonstrate a consciousness of the organisational boundaries that constrain youth workers' practice. Consequently, Hart suggests that youth workers give greater credence to young people's capacity to set and work within boundaries and consider greater collaboration in the negotiation and maintenance of professional boundaries with their client youth.

Youth work interventions that foster empowerment and agency

Many youth work interventions directly or indirectly foster empowerment and agency in their young clients. The recent shift towards a rights-based approach and the recognition of the need to give primacy to youth voice and participation in decision-making have seen a number of programs emerge that variously empower youth by safeguarding their rights to participate in the processes that shape youth organisations (see Hall, 2020). While these programs and approaches vary, they converge in their goal of improving youth outcomes by involving youth in activities considered meaningful and promoting equitable relationships and participatory practices.

Youth participatory action research

STARTTS – Sporting Linx: *program that uses sport to promote social connection, empowerment and leadership among refugee youth*

What does it aim to do? Sporting Linx targets youth from refugee backgrounds between the ages of 14-18 and aims to engage them in sporting activities to promote social connection, empowerment and leadership.

How does it do it? STARTTS works closely with individual schools to customise programs to address the specific interests and needs of their refugee student cohort.

Youth participatory action research is youth-led research which engages young people as co-researchers in the design and administration of research projects focused on social problems that impact their lives. The overall aim of these research projects is to involve young people in the transformation of collectively produced knowledge into practical solutions that can precipitate community-level change (Hall, 2020). Research suggests these youth participatory action research programs bolster leadership, the desire to contribute to community change, as well as empowerment and self-esteem among participating youth (see Ozer & Douglas, 2013).

Youth-adult partnerships

Youth-adult partnerships, also termed 'youth-driven' programs or practices, similarly prioritise young people's right to participate in democratic processes via collaborations between youth and adults that aim to improve youth-serving organisations or resolve broader problems that impact communities (Hall, 2020). While these partnerships are conceptually and structurally diverse, they all seek to give primacy to the youth voice in decision-making processes, and foster supportive adult relationships (see Ramey, Lawford & Vachon, 2017). Generally, these programs aim to develop skill-building and individual empowerment through shared activities that take a variety of forms.

Ramey, Rose-Krasnor and Lawford (2017) explored the association between young people's construction and expression of their sense of identity and the degree of youth voice, collaborative youth-adult relationships and youths' program engagement across 194 youth participating in youth-adult partnerships. The authors found that all three characteristics of youth-adult partnerships (youth voice, collaboration and program engagement) predict youths' capacity to actively seek out, evaluate and use self-relevant information in their construction and expression of their sense of self, while program engagement served as a unique predictor.

Spier's (2013) evaluated a park design 'walkshop' in which young people participated in a simulated consultation walk with a view to redeveloping an urban park. This study demonstrated that this program transformed students' understanding of the park and increased their sense of creative agency as social actors able to shape public spaces. Generally, research has shown that youth-adult partnerships foster empowerment, a sense of control and self-esteem among youth (see Zeldin, Christens & Powers, 2013; Zeldin et al., 2014; Zeldin et al., 2016).

Youth organising

Northern Sydney Local Health District – Northern Sydney Youth Health Promotion: *employs a group of local young people aged 15-24 to promote the health and wellbeing of local young people*

What does it aim to do? The Northern Sydney Youth Health Promotion (NSYHP) aims to promote the health and wellbeing of local young people by focusing on issues such as tobacco, alcohol, emotional and social health and obesity.

How does it do it? The group of local young people employed by NSYHP (Youth Consultants) to undertake this work are trained and mentored by a Youth Health Promotion Coordinator & Social Wellbeing Manager. This team of 10-12 Youth Consultants offer a unique perspective and insight, encourage meaningful dialogue and consultation between young people and healthcare providers, youth services, schools, local councils, planners and policy makers.

Anticipated outcomes: The Youth Consultants use their unique perspective, local knowledge and creative skills to improve young people's engagement with health and wellness. Youth Consultants engage with young people at events and develop strategies to address issues that affect young people.

Youth organising, youth social action or youth activism programs are defined as 'a youth development and social justice strategy that trains young people in community organising and advocacy…to alter power relations and create meaningful institutional change in their communities' (Listen, Inc, 2003, p.9). Originally, youth organising programs emerged as an intervention within the positive youth development movement, advocating for programs that develop interpersonal capacity among participant youth within safe and structured environments (Hall, 2020). The youth organising approach extended this aim to encourage development of sociopolitical capacity (i.e. the capacity to consider local issues and broader sociopolitical issues in tandem and work towards resolving inequities), and community capacity (i.e. a commitment towards collaborative change and skill-building) among participant youth.

Youth organising programs can take a variety of forms. Generally, these programs converge around prioritisation of youth voices in program processes including relationship-building, problem identification, action planning and implementation.

One ethnographic research study of a youth-led peer-support program sought to explore the role of young people in determining, creating and applying change processes for their peers, and ultimately, enhancing processes of empowerment and agency (Moensted & Buus, 2011). Using interviews with program participant young people, volunteers and staff, the authors found that when participations were offered a dual role by the program, both receiving peer support as well as facilitating change processes for others, this gave them a voice, and reinforced their rights to be involved in transforming their situations.

Youth organising programs require careful consideration of service delivery needs. Blanchet-Cohen and Brunson (2014) explored staff practice in the context of a youth-led program that engaged marginalised youth in social change through youth-led grants in Canada. The authors interviewed youth workers and managers to better understand how these youth-led practices were supported, both logistically and in principle, across the organisation and found that support was required at multiple ecological levels including individual-level, group-level, setting-level and organisation-level. Ultimately, Blanchet-Cohen and Brunson (2014) emphasised the importance of training for practitioners overseeing and managing youth organising programs. Overall, research has shown that youth organising programs and approaches bolster leadership and the desire to contribute to community-level changes, as well as empowerment and self-esteem among youth (see Schwartz & Suyemoto, 2013).

Needs-led youth work

Needs-led youth work similarly prioritises youth participation in decision-making and care processes while also requiring a continuous focus on the young person's needs, and practitioners' showcasing of needs-led attitudes and skills (Metselaar, van Yperen, van den Bergh & Knorth, 2015).

CREATE – Your Future program: *provides young people with the skills and knowledge required to effectively transition from OOHC to independence*

What does it aim to do? The Your Future program (CYF) aims to impart the life skills and self and community awareness required to successfully manage the challenges of everyday life by translating knowledge and values into abilities that enable young people to excel.

How does it do it? CYF uses an experiential approach to learning, encouraging young people to explore their own knowledge, beliefs and experiences. The workshop modules are designed to engage young people of all learning styles by balancing visual, auditory and tactile activities and approaches.

Anticipated outcomes: In addition to achieving skill-based competencies such as managing finances, being healthy and navigating the rental housing market, young people are also guided through the steps required to think critically, make informed and independent decisions and understand their identity and role in the community.

In their systematic review of needs-led programs for school-aged children and their families, Metselaar, van Yperen, van den Bergh and Knorth (2015) found that most studies reported an association between clients' involvement and engagement in the program and positive outcomes, such as improvements in youth behaviours, parenting stress, client satisfaction, completion rates, youth safety, wellbeing and empowerment, and service coordination. Practitioner attitudes and skills that were significantly associated with positive outcomes included listening to clients and working in partnership with them (Metselaar, van Yperen, van den Bergh & Knorth, 2015).

By contrast, only a few studies in this evidence review attributed these positive outcomes to the attention given to the clients' needs. Further research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of this approach for achieving positive outcomes. Bramsen, Kuiper, Willemse & Cardol (2021), developed a manualised needs-led youth work tool called MyPath. MyPath is designed to prepare young people in out of home care for life outside of care or support. MyPath seeks to develop youth autonomy and participation by facilitating self-reflection and goal planning. An accompanying instruction manual for youth work practitioners guides professionals through the tool and emphasises the importance of prioritising young people's voices while they work through their reflective tasks. A pilot study of this tool found that it was usable and facilitated strengthening of young people's autonomy as well as meaningful participation.

Limitations

It is well-established that youth work scholarship is limited by a lack of documentation and synthesis of practice-oriented knowledge (Moensted, Day & Buss, 2020). Veerman & Van Yperen (2007) partially attribute the paucity of experimental studies in youth work academic literature to difficulties associated with evaluation of non-standardised interventions that characterise much youth work practice. These gaps in available literature preclude this summary from being an exhaustive overview of available youth work interventions and programs that foster agency and empowerment. It is highly probable that many additional, and effective, youth work interventions operate to foster agency and empowerment in young people, but that these interventions have not been evaluated or identified in our searches of academic databases, grey literature and stakeholder submissions. These deficits in youth work scholarship are particularly pronounced for youth work targeting Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people, and CALD youth more generally.

Additionally, there are definitional inconsistencies and ambiguities surrounding concepts such as agency and empowerment. These terms are variously defined and measured in the literature which precludes comprehensive review of the way these processes and outcomes are realised in youth work practices and programs. Similarly, as noted above, many interventions may indirectly foster agency and empowerment in participant youth but not necessarily report on these as outcomes or substantive processes.

Conclusion

Youth work is increasingly moving beyond a deficit-oriented, risk-averse approach to support of young people and instead giving primacy to youth participation in decision-making and processes that shape youth organisations. A content synthesis of literature pertaining to youth work interventions revealed that many programs directly or indirectly foster empowerment and agency in their young clients. Youth work programs and practices that recurred in the literature surrounding agency and empowerment included: relationship-based youth work, youth participatory action research, youth-adult partnerships, youth organising and needs-led youth work. While these programs and approaches vary in structure and format, they converge in their goal of improving youth outcomes by involving youth in activities that are meaningful and promoting equitable relationships and participatory practices.

Moensted, Day and Buus (2020) conducted interviews and a focus group with youth practitioners in Australia to explore the ways in which youth work practitioners are supporting transitioning and

disadvantaged youth. The authors found that three recurring themes in youth work practice emerged: 1) having an ecological focus; 2) encouraging personal agency; and 3) fostering alternative possibilities. These three concepts capture much of the above synthesis of youth work interventions that are relationship-based, and that foster agency and empowerment.

Section 5 - Highlighting good practice in NSW

Introduction

This document highlights good practice that is currently happening in the youth work sector in NSW. The programs and interventions discussed exemplify practice that fosters agency and empowerment in young people aged 10-24 years.

Background

This document forms part of a broader evidence scoping review of youth work interventions that foster agency and empowerment for young people. In partnership with the NSW Department of Communities and Justice, the research team at the Research Centre for Children and Families reached out to the youth sector in July 2022 for submissions to include as part of the review. A call out for submissions from youth organisations in NSW was made to gather materials not publicly available and that speak to local work in this space. Youth organisations were not asked to prepare any materials specifically for this research, but rather, to send through relevant existing documents highlighting their programs, practices and approaches.

How have we organised this data?

The team received a strong response from the youth sector, receiving 60 submissions from 17 different organisations, partnerships, and individuals. Information about the types of submissions received can be found in Appendix A. The types of data received ranged from peer-reviewed journal articles to online media releases. The team reviewed these submissions to detect key commonalities between services, and used an iterative process to identify four overarching categories:

1. Services delivering health and wellbeing support
2. Services delivering support relating to community, culture, and connection
3. Services delivering education, employment, and training support
4. Services conducting youth work during COVID-19

Many of the providers featured in this document offer wraparound, holistic support to young people via a range of programs and services that cut across all four categories. Due to the volume of materials received, this document reflects only a proportion of the total works shared by the individuals and organisations who submitted content. Readers are therefore encouraged to follow the embedded links to learn more about the range of services offered by providers.

Key Insights

Services delivering health and wellbeing support

These organisations offer a range of services to young people to support physical, mental health and wellbeing. Though each organisation delivering health and wellbeing support offers very different services to a diverse range of young people, they are all underpinned by the principles of person-centred and trauma-informed care. Creativity is central to the success of the programs run by the Blue Mountains

Women's Health Resource Centre and STARTTS in their respective Artspace and Capoeira Angola programs. Save the Children and the headspace & MCCI partnership both effectively champion youth voice through civic participation activities designed to promote mental health and wellbeing. Project Youth's trauma-informed practice framework serves as an example of good practice for supporting mental wellbeing at an organisational level.

Services delivering supports relating to community, culture, and connection

The organisations and individuals delivering services in this category share a common goal: to foster authentic and meaningful connections with young people and their communities. Each uses a different approach to create connections, however there are some similarities between services. Humanity Matters and StreetWork both use outreach-based street work to meet young people where they are at, in their communities. Humanity Matters, along with Weave, both practice regular community outreach in the form of street festivals or celebrations where young people and communities can engage meaningfully in a pressure-free, informal setting. SSI and WEAVE both honour the culture of their service users by ensuring service-user voice and participation is at the forefront of their service planning and design. Peter Slattery and Soulgen both seek to enhance community strengths through strategic engagement through the provision of workshops and resources to persons and organisations working with young people.

Services delivering education, employment and training support

Each of the organisations in this category provide a wide range of services to young people, which include tailored supports for education, employment, and training. CREATE Foundation, Fairhaven and Southern Youth and Family Services all offer support to young people transitioning from school to independence, providing advice on either further education and training or employment pathways. Fairhaven and Southern Youth & Family Service both also offer supported training opportunities for young people which can serve as a stepping-stone to either employment or to mainstream employment support services.

Services conducting youth work during COVID-19

Organisations in this category worked to adapt their practice and messaging quickly and effectively during the COVID-19 pandemic. The projects completed by the NSW Multicultural Communication Service & SSI partnership and the Northern Sydney Youth Health Promotion team both produced accessible, relatable resources for young people relating to mental wellbeing during the pandemic. The partnership between NSW Multicultural Health Service & MCCI resulted in an effective COVID messaging campaign led by young people from CALD backgrounds as 'COVID Warriors' for their community.

Limitations

The scope of this review of youth work interventions that foster agency and empowerment for young people was limited to those which could generally be categorised as 'early intervention'. This limitation was extended to the submissions received by the team. Categories of youth work that have therefore been excluded from this scoping review include those relating to housing and accommodation, practice occurring in intensive care settings such as residential care, psychiatric wards, emergency departments and juvenile or migration detention centres. These are specialised kinds of youth work which would require their own separate reviews.

Services delivering health and wellbeing support

Blue Mountains Women's Health Resource Centre (BMWHRC)

The Blue Mountains Women's Health Resource Centre (BMWHRC) is a community-based drop-in centre for women, trans and non-binary persons of all ages. The centre offers a range of health supports ranging from traditional and holistic health services from general practitioners to massage therapists, and psychosocial supports such as yoga and knitting groups (BMWHRC, 2022).

Artspace is a weekly program for persons aged 12-25 that runs during after-school hours (BMWHCRC, 2022). Materials for artmaking and craft are provided by the centre for participants to create a safe space alongside a youth work practitioner who facilitates the group and 'holds space' for reflection and recovery (Brooks, Hooker & Barclay, 2019). The program is run at the same time as the weekly health practitioner clinic hours. This programming enables young people to access health services in their own time, at their own pace, should they wish to do so. Importantly, free childcare (Brooks, Hooker & Barclay, 2019) is provided for young parents visiting Artspace to enable them to relax and focus on their own needs.

In 2016-17, researchers conducted a qualitative evaluation of Artspace that highlighted positive outcomes which were "particularly beneficial for those clients who had considerable exposure to social adversity and trauma and were experiencing related serious health impacts." (Brooks, Hooker & Barclay, 2019, p. 391). Positive outcomes identified in the study included improved access to health care which participants may have been otherwise unable to access via mainstream services, and social inclusion (Brooks, Hooker & Barclay, 2019).

Time, trust, and facilitator skill underpinned successful outcomes for participants. Several participants took months to build a sufficient sense of trust, safety and connection with staff and the centre before deciding to see a health practitioner (Brooks, Hooker & Barclay, 2019). During this time, attending Artspace enabled young people to practice therapeutic creativity which supported a shift in self-perception from "person struggling to survive adversity, to someone who can care for others and be a leader" (Brooks, Hooker & Barclay, 2019, p. 396). In this sense, Artspace functions as a safe and supportive space in itself for persons who may not be ready to engage with health care practitioners.

headspace & MCCI (Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra)/SCARF Refugee Support

headspace is a nation-wide mental health service for young people aged 12-25 years old. There are over 150 headspace centres in Australia which offer low-cost or free of charge services (headspace, 2022). MCCI is a large community organisation that supports persons from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds living in the Illawarra/Shoalhaven and ACT/Queanbeyan regions (MCCI, 2022). SCARF Refugee Support is an organisational branch of MCCI that supports humanitarian refugee migrants in the Wollongong/Illawarra area (SCARF, n.d.). MCCI offers a range of services including "aged care, youth development programs, stakeholder engagement, community capacity building, volunteering and training services" (MCCI, 2022, para. 2).

In 2021, headspace Wollongong and MCCI/SCARF partnered on a joint project to create a worksheet resource called '7 Tips for a healthy headspace'. The project involved the recruitment of two teams of

Arabic and Swahili-speaking young people who translated a low-literacy, basic English worksheet resource that had already been developed by the headspace Wollongong youth reference group (submission from headspace and MCCI/SCARF, July 27, 2022).

The goal of the worksheet resource was to address the access gap for information about mental health wellbeing and services among newly arrived migrants and/or persons with limited to no English skills (submission from headspace and MCCI/SCARF, July 27, 2022). Specifically, the resource sought to: "[e]ncourage early helpseeking [and] [e]ncourage the adoption of healthy behaviours to support healthy habits for healthy mental wellbeing" (submission from headspace and MCCI/SCARF, July 27, 2022, p. 1).

The creation and translation of the '7 tips' worksheet resource was a youth-led process, in line with the principles of co-design (submission from headspace and MCCI/SCARF, July 27, 2022, p. 2). Benefits of the project included the creation of a useful and accessible resource for young people from CALD backgrounds and their families, and the empowerment of the young people involved the project.

> One young person commented "I feel so proud that I did it in Arabic, like, I translated something in Arabic" (Mane Collective, n.d., 3:08). The '7 Tips' project won the 'Outstanding Youth Participation' award in the NSW Youth Work Awards 2021, hosted by national peak Youth Action (Youth Action, n.d.).

To read more about work conducted by MCCI, see 'Services conducting youth work during COVID-19'.

Resources

- A video about the '7 tips' project, featuring interviews with members of the youth translation team can be viewed here.

Project Youth

Project Youth is an organisation based in South Sydney that supports young people aged 12-24. Project Youth has three service streams: early intervention; education, employment and training, and housing and homelessness (Project Youth, 2022). The early intervention stream features programs to support social connection, creativity and wellbeing and more targeted programs to support mental and physical health. Psychological supports offered by Project Youth include family therapy and a Dialectical Behavioural Therapy group which runs 5-week-long course cycles for young people aged 12-15 (Project Youth, 2022). Project Youth also offers a physical fitness and mentoring program called 'Kick Start' for young men before school, which additionally provides breakfast and transport to school to facilitate attendance (Project Youth, 2022).

Project Youth have developed a robust trauma-informed framework for practice that informs work conducted across the three service streams. The Project Youth Practice Framework serves as the foundational document upon which the organisation's processes and procedures are based. The Practice Framework features 7 key trauma-informed principles for practice (submission from Project Youth, 7 July, 2022, p. 2):

Safety	Collaboration	Culture

Trust	Empowerment	Peer Support
Voice and Choice		

The Project Youth Practice Framework Roadmap stresses that service engagement is voluntary at all times and that the cyclical model of casework used by Project Youth is "not a rigid and formal process; it is flexible and will always focus on trauma informed principles to promote healing and recovery" (submission from Project Youth, 7 July, 2022, p. 5).

Finally, the Project Youth Practice Standards function as an accountability measure for the trauma-informed practice principles to which Project Youth has committed. Project Youth understand that "the journey to becoming and sustaining a trauma informed organisation is long, complex, slow, dynamic, evolving and multilayered" (submission from Project Youth, 7 July, 2022, p. 3). Thus, the Practice Standards have been designed for staff use to self-audit their practice and to identify areas for improvement and development.

Save the Children

Save the Children is a national branch of multinational aid and development organisation, Save the Children International, which focuses on the provision of support to children and young people and promotion of their rights (Save the Children, n.d.). For its work in Australia, the organisation has recently been renamed 54 reasons, which is a reference to the 54 articles that comprise the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

54 reasons programming targets child protection, family support, family violence support and early intervention programming such as supported and/or multicultural play groups, youth work groups and activities and school-based programs. The organisation also runs a unique program called 'Our Voice' which strives to promote the participatory rights of children and youth to meaningful engagement with their communities in disaster-planning and response contexts (see link in 'Resources' below).

'Journey of Hope' is a psychosocial support program developed by 54 reasons that is delivered to children and young people during school hours. Journey of Hope (JoH) is a "globally evidenced post-disaster recovery program" (Alexander et. Al. 2021, p. 7) which was recently evaluated in NSW schools following the 2019-20 bushfires, COVID-19, and regional flooding events (Alexander et al., 2021).

JoH is an eight-week program delivered by 2 trained facilitators for one hour per week in groups of 8-10 students (Alexander et al., 2021). Different modules have been developed for different age groups to ensure content is age-appropriate, for toddlers through to 18-year-olds. There is also a module for parents and caregivers (Alexander et al., 2021). Though activities vary between age groups, modules generally involve "structured games, stories and creative play" (Alexander et al., 2021, p. 7).

Four key objectives inform the program: the normalisation of trauma, the development of positive self-regulation strategies, the promotion of protective, prosocial behaviours and the reduction of behaviours associated with risk (Alexander et al., 2021). JoH is underpinned by Cognitive-Behavioural Theory principles (Alexander et al., 2021).

Researchers from The University of Melbourne evaluated data from 21 NSW schools running the JoH program from late 2020 to early 2021 (Alexander et al., 2021). Research evidence indicated: "statistically significant improvements in students' report of difficulties in their daily lives, in their attitudes to and relationships with others, and in their use of positive coping strategies, which were greater than natural improvements over time" (Alexander et al., 2021, p. 5). Evidence did not indicate a reduction in the use of negative coping strategies used by students, however this will be considered for future program planning and review (Alexander et al., 2021).

Resources

- A summary of the Journey of Hope evaluation can be found here.
- Read more about how 54 Reasons promotes the rights of children and young people to participate in their communities through the Our Voice program.
- See this link for '54 reasons' child-friendly interpretation of the articles of the UN Convention on the Rights if the Child.

STARTTS (NSW Service for the Treatment & Rehabilitation of Torture & Trauma Survivors)

STARTTS is a support organisation that provides services for asylum seekers, refugees and refugee-like backgrounds who have experienced torture and/or trauma (STARTTS, 2021). These services range from the provision of specialist mental health treatment for individuals and group-based programming, to training and professional development for practitioners and organisations. STARTTS also conducts research and advocacy work to inform sector-wide concepts of best practice and to inform policy makers (STARTTS, 2021).

Two key interrelated theories underpin STARTTS' scope of works:

- the biopsychosocial systemic approach and the complex interaction model. The biopsychosocial systemic approach "recognises that clients from refugee backgrounds can experience trauma signs and symptoms on the biological, psychological and social levels" (Quintero & Naguran, 2021, p. 46).
- The complex interaction model first proposed in 1994 by Aroche & Coello (as cited in Quintero & Naguran, 2021) acknowledges the impact of a multitude of overlapping stressors experienced by refugees and asylum seekers settling into a new country. This cohort must contend with the anticipated stress of settling in a new country, often with a different language and culture, in addition to processing the trauma they have experienced and persistent concerns for family and community they may have left behind. In the context of young people, these significant stressors are further complicated by the "normal" challenges of emerging adulthood such as puberty and schooling.

Delivering programming through schools with high numbers of students with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds enables STARTTS to provide both targeted and universal early intervention supports. STARTTS in Schools comprises three service streams: the School Liaison Program (SLP), child and adolescent counselling and a team of youth work specialists (Quintero & Naguran, 2021). The SLP functions as a

"coordination interface platform" (Quintero & Naguran, 2021, p. 34) between schools and children and young people from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds. The SLP can facilitate referrals into STARTTS programs and services, provide training and consultation support to teachers and administrative staff and assist with resource development, among other responsibilities (Quintero & Naguran, 2021).

The youth work specialist team uses "youth-centred, relationship-based, and collaborative approaches in its interventions and works with clients to build on their personal strengths such as leadership, self-esteem, self-awareness and identity in order to increase participation in the community" (Quintero & Naguran, 2021, p. 36). The team offer a range of programs for persons aged 10-24 years old including camps, after school programs and various sports and creative pursuits (Quintero & Naguran, 2021).

STARTTS 'Project Bantu Capoeira Angola' is one such program whose positive outcomes are supported by research (Momartin et al., 2018). In Capoeira, "[t]he movement gives young people a chance to connect with their own bodies and surroundings within a safe environment" Momartin et al., 2018, p. 155). "[R]espect for self and others, self-discipline and sense of responsibility" (Momartin et al. 2018, p. 157) are core values taught through Capoeira Angola.

> Observations and reports of participants of the Capoeira program indicated "significant reductions in emotional and behavioural problems … [an] increased number of new friendships … [and] improved relationships with teachers" (Momartin et al. 2018, p. 158).

Resources

- The Capoeira study conducted by Momartin et al. (2018) is available for free.
- STARTTS offer a range of programs for children and young people including regional school holiday breaks program, youth camps, Sporting Linx, Capoeira and the South Sudanese Young Ambassadors Program.

Services delivering support relating to community, culture and connection

Humanity Matters

Humanity Matters is a community organisation based in Western Sydney that uses street-based engagement to connect with young people. Street-based engagement is an outreach approach (a form of detached youth work) which involves practitioners meeting with young people "on their turf and on their terms" (submission from Humanity Matters, July 10, 2022, p.). Humanity Matters seeks to engage young people who have become disengaged or disconnected from mainstream services and society. By developing relationships with young people based on trust, mutual respect and participation, Humanity Matters supports young people to re-establish their relationships, community connections and engagement with employment, education, or training.

Humanity Matters uses a 2-stage model of engagement; street-based engagement (stage 1) followed by re-engagement (stage 2) (submission from Humanity Matters, July 10, 2022). Both stages are characterised by their occurrence in the community – the goal of street work is not to redirect young people off the streets and towards centre-based activities (Ellerton, 2020). Rather, it is to shift their engagement from a

disaffected relationship with the local community, to a positive relationship, characterised by prosocial behaviours.

During stage 1, staff meet with youth in locations where they are known to gather (public places such as skate parks, shopping centres, etc) to develop a relationship and build rapport. Once trust and familiarity have been established, staff will work in partnership with the young person to formulate a case plan for re-engagement, guided by the needs and goals identified by the young person (Ellerton, 2020, p. 39). During this second stage of re-engagement, staff work to connect young people to the services they need, which tend to be related to housing or legal issues (Ellerton, 2020, p. 39). During this process of re-engagement, "[a] streetworker acts as the **conduit** between detached young people and their families, education, existing services and the community" [original emphasis] (submission from Humanity Matters, July 10, 2022).

Additional options for engagement and giving back to the community are also available to young people through Humanity Matters' community-held street festivals, serviced by the organisation's 'Humanity United' food truck.

Peter Slattery

Peter Slattery has been working in partnership with young people for 35 years and has amassed a wealth of readily accessible practical tools and resources. In addition to his publications, Peter also runs workshops and training days for organisations and staff working with youth (Slattery, 2022). The central theme of Peter's work is authentic engagement and connection with young people through conversation and relationship-building: "engagement is about… relationship, relationship, relationship" (submission from Peter Slattery, August 5, 2017). Peter argues that the key to youth wellbeing (and human wellbeing broadly) is through "a sense of BELONGING and CONNECTION … [a] strong sense of self and IDENTITY … [and] GOOD SOLID RELATIONSHIPS" [original emphasis] (submission from Peter Slattery, August 5, 2017).

Peter has developed 12 adaptable conversational 'frames' for engaging well with young people. Peter explains that a frame provides "a structured way to have a meaningful and purposeful conversation in an unusual, fun, and at times, a challenging way, so together you can find out how a young person is and what is happening in their life" (2017, p. 4). Applying the frames is intentionally flexible; there is no set length of time for the conversation and importantly, the adult/youth worker approaches the conversation with an attitude of genuine curiosity rather than an agenda to work towards a preferred outcome. Open-ended questions suggested in each frame provide the opportunity for young people to practice reflection and self-awareness.

Resources

- Frames 12 Fabulous Ways of Talking with Young People is available for free as a digital download - https://peterslattery.com/product/frames/

SSI (Settlement Services International)

Settlement Services International (SSI) is a large community organisation and social business that operates in NSW, QLD, Victoria and internationally (SSI, n.d.). SSI work alongside Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities from migrant, refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds to "empower people to change

their lives" (SSI, n.d., para. 2). SSI also provides employment services and acts as an NDIA Local Area Coordinator for Sydney and South-West Sydney. SSI offers a range of programs and services for young people, ranging from domestic violence support, early intervention, multicultural foster care, and the Youth Collective.

The Youth Collective is an initiative which connects youth workers employed by 21 agencies within the NSW Settlement Partnership (NSP) (Swain & Dimond, 2020). The NSP is a consortium led by SSI whose membership comprises Migrant Resource Centres and various community organisations in NSW (Swain & Dimond, 2020). In 2020, SSI conducted an internal review of the Youth Collective, reviewing the years from inception in 2015 to 2018. The Youth Collective has 3 primary goals: to engage youth from migrant and refugee backgrounds in various aspects of service provision, to connect youth workers from different organisations and to conduct targeted advocacy (Swain & Dimond, 2020).

The Youth Collective engaged local youth from CALD backgrounds in two ways, via programming and youth representation on the steering committee. Between 2015 and 2018, four youth symposiums were held by the Collective, '20voices', which centred on themes of accommodation, education and training and wellbeing (Swain & Dimond, 2020). 20voices symposiums provided a platform for young people to advocate, collaborate and act on issues of importance to their community. The education and employment symposium for instance, led to the development of a work experience program 'Gateway to Your Future' through which two young people were subsequently employed (Swain & Dimond, 2020).

The review also highlighted various challenges encountered by the youth representatives on the Youth Collective steering committee. These related to concerns about the accuracy of community representation, and the quality of the representatives' involvement on the committee, which could have been enhanced by greater scheduling flexibility and the inclusion of professional development training. By conducting a detailed internal review of the Youth Collective and investigating areas for future improvement, SSI has highlighted their commitment to authentic and meaningful engagement with young people, which exemplifies good practice.

To read more about work being done by SSI, see their collaboration efforts with the NSW Multicultural Communication Service in 'Services conducting youth work during COVID-19'

Soulgen

Good youth work practice is underpinned by good youth work research. Soulgen is a social-enterprise consulting service that specialises in fostering community connections and working with young people. Participation through co-design and creativity characterises the Soulgen approach to working with individuals, organisations and communities (Soulgen, n.d.). Soulgen uses an Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) methodology, which Soulgen founder Dimitrios Papalexis, explains focuses on "what is strong within a community and not what is wrong, ABCD is an approach that builds on the strengths and assets of young people and communities and uses those assets as the building blocks for sustainable community development" (2020, p. 6).

In 2020, Soulgen prepared a preliminary scoping report for Rozelle Neighbourhood Centre that gauged community interest in the development of a social enterprise for young people living in the local area

(Papalexis, 2020). Soulgen employed a range of age-appropriate data collection techniques to ensure authentic participation and representation. During the school holidays, "Discovery Workshops" (Papalexis 2020, p. 8) were held for younger children at a local PCYC featuring dance, theatre, and magic. Young people in their mid-to-late teens were involved in the data collection by assisting with public outreach in key local activity hubs.

The report presented findings from a total of 6 organised community consultations and 60 surveys (Soulgen, n.d.). Papalexis reported 4 key themes that emerged from the consultations: "the environment and sustainability … social connection and solidarity … sport and creative activities [and] employment and volunteering" (2020, p. 3). From these themes and discussions, the idea of an environmentally focused social enterprise café emerged. A café would integrate elements of all four of the themes identified as a flexible, multipurpose space, which would successfully reflect the goals and the needs of the local community.

StreetWork

StreetWork is a North Sydney based organisation that provides early intervention support and prevention services to young people (StreetWork, n.d.). StreetWork provides tailored support to persons between the ages of 11-18 years old to address mental health and substance use concerns, school absenteeism, homelessness and criminal justice system involvement (StreetWork, n.d.). StreetWork's scope of services comprise 3 key areas: outreach services, skill building programs and the Kickstart Mentoring Program. Outreach services range from 'soft' engagement opportunities such as after-school barbeques to the 24/7 availability of a volunteer police advocate to support young people who have been arrested (StreetWork, n.d.). Skill building programs offered by StreetWork include urban art programs, an anger management fitness class, sailing and weekly hip hop classes.

StreetWork's Kickstart Mentoring Program is a 1:1 service that pairs a young person with a mentor who provides advice and support (submission from StreetWork, July 25, 2022). In each mentoring partnership, a contract and case plan are formed between the mentor and the mentee, to guide their work in partnership towards improved outcomes for the mentee (submission from StreetWork, July 25, 2022). Establishing a positive connection between a mentor and mentee is key to a successful mentoring partnership. Each partnership is created by "focusing on the needs of individuals … [to] match young people with the most compatible professional youth case worker" (Huber Social, 2021, p. 7). In addition to the provision of casework and referrals to specialist support services, Mentors provide "positive role modelling of consistent behaviours, providing boundaries and through positive reinforcement with the aim of empowering young people to make good choices" (submission from StreetWork, July 25, 2022).

Resources

- Youth worker Tyson discusses the StreetWork Kickstart Mentoring program in this video.
- CEO Helen Banu discusses StreetWork in this video.

Weave Youth & Community Services

Weave Youth & Community Services is an organisation based in Sydney and Southeast Sydney that provides "a way up and a way forward for children, young people, women, families and communities facing complex

social situations" (Weave, 2022, para. 1). Weave offers a range of supports that are community-led and trauma-informed, with programming that targets poverty, substance use, family violence and mental health (Weave, 2022). Types of support range from community development projects and early intervention supports such as social and creative activities to more intensive supports such as casework and counselling.

Although Weave is not an Aboriginal owned business, 66% of Weave service-users identify as Aboriginal (Weave, 2016, p. 3). As an organisation, Weave is deeply invested in empowering the local Aboriginal community which they have sought to achieve through the integration of community voice at all levels of service provision (Weave, 2016). Clients and members of the community are given opportunities to "become actively involved in Weave to shape the kinds of services that are delivered and how they delivered" (Weave, 2016, p. 10). This involvement takes several forms, ranging from leadership and volunteering positions to the hosting of community celebrations and meetings with Elders (Weave, 2016). By hosting or facilitating community events and celebrations, Weave provides an informal platform for gathering feedback and ideas from the community about any concerns or suggestions about service delivery.

> Aunty Marcia Ella-Duncan OAM (Weave, 2017, 1:34) explains that "while we might be running a stall or running a little competition or face painting … they're capturing that information and bringing it back into the service and saying 'hey, how can we do this?'"

Work conducted by Weave in partnership with service users is informed by a deep contextual knowledge of the local community, Aboriginal culture, and the effects of colonisation on culture. Staff are actively encouraged to spend time in the community to gain this knowledge and to build trust and rapport (Weave, 2016).

> Previous Weave CEO Shane Brown explains that (Weave, 2017, 3:00): "[f]or organisations that are delivering services in communities they're not part of you need to get out into the community, and you need to meet the gatekeepers … When you're embedded in the community and when you're trusted, you can be available when crises happen."

Resources

Weave has a large range of videos providing insights into their service, including the following:

- Connecting With Community: A Weave Case Study for the NSW Mental Health Commission: link
- Providing trauma-informed care: A case study of Weave Youth and Community Services: link
- Stories of Lived Experience: link
- Empowering Young People: A Weave Case Study for the NSW Mental Health Commission: link

Services delivering education, employment and training support

CREATE Foundation

CREATE Foundation is the national consumer body for children and young people with a lived experience of out-of-home care (CREATE Foundation, n.d.). A major component of the Foundation's work is to support young 'care-leavers' aged 15-25 in their transition from care to independence. To this end, CREATE has developed CREATE Your Future (CYF), a suite of workshop modules designed to equip young people with the knowledge and skills they need to thrive. The CYF program is a much-needed resource for young people whose learning capacity can be compromised because of trauma and placement instability (CREATE Foundation, 2020). "CREATE Your Future fills in the life lesson gaps that [care-leavers] may have missed" (CREATE Foundation, 2020, p. 12).

The CYF comprises 8 workshop modules that each cover an important area of independent living: health and wellbeing; finances; relationships; civic participation; personal identity; housing; education and employment; and accessing support services (CREATE Foundation, n.d.). The modules are inclusive in design and use an experiential approach to learning to prompt young people to "explore their own knowledge, beliefs and experiences." (CREATE Foundation, n.d., p. 1).

In the employment and education module "Learn to Earn" (CREATE Foundation, n.d., p. 1), young people are supported in the decision-making process about their chosen education or employment pathways. For those pursuing further education and training, CYF offers information and resources for selecting a course and financial support options (CREATE Foundation, 2022). For young people pursuing employment options, the module includes resume-writing support (CREATE Foundation, n.d.). The CYF program also features a detailed website and offers an annual grant scheme (see 'Resources' below).

Resources

- CREATE has compiled a series of case studies for the CYF program: Transition to Independence, Their Story.
- The CYF program has a dedicated website, featuring a range of information and resources for young care-leavers.
- Further information on the CREATE your Future Grants can be found here.

Fairhaven

Fairhaven is a disability support provider and social enterprise based on the Central Coast. Fairhaven is the "largest provider of supported employment for people living with disability on the NSW Central Coast" (Fairhaven, 2022, para. 1) with two key sites: Fairhaven CoPack and the Fairhaven Op Shopping Village and Café (Fairhaven, 2022). Both facilities offer a range of employment opportunities for persons whose NDIS support package includes employment funding. Fairhaven services include NDIS support coordination, social support, various levels of home support and support for school leavers.

Recently, Fairhaven secured a Youth Opportunities Program grant which they used to run a work experience program for students from any school on the Central Coast (participants did not need to have a NDIS package) at no cost to participants (submission from Fairhaven, July 20, 2022). The program was designed to deliver "a work experience opportunity for young people which provides a safe and supportive environment to get a taste of what work life might be like" (submission from Fairhaven, July 20, 2022). The program began during a COVID-19 lockdown via online video conferencing between participants, which led to the idea and planning of the Fairhaven Planter Project (submission from Fairhaven, July 20, 2022).

Once project participants met after lockdown, the group experimented with a range of box prototypes and prepared the workshop area for activity (submission from Fairhaven, July 20, 2022). Over the course of four months, the team engaged in a range of activities required to create and sell a product. The activities included construction, sourcing of materials, and speaking with the retail manager of the Fair Haven Op Shop to discuss selling the planters upon completion (submission from Fairhaven, July 20, 2022)..

> The Fairhaven Planter Project enabled participants to "have input into decision making, balanced with an understanding of some of the basic requirements of being a valued member of the workforce" (submission from Fairhaven, July 20, 2022).

Resources

- More information about Fairhaven's School Leavers Employment Support program can be found on the Fairhaven School Leaver Employment Support page and on Youtube.

Southern Youth and Family Services

Southern Youth and Family Services (SYFS) is a community organisation based in the Illawarra region of NSW. The primary service focus of SYFS is the provision of housing support to young people and families experiencing or at risk of homelessness (see exclusion criteria above in 'Background'). However, SYFS recognises that housing alone is just one element of wellbeing. For this reason, SYFS offers a holistic, wraparound service for young people featuring a range of different programs that are delivered seamlessly to the young people they support (Keevers, 2015).

Research on SYFS conducted by Keevers (2015) illustrates the effectiveness of this holistic approach. Despite SYFS primary service offering being accommodation, when residents and service-users were asked about which elements of their experience with SYFS had the most lasting impact on their lives, "access to stable housing" (Keevers, 2015, p. 4) was not the most frequent response. The following responses ranked from first to third occurred more frequently than 'access to stable housing' which ranked fourth in number of mentions (Keevers, 2015, p. 4):

1. "The relationship with and the care practices of SYFS staff"
2. "Practices that assist young people learn to look after themselves, to become independent and live the life that matters to them"
3. "Experiencing a sense of belonging and connectedness"

Education, employment, and training (EET) services are central both to the development of independent living skills in young people *and* in fostering belonging and connectedness through making friends and connections at their place of work or learning. SYFS offer a number of EET programs including NETWORK which is functorially similar to a job provider service but is tailored to support young people in a strengths-based and client-led way. SYFS is also a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) approved to deliver Certificates II and III in Hospitality. The MET Café is SYFS' social enterprise café with a full catering kitchen that serves as the base of operations for the Hospitality Certificate courses.

Resources

- To learn more about the good practice happening at SYFS, check out their About Us video.

Services conducting youth work during COVID-19

NSW Multicultural Communication Service & SSI (Settlement Services International)

NSW Multicultural Health Communication Service is a state-based service whose primary role is the provision of translated health materials to non-English speaking communities. The MHCS also provides consulting services to organisations to advise on the development and distribution of multilingual health information (MHCS, n.d.). Settlement Services International (SSI) is a large community organisation and social business that operates in NSW, QLD, Victoria and internationally (SSI, n.d.). SSI work alongside Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities from migrant, refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds to "empower people to change their lives" (SSI, n.d., para. 2).

In late 2021, SSI partnered with MHCS to create a youth-led video as part of a Multicultural Community Wellbeing Campaign (SSI, 2021). The purpose of the video was to promote support-seeking behaviours to address mental health concerns (SSI, 2021). The testimonial-style video features 5 young people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds speaking in English, Nepali and Hazaragi with English subtitles (SSI, 2021). The young people in the video; Hala, Shaimaa, Subash, Achol, and Shahida, spoke about the everyday strategies they employed to support their mental health and wellbeing during the pandemic lockdowns (SSI, 2021).

The strategies proposed by the young people in the video included going for a walk outdoors with friend, writing poetry, healthy eating, keeping a routine and using technology to stay connected with friends and family (NSW Multicultural Health Communication Service, 2021). Importantly, the video was created and produced by the young people themselves. The group attended workshops about how to film and edit video using a mobile phone and several participants attended and spoke at the online launch event (SSI, 2021).

For information about more good practice from SSI, see 'Services delivering support relating to community, culture and connection'.

Resources

- Youth Well-being video
- Blog entry from SSI about the process of creating the video

NSW Multicultural Health Service (ISLHD) & MCCI (Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra)

The NSW Multicultural Health Service (MHC) is a service within the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District (ISLHD) whose core function is to ensure that CALD communities have equitable access to public health messaging, servicing, and care (ISLHD, 2019). MHC often work in collaboration with community partners such as MCCI. MCCI is an organisation that supports CALD communities in the Illawarra/Shoalhaven and ACT/Queanbeyan regions (MCCI, 2022).

Together, MHC and MCCI developed and implemented 'Be a COVID Warrior', a project which resulted in the delivery of approximately 40 "interactive and practical workshops" to 880 persons of CALD backgrounds in the Illawarra area (submission from MHC and MCCI, July 27, 2022). Workshops were conducted using a "strength based framework and a whole of community approach recognizing the roles CALD youth and seniors play within their families and their extended communities" (submission from MHC and MCCI, July 27, 2022). In addition to the workshops, the project trained 190 youth 'COVID Warriors' to spread best practice advice about managing transmission risk throughout their communities (submission from MHC and MCCI, July 27, 2022). Key objectives of the 'Be a COVID Warrior' project included increasing health literacy about COVID-19 hygiene, testing and vaccines, mythbusting and the provision of timely, accessible information to communities unable to access English-language resources (submission from MHC and MCCI, July 27, 2022).

Outcomes of the 'Be a COVID Warrior' project included an increase in health literacy among Illawarra CALD communities, increased access to testing and the "[e]mpowerment of CALD communities with accurate information, knowledge and skills to make safe decisions" (submission from MHC and MCCI, July 27, 2022).

Northern Sydney Youth Health Promotion

The Northern Sydney Youth Health Promotion team comprises a group of 12 young people aged 15-24 who are hired on a casual basis by the Northern Sydney Local Health District (NSLHD) as a part of the Youth Health Consultant Initiative (submission from the Northern Sydney Youth Health Promotion team, July 15, 2022). The team play an active role in developing and evaluating various youth health initiatives in identified youth health priority areas including "tobacco, alcohol and other drugs, nutrition, physical activity, healthy relationships, as well as emotional, social and mental wellbeing." A recent example of targeted public health messaging developed by the team, for a teen audience, is the 'Rethink Energy Drinks' infographic.

The Youth Health Promotion team also assist with the provision of advice as representatives of the local youth demographic in Northern Sydney: "[y]oung people are experts in their own lives, so it is vital they are meaningfully involved in the design and delivery of health care that affects them" (submission from the Northern Sydney Youth Health Promotion team, July 15, 2022).

During Youth Week 2020, the Youth Health Promotion team did a "Twitter Takeover" of the official NSHLD Twitter handle (NSLHD, n.d.) and disseminated multiple resources, including a timely infographic titled Practical Tips to Deal with Self Isolation (linked below in 'Resources). The resource included the following 8 tips (Northern Sydney Youth Health Promotion, n.d.):

- Stay connected
- Embrace alternatives
- Maintain routine
- Be open (to receiving mental health support)
- Stimulate your brain
- Be active
- Get cooking
- Things to avoid (alcohol, drug and excessive screen time)

Resources

- Practical Tips to Deal with Self Isolation – infographic by the Northern Sydney Youth Health Promotion Team.

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