

Youth work as a preventative health promotion response to the social determinants of health

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What young people tell us



**There is nowhere
safe to go**



**Foróige is where I
feel listened to**



**Concerns about cost
of living, education
pressures and local
opportunities**

Why this matters?



Social determinants strongly influence health outcomes

Health is shaped by more than individual choices.



Poverty, education, housing and safety affect wellbeing

Social and structural determinants influence wellbeing.



Early intervention can reduce long-term health inequalities

Health inequalities emerge early in life; young people experience these differently depending on circumstances.

Understanding the Social Determinants of Health



Income & Poverty



Education



Housing & Environment



Community Safety



Social Inclusion



Access to services



These determinants influence opportunities, wellbeing and future outcomes

Why Foróige?

"To enable young people to involve themselves consciously and actively in their own development and in the development of society"



Participation



Empowerment



Relationships



Inclusion



Youth Voice

Youth work through a health promotion lens

Youth work provides:



**Trusted
relationships**



**Safe supportive
environments**



**Opportunities
for
participation**



**Community
connection**



**Skill
development**

Creating Health Promoting Safe Spaces



Feeling trusted



Feeling listened to



Sense of belonging



**Ability to influence
decisions**



Feeling protected

What safe spaces look like in practice



Practical

- The space is easy to find and access
- Everyone is welcomed and new people are introduced
- Guidelines for behavior in the space are co-designed by young people
- Adults are friendly, welcoming and approachable
- Staff know the individual names of the young people and address them by name
- Conflict, if it arises, is dealt with promptly and appropriately



Physical

- Foróige Charter of Rights and the Foróige Child Safeguarding statement are clearly displayed
- The space isn't overcrowded
- It is comfortable – heat, light, furnishings, clean, etc.
- Young people are consulted, and are involved in, decorating the space
- As far as possible, spaces are accessible to all
- There are colourful posters, pictures & graphics on the wall reflecting the use of the space
- As far as possible, posters and important information is available in a variety of languages



Other

- Young people are consulted on and contribute to, making the rules for the space
- Young people are regularly asked 'is this a safe space for you?' and further improvements that can be made

How youth work improves health outcomes

Social determinants of health



Youth work response



Protective factors



Health & wellbeing outcomes

Youth work as a bridge between young people and systems

Amplified lived experience

Bringing the direct voices and realities of young people to the forefront of systems.

Identify needs

Pinpointing specific gaps and requirements through professional engagement.

Inform services & support participation

Ensuring services are responsive and young people are active agents in decision-making.



The Ottawa Charter & Youth Work

Ottawa Charter Action Areas

Create Supportive Environments

Strengthen Community Action

Develop Personal Skills

Reorient Services

Build Healthy Public Policy

Youth Work Alignment

Safe youth space

Youth participation

Leadership & resilience

Prevention & Early Intervention

Youth voice informing decisions

Key Takeaways

Youth work goes beyond supporting those experiencing social determinants of health.

It proactively creates conditions that protect wellbeing and promote health before difficulties become entrenched.

Youth work contributes to improved outcomes by addressing social and structural determinants through relationships, participation, and connection:



Improved wellbeing



Stronger protective factors



Greater equity



Reduced health inequalities