Promoting Quality in Intercultural Youth Work:

12 Steps to Good Practice

Phase II

Exploring Intercultural Youth Work in the City of Dublin
Picture on cover: 2 Ladybirds in a three legged race
Credit: Irish Girl Guides

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Foreword

This resource was devised as a guide for youth workers and volunteers to promote intercultural youth work across the youth sector in Ireland. It is a guide that any youth service, club or project can use to become a more inclusive service, to reach young people in the local community from minority ethnic backgrounds and ensuring those young people feel welcome to return as regular participants.

The resource is laid out as ‘12 Steps to Good Practice in Intercultural Youth Work’. Each step covers a different aspect of youth work from the practicalities of creating an inclusive environment in your organisation (e.g. Step 2 – Space & Environment) to effectively monitoring the impact of your work (e.g. Step 11 – Monitoring and Evaluation). Each step contains a description of what your youth organisation can do, together with methods and good practice examples from other youth work organisations, additional resources and training to consult as necessary, and a list of indicators to measure how you are doing, and how you can go further. In order to be a guide for the whole youth sector in promoting intercultural youth work, the ‘12 Steps’ guide uses the term ‘your organisation’ to refer to all projects, clubs and services within the youth work sector.

The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) devised the ‘12 Steps’ guide based on positive examples of intercultural youth work. The 12 Steps are not laid out in any particular order of importance. None of the youth work organisations we feature went through each Step from 1 to 12 in full or in order. The steps are very much an ideal scenario of what your organisation can achieve. In reality, many services, projects and clubs will fulfil some of the 12 Steps, but not others. Some of the steps you may already have attained and some of the Steps might be reached easily in your organisation or with your group. In some cases, you may choose to adopt some of the practices in a particular step, but not all of them. Other steps may become long-term goals for your organisation and a means to map out the direction you wish to take over the coming years.
In creating this resource, we interviewed 7 individual services, projects and clubs, from different youth work organisations in different parts of Dublin – ranging from inner city projects to organisations with a national remit. Each featured organisation reflects different practices in youth work, but all have led on an intercultural approach for several years. The organisations, their workers and volunteers have done this in different ways, but always by focusing on the needs of each young person, and finding ways to reach out and include young people from minority ethnic communities in the local area.

NYCI would like to thank all youth services, clubs and projects in Dublin who participated in the writing of this resource, for their time, their feedback and the use of their photographs.
Description of the 7 featured youth work organisations

NYP2, North Inner City Neighbourhood Youth Project, (HSE)

NYP2 (Neighbourhood Youth Project 2) works with young people at risk in the Summerhill area of North City, Dublin. It was established by the Health Service Executive (HSE), as an integral element of the family support services in the North Inner City area. NYP2 tries to cater for the physical and personal development, emotional and educational needs of young people between the ages of 11 and 18. The aim is to try and build the self-esteem and confidence of the young people through reflection on the personal choices and options open to them and encourage them to take responsibility for the choices they make in life.

Demographics have changed in this area over the last few years and 50% of the young people they work with come from culturally diverse backgrounds. They engage with about 120 young people each year. Some will be seen every day while others attend activities on a project basis. Activities include football, dance, guitar lessons and exchanges etc. They have a priority group of 40 young people and everyone in that group has their own key worker. Engagement takes place at many levels – with families, courts, probation officers etc. Each of these young people will have a care plan which is drawn up with the young person. It will focus on their relationships - in their families, within their communities and with themselves. It will look at mental health and personal problems. It usually leads to a specific contract which might be about them giving up something - drugs, crime, violence, or self harm etc.
Swan Youth Service, (CDYSB)
www.swanyouthservice.org

Swan Youth Service works in St. Agatha’s, North Strand and North Wall areas of Dublin’s North Inner City. They aim to promote positive involvement of young people in the area by building positive working relationships and acting as a consistent support. They try to create a sense of social awareness among those who engage in their activities, give young people a voice, and encourage participation in the community in a positive and responsible way. They challenge and encourage the young people they work with, helping them to recognise that the society they live in is often unjust and unequal. Through group work they help develop new interests that encourage social, practical and creative skills in the hope that as many opportunities as possible are open to the young people of the area. In keeping with this approach they have increasingly worked with young people and volunteers from minority ethnic backgrounds in the area. Over several years they have explored different approaches to expand and cement their intercultural youth work.

The Base Ballyfermot Youth Centre and Childcare Facility, Ballyfermot, (CDYSB, HSE, DCC, DTF, NDP, FÁS)
www.thebase.ie

The Base Youth Centre in Ballyfermot provides a multitude of programmes, services and activities for children, young people and the wider community. The range of youth work services includes centre-based activities; drop-in, youth café, structured group work, key working, educational and training programmes along with outreach and detached work. In addition to the youth work programme, The Base responds to the various needs of the young people in the area through a teen-parent support programme, youth health programme, arts, music, new media, a childcare facility and community employment programme.
The Base believes in working in a holistic way and in empowering young people to make informed and positive choices about their lives; by providing a safe space where children are valued, and programmes, services and activities are needs-based. Central to The Base’s philosophy are values of empowerment, participation and equality which inform all practices.

**Voluntary Service International (VSI) Dublin, Teenage Programme**

[www.vsi.ie/volunteer/teenage.html](http://www.vsi.ie/volunteer/teenage.html)

Voluntary Service International (VSI) is the Irish branch of an international NGO called “Service Civil International”. In Ireland the focus of VSI is on marginalised youth, encouraging them to access volunteering opportunities through the Teenage Programme. Some separated children seeking asylum in Ireland contacted VSI as they wanted to become volunteers. VSI also organises youth exchanges and residential camps for young people. In general the focus is on promoting volunteerism among young people, and encouraging them to take positive action for change within society.

**BeLonG To Youth Services – Dublin Service**

[www.belongto.org](http://www.belongto.org)

BeLonG To is a national youth service for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender (LGBT) young people in Ireland. They support 12 youth groups around the country, engage in national advocacy and awareness-raising and train teachers and youth workers. In 2011 they began a new LGBT Refugee and Asylum Seeker service and began to develop new LGBT youth services in 3 more locations.

BeLonG To’s vision is for an Ireland where LGBT young people are empowered to embrace their development and growth confidently and to participate as agents of positive social change.
Their input into this resource is based on their Dublin-based direct youth service rather than on BeLonG To as a whole. In Dublin, BeLonG To run a core youth service offering five groups per week, their largest group meets on Sundays.

**Foróige Dublin South**

[www.foroige.ie](http://www.foroige.ie)

As the largest youth work organisation in Ireland Foróige manages staffed projects and volunteer-led youth clubs around the country. A Regional Youth Officer (RYO) is employed to support all the volunteer-led clubs within each geographical area. The RYO supports club leaders to apply good youth work practice through training and mentoring. They also source volunteers for clubs. Their role involves stressing the importance of equality and inclusiveness in youth work and the need to take an intercultural approach in youth clubs. The RYO also ensures other core principles of youth work – such as safety and wellbeing, educational and developmental approaches, and having a young person centred practice. At the time of writing the RYO in South Dublin managed 14 volunteer-led clubs.

**Irish Girl Guides (IGG)**

[www.irishgirlguides.ie](http://www.irishgirlguides.ie)

The Irish Girl Guides is a female-only national organisation offering varied and exciting programmes for girls and young women aged 5-26. They have a strong emphasis on the outdoors, environment, community responsibility and teamwork. The girls’ self-esteem and leadership skills are progressively developed through taking part in the Guiding programme of activities. The Irish Girl Guides actively promote diversity and inclusion and welcomes girl and young women from all walks of life. Their headquarters is based in Dublin.

**Do you have a youth service, project or club you think should be featured on our ‘Good practice’ site? If so, please contact us at: anne@nyci.ie**
Step 1 Organisational Review

An organisational review means your youth organisation should undertake a planning process when adopting an intercultural approach to youth work. This involves collecting information on the demographics of the local area, such as the cultural and ethnic groups living in your community. Your membership form should include details on the ethnic background of the young people attending to facilitate planning. Your aim should be that staff, volunteers and members should reflect the cultural diversity of your community. Research could also include information on languages spoken, cultural practices, religious backgrounds, places of worship, schools and minority ethnic organisations in the community. It is important to map other services in the area, and identify any gaps to avoid duplication. The review should also include an honest evaluation of both the capacity of your organisation to meet the different needs of young people in the area, as well as the openness of staff to adopt a new approach.

Organisational Review in detail...

The primary concern for youth work is the education of young people in non-formal settings and meeting the physical, social, spiritual, emotional, self-esteem, mental and sexual health needs of young people. When targeting a young person from a minority ethnic background, it is important to look at their needs as a ‘young person’ first, and as a ‘young person from a minority ethnic background’ second. It is important to keep in mind the ethos of the organisation, and remain consistent in the type of service you run and what you offer to young people attending. When deciding to actively target young people from minority ethnic backgrounds, your organisation should review your mission statement, guiding principles, and any other policies and procedures which could affect intercultural youth work in your organisation.
Many youth organisations have a defined target group and specific programmes designed to target young people at risk. However, young people can be ‘at risk’ in different ways. Therefore you have to be clear on who you are targeting, why, and how you will respond to the needs of those young people. In Ireland, the life situation or characteristics that render a young person at risk include: being ‘in care’; poverty and/or poor quality housing; family difficulties or abuse; academic difficulties and/or a bad experience of school; involvement in criminal behaviour; and homelessness, among others. Young people from a minority ethnic background may be at risk of the above, and in need of similar supports to other young people you work with.

However, young people from a minority ethnic background may be at risk from other factors related to the reasons why they and/or their family originally came to Ireland, such as uncertainty about their future; isolation; confusion over their identity; suffering from stress/trauma; vulnerable to exploitation; and so on. Can your organisation meet the needs of young people at risk in those circumstances?

NYP2 are one such group who work with young people who are at risk or are marginalised. NYP2 have a very specific definition of neighbourhood. To them it means young people in the neighbourhood whether they have come from outside to attend the local schools or they live locally. With high percentages of the local population coming from migrant backgrounds NYP2 felt that they must start working with this group of young people. They discovered that young people from minority ethnic backgrounds who had recently moved into the community were at risk, but often in very different to the other young people that NYP2 had worked with.
“Our primary aim is to work with young people who are going through the difficult transition from childhood to adulthood. So when the demographics changed in the neighbourhood and young people from all over the world started to go to local schools and be visible on the streets, we felt that naturally enough some of the young people we worked with as a priority should reflect that demographic. The numbers were so significant – in some areas on the North Inner City 30% of the population are people from outside Ireland. And in the local schools 60% are non-Irish. The Home School Liaison Officers would have known what we did, the programmes we ran etc. and we explain to them that we work primarily with young people at risk but we said ‘there must be young people at risk amongst the new population.’

With the Irish kids you could more easily identify those at risk – largely from referrals etc. But it takes time to get to know people and know what their needs are and we didn’t have that knowledge about the newly arrived young people. This point was made very strongly to me by a Home School Liaison Officer, when I said we really want to focus on the most needy, he explained that just by being new to Ireland they have issues, there’s issues of racism, of separation from family etc. and it is really hard to tell who is at risk especially amongst foreign nationals and there would be a number who would be very isolated, have no friends. So we took his advice on board. We only got to know them and got to know their issues after we invited them in. And what we discovered over the years is it takes a while to discover when someone is at risk. Someone can seem fine – they can look fine, be quiet and well-dressed - but be very isolated, depressed and at risk of drug use or homelessness. And then we worked with a number of asylum seekers too.”
(NYP2 Youth Worker)

Some groups of young people are at risk for very specific reasons. Most of the groups interviewed for this resource stressed that young asylum seekers and refugees were a particular group of young people at risk and over time their work had expanded to meet their specific needs.
BeLonG To have a very specific remit in that they work with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) young people. Young LGBT people who attend the service may not have disclosed their sexual orientation or gender identity to their parents or friends so walking into the group can be a huge and scary step to take. Young people can also present with issues of homophobic bullying from school or their community and therefore have very specific needs in terms of support from the youth workers and the peer support gained from the group of young people itself.

BeLonG To found that cultural diversity had happened in their groups naturally with young people from various cultural backgrounds seeking them out. Between 5% and 10% of their membership are estimated to be from minority ethnic backgrounds. The immediate need of these young people is usually related to their sexual orientation rather than to other issues such as being from a minority ethnic group. However, BeLonG To often have young asylum seekers people referred to them who come to Ireland as because of their sexual orientation¹ and in these situations BeLonG To gets very involved in supporting these young people through the asylum process.

“It is more time consuming – involves advocacy, liaising with solicitors, connecting the young asylum seekers with other support services and supporting them within the structures of BeLonG To – both individual support and within BeLonG To groups. But we couldn’t not do it – it’s our job to do whatever we can – we find the capacity to meet the different needs that are presented to us” (BeLonG To Youth Worker)

This experience has led to BeLonG To’s establishment of an LGBT Refugee and Asylum Seeker project. Young LGBT refugees and asylum seekers are often fleeing

¹ The UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) has said: “In many parts of the world, individuals are subject to serious human rights abuses because of their real or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (“LGBTI”) persons have been able to obtain international protection in some countries but not in others. The growing number of asylum claims based on sexual orientation and gender identity, coupled with a heightened awareness of the multiple vulnerabilities faced by LGBTI asylum-seekers and refugees in all stages of the cycle of displacement, has prompted an increased focus on these issues.”
violence and homophobia in their country of origin and they can then experience both homophobia, and racism, here in Ireland.

Foróige started working with separated children seeking asylum living in hostels in South Dublin after they responded to a request from the Health Service Executive (HSE), who are responsible for these young people up to the age of 18. Foróige was running 12 other volunteer-led youth clubs in the region and so had the capacity and resources to respond to this request. They set up two new clubs supported by a paid staff member (the Regional Youth Officer) and Foróige volunteer club leaders. The hostels were closed in late 2010 and the young people were transferred (or ‘dispersed’) out of the Dublin area bringing these clubs to a close.

In reviewing your practice it is important to **adhere to your mission and remain consistent in the type of service you run and what you offer**. If your organisation does not offer what the young person is looking for, you should refer them on to another relevant youth organisation. VSI (Voluntary Service International) discovered that the first separated children seeking asylum they worked with were interested in carrying out voluntary work and a number chose to join them with that motivation in focus. However, as more and more joined through ‘word of mouth’, there were different expectations of what activities VSI might offer.

“Over time we realised that we offer a particular service and some of the young people getting involved were getting involved because it involved something, an activity, but they weren’t necessarily that motivated about the activity itself.... We’re still a very particular type of organisation. We’re not about art or GAA so we don’t want to stretch ourselves too far outside our own ethos and aims and goals and activities... We realised probably the ideal way to go is to actually start working with other organisations through partnership projects. It’s proven quite successful with ECO-UNESCO as our partner organisation in an Easter project. We realised that just because they’re from the ‘target group’ and they’re marginalised doesn’t mean they have to join our activity.” (VSI Teenage Programme Coordinator)
VSI is now investigating options for how young people could move on to other relevant youth clubs and organisations, if they wish, and is looking at the possibility of doing this through a peer-education system which would empower the young people as well.

Similarly, if your focus is on those most in need it is important to have a partnership relationship with a neighbouring youth service to refer young people to so that the varying needs of young people in the area can be met.

“At first we had very small numbers and then we started getting very large numbers and we had to start looking at how to manage this and not to lose the priority ones. We stress to the Home School Liaison staff that we run a specialised service – we aren’t the local youth service. But we have a very good relationship with Swan Youth Service so the kids who aren’t at risk can go there.” (NYP2 Youth Worker)

Swan Youth Service had the capacity and interest to include young people from minority ethnic backgrounds in their youth service and to set up new programmes to respond to some of their identified needs.

It is important to determine what the specific needs of the young people are and to see if and how you can meet those needs. In 2004 in Dublin’s North Inner City the FNYPAR (Foreign National Young People At Risk) working group was set up to look at the needs of young foreign nationals in the area.

“In 2005 there was a FNYPAR seminar held and there were a number of young people who spoke at that seminar and there were a couple of staff from here at it. And really it was the impact of hearing those young people speak that drove us into thinking that we needed to start working with young international people. We asked them to come down as a group on a drop-in basis at first. It was about us all
getting to know each other first. Then we also had referrals as people came to know of our work – from HSE, and from schools. We made a stand that we should target anyone in the area and that included anyone coming into the area to the schools. That did sometimes mean that we were working with people who were coming from well outside the immediate area. And we did have to consider that in terms of activities – we couldn’t have people going home late at night into possibly unsafe areas.” (Swan Youth Service Staff Member)

Following a seminar in October 2008 with international young people living and/or attending school in the area, and in consultation with the young people involved in FNYPAR that Swan Youth Service and NYP2 together developed a Saturday morning international club. In direct response to what the young people themselves requested it focused on increasing the social networks of these young people, as well as giving opportunities to share together on particular issues – like settling in etc.

It was through the FNYPAR that NYP2 and Swan Youth Service became more aware that young asylum seekers and refugees were a particular group of young people at risk within a wider group of at risk young people. In time, the specific needs of individual asylum seekers and refugees became more apparent and each of the organisations responded to identified needs as they emerged. They each developed personal and organisational expertise in working with these young people, becoming involved in advocacy and support at many levels.

Young people from a minority ethnic background are not necessarily ‘at risk’ but youth organisations can be a fantastic opportunity for settling into a new community, providing personal welfare and wellbeing; support in education and improving English; self-esteem programmes; intercultural and international activities; exchanges and recreational activities, such as issue-based programmes (for example, justice, social awareness, development education). The Base in Ballyfermot decided to do research on the needs of what they described as the
‘invisible residents’ in their community. They were aware that a number of families had settled in the area from minority ethnic backgrounds but these families were not engaging in local community initiatives. The Base approached local schools who identified the need for language support and confidence building for the younger age group (5 to 9 years old) so they set up an interactive English language project using youth work approaches with the support of an English support teacher and an artist. This introduced the young people and their families to the organisation and other activities they have on offer. It also introduced staff to the practice of working with a culturally diverse group.

**Youth organisations often seek to respond to the needs of the wider local community.** One of the needs that NYP2 and Swan Youth Service have identified is the need to tackle racism which is very present in their communities. This involves dealing with it on an ongoing basis at many levels – both with the young people directly and at community level in consultation with the Community Police. They insist that it is important to take a long term view and see that the actions they take today are about preventing social unrest into the future.

“There was one day at the bridge when about 200 kids were squaring up – about 70 African kids on one side. It could have been really bad but we were able to deal with it thankfully. But it could have been bad, very bad. The potential for huge problems and for ghettoisation is enormous. I think it’s very important that groups try to engage.” (NYP2 Youth Worker)

Swan youth Service decided to tackle racism proactively by including it as part of their programme of activities.

“This year we ran an integration programme for the first time and it was really, really interesting. It was a particularly good learning process for the Irish young people to look at the topic of racism with the international young people. Looking at personal experiences of racism and discrimination.” (Swan Youth Service Staff Member)
BeLonG To explain that cultural hostility is not something they experience in their work as an organisation. They promote awareness of human rights abuses which would include knowledge of violence toward LGBT people internationally. They would know of nations and peoples that are overtly homophobic and whose laws punish homosexuality. However, BeLonG To staff have noted that the stories they hear from within Irish families are equally horrendous. They also stress that homophobia and intense anti-homosexuality attitudes are not related to any one group, class, religion or community. They say it can appear anywhere and “you never know where it will come from”. In this way their focus is on tackling homophobia and prejudice but they also consistently tackle racism within their youth programmes as well as in the Refugee Project and their work with Traveller support groups.

“Racism and homophobia are not discrete prejudices, many of the young people we work with experience both and so it is our focus to tackle both.” (BeLonG To Youth Worker)

Regular surveys can be an effective way to review your practice and capacity for change. Irish Girl Guides run a full membership survey every 3 years, to see to what extent they have become more inclusive over the intervening period. Their first survey was completed in 2007 and the second in 2010. The questions in the more recent survey were based on NYCI’s ‘Access All Areas, A Diversity Toolkit for the Youth Work Sector.’ One of the things IGG realised was that it is hard to make direct comparisons between survey results as the questions asked in each survey have differed from each other. What is apparent however is that inclusion in IGG is on the increase both with regard to disability and cultural diversity (approximately 4% in each which is at least double the previous survey results).

Some youth groups are set up specifically in response to the demographic make-up of the local area. IGG set up Ladybird, Brownie and Guide Units in Corduff, Dublin 15, which is an area that is very culturally diverse. It is important to collect
data on the minority ethnic communities represented in your catchment area, as well as languages spoken. NYCI would also recommend that an **ethnic identifier is included on all registration forms**, ideally including information such as nationality, ethnicity, religion, place of birth, and language/s spoken at home. It is good practice to ask the nationality or ethnic group of the young person and that of their parent(s)/guardian(s)/primary caregiver(s), in order to plan adequately. Young people over the age of 11 should answer for themselves. For those younger than 11, parent(s), guardian(s) or primary caregiver(s) should be consulted on the nationality/ethnic background of the young person. This can be done on the registration form, in an interview format or through activities. It can also be a good way to begin the needs assessment of the young person by asking how you can meet their cultural and religious needs.

IGG have recently changed their registration forms to allow leaders to more accurately know and understand the demographics of their Unit. Their registration format now includes a question on national/ethnic identity. They have also used the term ‘parent’ rather than mother and father in recognition that not all young people will have a mother and father especially those who live with same-sex parents.

Foróige similarly supports the goal of having a culturally diverse membership and prides itself on its success to date with 5% of its membership in South Dublin estimated to be from a minority ethnic background. It centrally collates data on all its members and sees it as important to have an accurate record of the ethnic identity of its membership so it can determine how culturally diverse it actually is. Foróige is phasing in the introduction of an ethnic identifier question on its registration form and this will be complete by 2012. In the absence of this, the ethnicity of participants is recorded and centrally collated based on staff knowledge.
Belong To, on the other hand, do not ask their young people to fill in forms as they promise confidentiality to allow them to more easily make contact with them. As a result they have to rely on their own relationships with the young people to estimate their statistics on cultural diversity. But in being true to their remit of working with young LGBT people their focus is not on setting targets to increase their cultural diversity. Nevertheless, they do embrace it as a critical factor in their work especially where a need is identified. For example, they have done key partnership work with Pavee Point and helped them set up a Traveller LGBT group.

Your organisation may have an ‘open door’ policy, but does that mean that young people from a minority ethnic background know about or access your organisation? An ‘open door’ policy is often simply not enough. Many young people from minority ethnic backgrounds and their parents will not be familiar with the concept of youth work. They may not know about local youth organisations, where they can be accessed and by whom. In addition, they may not know if they are ‘safe’ places for their children to attend.

In South Dublin, Foróige’s Regional Youth Officer (ryo) had to consider how she might proactively target young people from diverse cultures. Initiatives have included making visits to schools, sourcing volunteers from minority ethnic communities, running events that have an international or intercultural theme, and running media campaigns in local newspapers and affecting change within the clubs by introducing activity packs focused on diversity, inclusion and global justice.

Outreach is crucial for reaching young people from minority ethnic families. For all of the groups featured here the staff didn’t wait for migrant communities to join them, but went to meet them directly.

“Initially we saw kids going by in school uniforms so we went to the local schools. We had to be proactive because they weren’t going to come here to us. We knew the Irish kids might know us, but the non-Irish wouldn’t so we had to go out to meet
them and the obvious way was through the schools. We said ‘we work with some of
the Irish kids who are in your school. And we would like to make it known that we
are here if anyone might need our services. We would certainly be willing to see
what we could do. We have no magic to say we can work with this group or that
we’ve skills around language but we work with young people at risk and there has
to be young people at risk amongst the new local population’.” (NYP2 Youth
Worker)

“They need to be targeted, ideally first as an international group so they become
familiar with the place. Then we look at programmes. It’s really a very slow process
getting the young people involved in other generic programmes that are happening.
We get them involved in volunteer programmes and on other programmes - film,
DJ-ing, etc.” (Swan Youth Service Staff Member)

NYP2 stress that the only way to do their work is in a very planned way – with
programmes planned in advance, together with time slots and target groups
decided and then to individually target the participants – through school visits,
supported visits to the premises, being sure to be there to greet them on their first
day, introducing them to other staff.

“We plan the thing so groups come at different times so we can manage the
resources. We explain that the building space is limited. We’d take one group off for
football when we have different groups. It’s very planned. We know who is coming
and when. And then we prioritise and target individuals. It’s smooth as you talk
about it, but it’s not so smooth when it happens.

We can’t take too many, we can’t have an open door – we know we will get
referrals and we will always offer our services to those people. Some people work
with the easier kids in their communities but our job is the difficult ones, but we
have to accept that our definition of difficult is trickier now. It could be kids who are
isolated or self-harmers. It doesn’t have to be bullies.” (NYP2 Youth Worker)
Outreach is also about looking beyond the country. One very effective way of bringing cultural diversity into a programme initially is to engage with volunteers coming from overseas. NYP2 worked with many overseas volunteers before engaging directly with young people from diverse cultures.

Youth exchanges such as those organised by VSI Teenage Programme are another excellent way that young people can engage directly with people from diverse cultures. Léargas support these initiatives and many of the groups interviewed have taken part in youth exchanges.

Other groups are strongly influenced by international links they have set up. IGG are strongly influenced by their membership in a world-wide organisation which gives them a global outlook.

**Adopting an intercultural focus should involve taking a strategic, planned for approach and deciding what would work best for your organisation.** IGG wanted their membership to reflect Irish society and to realise in practice their ethos of being open to all. IGG had to consider how it could achieve these aims effectively. They decided that since activities are the core part of the Guiding programme they should dedicate time to developing an activity resource pack that would introduce and embed interculturalism into programmes. They realised they would need a dedicated staff member and they sourced funding for a 4 year period. They decided that by supporting, training and resourcing their 1,000-strong volunteer leaders the necessary task of recruiting young girls from minority ethnic backgrounds into local Units would be less daunting.

![IGG Ladybirds displaying the Outreach Activity Pack. Credit: IGG](image)
Assessing and responding to training needs is another important part of an organisational review. Following on from the development of the activity resource pack a massive training programme was established by the IGG Outreach Development Officer (ODO) to respond to the need for capacity building across the organisation.

The ODO also ran open taster sessions for young girls and their parents to introduce them to Guiding. The sessions were held in areas where local Units had room for increased membership.

The aim of many intercultural youth work activities is integration, but it is usually not stated as such. Many groups say that it can be hard to get young people involved in activities that are described as being about integration or intercultural youth work. Swan Youth Service, however, proactively focus on integration through one of their programmes, a programme that continues on from the international club where the international group are joined by Irish young people. This has been very useful for integration in terms of facilitating genuine dialogue that fosters understanding, respect and exchange of knowledge.

“It was really good for getting the young people working with others that they hadn’t worked with before in groups. It was good for the international young people who wouldn’t easily gravitate towards the Irish. And it was really good for Irish young people to understand at a human level what international people experience. They all got on exceptionally well.” (Swan Youth Service Staff Member)

It is important to liaise with other agencies working in your local area, or with your target group. Make sure to fill gaps in services identified and not duplicate the work of others. BeLonG To are stretched very tight and they are very aware of all that they would do if they had more staff. In order to maximise their time they liaise with key groups – social workers and hospitals, and the Gay Health Network.
You may also need to review organisational policies, contracts or charters in your workplace. **Do you have an Equality or Intercultural Policy or statement?** Are there regulations on racist language or bullying? It is important to discuss issues which may arise among staff members. For instance, when can young people speak their heritage language? Will you provide gender-specific activities? How do you identify and tackle racism? (See Step 6 Group Contract; Step 9 Policy Development)
Additional Resources/Training on Organisational Review:

- NYCI ‘Access All Areas’ Diversity Toolkit for the youth sector
  www.youth.ie/diversity
- CSO – www.cso.ie (for breakdown by town with a population over 5,000 inhabitants go to http://beyond2020.cso.ie/Census/TableViewer)
- Department of Education and Skills can provide information on the country of birth of students attending local secondary schools

How would you rate?/How is your organisation doing?

- Has your organisation consulted statistics on the population of local area?  
  YES  NO
- Has your organisation gathered data on the ethnicity of young people using your service?  
  YES  NO
- Does the registration form of your youth organisation include an 'ethnic identifier'?  
  YES  NO
- Does your organisation participate in local inter-agency fora and/or networks in planning?  
  YES  NO
- Has your organisation completed a self-assessment process to identify gaps in your service (e.g. NYCI ‘Access all Areas’ Diversity Toolkit checklists)?  
  YES  NO
- Does your organisation refer young people to other relevant youth organisations as needed?  
  YES  NO
Step 2  Space and Environment

The space and environment where your youth group meets can be hugely important in attracting young people from a minority ethnic background. There are easy and effective ways to make your organisation safe, approachable and welcoming for those from minority ethnic and cultural backgrounds. This should include having regular times and dates for drop-in and other activities. Incorporate visual imagery that is culturally inclusive, use different languages in your lobby areas and promotional material and include maps to your meeting place. Provide a drop-in facility for parents and young people to meet you face-to-face as they may be more confident communicating in English that way than when speaking over the phone. If parents arrive with, or collect, young people take the time to talk with them. Use simple English at all times and provide written notes and reminders as well as verbal ones. Where possible, provide food and music for any events organised. Consider gender issues when groups are meeting in your organisation and especially if you have gender specific groups.

Good Practice in using your Space and Environment…

Most youth organisations are not in control of their environment as much as they would like to be, but all of the youth workers interviewed for this resource found ways to positively affect the spaces they use.

NYP2 is housed in a modern building on Summerhill Parade in the North Inner City. Like most youth clubs in the city the main door has to be kept closed and it relies on a buzzer system for security. Inside the space is warm and inviting. Wonderful smells waft from the kitchen and dining area. A number of sofas give it a homely feel as do the staff who are always welcoming and present. A large room downstairs is a great space for activities. The walls are adorned with photo collages of the many young people who have been involved in NYP2 making it clear that this is a young person-centred space and very culturally diverse, so stressing that it is the individual
young person who matters. To introduce and ease newcomers to NYP2 the staff go
to meet them, mainly to their schools, where they explain what NYP2 is about.
When they have planned a programme in response to the feedback they return to
the school to accompany the targeted young people to the building so they can
become familiar with it. **Space is about trust.** On the first day of the programme the
staff members who have been to the school will be there to greet them and to
introduce them to other youth workers. **Space is also about safety.** NYP2 make sure
to have different time slots for different groups so that potential clashes are
averted.

Like NYP2, Swan Youth Service is housed behind a door accessed by a buzzer
security system. Once inside the space opens up into a very large area that includes
a full sized hall complete with stage, kitchen area, computer room, large basement
for activities along with office and meeting spaces. The walls are decorated with
murals done by the young people. From the outside there is nothing to mark the
space as a youth service, their name isn’t even there. So Swan youth leaders
similarly introduce young people to the service by liaising with local schools and
working closely with NYP2 with whom they jointly run an international club on
Saturday mornings.

The Base in Ballyfermot also has secured doors with a bell provided to gain access
but its façade is completely glass showing a welcoming café inside that feels very
youth and community friendly. Inside, the open plan offices on the second storey
are visible giving a direct connection between staff and the young people in the café
area. The vast window space is painted on by the young people. The privilege to
paint on the windows is granted according to how well a particular group has been
doing over the previous few months so the images change over time. A large wall is
awaiting a Charter of Rights that the young people have been working on together
for a number of months. This will serve as their code of practice for The Base for all
to see and be aware of. The Base also operates outside the environs of their own
space, doing extensive outreach in the community. They jointly run a weekly
detached youth work or street work programme with organisations in the neighbouring areas of Ballyfermot and Cherry Orchard. The youth workers invite the young people they meet doing this work to whichever service/environment best suits their needs. They also work in other spaces to engage with a target group when necessary.

There was a hostel up the road where there were separated children seeking asylum and the HSE Outreach Worker identified that they weren’t engaged in any activities apart from school. The staff approached us to see if we could do something with them. It was going to have to be outreach to start with as the young people didn’t seem ready to go anywhere, so we looked at whether we had a youth worker available and after meeting the group and assessing their needs; we devised an engagement and relationship-building programme 2 hours each week. After 3-4 weeks of outreaching we got them in here to The Base. (The Base Equality Officer)

At BeLonG To one aspect of the work is the transitory nature of the engagement for some of the young people. Therefore, the space and environment they offer is as much about being there for the young person remotely as well as offering a physical space. In this respect the website is hugely important. It is kept user friendly; up to date and relevant. Through the website between 5 and 10 young people decide to come into direct face-to-face services in Dublin every week. Over 30,000 people used BeLonG To’s website 2010, so many use it for information and online support. Because BeLonG To have a national remit rather than a geographical community focus they need to be able to respond to calls and e-mails from young people whenever and wherever they happen. Taking visits and calls in this way can be very disruptive, but flexibility is a key demand of the job and it has to be factored in to
the organisational structure. Suicide prevention is an ongoing task and some of these calls can be emergency ones.

But BeLonG To’s space and environment is also physical. In Dublin BeLonG To use two principal environments – their own building on Parliament Street and Outhouse, an LGBT community space on the Quays. They use Outhouse for larger groups that they cannot accommodate in their own building.

BeLonG To is housed in a Georgian building in a lovely, central part of the city centre. It is entered through an off street door with a buzzer system. There is a BeLonG To sign outside but nothing else to identify it. Once inside, a staircase leads up to a landing from which the young people have to pass through two doors to reach an area that doubles as a youth group room and board room. Brightly coloured couches and cushions – chosen by the young people themselves - make it an inviting space.

The room holds 20 comfortably – which is perfect for 4 out of their 5 regular groups. But more recently, especially after the screening of Growing up Gay on RTE 1, their drop-in group on Wednesdays attracted over 30 young people which had the room bursting at its seams. Their big group which meets every Sunday is held in in Outhouse, which is close by, very open and LGBT friendly. However, it is also an adult space and there is a cost factor in using it so it is not ideal.

Like other groups it is the staff that create the atmosphere that makes young people feel safe, supported and relaxed. BeLonG To describe how the young LGBT people feel their minority status very acutely – and that this dissipates as soon as they become part of the group. If a young person wants to meet the group then a staff member will meet them at a public place – like the Spire, bring them up to BeLonG To and from there to Outhouse – thereby bringing them into the physical space and a safe and welcoming environment in a single process.
When BeLonG To first moved to its current home it already had groups at Outhouse. They were concerned that moving to a less open space would affect the numbers of young people attending. They were also conscious that the young people had developed a sense of safety and trust associated with Outhouse. So it was important to BeLonG To that the new premises were close to Outhouse so that the young people were not taken out of a familiar area. To entice them initially they provided food – cheese, cold meats and bread. This practice continues and in being the same as good intercultural practice it shows that in many ways, by working sensitively with one minority group; groups are already applying good intercultural youth work practice.

All of these groups have stressed the importance of having drop-in spaces. They say that engagement with young people from minority ethnic backgrounds needs to allow for fluidity in how they meet their needs. Some may want the support system that a drop-in offers but not want a programme. Some may take time to develop a trusting relationship with the service.

Other organisations have very different homes.

Like many youth clubs Foróige South County Dublin has very little control over their building space. Most clubs rent space in their local community so deliberately manipulating the space to be culturally inclusive can be difficult. Instead, Foróige look to the wider environment to stress their cultural inclusivity. For example, when they hold regionally based events – such as running a multi-ethnic disco and international quizzes – they mix their more culturally diverse groups together with their less diverse groups. This linking of groups can be very effective in proactively and positively bringing cultural diversity into the young peoples’ and leaders’ environments where it is not yet the norm.

Another way of manipulating their environment and promoting cultural inclusion is to use newspapers to feature their clubs. Foróige have also launched a new user-friendly website. Alongside the media approaches the Regional Youth Officer goes
in person to local schools to talk with the young people to tell them about their local clubs and to stress the welcome that those from minority ethnic backgrounds will receive. Maintaining a sense of trust and safety at all times is important and whenever an activity happens in an unfamiliar space it is Foróige’s practice to bring the young people from the familiar venue to the unfamiliar.

But **space and environment is also about looking at your external image.** Irish Girl Guides, like Foróige and most other voluntary led organisations, do not have their own premises and so the leaders have very few opportunities to influence their space. IGG’s response has been to look to their own wider PR material, uniforms, newsletter and public image to influence the environment and how they are seen. All of their PR material has been changed recently. But when doing so they decided that they would not use photos in a tokenistic way to show cultural diversity, but instead use the best photos they had to depict what Guiding is about as that is the principal message they needed to convey. As a result some of their leaflets show cultural diversity and others don’t, but there is integrity in the decision-making process. IGG also reviewed all of the Guiding publications to make sure they are culturally sensitive and the ODO advocated strongly for change in practices that could act as barriers to participation. This involved changing the wording of the traditionally used ‘Guide promise’ to be more inclusive of more faiths and none.

**Translation of materials is also another consideration.** When a new Guiding Unit was being set up in Corduff, Dublin 15, IGG were aware that the area had a large ethnic mix. In response to the obvious needs and wanting to create the best
environment translations were provided to parents in French, Polish, Lithuanian and Irish to explain Guiding and its value to young girls who get involved.

“Because we only ever meet the people who do join our youth groups we are unaware of how many people can’t find our organisations, or on arrival felt it wasn’t for them but only for ‘Irish’ young people because of the signs and images they saw or even a lack of welcome from staff who weren’t sure how to approach them. Outreach and managing space is crucial.” (NYCI Intercultural Officer)

**Space and environment can be manipulated and managed.** St. Agatha’s Hall, where Swan Youth Service is housed, had an interesting cross cultural experience one Halloween. Having decorated the hall with Halloween decorations they realised that the images were seen very differently by some members of the African community who used the shared space. (Witches are considered to be real entities and very powerful for many Africans and images of them can be taken seriously.) St. Agatha’s Hall did not want to upset anyone, but nor did they want to deprive the young people of their Irish tradition.

“It was really interesting at Halloween. We had the hall festooned in ghosts, ghouls, skulls and spooks – we would have been holding a disco. And there are African groups – both adults and young people - who use this building as a community space. And this was a big no no for them. It was very serious. And some parents made it an issue. What could we do – just take it down when the Africans were coming, then put it up, take it down, put it up again to keep everyone happy.” (Swan Youth Service Staff Member)

**Space is fluid.** Swan also point out that space is not always about rooms, it’s as much about shared spaces in a building – such as the seemingly functional space of the kitchen, corridors and stairways. They describe how work happens in those undefined but shared spaces where people meet and interact more casually.
There’s also a lot of softer work that goes on in the corridors and other places. Say for instance the international group is in the hall and they will move down to the basement and the Irish kids might say – what are they doing here in ‘our’ space. And we can challenge that. And the kitchen is the hearth of the house here and we don’t distinguish between staff and young people – so there is softer stuff happening – it’s about ownership of this service being for everyone– always subtly sending out the message that this is everybody’s space. (Swan Youth Service Staff Member)

Voluntary Service International deal with fluid spaces all the time as they change locations with each project. VSI are usually in residential settings. The young people make these settings their own by choosing the music and entertainment, cooking their own food, and often having culture evenings. Sometimes imagery and posters are used – especially in youth exchange projects.

**Environments evolve over time.** In the past NYP2 invited all the young people who came into the building to write ‘welcome’ in their own languages. However, as cultural diversity became the norm NYP2 were keen to stress that it is actually a space that is about an Irishness that is diverse, all encompassing and does not alienate or segregate. For example, most of the native Irish young people who attend are experiencing many difficulties in their lives and are frequently exposed to prejudicial attitudes that can surface and cause friction. Similarly there can be friction between ethnic groups. Stressing the ‘internationality’ of the space has become more important.
“At different times we would have done things to make it look culturally welcome. At one stage we had welcome in different languages and any new kid who came we had their language included. Then as those wore off we’d have something else – like at the world cup we had flags from different countries. But we don’t go overboard because I now put it that we are the Irish group – when we go away abroad we are Irish so yes you might be Chinese, but you’re also Irish. And we might be lots of different things; we’re international, we’re Dublin, we’re whatever.” (NYP2 Youth Worker)
Additional Resources/Training on developing your Space and Environment:

- Practical Guidelines for doing Intercultural Youth Work
  
  www.intercultural.ie or www.intercultural.ie/practice_guidelines

- NYCI ‘Access All Areas’ Diversity Toolkit for the youth sector
  
  www.youth.ie/diversity

- NYCI flyer on Intercultural Youth Work (with sections translated into 8 languages)
  
  www.intercultural.ie/content/intercultural-youthwork-flyer

How would you rate?/How is your organisation doing?

- Is your space welcoming to young people from different ethnic backgrounds?  YES  NO

- Are staff members and volunteers especially welcoming?  YES  NO

- Do you have signs in different languages?  YES  NO

- Do you have visual imagery that portrays cultural diversity (posters, flags, photographs)?  YES  NO

- Is your information clear and fully explanatory to newcomers (dates, location, contact details, who can attend, costs etc)?  YES  NO

- Do you have a drop-in facility for young people and their parents to access information?  YES  NO
Step 3 Staff and Volunteers – Attitude and Commitment

The attitude of paid staff and volunteers is crucial in adopting an intercultural approach to youth work. Staff and volunteers should always be open and friendly to everyone. They must have access to training and support services. 'Buy-in' and willingness from all is fundamental, as well as leadership from management in promoting intercultural youth work. When working with young people from diverse cultural backgrounds, it may be necessary that a trusted, known adult from a minority ethnic community is present, at least initially so it is important that some paid staff and volunteers come from minority ethnic backgrounds themselves.

It is also important that staff members are clear on appropriate terminology to use when talking about young people from minority ethnic backgrounds. Youth work staff should establish clear boundaries in terms of relationships with the young people, language used, explaining clearly what youth work is and what your organisation provides as young people may perceive the relationship with staff as personal rather than professional.

Good Practice with staff and volunteers...

Many youth workers and volunteers already have the skills required to work with young people from minority ethnic backgrounds. Good intercultural practice involves good youth work practice. Attitudes of inclusion, openness and respect are the principal ingredients needed for intercultural youth work. Many youth workers and volunteers will have practical experience of working with young people from different backgrounds and cultures, with specific identities and individual needs. Similarly they will have some cross-cultural skills, if only from travel abroad or day-to-day social experiences. These skills should be encouraged and promoted...
as those needed to work with young people from minority ethnic backgrounds in your community.

For instance, NYP2 youth workers were skilled at managing young people with very different personalities and different behavioural norms and bringing them together in the same activities. They were able to adapt those same skills to bring young people from diverse cultures together and they managed any potential conflict in the same proactive and successful ways they use with their other groups. Because NYP2 had also been involved in the past in international volunteer programmes (such as the European Voluntary Service [EVS]) the staff were also familiar with working with people from different cultural backgrounds.

“We’ve always had international staff, EVS volunteers and students. We had a deliberate policy to bring volunteers in from all over the world. We had international staff, Europeans and Africans over the years before we ever had international young people.” (NYP2 Youth Worker)

Similarly BeLonG To staff are familiar with working with young people who experience a minority status. And while staff recognise that working with young LGBT people from diverse cultural backgrounds could take more time – especially in the case of asylum seekers - they see it as “just part of my job”. And while they don’t have specific intercultural training they stressed “I don’t know everything. It’s about just going out and looking for it.” When this has arisen BeLonG To have looked to other support services to fill their knowledge or skills gap.

“We can’t just work in our own area (of expertise) so we wouldn’t have questioned doing work related to interculturalism. We couldn’t not do it – it’s our job to do whatever we can – we just find the capacity to meet the different needs that are presented to us” (BeLonG To Youth Worker)

**Buy-in from the staff and volunteers** in your organisation is very important, and they must be encouraged and willing to work with young people from a variety of
national and cultural backgrounds. Reluctance of staff can be due to a lack of training or confidence in working with those who they perceive to be ‘different’. Be sure to talk through issues regularly at staff meetings; record details of what works and what doesn’t; make sure everyone has the opportunity to voice concerns and learn from colleagues.

“Rightly enough the staff would voice concerns. They don’t want to lose our priority work with the Irish kids.” (NYP2 Youth Worker)

“My sense is that intercultural work is still identified with certain staff. We have tried to spread it out; rotating staff on the international club has worked well. But where health and development education is part of the brief of all staff members, the intercultural work isn’t on the brief for everyone. There are still youth leaders who don’t get it. It’s the social analysis issue that they don’t get. So it’s about the way you lead and drive things. It has to become topical. To embed something across the organisation we would keep something very alive for all the teams at a particular time. You have to push it and name it. Attitudes toward inclusion – on LGBT issues, gender as well as cultural awareness can vary and sometimes we would struggle with different attitudes that we observe. But staff do park their issues for their work. I think it’s important to say that dealing with attitudes amongst the staff is alive and on the agenda. We are not avoiding the awkward or difficult bits.” (Swan Youth Service Staff Member)

The Irish Girl Guides travelled to every part of the country to train local leaders on how to make a Unit more culturally diverse. This resulted in 700 out of their 1,350 leaders receiving training on intercultural issues and how to use their outreach activity pack. NYCI also carried out training with key IGG staff and committee members.

However, like all volunteer-led services the attitude and commitment of volunteers in IGG to do outreach and inclusion work varies. There are a number of leaders who
will say “we have always done it this way” and resist change and others who say they are currently full and they could target proactively only if they had another volunteer leader to support them. Others are very keen to embrace a more inclusive way of working and a recent survey shows that 70% of IGG Units record some form of inclusion – either cultural diversity or working with young girls with a disability. The training, activity pack and articles in every edition of the Guiding magazine, Trefoil News, seek to challenge and encourage leaders. IGG also works with and trains young leaders who will then go into Units and affect change where it is needed. They also plan to run a full weekend of leadership training looking at equality, diversity and tackling racism.

Foróige volunteers, similarly, come from within the community and they bring with them a variety of attitudes and differing capacities to make commitments. For some the commitment they are asked to give is just one evening a week which in turn limits the time Foróige would need to promote specific objectives. At times issues have arisen where latent prejudice has been observed. However, through ongoing capacity building and training the importance of cultural inclusion is stressed. It is usually done through District Council meetings at which interculturalism and global justice will be promoted within a wider agenda. It will usually be introduced under suggested activities that leaders could do with their groups. Another way that Foróige stresses the need for an intercultural approach is by stressing its own organisational ethos whereby the leader is clear that their role is to ‘guide, facilitate and mentor so that all young people can participate equally.’ They find that through the leaders training process, just by promoting this approach as fundamental to the organisation that a new leader’s attitudes can be challenged. The important factor
in working with a leader who they may have some concern about with regard to attitude is that the leaders are open to being challenged.

“The heartbeat of our organisation is youth development. Equal participation is a crucial part of that.” (Foróige Regional Youth Officer)

Staff may also fear ‘saying the wrong thing’ or offending people unintentionally. It is important to address the issue of terminology in staff meetings and with the young people themselves, for example, in the group contract. However, don’t worry that you always have to be ‘politically correct’. **Language changes constantly and it is better to ask someone directly what to say.** When in doubt, ask someone in a sensitive and open manner.

**Staff and volunteers need to understand why they are working with young people from minority ethnic backgrounds so that they are all fully committed.** For NYP2 and The Base, their focus is on meeting the needs of community or community members. The presence of minority ethnic young people made them a target in exactly the same way as any other young person in the community. For Swan Youth Service, they took on a commitment to tackle racism which they saw as a hugely damaging force within the community. For Foróige, VSI and Irish Girl Guides it is about making real their organisational ethos of a commitment to inclusion. For BeLonG To it was about commitment to all of the young LGBT community.

Just as staff willingness is important, **leadership from the organisation and management** is crucial when adopting an intercultural approach to youth work. All projects interviewed highlighted the importance of leadership from management on the issue of interculturalism.

**Building capacity in staff and volunteers through training is crucial.** Many staff and volunteers have participated in and received specific training in addition to the skills learned through their youth work experience and through working in communities overseas and locally. Most of the organisations interviewed give training to their
own volunteers and staff as they have the expertise internally. However, some staff may still carry negative attitudes or hidden prejudices, and while they behave in a manner consistent with the ethos and rules of the organisation there is always a concern that these attitudes will be conveyed in subtle ways to the young people. External training may be the way to tackle this. Specific training on intercultural issues is available from NYCI on tackling racism, cultural competency and intercultural awareness. Details of NYCI training courses are available on www.youth.ie/training. For information on other intercultural courses please contact us directly.

Some organisations spoke about doing specialist training with staff. At The Base for example the staff are given training relevant to their role. Reception staff will do role play training on how to manage when a person’s accent can be difficult to understand, catering staff will have training on what food to provide for people of different faiths while youth workers will have training on working with asylum seekers. Much of the training is about setting clear boundaries.

“"I always say you need to know the [asylum] process and the issues but you do not need to know the case and I really stress that with the workers. Sometimes the young person’s care worker would have to bring an issue up that may be private. For example, it’s important to know if there are issues around FGM (female genital mutilation) which would be very relevant to us if we were going to do sexual health. I go through the process with youth workers – what is a separated minor, what’s a hostel, what happens when they turn 18, what’s their status, etc.” (The Base Equality Officer)

All of the youth workers interviewed stressed the need to develop leadership skills within the young people themselves and to encourage them to become volunteers.

Swan Youth Service has a number of young volunteer leaders from minority ethnicities and they say that this is crucial because the volunteers can directly
address attitudes and assumptions that arise much more effectively as they can explain it from their own perspective and knowledge base.

“We are always challenging people around racism. And there’s one young volunteer here from Mauritius and he has a great way about him. He is good at challenging young people’s perceptions of ‘foreigners’. And he got involved in that North Wall group as a young leader and he has had a significant impact on the young people. There have been awful attacks in that area and some of the young people who designed this mural here would be exposed to those racist attitudes.” (Swan Youth Service Staff Member)

Involving adult leaders and parents from minority ethnic communities in your organisation is extremely useful. Organisations recognised that knowledge of their service and youth work in particular may not be familiar to young people from minority ethnic backgrounds so bringing in staff or volunteers who are not Irish is another way to reach out and engage with young people from diverse cultures.

The Base state that the presence of a multi-ethnic staff has been really important in building up trust amongst the wider community.

“In all there are 8 nationalities represented in the staff and that definitely has some kind of an impact. The families are reassured. Also one of our sessional youth workers is a member of the Traveller community. She is very proactive in the community and that breaks down barriers with all attending our services.” (The Base Equality Officer)

A number of Foróige volunteers come from a minority ethnic background. The Regional Youth Officer is responsible for recruiting, supporting and mentoring young people. She puts a lot of time into making sure they are placed well and that they integrate well into the existing youth leader teams.
“Bringing in a new leader at any stage is difficult. They have to gel as a team for it to work. There was one group where I really wanted to introduce cultural diversity and I felt that if I introduced a volunteer from a minority ethnic background it would be a positive move, but the placement had to be managed well – with the right person. It was important that the volunteer would be welcomed fully and, in this case, it worked out very well.” (Foróige Regional Youth Officer)

Recruitment is an ongoing task in IGG who also focus on recruiting volunteers and parents from minority ethnic backgrounds. They are currently running a campaign called ‘Ask 1’ where leaders ask another person to become a ‘Plus 1’ leader.

BeLonG To also describe the advantages of having a leader from a minority ethnic background.

“This has worked in a very positive way as a recent Polish volunteer was able to create a more welcoming environment for a young Polish participant who came to the service. It has also provided links with the wider Polish community and Polish schools where LGBT awareness is now provided.” (BeLonG To Youth worker)

Like NYP2, VSI (Voluntary Service International) Teenage Programme has a number of volunteers through the European Voluntary Service who represent different cultures and languages. According to VSI it is crucial for minority ethnic young people in Ireland to have role-models from different backgrounds in their lives. It gives the young people hope and inspiration for their own future in Ireland. Young men in particular benefited greatly from having a ‘non-Irish male leader’ in their group.

If you recruit volunteers from a minority ethnic background it is very important to support them in understanding their role and the role of your organisation. Many
people do not understand the meaning of ‘youth work’. **Explain all youth work processes clearly.** Refer to NYCI’s flyer on intercultural youth work which explains what youth work and interculturalism mean in 8 different languages (available on [www.intercultural.ie](http://www.intercultural.ie)). All volunteers should receive training covering the work of the organisation, intercultural issues and child protection. Garda vetting is also a process which must be explained in detail to all volunteers. Many groups decide that while a volunteer is awaiting Garda clearance they can still be involved; either working alongside another vetted staff member, or in tasks other than working directly with young people. The Base have also taken a stand on taking on asylum seekers as volunteers.

> “Actually about the Garda vetting, we have developed a practice where we are happy for asylum seekers to have a reference that is a statement of good character because they cannot be Garda vetted because they are outside of the system, i.e. not registered. And no volunteer is ever left alone with young people anyway.” (The Base Equality Officer)

**Volunteers must be supported throughout their work with your organisation.** Do not take on volunteers if you do not have sufficient time or resources to support them in their role.

Volunteers are important but should be recruited based on the needs of your group. A job description can be a very helpful tool for your organisation and for your volunteers in that it explains exactly what you expect from a volunteer and it puts their work in the context of a professional service. However, for some organisations that are mostly
volunteer-led this can be problematic. For example, IGG have resisted having a job
description for volunteers for fear that it might scare them away and their reliance
on volunteers is absolute for the success of their organisation.
Additional Resources/Training for Staff and Volunteers:

- NYCI resource “Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Other Migrants – key definitions”
- NYCI resource “What terminology do I use when talking about Young People from a Minority Ethnic Background?” both available on www.intercultural.ie
- All NYCI intercultural training courses available through www.youth.ie/training and www.youth.ie
- NYCI ‘Access All Areas’ Diversity Toolkit for the youth sector www.youth.ie/diversity
- NYCI flyer on Intercultural Youth Work (with sections translated into 8 languages) www.intercultural.ie/content/intercultural-youthwork-flyer
- Volunteer Centres Ireland www.volunteer.ie

How would you rate?/How is your organisation doing?

- Have your staff members received training on intercultural issues?  
  YES  NO
- Have your volunteers received training on intercultural issues?  
  YES  NO
- Does your organisation provide training for volunteers?  
  YES  NO
- Does your volunteer training cover topics such as understanding youth work, your organisation and the role of the volunteer?  
  YES  NO
- Does your volunteer training cover Child Protection and Garda vetting?  
  YES  NO
- Does your youth group have (or plan to recruit) volunteers from minority ethnic backgrounds?  
  YES  NO
- Does your management committee/board include members  
  YES  NO
from diverse communities?

- Are minority ethnic communities and parents involved in your youth organisation?  
  YES  NO

- Do job descriptions require staff to have an awareness of interculturalism and diversity?  
  YES  NO
Step 4 Responsibility for Interculturalism Assigned in your Organisation

A staff member or team in your organisation should have responsibility for promoting interculturalism in your youth work. This would include planning, making sure you have a code of practice, establishing new contacts, identifying training opportunities, resources and so on. This competency can be part of a staff member’s main tasks and not necessarily a paid separate role, in the same way that responsibility for health and safety, first aid or child protection is assigned. The role may also be combined with the role of Equality Officer or person responsible for other diversity issues in your organisation. The person with responsibility for interculturalism should undergo specific training or have specialised skills on intercultural youth work.

Good Practice…

Interculturalism is often a grass roots initiative in many organisations in that it comes about as a result of working with minority ethnic young people directly. Expertise is built up through experience. Often it is led by someone with a particular interest and as a result the work is largely personality-driven rather than policy-driven. Therefore, leadership from management is very important to focus the responsibility within the wider organisation.

Interculturalism at Irish Girl Guides became assigned within the organisation after the leadership sought funding for a dedicated staff member. For 5 years the principal responsibility for interculturalism rested with this staff member together with support from management. IGG decided that having a core person dedicated to the task for some time was crucial for success. The responsibility for interculturalism will now move to IGG’s newly developed Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee. This is a voluntary committee that has funding attached to it
so that many of the initiatives that have been put in place can be continued and supported. The Committee is also supported by IGG’s newly adopted intercultural strategy and by an intercultural policy that is currently being developed.

In the case of NYP2, while two staff members have principle responsibility for interculturalism in terms of external networking, all of the staff are fully involved. In particular this involvement is ensured through the staff quarterly planning processes and in weekly reviews where all engagements and interventions with young people are discussed and planned in advance.

It is not necessary to have an Intercultural Project Officer. Many organisations choose to **combine the responsibilities for interculturalism with other roles** such as Equality Officer or Outreach Worker. In the case of The Base all staff have responsibility for an intercultural approach, but specific responsibility for interculturalism is combined with equality, anti-bullying, health and child protection in the job description of two staff members. The Base also stresses how much they are supported by their Director who sees interculturalism as extremely important.

Management should try to support any staff member(s) who wish to take on the role of **person/team with responsibility for interculturalism** in your organisation. It is often very effective to support two staff members to work together on this. Staff and volunteers in this role should be supported to participate in additional training on intercultural youth work.

At Swan Youth Service the responsibility for interculturalism is shared between two people. However, they stress that **responsibility should be assigned at all levels in an organisation**. They warn against the danger of it being left to one or two people with others assuming it is not their responsibility. They explained that it can be a lot easier to highlight the importance of interculturalism when the message is clearly conveyed from many levels; in particular, they see a need for lead agencies in the youth sector to drive it and support the work.
“It’s not named in anyone’s role in particular. It’s about the staff understanding that it is everybody’s role. There would be a danger if one person had that role that it would all be left to that person and that would absolve others of their responsibility.” (Swan Youth Service Staff Member)

At Foróige there has been strong support for interculturalism from the head organisation, but there is no one currently named as a person with responsibility for interculturalism. However, at club level there is an onus on individual youth leaders to embrace cultural diversity and to deal with issues of racism that arise. Other aspects of interculturalism rest largely with the Regional Youth Officers who are expected to offer advice and guidance should a cross cultural issue occur. They are also expected to look at strategic planning in terms of recruitment of young people and volunteers from culturally diverse backgrounds. Intercultural expertise from outside the organisation or from internal experts is not usually sought in the week-to-week operation of the clubs. Responses to intercultural issues will usually be handled through local dialogue and ideally with the young people through consultation. Where issues arise, Foróige make their decisions with the welfare of young people being the paramount concern.

If your organisation develops a **policy or strategy**, it is important to **include a section on intercultural youth work and plan for this approach in the future**.

“Having interculturalism mentioned in your policies or strategic plans makes it easier for a staff member to take on the responsibility for interculturalism in their work, because it has already become part of the stated aims of the organisation”.

(NYCI Intercultural Officer)

For some youth organisations, **interculturalism is just one aspect of diversity in youth work**. Many youth projects, clubs and services will also have programmes
which support LGBT young people; young women or men specifically; young people with a disability or young people with specific religious beliefs.

BeLonG To focus specifically on one aspect of diversity so that supporting diversity is the cornerstone of their work. For them interculturalism is not assigned to any one member of staff, instead all staff members have comfortably taken on the responsibility as part of their role. BeLonG To are currently doing a full review of their policy and this will allow them to look at the issue and to consider putting something in writing given the increased cultural diversity within the organisation.

One of the tasks for those staff with responsibility for interculturalism is dealing with cross-cultural issues that might arise. There can often be difficult barriers facing staff while overcoming cross-cultural issues. The most common of these is when organisational culture becomes an additional layer in any cross-cultural dialogue. This is because an organisation will naturally defend their own organisational way of working and its own ethos as well as approaching issues from a particular cultural (usually majority) point of view. In addition it can be difficult for people to recognise their own cultures – either organisational or national so cross-cultural misunderstandings can sometimes remain unrecognised and/or unspoken. These factors can make it more difficult for the minority viewpoint to be recognised and responded to in a way that promotes understanding and solutions.

Another barrier is the time that it can take to work through an issue that needs an intercultural approach. For example, it is not unusual for groups to approach
Foróige with a request to affiliate to them. However, where there are cultural barriers such as faith-based issues it can be difficult to reconcile different approaches.

“Foróige is a very open and welcoming, non-denominational organisation and recently a faith based group in my region approached us to affiliate. They were largely accepting of the support Foróige could offer in terms of developing their youth initiative. I did some outreach work with the group and gave them a chance to consider what support Foróige could offer. However, there was ‘tension’ between what this group wanted – which was a religious based youth group - and Foróige’s position, whereby our organisation promotes inclusion and participation of young people in clubs which have no religious agenda. In the end they declined our support.” (Foróige Regional Youth Officer)

Given time and considerable dialogue the group requesting affiliation might have come to understand all the considerations involved, including the equality legislation under which youth organisations operate. Maybe these issues could be worked through, just as a large number of faith-based youth groups in the country already have. However, the time commitment needed to deal with thorny intercultural issues such as this is often not available given all the other priorities of youth organisations and the limited capacity they have to work within.
Additional Resources/Training:

- NYCI intercultural training, in particular:
  - “Developing Intercultural Policies and Implementation Plans”
  - “How to design and deliver a session on Intercultural Awareness”

- NYCI ‘Access All Areas’ Diversity Toolkit for the youth sector
  
  www.youth.ie/diversity

How would you rate?/How is your organisation doing?

- Is responsibility for interculturalism assigned to a member of staff/team in your organisation?  
  YES  NO

- Does the person/team with responsibility for interculturalism have a task description?  
  YES  NO

- Is relevant training available to the person/team with responsibility for interculturalism?  
  YES  NO

- Has relevant training been completed by the person/team with responsibility for interculturalism?  
  YES  NO

- Does your managers, board of management, headquarters and/or lead agency support interculturalism?  
  YES  NO
Step 5  Involvement of Youth

An intercultural approach to youth work requires the involvement and participation of young people from the cultural and ethnic groups living in the local community as much as possible. Outreach to new communities is essential, and a traditional ‘open-door’ policy may not work as it puts the onus on the young person to find the organisation and know that they are welcome to join. Consultation with young people in the area ensures that the youth organisation is needs-based. In the youth services, projects and clubs featured in this resource, an individual needs-assessment was often completed when new participants joined.

Young people from minority ethnic backgrounds attending your organisation may initially prefer to engage with people from the same background or living in similar circumstances. This is understandable, but the aim of all youth work should also be integration. You and your colleagues must decide how to approach this; how to set up activities and when to mix groups. Talk to the young people when planning this. Consider setting up a 'buddy' system, in groups of 4 rather than pairs, for young people of different backgrounds to work together.

If your current group is quite ‘mono-cultural’, it can be beneficial to prepare them before introducing new members, and involve them in planning for this change. You should explore the needs, interests and own cultural awareness of your group. This will mitigate the potential for tension when faced with diversity. Young people may have dual or various 'identities', especially those of minority ethnic backgrounds; explore this in the group. It is important that every individual is encouraged to be aware of and proud of their own heritage and background.

**Good Practice in involving young people...**

Young people will be drawn to a youth organisation that offers activities which they are interested in. When working with those from a minority ethnic background, the activities you offer can be especially important. Consult with the
young people to see what they would like to do. Many minority ethnic parents will want to see their children doing activities which develop their life-skills and education, and young people themselves are often motivated by activities that develop their talents and abilities. (See Step 7 ‘Activities’)

Involvement of youth is principally about making sure that young people’s voices are heard and that they participate fully. Participation is about young people taking the lead in activities and how something is run.

BeLonG To apply the critical social education model of youth work. In everything they do they are focused on youth participation and leadership and they have set up a structure to support this. The young people run everything. BeLonG To take 15 young people each year through an intense two-day training programme on youth leadership. This is followed with 12 more youth leadership sessions over a year. The training uses both internal and external facilitators. The young, highly trained people then facilitate the groups throughout the year. During a planning session they decide what they will deliver for the following year. Each month the topic changes so each topic is given four sessions which allows it to be covered in depth. Each week, two of the youth leaders facilitate the group on a rotation basis. They have a planning session in advance of the day itself. The youth leaders will support this process and will help them to realise a structured outcome. During the session itself the youth workers will only step in to make sure the work of the day is brought to a cohesive closure. The topics include issues related to interculturalism such as racism. The atmosphere of empowerment and the example of others seems to encourage everyone to take part. The staff say that in their observations a person’s ethnicity does not seem to get in the way of being fully involved.

Swan Youth Service, on the other
hand, who also apply the critical social education model to youth work, have said it is often quite hard to get the young people from minority ethnic backgrounds fully involved and taking their own decisions on programme planning.

“For the international group I often find it very difficult to get them to come up with ideas. It can be hard for some of them to come up with their creative side. They seem to just be happy to be here.” (Swan Youth Service Staff Member)

Involvement of youth in programme planning is a cornerstone of Foróige’s way of working. Young people are expected to make decisions and be active participants. The leader’s role in this is to offer choices, to give ideas and be informative. Like Swan Youth Service, Foróige said that a particular challenge was getting their groups of separated children seeking asylum to be involved in the decision-making process. They loved football and would often choose to go to the cinema but when a detailed two week summer programme was developed there was little take up from the young people. The programme had been developed based on the feedback a caseworker had given. There had been some consultation facilitated by the social work team for this programme. However, despite asking what they would like to do and trying to accommodate them through the programme, the participation remained low.

“I believe that you have to be very creative in a situation like that. You need to see what the interests are and build from that. For example, playing football is acceptable as an activity, but it is trying to identify what else could be fused into a programme. For example, if it has a football theme to perhaps take a different angle that would be interesting, innovative and educational for the young people involved – maybe a sports science model could be part of a football programme. I wonder how a project would have gone if the football interest had been expanded and we had created possibilities for the young people to develop in this area.” (Foróige Regional Youth Officer)
In the Irish Girl Guides involvement is seen differently. Programmes for Guiding are set down already. However, there is vast scope for decision-making built into the structure of Guiding and in the activities. Leadership is an integral part of the Guiding ethos. When Guides reach certain ages they will be given leadership roles in the form of Patrol Leaders and Assistant leaders. The onus is not just on taking responsibility but also invites participation. The Patrol Leaders together should decide the activities they want to do in the coming weeks. Where possible leadership roles will rotate or temporary patrol leader’s roles may be assigned during weekends away. The onus in Guiding is that each girl will excel in her own way so the emphasis is on developing and encouraging each individual. This will mean that each girl’s involvement will differ depending on their own needs and interests.

“It’s about letting every girl shine. You try to bring the best aspect out in each girl you work with.” (IGG Outreach Development Officer)

NYP2 adopt a different approach. They take on the principle role of planning and managing their programme delivery. This allows them to keep the young people safe by defining the specific boundaries of engagement between themselves and the young people, and between various groups of young people. It also allows them to take a stand on issues such as smoking, drugs, sexuality, anything that has a basis in law, including health and safety. This is extremely important given the context in which they work where the young people have specific needs that must be addressed. NYP2 staff will meet young minority ethnic people first at their schools where they explain what NYP2 is about. They ask the young people to fill in a form saying what they are interested in doing, explain the sort of programmes that NYP2 can offer and ask if they would like to get involved. NYP2 also have a close relationship with the Home School Liaison Officers who are aware of specific needs that young people have and they will try to connect those young people most at need. NYP2 plan a programme of activities in response to all the feedback.
To introduce leadership and to encourage participation NYP2 run a variety of initiatives – including the development of Foreign National Young People At Risk group on which there is strong representation from the young people. 15 young people from NYP2 took part in a democracy summer camp in Germany in 2010. They also encourage volunteering within the projects. NYP2 stress the need to link responsibility with freedom and to challenge the young people to work towards this as part of their own personal care plan.

“We would say ‘we have this resource or that resource, what would you like to do?’ So they would choose, say breakdancing, and we would facilitate the mechanics of it. We would get the hall etc. but it would be their choice to do a particular activity. We would try to facilitate them making decisions, but we do direct a lot.

For example, we got funding to do a German-Irish exchange. The funding given from Europe is specifically to discuss certain issues that are important to young people. And the young people’s voice is what is important but it has to be real. Sometimes the funding does drive the programme content. So we have a thing on democracy next week. The group going to Germany will want to discuss alcohol, drugs, sexuality etc.

Then again, we try to make them think about how life is for them and for them to become more independent. And we develop that through the volunteer programme, we say when you are a kid you’re a kid but as you grow up there’s things you need to do to help out and volunteer. When you provide food, as we do, there’s always loads of jobs – cleaning up etc.; opportunities to get involved in the nitty, gritty of real life, and helping out with the younger kids. Giving people responsibilities as well as freedom.” (NYP2 Youth Worker)
Mixing groups of young people together is an issue that many people raise. There are a number of steps that people have taken to establish integration and avert conflict. **Identity work is important for all young people.** Even if you don’t work with a culturally diverse group, identity work should still take place, especially if you are planning on introducing newcomers to a group. Young Irish people may feel that they don’t have a ‘culture’. But feeling secure in your own cultural background is crucial for integration within society in general.

NYP2 take a very proactive stance when confronted with attitudes (particularly from parents) who object to putting young people from diverse backgrounds together.

“**A lot of our kids and their families are racist.** There’s parents saying – why are you working with them f……ers. So we just sit down and explain. We say ‘look say we were in Riga, or in Johnnesburg. You are there with your parents but you might want to be back here but you’ve no choice in it. Are you saying we shouldn’t offer them kids somewhere to go?’ And they agree logically – but emotionally it may be different. So it’s not easy and it wouldn’t happen if we weren’t proactive.” (NYP2 Youth Worker)

Sometimes there can be additional benefits when youth services take the initiative to try experimental projects. Swan Youth Service found that they had a real breakthrough when they ran a programme with a mixed group (minority ethnic and Irish young people) that explored racism and discrimination. Real understanding came about through listening to each other’s experiences and the Irish young people started to understand better what it feels like to suffer racism.

Like Foróige, Swan Youth Service and NYP2 have noted the interest in sport and football from minority ethnic young people. They use this as a really effective way to bring young people together.
Youth workers are often unsure of whether an integrated or targeted approach\(^2\) is best when working with young people from a minority ethnic background. In the experience of the youth workers interviewed for this resource, it is important to work based on the needs and wants of the young people themselves.

For example, NYP2 often have mostly minority ethnic groups and mostly Irish groups as that has been most appropriate approach for the young people at the time. Often the type of activity offered determines the make-up of the group.

“We have activities that are mainly for the foreign nationals that they have asked for – like the Eastern Europeans love break dancing, but the Irish kids don’t. And we have to be careful there. We don’t try to over social engineer, but we do engineer. We try to have it happen naturally and have the groups as mixed as possible, but if they’re not, they’re not. But people still have a chance - it’s always open, we make sure it’s open to everyone; they may choose not to come in with that group but we say look it is open – there’s nothing stopping you.” (NYP2 Youth Worker)

Swan Youth Service – together with NYP2 – set up an international group, but while the group does include a few Irish it is mostly young people from minority ethnic backgrounds who attend. This is done as a way to introduce the young people to youth work and to each other. Having taken part in this programme they will be more comfortable and will move on to other youth work activities where mostly Irish young people are involved.

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\(^2\) Integrated work is where young people from minority ethnic backgrounds are mixed with groups (often pre-existing) of Irish young people. Targeted youth work is where the focus is on a specific group of young people because of an identified need. In this case, we are talking about targeting young people from minority ethnic backgrounds.
“We had an incredible mix of nationalities in 2005, the first year we ran an intercultural group. I think the bigger the mix of nationalities, the better it works. There was more interaction, more engagement. And they did actually seem to mix better than when you have maybe only three main nationalities as cliques can develop.” (Swan Youth Service Staff Member)

The Base has taken both targeted and integrated approaches in their work. With members of the Traveller community they have generally adopted an integrated approach. However, one group of boys from the Traveller community are still uncomfortable about taking part in an integrated programme and they are being accommodated separately until they are ready to mix more. In the past they have worked with a group solely from minority ethnic backgrounds, but that was because it was about English language development. Having completed that programme many of the participants went into mixed (integrated) programmes. The Base also supported a number of young separated children seeking asylum living in hostels in the area. While much of this work involved one-to-one interventions the young people also took part in integrated youth work activities.

**Working with young males and females together can be a barrier for some ethnic and cultural groups.** Your youth organisation will need to decide whether or not to provide single-gender activities. Segregation based on gender may be necessary, for instance in activities such as swimming. NYP2 have become very aware of this issue and find it harder to engage young girls from minority ethnic backgrounds. In general they tend to work more with young men anyway. However, they were keen to include two young women in a recent
residential and they spent a considerable amount of time reassuring their parents that they would be safe. Swan Youth Service also say that it has been harder to engage young girls from minority ethnic backgrounds – they say this has also to do with relationships they have built with local schools (the boys schools have been especially proactive to date).

“There are more cultural issues for girls. Especially the African girls. The European girls are more likely to engage. But there are issues around confidence and English language skills. But definitely it is more difficult for some cultures and nationalities. There can be different fears. I think the more that the girls get involved in different processes the more they slowly open up to the idea of different possibilities in youth work, but it’s a very slow process. But then part of the problem is also age. A lot of the girls we have tried to target have been around 15. And that’s just a little bit too old in terms of maintaining and developing relationships in the longer term.” (Swan Youth Service Staff Member)

There can also be additional benefits to working with single gender groups. IGG work only with girls and they have found that this is attractive to girls from minority ethnic backgrounds especially those from the Muslim faith.

Religious belief can sometimes be problematic in terms of involving young people. If young people and their parents are concerned that religious views will not be respected they may choose not to get involved in youth groups. At The Base, a Muslim family were reassured when they were told one of the staff was also Muslim. Another factor is that faith groups often provide alternative social opportunities to young people.

“There is another point I have noticed in my work, which is that many young people coming from different ethnic backgrounds tend to flock towards their own faith-based groups as a means of socialising, which potentially has an impact on the numbers of young people availing of our services.” (Foróige Regional Youth Officer)
When working with young people from a minority ethnic background, trying to find the right ‘terminology’ can seem very difficult. When in doubt, it is best to ask the young people themselves. For instance, the Foreign National Young People At Risk group was named after consultation with the young people who themselves chose foreign national as their preferred term. It is also crucial to make an effort to get the young person’s name right from the start, and always ask them what they prefer to be called – first/second name, nicknames and so on.

Flexibility is generally very important when working with young people, and this is also true of young people from a minority ethnic background. When working with young Travellers, many found that the best approach was to keep a young person’s place in the group open to them, even if they had not attended for some time. Follow-up with any young person to see why they have stopped attending and make sure that they know they are welcome back at any time. VSI also felt it necessary to keep places open for young people from minority ethnic backgrounds. Many of VSI’s projects took place abroad, and since asylum seekers cannot travel, specific places in the projects taking place in Ireland were reserved for them.

You need to ask yourself if your organisation can meet the needs of the minority ethnic young person you work with. Many youth organisations in Ireland work with young people at risk and those experiencing personal, social or educational difficulties. Some minority ethnic young people are at risk in the same way that other young people you work with are. Others will be at risk based on their legal status in Ireland. Youth workers interviewed for this resource found that minority ethnic young people who used their services required particular assistance in advocacy and support, especially on immigration issues and issues related to the asylum seeking process.

Where you are not in a position to meet the young person’s specific needs it is important to refer a young person onto another organisation or work with another
organisation so that the young person can stay involved. They may be with you because you have something else to offer – often it’s the normality of a service that is not specialised so they can feel like everyone else for a time.

**Waiting lists** are a feature of many Irish youth clubs, projects and services. Very often popular activities have waiting lists of several months or years. As a result this can indirectly discriminate against any young person who has not lived in the area for long, and therefore has no chance to participate. Putting someone on a waiting list can be interpreted as a polite rejection, especially if someone comes from a country which doesn’t operate a system of waiting lists. Why not consider a lottery system by putting all names from the waiting list in together and pulling names from a hat as places arise?

Involvement of young people also means looking to their future when they no longer engage with your services. Sometimes funding cuts can bring a programme to an end, sometimes young people have to move, and usually there is an age restriction which brings an end to a young person’s engagement.

“It’s a slow process to bring young people up through to leadership roles. One of the problems is that there is more transience amongst people from minority ethnic backgrounds. They often move out of the area so we lose them.” (Swan Youth Service Staff Member)

In all cases it is important that the young person’s feelings of trust and safety are not damaged when they are no longer involved. It is important to be clear about what your own involvement is, and what restrictions may end their involvement.

Foróige explained that one of the barriers to youth involvement, especially for the separated children seeking asylum, is that Foróige only works with young people up to the age of 18 so the continuity of relationship and trust building is lost when they cannot work with the young person after that age. Although individuals can return as adult volunteers with Foróige on turning 18, the Regional Youth Officer in Dublin
South noted that instances of this occurring are limited. She stressed that it is almost impossible for asylum seekers because they are currently dispersed (transferred to accommodation outside of Dublin) when they reach 18 years of age.

For VSI the current practice where separated children seeking asylum are being dispersed from Dublin hostels to take up residence in towns and cities around the country is also hugely problematic. When these young people have to leave youth groups where high levels of trust have been built up there is an additional onus on the youth leaders to find ways to support the young people through the experience. Often this is through continued involvement on an occasional basis when it is possible to bring the young people together.

Above all, youth workers interviewed agreed that involving young people from minority ethnic communities was worth the effort and positively transformed the work they were doing.

“In some ways we went into it in a naïve way. We just saw them as young people who wanted to get involved. We opened the doors to them...For us it just seemed like a really organic thing for the organisation. But it’s really just transformed the youth programmes.” (VSI Teenage Programme Coordinator)
Additional Resources/Training on how to involve young people:

- NYCI resource “Why don’t we?”
  www.youth.ie/nyci/why-dont-we-youth-participation-resource-pack

- NYCI ‘Access All Areas’ Diversity Toolkit for the youth sector
  www.youth.ie/diversity

How would you rate? /How is your organisation doing?

- Are minority ethnic young people represented in your youth organisation?  
  YES  NO

- Does your organisation portray a range of young people in advertising?  
  YES  NO

- Does your youth organisation reflect the cultural and ethnic diversity locally?  
  YES  NO

- Are minority ethnic communities, parents and young people consulted and involved in planning activities?  
  YES  NO

- Have you assessed whether targeted or mixed groups are more appropriate?  
  YES  NO

- Have you assessed whether single gender activities are required?  
  YES  NO

- Do you check-in regularly with young people using your organisation?  
  YES  NO

- Do you refer young people to other relevant youth organisations as needed?  
  YES  NO

- Does your organisation have peer/youth leaders who come from a minority ethnic background?  
  YES  NO
Step 6  Group Contract

A group contract is a fundamental set of rules for running any youth group, and it is particularly important for intercultural youth groups. The group contract should highlight the need for respect within the group, and the behaviour expected of each participant. It should also outline types of behaviour, language and so on that are acceptable and what is not, and what should be done in addressing specific incidents of racism and discrimination. Like any complaints procedure within your organisation, this should include various steps including warnings, suspension, membership revoked, redress for victims and so on. An anti-racism agenda should also be actively undertaken, for instance in terms of addressing commonly-held myths. Your group contract may need to include rules on the use of different languages in your organisation, as well as the use of specific terminology or names. An anti-racism code of conduct can be very useful for groups. A template is available from NYCI.

Good Practice in developing an Intercultural Group Contract...

When it comes to writing a group contract, there are many different practices among the projects featured in this resource. All groups had different styles of agreements. However, one thing was consistent – all groups had a code of behaviour on what was acceptable, or not, for members of the group covering issues of respect, language, bullying and communication.

All organisations used a combination of rules for the specific group of young people, while also relying on the ethos of their organisation as general principles of the work.
NYP2 has a fixed contract, which is a printed list of the rights and responsibilities of the young person, which is explained and signed by each young person, and their parent or guardian if they are under 18. For each programme of activities they develop a group contract in consultation with the young people and they will go through it quite intensively. Anything based on law such as health and safety issues will be included as a norm. Respect is highlighted as the grounding principle. The behaviour aspect of the contract will include what is expected of the young people within the wider community while they are engaging with NYP2 – i.e. not just while they are in the project but also outside in the community.

“We get all our kids who become members to sign a contract. The contract is about respect, for the staff, for themselves and for the community and that means treating people properly.

If they break that contract, in the club or in the community - because we are about the community - and they are going around beating up foreign nationals, as some of them were, then we would say ‘look the contract you signed said you wouldn’t do this.’ We go through the contract very intensely. ‘You understood this.’” (NYP2 Youth Worker)

The discipline section of a contract is also clearly laid out. NYP2 have found that discipline needs to be enforced more during drop-ins when verbal abuse is more common.

The Base similarly found that drop-ins demanded a more stringent response than programmed activities. They stressed the need to keep on top of it.

“If there are racist comments made the leaders will deal with it as they do for homophobic comments or any other discriminatory comment. Each youth leader has their own style. Some leaders will challenge the young person straight away and an apology will probably result. But it’s just reinforcing it. It’s not about going overboard. But we do not tolerate it. The minute the leader feels that the terms
used are offensive or could be offensive, even if it wasn’t taken that way, they step in. There is a line that you don’t cross. And with the staff we have to keep reminding them because they could let it go if the drop-in is really busy and they might not be able to be on top of it all the time but it’s the same with cursing and all that. We say that they have to pick it up every time they hear it. It has to be reinforced until they are sick of it. They need boundaries.” (The Base Equality Officer)

VSI explained that it is important to allow sufficient time for discussion on the group’s rules especially with diverse groups. Young people have very different views on what is reasonable language or behaviour, and this is particularly true of groups with young members from a variety of cultural and family backgrounds. In the VSI residential programme, there is a Circle Meeting at the end of each day, whereby a talking piece is passed around the group, and everyone has their say. Whoever holds the talking piece can speak and the others must listen. This is a very useful way to tease out difficulties that happened during the day.

NYP2 similarly teases out ways that the groups will operate.

“We sit down with the small groups and we tease out a way of working. We say for example ‘What do we do if we plan to go to the cinema and only 2 out 5 people show up – or what do we do if we’ve planned something and then someone changes their mind about doing that activity.’ We think out what way we are going to work as a group, make them think about what is fair.” (NYP2 Youth Worker)

BeLonG To use a group contract for their large Sunday group. There are 8 rules on it and the young people review and change it every year or so. At the beginning of each session the youth facilitators go through the group contract. Some of the rules are very specific to the group. For example, alongside respect for youth workers and having mobile phones on silent there will be rules on no excessive PDAs (Personal Displays of Affection) and the importance of sobriety.
BeLonG To notes that this emphasis on sobriety is threefold – first there is the fact that some of the group are under 18, secondly there is an emphasis on health promotion, and thirdly it is to allow young people to have a social space and experience which are alcohol free. This latter consideration takes into account that LGBT people, like all minority groups, need to meet others who share their experiences and to allay the isolation of being in the minority, but social spaces in the LGBT community have traditionally revolved around pubs, clubs and alcohol. BeLonG To seek to challenge this and give other possibilities for social engagement. This also meets the needs of many people from minority ethnic backgrounds who are not comfortable with the Irish pub culture.

Foróige clubs all do a group contract. A principle in all their contracts will be the necessity for equal participation and expectations around a code of discipline will be included. While racism will not usually be named explicitly it would be expected that the equal participation and discipline rules would cover most incidents that would arise.

IGG differs from many other youth groups in that it doesn’t usually use a group contract process. This is because many volunteers will be unfamiliar with it as a tool. However, on an individual level each girl is given a code of conduct form when they register and this will be signed by the girl’s parent or guardian. It sets out some of what is expected. However, the intercultural outreach programme and activity pack encourages leaders to use group contracts especially to set up a safe space for the activities. Encouraging the use of a contract is usually given by example at events. One opportunity for this is at leader trainings where a group contract is used, thereby showing in practice how it can be used within different Units.
While many young people draft the Charter or group contract themselves, youth leaders tend to input with regard to certain rules for the group. Some youth workers established the rules as a staff team, based on what issues had arisen before or were likely to become problems within the group. **It is important that your group contract is wide-reaching and includes issues of racism and intolerance**, even implicitly, so that racist comments or prejudices can be challenged immediately when they arise.

Most groups found that the group contract was ‘self-maintaining’, in that once the young people had discussed and thought through the rules; they were more likely to govern respect of the rules themselves.

**It is important to be aware of any racist or discriminatory behaviour and attitudes in your group.** Some projects spoke of challenging young people through general chats and conversations, while others decided to address racism through participatory activities around identity, exclusion and self-esteem. When working in a mixed group, it is a good idea to split groups into mixed teams so they get to know other young people from different communities when doing activities.

Some youth workers mentioned what they called ‘hidden racism’ or a potential for racism - something that the young people often didn’t notice, but which came across in general attitudes. For instance, some of the language used alarmed the leaders but not the young people themselves. Some groups design specific sessions to work on these attitudes – ‘moving debates’ can help! **It can also be useful to focus on the similarities between different young people** rather than differences that separate them.
We must always be aware that minority groups and marginalised groups have negative opinions and prejudices too that must be challenged. Youth workers should not fall into the trap of believing that once minority groups are included in organisations that that is an end in itself with regard to inclusion, and tackling racism and inequalities. As with all communities, a hierarchy exists among young people from particular countries having opinions about each other and actively buying into prejudiced attitudes or behaviour. In tackling racism, Swan Youth Service found that simply including young people from diverse backgrounds was not sufficient to become fully inclusive.

“And it’s not all about looking at Irish attitudes in terms of affecting change. Other groups are also in need of training or attitudinal change. Like when we have Roma here and the Romanians ask what are we doing with the Roma in here? And we say ‘well what do I say to the Irish boys who ask why I’m letting you in here? Everyone here is treated with respect. Everything is open here.’ There’s huge racism between different ethnic groups. That’s the way the world is. There is a lot of racism and also a lot of sexism and negativity toward gay people from a number of the ethnic groups. So we deal with racism and discrimination on a lot of levels.” (NYP2 Youth Worker)

Like any conflict with young people, there may be other reasons for tensions between ethnic groups, such as issues connected with the young person’s home, experience of school, lack of self-confidence and so on. It is important to work with young people on issues of anger which may manifest as racist comments or bullying. Individual work is fundamental to overcoming this.

Nonetheless, all groups should have a disciplinary procedure in place when someone violates the group contract. Dealing with conflict as soon as it arises was highlighted as crucial by all youth workers. This occurred between all young people, whether they were from different ethnic backgrounds, or of the same nationality. Racist comments or tension should be dealt with as any other breaches of discipline.
would. A no-tolerance approach to racist attitudes and behaviour is crucial. As staff, you should challenge any comments immediately. In some cases, young people may be suspended or asked to leave the programme.
Additional Resources/Training for developing an Intercultural Group Contract:

- An anti-racism code of conduct template is available from NYCI at www.intercultural.ie
- NYCI Resource ‘Let’s Beat Bullying’ Let’s Beat Bullying (PDF)
- Specific training on this resource is recommended and available through NYCI; see www.youth.ie/training for details.
- BeLonG To resources on tackling homophobic bullying contain useful tips www.belongto.org

How would you rate?/How is your organisation doing?

- Do you have a group contract when working with a group of young people? YES  NO
- Is the group contract written and agreed upon by the young people and the leader? YES  NO
- Is the group contract displayed during the group sessions? YES  NO
- Is the group contract displayed at all times in your organisation’s premises? YES  NO
- Are copies of the group contract given to the young people to sign and/or keep? YES  NO
- Is the group contract reviewed when new members join the group? YES  NO
- Do your staff and volunteers address racist comments and behaviour? YES  NO
- Do you have a reporting system for incidents of bullying, YES  NO
including discrimination and racism?

- Does your organisation have any other mechanisms in place that protect participants from racism and discrimination?  
  YES  NO

- Do you discuss issues of stereotyping, prejudice and racism with your group?  
  YES  NO
Step 7  Activities

Youth work activities must be appropriate for the particular youth group. Consider factors such as age, gender, religion, culture and language ability when planning activities. Even where a group is relatively homogenous it is important to look at activities that promote diversity and inclusion. Developing abilities and talents will be an important aspect of a young person’s involvement in the youth organisation. Activities that are not skill-based may also be a barrier, especially to parents of young people from minority ethnic backgrounds. Financial resources may also be a barrier to participation. As with all youth work flexibility is paramount.

Good Practice in planning your activities…

All projects featured in the ‘12 Steps’ employed a range of different activities when working with the young people in their groups. The most important aspect was to consult with the young people on what they were interested in doing.

Sport is a good way to get young people mixing together, particularly males. Swan Youth Service is involved in a European Soccer League which has been really effective in bringing young people together.

NYP2 use an award system alongside their football activities. The young people are rated on their attitude, their effort and lastly their skill. Those that do well will be brought on a reward trip, on a go-karting trip or something similar. Activities are used as a way to confront issues – usually attitudinal ones.
At Foróige the activities that worked best with the more culturally diverse groups were football and trips to the cinema. When they ran an orienteering treasure hunt it was not successful.

“We think, on reflection, that this was probably because the group weren’t really that interested in the idea in the first place, which is not uncommon for teenagers irrespective of their ethnic background! And it was the Easter holidays so most of the group were quite happy to lounge around in bed or watch TV. As any of us might do during the holidays.” (Foróige Regional Youth Officer)

Most of the activities that Foróige do in their clubs would involve games and activities that concentrate on teamwork, leadership and communication. Foróige has a package of training resources that leaders can use. This pack is kept under revision which allows for more cultural, inclusion and identity-based activities to be included. In South Dublin the Regional Youth Officer has introduced global justice issues to her leaders by encouraging the use of NYCI’s 2010 One World Week activity pack.

**Games and activities can be very effective ways to address diversity and inclusion.**

Irish Girl Guides sought to become more culturally diverse by developing an activity pack that focuses on inclusion and diversity. The pack is designed to be used in age appropriate ways so that inclusion and diversity is part of all Guiding programmes from age 4 up to senior branch (18+). The main focus of the activities in the pack is that the girls develop a sense of ease with who they are. It looks at similarities and differences it develops respect and it emphasises the value of communication and dialogue.

“The thing about Guiding and the use of our Outreach Pack is that the young girls stay with us over many years, so a trust is built up, and that offers a safe space where we can explore issues such as exclusion and what that means. So even if the group is ‘all white Irish’ it promotes an ethos for life which will influence the girls’
engagement with other young people in their schools and in their communities, many of whom will be from diverse cultures or circumstances.” (IGG Outreach Development Officer)

Alongside this grass roots work IGG have run a number of activities at a national level aimed at recruiting young girls into Guiding, especially those from diverse backgrounds. One of the key activities has been holding ‘taster days’ in 10 locations in the country. Areas were chosen on the basis that capacity existed in the local Unit. The days were advertised as ‘Give Guiding a Go’. These days resulted in an increased membership of 150 girls, with 10% of the attendees coming from minority ethnic backgrounds. The days were designed to also bring parents in to hear about Guiding and what it could offer. Other activities at national level include planning for a big International Guide Camp, called Camp 101 as it is the 101st year of Guiding in Ireland. This will build on the success of the first centenary of Guiding in Ireland. There will be international guests from all over the world camping with individual IGG Units. The aim of the camp is to provide an opportunity for girls to explore their potential to influence the world around them in a fun, safe and secure environment. Being an international event it will provide a strong focus on interculturalism and diversity in Guiding.

Identity work is a crucial aspect of all youth work. For young people, opportunities to consider and discuss their identity can be an important way to voice concerns and also affirm their cultural background. Even if you don’t work with young people from minority ethnic backgrounds, identity work is still relevant, especially if you are planning on introducing newcomers to a group. In particular, feeling secure in
your own cultural identity is crucial for integration to happen within society in general.

**Identity work can occur implicitly or explicitly in activities of your programme.** Issues such as racism, discrimination or bullying may need to be dealt with explicitly. In all activities inaccurate information about other cultures, continents and people can be challenged. Swan Youth Service described how a wall mural was being developed at their youth service and discussion around the flags and countries of Africa was raised which provided an ideal opportunity to clarify misconceptions or questions that the young people had.

For non-threatening ways of exploring identity, cross-cultural games can be used. VSI used an activity called ‘Games from our childhood’ where each young person taught the others in the group a game from their own childhood. This activity was very popular as participants got to share a part of their own culture and it also highlighted similarities between many childhood games around the world.

“We play games from our childhood. That’s one thing they really, really enjoy sharing. One game that’s caught on is a game with stones from Somalia called ‘Shop’ and we’ve all learned how to count in Somali and it’s become addictive!” (VSI Teenage Programme Coordinator)

**Many young people – and parents - from minority ethnic backgrounds are more interested in developing skills than having fun or socialising.**

NYP2 offer a homework support programme during which tutors are available. Other activities that are offered include music tuition as well as dance. Additionally the young volunteers receive youth
work training. One other important consideration for NYP2 is the safety of the young people. 6th year students in O’Connell’s School are allowed to leave the school during lunch time. Many of the young people from minority ethnic backgrounds have nowhere to go during this time or live a long way from the school so NYP2 is open for them during this time.

Swan Youth Service ran a development education programme one year with their culturally diverse group and the young people said they were keen to continue into a second year. Similarly, they were happy to get involved in a health promotion programme. Swan Youth Service encouraged the young people from minority ethnic backgrounds to suggest their own ideas, but at the time they were reluctant to say what they wanted as they were not yet well established in the organisation. They also noted that the young people felt more comfortable doing activities within the building rather than going on outings.

The activities run by BeLonG To on the Sunday meetings follow a critical social education model by looking at different issues every month. The issues cover awareness of and concern for global and local issues that affect a wide range of people. The focus on racism looks at the crossovers that exist between different forms of discrimination that people face. The group is aged between 14 and 23 with the older age group being involved mostly at leadership and facilitation level.

BeLonG To themes include:

- Power and participation
- Poverty and globalization
- Young people and politics
- Peace and conflict
- Child labour
- Racism

**Gender appropriate youth work may also be a consideration.** Working with young males and females together can be a barrier for some ethnic and cultural groups getting involved in youth work. Segregation based on gender may be necessary, for instance in activities such as swimming. It may also determine the type of activity
on offer. Because NYP2 have many male only groups the activities provided can be based around football and other sports that girls may not be as keen to be involved in.

It is important that youth organisations support the heritage, language and culture of the young person. However, this needs to be done with sensitivity to other considerations. At IGG leaders have noted that the young girls often do not like to be singled out to talk about their cultural traditions – they want to be treated the same as everyone else. NYP2 have chosen to make their space English only in order not to alienate the Irish young people attending. They stress the need to make their space an ‘international’ space where everyone belongs at all times.

It is clear therefore that youth work organisations need to balance both aspects – the integration of young people while also preserving heritage identity. For example, making your youth group an English-only space at all times may not be appropriate unless there are specific reasons for doing so. Be sure to consider English language ability of participants when planning activities. Very often English might be the second, third or even fourth language of minority ethnic young people, so give them the chance to learn and practice it as much as they can while at the same time giving them time-out in their own language where possible as it can be hard to speak in a second language all the time. A group contract should be discussed and guidelines decided together regarding when English must be spoken, and when young people can speak their native language.
Cultural events are often popular among schools and youth organisations. Cultural events are often useful to allow attendees to express their own culture and to experience others. However such events often only address the ‘tip of the iceberg’ when it comes to cultural understanding, and need to be followed-up with different fora, discussions and other opportunities to interact. Cultural events can also be focused on expressing differences - not similarities - and don’t take into account mixed ethnicities and lived experiences of young people from minority ethnic backgrounds in Ireland. Asking a young person to constantly focus on their culture of origin, overlooks the fact that the young person may have been born in Ireland, grown up in the local community, and perhaps never even been to the country their family originally comes from. Youth workers have also explained that describing an event as ‘intercultural’ is often seen as being for minorities and the Irish don’t attend. Organising a ‘family day’ or ‘food festival’ – rather than an ‘intercultural event’ - is more popular among Irish and minority ethnic communities as it makes everyone feel welcome and included, without constantly pointing out differences between groups.

Many young people will also want to learn about the society and heritage of Ireland, and their local area in particular. VSI promote volunteerism to young people, and encourage them to take positive action for change within society. The young people chose to get involved in a local clean-up and contacted the local tidy town group to offer their time to clean-up a local wooded area. This contact with the local community proved to be vital in the success of the project, as the young people were praised for their work and felt a great sense of self-esteem. Additionally, the community learned a lot in meeting the young people from different cultural backgrounds.
International exchanges and nationwide projects can be very effective in bringing an intercultural perspective into youth work. BeLonG To have done exchanges in the past to Sweden and Britain and have sought to do others, but have found it difficult to find groups similar to theirs in other countries. They also get involved in nationwide events such as Real Youth, and LGBT Pride festivals (including supporting regional pride festivals). BeLonG To explained that it is a challenge to get youth considered properly at nationwide events as a separate contributor in their own right and for the necessary supports and protections to be in place. So BeLonG To creates extra youth-specific alcohol-free spaces at relevant festivals etc.

Costs may be a barrier for many young people who wish to participate in your programme, particularly for minority ethnic families who may be financially supporting extended families in their countries of origin and have few resources left to dedicate to their children’s out of school activities. Thanks to funding support NYP2, Swan Youth Service and The Base do not charge for their normal activities. For residential, summer camps or exchanges in these groups very small charges might apply. Finding ways to support members who may not be able to afford youth activities include getting sponsorship from local businesses or county councils.

Summer camps are often times when young people from minority ethnic backgrounds engage more with youth groups. Most of the youth groups interviewed run a summer programme as they say this period is one in which the young people are available and need to be involved and connected.
Youth workers are often unsure of **whether an integrated or targeted approach is best when working with young people from a minority ethnic background.** Swan Youth Service and The Base have both said that it often works well to have a targeted (separate) group first and then to introduce the young people into an integrated programme. However, this must be planned for and set in place in advance so that segregation doesn’t set in as a practice. IGG, Foróige, and BeLonG To prefer to go for integration as the norm but with exceptions where these are appropriate – as in the case of the Traveller only LGBT group, and the Foróige separated children seeking asylum groups.
Additional Resources/Training for planning activities:

- NYCI ‘Access All Areas’ Diversity Toolkit for the youth sector [www.youth.ie/diversity](http://www.youth.ie/diversity)
- NYCI intercultural training, see ‘Practical supports for Intercultural Youth Work’
- Practical Guidelines for doing Intercultural Youth Work [www.intercultural.ie](http://www.intercultural.ie) or [www.intercultural.ie/practice_guidelines](http://www.intercultural.ie/practice_guidelines)
- NYCI resource on activities not requiring language [www.intercultural.ie](http://www.intercultural.ie)

How would you rate?/How is your organisation doing?

- Does your youth organisation advertise your programme of activities in the community?  YES  NO
- Does your youth organisation have a good range of activities, including:
  - activities free of/low charge,  YES  NO
  - activities not requiring proficiency in English  YES  NO
  - activities which build the skills of the young people  YES  NO
  - activities which promote heritage language/culture of minority ethnic groups  YES  NO
- Does your youth organisation consult with the young people on your programme, for instance, through questionnaires, suggestion boxes and discussions?  YES  NO
- Do you have contact details of other relevant youth work organisations to refer young people to as needed?  YES  NO
Step 8  Networking

Your youth organisation should build relationships with local stakeholders including schools, community and religious leaders, existing networks of minority ethnic groups, as well as those of the majority community and with parents. This will help to allay fears and concerns by building trust. Invite parents and families to open days. Make time to meet parents individually if possible. Translate basic information about your organisation where relevant. Look for opportunities to work with other local groups. Also liaise with formal structures such as An Garda Síochána (police service in Ireland). It’s also important to network with other youth projects, clubs and services.

Who to network with and how to do it effectively…

Networking can be seen as time-consuming but it is something that can be built into everything your youth organisation does. Some of it can happen informally – when you meet parents or other community workers at the shops, schools and other public places. Working together is crucial to support each young person and meet their needs. All the youth workers interviewed here highlighted the need to be involved in community-based groups and inter-agency initiatives. Stakeholders include the following:

- Local Youth Work organisations
- Vocational Education Committees (VECs)
- VEC Youth Officers
- Schools
- Home-School Liaison Officers
- An Garda Síochána
- English Language Schools
- The Health Service Executive (HSE)
- City And County Partnerships
- County Councils and County Development Boards
- Third level institutions who can provide volunteers
- Local media
- Religious Organisations (churches, chaplaincies, mosques and other religious groups)
• Family Centres
• Groups For Elderly People
• Intercultural Committees
• Minority ethnic-led networks/associations
• Other community-based organisations

If you are supporting young refugees and asylum seekers, it can be useful to refer to specific support agencies, such as:

• Refugee Legal Service (RLS) (www.legalaidboard.ie)
• Refugee Support Groups in your area
• Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) (www.ria.gov.ie)

Swan Youth Service started to do intercultural work largely through their involvement in the FNYPAR group. It includes a number of other agencies – including local Home School Liaison Officers. They worked on the premise that they could each bring their own expertise to meet the wide and varied needs of the young people. Swan Youth Service was able to offer a community-based youth service that ran a range of programmes.

“I’m very keen that people get together and to integrate services locally. We got involved in YPAR (Young People At Risk) and from within that came FNYPAR and we ran seminars that brought young people’s voices out and the need for a club came from that.” (NYP2 Youth Worker)

As Swan Youth Service got to know the young people, various issues emerged that necessitated negotiating with statutory bodies (often to do with migration issues or the asylum process). They were able to do this effectively through the larger structure of YPAR because of the inter-agency make up of the group.

As NYP2 explained – the issues are big, with young people dealing with racism, policing practices, parental concerns and issues to do with their status.
Working in partnership is important to maximise resources, skills and meeting more of the needs of the young person. The Base choose, where possible, to work in partnership and to do interagency work. They stress that you need to put time in to get things right and to identify the needs and what you can do to meet them.

“A lot of gaps were identified through the integrated type of work we do with other agencies, schools in particular. In the case of the Traveller community, we had the education network here, and we sit on school completion boards; we are represented everywhere and we gather information from other projects. We work very closely with BTAP (Ballyfermot Traveller’s Action Project). There is a site right beside us where there are issues of poverty and some individuals are responsible for anti-social behaviour which is affecting the whole community so there was an obvious identified need. Then it took two years of weekly site visits, structured activities and individual work before we got anywhere, building up enough trust and relationships before we got any of the kids down here. It was a huge investment of time and resources but it was worth it. (The Base Equality Officer)

Although establishing partnerships takes time and not all collaborations are successful, The Base have gradually built up strong working relationships and know which ones work. Their outreach or detached work is always done in partnership with local youth services (family services, drug services, HSE, schools, Schools Completion Programmes and youth services).

“We aren’t a youth service, we are a youth centre. We are in the middle of two youth services. We need each other. We have special programmes running here – like arts and media, teen-parent support programme, a youth health programme. They are very targeted and specific. We only have 4 youth workers so we pair a lot. In partnership with a number of local agencies we developed a detached street work model. One of our youth workers is paired with another local worker to do outreach/detached work. There is a rota. It took a year to get that collaborative project up and running, deciding on protocols etc.” (The Base Equality Officer)
The local School Completion Programme is a significant partner in The Base’s ongoing work with individual young people. They also rely on the partnerships and networks of their partners. For example, the Ballyfermot Traveller Action Project (BTAP) is linked in very closely with the Irish Traveller Movement (ITM) and Pavee Point and in that way they can access the added support they offer. The Base says that partnerships are best when they are based on mutual need.

“It’s trying to find a common ground. And it’s often about us having the resources and facilities that the other partner doesn’t have and the partner having access to young people we don’t necessarily have access to. We put a lot of time into preparing the whole thing. Sometimes it doesn’t work. But even where we have doubts about a collaboration we would still give it a go. Other partnerships we know will work because we know them well and we have worked together before. The more you know them the better. We really try to take into account the strength and speciality of services and avoid duplication. Within the community I sit on different networks and boards such as the Intercultural Network which is supported by the local Partnership.” (The Base Equality Officer)

Strategic networking for IGG depends largely on local leaders and how they utilise their own links within their communities. Networking with Partnerships and other similar networks can be almost impossible to foster due to the voluntary nature of Guiding and the professional basis of many Partnerships and networks – i.e. the Guide leaders are generally not available when networking meetings are held as they are usually held during business hours. As a result many networks do not know about the Guiding Units in their communities. However, at local level, wherever networking does happen it is extremely effective. This has resulted in some very effective working relationships. For example, local Guiding Units work closely with the Irish Wheelchair Association in Galway, in Mayo with a Downs Syndrome support group, in Athlone with Barnardos and with Navan Travellers. These relationships have made a very positive impact on the levels of diversity and inclusion in the local Guide Units.
“It is important to see networking as a two-way process. For example, sometimes a girl might be doing the Gaisce award who isn’t a Guide. But by having a relationship in place with the schools it can be arranged that she can do it through her local Guide Unit who would be able to mentor her.” (IGG Outreach Development Officer)

Networking for IGG will happen on a regional basis. Regional Development Officers will link with Volunteering Centres in their areas and also with schools.

Because IGG cannot network as much as they would like they are developing a video that will explain Guiding and the skills that girls develop through it. It is especially aimed at the parents of girls from minority ethnic backgrounds. It will be distributed to Embassies, Family Recourse centres, on the IGG website, on YouTube etc.

Foróige networks wherever possible, but similarly they have to be strategic given that each Regional Youth Officer has to cover a wide geographical area. In South Dublin, 14 different community areas are covered and despite trying to get to as many as possible it is not feasible to attend all the appropriate local network events. Being involved in Area Partnerships is important to them, as is networking with the County Council, the VEC, and other youth organisations working in the area such as CDYSB (City of Dublin Youth Services Board) and CYC (Catholic Youth Care). They also link with Volunteering Centres, churches and schools. Because Foróige is so big they find that their largest network is their own internal links to sections and services within Foróige. NYCI is another vital connection for many of the groups.

With limited resources, BeLonG To’s Dublin service have to consider the best ways of reaching and helping the young people they target. As a result they do strategic networking such as working with Social Workers and hospitals, specialised support bodies, Community Liaison Gardaí, the North Inner City Drugs Task Force Committee, Gay Health Network, the HSE, other youth organisations and more recently with Pavee Point on their Traveller project. Nationally, BeLonG To work closely with a number of government agencies including the OMCYA, HSE’s National
Office for Suicide Prevention, the Department of Education and Skills, and the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht. They also sit on many national strategic committees such as the Equality & Intercultural working group for the National Youth Work Advisory Committee (NYWAC), a number of equality bodies and a number of mental health steering groups.

Linking in with organisations of minority ethnic communities is also crucial. It is important to go to where minority ethnic communities meet to engage with them. It is also very important to look at what’s already going on in your community, as many minority ethnic groups are quite active. Many families and parents will also have a trusting relationship with such groups in their local area, particularly for families living in Direct Provision Centres. Contact details for intercultural groups around Ireland are available from The Integration Centre, New Community Partnerships (NCPs) and others.

Although translation of basic information into the native languages of the target groups can be helpful, most groups did not translate their information in leaflets or brochures. However, some groups have language skills within its staff and volunteers. For example, in The Base Arabic, French, Norwegian, Polish and Spanish are among the languages spoken by staff and volunteers.

Working with young people from a minority ethnic background requires a strong, trusting relationship between the youth worker and the parents or guardians. An open attitude and respect are essential along with establishing a good reputation for youth work among the community. Building such a relationship takes time and commitment on the part of the youth worker, and is greatly aided by
meeting the parents through other points of contact, such as schools, teachers and religious communities. It is important to explain what youth work actually is, and what your organisation provides. Some parents may not be fully convinced of the value of youth work. NYP2 work very closely with families, recognising the core influence and importance they play in each young person’s life. They are also conscious that many of the young people are separated from family. They support the young people to stay connected as much as possible – which often necessitates giving access to the phone to ring abroad during family emergencies or crisis times.

**Minority ethnic parents will also worry for their children’s safety in youth organisations.** For Swan Youth Service the fact that the young people have been linked to them through schools gives the parents confidence that they are in a safe and positive environment. **Outreach** is important and many projects undertook outreach to parents and families, both before young people joined the group and on an ongoing basis to communicate information to parents, and check for any concerns. IGG spend time liaising with parents, not only explaining the value of Guiding but also inviting parents to volunteer. Engaging with parents from new communities in Ireland is similar to the approach for working with young Travellers. The Base spent two years building relationships with parents and community leaders at the local Traveller accommodation site before enough trust was built up that allowed the young people to engage. Parental involvement is seen as a crucial element to the work conducted with young people.

“That is something that we need to give ourselves a big push under ourselves. We don’t do enough and it’s because it isn’t traditional to work with families or parents. But we know we have to. We are in the process. We are starting from basic things - in any policies developed we will consult with young people, parents and staff and that’s one way of engaging with the parents. We found at the start that it was easier to engage with parents from minority ethnic and Traveller parents, but with persistence and consistency most parents are willing to be engaged.” (The Base Equality Officer)
Networking with parents at BeLonG To is an ongoing part of the work, but there are issues around confidentiality and boundaries. BeLonG To will only network with parents who approach them. Nevertheless, engaging with parents is something that BeLonG To put a lot of time and resources into – advising parents over bullying that their children are experiencing and the coming out process. Parents often want to know if they are supporting their children effectively. Others just want to check out if BeLonG To is an appropriate organisation for their young people to be involved with. Parents can also be referred to www.lovingouroutkids.org, a support group for parents of LGBT children.

Some groups of young people don’t have parents in the country so other strategies need to be adopted. As the VSI Teenage Programme Coordinator explained, separated children seeking asylum do not have the usual social supports from a family living in Ireland; even the basic role of a parent in getting their teenagers up and out of bed in the morning for a youth work activity is missing in their lives! So it is important to get to know the manager of the HSE accommodation where they live, and the social workers assigned to each young person.

**Working with separated children seeking asylum** requires a lot of additional networking and cooperation with agencies. As Swan Youth Service discovered when they wanted to do an exchange programme – they had to negotiate with the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) to get special permission for one young person to travel who was still in the asylum process\(^3\). NYP2 have also had to deal extensively with issues connected to the asylum process. In particular they have had to help support young people who have been served with deportation notices and those whose visas have lapsed. This is a time that is not only traumatic for the young person, but also very emotive for youth workers and others they have been

\(^3\) Asylum seekers cannot leave the state until their case is decided on. Exceptional cases are decided on at the discretion of RIA.
in contact with. NYP2 explained that it is really important to be clear with these young people just how much they can support them but what limitations they have to work within.

“A lot of young people we work with may have legality issues around their migration status. They are afraid of being thrown out. And we say to them look we are the HSE and we are a figure of authority but our primary care is to you. We aren’t going to turn you in. And they trust us to know we are working with them as people. But it’s tricky for us being a state body because I am giving out stink to HSE who is my employer. We have to get that across to the young people to say we will do our best but the law is the law too. We have to get it across to the young people. And it’s tricky for us, for workers to be in that situation.” (NYP2 Youth Worker)

Some young people and parents will want to be involved in a youth work group that is specific to their ethnic, cultural or linguistic (language) background. Some young people will join such groups on a temporary basis until they become confident to join a mainstream youth organisation or other activity in their area. At The Base a group of male Travellers chose to stay together. But it would be expected and planned that they would integrate as soon as they feel more comfortable to do so. The drop-in facility allows for natural mingling and familiarity and trust to be built up.

Linking with other youth organisations is very important to support the young people to have confidence in joining an activity or youth club that they enjoy. Young people may want to join a specific youth work activity that you do not offer. It is important to help the young person understand the options available. For example, VSI worked jointly with ECO-UNESCO who offered young people the opportunity to become involved in environmental awareness programmes. The collaboration of experience between the two organisations worked really well.
“Just because they’re from the ‘target group’ and they’re marginalised doesn’t mean they have to join our activity... We realised probably the ideal way to go is to actually start putting other organisations in contact (with the young people) through partnership projects.” (VSI Teenage Programme Coordinator)

The National Youth Council of Ireland organised networking events in Dublin, Louth, Galway, Monaghan and Waterford. Some events brought youth workers and volunteers together to hear personal accounts of good practice examples in intercultural youth work; others introduced youth work organisations and minority ethnic members of the community to each other. Youth workers can learn a lot from each other, and sometimes things happen in other organisations that others would not be aware of. So sharing information on what works in intercultural youth work is important.

“The networking events have strengthened our links with others. When we see them then at other events, they come and chat or vice versa which would not have happened as much in the past and we are discussing a number of possible follow on actions.” (NYCI networking event participant)

**Encourage minority ethnic adults to become involved in your organisation as volunteers and youth workers**—this will help build trust with new communities in your local area. Advertising for volunteers through local newspapers, libraries, the internet and volunteering centres can help. Again it is important to include a clear description of youth work, what your organisation offers and other procedures such as child protection and Garda vetting.

**Networking includes passing on your expertise and experience to other groups.** Swan Youth Service took part in an advisory committee for a Europe-wide youth programme coordinated by Integrating Ireland. They also facilitate processes that allow the young people to have a voice. One way of doing this is through support of the annual seminars run by FNYPAR in which experiences are shared – largely by the young people themselves - with statutory bodies.
Networking often goes beyond the community level to the statutory. NYP2 see negotiating at statutory level to be crucial in meeting the needs of young people by influencing the policy that impacts on their lives. To do this effectively they are involved within a number of political processes, through trade union links and through political parties. They also sit on the Community Policing Forum in order to influence community policing practice. Through this forum they were able to establish changes in reporting racism and also to put protection measures in place in the area to protect young people who faced racist threats on their way home from school.
Additional Resources/Training for networking:

- Practical Guidelines for doing Intercultural Youth Work [www.intercultural.ie](http://www.intercultural.ie)
- NYCI Training on ‘Practical Supports in Intercultural Youth Work’
- NYCI ‘Access All Areas’ Diversity Toolkit for the youth sector [www.youth.ie/diversity](http://www.youth.ie/diversity) (for a list of relevant organisations working with and led by minority ethnic and cultural communities)
- NYCI reports on networking events on [www.intercultural.ie](http://www.intercultural.ie)
- NYCI flyer on Intercultural Youth Work (with sections translated into 8 languages) [www.intercultural.ie/content/intercultural-youthwork-flyer](http://www.intercultural.ie/content/intercultural-youthwork-flyer)
- Contact your VEC Youth Officer through the local VEC in your area. See [www.ivea.ie/services/youth_work/youth_work.shtml](http://www.ivea.ie/services/youth_work/youth_work.shtml)
- Volunteer Centres Ireland [www.volunteer.ie/-about-us-.html](http://www.volunteer.ie/-about-us-.html)
- The Integration Centre [www.integrationcentre.ie](http://www.integrationcentre.ie)

How would you rate?/How is your organisation doing?

- Has your organisation conducted meetings with local representatives of minority ethnic communities? YES NO
- Has your organisation organised a specific event for parents/guardians? YES NO
- Has your organisation produced a leaflet describing your work in simple English or translated into languages used locally? YES NO
- Does your organisation have contact details of the organisations in your local area that represent minority ethnic groups/communities? YES NO
- Are you aware of other initiatives by local youth organisations in intercultural youth work? YES NO
Step 9  Policy Development

An intercultural policy – like any other – is a kind of roadmap that your organisation lays out for you and others to follow. It sets out your aims and principles along with how you are going to achieve these. It places the work you are doing in a legal context by citing equality legislation and how it relates to working with young people from a minority ethnic or cultural background. It also sets out disciplinary procedures for situations when your stated principles are broken either by staff, volunteers or members.

Policies are statements of practice. They should reflect your practice and be fully implemented. Different organisations take different approaches to this. Some opt to write an intercultural strategy which sets out a more detailed way of achieving intercultural youth work while others write inclusion policies that cover intercultural youth work together with working with other marginalised young people. Whatever approach is taken it is important that it is written in consultation with all your team and that as a group you take ownership of it. It is also crucial that all of your staff, volunteers and members are aware of it and familiar with it.

Good Practice in developing your policy...

Groups tend to be at various different stages in terms of setting their work on a policy footing. Swan Youth Service, for example, is currently drafting an equality policy. Within that they will be able to include something specific on intercultural youth work. However, they have just completed a strategic plan in which they were able to ‘nail their colours to the mast’ and say that intercultural youth work was important to them by making a strong equality statement.

BeLonG To have a number of policies that all the staff are familiar with but they recently identified the need to review and update their policies. The Board of Management have taken on this task and each staff member will input into their
own area of expertise – e.g. child protection etc. The opportunity now presents itself through the policy review process to consider how the increased cultural diversity of BeLonG To’s membership should be acknowledged and how their intercultural practice can be reflected at policy level.

The Base similarly intends incorporating intercultural policy into their equality policy which is currently being developed. They do have an anti-bullying policy and racism is explicitly mentioned in that. The Base point out that it is more appropriate to deal with it under equality as issues arise that are related across the equality grounds. For example, they see gender issues flaring up in their area and this is something that crosses all ethnic groups including settled Irish so it is best approached through a process that is inclusive of all and addresses everyone’s issues.

The Irish Girl Guides have recently adopted an inclusion strategy which will be followed by an inclusion policy in the coming months.

NYP2 are keen to change policy at a statutory level to best meet the needs of the young people they work with. To do this effectively they are involved in a number of processes, such as political, community and policing forums.

Some groups belong to large organisations and it is at headquarter level that the responsibility for policy development lies. For example, Foróige head office has responsibility for organisation policy development. Foróige does not have a separate intercultural policy as this is seen in the wider context of their equality policy. However, the organisation has focused on interculturalism in its development of an integration strategy in 2008/9. This strategy was developed, piloted and implemented in two of their regions (Blanchardstown and Tallaght). By doing a strategy for two specific regions they were able to review and evaluate it.
and then consider how to extend and adapt it so that is can become a national integration strategy for the whole organisation. This process is being rolled out across the organisation in 2011. Foróige has a code of practice and mission statement that promotes inclusion.

**Implementation plans are an integral part of a policy document.** Swan Youth Service feel that it is only now – after a number of years working in intercultural youth work - that they could write up the procedures or processes that they consider successful that would form an implementation plan. They now have a formula that works - from initial engagement, to introduction into the service through the international club, and then progression into the wider youth service and, in time, having opportunities for volunteer or peer leadership.

“Policies aren’t as hard to write as people think. They start off with the organisation’s mission statement and guiding principles. Then a policy statement that says you are committed to intercultural youth work. Then you give the reasons for doing it (such as demographics in your community). After that you lay out what the responsibility of staff, volunteer and members is toward interculturalism and how you will implement the policy. This follows with your complaints and disciplinary procedures and finally a contextual piece on equality legislation. We have a template at NYCI and a training course to help people through it.” (NYCI Intercultural Officer)

Youth groups should include anti-racism measures in their policies. They would ideally adopt an Anti-Racism Code of Practice for the entire youth organisation. A template is available from NYCI.
Additional Resources/Training on developing your Policy:

- NYCI training, particularly “Developing Intercultural Policies and Implementation Plans” [www.intercultural.ie/training](http://www.intercultural.ie/training)
- NYCI ‘Access All Areas’ Diversity Toolkit for the youth sector [www.youth.ie/diversity](http://www.youth.ie/diversity)
- Anti-Racism Code of Practice template available from [www.intercultural.ie](http://www.intercultural.ie)

How would you rate?/How is your organisation doing?

- Does your organisation have an Intercultural policy or Strategy in place and in practice?  
  YES  NO
- Does your organisation have an Anti-Racism Code of Practice?  
  YES  NO
- Is interculturalism explicitly stated as an aim of your work in any of the other policies of your organisation?  
  YES  NO
- Do staff and volunteers receive training on equality issues and legislation?  
  YES  NO
- Does your organisation have a non-denominational policy?  
  YES  NO
Step 10  Resources

Youth organisations can avail of a wide range of resources on intercultural youth work. If you identify useful resources, please let us know. You may also be involved in developing resources for intercultural youth work. Taking part in training is an invaluable source of information. It gives you a chance to meet other youth workers and discuss problems and solutions. It is also an opportunity to ask questions. Training is available from the National Youth Council of Ireland on issues such as tackling racism, intercultural awareness and developing intercultural policies and projects.

Good practice – Good Resources…

In general, the youth work projects featured here, stated that their greatest resource was their staff, volunteers and youth workers. Sometimes the biggest issue was finding funds or materials to run a specific project. They all used creative ways to do this, from begging to barter.

“There’s never been a situation where we haven’t been able to do anything because of cost – either getting equipment or facilitators or doing the Zambia building project. We always find a way to make it happen. We either go around it or go through it but we find it.” (Swan Youth Service Staff Member)

All the groups used a broad range of practical resources in their intercultural youth work, sourced from NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations), NYCI, the Department of Education and Skills along with resources from other contacts and volunteers.

Swan Youth Service has availed of the resources developed by NYCI – in particular getting involved in the Development Education programme and the Health programme and applying the resources that NYCI has developed.
The Base set up a resource library and a file on the shared server so that youth workers could collect and share any resources they find.

“There’s a lot of good stuff online from the UK and Australia. And I also collect good reference material, for example Opening Doors which was developed by NWICN (North West Inner City Network). Dublin 10 has done a services directory and we have an intercultural directory.” (The Base Equality Officer)

In terms of working with young people from different backgrounds, one observation was that **many of the resources are more suitable for a classroom-style of learning**, despite the fact that they should be focusing on youth work as non-formal education. Resources very often require strong literacy skills for young participants. Youth workers have to search for suitable resources for the group they are working with.

Youth workers and volunteers should also be aware that **many resources reflect a mono-cultural perspective** - in that the case studies are all about ‘the Other’, often in another country – with very few examples focusing on equality and diversity in Ireland. Youth workers need to balance this and represent all sides. Case studies in the resources may also be very close to the true life story of many of young people you work with, in particular Travellers, separated children seeking asylum, other asylum seekers and refugees, so we need to be sensitive to this.

If youth workers worked in larger team settings and had appropriate funding, many felt that they could **develop their own resources based on their own experiences**. This is sometimes the case for Foróige Regional Youth Officers who develop activity packs to support their youth leaders.

IGG stand out in the youth work sector in Ireland in terms of intercultural resource development. IGG feel that if a programme of activities stresses the value of diversity and inclusion – even where the membership was not culturally diverse –
there would be positive attitudinal shifts within each girl’s own life; at home, in her community and school.

“We needed to develop a resource to give guidance to leaders. We wanted it to be useable anywhere – whether it’s a multi-ethnic or mono-cultural group.” (IGG Outreach Development Officer)

Their Outreach Pack has been disseminated widely, is available on-line and is popular with many groups outside of Guiding. However, IGG also look to other resources to inform their work. They have an extensive library which includes books on various cultures, diverse religious practices etc. They have literature on tackling racism and collect activity ideas all the time. They are particularly keen on the NYCI One World Week packs. One of IGG’s most important resources is their magazine ‘Trefoil News’ which goes to every leader in the country and each publication features two pages dedicated to inclusion, diversity and outreach topics. It is sent free of charge eight times a year.

“We aren’t the experts – we look elsewhere and we keep looking. We are really lucky to have access to the resource of WAGGGS – the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts. The European diversity toolkit is very good. There is also a Girl Guiding UK resource called Including All and fabulous handouts which explores faith in Guiding. But sometimes I just create games myself for the newsletter and I use the internet a lot – I just pick a topic – there is loads there.” (IGG Outreach Development Officer)

The Base also has its own resources in terms of its facilities, including a full editing suite, a theatre space that can be used as a cinema, media suite, health suite, café and professional recording studio.
NYP2 also saw the value in developing sustainable resources and they set up the Cavan Centre, a residential centre specifically aimed at young people from Dublin inner city areas. Also small grant schemes are invaluable in getting groups resourced. NYP2 explained about the Impact Trade Union’s small grant scheme which gives grants of up to €1,000 for intercultural or educational projects.

**Resources may be people, especially organised young people.**

NYP2 pointed out how the YPAR and FNYPAR groups as resources for the wider community due to their consultative/advisory role. Swan Youth Service spoke about organised young people being a resource for change in the context of a Zambian project where young people from Swan Youth Service helped build new houses with local people. This project included advocacy training to help develop awareness in Ireland.

Youth workers said that **events which brought representatives of the youth work sector together were invaluable** in terms of sharing information and problem-solving. Events included training courses, and events which invited people to come, see and speak to youth workers from other locally-based youth work projects and also to meet minority ethnic communities in their area. NYCI also partner with Youthnet in Northern Ireland to hold seminars in which youth workers can share their experiences of inclusive youth work practice both North and South.

**Local events can also be a huge resource for your work.** Foróige clubs in South Dublin benefited greatly from becoming involved in **community-wide initiatives** in the area, such as international discos and quizzes.
BeLonG To have taken a strategic look at resource development. They decided that research and guidelines are of most benefit to the young people – i.e. they look to affect change in the wider community in which all young LGBT people are living rather than concentrate just on their own groups. BeLonG To have developed or supported the development of posters, guidelines, research and reports. They have disseminated these widely to schools and youth organisations. Young people are fully involved in these publications; they check them for relevance, pitch the language correctly and to make sure they portray the best images. Included in these publications is a ‘Coming Out Guide for Parents’, and the recently published ‘Addressing Homophobia Guidelines for the Youth Sector’.

BeLonG To were also instrumental in producing the ‘Growing Up Gay’ programme on RTE1. They have developed an excellent website which includes YouTube videos they have produced themselves and they continue to explore and research the use of new social technologies.

**Skills and training are important resources for youth work.** Staff and volunteers, who bring together their various skills and previous trainings, are a valuable resource to youth organisations.

“In my last job I had trained in the ‘Copping On’ programme with Youthreach. I bring so much of that training into my work at IGG. It really informs what I do and how I think as a youth worker. It gives a different perspective to my work. I know that other leaders bring their own skills to their leadership role. I wish sometimes we could capture it all so we could all learn more from each other.” (IGG Outreach Development Officer)

Sometimes leaders will have activity-based skills or they have language skills or have relationships and knowledge they have developed.

“Sometimes what helped is... well there’s an extended big Muslim family here and there’s a Grandad who is head of this family and he was reassured because I was...”
there, because I am Muslim. He knew that no one would force ideas on the kids. I would be able to stress the non-denominational nature of youth work and that there is no pushing of any religion.” (The Base Equality Officer)

NYP2 feel very strongly that there is a wider issue to look at in terms of resources. They see the need to focus on the integration of services and developing inter-agency work. In this way the available resources can be maximised for the young people who need it. For example, currently a number of services operate during day-time hours but there are not enough after hour’s services. They feel that by planning and collaborating this could be dealt with.
Additional Resources/Training:

Youth work projects recommended the following resources for intercultural youth work:

1 Activity-based resources

- NYCI Resources e.g. Life Stories; All Different, All Equal, all available from www.youthdeved.ie/nyci/publications
- Development education training, programmes, events, library and activities. Go to www.youthdeved.ie
- One world week packs www.youthdeved.ie/nyci/publications
- Irish Aid development education materials. Resources such as ‘One World, Our World’ are available through www.irishaid.gov.ie/publications.asp

- SALTO youth resources www.salto-youth.net
- IGG Outreach Resource Pack
  www.irishgirlguides.ie/resources/16475/uploadedFiles/Outreach%20Pack%20for%20download1.pdf
- Internet for various icebreakers and activities
- Films used for discussion e.g. Pixar’s For the Birds, Media that Matters etc

2 Professional development and capacity building resources

- NYCI’s ‘Promoting Quality in Intercultural Youth Work: 12 Steps to Good Practice’
- NYCI ‘Access All Areas’ Diversity Toolkit for the youth sector
  www.youth.ie/diversity
- NYCI training www.intercultural.ie/training

Department of Education and Skills intercultural supports for mainstreaming interculturalism in schools:
• Primary Schools www.ncca.ie/uploadedfiles/Publications/Intercultural.pdf

• Post-primary Schools  

• CSPE (Civil, Social and Political Education) manual for schools

• AIM (accessing intercultural materials)
  www.integration.ie/website/omi/omiwebv6.nsf/page/usefullinks-irish-
  DepartmentEducationportal-en or
  www.education.ie/home/home.jsp?pcategory=51881&ecategory=51922&lan-
  guage=EN

• WAGGGs (World Association of Guides)

• Changing Perspectives (from the Department of Education and Science) used in
  secondary schools for CSPE. Available from
  www.nccri.ie/pdf/ChangingPerspectives.pdf

• Council of Europe’s Youth Partnership T-kit (training kit) and in particular the
  one on intercultural learning: youth-partnership.coe.int/youth-
  partnership/publications/T-kits/4/Tkit_4_EN

• Other organisations such as Co-exist www.coexist.ie, a peace education group
  based in Dundalk, Co. Louth, as well as experienced peace education facilitators
  who volunteer with VSI.

• Opening Doors, The Intercultural Toolkit for Service providers in North West
  Inner City, NWICN, info@nwicn.ie, www.nwicn.ie 01 677 4025

• Léargas for information and funding for youth exchanges – Youth in Action etc
  www.leargas.ie

• Addressing Homophobia – Guidelines for the Youth Sector in Ireland, available
  from BeLonG To info@belongto.org, www.belongto.org, 01 6706223
How would you rate?/How is your organisation doing?

- Has your organisation developed a list/file of resources and activities on intercultural youth work?  
  YES  NO

- Are useful resources for intercultural youth work shared with all staff?  
  YES  NO

- Has your organisation gathered information on cultural and ethnic groups represented in your area?  
  YES  NO

- Does your organisation liaise with other services in the form of fora, committees or community-based initiatives?  
  YES  NO

- Has your staff and volunteers completed training on interculturalism?  
  YES  NO

- Do young people have a voice in your organisation in an advisory or advocacy capacity?  
  YES  NO
Step 11  Monitoring and Evaluation

It is crucial to undertake regular monitoring of your intercultural youth programmes. Before you begin any programme you should do a needs analysis of the group; and follow up regularly to monitor what the young people want and need from your service. Your organisation should have specific aims and objectives for the group that can be checked by staff. Evaluation should also include the young people themselves, especially minority members of the group. All monitoring should include attendance, reasons for absences and so on.

**Good practice in monitoring and evaluating intercultural youth work…**

Evaluation is crucial to any group, and all projects interviewed for this ‘12 Steps’ guide used several means of evaluation and on-going monitoring of their groups; including staff meetings, individual progress monitoring, informal discussions and written evaluations.

NYP2 do monitoring and evaluation during four intense staff planning sessions held during the year. Planning always consists of a thorough review of the previous quarter.

Alongside this process they hold weekly staff meetings where they review the individual cases of the young people they have set up a care programme for. A care programme is done with the young people most at risk. It establishes their specific needs, and it does this by asking them to consider key relationships in their lives – with their family, community, institutions, and themselves.

Where one-to-one work has been done with an individual, and a plan has been set up for them, a monitoring and evaluation process must take place. NYP2’s care programmes are reviewed and monitored with the young people themselves on a regular basis. BeLonG To also develop one-to-one programmes with some young
people which involves ongoing monitoring and evaluation in consultation with the young person.

It is crucial that **evaluation of group work is carried out with the young people directly**. Some groups use focus groups or establish a youth committee to receive ongoing feedback. Foróige set up a youth advisory committee as part of their monitoring and evaluation process. Foróige also have a regional conference each year where key issues will be raised and discussed. The issues that have been raised at Dail na nÓg (young people’s parliament event held every year) that year will be brought up for discussion. Issues raised at the conference will also feed into the next sessions of Comhairle na nÓg (youth parliament groups that meet regularly throughout the year at county level). There is a voting mechanism and the youth advisory committee will take part in Foróige’s National Executive. In this way they become part of the decision-making process. The process is about evaluating what is working in the groups across the country and what isn’t.

Alongside this, regional meetings take place at the end of each year and the groups will look at what worked in their own region, what didn’t and what supports are needed. At club level, Foróige leaders are encouraged to monitor and evaluate their own programmes. However, this does not formally feed up to the Regional Youth Officer but is done by leaders to inform their own practice.

In group evaluation of residential projects, VSI has used ‘Circle Meetings’ where the young people and staff/leaders come together every evening to evaluate the day.

“We have daily Circle Meetings where we all sit down. You can only speak when you’re holding the talking piece. It means everyone gets a chance to say what they want and it’s not just the same people speaking up.” (VSI Teenage Programme Coordinator)

**Getting feedback from young people can sometimes be difficult.** Swan Youth Service find it hard to get critical feedback from young people from minority ethnic
backgrounds in particular. The young people can be reluctant to be critical. Nevertheless, they always ask the young people, staff and volunteers how an evening and project went. They are always asking themselves how something is going - bringing critical reflection into everything.

**There are different tools for monitoring and evaluating.** Swan Youth Service like using the Programme Record forms issued by CDYSB. Each youth worker will fill them out consistently throughout the project – every time there is a meeting and also on conclusion of the project. But like all forms they don’t always reflect the experience on the ground or what the service seeks to record so Swan Youth Service have adapted the forms to suit their own purposes.

**Reflective practice also means asking if the current system of monitoring and evaluation is working.** The Base were not fully convinced that they were identifying gaps with the monitoring and evaluation process they were using. Often organisations evaluate what they are doing, but not what they are not doing. The Base brought in a consultant to look at their system and they are currently piloting a new system.

“This is about monitoring how we are meeting our own aims and objectives, how each project is doing, where are we going with it… what happens after it. Like when the Story Bag project was over we identified that we would need to do a summer programme with the young people and new young people came onto that and that became a completely different project – making puppets - which was great fun. Then there was an evaluation of that which led to referrals of the young people to the youth programme or the arts and music programmes.” (The Base Equality Officer)
The Base saw the need for creative ways of doing evaluations.

“We did fly-on-the-wall stuff and filming. The filming was done discreetly – from day one to the end - so we see the progress. We use video a lot. The young people are used to seeing our techy guy a lot so they don’t take much notice of him. But then we need to find the time to edit. It’s great we have all those resources here in-house. Also the young people love quizzes and ‘survey monkey’, they love clicking – yes, no, maybe! They love that sort of stuff and it’s really easy. We use photos a lot, especially if they are working on a project.” (The Base Equality Officer)

Checking in with young people on a regular, consistent basis is crucial. The Base has a young person’s advisory group – called the Youth Forum. When the young people were asked about their view of inclusion at The Base and for advice they would give to other youth organisations the young people stressed the importance of consulting young people, of having their voices heard and listened to. This is the reality of their experience at The Base where nothing is done without consultation, needs analysis and the young people’s full participation.

Written evaluations by the young people are also important but they don’t have to be traditional or ‘formal’. VSI use a tool called ‘reflection feet’ where young people take a card or paper cut out in the shape of a foot and they can write positive or negative things about the day. The young people also write postcards to themselves in their own languages which VSI will post to them after the project. VSI have also given the young people a disposable camera for residential projects, and each day they are given time to take a photo reflecting how they felt that day.

“I’m learning the important thing is dialogue with people when you work with them, even if we don’t have the same ideas in the start because the results are incredible!” (evaluation input from VSI Teenage Programme participant)

At BeLonG To in Dublin the practice of monitoring and evaluation of programmes has raised a number of questions. Currently they do a formal written evaluation
every month by which time they have spent four weeks covering a specific topic, but they feel they may be missing out on learning from throughout the month, especially what might have happened in the first week. They are also conscious that evaluations generate a large amount of paperwork which has to be processed and this takes valuable staff time. To find ways around this they have used **innovative ways to do evaluations** – pin on the wall, suggestion box, drawing a hand and writing the positive and negatives on the fingers/thumb. They have used symbols – such as smileys, sad face, neutral face. The immediate concern is in getting the quickest, easiest feel of where the young people are at.

BeLonG To note that there is also constant monitoring going on during activities so that a youth leader can step in if something isn’t going well or to pull things together at the end if there isn’t good closure on a topic.

Informal monitoring and evaluation can happen **in group discussions or having one-to-one conversations with the young person**. At the various projects there are numerous occasions when informal chats are held to establish how the young people were getting on. One youth worker said that young people who are experiencing trauma do make progress despite being in a difficult personal space. They say that though it might be slower or less obvious it is still important to view it and mark it as progress. Evaluation must be constant.

“I took away with me a feeling of belonging, new friendships and a great sense of myself.” (VSI Teenage Programme participant)

**Attendance is one very obvious but sometimes neglected way to monitor your group.** It is important to follow-up with a young person who has been attending your group and then stops coming. Monitoring can also be assisted by **talking to other agencies who work with the young people or their families.** Becoming involved in **inter-agency fora and showcases** is also a good way to hear and see what other youth groups are doing, such as the National Youth Council of Ireland’s events, European Youth Forum events and so on.
External evaluation can also be useful as it provides an objective assessment of your work. It is important to have the perspective of someone working outside the organisation. It is also important to demonstrate to funders that you have fulfilled the aims and objectives of your project, especially when you plan to apply for further funding. External evaluations are sometimes carried out by university graduates as part of their course work which offers a critique without the cost factor.

At some point, staff and leaders must also look at their projects in the context of the wider organisation and evaluate the organisational supports and structures. Regular staff meetings are useful and feedback to senior management is essential but some youth workers may wish to take a full day or other occasion to fully evaluate organisational issues.

IGG have taken time out to evaluate how their organisation is embedding diversity. They agreed that they want their membership to reflect the demographics of the country and they continue to set the targets they want to reach. Using surveys at three yearly intervals is the principle vehicle by which they evaluate their progress.

“Girls have learnt about each other and developed a better awareness and understanding of people, cultures and countries in a gentle way. It made the leaders more aware of reaching out. They didn’t always realise the difference and difficulties of fitting into another culture – stuff they learnt helped them in school when culture came up.” IGG leaders speaking about using the Outreach Pack

IGG monitor in other ways. One way was to review all of their literature to make sure it is inclusive – this a considerable task given that Guiding is in existence for 100 years and some of the early publications are still used. They also made a commitment that all future publications undergo an inclusion ‘audit’ by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee before it goes to publication. This process created a significant challenge to Guiding. The IGG Promise – a fundamental
pillar of Guiding, which all members say at their meetings and hopefully live by in their everyday lives - had to be changed to be more inclusive.
Additional Resources/Training on Monitoring and Evaluation:

- NYCI ‘Access All Areas’ Diversity Toolkit for the youth sector [www.youth.ie/diversity](www.youth.ie/diversity)

How would you rate?/How is your organisation doing?

- Have you completed a needs-analysis of your group? **YES**  **NO**
- Have you completed a needs-analysis with individuals? **YES**  **NO**
- Have you completed a self-assessment process to identify gaps in your organisation (e.g. the NYCI ‘Access All Areas’ Diversity Toolkit checklists)? **YES**  **NO**
- Have you repeated the self-assessment process at periodic intervals? **YES**  **NO**
- Does your organisation have a youth focus group or youth advisory committee? **YES**  **NO**
- Does your organisation consult formally with the young people to monitor and evaluate your work (e.g. through written procedures, formal interviews)? **YES**  **NO**
- Does your organisation consult informally with the young people to monitor and evaluate your work, e.g. through informal chats, observation etc? **YES**  **NO**
Step 12  Mainstreaming

Mainstreaming interculturalism involves an approach that plays itself out across all youth work activities and policy areas. It involves a review of existing youth practices to determine if cultural diversity has been planned for and embedded in all aspects of your groups’ activities. Mainstreaming interculturalism assumes that the goal of all youth activities should be the inclusion of diverse cultural groups both within the organisation itself and in the wider community. To achieve this, all staff and volunteers must understand and support interculturalism. In essence, ‘mainstreaming’ interculturalism is about having inclusive attitudes and values which in turn lead to good practice.

As a society, we have learned to look at all aspects of our services in terms of gender and disability. Interculturalism is about looking at all aspects of our organisations from the perspective of culture and recognising that everyone comes from an ethnic and cultural community which can be a factor in how services are perceived. Mainstreaming interculturalism, therefore, is adopting a lens that examines how young people and parents from minority ethnic and cultural communities will be affected by our work - and taking appropriate action if the affect is negative. Applying the best practices outlined in this resource in the most appropriate and effective way for your own particular group would be evidence of mainstreaming - or embedding - interculturalism in your youth organisation.

Good Practice in Mainstreaming Interculturalism...

In an intercultural youth organisation, all young people will feel like they belong and they matter for who they are. The young people’s cultural and religious practices – including those of the majority culture - will be understood and acknowledged in a way that is natural for all. Acknowledging and valuing everyone’s cultural identity is important and subtle gestures can be very positive, such as
celebrating festivals or ensuring appropriate foods are provided according to cultural or religious practices within the group.

However, we must remember that people are individuals irrespective of cultural identity. People who share a common language, religion or background are not automatically alike or have the same needs. Many young people do not like to be singled out or asked to represent their cultural group. To celebrate a young person’s ethnicity, a youth organisation should celebrate and explore diversity in general and also celebrate and explore the ethnicity of the majority culture.

At The Base there are significant numbers of Travellers involved, but there is a very strong emphasis on integrated services so highlighting someone’s individual ethnicity is not a focus. The focus is on capacity-building so that the young person from a minority ethnic background feels comfortable in themselves and their own identity, whatever aspects of that identity they want to express. At a youth forum meeting at The Base the two members of the Traveller Community present were extremely confident and eloquent and keen to speak for themselves to convey their own experiences of inclusion at The Base. Their articulation of their experiences showed a deep sense of who they were as members of the Traveller community and what that meant in the context of the youth service. They insisted, however, along with others in the forum, that integration is crucial and also that integration is a wider issue than just ethnicity. They described how they were brought together as a group, many of them had been involved in different projects and they didn’t know each other. The group described how young people need to be “forced together” (compelled to interact) and that you need to “actively fight against segregation and exclusion” if you are going to successfully mainstream inclusion and be an open and inviting service in general. They advised bringing people together in residential to break down any barriers.

BeLonG To would differ in that they believe that young people need space and opportunities to be together with their own minority group. They believe that one
of the greatest challenges to supporting minority young people is mainstreaming their issues (making their issues clear to all organisations) while also promoting a strong and vibrant sense of their identity and the differences they experience. They believe that young people who share an identity (ethnic, sexual or multiple) need to be supported to celebrate this with others who share these identities. They stress that work on interculturalism needs to be carried out with this in mind and that safeguards against enforced integration are put in place. They also believe that members of minority groups themselves are ultimately best placed to speak on behalf of their communities and that youth work in Ireland needs to place a focus on creating situations where this is made possible.

Intercultural youth work is essentially about having the right attitude and values. **Putting intercultural attitudes and values into practice means adopting an approach that reaches across all activities and policy areas of your work.** Mainstreaming interculturalism is often about instilling the attitude that embracing the new should be the norm. It is instilled by doing this in practice and in it being seen as a valuable and normative practice to others, especially young people who then embrace it in turn. In this way inclusion becomes actively promoted.

“My understanding of interculturalism is that it is what we do, being open to anyone, being a space that is welcoming, and also a learning process. ‘Open to anyone’ to me means there is always an embracing of new people, of being totally okay with transience, being stable in ourselves, always having the right atmosphere.” (BeLonG To Youth Worker)

BeLonG To have recently begun an LGBT Refugee and Asylum Seeker Project (staffed by a Coordinator and Administrator). Its aim is to improve the safety and quality of life of LGBT asylum seekers and refugees by developing best practice models for mainstreaming lesbian, gay, bisexual & transgender asylum seekers and refugees in statutory and voluntary asylum-seeker/refugee services, and also in
LGBT services with a focus on youth and young adults. In this way inclusion of LGBT young people becomes the norm in mainstream services just as inclusion of minority ethnic young people should become the norm in LGBT youth services.

At The Base and NYP2 they describe **interculturalism as being everyone’s responsibility**. They are confident that issues that arise will be dealt with by all staff members.

“It is core and seamless here. The thing is, a lot of youth groups are doing the whole ‘bringing it in and adding it on to what they are doing’. It’s true that you should be aware of it but if you are working from youth work or community principles it should be core. That’s what you should be doing anyway. If you are about empowerment and engagement and up-skilling and capacity building and equality and social justice and advocacy it should be there.” (The Base Equality Officer)

“We couldn’t but do it because we work in a defined neighbourhood and we are there to service that community and work with the families and young people who live in that community who are most experiencing difficulty. So when the demographics changed we felt that naturally enough some of the young people we worked with as a priority should reflect that demographic.” (NYP2 youth worker)

The **definition of interculturalism is that it is planned for and that cultural difference is respected and acknowledged**. Working in multi-ethnic settings can present challenges for different groups. Reviewing their current youth work practice to include cultural considerations has led to different responses from different youth work organisations. For example:

- The Base was conscious that participants coming from different cultural and national backgrounds may have added sensitivities around discussing sexual health. However, they decided that the best approach was to use real honesty when discussing topics. A successful outcome of this approach became evident when a young Somali activist visited and spoke to the young people about female
genital mutilation and asked for their support in a campaign she was running. They immediately took the issue on board and fully supported her to run an awareness raising event.

- NYP2 wanted to give the young people from diverse cultures a way to express their own concerns, and address issues they might have. So they instituted the FNYPAR group as a way of mainstreaming interculturalism by giving voice to young people to influence policy and practice.

- IGG’s response was to take a reflective look at their practice. This resulted in rewriting the ‘Promise’ and ‘Prayer’, which are key components of Guiding, to make them open and relevant to all faiths and ethnic groups. Instead of saying the words ‘duty to God’ they now say ‘duty to my God or my faith’. They also have alternative wording for ‘duty to my country’ where girls can now choose to say ‘duty to the country I am from and I live in’ so that a person can acknowledge the loyalty she might feel to another country if Ireland is not her original home. They have also devised a new prayer for the two younger age sections (Ladybird and Brownie sections) which is more about creating a stepping stone to spirituality and a focus on values rather than on a specific faith system.

Some groups spoke about how they learnt over time and with experience to respond to the specific needs of groups such as young asylum seekers.

- In VSI, it wasn’t something they felt they needed to know about in detail before doing this work – it involved having the right attitude and asking questions. However, in coming to understand the specific needs of particularly vulnerable young people from minority ethnic and cultural backgrounds the issue of the appropriateness of ‘positive action’ has been raised within youth work teams. All of these organisations now promote ‘positive action’ for certain groups. For them, it has meant advocating for the rights of these groups to be treated more favourably, in order to realise equality of outcome with their peers.
• NYP2 spoke about becoming aware of conflicts at home between parents and young people, particularly those connected to the stresses of the asylum process, cultural conflict, and expectations from the family. This can be very difficult for some of the young people and the need for the stability of a youth group at these times becomes even more crucial.

Mainstreaming interculturalism also means looking at structures within an organisation. IGG had sought and received funding from the Department of Education and Science for a four year period to have a staff member in place to build resources and capacity in the organisation. With the end to that funding IGG have taken new steps to mainstream interculturalism within their organisation. The principle vehicle by which this will happen is through the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee, a permanent committee which has a place at the National Programme & Training Committee and voice on the Executive Committee. This also works as a two-way process in that the EDI Committee will be aware of what is on the agenda of the Executive Council and they can flag anything that is important in terms of cementing an equality focus in the organisation. The Committee is also given a budget to carry out essential pieces of work to embed equality and interculturalism and to reach targets within the organisation to engage with more girls from minority ethnic and hard-to-reach backgrounds.

IGG have also taken a strategic direction to mainstreaming interculturalism. Alongside the development of their Inclusion Strategy they have built capacity in the organisation through an extensive training programme. IGG explained that a number of people have been trained up and can continue to train others. A support system will be set up for this pool of trainers. There will be a buddy system in place to encourage ongoing capacity building in the training group. Additionally, a
resource list will be available to all Guiding leaders and it will grow as others add to it. In this way learning and expertise will be captured and shared.

IGG say that persistence and time is important to mainstream interculturalism.

“I feel like I’m a pain in everyone’s side. But it’s about having the passion to be repetitive – to keep knocking on people’s doors. And to push the inclusion agenda wherever I see gaps. Being run by a volunteer committee or team into the future will offer a much stronger voice, as Guiding prides itself on being volunteer-led” (IGG Outreach Development Officer)

Foróige described how they could not claim that interculturalism is mainstreamed yet as an organisational wide mindset in so far as it would be possible for many groups to be largely mono-cultural and for their activities to focus on topics other than identity, diversity and inclusion work. To some extent this is because of the volunteer-led nature of many of their clubs. However, there are a large number of individuals, clubs, groups and managers who stress the need for an intercultural agenda within the organisation. In one region an intercultural strategy has been written and piloted and a proactive intercultural committee is in place. Foróige intend extending that to a national level. Foróige also has a best practice Unit and a focus on inclusion there would help bring a mainstreamed intercultural approach (whole organisation approach) much closer to reality.

All the groups said that planning was the key to doing good intercultural work.

“We do try to prevent issues before they come up. We explore cultural diversity with a lot of groups in their personal development sessions. And we do a lot of development education work and the young people do projects looking to Africa and the Middle East and they like to link in with things that are happening. We don’t have to wait for a black kid to show up to do anti-racism work, we do it anyway. So when we are talking about integration we do a lot of work with the group before they meet another group for instance.” (The Base Equality Officer)
**Mainstreaming happens at different levels of an organisation.** At The Base one example of mainstreaming is when catering staff were doing training on meeting dietary requirements. Faith-based restrictions were included alongside diets that are gluten free, celiac, diabetes, etc.

Both NYP2 and Swan Youth Service stated that while at the level of their own practice mainstreaming is apparent there is room for improvement at structural levels within the wider community. NYP2 explain that mainstreaming needs to happen at the level of the family, with the social worker or care worker being actively involved. Swan Youth Service would like to see it more visibly evident within the wider CDYSB structure so that it would filter down to other youth organisations.

**Mainstreaming interculturalism is about everyone in a community working holistically and collaboratively together.** The more interculturalism is embedded in your youth work the more it promotes intercultural approaches in the wider community. VSI ran a project that involved doing voluntary work in the community which helped to promote positive intercultural attitudes to a wider audience.

In recognising the role youth services play within the wider community NYP2 insist that young people attending their service maintain their attitude of respect at all times outside of the organisation - within the community itself – thereby affecting change more widely.

An open and inclusive community is how the young people from The Base described their own area of Ballyfermot. They described how they have a strong sense of belonging within the area itself and The Base are just one part of that.
While many youth groups have challenged and changed other services within the wider community by their positive practices, those groups that work with asylum seekers, undocumented migrants and refugees say they find it difficult that their work is done in isolation from a legal process over which they have little influence or control. Many projects work collaboratively with other services to try to overcome these barriers and to propose a cohesive approach to immigration issues based on consultation, planning and respect.

“We are fighting a lot of issues like deportation and dispersal with people individually. And they trust us to know we are working with them as people. It’s hard when you are working with someone and then they are gone. They may not have even wanted to be here in the first place but now they are more Irish than African sometimes and they want to shift them. It’s very inhumane. It’s a big issue but they know we are still trying to fight it at policy level, trying to bring about positive changes – in education and other areas.” (NYP2 Youth Worker)

All of the groups interviewed spoke about the positive energy in culturally diverse groups and the pleasure to be gained from this. They say how important it is ‘not to be afraid to ask questions’ so as to understand and ‘identify the notable differences and similarities between people’. They described how it isn’t easy work but it is essential work.

“There may not be schools with as many as 50% from minority ethnic backgrounds like us, but schools in the city will most likely have 20% or 30% so those kids need targeting. I think people are afraid. But if anyone is community-based then they must work with the people in their community. If they’re all Irish fine, but if they are African then it’s African kids you work with. It’s whatever it is – if the community changes you have to change. You learn things, the kids learn, you deal with it. It’s hard. You wouldn’t want to romanticise it.

Nevertheless, the staff have found it a refreshing change, a challenge yes, it has
been a challenge but I think it’s given the project a new zest for life. Having a new challenge is good, but I think it’s been very invigorating for the staff along with the young people.” (NYP2 Youth Worker)
Additional Resources/Training in mainstreaming Interculturalism:

- NYCI ‘Access All Areas’ Diversity Toolkit for the youth sector  
  [www.youth.ie/diversity](http://www.youth.ie/diversity)
- NYCI Intercultural training, particularly ‘Embedding Interculturalism in Youth Work’  
  [www.intercultural.ie/training](http://www.intercultural.ie/training)

How would you rate?/How is your organisation doing?

- Are your staff and volunteers openly committed to interculturalism?  
  YES  NO
- Does your organisation have:
  - an intercultural policy?  
    YES  NO
  - an intercultural code of practice?  
    YES  NO
  - an intercultural strategy/implementation plan?  
    YES  NO
- Does your organisation carry out reviews of your work to identify gaps and make changes?  
  YES  NO
- Does your staff have access to ongoing training?  
  YES  NO
- Does your organisation network within your community on interculturalism and related issues?  
  YES  NO
- Has your organisation taken action on some or all of the 12 steps outlined in this document?  
  YES  NO
Glossary

‘Your organisation’ – In order to be a guide for the whole youth sector in promoting intercultural youth work, the ‘12 Steps’ uses the term ‘your organisation’ to refer to all youth projects, clubs and services within the youth work sector in Ireland.

Terminology

- **Asylum Seeker** - a person seeking to be granted protection as a refugee outside their country of origin, and is awaiting the determination of his/her status (See below: Refugee). In Ireland, the asylum process is a legal system which decides who actually qualifies as a refugee and is then entitled to remain in Ireland. Those judged not to be refugees can be deported. If a child under 18 years arrives in Ireland without parents or guardians, and seeks asylum, he/she is called a **Separated Child Seeking Asylum**.

- **Charter** – a Code of Practice or group contract

- **Direct Provision** – accommodation provided to asylum seekers while their claim is being processed in Ireland. Direct Provision Centres are located nationwide. In direct provision, asylum seekers are provided with accommodation and food, but with little privacy or independence. Asylum seekers receive €19.10 per week per adult, and €9.60 per child to cover essential items such as toiletries and travel.

- **Ethnic Identifier** – a question on a person’s background which can be included on your organisation’s membership form or asked in an interview. It includes information on nationality, ethnicity, place of birth, family background and native language(s). It is helpful in planning adequately for the particular needs of young people in your group. It is good practice to ask the nationality or ethnic identity of the young person, and of their parent(s)/guardian(s)/primary caregiver(s).

- **Interculturalism** - recognizes that ethnic and cultural diversity can enrich our society. This approach implies the development of policies that promote communication, understanding and integration between different cultures and
ethnic groups. In *multiculturalism*, difference is accepted but not necessarily valued, and there is no acknowledgement of the need to interact with others. *Assimilation* promotes the absorption of all into the dominant culture, seeing difference as a source of conflict and making minority cultures as invisible as possible.

- **Mainstreaming** – refers to the integration and embedding of a particular issue into all aspects of an organisation’s policy and practice. In the ‘12 Steps’ guide, the issue is interculturalism. Mainstreaming often refers to incorporating needs and issues of a particular into a general service or system, and essentially means an overhaul of how we have been doing things in the past, to include a new perspective in all we do. Mainstreaming interculturalism requires the adoption of an intercultural ‘mindset’ in all we do, and assumes that the goal of all youth work should be the integration of diverse cultural groups, within the organisation itself and in the wider community.

- **Minority Ethnic background** – in ‘12 Steps’ we refer to engaging with people from minority ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The ethnicity in question refers to the *background* of the young person and not necessarily how they identify themselves. Do not assume someone else’s ethnicity or describe them by your own definition of who they are – simply ask them how they like to be described. Often, people prefer to identify themselves by more complex or mixed ethnicities, for example, Polish-Irish, Irish-Nigerian, Indian-Irish, etc.

- **Networking** – this means building relationships with all stakeholders. This should include community and religious leaders, families and existing networks of minority ethnic groups, as well as schools, religious institutions, community services and other youth work organisations. Look for opportunities to meet communities and parents, and work with other local groups.
• **Refugee**[^4] – a person who has had to leave their country of origin because of a well-founded fear of persecution because of reasons including their ethnicity, religion, nationality, or political opinion. Ireland is a signatory to the ‘1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees’, which obliges us to provide protection to people fleeing their country for the reasons above. Refugees are entitled to apply for ‘family reunification’ to bring their immediate family members (within certain criteria) to Ireland.

• **Separated Child Seeking Asylum** - previously called ‘unaccompanied minor’, this is a child under 18 years who is seeking asylum in Ireland and is not with his/her parents or guardians. These children are in the care of the HSE and can attend school until completing the Leaving Certificate. They are not entitled to free State education beyond secondary school.

[^4]: UN official definition: A refugee is someone who "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country."
List of Acronyms

BTAP – Ballyfermot Traveller’s Action Project

CDYSB – City of Dublin Youth Services Board (CDYSB manages the funding of many youth services in the city)

CSO – Central Statistics Office

DCC – Dublin City Council

DTF – Drugs Task Force

EVS - European Voluntary Service

FGM – female genital mutilation\(^5\) (also known as FGC - female genital cutting)

FNYPAR – Foreign National Young People At Risk group (see YPAR)

IGG – Irish Girl Guides

LGBT - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender

NDP – National Development Plan

NGOs - Non-Governmental Organisations

NWICN – North West Inner City Network

NYP2 - Neighbourhood Youth Project 2

ODO - Outreach Development Officer (IGG)

OMCYA – Office of Minister of Children and Youth Affairs

RYO - Regional Youth Officer (Foróige)

VSI – Voluntary Services International

YPAR – Young People At Risk group

\(^5\) It should be noted that FGM is a value based term and should be used carefully and in context. In this publication it was the term of choice of the young activist and the group she worked with. In circumstances where someone has not condemned the practice it may be more appropriate to use the term FGC, or female genital cutting, to aid discussion and awareness raising without having a value judgement block progress.