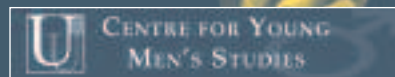


Young men and Violence

Practical ways for youth
workers to engage and
support young men



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Introduction

In January 2002 YouthAction Northern Ireland received funding from YouthNet through the EU Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation's Thematic Initiative 'Young Men and Violence.' The project was one of three programmes supported to develop an understanding of the relationship between young males and violent behaviour throughout Northern Ireland. There was to be particular focus on the relationship between young men as victims and perpetrators of violence.

This resulted in the publication of 'Everyday Life; Young Men, Violence and developing Youth Work practice in Northern Ireland.' The study poignantly captured the fact that violence is one of the most significant features defining male youth culture.

The study had three main aims:

- To consult with young men about their experience and attitudes in relation to violence
- To use the findings from these consultations to develop models of practice that demonstrated how focused work can support young men in exploring their experiences of violence
- To promote greater awareness of young men's issues and needs in relation to violence through dissemination of the research findings

Since 'Everyday Life' YouthAction Northern Ireland has continued to develop practice with young men around the theme of violence and training for practitioners. Despite this, practitioners continue to find it difficult to address violence related issues with young men and report a lack of resources to support violence related work.

This resource builds upon the findings from 'Everyday Life' and shares some of the practical lessons that have evolved through exploring the nature of violence in the lives of young men.

This resource is a practical tool for workers who are interested in developing processes that explore violence and its impact upon young men and others. It aims to enable and support young men to reflect upon violence through group orientated exercises that are engaging and related to their everyday experience of violence. It is assumed that facilitators will have a certain level of experience in working with young men and appreciate the need to work in ways that are creative, participatory and conducive to learning.

Findings from 'Everyday Life'

Twenty-two groups of young men (135 in total) aged 14 – 25 from Catholic and Protestant communities, including interface areas, were consulted about their experience of violence. 46% were from Catholic communities and 54% were from Protestant communities.

Issues identified by the young men during the initial consultations largely determined the actual content and focus of pilot programmes. They were also influenced by further issues and areas of relevance highlighted during initial group sessions. Whilst the young men commonly thought that there was little that could be done to make their society a less violent place, they found the pilot programmes useful for exploring attitudes and behaviour, on a personal level. In particular they welcomed the opportunity to talk in a supportive environment about their issues and feelings in relation to violence, and frequently used the sessions as an outlet for their fears, concerns, frustrations and aspirations and role in a more peaceful society.

A broad range of themes emerged from the consultations with young men:

- Violence was perceived as a natural part of male youth culture
- Violence was accepted as 'part of everyday life'
- Although the majority of young men had direct experience of violence on a daily basis they felt powerless to change this in any way
- Most young men were reluctant to see themselves as perpetrator, or unnecessarily violent
- The majority of young men saw themselves as defending themselves or their communities
- Many of the young men said that they never reflected on violence or spoke to anyone about violence even though they lived in fear
- Young men repeatedly talked about feeling unsafe. Despite this, they spoke of experiencing both a fear of violence and an attraction to violence
- The young men desired more control over their anger and ways to manage violent situations
- They wanted environments where they could let off steam, talk about issues and learn skills to deal with violent situations
- Most young men felt alienated within their communities and could not identify with community processes of any kind
- Violence was often an expression of young men's hopelessness, frustration, boredom and energy
- Alcohol was frequently mentioned as an important factor in young men's involvement in violence

"I think there is a lot of pressure on fellas to be violent."

"It's hard not to get involved in violence. You see it all the time on TV and in the community where I live."

Violence is 'just a good laugh' like some sort of entertainment."

Violence is an integral part of life

The reality of violence in young men's lives

Associated with violence, many young men are drawn to the excitement and 'glamour' of violence. In communities throughout Northern Ireland young men often find themselves in violent situations or coming into contact with paramilitaries either by being recruited into their ranks, falling victim to punishment beatings and/or shootings.

As stated in 'Everyday Life': "To not prioritise violence related issues in work with young men is to ignore one of the major influences within male youth culture."

Therefore it is of the utmost importance to address the role that violence plays in the lives of young men. The reality and extent of violence was evidenced throughout the consultations. Young men often spoke of their desire for communities to be less violent and voiced the constant pressure placed on them to fight.

Key issues raised by young men included:

- Being fearful in their own community
- The constant need to appear tough and fearless
- Regularly feeling pressure to be involved in violence
- Having to continually deal with violence
- Witnessing some form of daily violence
- Being victims of violence on a regular basis
- A belief that there are no alternatives to violence
- The need for boys to stand up for themselves from an early age
- Not knowing how to deal with problems other than fighting
- Wanting to avoid being seen as someone who cannot stand up for themselves
- Certain types of violence are acceptable to young men



Practical Issues

Youthworkers as Educators

Youthworkers are in a powerful and unique position to positively influence young people. Their skills and knowledge enable them to build purposeful relationships with young people and offer them the possibility of change.

Young men on YouthAction programmes frequently cite the non-judgmental attitude and supportive approach of the youthworker as crucial in creating an atmosphere of openness, allowing them to express their attitudes towards violence in comfort. The ability to engage young men effectively opens up the possibility of reaching those who have been most affected by violence and the legacy of the Northern Ireland conflict. It also means engaging with those who have been both the victims and perpetrators of violence and attempting to engage them in dialogue as part of the quest towards a more peaceful and stable society. This may be perceived by many as a fanciful aspiration. However, in a society emerging from conflict to peace, part of any resolution must be to engage those who have been most actively involved in the conflict.

Programme Delivery Methods

An external evaluation of 'Everyday Life' identified a number of factors that contributed to why the work with young men around the theme of violence was conducive to supporting them to talk about issues in their lives. These factors were:

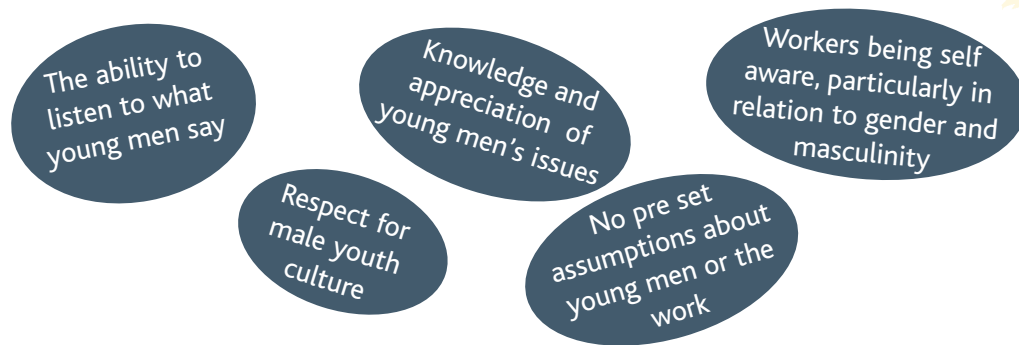
- An approach that was generally supportive of young men and sympathetic to their lives
- An approach that aimed to encourage young men to talk and reflect upon their experience rather than teach them anything
- An approach that actively engaged young men in discussion and reflection
- Sessions that harnessed young men's natural energy and creativity
- Sessions that related directly to the issues young men themselves had raised, including:
 - Daily violence
 - Alternatives to violence
 - Understanding and managing their own anger
- The use of role plays, story telling, opportunities to talk and reflect, sessions that involved movement, activity and fun, use of video/film, external speakers with direct experience of violence and sessions that introduced alternatives to violence all kept young men interested in programmes.

"We talked about things you wouldn't normally consider."



Engaging young men

The skills of the worker are central to the development of work exploring young men's participation and experience of violence. While many of these are relevant to good youth work practice, others are more specific and reflect male youth culture. The following factors are what young men have identified as being supportive to them:



Further considerations for workers:

- It is the responsibility of the practitioner to work creatively with young men
- Ensure young men are actively involved in planning and decision-making processes
- Try to recognise and understand both verbal and non verbal communication and how young men often use bravado as a coping mechanism
- Sessions should be 'real' to young men's lives
- Understand that learning also occurs outside of structured sessions
- Inform and involve other agencies in the local area of the purpose of your work with young men
- Certain types of violence are acceptable to young men
- Don't under-estimate the impact that violence related work can have upon individual young men

Creating learning environments

Work with young men can occur in buildings or on the streets. Most frequently youth workers meet young men in youth and community settings where the young men attend and are known to the worker. The idea of going out to meet the young men 'on their own ground' is also a powerful and practical expression of attempting to actively engage young men. Time spent where young men gather, enables workers to build relationships with different young men and identify some of the issues the young men face in their communities. No matter where the work occurs it is important to think about the type of environment you wish to create.

Learning environments for work with young men should:


- Be safe
- Build trust
- Ensure confidentiality
- Combine Movement, Fun and Reflection

PRACTICAL EXERCISES

This section of the resource presents some practical exercises that have evolved through YouthAction Northern Ireland's work with young men around the theme of violence. These exercises can be used or adopted to meet the needs of the young men that you engage with.



"I liked it when the guy (ex-offender) came to do the story telling about his experiences of growing up, about all the stuff he did and then going to jail. Loads of those things are like that here. He talked about violence and told us what jail and stuff is really like, instead of just guessing about it."



"We got to talk about violence and other things to do with it. We've never done that before, even though we're in fights all the time, you never really think about it that much or talk about it."

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Exercise: **Boom**

Aim: To increase awareness of violence

Objective: To identify 'Triggers' or 'Red Flags' of violence

Resources: Balloons, Flip chart, Markers

Methodology: The facilitator begins the session by asking the group what they believe triggers of violence to be. After ensuring that the group understand, the facilitator gives each participant a balloon and reads out a number of situations and/or statements. The group is told that each time a statement or situation raises a red flag for them, they blow into their balloon. As a number of statements continue to be read the young men should begin blowing into their balloon. Ideally this should be continued until at least some of the balloons have burst. Some discussion may be allowed at this stage to assess what the young men feel had just happened. Not only can the facilitator relate the bursting balloons to keeping feelings and emotions inside but also draw on the 'simple' trigger that occurred just before the balloon burst. Discussion can centre on not only the trigger but what does it mean for the balloon to 'burst'.

Tips for facilitator:

Potential triggers could include:

You're gay	No money
You're stupid	No job
Are you thick?	No girlfriend/boyfriend
Your ma...	Girlfriend/boyfriend two-timing you
Waste of space	In trouble in school
Druggy	Told to leave a shop
Weakling	Parent/s ask where you've been
Fruit	Mates get jumped
Mental	You get jumped
Fat	Someone spreading rumours about you
Skinny	Lose money
Swat	Nowhere to go at the weekend
Bully	Parents split up/argue
Smelly	Feel left out
Taig	
Prod	
Fenian	
Hun	

"Coming here made me realise that violence and fighting isn't normal."

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Exercise: **Red Square**

Aim: To increase awareness of violence and alternative behaviours

Objective: To identify triggers of violence
To identify positive coping mechanisms

Resources: Labels, A4 paper, markers

Methodology: The aim of this exercise is for the young men to visualise the difficulties arising from aggressive behaviour and examine coping mechanisms.

Preparation

In preparing for this exercise the facilitator should prepare sticky labels with triggers (refer to 'boom' exercise) written on them. The triggers that are written on the labels should be also written on A4 sheets along with everyday situations such as you 'meet with friends'. On each sheet triggers as well as normal situations should be written down. For example on one sheet it should say, 'someone slagging you' and on another 'meet with friends'. The aim is to line all the statements up on a grid (e.g. 5 squares * 5 squares) that the young men have to cross.

Identifying triggers and getting the labels

Five minutes should be spent at the start to allow the young men to identify what their triggers are. If the young men feel that the trigger the facilitator calls out relates to them, they take the sticker and place it on their chest. This continues until the list is complete.

On the grid

The facilitator then brings the group to the grid and one at a time the young men are allowed to cross the grid taking one step at a time. The aim initially is to cross the grid without hitting one of their triggers. Once they do they are off the grid and it's the next person's turn.

When everyone has had a turn the group is allowed to cross again but this time when they hit one of their triggers they can provide an appropriate response to deal with the trigger and pass to the next square.

Tips for facilitator:

It is essential that enough of the triggers are made for the labels. It is also important that the triggers are well placed on the grid.

Triggers Grid

			You go to the Cinema	
	Someone compliments you			
			You're fat	
			You're gay	
Out with friends				



PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Exercise: **Relaxation**

Aim: To increase young men's ability to cope with stress

Objective: To identify methods of relaxation

Methodology: The facilitator introduces the exercise and may allow some conversation about different methods the young men already use to relax or cope with situations they find difficult. It may be an idea to provide examples of situations for the young men for example 'How do you cope when you have had people on your back all day?' or 'You come home and your parents are giving you a hard time...' It is important that the facilitator draws not just on their experiences but on methods they use already whether that is punching a wall or listening to music. The facilitator highlights that we all have ways of dealing with things and these methods can be both negative and positive.

The facilitator can help the group think through different ways that they can cope with stressful situations through visibly identifying them on flipchart. The group may decide what coping methods are and likely to have a positive impact on attitudes and behaviour, and which are negative, damaging to the person and those around him.

Relaxation should be introduced as another way to cope with stressful situations and the facilitator should explain that the exercise is about learning to relax. The facilitator should read the relaxation story opposite. Music is helpful but not a pre-requisite.

Tips for facilitator:

The relaxation exercise is a good way to get a group focused. It provides an alternative way of coping with stress and can be an alternative to violence - one which may never have been previously available to the young men.



"No one asks us what we want. Sure they would hardly listen even if they did"
(Young Man aged 15)

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Relaxation Exercise

I want you to close your eyes and think about the day so far. I want you to think about what has happened so far. Think about what you have done from since you have wakened this morning. Getting ready and leaving the house. What happened along the way? Now think of coming here today/tonight. How did you get here? Imagine the feelings as you walked in the door. Now I want you to relax and leave that day you had or the day you're going to have. I want you to leave all those thoughts, worries and anxieties at that door. I want you to begin to listen to the music. Begin to be more conscious of your breathing. You become conscious of the rhythm of your breathing (pause). You feel the tension leave your arms. Feel the weight of your arms and your hands. You begin to relax your toes and up to your ankles (pause) you feel each leg begin to relax – your left leg (pause) your right leg. You become more aware of the weight around your chest, the muscles around your neck and shoulders. Think about your head and the weight it holds. Listen to your heart beating. Feel the air fill your lungs. Your chest moves up and down, up and down, feel the air go in and out, in and out. Begin to relax. Listen to the music and you're becoming more relaxed and more relaxed.

Now you're going to leave the room. Imagine a carpet is taking you on a journey to a place you've never been but somewhere you've dreamt of. A place of calmness and tranquillity where there is no fear, no pressure no-one to disturb you. You're going to this place and below you see the life you're leaving behind for a short time. In the distance you begin to see your special place. How do you feel to see it? Feel the excitement the joy and the peace. Now take your time and have a look around. Are you on your own? Take it all in, listen to the music and be aware of your surroundings.

It's now time to leave. You get back on the carpet and are travelling back. You rise up and up and are travelling high above the land. You begin to see the room come back into view. You begin to see your life return. How do you feel? Feel the same joy and excitement to return now after having time away. Pressures are now challenges you'll overcome – what are they? – see them and smile. You see the people... people you want to be close to.

You become aware of your body, your breathing. You feel your hands, your feet, your toes, your fingers, arms, legs and chest. Feel your chest move up and down up and down while you breath in and out. You become more aware of the sounds around you and the people around you. You become aware of your surroundings, the room and in your own time get up

"I learnt about ways of calming myself down or staying calm and thought about the feelings you get after you get angry or crack up."



PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Exercise: **Silent Witness**

Aim: To increase awareness of violence

Objective: To identify and recognise experiences of violence

Resources: Worksheet, pens

Methodology: The facilitator introduces the exercises by asking the group what forms of violence they are aware of. After exploring some of the different forms of violence that can take place, the facilitator explains to the group that violence is often a part of everyday life and so much so that much of it goes unnoticed and becomes normalised. The facilitator introduces the worksheet as a way to highlight the amount of violence that goes on around us that we are either unaware of or feel incapable of dealing with.

After allowing time for the young men to consider the extent of violence they have been witness to in for example the past week, time should be allowed for the group to talk about how this impacts on their attitudes and behaviour and in what ways they cope with these images and experiences.

Tips for facilitator:

It is important that the group don't just feel safe in feeding back what they wish to but that they feel personal information may be kept outside of the group. The young men should be advised that the facilitator would be available after the session for one to one support or, be given information or helpline numbers of individuals/agencies who can support them. The group agreement and confidentiality should be emphasised before the exercise.

"We got to talk about violence and other things to do with it. We've never done that before, even though we're in fights all the time, you never really think about it that much or talk about it."

Silent Witness

Name:

Day Date:

	AT SCHOOL	AT WORK	IN THE COMMUNITY	ON TV	IN MAGAZINES	AT HOME	AT THE WEEKEND
SLAGGING							
PUNCHING							
KICKING							
SPITTING							
STABBING							
HITTING (with a weapon)							
EXCLUDING							
UNWANTED SEXUAL ADVANCES							

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Exercise: **My Community**

Aim: To promote positive active citizenship

Objectives: To explore positive and negative aspects of community
To explore likes and dislikes of community
To explore ways of becoming more positively involved in community life

Resources: Flipchart/card, markers

Methodology: The participants are provided with a sheet of flip chart paper each and markers and asked to write their name which ever way they want on the sheet of paper at the top of the page. They are then asked to draw a symbol or word which represents who they are and/or how they see themselves. Time should be allowed for some discussion around what the young men have written and why.

The participants are then asked to think about what community means to them, forgetting about their images for a minute. Allowing some time for discussion, the young men are asked to consider what their community means to them and articulate likes and dislikes in words or images below their name on the flipchart. This is a good way to gauge views and attitudes of young men and a starting point for discussion of their views and attitudes towards community. Narrow perceptions of community should be explored by the facilitator alongside positive messages. The facilitator should allow time for feedback.

Tips for facilitator:

Good debate within the discussion can identify the paradoxes within communities for young men. Community at times can bring both a sense of belonging and at other times a great sense of isolation. The facilitator should draw on all types of underlying issues.

"We felt comfortable with the worker and with talking to him. You listened to us and pushed us. Like always asking us questions that made us think. But you didn't treat us as if we had to talk – there was no pressure."



PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Exercise: **Men and the media**

Aim: To explore male stereotypes

Objective: To identify how images of men are portrayed in the media and explore how this affects attitudes and behaviour towards violence.

Resources: Newspapers, magazines, glue, pens, markers, flipchart paper, card

Methodology: The group is divided up into sub groups and each group is asked to cut out images of men that portrays something about what it means to be a man.

Group is then given newspapers and magazines. They are asked to cut out images of men, and to think about what the image says to them. Groups are then asked to create a collage using some of the images on card or flipchart. Each group should provide a brief explanation under each image.

Tips for facilitator:

This should be the basis for further discussion on the construction of male stereotypes and how this impacts on attitudes and behaviour of young men. Time should be allowed for feedback from each group and reflection on how this can lead to violence should be encouraged.

"I'm in trouble all sorts of ways. The group helped me calm down and think about things."

"I would think about violence more now. Not just about fighting, all different sorts. Arguments and doing damage to stuff, that's violence too."



PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Exercise: **Agree/disagree**

Aim: To explore young men's attitudes towards violence

Objective: To assess the acceptability of different forms of violence

Resources: Situations cards, agree and disagree cards

Methodology: The facilitator provides the group with a list of potential situations which are read out in turn. At each end of the room the facilitator sticks up 'Agree' and 'Disagree.' After each statement is read out the group members decide to either agree or disagree with the statement and move to the corresponding end of the room. Statements such as 'it is ok to hit your girlfriend' should be followed on by more contextual statement such as 'it is ok to hit your girlfriend' if for example 'she has two-timed you'. This is a good exercise to highlight the irony of societal expectations placed on young men. On one hand young men may believe it is wrong to hit women but given more context some may believe that it is legitimised by a presented threat to their masculinity. It is important that the facilitator not only allows discussion to occur but helps that group to understand what the underlying attitudes are while also acknowledging the conflict between values and expectations.

Tips for facilitator:

Facilitator should be aware that some young men will not have thought through the issues and will draw on male stereotypes. It is important that the facilitator challenges stereotypes.

"There's too much temptation, like the place is full of pubs and off-licences so it's dead easy to get drink and all your mates are drinking"
(Young Man aged 17)



Agree/Disagree Statements

- All men are violent
- Men are more violent than women
- All young men like violence
- Violence is exciting
- It's ok to hit a man
- It's ok to hit a man with a weapon
- It's ok to hit a woman
- It's ok to hit a woman if she hits you
- It's ok to hit your girlfriend if she two-times you
- There are times when it's ok to hit people
- Violence is just physical
- Men should defend their community
- Men should defend their family
- You have to fight

"I think that we are all seen as
wasters as we are always
hanging about all the time"
(Young Man aged 14)



PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Exercise: **Anger iceberg***

Aim: To explore aggressive behaviour amongst young males

Objective: To identify times when the young men were angry and discuss

Resources: Flipchart paper, markers

Methodology: Groups or individuals are asked to think about a violent situation that happened in the last week. The participants are given a worksheet/flipchart with a picture of an iceberg floating in water. Participants are asked to think about the feelings that they portrayed in public or on the surface, following this situation. They are then asked to think or write the feelings, thoughts, actions that occurred in private, represented by the part of the iceberg concealed below the surface of the water. The facilitator can also support young men in exploring alternative responses to the situation and how they behaved.

Tips for facilitator:

Facilitators are tasked with creating a safe environment where young men can be open and honest. The group agreement may be referred to prior to the exercise. The facilitator may need to make the young men aware of what is public and what is private.

* Adapted from 'Healthy Relationships Curriculum' Men for Change, Nova Scotia

"Speaking up and talking about yourself is difficult. It's something I could never have done before, but now I'm happy to talk away about loads of things."

"A drop-in type of place where we could do stuff, this would prove that we're not all trouble makers"
(Young Man aged 14)



PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Exercise: **Emotional Pizza**

Aim: To increase young men's awareness of emotions

Objective: To identify the multitude of emotions young men experience

Resources: Flipchart, Markers

Methodology: The facilitator introduces the session by identifying positive and negative emotions. This can be facilitated by providing a visible alphabet on flipchart. On the sheet each letter of the alphabet is accompanied by space to write emotions alongside the letter. For example beside 'A' the group may suggest 'Aggression'.

On the flipchart, the facilitator or one of the group members draw a large pizza shape and divide this into the number of young men in the group. Each young man is asked to take a slice of the pizza and think of an event in the past. The group are asked to recall the situation and given time to reflect on it and consider the range of emotions that they experienced as they went through it. Group members can draw from the alphabet list. Once the emotions and scenarios have been written down the facilitator may draw on certain emotions and question their place in the lives of young men. The facilitator can also explore what emotions young men are likely to express in public and in private and how this can have an impact on emotional and mental wellbeing.

Tips for facilitator:

It is important that the facilitator draws on both the positive and negative emotions that young men experience and how this is reflected in both their public and private lives. The second exercise may draw out negative emotions and the facilitator may relate this to the positive list in the alphabet encouraging alternative behaviours.



PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Exercise: **Big Body**

Aim: To challenge gender roles and expectations

Objective: Identify and explore stereotypes as well as real experiences

Resources: Flipchart, Markers, Volunteer

Methodology: In groups the participants are asked to nominate someone to lie down on two sheets of flipchart paper. Others from the group are provided with markers and asked to draw the outline of their 'volunteer'. Once this has been done the group are asked to consider what it means to be a man. Inside the body they are asked to write all the issues they face, pressures that affect them and expectations they believe are placed on them as young men. On the outside of the body, the groups are asked to consider how they feel the rest of the community perceives them whether that be their family, neighbours, teachers, shop owners, police etc. Considerable debate can be generated from this exercise and a lot of time can be spent talking about roles, expectations and the impact that these have on the lives and behaviour of young men.

Tips for facilitator:

In order to keep the debate productive considerable encouragement may be required for group members. Explaining the tasks in steps serves to avoid confusion. For example asking the group to draw the body and then explaining what to write on the inside of the body followed by the outside. Throughout the feedback the facilitator should help the group to engage in a process of questioning underlying issues. The role of the facilitator is also vital in streamlining messages the group are discussing.



"If we did help with putting something out in the community like seats, it would only get wrecked by the older ones at the weekend. How are we gonna stop them from wrecking it, we'd be killed"
(Young Man aged 16)

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Exercise: **Personal Ad**

Aim: To increase self-awareness

Objective: To identify and present personal skills and qualities

Resources: Worksheet, pens

Methodology: The group is given around 15 minutes to sell themselves and think of positive things about themselves to tell the group. It can be an uncomfortable exercise and the facilitator's skills are therefore vital in engaging the young men. As a helpful start the young men may be given a worksheet with four headings on it as the basis for the ad. They include 'who you are', 'skills you have', 'achievements you've gained' and 'qualities you have'. The young men are then asked to write and to present in any way they wish the ad they have developed with the basis of these headings.

Tips for facilitator:

Sometimes this can be a difficult exercise given that many young men do not share emotions. There may also exist a fear among young men that by expressing feelings and emotions they will be rejected by others. This not only serves as an affirmation exercise but can also increase trust within the group.



PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Exercise: **Man in a box**

Aim: To explore male roles and expectations

Objective: To identify alternative male roles

Resources: Fake money, box, characteristic cards, auctioneer

Methodology: The young men are given a number of cards with characteristics written on them. The characteristics may include those traditionally associated with men such as provider, aggressive, strong, violent and good footballer etc. as well as non-traditional characteristics such as caring, loving, good homemaker etc. The young men are also given a box and asked to place in the box the characteristics which they feel relate to being 'a man'. Once this is completed and after debate has occurred, the young men should be left with characteristics which are considered feminine or masculine. Then each group is given fake notes. The facilitator then proceeds to begin an auction taking all the characteristics. The young men bid for characteristics they would like to keep. At the end of the auction the facilitator should encourage discussion about the expectations and restrictions placed on young men by 'putting them into a box.' The conversation should allow debate on how these restrictions influence attitudes and behaviour.

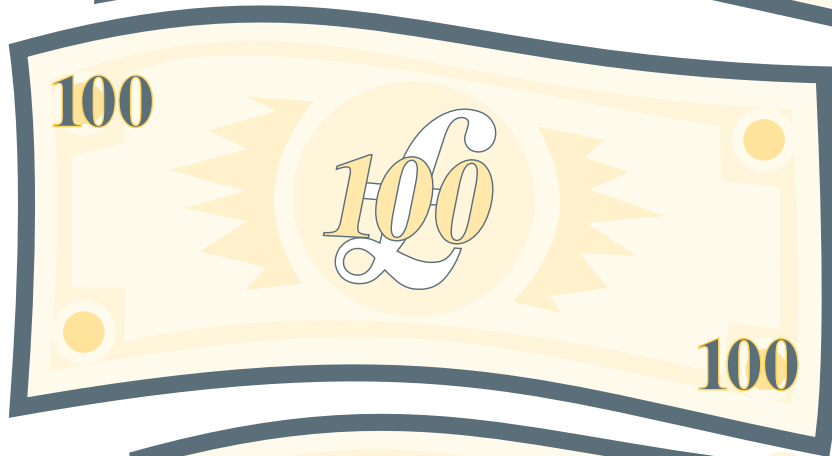
Tips for facilitator:

Young men should be encouraged to think 'outside of the box' of male stereotypical roles. Facilitator should allow debate to flow during and after the exercise.



*"I like to be trusted, given the chance to do something that's a bit of craic for us and prove to people that we can actually do something"
(Young Man aged 16)*

Money



PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Exercise: **Victim and perpetrator**

Aim: To promote community safety

Objective: To explore the nature of victims and perpetrators of violence

Resources: A4 paper, pens, scissors

Methodology: Within the group young men are asked to think about and discuss how they would characterise a victim of violence. Discussion may centre on the most vulnerable in society including the elderly, disabled, women, children etc. Once this has been discussed, they are encouraged to describe perpetrators of violence.

The group is then given paper and asked to write down a time when they felt that someone was attacking them. As this can leave young men feeling vulnerable, the events or stories can be written down anonymously with the paper folded up and placed in a hat. The stories can then be read out by the facilitator who should compare young men's experiences with their perceptions of typical 'victims'. Discussion can then progress on to the reality of victimhood for young men.

Tips for facilitator:

This exercise can form the basis of community safety awareness. Discussion can lead on to how the events listed by the young men may have been avoided. It is useful to be aware of the many different forms of violence experienced by young men and avoid inappropriate disclosures.

"Aye, this place is a hole because of all the temptation that's about. You do things because your friends are doing it and I ain't gonna be the one who's left out"
(Young Man aged 16)

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Exercise: **Quotes**

Aim: To promote self-esteem and positive mental health

Objective: To explore pressures in young men's lives

Resources: Quotes from young men, 'Agree', 'Disagree' and 'Unsure' cards.

Methodology: Quotes taken from either the group being worked with or previous groups are read out by the facilitator. Agree, Disagree and Unsure cards are placed at different ends of the room. After each quote is read out the young men are asked to state their opinions by placing themselves in the appropriate area of the room. Further advantages may be gained from allowing some debate based on the position of each of the young men.

Tips for facilitator:

The quotes for this exercise should be taken from real statements made by young men and not by assumptions made by the facilitator translated into 'quotes'. These can be taken from statements made by young men within groups previously or indeed the quotes listed below.

The facilitator may also play Devil's Advocate either agreeing or disagreeing with the statements to prompt debate.

"We talked about things you wouldn't usually consider. Now I would think about things before I do them."



Quotes

"There's not many opportunities for men to talk about their problems, but there should be."

"We talked about things you wouldn't usually consider. It was good to be able to express your opinions and say how you feel."

"Holding feelings in leads to you going insane and you start to think about suicide. Men need to talk about their feelings, but there's not many people you can talk to."

"I'd like people to have a good impression of young men – cos they don't."

"You need to talk about things that bother you and express yourself sometimes. It can relieve your anger and stop you exploding."

"There's not many opportunities for men to talk about their problems, but there should be."

"I'd really like to change. I don't want to get angry and violent all the time, but it's hard to change. My life's crap, but how do I go about changing it."

"It's mad like. If you're out rioting or even fighting and you win - you feel important –like you've got power-something you don't get from school or your mates or something."

"Fellas don't learn by just sitting there and writing all the time."

"You need the buzz – if you don't have the buzz you feel like there's nothing."

"You need your mates cause if you don't have any mates you've no back up-you're on your own."

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Exercise: **Emotional Bingo**

Aim: To increase emotional literacy

Objective: To identify emotions, feelings and their meanings

Resources: Bingo grids, markers, flipchart

Methodology: The participants are given a grid with 16 squares. Like bingo each square has a number allocated to it with a corresponding emotion or feeling. For example, when the facilitator calls out the number 1, anger is the corresponding emotion, as seen below in the grid. If the young men have the correct number called out and can identify the corresponding emotion they can mark it off their grid. If someone calls 'Bingo!' getting any four numbers in a row, column or diagonal line the facilitator asks the individual to explain the emotions corresponding to each number.

Tips for facilitator:

An example of a grid is illustrated below. The facilitator can adapt this according to the size of the group. Whilst this grid contains 16 squares it could be adapted to allow more or less squares but remember that for each square you need to identify an emotion or a feeling.

If this is being co-facilitated, it may be an idea to have someone record some of the issues raised by the young men for further discussion.

It is important to get a balance between positive and negative feelings and to acknowledge that these emotions and feelings are a normal part of everyday life.

1 Anger	3 Aggression	15 Proud	13 Understood
5 Hurt	7 Lonely	21 Successful	17 Scared
18 Sad	11 Guilty	9 Loved	24 Anxious
12 Happy	8 Depressed	2 Appreciated	31 Invincible

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Exercise: **Music Makers**

Aim: To increase emotional awareness

Objective: To explore impact of music on feelings and behaviours

Resources: Songs, CD player, worksheet, pens

Methodology: Either in groups or individually, the young men are played a series of song snippets from a variety of types of music (e.g. rave, rock, soul, classical). After all the music is played the young men are asked to consider what the song means to them, and the kind of emotions that are stirred as they listened. After all the music has been played the facilitator should play the snippets one at a time and allow time to discuss the feelings and thoughts and memories of the young men as they listened. Thoughts may be written down anonymously. This exercise can be used in conjunction with the other exercises in this resource that explore emotions.

Tips for facilitator:

A list of emotions may be placed on and around the room for easy reference. The facilitator should be able to explore why certain types of music trigger certain emotions.

"I'd like not to get blamed for everything that goes wrong round the place"

(Young Man aged 17)



PRACTICAL EXERCISE

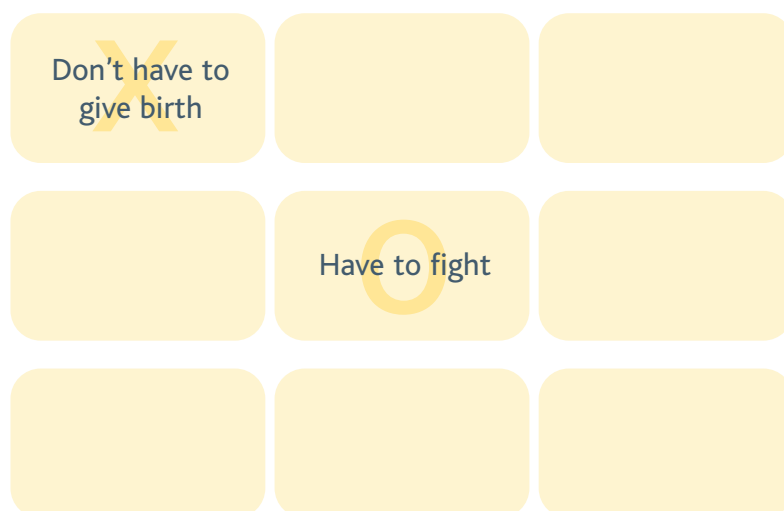
Exercise: **X O**

Aim: To increase awareness of being male

Objective: To identify positive and negatives issues about being a young man

Resources: Flipchart, A4 paper, Markers, Pens

Methodology: Participants are paired up for this exercise and asked to draw the template of an XO grid. Each player then chooses whether he is 'X' or 'O'. Whoever is chosen to be the X is asked each time he places an 'X' on the grid, to tell the group or write something positive about being a young man. Those who write 'O' are asked to think about something negative about being a man.



Tips for facilitators:

The facilitator's skills may be vital in the success of this exercise as young men often resort to bravado without delving into the deeper abyss of their lives. Special attention should be paid in summarising the positive and negative aspects of being male. Time should be allowed for discussion around masculine pressures and it is also important that the facilitator responds to comments that are sexist, prejudiced and promote inequality.

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Exercise: **Story telling**

Aim: To promote alternative behaviours

Objective: To increase awareness of violence

Resources: Story-board, paints, markers, pens, creativity

Methodology: The young men are given a scenario such as 'Jimmy is a second year in a secondary school and is getting trouble from some other young men...' the young men are then asked in turn to add a word as quick as possible to develop a story as it unfolds. Ideally there should be two facilitators one to scribe and one to encourage the young men. After around 5 minutes the facilitator may read back what has been said. This is a good basis for discussion and an effective way to begin talking about alternatives to violence.

Tips for facilitators

The beauty about this exercise is that it very quickly engages the interest of young men and can be adapted to suit many different topics. However, it may be necessary for the facilitator to run this exercise a few times in order to allow the young men to articulate the situation.

Other suggestions for stories may be:

'Jimmy's mates invite him to come along to a party...'

'As Jimmy is walking home one night a gang of young males start calling him...'

'Jimmy thinks he should learn self defence because...'

'Jimmy feels pressured to...'



PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Exercise: News-lie

Aim: To increase personal awareness

Objective: To make the link between public and private lives of young men

Methodology: This works especially well with 'friendship' groups but can act as a good ice-breaker also. The group is split into pairs, with one member interviewing the other. The interviewer is given several minutes to prepare five questions to ask their partner. The young man being questioned is told to include one incorrect answer in his responses. After the questions have been answered the interviewer attempts to identify the incorrect response.

This enables discussion about the ways in which young men communicate and pressures they may experience to present themselves to others.

In many cases even the simplest of questions such as 'do you like football?' can have unexpected results and open debate after the interview.

Resources: Volunteers!

Tips for facilitator:

The facilitator can explore with young men the pressures they feel and the way they behave in public and in private. The facilitator may choose to allow debate after each interview or alternatively if there is more than one interview have discussion at the end of the session.

Each interviewer can ask questions on a different topic, such as fighting, the importance of having mates, issues within his community, drugs and alcohol and coping with violence.



PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Exercise: **Violence in Sport (1)**

Aim: To increase awareness of violence

Objective: To explore the extent of violence in sport


Resources: Flip chart, Markers

Methodology: The young men are divided up into groups of three or four. Each group is asked to think about their favourite sport and asked to write down the process of getting the players from recruitment to success. For example in a football team there may be trials, recruitment, training, matches etc. At each stage the group is asked to write down how the competition, desire to win, tensions between players etc can lead to violence and aggressive behaviour.

Each group feeds back how they feel sport can display aggressive and violent behaviour. The facilitator then asks the group to consider how these behaviours can have an influence on young men following the sport. Points that young men make should be written down on flipchart by the facilitator.

Tips for facilitator:

Since not all young men are interested in football, the facilitator should encourage the groups to consider other sports as well for example tennis, ice hockey and hurling



"People think that we are great when we are heading out with our football bags on the way to the field, but they look at us differently when we're not playing football"

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Exercise: **Violence in Sport (2)**

Aim: To increase awareness of violence

Objective: To explore the extent of violence in sport

Resources: Television, video/DVD, Flipchart, Markers

Methodology: This exercise can be facilitated in one of two ways:

1. The facilitator should prepare the session by recording a recent sporting event such as a rugby match. The more recent and relevant to the young men the better the exercise will work.
2. The groupwork session can be delivered at a time when a sporting event is being shown on television

The young men are asked to watch the match and consider the behaviour and attitude of the players. The young men are given a worksheet highlighting different responses and behaviour that they can 'tick off' throughout the game to highlight the extent of violence.

After the game the facilitator should explore the young men's thoughts throughout the exercise. The young men may have picked up on aspects of competition of which they had never been previously aware. Drawing on the recordings made by the young men, the facilitator should encourage the young men to reflect on the extent of violence that sometimes goes unnoticed and how this can have an impact on young men and their behaviour.

Tips for facilitator:

It is important that the session is fun, and the young men are interested in the sport. This exercise works best with contact sports, although expressions of anger can also occur in other non-contact sports such as tennis, snooker and squash.

The facilitator can use this as a social evening and bring along 'munchies'.

"You feel that you have to stick up for your mates, if something happens on the sport field, but you shouldn't have to."

Violence in Sport

BEHAVIOUR

TICK

SHOUTING

CURSING

AGGRESSIVE HAND GESTURES

PUSHING

SHOVING

KICKING

PUNCHING

SPITTING

TRIPPING UP

DIRTY LOOKS

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Exercise: **'Male talk'**

Aim: To identify how roles and expectations can lead to violence

Objective: To explore how men relate to each other

Resources: Situation worksheet

Methodology: The facilitator reads out a series of scenarios (listed opposite) and asks the young men to discuss their response to each. From the feedback provided by the young men the facilitator can encourage debate around the underlying assumptions, unwritten rules, expectations young men face and how this can impact on male behaviour.

Tips for facilitator:

The scenarios can be taken from the examples on the page opposite but the facilitator is encouraged to develop his or her own scenarios also.

"It's a dump. Nothing is clean and the council are doing nothing about it"
(Young Man aged 17)



"I used to like going to the youth club years ago, but they've just started doing everything for the wee ones. There's nothing for us to do there now"
(Young Man aged 17)

Male Talk

- You meet a male friend you haven't seen in a long time. He greets you with a hug
- Your team win the FA Cup and everyone in the bar is jumping around shouting, kissing and hugging each other
- You're sitting with your girl/boy friend and your mates walk in
- When you're out with your friends one of them starts an argument with another crowd
- When you're out with your girlfriend she starts arguing with another fella
- Your friends want you to come out but you say you've work to do for school
- One of your mates has become depressed
- One of your mates calls you 'gay' because you want to sit in with your girlfriend
- All your friends are looking for a career in the building industry, but you want to stay on in school

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Exercise: 'Mirror, Mirror'

Aim: To increase positive self esteem

Objective: To identify how negative self image can lead to violence

Resources: Create a Mirror, Mirror worksheet on flipchart and pencils

Methodology: The facilitator introduces the exercise by asking the young men to think of someone they really don't like. Each young man is then given a worksheet with the outline of a mirror on it and pencils. The young men are firstly asked to draw a portrait of this person. Once the young men have drawn the outline of the person they are asked to take five minutes to consider exactly what it is about the person that they don't like. After five minutes the young men are asked to put the portrait up to their own face and consider the similarities between themselves and their portrait. The young men are then given a second worksheet and asked to repeat the exercise this time drawing someone they admire and again asked to consider the similarities and aspirations to be like this person. The facilitator should explore what the barriers are to being who they want to be.

The facilitator should explain that a lot of feelings towards other people may sometimes be a projection of how we feel about ourselves. The real 'us' can be hidden beneath a layer of negativity. From we are young we are told who we are e.g. stupid, clumsy. As time goes on these negative feelings can be reinforced by our failures. We tell ourselves we are who people say we are. Imagining this, we practice it. For example the more people tell us we are stupid, we imagine ourselves to be stupid and we let ourselves become 'stupid'. This reinforces negative self image. We even waste a lot of time proving to others that we are who we have convinced ourselves we are.

The facilitator should then read out the extract about fears by Marianne Williamson on the page opposite and encourage discussion.

After the session the young men should be encouraged to try the meditative exercise 'Think new, feel like you' on page 41 for a week and see if they noticed any positive changes in how they think about themselves.

Tips for facilitator:

It is important that the facilitator is sensitive to some of the negative self images that may occur throughout the exercise and that the facilitator reinforces the benefits of positive self image and positive self talk

poem

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate,
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.
It's not our light, but our darkness, that frightens us.
We ask ourselves: who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?
Actually who are you not to be?
You are a child of the universe.
Your playing small doesn't serve the world.
There is nothing enlightening about shrinking,
So that other people will feel secure around you.
We are born to make manifest the glory of the universe that is within us.
It's not just in some of us: it is in everyone.
And as we let our own light shine,
We unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.
And as we are liberated from our fear,
Our presence automatically liberates others.

Marianne Williamson

think new feel like you

1. Take a few moments to relax and breathe deeply. As your muscles relax, it becomes easier and easier to unleash your imagination.
2. Now, imagine another you standing in front of you. This is the most magnificent you that you can imagine – your true self.
3. Take a moment to feel totally happy with your true self. Look at the way your true self stands, breathes, smiles, walks and talks. Look at how you speak to others. Look at how you handle problems and go for goals.
4. Now step into your true self. See through the eyes of your true self and hear what you hear, feel what you feel.
5. Take five minutes and daydream about how life would be different as you live more and more like your true self. Think of a number of situations from the past, present or future and how you would behave.

Adapted from Paul McKenna – 'Change your life in seven days'

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Exercise: **Decision Making**

Aim: To increase young men's understanding of the relationship between actions and consequences

Objective: To highlight how pressures can influence decision making

Resources: Values worksheet (page 43)

Methodology: The facilitator introduces the session explaining that the topic focuses on decision making. The session is opened by highlighting that every small decision impacts upon our future, and that sometimes these decisions are influenced by others. The facilitator asks the young men to individually complete the Values Worksheet. The young men are given five minutes to complete the exercise and after feedback is given, the facilitator discusses the answers to the questions contained within the Value Sheets.

The facilitator poses the question "Do young men make decisions based on their own values, or do they respond to the pressures and expectations placed upon them?"

This question can be related to those in the Values Worksheet e.g. 'You're challenged to fight in school/work - what do you do?.' Emphasis should be placed on why certain actions were taken, and time allowed to discuss more positive responses to the statements in the Value Worksheets.

Tips for facilitator:

If you are aware of literacy difficulty within the group you could put this on an overhead projector or on flipchart and talk the young men through the answers. Video footage could also be used to highlight pressures on young men.



"No one asks us what we want and why we are always hanging about. If they ask us stuff then they will see us differently"
(Young Man aged 15)

Values

Our values should be the strongest influence on the decisions we make. However, sometimes other factors such as peer pressure and expectations of how we *should* behave influence our decisions.

To help you think about what your values are complete the questions below

Someone has challenged to you to a fight

What do you do?

.....

Why?

.....

You've been going with a girl for a while and your mates are slagging you about how far you 'have gone'.

What do you do?

.....

Why?

.....

One of your friends is always the brunt of the joke and gets a lot of slagging

What do you do?

.....

Why?

.....

You're underage and your friends offer you a drink

What do you do?

.....

Why?

.....

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Exercise: **Heroes**

Aim: To explore male roles and stereotypes

Objective: To highlight how perceptions of heroes can lead to violence

Resources: Discussion questions, flipchart, markers, 'what is a hero' poem

Methodology: The facilitator asks the young men to think back to when they were young and the people they considered 'heroes'. These heroes could be fictional characters or real people. The facilitator asks the young men to shout out the heroes as he/she scribbles on flipchart. Once a list has been completed the facilitator should engage the young men in discussion around the similarities of these heroes.

Questions to prompt discussion might include:

- Are there any similarities between these people?
- What characteristics, powers, abilities do these people have?
- Are there any of these characteristics, powers or abilities we would like to have ourselves?
- Do we strive to be like these people – invincible, powerful, popular etc and How?
- How do we achieve this?

A popular definition of hero may be used to highlight the fantasy that surrounds our perceptions of who we aspire to be

"in mythology and legend, a man, often of divine ancestry, who is endowed with great courage and strength, celebrated by his bold exploits, and favoured by the gods".

Colombia Encyclopaedia

Tips for facilitator:

The facilitator should challenge the group by asserting that being a hero is often not about doing fantastic things that the whole world will see but is more about doing the little things that no-one may ever see. While the facilitator challenges the group to consider how they can be a hero in their everyday lives, the passage 'What is a hero' page 45 is read out. It is also important to be sensitive to all the issues raised and be aware of the young men's different life experiences and backgrounds.

What is a hero ?

A hero is someone who moves beyond fear
And while fear is still there, they have a heart to win,
They conquer not by forceful bravado;
But by summoning strength from within

A hero is someone whose sense of what is right
Overcomes the expectation of others,
And when they perform beyond all their dreams;
It is selflessly for others' good

It is not within them to carry revenge,
Nor to boast of victories won,
But to quietly face every new challenge;
And with the help of others,
Do what needs to be done

And even if fate deals him less than fair hands,
He plays them with fairness of heart,
For it is an inherent goodness within
That sets a hero apart

Anonymous author

In Northern Ireland, as elsewhere, many young men are struggling to find their place in a world experiencing rapid social and economic changes. This has had a major impact on young men's expectations, behaviour, education, mental health and employability. Subsequently young men are often disillusioned and frustrated and actions can lead to violence, suicide or risk-taking behaviour.

YouthAction Northern Ireland

Work with Young Men Unit

Michael McKenna and Colm Walsh

YouthAction Northern Ireland has been developing non-traditional approaches to work with young men since the early 1990s. Through listening to the pain, hurt, anger and sense of hopelessness from the young men, YouthAction Northern Ireland has sought to proactively address the issues they experience through developing partnerships with young men throughout all the projects delivered in Northern Ireland, learning from each project as we go. We also offer support, training and resources to local workers and community groups engaging with young men. Over the last ten years, we have refined our way of working, learning from each project as we go.

www.youthaction.org

University of Ulster

Centre for Young Men's Studies

Dr. Ken Harland, Sam McCready and Dr. Karen Beattie

The Centre for young men's studies resides within the Community Youth Work department at the University of Ulster and is located within Incore - centre of excellence for the study of peace and conflict. Working in collaboration with YouthAction Northern Ireland, we seek to provide an understanding of the issues facing young men and boys living in Northern Ireland through action research, training and the development of practice.

www.incore.ulst.ac.uk/cyms

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