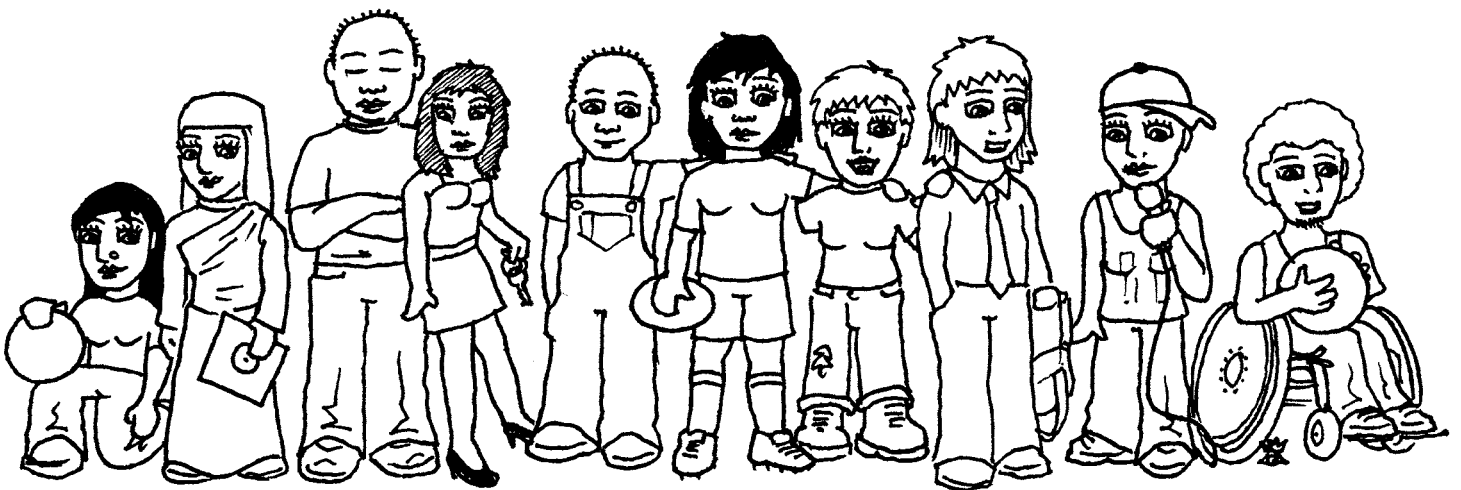


Opening the doors

*A 'Do It Yourself' Access and Equity manual
for working with young people*



*Produced by YAPA and the Access Project Reference Group
for the Nepean Better Futures Strategy*

Opening the Doors

This is one chapter of **Opening the Doors**. The other chapters are:

- What is Access and Equity?
- What does the law require me to do about Access & Equity?
- What does my funding body require me to do about Access & Equity?
- Young people with a disability
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people
- Gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgender young people
- Early school leavers
- Rural and geographically isolated young people
- Young women
- Young parents
- Refugee and migrant young people
- Young people with mental health issues
- Young people involved with the juvenile justice system

Opening the Doors is only available online. You can:

- browse the publication in a series of web pages
- download individual chapters as PDF files
- download the whole publication as a PDF (large file: 2.4 MB – broadband recommended).

www.yapa.org.au/openingdoors

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Disclaimer: This manual is a general guide for NSW services designed specifically for the Nepean Region (Blue Mountains Penrith & Hawkesbury). The producers of the manual took reasonable care to ensure that all information was correct as of 2005. However government regulations, laws and standards are complex and do change over time. This document is not intended as legal advice. You should seek clarification on legal matters through other publications and authorities.

INTRODUCTION

This manual is for anyone who works with young people, or wants to work with young people.

We have designed this manual for the Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury and Penrith areas (the Nepean Region). The manual also contains useful information for other areas in NSW as well.

It has lots of practical advice about working with different groups of young people who may experience barriers to using your service.

It's a "Do It Yourself" access and equity manual for working with young people.

BETTER FUTURES

Better Futures is a New South Wales Government initiative designed to improve the effectiveness of support and services for children and young people aged 9 to 18 years, and extends on the Family First Initiative.

Objectives of Better Futures

Better Futures (BF) is designed to increase the effectiveness of services across New South Wales for young people and to identify better ways of working with young people aged 9-18 yrs and is based upon three central concepts:

1. Recognition of prevention and early intervention as effective, cost-effective in the long term, and empowering to individuals and communities
2. Focus on community and individual strengths and capacity building
3. Risk and resilience theory and the place of connection to family, school and community as a protective factor against the development of other at-risk behaviours

BF will enable the NSW Government to build on our increasing understanding of risks and protective factors for young people; complement existing services and programs; and, encourage innovation and advancements in practice at the local level.

Using a partnership approach, involving all tiers of government and community organisations, BF aims to improve planning of service delivery for young people and to ensure that available resources are used to achieve the best outcomes for young people.

Overarching Principles of Better Futures

Field of Activity (FOA) 4 - *Strengthening the connections between communities and families* is an underpinning principle of the Better Futures Strategy.

The general principles which guide the BF Strategy include:

Participation – Young people should be active participants in the development of policies, programs and services and in decision-making that impacts upon their lives

Opportunity – Young people require fair access to opportunities and services so that they can enjoy life and participate in the community

Collaboration between Services – Consultation, collaboration, and partnerships between organisations working with young people are essential to improving existing services, planning new programs and providing quality services to young people

Prevention and Early Intervention – Focus on these strategies while recognising the need to strengthen critical responses in some key areas

Evidence-based Solutions – Applying what has been found to work, recognising that this may mean changing practices within existing services

Effectiveness – Monitoring and evaluating to measure improvements in key outcome measures for children, young people and families

Fields of Activity

The Better Futures (BF) and the Aboriginal Child Youth & Family (ACY&FS) Strategy builds on the NSW Government's Families First (FF) strategy and planning framework, which is based on Fields of Activities (FOA's) 1, 2, 3, and 4. Better Futures extends on Families First continuing with Field of Activity 4, with an additional 3 Fields of Activities 5, 6, and 7. The ACY&FS covers all seven Fields of Activities and focuses on improving outcomes specifically for Aboriginal children, young people and their families and communities.

The planning framework for FF is based on planning within the Four Fields of Activity, as follows:

Families First Fields of Activity (FOA) for 0 – 8 population:

FOA 1: Supporting parents who are expecting or caring for a new baby

FOA 2: Supporting parents who are caring for infants and young children

FOA 3: Assisting families who need extra support

FOA 4: Strengthening the connections between communities and families

Better Futures, with a focus on young people aged 9 to 18, extends on this planning framework by including an additional four Field of Activities, this has been amended from the 2003-2004 plan which used 3 Field of Activities. With the addition of FOA 4 this focuses on building resilience and increasing protective factors for young people.

Better Futures Fields of Activity (FOA) for 9 – 18 populations:

FOA 4: Strengthening the connections between communities and families

FOA 5: Support the healthy development of young people and their participation in communities

FOA 6: Keeping young people at school and improving their educational attainment

FOA 7: Supporting young people at very high risk

The Nepean Better Futures Steering Committee has representatives from Government and Non-Government Agencies.

The Better Futures Steering Committee Representatives currently are as follows :

Jo Sammut, Communities Division DoCS

Jill Schofields, Department of Education and Training

Ian Hanslow, Penrith Youth Interagency

Leizsha Clissold, Penrith Youth Interagency

Robynne Cole, Department of Community Services

Sue Eastwood, Department of Community Services

Worker, Youth Accommodation Interagency Nepean

Joy Sneesby, Department of Housing

Katerina Tahija, Penrith City Council

Erich Weller, Penrith City Council

Graeme Pringle, Western Sydney Area Health Service

Bruce Drake, Department of Sport & Recreation

Michelle Colless, NSW Police Service

Kaylene Kelland, Hawkesbury City Council

Marcello Scali, Hawkesbury Youth Interagency

Jo Brown Blue, Mountains City Council

Annette Coulter, Blue Mountains Youth Services Network

The Steering Committee developed the Nepean Youth Plan in 2003/2004 and 2004/2006 is responsible for its implementation, monitoring and review at a local level.

For further information on Better Futures contact Sue Eastwood
Community Projects Officer
Better Futures
(02) 4729 8200
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What is access and equity?

ACCESS means that your service is available to everyone who is entitled to use it.

EQUITY means that your service is developed and delivered on the basis of fair treatment of everyone who is entitled to use it.

Access and equity also involves identifying and removing barriers that stop young people knowing about or using your service.

Access and equity are important principles of social justice.

Other social justice principles include:

Communication means that young people are informed about your service and how they can use it.

Participation means that young people are given opportunities to have their say and have their views considered in decision making processes that affect their lives. This includes the opportunity to have their say about how your service and its programs are developed, delivered and evaluated.

Responsiveness means that your service is aware of the needs of young people from diverse backgrounds and is responsive to these needs as much as practicable.

Effectiveness means that your service is results orientated and focuses on the actual outcomes being achieved for clients.

Efficiency means that your service makes the best use of available resources.

Accountability means that your service reports on the way it provides its services and is accountable to young people, their families, the broader community, funding providers and your management committee.

There are a number of Australian and NSW laws about access and equity which your service needs to comply with. If you receive any government funding your funding body will also require you to take action on access and equity as a condition of funding. We have outlined relevant laws and funding body agreements in the following pages.

In this manual we have outlined some of the main issues and barriers affecting different groups of young people. This information is written as a guide to increase your knowledge and awareness. Each young person should be seen as an individual, and as such they may have different needs than other young people.

How to use the checklists

We have developed some checklists to get you thinking about how your service is performing on access and equity issues.

It is best if you can work through these activities with your management committee or staff team, but you can also do these activities by yourself.

Steps

1. Read through each checklist and answer yes or no to each question
2. You now have some guidelines for what you are doing well (your yes responses) and some goals for how you can improve (your no responses)
3. Prioritise each of your no responses
4. Choose 3 – 5 goals to work on in the next month and write a plan of how and when you will achieve them. You may want to include your plans in your work plan or strategic plan.
5. Once you have achieved one of your goals you can record your action as a new achievement and choose another goal from the remaining items on your list.
6. Keep other people, including your management committee, informed of your progress and share good ideas and examples with your colleagues and your youth network.

Access & equity checklist

Policies & procedures

- Your service has a written commitment to access and equity in its constitution Yes No
- Your service has a written access and equity policy Yes No
- Your staff, volunteers and management committee understand your access and equity policy Yes No
- Your staff, volunteers and management committee understand your legal access and equity requirements Yes No
- Your staff, volunteers and management committee understand your funding body access and equity requirements Yes No

Employment, recruitment and development of staff and volunteers

- Your service has a written policy on Equal Employment Opportunity Yes No
- Job descriptions require staff to have an awareness of access and equity issues Yes No
- Staff and volunteers receive training on access and equity issues Yes No

Needs analysis and planning

- Your service has up to date information about the demographics in your community Yes No
- You collect statistics from young people who use your service about their cultural background Yes No
- Your service compares the demographics of your local area with your client statistics to identify groups of young people who do not use your service Yes No
- You consult with a broad range of young people, including those who do not use your service Yes No
- You consider community profiles and needs in your strategic planning processes Yes No

Having a Say

- Your management committee includes a diverse range of community members Yes No
- You provide informal ways for young people to have a say about your service Yes No

Access & equity checklist

Partnerships & networks

- You have a list of services that you can refer young people to Yes No
- Staff attend relevant interagency forums, ie the migrant interagency. Yes No
- You provide information about your service to a broad range of
community groups Yes No

Promotion

- Your service portrays a range of young people in advertising your service . . Yes No
- Your promotional material is accessible, ie translated information,
TTY phones. Yes No