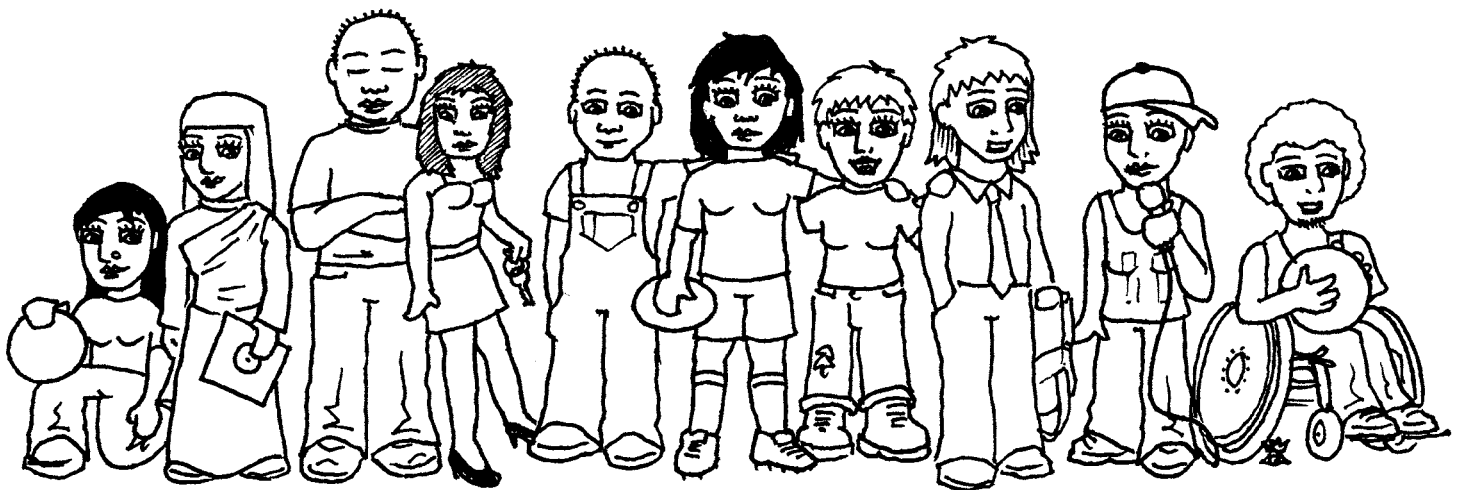


Opening the doors

*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

Enquiries: info@yapa.org.au (02) 9319 1100 or 1800 627 323

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Drawings: Colin Stokes.

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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.

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.

WORKING WITH ... **YOUNG WOMEN**



DEFINITION, DEMOGRAPHICS AND TERMINOLOGY

This section refers to young women.

Young women make up 50% of the youth population in the Nepean area.

Although young women are equal in number to young men they may not participate equally in youth services.

In many services, more young men than young women:

- attend or use the service
- dominate activities at the service.

To implement access and equity principles you need to make sure that young women are getting "a fair go" at your service.

OVERVIEW OF THE NEEDS AND ISSUES

Young women face a range of disadvantages in comparison to young men.

Despite advances in economic and social standing in recent decades women continue to face disadvantage in a range of areas.

In comparison to men, women are more likely to:

- earn lower incomes. On average, women who work full time earn only 85% of the wage earned by their male counterparts. (\$772.10 per week compared to \$910.50 per week).⁶
- earn lower earnings, on average, in each occupation.⁶
- be under-represented in management positions. Only a quarter of all management positions are occupied by women.¹⁰
- work part time. 46% of women work part time compared to 15% of males.⁴
- combine part time work with family responsibilities.⁴
- be under-represented in local, state and Australian governments. Women hold

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only 24 – 31% of elected government positions.¹⁰

- be underrepresented in sport and physical activity.¹⁰
- bear most of the responsibility for child raising. For example, 83% of lone parents are women.²

Physical and sexual violence

Many women face physical or sexual violence.

30% of women over the age of 18 have experienced physical violence since age 15. 18% have experienced sexual violence.¹⁰

This violence is predominately perpetrated by someone known to the victim, usually a partner or former partner.

In a study of physical violence against women it was revealed that this was carried out by:

- 15.9 % current partner
- 51.2 % previous partner
- 10.8% boyfriend or date
- 10.7% family member
- 8.2% friend.¹⁰

Sexual violence was carried out by:

- 3.6% current partner
- 21.5% previous partner
- 34.1% boyfriend or date
- 26.5% friend
- 8.3% family member
- 7.4% boss or co-worker

- 22.3% stranger.¹⁰

Aboriginal women experience physical and sexual violence at higher rates than other women. Aboriginal women are four times more likely to experience assault.

A significant proportion of women do not use public transport at night or walk alone at night because they feel unsafe.¹⁰

More information on the needs of young women is outlined in the Young Parents section, the Migrant and Refugee section, and the Early School Leavers section of this manual.

PRACTICAL TIPS

Are young women attending your service?

If you keep statistics on the number of males and females who use your service it can be helpful to have a look at who has used your service over the past year.

If significantly more young men than young women used your service, you may need to address this by implementing specific strategies for young women.

The first step in increasing young women's participation is to ask them what they want. Talk to young women who currently use your service about how it could be improved and what activities they would like to see. Most likely your service is already meeting some of their needs, otherwise they wouldn't be attending.



Ideas for a consultation workshop

Here are some questions to ask young women who already use your service. You can interview young women individually or run a group workshop to answer some of these questions.

- a) Being a young woman is...
- b) I hate it when I can't...
- c) I like it when I can...
- d) It's not fair because...
- e) At the youth service boys expect me to...
- f) At the youth service it would be great if...
- g) At the youth service I would like to be able to...
- h) Do you think the issues for young men and young women are different?
- i) What activities would you like to see happen at the youth service just for young women?
- j) Is there anything else you would like to say about young women using this youth service?

(Adapted from *Should I go and play pool? Ideas for strategies and programs to access young womyn*, 1995 by Al Bingham and Deb Shearim)

It may be useful to undertake an observation study to find out the patterns of behaviour at your service. Ask an independent person to visit your service or activity over a few sessions, to sit quietly and observe the interactions between young women and young men, whether any group dominates activities etc.

Most importantly, talk to other young women who do not use your service. Ask them what activities and programs they would like and how they would like those programs to run. They may already know about your service and have some good feedback about why they don't attend.

Some young women don't like to attend programs which young men also attend. For example they may not like the rowdy behaviour of some young guys or they may just want a safe place to talk about "girl stuff".

Many youth services have programs specifically for young women. These programs provide a safe place for young women to unwind, meet with their friends and have fun.

Young women's groups provide a good opportunity to run health, fitness, education and self esteem programs. Your local women's health service may work in partnership with you to deliver a program.

Young women's programs are also well suited to the needs of young women who are Muslim or come from a Muslim family, as often they will not attend programs which young men also attend.

Islam (the religious faith that Muslim people follow) requires that relationships with people of the opposite sex outside the immediate family be strictly controlled.

There are restrictions on clothing that can be worn, touching and social contacts. For example, girls are not allowed to talk to boys from outside the family unless they are with someone from their family, and any physical contact between unmarried males and females is absolutely forbidden in Islam.

It is important to gain the trust of parents when running programs for young Muslim women.

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You can:

- Have clear information for parents about the program and supervision arrangements (including translated information if necessary).
- Have a parents' open day or offer to meet with parents to introduce yourself and your service.
- Gain the support of the local school.
- Have the program take place straight after school or not too late at night.
- Hold the program in a familiar venue.
- Provide transport home from the program.
- Find out if parents require all staff and instructors to be female.
- Provide cultural training to any staff or instructors who have limited experience in working with young women from culturally diverse backgrounds.

If you are running a program specifically for young women you may want to consider forming a partnership with migrant services such as Nepean Migrant Access or the Blacktown Migrant Resource Centre. These services can provide more advice about working with young people from refugee and migrant families.

You may also want to consider establishing a program specifically for young mothers. The Young Parents section of this manual provides more information about working with young mothers.

Are young women treated as equals at your service?

You can change the dynamics at your service by changing:

- the activities you provide
- the way the activities are run
- the way you behave and respond.

The activities you provide

If your service is dominated by loud or rowdy behaviour you may want to consider changing the activity.

A service in Western Sydney found that they were facing a lot of issues with aggression, competitiveness and even violence. The central activity at the service was a pool table which boys dominated while girls took on a passive role watching. The service decided to remove the pool table and replace it with computers and a series of activities such as music lessons and craft activities. They noticed an immediate difference in the service "vibe" and who attended the programs. The pool table has now been formally retired.

Active sports and activities can be great for young people, especially after a day of sitting down being quiet and listening at school all day. If your service offers sporting activities think about how you can change those activities to be less competitive and more fun and team orientated.

The way activities are run

If you run an activity that is dominated by young men, think about how you can increase young women's participation.

A youth service in Sydney ran regular music events. They found that both young women and young men enjoyed the events but that all the bands were only comprised of young men. The service initiated a music course just for young women and helped start several female only bands. They also introduced a



policy where bands who had a female band member would be given priority of playing at the music events. They actively sought out other girl bands from other areas to play at their events as well. They also introduced other music programs which were open to both young men and young women where young women felt comfortable performing such as talent quests and karaoke nights.

The way you behave and respond

The way that youth workers behave influences the “vibe” of your service. It is critical that your behaviour is non-sexist and that you value young women and young men equally.

Steps that you can take:

- Promote a positive image of women and their achievements. Think about your promotional material and the guest speakers at your service and how this reflects on the image of young women.
- Organise special events for young women's festivals and camps, International Women's Day and Reclaim the Night. Talk to young women and young men about the reasons for these events.
- Put programs in place for young women and young men which challenge assumptions and provide education about physical and sexual violence.
- Challenge sexist behaviour and assumptions. This includes "jokes" – for example jokes about blonde women being stupid, women not being able to drive or men not being able to cook.
- Sexual harassment is against the law and you have a legal responsibility to prevent this from happening at your service. Make sure your workers and volunteers know how to respond to any sexual harassment they witness. YAPA has suggestions in its

model policy on Inclusiveness, at www.yapa.org.au/youthwork/modelpolicies .

- Ensure that your workers and volunteers model non-sexist behaviour in the way that they relate to each other and clients.
- Promote non-traditional career options for young women and young men.
- Talk to the young men who use your service about whether they want any programs just for them to talk about "guy stuff".
- Have clear rules and workplace policies about non-sexist behaviour.
- Encourage and support young women to play an active role in decision making at your service and at a wider community level.

COMMON MYTHS

Myth 1 - Domestic violence only affects older women

Domestic violence is an important issue for young women. A large proportion of female victims of domestic violence are aged between 15 and 39 years of age. ¹²

Many young women are assaulted by their current or former partner/boyfriend.

You may not know that a young woman you work with has been a victim of domestic violence because she may not talk to you about it.

Some female victims of domestic violence do not report incidents to the police or anyone else because:

- they do not believe the incident is serious, particularly if they have suffered abuse as a child and view this as "normal" behaviour



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- they feel ashamed or embarrassed to talk about it
- they fear the offender and repercussions of reporting an incident
- they want to continue the relationship.

It is important for youth services to provide information about domestic violence and its impacts. Best practice examples of programs which address domestic violence are available at www.austdvclearinghouse.unsw.edu.au/states.htm .

Myth 2 - Sexual harassment is relatively rare

Young women frequently face sexual harassment, particularly in public places.

Offenders may target young women because:

young women are viewed as less powerful and less willing to report the incident to police

young women use public transport more than older women, and may “hang out” in public areas.

Create a safe place for young women to talk about this issue in a young women’s group and consultation. You may be surprised at the level of harassment that they face on a regular basis.

Streetwise Communications has produced a range of comics which discuss the topic of sexual harassment. It is a good idea to have resources available for young women (and young men). More information is available at www.streetwise.com.au/publications_sexual.html .

Young women

How accessible is your service?

Use this checklist to identify how you can improve your service for young women.

Needs analysis and planning

- Your service specifically consults young women about their needs as young women Yes No
- Your service develops programs which respond to the needs which young women identify Yes No
- Your service gathers statistics on how many young women and young men attend / use your service Yes No
- Your service develops specific strategies to increase the participation of young women (if under represented) Yes No
- When necessary, your service changes the activities it provides or the way it provides activities to ensure that young women get a fair go and that young men do not dominate activities Yes No

Image of young women

- Your service promotes positive images and achievements of young women Yes No
- Your service promotes opportunities for young women to develop their skills (incl non-traditional areas) Yes No

Challenging sexism

- Staff and volunteers model non-sexist behaviour in the way they relate to each other, and in the way they interact with clients Yes No
- Staff challenge any sexist comments or behaviour from clients Yes No
- Your service has policies and rules in place that deal with sexist comments or behaviour Yes No
- Your service promotes information about physical and sexual harassment and violence Yes No

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Contact Services

Young Women's Access Project, Youth Action & Policy Association

Phone: (02) 9687 1466
Address: Suite 7, Level 1, 48 Macquarie St, Parramatta 2150
Email: yapaws@yapa.org.au
Web: www.yapa.org.au

Description: YAPA is researching strategies to improve young women's access to youth services. Young women and youth services will be actively consulted as part of the research. A written report and resources will be produced and distributed to youth services in NSW.

The Women's Cottage - Hawkesbury

Phone: (02) 45784190
Address: 22 Bosworth Street, Richmond
Email: womcot@pnc.com.au
Description: Information, resource and advocacy service for women and children.

North Richmond Youth Project - Young Women's Group

Phone: (02) 4571 3659
Email: nrywp@pnc.com.au
Address: 12 William St, North Richmond
Description: A young women's program predominantly attended by 11 - 15 year olds. This is a great program including lots of creative workshops, personal development, health and natural therapies, relationship workshops etc. It's held on Tuesday afternoon from 4.00 - 6.00pm with up to 20 girls.

Girls Can Do Anything, South Penrith Youth & Neighbourhood Services

Phone: (02) 4721 5024
Address: PO Box 627, Penrith, NSW,
Web: www.spyns.org.au
Description: Girls Can Do Anything is a program run in schools by South Penrith Youth & Neighbourhood Services. The program aims to build self image, self esteem, relationships and communication skills. Optional modules available are self defence training, anti

bullying skills, drug and alcohol awareness, body image, healthy lifestyle choices, stress management and motivation.

Upper Mountains Young Women's Group

Phone: (02) 47 822 875
Description: This service runs activities specifically for young women

Blue Mountains Women's Health Centre

Phone: 4782 5133
Address: 124 Lurline St, Katoomba 2780
Description: The centre runs a young women's action group which develops strategies to promote the responsible use of alcohol. Meets Wednesday afternoons.

Western Sydney Young Women's Leadership Program

Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils

Phone: (02) 9671 4333
Description: This is a program offering leadership opportunities for young women in Western Sydney. Over a period of six to eight months young women participate in a leadership program that will increase their confidence, skills and knowledge to speak out and participate in decision-making positions. They also have the opportunity to be mentored by existing women leaders from Western Sydney who will share their experience, knowledge and lessons.

Glenmore Park Youth Service - Girl's Club

Phone: 4733 2600
Address: Luttrell St, Glenmore Park
Description: Girl's Club on Tuesdays from 3-5.30pm and Girl's Hip Hop Group on Friday nights. Participants choose topics to focus on in the area of health, fitness, music, self-esteem and beauty. The program aims to incorporate families as a holistic approach so mums and sisters are welcome too.



Establishing programs just for young women

Web: www.cmyi.net.au/publications/informing.html#infosheets

Description: The Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues has produced an information sheet for community agencies with a simple step-by-step manual to establishing a women's swimming program

Girl Savvy, Office for Women

Phone: (02) 9287 1902.

Description: GirlSavvy is a program offered by the Office for Women. GirlSavvy is delivered in partnership with the Guides NSW and the YWCA of Sydney. The aims of GirlSavvy are:

- to inspire young women to think about the range of work options available to them including business and non traditional roles, and to also consider the personal advantages of achieving work + family balance and job satisfaction.
- to effectively communicate to young women the benefits of being financially independent and the positive impact such independence has on life choices.

Office for Women

Web: www.women.nsw.gov.au

Description: The Office for Women has a funding program for young women's programs

Women's Refuge Resource Centre

Phone: 02 9698 9777

Address: Level 1, 619 Elizabeth Street, Redfern 2016

Email: admin@wrrc.org.au

Web: www.wrrc.org.au

Description: The Women's Refuge Resource Centre is the central contact for the New South Wales Women's Refuge Movement (WRM), a network of 55 women's refuges situated across New South Wales providing support and accommodation for women and children escaping domestic violence.

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