SET OF INTERVENTION METHODS TO INVOLVE YOUNG NEET MOTHERS

IO3

Erasmus+: KA2 – Cooperation for Innovation and the Exchange of Good Practices – Strategic Partnerships for adult education
[Agreement N° 2017-1-AT01-KA204-035007]
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## Project Information

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Introduction

Each partner country will have a distinct target group with which they work. All approaches will be adapted to meet the needs of their specific group. In the Irish context the specific target group of young mothers are mainly within the Traveller community as this is the nature of our work. The approaches we use are not specific to this community and can be used with any community or group with which social workers, trained counsellors and other professions work. Within the Irish context Exchange House Ireland has over 35 years’ experience providing Traveller specific, professional, front-line family support, crisis intervention, education, training, and services for children and young people in Ireland. Travellers and other ethnic minorities are often hard to reach and it is therefore crucial to be proactive and innovative in reaching this target group. Within the Traveller community young mothers are often the hardest to reach and are less likely to engage in education and work once they have children. Young mothers are seen as critical to home and care of children.

We will look at aspects of outreach work and how it works on the ground. We will look at a holistic approach that encompasses the wider community in order to access our target young mothers and the support and interventions critical for the continued engagement throughout the process.

Outreach is used by the staff in Exchange House Ireland through our various services from Youth Work, Education, Family Crisis and Intervention and our Mental Health Team. Collaborative efforts are made on behalf of each department in order to reach our target group of young NEET mothers.

Throughout this research I have spoken to educators from an educational programme in Blanchardstown, Dublin, Ireland. This group works with migrant young mothers bringing them back to education. This can be the basic education such as learning English, cooking or anything that helps them to integrate into the community. The women themselves are encouraged to ask for what they need in terms of education and all possible efforts are made to provide it. The programme coordinator Ekoh told me that they access the mothers through their local religious communities. They explained that the pastors of the local churches normally work with their specific communities, and as such they speak their native language. The women also have a sense of trust and safety and are not afraid to engage with services encouraged by their church. The coordinators told me that they use these connections as a gateway into hard to reach
communities in order to engage young mothers. This is just another example of outreach that I felt deserved a mention as it shows how it can be used in a completely different context.

Social workers and trainers can benefit from researching projects already on the ground such as those discussed above. This will provide established networks into hard to reach communities, through previously established contacts.

It is vital, as mentioned above, when we work with marginalised groups to develop relationships built on trust, which is not easy as they do not always find positive responses from the general society. This manual may be used as a tool to strengthen competencies of the trainers/social workers and those working with hard to reach communities.

Lorraine O’Connor

Co-ordinator working with young Traveller students
Objectives of this Set of Intervention Methods

“Young NEETs need special attention in the counselling process in order to address, motivate and empower them for the decision to re-enter education and carry it out to the end” (Erasmus application, 2017 pp.47)

The objective of the “Set of Intervention Methods to involve Young NEET Mothers” is to focus on developing a set of intervention methods for preparing social workers and trainers in order to provide the tools to enable them to work with young NEET mothers, by this we mean not engaged in Education, Training, or Employment. The interventions are based on the work undertaken by the Irish partner and are intended as a guide to our project partners, therefore they may be adapted to suit their specific needs.

The Set of Intervention Methods to involve young NEET Mothers sets out clear guidelines for the techniques and tools to guide professionals in the field of Social Work, Education, Community, and Youth Work to actively engage, support and guide young mothers back into education. Throughout the process the professionals’ work through a consultation process with the young mothers, their wider community and families whilst respecting and acknowledging their cultural and social values. The intervention methods are intended to support a best practise model when working with young NEET mothers in particular those from ethnic or marginalised communities or the wider community in general.
Target Group and Specific Needs

The target group of the BYMBE project are young mothers who have, for one reason or another, left school early or may have just not finished their education in the first place. The young mothers in the BYMBE project in many of the partner countries come from marginalised communities whether they be ethnic minorities, migrant communities or in many instances the general wider community. There is little doubt as to the sensitive nature and the political, social, cultural and economic barriers faced by many of the young mothers, therefore sensitivity at each stage of the project is required to engage and maintain them throughout their educational journey. We need to encourage them to see that they have a central part to play in their journey. As young adults they have something to contribute and their voice needs to be heard, this goes for all areas of their life. Skills required for this are trust, compassion, fostering a non-judgemental and dyadic approach that involves the young mothers at every level. As a counsellor this is vital to build trust and rapport to allow a process of active engagement to take place. The tools and techniques in this intellectual output have been developed with this in mind.
Chapter 1 – Assessment of Needs

Assessment of the needs of the young mothers is crucial to the success of the BYMBE project. For the most part many young mothers struggle to see the purpose of returning to education. According to Barnardos many teenage mothers make negative experiences in education even before they become pregnant, as a result they may lack the motivation to return to education in the first place (2010, p.4). They may feel that they have little support in terms of the social, economic and political institutions; they have not considered which persons around them could support them if they returned to education. The BYMBE counsellor will support the young mothers through the tools and techniques in this chapter to help them see the broader picture.

“My World Triangle” and Site Surveys will encourage the young mothers to look at their broader community and to see what support they have at hand. Tools such as the Scaling Questions and Decisional Balance tool are designed to help the mothers move away from negative self-talk and try to get them to see how returning to education will benefit them and their children in the long term. Looking at Gardener’s theory of multiple intelligence is designed to help the young mothers see that it was not their fault that they failed in the educational system; rather it was due to the design of the system itself that failed to incorporate the differentiation in individual learning.

My World Triangle

**Introduction**: Use this exercise to help the young mothers identify the support systems they have around them. Very often young mothers feel isolated and cannot see the resources they have close to them. This may include family, friends, local crèches, peers or any support system which they can utilise in order to facilitate their return to education or employment. Using the world triangle is a useful tool to get the young mothers to visualise who they have in their lives or indeed where they require the most support. The “My World Triangle” also helps to generate conversation between the young mothers and the counsellor and can be used in conjunction with other methods in this project.

**Theoretical Background to My World Triangle**

“My World Triangle” provides the social workers and counsellors with a framework that considers every aspect of the young mother’s life. It identifies the strengths or wellbeing concerns in the young...
person’s world; this may include information about the physical, social, emotional, educational factors or any issues that affect their everyday lives and may affect their parenting.

“My World Triangle” supports practice that considers the child or young person’s needs and risks, as well as the positive features in their lives. In many cases, it will not be necessary to explore every area of the triangle in detail but only to look at it. “My World Triangle” is an excellent tool that allows young mothers to explore what potential support systems are available to them.

- It allows the young mothers to explore how they grow and develop;
- What the young mothers need from the people who look after their children
- The wider world around them – who they have in terms of friends, family in addition to their structural supports.

Pictorial images of my World Triangle

My world triangle

The whole child or young person: Physical, Social, Educational, Emotional, Spiritual & Psychological development

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1 Source: Getting it right for every child website, Using the National Practice Model II: Gathering information with the My World Triangle, https://www2.gov.scot/resource/doc/1141/0109332.pdf
2 Source: Care and Learning Alliance website, Keep Children Safe: https://www.careandlearningalliance.co.uk/my-world-triangle/
Supporting from family, friends and other people
Networks of family and social support. Relationships with grandparents, aunts and uncles, extended family and friends. What supports can they provide? Are there tensions involved in or negative aspects of the family’s social networks? Are there problems of lost contact or isolation? Are there reliable, long term networks of support which the child or family can reliably draw on? Who are the significant people in the child or young person’s wider environment?

Comfortable and safe housing
Is the accommodation suitable for the needs of the child and family – including adaptations needed to meet special needs? Is it in a safe, well maintained and resourced, and child friendly neighbourhood? Have there been frequent moves?

Belonging
Being accepted in the community, feeling included and valued. What are the opportunities for taking part in activities which support social contact and inclusion – e.g. playgroups, after school clubs, youth clubs, environmental improvements, parents and residents’ groups, faith groups? Are there local prejudices and tensions affecting the child or young person’s ability to fit in?

School
From pre-school and nursery onwards, the school environment plays a key role. What are the experiences of school and peer networks and relationships? What aspects of the learning environment and opportunities for learning are important to the child or young person? Availability of study support, out of school learning and special interests. Can the school provide what is needed to meet the particular educational and social need of the child?

Enough money
Has the family of the young person adequate income to meet the day to day needs and any special needs? Have problems of poverty and disadvantage affected opportunities? Is household income managed for the benefit of all? Are there problems of debts? Do benefit entitlements need to be explored? Is income adequate to ensure the child can take part in school and leisure activities and pursue

Work opportunities for my family
Are there local opportunities for training and rewarding work? Cultural and family expectations of work and employment. Supports for the young person’s career aspirations and opportunities.

Local resources
Resources which the child or young person, and family, can access for leisure, faith, sport, active lifestyle. Projects offering support and guidance at times of stress or transition. Access to and local information about health, childcare, care in the community, specialist services.
**HOW CAN THE MY WORLD TRIANGLE SUPPORT OUR PRACTICE AT A GLANCE?**

Using the My World Triangle allows practitioners to consider systematically:

- how the young person is growing and developing;
- what the young person needs from the people who look after him or her;
- the impact of the young person’s wider world of family, friends and community.

**EXERCISE MY WORLD TRIANGLE**

**Directions**

Use guiding questions based on the “My World Triangle” format:

- Introduce the “My World Triangle” to the young mothers (explain what it is and why you are using it).
- Use the heading indicated on the map, it may not be necessary to cover them all.
- Encourage them to use the images as a map to identify what barriers or concerns the young mothers may have in various areas indicated on the map.
- Encourage the young mothers to look at what immediate support they have around them and how they could utilise them when returning to education.
- At the end of the session gather the information the young mothers have given, reiterate and confirm that the information is correct.
- Use the information gathered to give the young mothers further help and support.

**Materials required**

1. Quiet, clean room well-lit/ventilated room
2. My World Triangle handout
3. Table and chairs
4. Pen and paper

Recording devices are a useful tool just in case the young mother has literacy issues, consent should always be sought from the client.
Variations on my World Triangle According: My Living World Exercise

Similar to that of the “My World Triangle” it supports mothers in discovering their own structures in their life: let the young mother create her own living world by looking at the various areas of her life. Ask the young mother to write down her feelings and present her findings. After this ask the young mother to use the Playmobil figures to demonstrate how they could benefit her life. Discuss what support she feels might be missing from the scenarios. Then try to get her to find other possible supports or solutions to the problem. Working collaboratively with the young mother and the counsellor could look at ways on which to improve the areas of her life that she feels are incomplete.

Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parenting (Areas of life)</th>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Presentation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Living conditions/Income</td>
<td>A2 Poster/ Markers</td>
<td>Young mother captures her thoughts on the poster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family/ Friends/ Partnership</td>
<td>Different playing figures (Playmobil)</td>
<td>Young mother presents findings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further materials required
- Quiet, clean well-ventilated room
- My World Triangle handout
- Flip chart paper
- Table and chairs
- Pen and paper
- Recording device

Scaling Questions

Theoretical background of Scaling Questions

Scaling questions are embedded in a solution focused model. According to Sharry scaling questions can be asked in a myriad of different ways and are one of the most versatile techniques of solution focused
theory. Scaling questions can be used to rate clients’ confidence about change and also highlight their motivation to change, even if they feel their goal is remote or that they have not made much progress” (2001, P.38)

This approach is a strengths-based approach and can be used actively to keep young mothers involved and engaged. The counsellors should get the young mothers to focus on their strengths or what is or was working for them; the young mothers should be encouraged to reflect on more positive experiences. A good example here is to use scaling questions to help them generate goals, chart progress and build confidence. Using this model will help counsellors to help young mothers to remain motivated and engaged. Scaling questions can help to maintain the young mothers’ motivation for change, in our case the benefits of returning to education and seeing it through to the end. The counsellor can use the questions to help the young mothers build confidence by reversing negative self-dialogue in other words. If the counsellor asks the young mother a question and she answers it very negatively the counsellor can rephrase the question by extracting the positives from the reply. This in turn may keep them motivated and engaged.

See examples below:

*Example of scaling questions:*
- Young mother: I have wanted to come back to education for a long time but you know there are so many reasons I can't.
  - Therapist: So, what you're saying is that you wanted to come back to education in the first place.
- Young mother: Yes, I do but not sure how I can balance childcare, money and go back. It might be very stressful.
  - Therapist: You sound as if you have given returning to education a lot of thought.
- Young mother: Yes, I have, I want a better life for my child.
  - Therapist: On a scale of one to ten where ten is you want things to change and one where you don’t want to change. Where do you think you are?
  - Young mother: might say eight.
  - Therapist: well that’s really high it looks like you really want to change life for the better.
• Young mother: Yes, I do, I really do.

  o Therapist: So, you want a better life for you and your daughter and you know that having a good education will help you to achieve that. Is there anything else that you could do to bring eight up to a nine?

• Young mother: see the course through I suppose.

The above scenario allows the therapist to use scaling questions about how the young mother really feels about her current situation. Using scaling the questions builds on the young mother’s motivation strengths and reasons for completing education, thus maintaining a powerful motive for change.

Variations on Scaling Questions

Designed by Likert in the mid-1930s “Likert-type or frequency scales use fixed choice response formats and are designed to measure attitudes or opinions these ordinal scales measure levels of agreement/disagreement (Bowling, 1997; Burns, & Grove, 1997).

Within the Likert- scale an individual may be asked a number of questions, they are then offered a five to seven-point scale from which they can choose. The responses can then be measured and evaluated; from this link the answers may be measured: https://www.simplypsychology.org/likert-scale.html

In the BYMBE context the questions may be used to elicit answers from specific questions, however the counsellor can then rephrase the question or tease out the answer and try to find a way to create a more positive response. For example:

  C – The counsellor may ask a question like “In your opinion what would you rate the amount of support you have in terms of childcare?”
  YM – The young mother may respond with a 3.
  C – The counsellor may then build on that response by asking if they have any other family or close friends or neighbours that they have not thought of. This may elicit a different response which can be built on further in the session.

Below is a sample template of a Likert questionnaire: Counsellors can use this to draw their own questions similar to that of the scaling questions.
Site Surveys

Site Surveys are designed to gather data on the needs of the community. The purpose in this situation is to ascertain how many young mothers there are on site in addition to gaining an understanding of what types of support are available for the young mothers. Site surveys are rich in qualitative data as the counsellors will be on the ground with the specific community they are working with. There are a number of ways surveys can be carried out such as:

- On-line and paper surveys

These can be distributed door to door or emailed to people if they have access to a working computer.

- Drop-in information sessions
These can be conducted over a period of time; this will give the counsellor a better opportunity to reach the wider community.

- **Focus groups**

  By using focus groups, the counsellor can gather a huge amount of data at a given time.

  When compiling the questionnaire keep in mind:

  - The aims of the research – it must be able to capture the specific data that you require to carry out further work.
  - The length of the questionnaire – if it is too long people will not answer it.
  - The layout of the survey – make it look good.
  - The content – it must be relevant.
  - It must be open to adaptation.
  - The terminology must not be too complicated or too invasive.
  - Ethics – let the participants know beforehand that what they share is confidential and will be stored as per data protection regulations.

  Please see below an example of a site survey conducted by Exchange House National Traveller Service in Ireland. The partner countries can adapt this to suit their own needs. During development question the social, cultural, physical and economic needs of the community. All should be taken into consideration.

**SITE SURVEYS/QEUSTIONNAIRE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How many people per household?</th>
<th>Exchange House Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>How many young primary school children (aged 6-12)</strong></td>
<td>Afterschool/Homework club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How many secondary school children (aged 12- 16)</strong></td>
<td>Youth Services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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3 Adapted from Research Methods Questionnaire - https://www.simplypsychology.org/questionnaires.html
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How many adolescent children 16 years and upwards not engaged in education</td>
<td>Further Education Services in Exchange House 16 years upwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many young married couples 18-25?</td>
<td>Family Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many young women 18-25 age group are there with young children</td>
<td>School liaison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many in training or employment?</td>
<td>Education services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the highest level of formal education in the household?</td>
<td>Ed Services, Youth Services and Family Crisis Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What training do you need to access employment or further training?</td>
<td>Ed service or Family Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What financial supports would you need to access a training programme?</td>
<td>Ed service or Family Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you have available childcare if you were to take up a training course?</td>
<td>Ed service or Family Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you experienced discrimination when accessing training and education in the past?</td>
<td>Ed service or Family Support, Mental Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel you would need literacy support to access further training and education?</td>
<td>Ed Service</td>
</tr>
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**Howard Gardner Theory of Multiple Intelligence (MI)**

The Theory of Multiple Intelligence, first theorized by Harvard professor Howard Gardiner in the 1970s recognised that intelligence is not as linear as achieving results through standardised testing; he proposed that people learned in a multiplicity of ways and this needed to be acknowledged in the learning process. “According to Gardner’s analysis, only two intelligences—linguistic and logical mathematical I—have been valued and tested for in modern secular schools” (Davis et al, P.2). Gardiner realised that traditional ways of learning could lead to a feeling of failure and proposed an extension to the main intelligence valued so much by society. Gardiner proposed that humans have at least eight forms of intelligence which included linguistic intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, spatial intelligence, musical intelligence, bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence, naturalistic intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, and intrapersonal intelligence (Gardner, 1999).
For the purpose of the BYMBE project counsellors working with young mothers acknowledge that many of the mothers who attend the project are early school leavers and many have had negative experiences at school and therefore may benefit from looking at other ways to learn. The focus is on human potential, initially six types of intelligences now there are nine. The intelligences relate to a person’s competency, ability, and their natural intellectual strengths.

The counsellors, through the use of multiple intelligence testing, can help the girls to understand how they learn best and help implement learning strategies that will aid the young mothers in their learning. The task can be completed as an online tool accessed through https://quizlet.com/11998194/howard-gardners-theory-of-multiple-intelligences-flash-cards/. However, in the case of counsellors working directly with the young mothers on the BYMBE project a more practical tool would be to use a hard copy. In this way the counsellors can help the girls, give advice, support and explain in more depth how to implement the learning in their everyday life in addition to their education programme.

Below is a list of the Intelligences at a glance:
THE MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITY

- Introduce the activity, give an overview of the theory
- Hand out the attached Multiple Intelligence questionnaire (printable version available from: https://www.businessballs.com/self-awareness/howard-gardners-multiple-intelligences/)
- Help the young mothers to settle in. They may be a little nervous. Let them know this is not a test, it should be fun.
- Explain to the young mothers that they should read each question carefully.
- For each statement: put in order of their preference, in other words which statement do they feel suits them most.
- When they have completed advise them to add the scores and ticks in each column.
- Explain that highest scores indicate your natural strengths and potential - your intelligences.
- There are no right or wrong answers.
- Get the young mothers to write their findings.
- Explain that there may be more than one style.

Materials required
- Clean, well ventilated room.
- Table and chairs.
- Access to PCs if using the electronic version.
- Multiple Intelligence questionnaires - one per client - hard copy.
- Pens.
- Duration of activity 1-1.30 hours

Example: Section 1 of Multiple Intelligence Test (incomplete)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Multiple Intelligences Test – based on Howard Gardner’s MI Model</th>
<th>More info at businessballs.com</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(manual version – see businessballs.com for self-calculating version)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score the statements: 1 = Mostly Disagree, 2 = Slightly Disagree, 3 = Slightly Agree, 4 = Mostly Agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternatively for speed, and if easier for young people – tick the box if the statement is more true for you than not.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults over 16 complete all questions. Young people between 8-16 answers red questions only. This is page 1 of 4.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A short version featuring the young people’s questions only is available free from the businessballs website.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Score or tick the statements in the white-out boxes only

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I like to learn more about myself</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I can play a musical instrument</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I find it easiest to solve problems when I am doing something physical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I often have a song or piece of music in my head</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I find budgeting and managing my money easy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I find it easy to make up stories</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I have always been physically well co-ordinated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. When talking to someone, I tend to listen to the words they use not just what they mean.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example answering sheet

Add the scores or ticks in which columns and write the total for each column in the boxes on the right.

Your highest scores indicate your natural strengths and potential – your natural intelligences.

There are no wrong answers.

My strongest intelligences are (write them here):

You are happiest and most successful when you learn, develop, and work in ways that make best use of your natural intelligences (your strengths and style and brain-type).

This indicator can help you to focus on the sort of learning and work that will be the most fulfilling and rewarding for you.

The multiple intelligences definitions are available in sheet 2 of the MSExcel file containing this test. The file and more information about multiple intelligences are available from the website www.businessballs.com

Variations on Howard Gardiner’s Multiple Intelligence

Another similar tool to Multiple Intelligence is the Neil Fleming’s VARK model. The VARK model of learning suggests that there are four main types of learners. This model helps learners to identify their predominant learning styles/ preference. “The questionnaire alerts people to the variety of different approaches to support learning. It supports those who have been having difficulties with learning and has
particular applications in business, sport, training and education. Mentors, trainers, teachers and coaches who would like to develop additional learning strategies can also benefit from using VARKs.

The four key types are: Visual, Auditory, Reading and Writing and Kinaesthetic. Similar to the MI model the VARK questionnaire tool can be used as an online tool or as a hard copy and can be accessed at http://vark-learn.com/the-vark-questionnaire/.

Some interesting videos on the use of VARK can be accessed at http://vark-learn.com/introduction-to-vark/. This will enable counsellors to tap into the various styles and help the young mothers to see the visual by watching the video, the auditory by listening to the video, the kinaesthetic by completing the work and lastly the reading and writing by completing the actual questionnaire.

Decisional Balance Tool

Decisional balance tools were first developed by the psychologists Irving Janis and Leon Mann in the mid-1970s. It is a method for representing the benefits and costs of different choices and has been used to facilitate decision-making⁵ (Foster & Neighbors, 2013). Put simply the decisional balance tool helps people to weigh up the pros and cons of any decision that they are about to make. Whilst returning to education can be difficult for any person it may be particularly hard for young mothers in the case of the BYMBE clients. The counsellor can introduce this tool which will help the young mothers to analyse their own thoughts and inner conflicts. The tool is very much a weighing scale effect, this means that at the end the young mother may be able to see the greater benefit of engaging with learning. Moreover, how it will benefit her in terms of social, economic participation.

**DECISIONAL BALANCE EXERCISE**

- Why did you come here today?
- Do you want a change in your life?
- What do you want to change in your life?
- Will it make a difference to your life?

---


• Do you think it will be worth the effort?

• Do you think there will be any problems as a result of change?

• Do you think it will make a difference to your child’s future?

**DECISIONAL BALANCE TEMPLATE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change</th>
<th>No change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benefits of change</td>
<td>Benefits of not changing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• _ _ _</td>
<td>• _ _ _</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• _ _ _</td>
<td>• _ _ _</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Decisional Balance**
Chapter 2 – Planning – How do we address Needs

Reacting and responding appropriately to the needs of the community will be garnered from the information gained through open and honest dialogue. We can then direct young mothers to the appropriate courses and services that will best suit their needs including childcare supports and educational programmes.

• Look at the young mothers’ behaviour - So as above what is happening on the site, who is in education or training, who is working, who is looking for work?

• Look at the difference/discrepancy between what the young mothers are saying and what they want to do (how their life is) and what they are actually doing or saying they want to do. What are they doing to gain education, employment? Have they been in touch with our services? Do they really want to engage? We can make an appointment or, if it suits them better, we can meet them at an alternative venue or in their homes? We need to get a feeling for what they really need. They may want a course in another area that we as an organisation do not have the skills to conduct, we will therefore show the young mothers that we can get the information for them and support them if they need help.

• Do they have issues around welfare payments or childcare? Can we assist them with this?

• Help the young mothers to see how change will benefit them – as above, show them how education has benefited members of the community who are now in full time employment and doing well as a result of returning to education or training.

Get them to write down the pros and cons of their current position. What benefit will it have on their lives? The use of decisional balance tool here would be useful (See Appendices).

When we try to build relationships, we really need to get to know our young mothers, but as family plays a key role in their lives, it is necessary to get to know the whole family. This gives us a feeling of what support is available and what culturally held beliefs the community may have. After conducting a site survey and getting a general feel for the community we need to establish deeper relationships. We do this through informal information sessions and follow-up sessions. A useful tool in relation to addressing needs
is to find out exactly what the young mother identifies as her own specific need. In terms of her education we can look at her learning needs. To this we can build an individual learning plan (ILP).

**Individual Learning Plan**

An Individual Learning Plan (ILP) is a working document, designed by teachers in collaboration with stakeholders, which informs the planning, delivery and evaluation of an educational programme (ACT).

ILP identifies the student’s individual needs and priorities for learning, outlines both short and/or long-term educational goals for a student and the actions, strategies, modifications and adaptations that will be taken to achieve them. It is a flexible living document that is reviewed and modified over time. It assigns responsibility and accountability for implementing and evaluating the plan. It provides an ongoing record to ensure continuity of learning, allows those involved to identify the key strengths, skills and knowledge of the young person to:

- realise the ambitions, goals, and plans of the young person
- identify their fears, experiences and challenges
- spend time providing one to one support ‘checking in’ on the young person.
- continue to support them and recognise success and build their confidence

Before the initial consultation with the young mother the counsellor should:

- Read and finalise the document.
- Consider how often you will be able to link in to develop and use the ILP with the young person.
- Consider how much of the document you plan to complete in the first session.
• Explain the individual learning plan to the young person. (How it works. Why?)

• Remember the document is a ‘working document’ and should be agreed and completed together!

• Decide on the amount of the content you will complete today.

• Decide on the tasks set out by you and by the young person before the next meeting.

• Plan the date/time for the next meeting.

It will only work if both people are engaged and believe in the process.

• Sending a reminder might help the young person to be organised before the next meeting.

• Some days there will not be progress/success and that is OK!

• It is a support tool and does not have to be used in each meeting you have with the young person.

**Activity:**

• Explain in brief what an ILP is and how it might benefit the young mother,

• Ask the young mother to complete plans for the future – give advice and feedback,

• Discuss how this might be used in your context. What sections you might add/change?

• Complete further sections as your education journey progresses.

**Childcare Interventions**

For our target group of young mothers returning to education, experience has shown us that the most common issues are around childcare. It is crucial as such to know what is available in order to impart this information.

**How do we address/plan specific childcare needs in BYMBE?**

Culturally young mothers from marginalised communities stay at home when they have children, moreover, child-minding and the family role is often seen essentially as woman’s role. It is crucial that the woman’s education is not seen as a loss but rather as a win – win experience for the woman and the
immediate and extended family. Without the support of the family it becomes too much of a challenge. We, as social workers and trainers, need to help them to see that they can do both.

Use a focus group to try to establish what the community need in terms of childcare. Use the opportunity to let them see what is available in the local community and from the state financially. Use the opportunities to see what is available in terms of building structure or if there are any empty buildings/offices that they could use as a means of childcare.

Childcare Focus Group

Guiding Questions

- Know what’s available.
- Are you aware of the childcare that is available to you in your area?
- Do you have any family that could undertake childcare if you were to undertake a programme?
- Are you aware of early childhood care and education services (ECCE) available in your area?
- Are you aware of any subsidies that may be available to you?
- Is there a site crèche?
- Are there any available spaces/buildings in the area?
- How can we build trust?
- External childcare services?
- Is there a possibility to rotate child minding roles within the immediate family?

Childcare can be seen as a barrier to participation in education especially for young NEETS it is therefore important to get the whole to family to think about the benefits of education and how it might empower them and change the course of their lives. Strengths based versus deficit-based thinking approach here can be very useful. It will help them to set goals and see how it might positively enhance their social and economic status and improve the long-term prospects of the family. Rather than seeing the problems guide the young mothers to see the positive effects using strengths based versus deficit model.
The Tree of Life

The actual concept of the tree of life is fairly easy and straightforward. It is a visual metaphor in which the tree represents your life and the various elements, or in BYMBEs case, the supports which are available to you in terms of childcare.

Tree of Life Activity

• Draw a tree with strong roots and branches.

• Using the roots – think of experiences/situations/relationships in your life - think about who is always there for you.

• Using the branches explore who else may be there for you even if it is only sometimes.

• Repeat this with the leaves, think of all the people in your life.

• Connect these to the branches – the outcome due to these experiences/relationships etc.

• Include a range of positive and negative roots.

• The point is to highlight the positive elements in how you are/or have been due to the past.

Materials Required

• Image of a tree of life this can be blank.

• Coloured pencils or, if working with a group, a large picture and coloured post-it.

• The picture can be an on-going activity added to over time.

• It may help the young mothers to visually see the supports available to them at a glance.
Provide informed information of what is available to the young mothers IN VARIOUS partner countries. For information, please refer to the Report on National Education and Support Services for Young mothers available on www.bymbe.eu/results/. All available information relating to childcare practises from partner countries is available in the National report.

After the session you can provide the following information about what is available in your own respective country. Having the information will help the young mothers to make an informed decision about what is available to them, as we have found in the past that most young mothers do not always know what is available to them.

Comfort Zone

The Comfort Zone activity is an activity that will help young mothers to step out of their comfort zone\(^6\). The objective of this activity is to get the young mothers to think about:

- What holds them back.

---

What they can achieve if they take a chance on education.

Think of ways that can improve their lives.

Develop new skills.

Challenge their own perceptions and values.

**Exercise**

- Ask the young mothers to think about what they feel keeps them in their comfort zone.
- Ask them to think of words they associate with this.
- Ask them to discuss – write it down.
- Ask them why they stay in their comfort zone.
- Ask what they think they can do to get out of their zone and how they might achieve this.
- Ask how they think it will benefit them.

**Materials Required:**
- Flip chart paper.
- Pens.
- Time frame 30-40 minutes.
Chapter 3 – Building Relationships with Young Mothers

Weger et al argue that “Active listening involves restating a paraphrased version of the speaker's message, asking questions when appropriate, and maintaining moderate to high nonverbal conversational involvement” (2014, p.13). As part of IO3 we need to try and establish what it is that the young mothers are seeking in terms of their educational experience. We need to try and establish what - or if indeed whether they face any - difficulties or barriers which may be hindering their active engagement. It is therefore crucial to engage in active dialogue. The first steps towards helping young mothers are an ability to understand their needs.

The purpose of the session is to gain meaningful information and insights into the client’s needs. This is why we suggest that a number of techniques be applied at the discretion of the social worker and the techniques we suggest are: active listening, asking questions, giving feedback, and empathy.

Active Listening

The technique includes several very important components:

- **Active listening** – through active listening we are trying to establish what the individual is really saying. We are not just listening to the spoken words but rather to what the young mothers is actually saying. This involves listening with all your senses and picking up on cues voiced by the young mothers.

  - Look at the speaker directly
  - Avoid distractions
  - Be mindful of the speaker's body language

  Give the speaker your attention

  • Be honest in your responses.
  • Be respectful in giving your opinions.
  • Treat the other person in a way that you think the speaker wants to be treated.

  Behave appropriately encouraging respect and understanding
Correct Use of Feedback Providing feedback is key to letting the young mothers know they have said is heard, valued and respected. This can be done through establishing what you are hearing is really what the individual is actually saying, so ask questions such as the ones below to emphasise that you are hearing what the young mother is saying and setting clear lines of communication.

Reflect on what has been said by paraphrasing.
• "Am I correct in saying that you mean..?"
• "What I'm hearing is... ,"
• "Sounds like you are saying... ,"

Ask questions to clarify certain points.
• "What do you mean when you say...?"
• "Is this what you mean?"

Summarize the speaker's comments periodically.
• "You mentioned that .. and that you found yourself.. then this occurred ... and you decided to..."

Effective Communication – show the young mothers that you are listening, use gestures such as nodding, smiling, keeping eye contact.

Use body language and gestures to show that you are engaged
• Nod
• Use facial expressions (smile)
• Have an open posture

When a counsellor asks questions ensure that the type of questions allow for providing the most relevant information possible.

Ask open ended questions – Do not ask question that will allow the young mothers to answer yes or no. The counsellor needs to tease out the young mother’s response and ask questions such as (How, What, Tell me about).
Closed-Ended Questions

• Are you feeling better today?
• Have you already completed your task?
• Is that your final answer?
• Were you planning on becoming a nurse?
• Do you think it is wrong to want to live on your own at your age?
• Can I help you with that?
• Is math your favorite subject?
• Are you pregnant?
• What is your best quality? *(this could be answered in only one word or whits a short answer)*

Open-Ended Questions

• What do you think would happen if...?
• What are your plans for the future?
• How exactly did you decide to drop-out of school?
• What do you plan to do?
• What was your school experience like?
• How do you manage to raise those children alone?
• Tell me what is like to live with your family.
• Why do you seem irritated today?
• What do you feel is most beneficial about re-entering education?
• Anything else you would like to share?

Offer frequent and genuine feedback

• Offer frequent praise if your young mother is working hard on a project for a relatively long period (week/months).
• Rather than say, "You're the smartest person ever," or, "You're the best writer in the group" offer realistic praise: "You're a good writer".

Make praise specific

• Instead of saying “Good job,” say, “Great job when you passed your exam.”
• "It must have required a considerable effort to deal with this task while dealing with this situation"
• Affirmations – Praise positive behaviour, use positive/complementary statements

Frame your praise positively

• Instead of saying, “Nice job not giving up,” say, “I’m proud of you for...”
• Point out the behaviours you want to see more of, not the behaviours you hope to diminish.
• Never mix praise with criticism, or it will lose effectiveness.

Praise effort, not the outcome.

• Praise can build healthy self-esteem when you use it to point out effort.
• Rather than praise for getting a nice mark in a test, praise the willingness to study.
➢ **Reflections** – repeat back what the young mother has said.

➢ **Summarise** – what has happened throughout the session.

➢ **Express empathy** – let them see that you have some understanding of how they feel.

➢ **Look for the discrepancies** in the lives of the people being counselled.

➢ **Do not correct or judge** - the counsellors’ personal feeling should be kept to themselves as this could impact on the future of the relationship. The young mother up to this point may have felt judged all their life. They may be surprised to find that in this instance they are not. This will allow the young mothers - counsellor relationship to develop.

➢ **Empower them** by supporting their self-efficacy.

**CORE SKILLS OF THE COUNSELLOR**

Not to be judging but very clear regarding the responsibilities of the young mothers and the counsellor, making the young mothers understand his/her part of the situation, showing up consequences in an understandable way, motivational conversation and a lot of patience. Not in the way of accepting things, but not giving up the hope and judging the young mothers.

Apart from those skills related to the personal relationship we think that it is important that the counsellor has a general idea of the influence of gender roles and stereotypes on living conditions and individual decisions (“Why are girls still dreaming of prince charming?”). This helps to understand their ideas and how to explain that statistics prove other realities for women (in Tyrol over 60% of working women could not survive with their own income in 2016, so either are dependent on their husband or social welfare), especially a high risk of poverty in old age, the moment of divorce or death of the partner.

Furthermore, it is important to provide counselling in all parts of the country. The smaller the village the more difficult the situation gets on the one hand regarding available jobs and childcare and on the other hand regarding being marked for life as a young mother with a difficult past.

**DIRECTIONS ON HOW TO CARRY OUT LISTENING SESSION**

➢ **Duration of activity:** 1 HOUR

➢ **Materials:** two chairs
- Setting: quiet face to face activity, comfortable office space.
- Keep the session as informal as possible.
- Start by asking open ended questions. Apply techniques described above.
- Wrap-up summarise the main points of the session seek clarification where necessary.
- Ask the client for feedback on how they felt the session went.
- Decide on a follow-up session, time, and date venue.
Chapter 4 – Motivation and Empowerment

Once a young mother enters into a situation or decides on a journey of change it is very important to keep them motivated and allow them to focus on what it is that they actually want. Motivational interviewing is a useful tool to use. The objective of using motivation interviewing is to enable the young mothers to make their own argument for change.

Motivational Interviewing is a psychological technique that most psychologists/ psychotherapists/ counsellors use in the beginning of the counselling process with young mothers. Very often young mothers have no idea that they want to make changes in their life such as return to education. They may not really know what they want to do or how they are going to do it. Motivational interviewing enables the counsellor to let the young mothers vocalise their own queries. This can only happen when there is an environment of trust and acceptance between the counsellor and the client, or in our case the young mother.

The young mothers need to feel that they are supported and may be directed by the counsellor. When working with young people this is a very effective tool as they are very often confused about what they actually want. They may see the obstacles in our case, childcare or the perceived lack of job opportunities but they may never have really considered the possibilities that having a good standard of education might empower them to make substantial and sustainable changes in their lives. Your role in motivational interviewing is directive, with a goal of eliciting self-motivational statements and behavioural change from the young mothers in addition to creating their discrepancy to enhance motivation for positive change.

Motivational Interviewing

- Let the young mothers make their own argument.
- Express empathy through reflective listening - listen to what the young mothers are saying, show an interest in them.
- Avoid argument and direct confrontation – never judge or let the young mothers feel that they are being judged.
Adjust to young mothers’ resistance rather than opposing it directly - so if the young mothers are being resistant you might delve into the issue a little more, get them to see where the problem may lie by asking or probing questions that may elicit a response but they must be the one to analyse this response.

Support self-efficacy and optimism - your role as a counsellor is to support the young mothers to build confidence and foster positive behaviour. Support the young mothers to believe in themselves (Davidson, 1994; Miller and Rollick, 1991).

The best option is to work as a group and in person with young mothers, moving to the population where they live. In addition, it is advisable that the timetables are flexible and it cannot be too intense. Otherwise, young mothers in the group we work with easily lose motivation. On the other hand, the person must also feel supported individually. It will therefore be necessary to offer individual tutorials to find out how you feel and to make you express yourself more openly.

Role Models

Building the relationship is a key strategy in building trust when working with young people in general; moreover, it is crucial when we are working with vulnerable or hard to reach groups. Building relationships is premised on valued relationships that are non-judgemental, confidential, open and honest. Invite the young mothers and their peers into the process. Engage them by using members from their own
community as they know the community best. Show what can be achieved from participating in an education programme. Bring in past pupils or someone the young mothers can relate too, to talk to the young mothers let them see the real-life experiences; this has a far more positive effect than theory alone. We can refer to this as praxis: a combination of theory and practice. Develop sessions that are active and participative. SAMHSA (2015) define peer support as mutual support involving experiential learning knowledge, skills, and social learning to support recovery. There are many types of peer relationships and friendships such as naturally occurring relationships and group setting: friendships developed within setting such as the classroom, work situation, home, and community settings. Foster mutual exchange and develop confidence building exercises through dialogue allowing young mothers to have a voice and say in what they want.

**How can we do this?**

- Gain trust and show your support for the young women and your encouragement for education.
- Engage a young adult/ young person on the programme as a peer support worker.
- They act as an advocate and support system with the young women.
- Organise a session/event and invite them to try to spend time with them informally at a local level.
- If possible, someone from their community or background.
- Identify peer networks.
- Try to encourage peers to show support and encourage their friends on this journey.
- Engage with local young mothers’ groups or educational services to try to find information and tools that will help to attract and retain young mothers.
- Engage citizen information services in order to stay up to date with rights in relation to social welfare payments and additional services.
- Ask how their friend is.
- Invite their friends to celebrations, open day's sports days, graduations.
- Be present in the local area, this is a core area.
Activity: Be your own role model

The objective of this exercise is to help identify characteristics of individuals you admire and try to apply them to your own life.

Step 1

Pose the Question: Who are your top three role models? Who do you admire and why? Who impresses you? They can be real or imaginary, someone you would just like to be.

1. ____________________________
2. ____________________________
3. ____________________________

Step 2

Name three people who have influenced your life up to this point.

1. ____________________________
2. ____________________________
3. ____________________________

Step 3

Note what it is that you think is good about this person? What have you learned from them? What makes them so special?

1. ____________________________
2. ____________________________
3. ____________________________
4. ____________________________

Step 4

Adapted from ICF https://coachfederation.org/blog/boost-confidence-and-be-your-own-role-model-with-this-fun-coaching (exercise accessed on 19/02/19)
What qualities have they got that could enhance your own life (an example could be they are very confident)

1.___________________________________
2.___________________________________
3.___________________________________
4.___________________________________

Step.5

Think about any ways that you could bring these qualities into your own life (an example could be confidence building)

1.___________________________________
2.___________________________________
3.___________________________________
4.___________________________________

Step.6

Choose one key area that you have identified as something you admire about your role model and try to work on this action over the coming weeks. Revisit that action over a stated period of time and see if there is any change.

1.___________________________________
2.___________________________________

Materials required

- Warm comfortable, well ventilated room
- Be your role model activity sheet
- Pen and paper
Recognising Achievement

Recognising achievement is very important to acknowledge a young mother’s progress. We need to let them know they are doing a good job. The Irish partner Exchange House Ireland organisation holds yearly celebrations of educational achievement. We host a national event entitled the National Educational Achievement Awards. We hire a hall and invite guest speakers; Exchange House presents learners with medals and certificates. This event has grown each year since its inception. We find that the level of educational achievement grows each year. At first it was mainly second level but we are now seeing a high number of third level graduates. As counsellors in the BYMBE project we can use this example in the project. Reward the young mothers for engaging, provide them with certificates and compliment them on their achievement.

The Miracle Question

“The Miracle Question is recommended in solution focused therapy as a way of building, clear detailed and motivating picture a solution-focused therapy as a way of building a clear, detailed and motivating picture of the client’s goals” (Berg, 1991; de Shazer, 1998 cited in Sharry, 2004.35). Counsellors working with young mothers can use the miracle question as a tool to enable them to goal set. Similar to the role model activity the young mothers can use the exercise below to help them construct their own reality. The activity can help the young mothers to see the type of world they want to live in and to critically analyse ways in which they can change/improve the quality of their lives but also to begin to work towards those goals.

How to use the Miracle Question

Using the tool below the counsellor will ask the young mothers to consider the question in each section. There is an explanation for each section that the counsellor can refer to when conducting the exercise.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSTRUCTION</th>
<th>EXPLANATION FOR COUNSELLOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I have a question, that takes some imagination ... Imagine that after we</td>
<td>this construction allows the young mothers any kind of fantastic wish regarding her problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>finish here, you go home tonight, watch TV, do your usual chores, etc., and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>then go to bed and to sleep . . . And, while you are sleeping, a miracle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>happens. and the problems that brought you here are solved, just like that!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;This happened while you are sleeping, so you do not know what happened</td>
<td>This allows the young mothers to construct their miracle without any consideration of the problem and without any consideration of the steps that be or might have been involved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;When you wake up in the morning, a) how will you know that this miracle</td>
<td>Now it is the young mothers turn to answer and to explain how things would be, if the miracle would have taken place. This serves that he visualises the desired state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has happened to you?&quot; OR, b) &quot;how will your best friend know that this</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>miracle happened to you?&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;On a scale from 0 to 10, with 10 standing for how things are the day after</td>
<td>This helps to figure out where the young mother thinks she actually is in relation to her goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the miracle and 0 standing for how things were, when you decided to come</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>here, where – between 0 and 10 are you after this appointment today?“</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;What do you think you have to do to achieve the next step on the scale? &quot;</td>
<td>This helps the young mothers to think about possible next steps to achieve her goal and to think about steps and not the entire goal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5 – Engaging Family and Community

A key element when working with young mothers is helping the family to see the benefits that will come from re-engaging with education. There may be some difficulty bringing family on board. It is therefore helpful to use a deficit strengths-based model. This model will enable the counsellor to work with the families on a focused solution. This model below will create a clear image of moving from a problem to a solution.

Deficit Strengths versus Strengths Based Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEFICIT-BASED</th>
<th>STRENGTHS-BASED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FOCUS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deficit/ Childcare</td>
<td>Strengths/ available childcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem/Costs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EVALUATION</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risks/ Family losing out</td>
<td>Discovery of strengths/ how it may benefit the whole family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INTERVENTION</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment/ Easier to stay at home</td>
<td>Implementation/ will benefit more from education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ROLE OF YOUNG MOTHERS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive/ stay the same</td>
<td>Active/ engage in education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CONTEXT</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolation of the Young mothers (office)/ might be cut off from my family</td>
<td>Inclusion/ might make a larger circle of friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mainstreaming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GOAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement in symptoms/ Improve living conditions</td>
<td>Development/ develop my prospects and that of my family</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity Planner

As the role of the young mother involves the support of the whole family it is useful to conduct activities that will engage the whole family, as in terms of childcare everyone’s help may be required. The
activity template below has been designed by the Irish team for the specific target group within which we work, for partner countries these can be adapted to meet the needs of your target group.

Allow for a community development approach to planning. It addresses the wider community often crucial in working with marginalised communities as discussed earlier. Engaging the whole community is extremely important as it allows everyone to see the long-term benefits that can be achieved when young mothers return to education. It must be noted that the activity planners outlined in the Irish context may appear very gendered. This is due to the nature if the Traveller community who remain quite a gender divided group. Our experience in Exchange House has taught us that these types of activities work very well with the community, especially as we are trying to draw the whole community into the process. Activities in each partner country may be adapted to suit their specific needs.

Some examples are identified below:

Women’s group Activity Planner

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women’s Beauty Days</th>
<th>Description of the activity</th>
<th>Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skincare advice</td>
<td>Product advice with skincare specialist</td>
<td>Cleanser, toner moistures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make up Application</td>
<td>Skills Demonstration</td>
<td>Various brands of make up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nail Application</td>
<td>Shellac &amp; Gel nails</td>
<td>Nail Application</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Men’s Group Day Two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Men’s football team</th>
<th>Description of the activity</th>
<th>Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Team Building</td>
<td>Five-a-side football</td>
<td>T-shirts, shorts football boots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Tuesday and Thursday Training with team coach</td>
<td>Team kit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Match</td>
<td>Competitive match with prize for the winning team</td>
<td>Winners Prize</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Children’s Activity Day 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children’s Fun Days</th>
<th>Description of the activity</th>
<th>Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth activities</td>
<td>Description of activity</td>
<td>Materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trip</td>
<td>Kayaking,</td>
<td>Transport, costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disco</td>
<td>Teenager disco</td>
<td>DJ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These activities can be carried out over the course of a week or can be broken down by day over a number of weeks. Partner countries can adapt these activities to meet their own specific needs. As in the case of the above plan there was a cost incurred so this needs to be taking into consideration when planning activities.

Variations on these activities are just simple exercises around just getting to know the people and involving them as part of the family inclusion. These activities are more cost effective and can be completed at any one point within a group activity. As it was mentioned, it is very important for the counsellor working with young mothers to highlight the importance of developing their responsibility for the development of their career, to develop autonomy and initiative, and to encourage the return to education by assisting in right career choice. Consultations and advice in vocational choice, guiding girls in choosing a profession that suits the person’s interests, realistically assessing the situation in order to achieve the goals to be reached is also very important as this strengthens motivation. It is important to work towards development of appropriate attitudes and to encourage any positive efforts to achieve education.

For an appropriate career choice, the first step is to answer the question “what would I like to do and what kind of profession and job is suitable for me?” For this purpose, it is important to evaluate vocational interests as well as abilities. This could be done in different ways. Below a few very simple exercises are suggested based on self-evaluation which could be used by the counsellor or social worker in their individual work with young mothers.

1. The first one ‘Getting to know your interests’ – is aimed for the evaluation of the vocational interests.
2. The second one ‘What are your talents?’ is aimed for the evaluation of the abilities.

**Practical exercise/1: ‘Getting to know your interests’**

*Task:* Please think about your experience and answer the following questions:

1. What do you like to do most?
2. What activities/tasks do you like to do (at work) when you have a choice?
3. When have you been most sure of yourself and your decisions in your activity?
4. When have you been most committed and enthusiastic (at your work if you have ever worked) or other activities?
5. What activities do you like to do in your leisure time?
6. If money were no concern, what would you be doing?

**Practical exercise/2: What are your talents?**

*Introduction:* Talents and abilities reveal themselves through the activities which person does the best; things that make you different from others. This exercise will help you to reveal your talents, which might influence your decisions about profession.

*Task:* Mark statements, which describe your talents best:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mark statement if it fits you</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I am able to express my emotions, portray any situation with my voice intonation, posture</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I try new drawing methods and materials</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I am interested in cars; technologic devices and I construe</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I am wonder in different events, their causes and effects</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I am interested in music; I listen other people singing; music production</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I am full of energy, and dedicate a lot of time to physical exercise</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I am enthusiastic and optimistic</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I am curious; I always want to know something new</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I create new melodies</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Stories that I tell are logical, and detailed</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I like to draw schemes, constructions  
I express my feelings and experiences with music  
I am a good story-teller  
I am able to portray any situation  
I spend a lot of time at sport activities  
My works are really original  
I express my feelings with drawing, painting or sculpturing  
I read scientific literature and often discuss some interesting topics  
I dedicate a lot of time to plans, collecting something  
I create performances and act with great pleasure  
I am able to work with instruments  
I am able to involve others into common activities  
I am able to create an interesting story or poems  
I am able to manage a group  
I understand and am able to solve technical problems  
I often win the games  
Other people recognize my authority and value my opinion  
I am interested in art objects created by other people  
I can easily empathize another person’s, thing’s or animal’s behaviour, and can easily imitate them  
I feel great pleasure participating in different contests and games

*Calculation of the Results*: please count how many choices are near each letter:

A _____________  
B _____________  
C _____________  
D _____________  
E _____________  
F _____________  
G _____________  
I _____________

The meaning of the Results:
A – Actor abilities (talents)

B – Scientific talents

C – Mechanical talents

D– Literature talents

E – Artistic talents

F – Organizational talents

G – Sport talents

I – Musical talents

If the majority of your statements are “B”, then you have scientific talents; if the majority are “E”, then you have artistic talents, etc. It may happen that you have a lot of diverse talents. In such case you need to decide which of them are just pleasant activities.

Follow up Sessions

Follow up sessions will help to maintain and further develop relationships with a community. Try to discuss the benefits of bringing young mothers back to Education Project, let them see how it will work in practise over a stated period of time. This will enable the counsellors to identify potential candidates for the BYMBE Project. At these sessions we would hand out application forms for anyone interested in returning to education. This would include family and extended family members or indeed anyone they may know that may have expressed an interest in returning to education. This will be a repeated activity and will continue over a stated period of time. Use the opportunity to distribute applications along with information on the project. Use any further events taking place within the community to further this activity and share any updated information.

This day showcases the vibrancy and rich heritage of the community and is a celebration of all the contributions and achievements they have made in all aspects of Irish society. The event also highlights issues within the community and aims to increase Traveller pride and expectations. The key is to use information leaflets to let people know what you have to offer as below:
A visual tool such as the flyer may be good as there are low levels of literacy in the communities especially if you are working with migrant communities as many of the partners are doing. Using read only materials may be off-putting. Using a visual sends a strong message and can be more powerful than words alone. The image below is quite powerful and shows a supportive bond between the mother and daughter but also the challenges that they face together.

“It is easy for everyone to say “you have to study”. They aren’t the ones going through what I am going through!”

“All young mothers should have the opportunity to complete education and pursue the future they want.”
Chapter 6 – Peer Leaders

When developing a connection with the young mothers it is crucial to choose a person that they can relate to. Many young mothers may feel that as a result of early school leaving their options may be limited, in addition, young mothers are often socially isolated and may lack the skills that will help them access resources. They may feel intimidated by institutions and societies impression of them. For some it will be taking the fear out of the process of returning to education.

However, for some young mothers their children may often be the reason that they choose to re-engage in education; they see it as a way to be a good role model for the child and also the community. No matter what the reason is for young mothers returning to education using a peer lead approach it makes sense the young mothers will be able to see that if someone similar to them was able to do it they may believe that they can do. This is the case of the young peer leader in the following activity. This young mother stated that she wanted to give something back to her community and education in her case was the only way to achieve this and get a job that could facilitate this action. When thinking about planning peer led activities consider the following:

- Think of two activities you can organise
- Choose the right people who will act as a peer role models
- Be open minded and solution focused
- Make it relevant
Planning peer led Activities

“Peer education is defined as a system of delivering knowledge that improves social learning and provides psychosocial support” Abdi. and Simbar, M, 2013, p.1)

Below is a template from a peer learner who engaged in an activity with an educational group. The learner is a young mother who progressed from a QQI Level 4 Information Technology programme to a level with us here in Exchange House Ireland. The young mother in question has gone on to complete further awards and now works as project coordinator inspiring others to continue in education. The young mother is instrumental in building a truly inspirational service. Using someone who was in a similar situation as a role model will help relate to the community. The young mother is a prime example of real-life praxis (theory and practise combined) The young mothers have an opportunity to ask relevant questions in terms of educational programmes of how she manages to work with a young child. They can do this as part of a group or in private. Time should always be allowed for questions as there may be issues that will need to be discussed that can be awkward for your mothers starting out on a new journey.

Below is an example a peer led activities example of a peer led session conducted by a young mother who was a former learner and now holds a management position in an Irish company.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10-10.30</th>
<th>10.15</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction Who am I?</td>
<td>Exercise</td>
<td>Working as part of a team</td>
<td>Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My educational experience</td>
<td>Team building exercise</td>
<td>To follow an instructional plan</td>
<td>Large table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being a young mother and progression</td>
<td>Building a bridge</td>
<td>To achieve a goal in a fun way</td>
<td>Old Newspaper Sellotape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where am I now</td>
<td>Formulate group Discussion</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>Chairs &amp; pens</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 7 – Risk situations

Young mothers are at risk of early school leaving due to a number of factors. Imaraura et al argue that "the most consistent risk factor for early pregnancy was lower socioeconomic status (P.1, 2007)."

Riordan (2002) cites the factors below as reason young mothers do not engage in education:

1. Family, social, and cultural factors such as lack of parental support, cultural differences, and values in child-rearing. Different social constructions of what makes a good mother and social stigma around being a young mother.

2. Structural factors such as negative experiences of school, exclusion of pregnant mothers from school, lack of childcare, the full-time nature of education, welfare payments associated, age limits in terms of payments for programmes in further education and training courses in addition to a lack of counselling service and support programmes,

This is where BYMME is unique as we strive to provide support to young mothers in re-entering education. Trained counsellors must understand the circumstances that have contributed to the young mother leaving school in the first place. This will help them when drawing up a future work plans with the young mothers. Using the Maslow’s hierarchy of needs tool later in this chapter will help the young mother identify the most important areas that they need to look at. This might mean looking at their housing situation, their current economic status, or their supports systems which we have identified earlier in this chapter. The counsellors must also look at crisis management in terms of immediate behaviour and what might be preventing the young mother from engaging in education or training in the interim stages and throughout their journey

Crisis can be defined as a time of intense difficulty or danger or when a difficult decision must be made. Risk can be defined as a situation involving exposure to danger (Oxford dictionary)

As a trainer it is important to recognise ambivalent behaviour; what it means, and how we can work on this to improve the outcomes for the young mothers. At times young mothers may not see the point in change or even be sure if they want to change. Therefore, it is critical to maintain an understanding about what the young mothers are feeling. The trainer must always remember that a crisis in one person’s life may differ from that of another. It is not for the trainer to determine or change that situation in a young
mothers’ life, and all changes must be directed by them. Once engaged with the young mothers they avoid arguments and confrontation by accepting what the young mothers have to say (this will often shock the young mothers as what they have experienced before may have been confrontation at this point)

Recognising some of the various types of crisis and risk situations below may help:

- Suicidal ideation
- Poor mental health
- Financial emergency
- Domestic violence
- Rape
- Murder
- Disclosure of abuse
- Child protection issues
- Threatening behaviour from an ex-partner
- Diagnosis of illness
- Accident or injury
- Unsafe living conditions

All of the above situations indicate crisis or very often a young mother may present with multiple crises. As a counsellor whilst the young mother may be in crisis the counsellor must always remain in control of the situation, just because the young mother is in crisis you do not have to be.

Steps in crisis management:

1. Assess the situation
2. Make a plan of action
3. Involve others as needed
4. Review and check in
The young mothers need to feel supported. They will not be able to engage properly if they do not have their basic needs met. You can support them in getting the correct help with accommodation, food, finance, therapy etc.

Build their trust and gain their respect from showing empathy. The young mothers need to feel supported. They will not be able to engage properly if they do not have their basic needs met. You can support them in getting the correct help with accommodation, food, finance, therapy etc. Build their trust and gain their respect from showing real support.

Use the Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs as a tool to assess if the young mothers’ needs are being meet. You can build a relationship if you acknowledge that you have a full understanding of the young mothers, however you may not always be able to help, but you can find the supports where necessary.

### Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs was developed by Abraham Maslow in the mid-1900s. The theory is based on the premise that human beings have five basic needs which enable them to live a quality life. It comprises of a five-tier model of human needs often depicted as hierarchical levels within a pyramid (https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html). The belief is that in order to reach a state of self-actualisation (a period of ultimate contentment, where the individual has attained all their goals in life and has become fulfilled) the human must first satisfy all their basic human needs. This is depicted in the diagram below:

![Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Diagram](https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html)
Maslow Exercise can help the young mother to identify the main issues affecting her life at this point as identified above. The counsellor can help them to prioritise their main concerns. What issues need to be addressed first to help them on their journey. Use the exercise below to help the young mothers to see what it is they believe they need at this point. We can then use the information gathered to help them in order to stop them from dropping out. The counsellor, where possible, can help them get the support they need.

**EXERCISE:**

In terms of housing/ income and home life in general how satisfied are you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very happy</th>
<th>Very unhappy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. 2. 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of safety are secure psychological and emotional feelings do you feel?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very happy</th>
<th>Very unhappy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. 2. 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of love and belonging with family, friends and community how supported do you feel?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very happy</th>
<th>Very unhappy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. 2. 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Are you confident and do you feel ready to take your next journey to education?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very happy</th>
<th>Very unhappy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. 2. 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Where do you want to be in 10 years’ time?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very happy</th>
<th>Very unhappy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. 2. 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Materials Required**

- Maslow handout
- Explain the basis of the Maslow Hierarchy of Needs (keep this simple)
- Questionnaire
- Pen and paper
- Review of the answers
- List of local services/ supports
- Time allocated -1 hour

**Variation of Maslow Hierarchy exercises**

Alan Chapman has a very detailed Maslow five and eight tier quiz. This is an excellent tool which can be used with the young mothers. For the purpose of this paper we are unable to share it but it can be printed off and used with the young mothers. It can be found at: [https://www.businessballs.com/self-awareness/maslows-hierarchy-of-needs/](https://www.businessballs.com/self-awareness/maslows-hierarchy-of-needs/)
Chapter 8 – Partner Contributions

This chapter identifies the various contributions for the partner countries engaged in the BYMBE project. Contributions have been made from Austria, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Italy and Spain.

Assessment of needs in Partner countries

Assessment of needs in Austria

In Austria we identified different groups of young NEET mothers in respect to their background.

- those who have stable support of their families
  - family usually pushes them to finish their education
  - do not need BYMBE

- those who have instable support of their families
  - they are used to depending on social welfare
  - BYMBE could be a help, but they themselves do not see a need

- those, where everything went so wrong that they are already in some kind of support
  - nearly no contact to parents or private support system
  - very instable situations and mental situations

To work with a group of young mothers we need pretty much the same approach as our partner in Ireland. As they are so used to cope with different entities of welfare and youth care from their childhood (often problems are ongoing from generation to generation) it is very important to build up a relation of trust and NOT judging them. This might be very difficult, because at the same time they are very provocative in order to test you out: whether the counsellor really wants to help and support them, or whether you are only “one like the others”. There is a strong trend “to repeat the same experiences – like being left alone, treated badly, judged again and again” – due to their prior bad experiences. As a counsellor you have to be prepared for several circles of ups and downs. If you think counselling is a normal process you might only lose in this process, or more precisely: you will lose the young mother and she will drop out.
There is a big need of showing respect on the one hand (active listening, attention, correct use of feedback), accept the person as she is, but on the other hand showing up clearly the limitations, consequences of their actions and behaviour, making their own responsibility and things which are not acceptable clear. Otherwise you may lose in this “game of repeating the same experiences again and again”. For the success of the project it is very important that the young mothers feel a break to “normal “interventions.

Core skills of the counsellor: not to be judging but very clear regarding the responsibilities of both the young mothers and the counsellor, making the young mothers understand her part in the situation, showing up consequences in an understandable way, motivational conversation and a lot of patience, not in the way of simply accepting things, but not giving up the hope and judging the young mothers.

Apart from those skills related to the personal relation we think that it is important that the counsellor has a general idea of the influence of gender roles and stereotypes on living conditions and individual decisions (“Why are girls still dreaming of prince charming?”). This helps to understand their ideas and how to explain that statistics prove other realities for women (in Tyrol over 60% of working women could not survive on only their own income in 2016, so are either dependent on their husband or social welfare), especially a high risk of poverty in old age or the moment of divorce or death of the partner.

Furthermore, it is important to provide counselling in all parts of the country. The smaller the village the more difficult the situation gets on the one hand regarding available jobs and childcare and on the other hand regarding being marked for life as a young mother with a difficult past.

**ASSESSMENT OF NEEDS IN BULGARIA**

Since Bimec is a training organization and not expert in social work we invited organizations that operate social services in the country to the train-the-trainer training for BYMME methodology. 20 trainers and social workers attended the trainings. From these 6 social workers, working in 3 organizations in Vidin, Rousse and Plovdiv (smaller towns in the country outside the capital) decided to take part in the further project implementation.

In Bulgaria the main portion of young mothers who have not finished school are of gypsy origin. The gypsies in Bulgaria have very similar characteristics to those of the Travellers described by the Irish partner: they live in their larger families and have to comply with the understanding that the main role of the
woman is to bear children and this starting from a very early age. Some of them have the support of their families/husbands but only in terms of income and a place to live. Usually they take care of the children themselves and it is difficult because they need support with childcare in order to be able to take part in the project or to go to schools. Very often their relatives do not support their desire to participate in the project trainings or to renew their education.

The social workers tried very hard to get into the community itself and to be able to reach the young mothers. In two of the cases (towns) they were supported by priests of the Evangelist church. They had to talk to many young women in order to attract at least a small number of them to take part in the project. They also had to convince the family (usually husband and in-laws) that it would be good for all of them if the young women continued their education. In one of the cases even the husband insisted on coming together with his wife to the training. In all these cases what helped most was the trust that either already existed with the social worker or with the Evangelist church. Also being open and promising support for actually registering the woman in the educational system was very important.

The actual work with the young mothers was very productive and successful. The main factors for success identified by the social workers were:

- The young women needed attention and support in developing confidence. The very fact that someone was there trying to help them and paying attention to them was rewarding and motivating.

- It was very important to show respect: active listening, attention, honest but tactful feedback.

- The social worker had to show acceptance and to not be judgmental, but to be understanding.

- The social worker had to be very well aware of the gender roles and stereotypes in the community, where the young women lived. The social worker had to work with the whole family to convince them to let the woman go to training and after that go back to school.

- Last but not least in most cases we also had to provide child care during piloting or we even did some of the sessions together with the children, which was difficult and for which we utilized the support of volunteers.
ASSESSMENT OF NEEDS IN IRELAND

In the Irish context as outlined throughout this IO approaching the young mothers is a collective process. The young mothers are from the hard to reach Traveller community target group, therefore it is crucial that the social workers and trainers engage with all services that work on the ground, this includes social services our own staff in Exchange house Ireland which includes a Family crisis and Intervention Service, Youth Service, Education Service and Mental Health Service, in addition to external agencies we work alongside.

The services within our organisation have worked with the target community for a number of years and have built up trusting relationships which must be maintained at all costs. The counsellors need to be mindful of their own professional behaviour whilst building on these relationships, many of the young mothers have never had a job and their lack of education remains the biggest barrier to gaining full time employment for example only 16% of Travellers have completed the Leaving certificate and 80.2%% of Travellers remain unemployed (CSO, 2017). Building relationships are key in engaging the young mothers. Skills required by the counsellor are, trust, compassion fostering a non–judgemental and dyadic approach that involves the Young Mothers at every level. As a counsellor this is vital to building trust and rapport to allow a process of active engagement to take place. Furthermore, as the community is a very close knit community familial relationships matter, the relationship to the young mothers must incorporate the wider community.

Relationships with the wider community mean that the family can support the young mothers in terms of childcare and provide essential emotional support. The counsellors also need to let the young mothers know that they will support them too.

Within the wider social context, it is often the case that when young women have children it is more likely the time that they disengage from education, training and employment it is therefore crucial that when we approach young mothers to return to education and training that they see a value in it. This can be a direct challenge to the counsellors in this case, so it is vital that education is seen as something that can enhance the lives of the young mothers and their families in terms of outcomes. The counsellors should highlight that education can be a gateway out of social exclusion and poverty.
ASSESSMENT OF NEEDS IN ITALY

For the purposes of BYMBE project a “young mother” is a woman aged from 15 to 29 years old who is pregnant or had her first child in her teenage years or in her twenties. Although women who have children after the age of 19 may escape the “teen mum” label, the struggles and stigma they face are not wildly different. However, situations still remain very diverse, being affected by several influencing factors, such as level of education of the mother (and her family), emotional and/or tangible support from the young mother’s family and from the baby’s father, and differences in adolescent age groups.

In approaching young girls, local organisations’ trainers have been involved as intermediaries for trust-building and to encourage young mothers to take part to the BYMBE training programme. Young mothers respond better to people they know and they respect. The activities of these organisation are empowerment-focused and aimed at improving women’s capabilities and professional profile through specific courses aimed at developing soft and digital skills or fostering self-entrepreneurship support or at achieving a qualification. Other activities include: trainings about family budget, legal support and of course child-focused activities: parenthood support, information about different parental models and pedagogical practices, study groups, after-school activities, relationship building activities.

Through intermediation of these organization, a clearer view of the different situations of young mothers has been gained. In particular a main perception and few common points have emerged:

- Main perception is related to the age range of the young mothers that local organisations succeed in reaching and engaging in activities. Despite working in disadvantaged areas, where educational poverty, social exclusion and young motherhood are common phenomena, young mothers less than 25 years old are extremely difficult to involve. Local workers have found that the younger the mother, the more she lends to her own maternal role and tends to see everything in an unrealistically positive way, rejecting help from externals and focusing on the role of caregiver of the family.

- Most young mothers – being in a relationship or not – often live with their families of origin and/or rely on family members as significant sources of financial and caregiving support.

- For those who are in a relationship, they had not planned to fully rely on their partner financially, but neither had they planned not to have him as the family breadwinner.
• Frustration is, undoubtedly, one of the most evident points in the collective narrative of young mothers, and is related to:
  o Simultaneously being in charge of everything related to children, housework and family management but not nearly enough in control of everything;
  o Incapability of sustaining family economically and give their children more;
  o Being dependent from charity of relatives;
  o Incapability of find a [convenient] job;
  o Incapability of being able to have personal money.

• As for education, young mothers value having an education as a means to provide a better future for their children. Yet:
  o when asked about their plans, they had no definite course of action to complete, finish, or continue their education;
  o since they cannot share childcare responsibilities (because of unfit parents, working partners or other), they claim to be not available for their academic tasks and, as a result, they sometimes had difficulty meeting deadlines and finding time and energy to come to training sessions.

• In truth, any plan to return to study clashes with the reality of the financial need of families, which always leads young mothers to prefer employment – even if temporary – and having some money for small expenses – over an uncertain and not immediately profitable investment as that of returning to education.

• As for access to the labour market:
  o Financial difficulties make aspirations not go beyond a convenient paycheck, whether time-limited or for regular or undeclared work.
  o Work is not a priority: job clashes with family demands, which are valued more than work; in response, they quit, hoping to return at a more opportune time or to find a less demanding job.
Most of young mothers are indulging in unrealistic expectations in relation to market value, flexibility in work schedules and job security of the job they would like to apply for: they want a stable job with benefits, but they do not have the skills and experience necessary to get it, and neither the Italian job market easily allows them to achieve this.8

- There is also a strong demand for the State (meaning social welfare) to take care of their situation by providing a job, money and free childcare, which is not something Italian welfare State is able to provide.

ASSESSMENT OF NEEDS IN LITHUANIA

In Lithuania, depending on the circumstances, background and family situation, we could state that the need for support of young NEET mothers differs and the Project BYMBE could be more vital in one case then the others.

We could say that the general challenge for all young NEET mothers on their way back to education is the need to take care of their children and in this case the child services are very urgently needed, as the lack of these services or family support usually is an obstacle on their return to education.

The situation in Lithuania is that in 2014 68% of children from one to six years of age attended childcare institutions (33% of children under three and 86% of children between three and six years of age) (Education 2015). 13% of children did not get a place in a childcare institution. Therefore, the private sector was encouraged and had been developed.

But for young NEET mothers in most cases private childcare services are too expensive.

In Kaunas city 11% of children did not get a place in municipality childcare institutions (14,873 children involved and 1,549 children did not get a place).

The scientific research shows that the teenage childbirth rate is significantly higher in the countryside municipalities than it is in the cities: 18.2 infants per 1000 women aged from 15 to 19 (comparatively, the

8 OCSE has recently defined Italian job market as characterised by “poor quality work” and “employees under stress due to a high level of pressure” (especially for those whose job contracts are time-limited and therefore seek for renewal). In Italy, the incontrovertible fact remains that, beyond skills, salaries are lower than the European average and that rises with seniority, so around 50 years, and not during the peak of productivity, 30-40 years, as happens abroad. This is extremely important if compared with the general trend for temporary work, which makes difficult for people to stay in the same job for more than few months or a year. For many workers, in particular among young people and women, atypical jobs bear the mark of precariousness and lead to a state of vulnerability and “working-poor”.

For information related to the Italian job market please refer to the Report on National Education and Support Services for Young mothers available on www.bymbe.eu/results/
same indicator in cities is 10.3). Therefore, women living in the countryside, give birth earlier than those living in the cities. According to the study the highest indicators of childbirth at a young age were recorded in municipalities having a number of other problems, including the higher number of recipients of social allowance, higher number of unemployed, and so on. It is clear, that those municipalities have more social and economic problems and difficulties.

Therefore, in a smaller town it is more difficult to get a job and childcare.

Some young mothers, living in remote areas, face the specific situation of transport difficulties: they do not have driving licence, do not have a car – there is no way to get out of the countryside to work, to attend courses etc.

We could agree with the classification suggested by the Austrian partners for the need of help by young mothers:

• There are young mothers who have the support of their families and they are on their way back to education with the support of their relatives.

• Young mothers who are used to depend on social support and have very little or any contact to parents or private support system. In this case participation in project BYMBE could be helpful.

Some of these young mothers are in really difficult situations, having emotional problems, addictions, financial difficulties, debts. The life style they choose is usually repeated from generation to generation (some are from families at social risk). The performance at school in some cases is really low and, in some cases, young mothers even have difficulties in reading, counting and a very low motivation for studying. This is the challenge for the counsellor.

Therefore, it is very important for the counsellor working with young mothers on rising of self-esteem of young NEET mothers. This process goes through teaching to take responsibility for their life, gaining a position in the professional world and taking care of themselves and their children. Career education is therefore crucial in raising awareness among young mothers of their own influence on their achievements.

Assessment of needs in Spain

In the case of Spain, adolescent motherhood is an invisible phenomenon that affects almost eight of every thousand women between 15 and 19 years. Furthermore, the percentage of adolescent mothers is related to the level of development of the autonomous community of residence and it is higher in the less
developed areas. That's why you cannot make general facts about the specific needs of young women, because these needs are affected by contextual and social elements. Therefore, also in the case of Spain, as seen in other countries, the needs are closely linked to factors such as the person, family support or not, the socioeconomic level of the family, if they live in a rural area or in town and so on.

In the case of Asturias in particular, there is a large part of the young mothers who belong to the Roma ethnic group, and they have been raised in a culture in which the role of women is closely linked to motherhood and home care, where getting married at an early age and having children is part of their life plan. Likewise, there is a devaluation of schooling, since normally the family environment does not reward the continuation of studies.

Regarding the schooling of Roma girls, it is necessary to highlight that girls leave school before Roma boys, and all of them before the rest of young people. In this sense, the motivations that lead girls to leave the educational system are related to lack of interest in content and for family reasons, the latter related to marriage and family responsibilities related to household chores (as well as family pressures).

With all this, the success of the intervention will go through:

1. To be able to establish contact with the community and with the young people, and to try to mediate with them in agree to participate in the program.

2. Once the young women have agreed to participate, the objective will be to maintain that participation over time, in such a way that its completion will be an indicator of the success of the intervention.

For the adequate success of the program, it will be key:

1. On the one hand, the role of social workers is essential, in the case of the Town Councils with which we work, they have a long experience in programs destined to Roma, and there is continuous communication with Social Services, having relatively easy access to young gypsy mothers.

2. In addition, the relationship of the social worker with young women is essential, in such a way that a bond of trust based on mutual respect and understanding is established. Respected personal times and always from the perspective of individual freedom.

With all this, it is important to take into account these factors in order to work BYMBE with young Roma women, with the greatest difficulties being those related to factors mentioned above: many of them
have assumed their role as mothers at an early age, and have economic dependence on their families or their partner. Due to this role, the return to studies involves delegating the care of their children to other people (who may not understand the need) or finding a lack of family support in the decision.

Building relationships with parents and communities

**The Austrian Experience**

As it was mentioned, it is very important for the counsellor working with young mothers to highlight the importance of developing their responsibility for the development of their career, to develop autonomy and initiative, and to encourage the return to education by assisting in the right career choice. This could be done during the individual counselling with the young mothers. Consultations and advice in vocational choice, guiding girls in choosing a profession that suits personal interests, realistically assessing the situation in order to achieve the goals is also very important as this strengthens motivation. It is important to work towards the development of appropriate attitudes and to encourage any positive efforts to achieve education.

For an appropriate career choice, the first step is to answer the question “what I would like to do and what kind of profession and job is suitable for me?” For this purpose, it is important to evaluate vocational interests as well as abilities. This could be done in different ways. Below a few very simple exercises based on self-evaluation are suggested which could be used by a counsellor or social worker in their individual work with young mothers.

As already mentioned above most of the Austrian young mothers are already in youth care or support systems as they have no or a bad relationship with their own parents. So, in most cases the relationship to the parents is not the issue. In many cases we even have to help young mothers to overcome the trauma of not being accepted and loved by their own parents or other problems they have experienced.

In addition, working with the peer group does not seem that easy. Most of them ended up in groups with a bad influence on them before their pregnancy. On the one hand the moment they come to us, they have successfully separated from these groups and do not want to have anything to do with the old friends. On the other hand, they do not seem to have new stable contacts. Even between one another there is a lot of suspicion whether they can trust each other. In the discussions they emphasise that they do not want to have contact to people with bad influence, as if they had to learn this by heart, of have to
besuade themselves to do so. In short, in most cases we were not able to identify a supportive target
group. Some of them told us they thought the only person they could trust were they themselves.

We did not offer activities, as this is not part of our other institutional offers. This is more the task of
other support services they are in, we mainly focus on the educational and professional development
together with the young mothers and try to help them with our knowledge and contacts.

As “Frauen im Brennpunkt” is also active in awareness rising from female problems on the labour
market and the higher risk of poverty of women, we also put a focus on the issue that the young mothers
do not just do the education for a job „in any case“ but – if possible, regarding local availability and their
own mental capacities - try to motivate them for a job which can „provide“ them an income they can live
from and nourish their child.

THE BULGARIAN EXPERIENCE

This was not an easy process because of the traditions in the communities where the girls live. For
the older generations it is perfectly acceptable not to finish school both for men and women, but especially
for women when they have children. What helped most was the relationship of trust that already existed
between the social workers or the people who supported them to reach the target. Another important
aspect was that some of the women already had older children, wanted to lead a better life, find a better
job, but understood that it was not possible with such a low level of education. So, the women themselves
were motivated and willing to overcome the resistance they faced in the families. Other women already
had the support of their family. So, we worked with the target group and their community case by case.

THE IRISH EXPERIENCE

Exchange House Ireland (TRIBLI) has over 35 years’ experience providing Traveller specific,
professional, front-line family support, crisis intervention, education, training, and services for children and
young people in Ireland. We are lucky enough to have access to Social workers, educators and youth
workers from the various departments in Exchange House. Having invited 20 members of the team to
participate in the trainings; this took place in our Boardroom here in Dublin. The main bulk of the
participants were from our social work department numbering 10 with the rest comprising of trainers
/educators. The training was delivered by Lorraine O’Connor.

The trainers stated that they were impressed with the training materials of IO3. The Gardner multiple
intelligence test impressed the participants as they felt that this is something they could use in their work.
One social worker expressed concerns that it was a little overcomplicated but I told her that there were other models that she could use, such as the VARK which I, as an educator, use with younger students. She was happy with the fact that we had considered this in the IO. The SYMFOS training was very well received as most of the participants had never used this tool. The fact that it was a very self-directed exercise that allowed the participant to take ownership and enabled space for contemplation to map their own personal journey was very well received. All participants said they would use this in their work.

**THE ITALIAN EXPERIENCE**

The issue of family participation is particularly relevant and concerns the needs, rights, roles and responsibilities of all those family members (mothers, fathers, grandparents, partners) and influencers (friends, teachers, social workers, neighbours) who accompany young mothers before and during motherhood.

In accordance with our mission to improve the quality of education, CESIE’s work has focused on community engagement thanks to participatory processes that involve all those who take care of the daily growth of children (parents, educators, teachers, social workers, grandparents...).

Our commitment has been to use our interdisciplinary interventions at local level in order to approach, guide and accompany young mothers’ families and influencers within the diverse local initiatives implemented by CESIE and associated partners aimed at:

- development of social skills, improvement of employability, or construction of social environments suitable for families and active engagement of youth; or
- creating real and virtual spaces to socialise, exchanging and sharing experience through events, meetings and happenings.

This action is aimed at creating a sense of belonging to a community who takes care of its members’ different needs. Also, partnerships with local organisation and education provider are a way to provide additional expertise, resources and supports.

**THE LITHUANIAN EXPERIENCE**

When women start attending trainings, usually they meet other women in similar situation and gain new connections, support, information, become more active, integrate better in the broader community. They have the possibility to develop their competences and soft skills, continue their personal
development and gain more confidence. Their attitudes towards their possibilities change. If there is some resistance in their families, they are able to deal with that situations and change the attitudes to more positive.

It is very important for the counsellor working with young mothers to highlight the importance of developing their responsibility for the development of their career, to develop autonomy and initiative, and to encourage the return to education by assisting in the right career choice. This could be done during the individual counselling with the young mothers. Consultations and advice in vocational choice, guiding girls in choosing a profession that suits personal interests, realistically assessing the situation in order to achieve the goals is also very important as this strengthens motivation. It is important to work towards the development of appropriate attitudes and to encourage any positive efforts to achieve education.

For an appropriate career choice, the first step is to answer the question “what I would like to do and what kind of profession and job is suitable for me?” For this purpose, it is important to evaluate vocational interests as well as abilities.

**THE SPANISH EXPERIENCE**

In the case of Asturias, the long history of the municipalities with which we work in relation to the Roma community will favour access to young women. Likewise, the work of the Fundación Secretariado Gitano, which works specifically with this population group, is also important. Thanks to their work, the access to the community to explain the importance of the program for women is essential. Both institutions have a variety of professionals from different sectors: social workers, psychologists, educators, etc. that will participate in the implementation of the work with young women and families.

On the other hand, the training with the professionals was valued very positively, considering that the presented materials complete in a holistic way the necessary work with the young women and their families. They were interested and optimistic about the results of the implementation of the different tools that are included in this manual, finding some of them novel and very useful in the work both with young women and in the intervention with their family networks.
Provision of motivation and empowerment, achieving sustainable change in Partner Countries

THE AUSTRIAN CONTEXT

In Austria we realise that for most of the mothers the motivation seems to be her child. We think this is because in Tyrol perceptions of family are mostly oriented on traditional role models of women and men. A study carried out by the Family Institute and the University of Vienna with 1000 persons between the ages of 18 and 70 in Austria showed that 72% think a mother should stay with her child for as much time as possible, especially children under 1.5 years. Every second person thinks it is negative if a mother of a young child has a job, as it is the duty of the father to assure the income of the family. This leads to the fact that in many families they stay in bad relationships, because it is better to have a “normal” family and a man than going to work. Concerning working and achieving one’s own income this leads to the fact that every 4th woman stays off her job more than 3 years and every 3rd woman works only part time, which has an immense effect on income and pensions and increases the before mentioned risk of poverty.

Regarding the girls we notice that their top motivation seems to be the child. They want to do everything for the child. We do not know if this comes from perceptions of motherhood and family in our society or if they were told so. It is just outstanding how often they mention repeatedly that they are doing it for the child.

This might be a motivation, but we think it has more impact on the long-term and is better for their mother-child relationship if they understand that they need to do it for their own good. Doing it for the child is a fragile motivation that may break down with the first mother-child troubles which arise. We aim to achieve a motivation that impacts at the same time on their self-esteem and confidence. The achievement of an education and profession shall not be a sacrifice for a child, but something they can be proud of at the end.

For those young mothers who claim that they are never listened to and are given a chance to prove they are able, it may also be a motivation to prove to the world that they can take this educational route till the end in order to achieve control over their lives, which they never had before. But the counsellor has to be prepared that this step might be a very strong aim on the one hand but also a very frightening one on the other hand. Self-control means also self-responsibility!!!
At the beginning it is hard to create visions or even find an objective for the next step with them. At a later stage the miracle question of de Shazer might be a good tool to work with them. This question was developed in the early 1980s and worked with a solution-oriented approach. The main objective is to shift the focus on the future when the problems were gone. It is not really one question, but a certain process the young mothers have to go through to change their mind-set.

**The Bulgarian Context**

The main things that motivate the girls, mentioned by young mothers through their feedback after the pilots are related to:

- **Developing confidence:**
  - Someone supports me;
  - Someone understands me;
  - Someone pays attention to me;
  - I can actually do something to change my situation;
  - Going back to school is an achievable goal.

- **Finding support in the peer group:**
  - There are other people like me;
  - Talking to people in the same situation.

- **The desired profession or even school itself is a motivator:**
  - If I study, I can become a hairdresser;
  - I miss school.

- **The possibility to have a better life:**
  - If I finish school, I can have a better job;
  - If I finish school, I can earn more money.

- **Feeling good and having fun:**
It’s interesting;

I like it;

I feel good.

**The Irish Context**

Within the Irish context managing risk is the key to maintaining young mother’s participation in education. Past experience has taught us within our education service that the rigidity of certain educational programmes means that there is too much pressure on young mothers and this inevitably leads them to drop out of programmes. Therefore, when counsellors work with the young mothers, they should have detailed information around what it is that the young mothers want, what availability they have, what they need in terms of childcare. Having informed data will then help you make choices in terms of what educational programmes will work best. In our own organisation in Exchange House Ireland’s educational department we can link with guidance counsellors within the educational training service who have expertise in this area. Currently one of the young mothers the social workers are working with has engaged with this service as a trained counsellor I have accompanied her on her first session to point her in the right direction. The fact that she knows and trusts our service gives the young mother the support she needs to start her on her educational journey. Furthermore, we have a broad knowledge of what is available in terms of education and training ourselves and we can guide the young mothers in various directions depending on their needs. This process shows the mothers that we are invested in them and that we will be supported throughout. When training the social workers and counsellors it is crucial that they have adequate information available to them in order that they can impart this on to the young mothers.

**The Italian Context**

Women who become parents at a young age often lose interest in school for a variety of reasons. One of the main objectives of CESIE’s activities targeting young mothers is to help them to complete their secondary education and to achieve, or to continue professional education, through training courses or vocational education and training.

The key to achieve this result lays in the following elements:

- **Creation of motivation to education.** Going back to education involves responsibilities related to homework, study, reading, preparation for exams, attendance in class. At the heart of the reality of
mothers-students is the challenge of reconciling these two roles. To encourage going back to education, it is crucial to take advantage of young mothers’ motivation to improve their children’s chances. Pregnancy or incapability to access the labour market despite multiple attempts often provide the impetus to reassess its educational objectives and aspirations.

- **Establishment of a relationship of trust between young mothers and trainers** and **Peer support relationships**. It is very important for participants to have peers whose personal situation is similar to their own and with whom talk about their experiences. This allows young mothers to reflect on their lives and encourage each other to take responsibility for pursuing their goals.

- **Delivery of training in a flexible manner**. To equip young mothers for re-entering education, they should be provided not only with career and personal counselling and planning services, but also with flexible course schedules and personalized program delivery to accommodate their needs and schedules.  

- **School integration**. Young mothers should be able to integrate into the school social network (classmates, teachers, etc.) and maintain the established links. Reintegration into a social environment outside the family allows young mothers to shift away from the relationship with the child, to reclaim their own personal space (a separate living environment and activities), and to increase their personal well-being by feeling that they are fulfilling themselves.

- **Global support services**. For young mothers, childcare, transportation and financial difficulties are the main challenges. Providing solutions through comprehensive support services allows them to focus on their studies and progress.

**The Lithuanian Context**

It is very important for the counsellor working with young mothers to highlight the importance of developing their responsibility for the development of their career, to work on developing autonomy and initiative, and to encourage the return to education by assisting in the right career choice. This could be done during the individual counselling with the young mothers. Consultations and advice in vocational choice, guiding girls in choosing a profession that suits personal interests, realistically assessing the situation in order to achieve the goals is also very important as this strengthens motivation. It is important

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9 This is unfortunately very rare in Sicily, especially for young mothers who have completed primary education and wants to achieve secondary education: in this latter situation, courses are mainly on the evening or private (and therefore expensive).

10 Unfortunately, this aspect has been out of our control, since social services cannot fully satisfy these needs.
to work towards the development of appropriate attitudes and to encourage any positive efforts to achieve education. For an appropriate career choice, the first step is to answer the question “what I would like to do and what kind of profession and job is suitable for me?” For this purpose, it is important to evaluate vocational interests as well as abilities.

**The Spanish context**

Providing young mothers with motivation and empowerment is one of the priorities of BYMBE.

When working with them, the main thing to keep them motivated is to be clear about what motivates each of them, since this varies from one person to another. Often, when talking to girls what keeps them motivated are on the one hand, their personal self-esteem and emotional state (feeling capable, knowing how to handle frustrations, etc.), support networks (that the family and their group close support, know that you can count on them, have a referrer -counselor- who can go in case of doubt, etc.) and personal and professional prospects derived from compliance with their training (if you really have clear the relationship between studying and having a good job, if you like what you do, etc.), among other factors.

Regarding empowerment, it is another of the basic pillars on which the continuation of training is based. They must learn to be self-sufficient, developing their autonomy and know that sometimes their decisions may not satisfy their environment, not meaning that they are wrong.

All these factors have to be taken into account by the counselor, for the successful achievement of objectives that the young mother has marked.

**Managing Risk in Partner Countries**

**The Austrian context**

In Austria as the young mothers were also in other services like youth care, risk situations apart from dropping out of education were not our duty.

- Discuss the possibility of a more flexible timetable
- Agree on communication times/modes (could we use Skype, in terms of the BYMBE young mothers returning to education, we could suggest some blended learning sessions?). With blended learning they could work from home, this would solve any childcare issues they may have
➢ Find a work plan that suits and that will help them meet their goals. This may mean approaching the programme with more flexibility.

If we need them to re-engage

• Make communication a priority; try to find the best way possible to keep the line of communication open.

• Use the motivational interviewing techniques above as a tool to keep young mothers motivated and involved.

The use of scaling questions may help to get young mothers to see what it is they really want and to get them to critically evaluate their own goals and long-term plans.

**THE BULGARIAN CONTEXT**

Unfortunately, the crisis situation in Bulgaria developed due to all the schools in Rousse rejecting some of the girls to be enrolled due to bureaucratic procedures and change in the school system. The officials refused support until the social worker contacted the media. After some media coverage, including by the national television the problem was solved. Otherwise we had no crisis situations with the girls.

**THE IRISH CONTEXT.**

Within the Irish context managing risk is the key to maintaining young mother’s participation in education. Past experience has taught us within our education service that the rigidity of certain educational programmes means that there is too much pressure on young mothers and this inevitably leads them to drop out of programmes. Therefore, when counsellors work with the young mothers, they should have detailed information around what it is that the young mothers want, what availability they have, what they need in terms of childcare. Having informed data will then help you make choices in terms of what educational programmes will work best. In our own organisation in Exchange House Irelands educational department we can link with guidance counsellors within the educational training service who have expertise in this area. Currently one of the young mothers the social workers are working with has engaged with this service as a trained counsellor I have accompanied her on her first session to point her in the right direction. The fact that she knows and trusts our service gives the young mother the support she needs to start her on her educational journey. Furthermore, we have a broad knowledge of what is available in terms of education and training ourselves and we can guide the young mothers in various
directions depending on their needs. This process shows the mothers that we are invested in them and that we will be supported throughout. When training the social workers and counsellors it is crucial that they have adequate information available to them in order that they can impart this on to the young mothers.

The training within the BYMBE project can be used with the young mothers to help provide the basis for returning to education in terms of building their confidence, supporting them to understand how best they learn and what works for them in addition to thinking about what challenges them and how this can be addressed before it reaches a point that the young mothers drop out.

**The Italian Context**

The lack of childcare resources, financial problems, the tough clash between an overestimated self-assessment of employability and the reality of the Italian labour market and the difficulty in developing a self-perception are four major obstacles faced by mothers in going back to education.

Engaging young mothers in training activities has required sensitivity and flexibility. Facilitators from local organisations and CESIE’s trainers had to offer as much support guidance and encouragement as necessary.

A joint analysis of the basic professional and personal characteristics of the young mothers was performed to serve as a basis to plan workshops. This activity has determined the focus, structure and timing of the workshops, the depth and theoretical background to provide, the exercises to offer and the examples to use. It has been relevant in helping design training workshops which are tailor-made for the situation of young mothers and respond to their needs and interests.

A crucial activity has been deciding a timing of the training (hours, days, weekdays, specific periods should be avoided), convenient to the target participants (family duties, job opportunities) but allowing regularity and consistency of activities and homework/individual tasks. Also, location of the workshops had to be convenient for all the participants.

**The Lithuanian Context**

In order to go back to school after some period of time the motivation, support and encouragement is needed. This support could be gained from the family, as well as the support of social workers is very important. The young mothers need help to overcome the doubts and uncertainty. The contact with social
worker, the possibility to have an advice in solving everyday life issues, organising child care and consultations are very important.

THE SPANISH CONTEXT

In the case of Spain, the best option is to work as a group and in person with young mothers, moving to the population where they live. In addition, it is advisable that the timetables are flexible and it cannot be too intense. Otherwise, young mothers in the group we work with easily lose motivation. On the other hand, the person must also feel supported individually. It will therefore be necessary to offer individual tutorials to find out how they feel and to make them express themselves more openly.


6. Davis, Katie et al: [https://howardgardner01.files.wordpress.com/2012/06/443-davis-christodoulou-seider-mi-article.pdf](https://howardgardner01.files.wordpress.com/2012/06/443-davis-christodoulou-seider-mi-article.pdf) (accessed on 14/02/19)


8. Decisional Balance Exercise/Template [http://www.nova.edu/gsc/forms/Young_mothers_handout_3_1_decisional_balance_exercise.pdf](http://www.nova.edu/gsc/forms/Young_mothers_handout_3_1_decisional_balance_exercise.pdf) (accessed 17/05/18)


13. Motivational Interview [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=67I6g1I7Zao](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=67I6g1I7Zao) (accessed on 12/04/2018)


