Being a friend

A Training Resource
to help young people
support each other effectively

Paula Keenan and
Dr Martin Mc Mullan
Introduction

YouthAction Northern Ireland is a membership-based youth work and arts charity, with a 75 year history of working with young people to tackle inequalities in their lives; improve their life chances; inspire them as activists; and contribute to flourishing communities in a peaceful and shared society. Our vision is that young people are supported to be ‘healthy, happy and hopeful.’

At YouthAction NI we have undertaken a number of strategic initiatives in recent years to support young people to maintain good mental health and well-being, most notably our work in promoting and delivering the “Lifemaps” positive psychology model. This resource has been complemented with a Quality Assurance mental health and well-being toolkit for organisations.

We have also developed a project in partnership with MindWise, a leading Mental Health charity in Northern Ireland. The project ‘MindYou’ involved a series of engagements with young people with mental ill health, designed to learn about their experience of mental health services and their ideas for improvement. The project culminated in a “Let’s talk event” where Government and voluntary sector decision-makers heard the results of the engagements and met directly with young people to hear their key messages. Young people came up with a series of suggestions to address the issues raised in the research.
Among these were:

- Let young people know what mental health problems are about – and what services are available to help in the community.
- Teach young people practical skills about how to deal with mental health problems – including how to help your friends.
- Give young people opportunities to learn from and support each other in groups.

In response to what young people were asking for, we developed a pilot programme with 22 young people. This focussed on training young people to be informal “buddies” to their friends who were experiencing mental health problems.

The programme evaluation indicated that young people felt the training was both useful and important. Over 70% said they would like further training on being a buddy and were particularly keen on having an opportunity for further skills development.

Many of the young people commented that they often found themselves in the position of supporting friends who were struggling with a variety of issues that impinged on their mental well-being. While some felt comfortable with this role, others expressed concern that they weren’t sure how to handle the situation and they worried that they might make the situation worse. Young people also commented that while mental ill health was a common feature of their lives, there were few opportunities to learn about it and many felt that adults avoided the topic.

The content and outcomes of the programme were shared with practitioners attending the “Lifemaps – the happiness formula” conference in March 2019.

They were very enthusiastic about the idea of giving young people some skills in supporting their friends. They all felt that the young people they worked with were experiencing mental health difficulties and could benefit from peer support. Youth workers felt the training could be further developed to help young people support their friends around issues of violence at home and exploring sexual and/or gender identity, as well as mental health.

This resource has been developed as a response to the feedback from youth workers and young people.
Who is it for?

This resource should be useful to anyone working with young people aged from 15 - 25 years old. The main work can be undertaken in one meeting of around four to six hours duration. It could also be delivered in shorter sessions over a longer period of time. It is however important to the process of developing learning, that the exercises are delivered in the sequence set out within the resource.

A final feedback session should be held a few weeks after delivery. The main purpose of this is to explore how participants have been able to put what they have learned into practice and to offer further recommendations.

Key advice for facilitators

• The resource primarily addresses 3 key themes: Exploring sexual and/or gender identity; Living with violence at home/in their relationship; and mental ill health.

• The issues covered here are sensitive and, as young people have told us, are not commonly spoken about. It is important to undertake this work with groups of young people who have had the opportunity to build trust among themselves and with the facilitator.

• There will be young people in the group who will have been affected by issues such as mental ill health, sexual/gender identity, and/or violence at home. The facilitator should take care in how they facilitate sensitive topics and in way that doesn’t create further anxieties.

• For the purpose of the training we explore the three issues of mental ill health, questioning sexual orientation or gender identity and violence at home as separate entities. In reality there may be considerable crossover. For example, a young person exploring their sexual and/or gender identity may experience depression as a result of negative reactions or they may be subjected to violence at home.

• It is important to be inclusive and not to make assumptions about group members’ sexual, gender or racial identities. It is equally important to respect differing perspectives and viewpoints while remembering that it is always your job to challenge discriminatory, prejudiced or stereotyped comments or behaviours.

• Be aware that some young people may not want to share their views or take part in discussions – participation must always be their choice.

• Make sure that young people understand that they are not required to share their personal experiences, and explore the limits of confidentiality with the group.
Setting the scene

It can often be useful to play some music to introduce topics. Here are some suggestions for music you might play at the beginning of the training or during particular sessions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME</th>
<th>SONG</th>
<th>ARTIST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friendship</td>
<td>You’ve got a friend in me</td>
<td>Randy Newman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>With a little help from my friends</td>
<td>The Beatles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bridge over troubled water</td>
<td>Simon and Garfunkel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploring sexual and/or Gender identity</td>
<td>In or out</td>
<td>Ani DeFranco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Killing of Georgie</td>
<td>Rod Stewart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I’m coming out</td>
<td>Diana Ross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living with violence at home or in relationship</td>
<td>By the grace of god</td>
<td>Katy Perry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Till it happens to you</td>
<td>Lady Gaga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Behind the wall</td>
<td>Tracy Chapman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>Julia Michaels ft Selena Gomez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fight song</td>
<td>Rachel Platten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In my blood</td>
<td>Shawn Mendes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Measuring impact

As youth workers it is often difficult to assess the impact of our work. Are our programmes effective? Are young people learning what we intend? Are we making a difference?

We have designed a Being a Friend ‘before’ check-in and ‘after’ check-out for this programme, which can help you measure the impact of the training.

Simply ask the young people to complete the check-in before the training. Some weeks later following the training, invite them to fill in the check out. Compare the scores to measure progress.

It would also be useful to give young people the opportunity to offer some qualitative feedback at the end. Useful questions for discussion might include:

1. What did you like most / least?
2. Did you learn anything?
3. Was there anything that really surprised you?
4. Can you see yourself putting any of this into practice? and how?
5. Would you recommend your friends to do this training – why? and why not?
## Being a friend check-in

Circle a number on a scale of 1 – 10 to rate:

**I am able to spot when a friend is having problems**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>can never tell</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>can always tell</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**I am able to ask a friend who is having problems how they are feeling**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I couldn’t ask</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I would always ask</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**I am confident that I know what to do to help a friend who is having problems**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>not confident</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>very confident</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**I know about organisations that can help young people having problems**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>don’t know any</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>know lots</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Beginnings ...

This is about introducing the topic of friendship and explaining that the course is about learning to be someone your friends can turn to when they are having a hard time.

**EXERCISE ONE: - What qualities does a good friend have?**

Draw a stick person on a flip-chart – working together, the group write the qualities that a good friend should have around the figure.

When the work is complete the facilitator leads a discussion on what qualities are most important – and why. Participants are each given 3 sticky dots to place on the qualities they personally value most.

The group can then see which have been prioritised.
The PALS model

We are introducing a simple model for explaining how to be a good friend. You can use the diagram and table below to describe what the PALS acronym stands for.

**EXERCISE TWO**

Discuss the model with the young people to test their understanding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Pay attention</strong></th>
<th>Pay attention to how they are and what’s going on for them – notice their behaviour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ask</strong></td>
<td>Simply ask them how they are – show your concern – tell them what you’re noticing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Listen</strong></td>
<td>Really listen to what they’re saying – give them space to talk – don’t push, but encourage them to open up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support</strong></td>
<td>You don’t have to be an expert on what’s happening to them – you can just be there for them and find out about sources of support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Paying attention

The first part of the model is about paying attention and noticing signs that your friend might be having a hard time.

Some of these might be signs that something is wrong while others may be specifically related to exploring sexual and/or gender identity; living with violence at home/in their relationship or mental ill health.

EXERCISE THREE

Word storm with the young people what the signs of having a hard time might be for each of the 3 categories – and which might be common to all three.

Use the information in the handout below to verify the suggestions – do these ideas ring true?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Becoming quiet / withdrawn</th>
<th>Losing their mojo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Becoming argumentative</td>
<td>Not interested in the same things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not wanting to go out anymore</td>
<td>Not eating properly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in appearance / self care</td>
<td>Having trouble sleeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not laughing any more</td>
<td>Excessive use of alcohol or drugs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exploring sexual and/or gender identity

- No longer talking about their relationships or who they fancy.
- Being bullied
- Being embarrassed around conversations about sex or relationships

Living with violence at home/in their relationship

- Spending lots of time out of the house
- Unexplained cuts, bruises or injuries
- Stopped talking about family life / their relationship
- Dropping old friends and only hanging out with their boyfriend / girlfriend
- Losing their individuality

Mental ill health

- Becoming super chatty and cheerful
- Worrying about how they look to the point that it affects their behaviour
- Worrying about everything
- Seeming sad all the time
- Working way too hard
- Becoming short tempered – angry a lot
- Deliberately hurting themselves
What they might need

Having identified that your friend is having a hard time, it’s important to start thinking about what they need – what might help?

Here are some real life statements from people who find themselves experiencing mental ill health; who are living with violence at home or in their relationship or who are exploring their sexual and/or gender identity.

EXERCISE FOUR

Divide participants into three groups. Each take a set of statement cards related to one of the three issues. Participants in the small groups take turns to read out a statement and then discuss what the person might need – suggestions are recorded on a flip-chart.

The three groups then come together and display their flip-charts. The needs highlighted in the three groups are then compared to identify similarities and differences.

The following statements can be used.

STATEMENTS

EXPLORING SEXUAL AND/OR GENDER IDENTITY

“Even if you, as a straight person, think that people won’t care - it doesn’t seem like that to someone who’s in the closet. LGBT+ people are still discriminated against, fear physical violence, have to listen to demeaning comments, worry about keeping jobs—they worry about their future.”

“When I was younger, I couldn’t picture living as a gay adult. I didn’t know if it was possible to be successful, happy, and out because I didn’t have those role models available to me until I was older.”

“Deciding to come out, though, can be very scary, and I didn’t know what would happen. I didn’t know if my parents would be okay with it, or if people would be mean or hateful to me. It’s stepping into the unknown.”

“At the age of 19 I came out. Despite having had a strong idea of my sexual orientation since 15, the stigma around being gay as well as the stereotypical representation of gay men in the media made it impossible for me to comfortably identify as a gay person.”

“Before I came out as transgender I was a shy reclusive person. It was very difficult to make male friends as we just had nothing in common. And I couldn’t make female friends either because I always thought I’d be found out, or that they would find it strange.”
STATEMENTS

**VIOLENCE AT HOME / IN RELATIONSHIP**

“I hated going to school – I couldn’t concentrate, I had to pretend I wasn’t worried about going home to protect my mum and brother again.”

“I used to always think, what’s wrong with my family? Every few weeks dad would get weird and say nasty things to mum, we tried to stop him but it only made it worse. Mum would sit there crying.”

“At school I felt like I didn’t fit in, I felt worried all the time. I hid from friends sometimes, because I didn’t feel happy like them. The fear and anxiety about violence at home was a part of my life, a part of me.”

“I never thought I grew up in family violence – my dad never hit me or my mum. But when my father called me and my sister “sluts” and other horrible words, or kicked our dog and threw and smashed things we had nowhere to go. We were bullied and frightened into silence and mum was blamed for everything.”

“Sometimes dad would be nice but he also made me and mum scared. When he got upset I thought it was my fault, but now I know people should never be cruel to their family. I still love him, in a way, but I really don’t like how he treated us.”

“I stopped going out altogether – he didn’t want me to see my friends, and I didn’t want them to know I was scared of my own boyfriend. I didn’t want them to make things worse.”

**MENTAL ILL HEALTH**

“I’ve been told since I was 12 that my constant stress, sickness and panic attacks were nothing more than attention-seeking behaviour. I didn’t want to make friends, but I didn’t want to be alone. I didn’t want to leave the house, but I couldn’t live with the idea of me being a failure. I didn’t want to admit something was wrong, but at some point I had to.”

“I remember I wrote a sort of suicide note when I was 12. At that age I self-harmed as well. I didn’t speak to anyone about how I was feeling. That was the first time I started feeling something wasn’t right, but I didn’t know what it was. Even at medical school, I still couldn’t figure it out.”

“It all started as just a few thoughts. But over time, I started having extremely bad anxiety and was becoming more depressed. School was using up the little energy I had left. I gave up all my after-school clubs, all sporting events. I wouldn’t eat at school or at home.”

“I was 16 when I first started experiencing mental health problems, mainly depression. It came completely out of the blue. I hadn’t lost anyone close to me or experienced anything traumatic. I began to live a life in fear. I wouldn’t go out in case something happened, I didn’t get too close to anyone in case they hurt me or left me. I began living in isolation.”

“I wasn’t professionally diagnosed until my late teens and this is mainly because I was scared. Scared to open up, scared of the truth and most of all scared of the stigma that comes with being ‘mentally ill’.”
ASK

When you notice that something seems wrong, that your friend may be having a hard time or struggling with something – you have to open up a conversation. You will need to ask them if they are okay, if something is going on, if there is anything you can help them with.

It can sometimes be difficult to approach the subject.

EXERCISE FIVE

Facilitate a group discussion on the following:

What would put you off bringing up what you’ve noticed about their form or behaviour?

What would encourage you to reach out to them?

Use points from the discussion to compile a list of “Top tips for approaching a friend who might be struggling”.

LISTEN

Once your friend is talking it’s vital that you listen really well. Some of us are better at listening than others and it can be all too easy to be distracted by your own thoughts and reactions. But listening is a skill that can be developed.

EXERCISE SIX

Discuss the following handout with the group – illustrating with examples

Tips for Practicing Active Listening

Make eye contact while the other person speaks. In general, you should aim for eye contact about 60-70% of the time while you are listening. Lean toward the other person, and nod your head occasionally. Avoid folding your arms as this signals that you are not listening.

Instead of offering unasked for advice or opinions, simply show that you understand what they’ve said by saying “In other words, what you are saying is...”.

Don’t interrupt while the other person is speaking and don’t start thinking about your reply – if you’re not listening properly you might miss something important.

As well as listening to what is said, watch non verbal behaviour to pick up on hidden meaning. Things like facial expressions and tone of voice can sometimes tell you more than words alone.
While listening avoid daydreaming. It is impossible to listen properly to someone else if you are also paying attention to the internal thoughts buzzing round in your head.

Show interest by asking questions to clarify what is said. Ask open-ended questions to encourage the speaker. Avoid closed yes-or-no questions that can shut down the conversation.

Avoid abruptly changing the subject; it will appear that you were not listening to the other person.

As you listen, be open, neutral, and withhold judgment and stereotypes.

Be patient while you listen. We are capable of listening much faster than others can speak.

EXERCISE SEVEN

Participants are invited to put what they have learned into practice. The facilitator asks them to form an inner and outer circle – so that participants are facing each other in pairs. Those in the outer circle will talk while the person opposite them (in the inner circle) practices their active listening skills. It is important to stress that this is a conversation, not a monologue. The conversation lasts for 3 minutes – then each swap roles for a further 3 minutes.

People in the outer circle move one to the left and the exercise is repeated, with a different topic, each again taking turns to speak and then listen for 3 minutes.

Topics for the conversations should be straightforward, for example:

- What was the best holiday you ever had – what was good about it?
- What is your favourite band and why?
- What is the best film you’ve ever seen – what do you like about it?
- Talk about someone you admire – what do you like about them?

Feedback from participants:

How did the listener show they were interested?

What did they do that made it easy or difficult to talk?

Was it hard to listen – why?

Was it okay when your listener said something?
Support

It’s important to realise that your friend might need more support than you can offer. If they are having a particularly hard time it mightn’t be long before you find yourself out of your depth. It is vitally important that you look after yourself and don’t take all their problems on board, otherwise you could become very stressed. You cannot take responsibility for your friend’s well being, but there are ways to help.

There are lots of other sources of support available – your task is to help your friend to access the support they need.

Sources of Help

**GENERAL**

- Childline 0800 1111
- Lifeline 808 808 8000
- CRUSE Bereavement 0844 477 9400
- PSNI (non emergency) 101
- PSNI (emergency) 999

**EXPLORING SEXUAL and/or GENDER IDENTITY**

Rainbow Project

W: www.rainbow-project.org
E: info@rainbow-project.org
T: Belfast: 028 90319030/
    Foyle: 028 71283000

belfasttrans.org.uk/

Information: www.stonewall.org.uk/

**VIOLENCE AT HOME / IN RELATIONSHIP**

Domestic and sexual abuse helpline 0808 802 1414
dsahelpline.org/

Men’s Advisory Project (Belfast) 028 9024 1929

Men’s Advisory Project (Foyle) 028 7116 0001

Information: woah.org.au/  
(Australian site designed for young people)

**MENTAL HEALTH**

To get an appointment with a mental health professional you must first see your GP who can make a referral for you.

Helpline: The Samaritans – 116 123

Information: youngminds.org.uk/

**EXERCISE EIGHT**

Bearing in mind the three groups of young people we are focussing on, young people are asked to look up helping agencies on their smartphones. They then record what they find on a flip-chart sheet.

After discussion distribute the handout below and see how the information compares.
Finally some advice about things that are helpful and unhelpful when supporting a friend in each of the three circumstances.

**EXERCISE NINE**

Distribute the following information as a handout for discussion.

Ask the young people to discuss:

- Which is the most vital “DO” in each category.
- Which is the most to be avoided “DON’T” in each category.
Being a friend - Do’s and Don’ts

If your friend tells you they are exploring their sexual and/or gender identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do</th>
<th>Don’t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recognize that they’re still the same person they were before they talked to you and that it takes A LOT of courage to approach these issues.</td>
<td>Don’t say “I already knew that” or “why didn’t you talk to me sooner?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show them that you don’t see them any differently and that you’re glad they told you.</td>
<td>Don’t ask loads of questions – be prepared to listen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If they ask you to use a different pronoun about them – e.g. ‘she’ instead of ‘he’ – do what they ask, even if it feels uncomfortable at first – and don’t be afraid of getting it wrong, you probably will at some point.</td>
<td>Don’t assume they are exactly like gay or trans or non-binary people you have seen on TV or social media – they are still an individual, and still your friend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask them how you can best support them – let them know you’re there for them.</td>
<td>Don’t tell anyone else about them unless they specifically ask you to – it’s up to them who they want to tell.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If your friend tells you there is violence at home or in their relationship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do</th>
<th>Don’t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If you feel your friend or one of their family is in real danger, you must encourage them to tell the police or social services. Try to get them to tell another adult, like a teacher or youth worker - offer to go to the adult with them.</td>
<td>Don’t even think about confronting the person responsible for the violence – you could be putting yourself or others in danger.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand that it may be very difficult for your friend to talk about what is happening in their family – be patient and give them space and time.</td>
<td>Don’t minimise what they are telling you – it takes a lot of courage for them to be open with you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you are able to, offer your friend the chance to stay with you, you may need to check this out with your parents or other people you live with.</td>
<td>Don’t get angry on their behalf – it may be upsetting to hear how they are being treated but they really need you to listen, not react.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let them know that you understand that what is happening to them is completely wrong and that it’s not their fault.</td>
<td>Don’t give off about the person causing the violence – your friend may have mixed feelings about them and you could be pushing them away.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If your friend tells you they are having mental health problems

**Do**

- Take them seriously, ask them questions about how they are feeling – but also respect that they might not want to talk.
- Encourage them to find help and sources of support e.g. GP. Offer to go to appointments with them.
- Find out more about mental illness and how it can affect people – there are lots of information sources online.
- Encourage them to get enough sleep, eat healthy food and exercise.

**Don’t**

- Don’t say things like “you’re fine” or “cheer up”.
- Don’t say you know how they feel, if you haven’t had poor mental health.
- Don’t pressurise them to do things and keep busy – certainly invite them to join you for social things, but also understand that they might not be able to manage it.
- Don’t take all their problems on board yourself – make sure you look after yourself too.

**The last word …**

To finish off, summarise the PALS model and ask participants to put it into practice during the coming weeks. Set a date for coming together again to find out how everyone got on and discuss any further advice or support needs.
Being a friend check-out

Circle a number on a scale of 1 – 10 to rate:

**I am able to spot** when a friend is having problems

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

can never tell

can always tell

**I am able to ask** a friend who is having problems how they are feeling

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

I couldn’t ask

I would always ask

**I am confident** that I know what to do to help a friend who is having problems

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

not confident

very confident

**I know** about organisations that can help young people having problems

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

don’t know any

know lots
Youth Action NI: A commitment to the well-being of young people

Building positive mental health and well-being in young people is a crucial area of our work. Our LIFEMAPS model is a mental health framework that harnesses valuable techniques in how to cope with the ups and downs of life. LIFEMAPS was developed by Simon Ward, education psychologist and Eliz McArdle, YouthAction Northern Ireland.

LIFEMAPS is an acronym for 8 interlinked concepts that describe a full approach to developing positive mental health;

**Learning** - Accepting that failure is a necessary part of learning rather than a negative consequence, which enables us to find the courage to try new things, build resilience and approach challenges without the fear of failure.

**Intrinsic Motivation** - Finding activities that we really enjoy and are interested in, and have an internal motivation to pursue because they bring us a sense of personal reward and pride, and contribute positively to our mental wellbeing.

**Flow** - Finding activities that fully immerse and engross us, causing us to lose ourselves in the moment, which can give us a break from negative emotions and build positive feelings of achievement in their place.

**Emotions** - Balancing out the negative emotions with positive ones; not by forcing positivity, but by being open to new experiences, people and ideas to help us build a wider range of positive emotions like joy, inspiration, hope, awe and serenity.

**Mindfulness** - Promoting a positive outlook by taking time to notice small, everyday moments that bring us pleasure in order to bring balance to our minds and counteract the negative moments.

**Accomplishments** - Building self-esteem through accomplishing personal goals, and realising that life isn’t about winning or losing, but more about learning and growing, and that small milestones pave the way to big successes.

**Purpose** - Finding a sense of meaning in the world outside yourself by finding ways to help others, through small acts of kindness to your friends and family, volunteering or joining a cause you are passionate about.

**Social Connections** - Building our sense of belonging and community by building strong connections with others through work, school, family and friends. This satisfies our desire to be valued, cherished and listened to, which is critical to mental health.
Further mental health and well-being resources developed by YouthAction can be found at:

www.youthaction.org/lifemaps

Resources such as articles and reflective youth work practices developed as part of Critical Voice, a partnership with Ulster University can be found at:

sites.google.com/view/youth-work-dialogue-ni/home

Follow us:

YouthAction NI
@YouthActionNI

This resource has been supported by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and the Education Authority Strategic Outreach programme.