

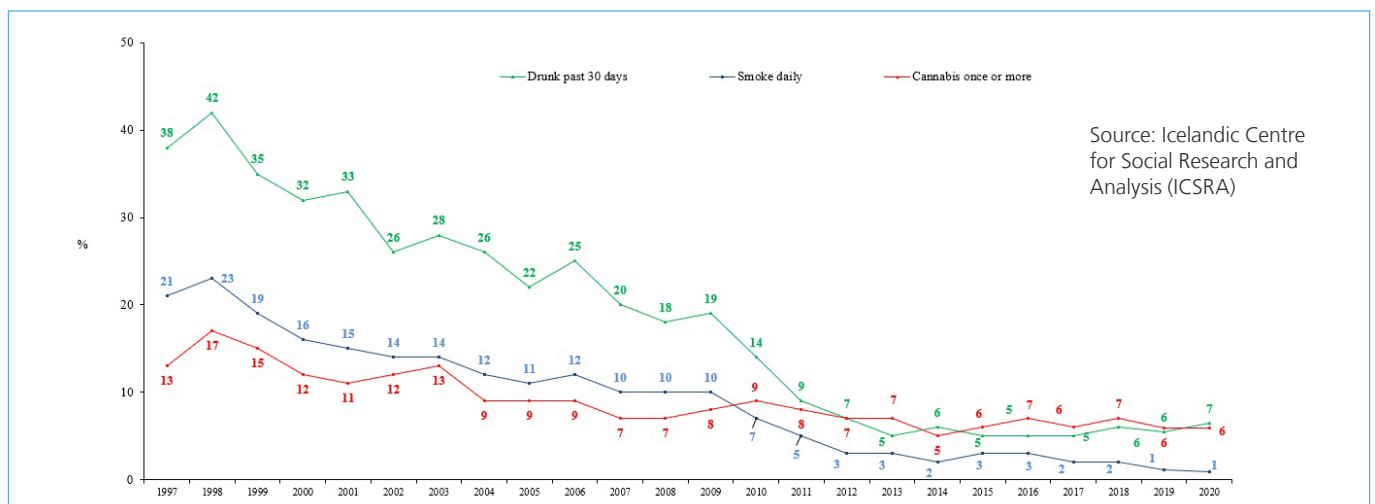
How might the 'Youth in Iceland Model' for preventing substance use among young people be developed and adapted for use in Dundee, Scotland?



What is the Youth in Iceland Model?

The Youth in Iceland Model (YiIM, also known as 'Planet Youth') is a community-based approach aiming to delay young people's substance use through reducing risk factors and increasing protective factors. The key components are parents, organised extracurricular/recreational activities, schools, and involvement of young people. Information about young people's health and wellbeing, including substance use, is gathered through surveys distributed in schools. Protective factors are then developed by the community in response to the data and schools are encouraged to strengthen supportive networks between themselves, parents, and other community organisations. The model has been implemented in more than 30 countries worldwide, with adaptations to suit locally specific conditions.

The graph below shows percentage of self-reported substance use among Icelandic 15-16 year old students by year between 1997 and 2020. The graph shows that the introduction of the YiIM can lead to reduced substance-related harm, but it is important to recognise that the YiIM is about delaying the start of substance use, such as alcohol use, and can also lead to wider positive outcomes related to education, community, family, stress/wellbeing, and physical activity.



Aims and focus of this project:

The aim of this knowledge exchange project, funded by the Society for the Study of Addiction (SSA), was to convene a co-production process involving a diverse group of individuals living and working in Dundee, Scotland to review the YilM for use/adaptation in the city as an evidence-based, primary prevention intervention. The aim of the group was to review the scientific evidence, including that gained first-hand, for its applicability to Dundee, gain an in-depth understanding of how the model could be implemented/adapted locally, and make recommendations to decision-makers in the City Council, Health Board, and Alcohol and Drug Partnership (ADP).

Why is this project important?

In Scotland, substance use amongst young people is a significant public health concern, with many young people reporting alcohol, tobacco, and/or drug use. Iceland had similar concerns regarding young people and substance use, but since implementation of the YilM rates of alcohol, tobacco, and drug use have decreased dramatically. The key strengths of this programme for potential implementation in Dundee, where drug-related harm in particular is high in comparison to other parts of Scotland, are that it brings people together, has partnership working at the core, is evidence-based and data driven, and has a long-term focus. The approach is about more than just substance use prevention, but also about engaging with activities, families, and education. Crucially, young people and parents/family members are central to the process making it more 'bottom-up' than 'top-down', something that can be missed in health policy and practice.

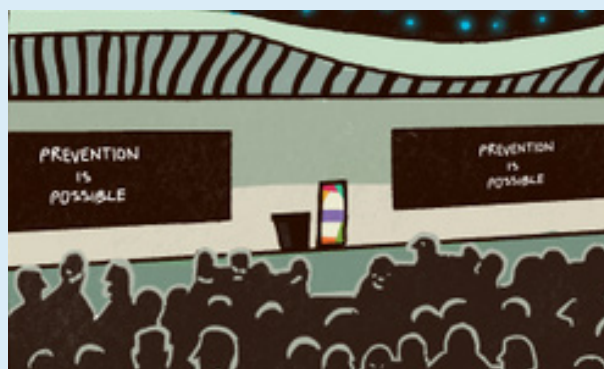


What did the project involve?

First steps: The first few meetings were designed to inform the group about the YiIM and to establish aims, objectives, and the direction of the study.

Co-production approach: This is an innovative format to allow deliberation, dialogue, and knowledge exchange. Key features are: establishing ground rules; joint ownership of key decisions; commitment to relationship-building; opportunities for personal growth and development; flexibility; continuous reflection; and valuing and evaluating the impact of the work.

It was clear that engagement with schools/communities is key early in the process to ensure buy-in. It was also important to reach out to Planet Youth colleagues in Reykjavik from an early stage. They are already supporting other countries to adapt the YiIM to local contexts.

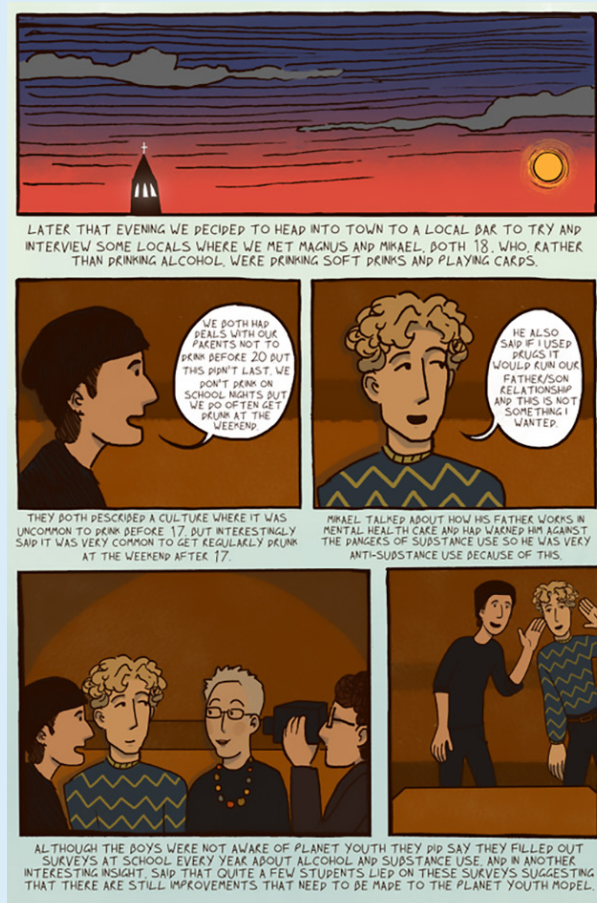
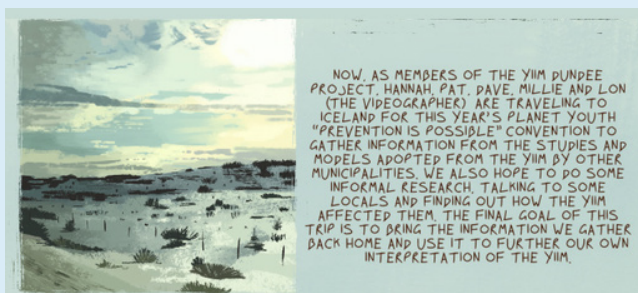


Iceland trip:

Some of the group travelled to Reykjavik to meet with those living and working in Iceland.

By visiting Reykjavik, and developing relationships with different stakeholders there, the group were able to gain a more detailed understanding to help determine how such a model could be applied/adapted to a particular local context and city. This has informed our recommendations.

The group also attended the Planet Youth conference to hear about the YiIM in practice across other countries.





THE MEETINGS FOR THE YOUTH IN ICELAND PROJECT HAVE OFFICIALLY BEGUN!
AFTER INTRODUCTIONS AND ICEBREAKERS IT'S CLEAR THE GROUP IS
VERY DIVERSE IN EXPERIENCE AND EXPERTISE

Ongoing group meetings: The project group met throughout to guide the direction of the project. The group involved researchers from the University of Stirling, individuals from We Are With You, NHS Tayside, Education, Leisure and Culture Dundee, Dundee ADP, a person with lived experience with substance use, a lived experience affected family member, a young person, Police Scotland, Winning Scotland, and DC Thomson (press).

Throughout the project the group discussed current prevention activities in Dundee, key

elements of the YiIM and how these could/should be implemented, and how the YiIM is implemented in other countries. They met with those working in the field, third sector organisations, politicians, and other relevant stakeholders.

Decision on final outputs for the study:

35-40-minute documentary film; briefing document for policy makers and communities; comic strip style A4 posters; commentary article for academics; conference presentations; report to funders (SSA); blogs; an online dissemination event; and a project website hosted by SSA.

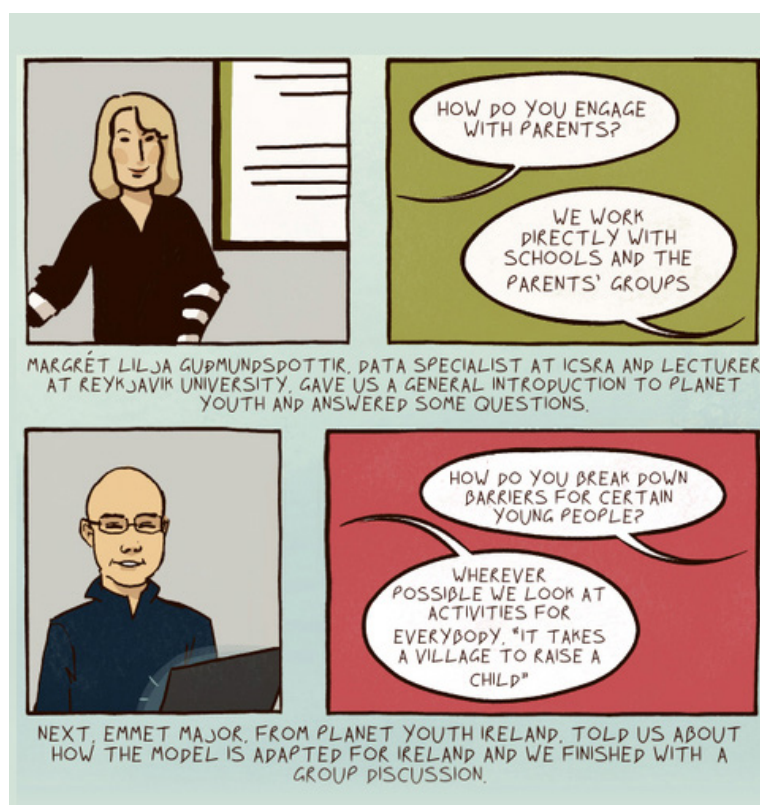
Dundee presentation and stakeholder event:

On 24th February 2020, a knowledge exchange event was run in Dundee to share learning on the implementation of the YiIM. This allowed discussions between stakeholders and a wider audience to hear about the project.

Dissemination event on 26 April 2021

The final dissemination event was held with wider stakeholders and family members to share research findings; to premiere the film made as part of the dissemination outputs; and to facilitate discussion about the potential next steps for the YiIM in Dundee.

The main aim of this event was not to make a fixed proposal of what should be done but act as a starting point for wider involvement and to discuss taking the project forward.



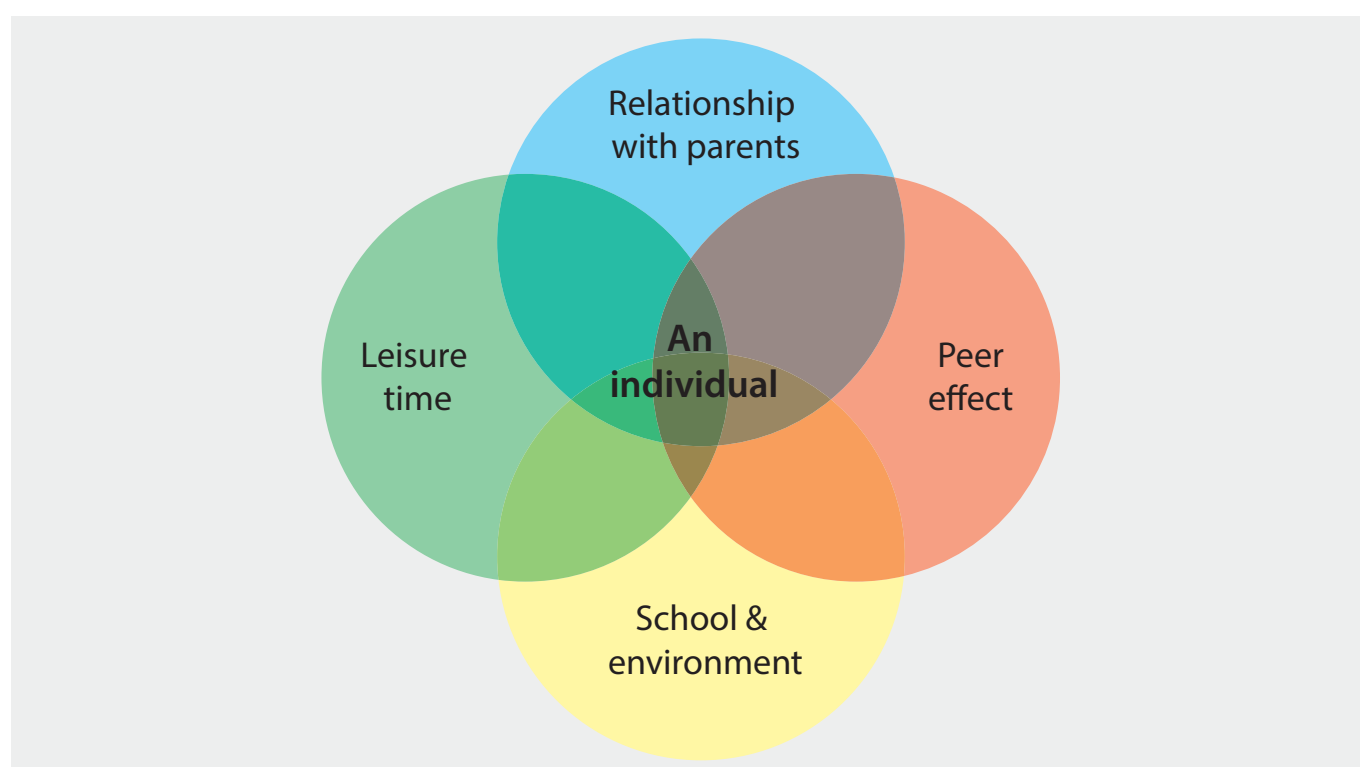


Primary research project and findings:

We conducted 16 semi-structured interviews with a range of strategic level informants including current group members and other interested stakeholders, such as local council, Scottish Government, and third sector organisations. The purpose of these interviews was to gain an understanding of the views of those working in the field in terms of whether the YiIM could be a suitable approach for Dundee and Scotland, to inform the wider evidence base.

High-level key findings:

- Participants were in favour of the YiIM but noted the need to ensure it is relevant to Scotland. This could be achieved through piloting
- Cultural differences between Scotland and Iceland were noted, highlighting the need for the survey and prevention approaches to be tailored to the Scottish context
- The YiIM was seen as necessary due to the lack of prevention programmes in Scotland and the high rates of substance use
- Partnership working across all levels and organisations is essential in order to ensure the YiIM could be implemented effectively, with adequate long-term funding



What are the plans for the project going forward?

- Continued work with the Planet Youth team with the plan to develop an advisory group.
- Winning Scotland is committed to taking the project forward in partnership with Education and Planet Youth. They are planning to pilot the survey in Dundee, Clackmannanshire, West Dunbartonshire, Highland, and Argyll & Bute. There is an agreement already in place for these areas to take forward the pilot, to conduct the survey in schools in order to gather data and to understand the local issues, before developing partnerships in order to address these.
- A local high school cluster in Dundee will be involved in the Planet Youth work first, as the work sits well with the other work being implemented in the school currently. The project will be trialled here before moving to other schools. Decisions will be made about funding, commitment, and buy-in before future decisions to scale up.
- The plan is to deliver the survey in Summer 2021 with the expectation to get the data back from Planet Youth within 6-8 weeks.
- Meanwhile, work will be done to identify what activities exist which could run alongside project. It is important to focus on sports, but there is also the need to consider a range of recreational activities as not every young person is interested in sports.
- It is also important to continue to engage with young people to find out what they think about existing issues and what they want in Dundee, especially in relation to the YiIM work.
- Active discussions are ongoing within the Dundee ADP Prevention sub-group about how to best make structures and strategies work. The Dundee ADP have embedded the YiIM in their key aspirations for next three years. It is important to note that the YiIM would run alongside, rather than replace, targeted interventions. The graphic below shows how the YiIM could fit in to, and add to, the existing prevention agenda.

Schools and youth work

- Initiatives to reduce exclusions and unauthorised school absences and to raise attainment amongst risk groups
- YiIM surveys to identify substance use issues and provides opportunity for early intervention
- Targeted guidance to / engagement with parents

GIRFEC

- Co-ordinated parenting interventions addressing relationship issues, social skills and personal responsibility
- Parenting programmes promoting secure attachment / parental sensitivity
- Prenatal and infancy visitation
- Early childhood education

Substance Use Services

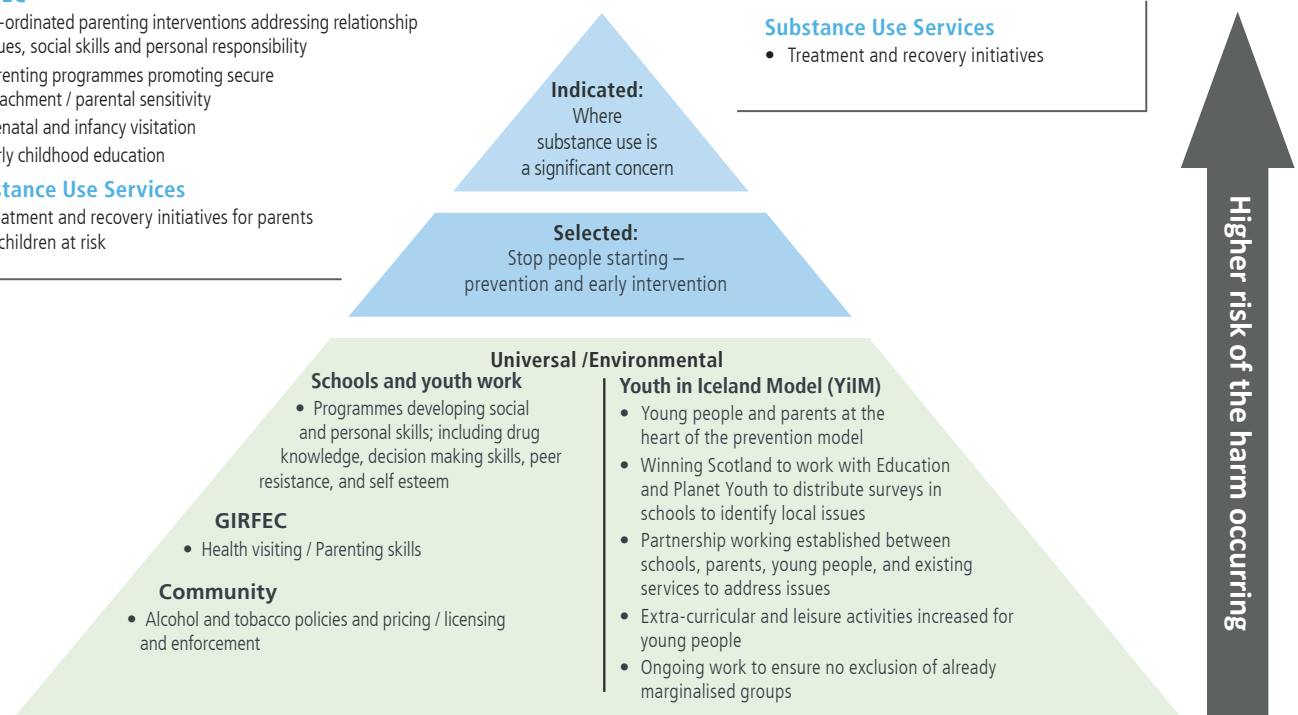
- Treatment and recovery initiatives for parents of children at risk

GIRFEC

- Group based Behavioural Therapy / Motivational Interviewing / Coping Skills programmes
- Parenting interventions / Family therapy
- Referral for specialist intervention including assisted withdrawal as per NICE guidelines

Substance Use Services

- Treatment and recovery initiatives



Populations:

- Indicated – Children / adolescents believed to be at highest risk or who have begun using substances early
- Selected – Children with higher risk profiles; e.g. Looked after children, children of parents who use substances, children with behavioural issues
- Universal – All children 0–15 years old

Take home messages:

Importance of working together

Wider stakeholders

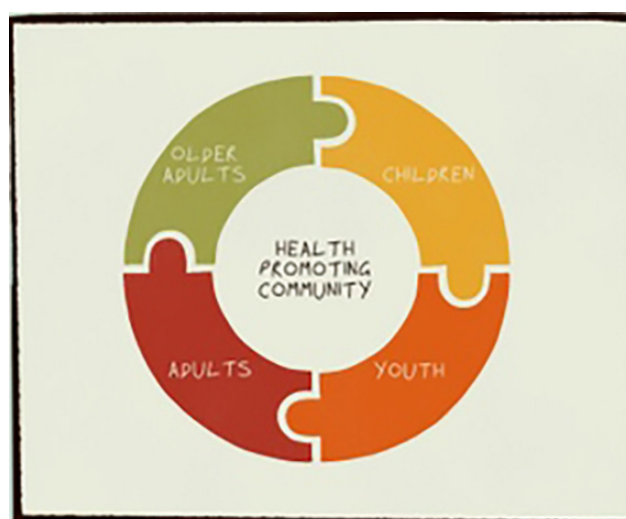
Lots of services exist already in Dundee but the current work is not joined up enough. There is a need for more information about strengths and gaps in existing provision in order to understand what's needed for Dundee and how the YiIM might fit in with that. It is also important to identify potential existing connections to reduce duplication of effort. For example: Scottish Football Association and 'Off the Bench' project; Leisure and Culture Dundee projects; Winning Scotland involvement; Action for Children's 'Sidestep' project; and the Protecting People team, among others, could all help to join up activities to provide a comprehensive programme. Wider stakeholders already interested include: Highland, Clackmannanshire, West Dunbartonshire, Argyll & Bute, as well as Dundee. The Director of We Are With You Scotland is interested in supporting the work nationally; The Scottish Government is aware of, and has discussed, YiIM; and the ADP have embedded the YiIM in their key aspirations for next three years.

Schools

It is important to have Education colleagues closely involved throughout the project. Schools get numerous approaches from organisations and so it is important to do everything in partnership. Schools already have the health and wellbeing census, family learning work, peer education, programmes such as the 'A Stop Smoking In Schools Trial (ASSIST)' smoking prevention programme, and the 365 school model which could all work alongside YiIM.

Young people and their parents

People need to feel heard, understood, respected, and treated with dignity. To connect with people, those involved in implementation need to listen with this in mind. It is crucial to include people's voices who are marginalised, let them be included in the beginning and right through. This allows a more 'bottom up' approach acknowledging that the voices of young people and their parents may be more influential than professionals. Young people must be central to the process. Examples of partnership working here could be with: Hot Chocolate youth work organisation; the Champions Boards; Scottish Youth Parliament/Youth Council; and possibly Young Scot. It is also essential to involve parents as the empowerment and education of parents is what makes the model work. A parents' information and communications subgroup is being set up already with the plan to develop an app across Tayside with information about opportunities for parents/families. This could work alongside YiIM.



Possible challenges to implementation

Funding and availability of activities

There may be a need for further funds to implement projects in response to the data collection and the sustainability of funding could be an issue. Iceland provides €500 per family for extracurricular activities. This is an important aspect of the model, but there is no funding for this locally currently. Dundee cannot have a 'watered-down version' of the YilM and the activities implemented in Iceland are essential. There is currently no comprehensive directory of sport and other activities, and services are disjointed.

Buy-in

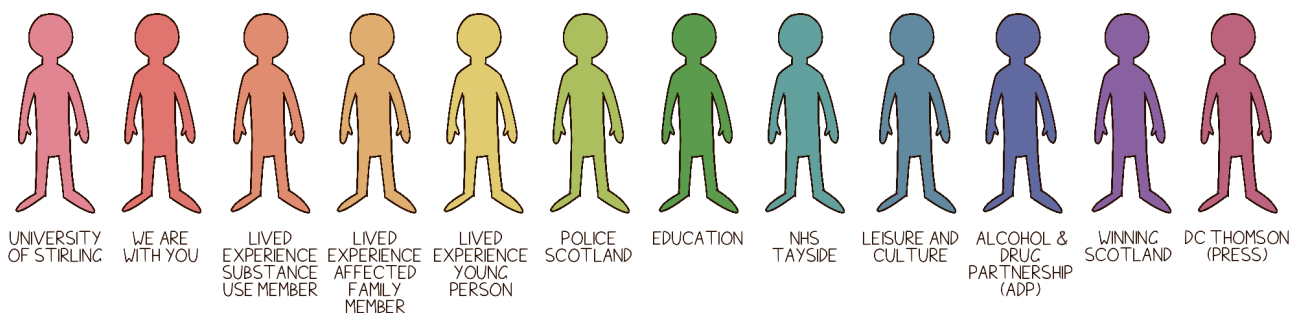
It would be crucial to be clear about the different demographics between Iceland and Dundee, for example in terms of existing inequalities, as this could be a potential barrier/challenge for Dundee in terms of implementation and buy-in. It is important to realise this is a long-term model, not a 'quick fix'. However, the increasing pressure schools are under in terms of academic attainment means there may be limited time to respond to health interventions that don't have immediate outcomes. Some schools may be more receptive, whereas others may feel more pressure to focus on raising attainment and give less time to health and well-being activities. Young people may not buy-in to the idea or could be affected by social desirability bias when responding to the surveys. It could also be challenging to capture the views of excluded or absent children.

Individual differences, experiences, and circumstances

Extracurricular activities currently appear fairly sport-focused, and there is a lack of other activities for young people such as art, music, or drama. Some young people are unsure about participation in sports for many reasons. Specific to substance use, there may be challenges with confidence, stigma, and prejudice towards people wanting to take part. It would be essential to provide training of activity staff about inclusivity and how to involve marginalised young people. There have been some concerns that this model may not suit the needs of young people in deprived areas or children with care experience, and whether it has the power to bring structural change. Practical issues that may be overlooked are whether parents are able to take children to afterschool activities due to work, and how to ensure young people have the kit and equipment to attend the activities.

COVID-19

Although the pandemic is a challenge to implementation, it could also present an opportunity. Increases of mental health challenges post-COVID are likely, particularly in terms of anxiety, regaining social skills, and confidence in groups. There may be a risk of increased substance use post-COVID. Therefore, a population-based prevention model with young people at the centre may in fact be particularly helpful in addressing a number of challenges post-COVID.



Contact

For more information, please scan the QR code for the study website, or email sacasr@stir.ac.uk

