

Guidelines for support services

This resource was created from recommendations given by members of Brave Lassies Blether, drawing on their experience leading a campaign on healthy relationships and accessing support services.

Key messages from young people to support services:

- Young people would like to speak to someone who will listen, understand and be comforting.
- Young people would like to feel validated, safe and treated like an equal.
- Services should work with people at an individual's pace to ensure the person does not feel overwhelmed.
- Young people would like a space which is open and welcoming.
- Services should be available and accessible to all.

Communication

- If your support service has a waitlist, send regular updates to the young people who registered to confirm they are still due an appointment. Include signposting to emergency services they can get support from in the meantime.
- Provide pre-reading material, including information on what is going to happen when the young person engages with your service, confidentiality matters, who will be in touch with them and how they can prepare for it.
- If your service offers limited or short-term support only, suggest alternatives to the young people who engage with you so they can get further support if they wish to do so. This may mean working with national or local services to ensure young people can be redirected smoothly to another service and do not feel left alone in this process. (e.g. is the service you are redirecting them still available?)
- Consider any accessibility aspects relevant to your service. If you are providing reading material or written resources, you may want to offer plain text versions, or translations in other languages.

Foundations

- When in touch with a young person engaging in your service, introduce yourself and anyone present in the process – in both digital or in-person settings. Clarify who everyone is and why they are here. Try to keep the number of people present to a minimum to prevent young people from feeling overwhelmed. Before inviting more people, you may want to ask the young person first if they are comfortable with this.
- Address confidentiality matters at the beginning and prioritise transparency throughout young people's support journey.



- If you are going to discuss heavy topics, address the fact that it might be upsetting for some people. Prioritise the young person's wellbeing and ensure that they are given opportunities to check in and keep themselves safe.
- Clarify why you are doing what you are doing – for example, if you have to fill in forms, take notes, ask specific questions. If you offer continuous support, it is also helpful to regularly check in with the young person and explain what the next steps are.
- Give opportunities to ask questions – even if the young person has engaged with the service before.

Best Practice

- Map out personalised support plans together with the young person so that it is tailored to their needs – this is to avoid one-size-fits-all models as not everyone will benefit from the same approaches.
- Co-create an agenda with the young person to give them agency over their experience in seeking support. You may give multiple opportunities to revisit the support plan put in place if the young person wish to make some changes.
- Practice active listening to create mutual respect, trust and safety.
- Believe young people and ensure there is no power balance.

Space

- If you welcome young people in a physical space, clearly indicate – either verbally and/or with signs – key locations such as toilets or a separate quiet area if the young person wants a moment alone.
- Create a cosy, familiar atmosphere with soft furnishing or bright space. Adding small furnishings and trinkets can help making a room feel less clinical or hostile.
- Have tissues and fidget toys available.
- Keep accessibility in mind. Physical spaces ideally have a clearly indicated disabled access for wheelchair users. Provide details on how to access your support service location using diverse modes of transportation, including public transport.



Was this resource helpful?

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