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Research Paper and Transnational Adaption Plans for Implementing Symbol Work

101 - Extended UK Version



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Introduction:

The aim of this report is to satisfy Intellectual Output 1 (IO1) of the Erasmus + SymfoS project by providing a summary of research papers submitted by individual partner countries with the purpose of:

- identifying where symbol work is located within the context of working with young people aged 15 – 25 years who are “disadvantaged”, particularly those that are not in education, employment or training (NEET);
- providing consideration of plans to adapt the SymfoS method to accommodate the variety of approaches to “Youth Welfare” provision in the partnership countries; and
- formulating a strategy for incorporating training in the SymfoS method with Higher Education, Further Education and training providers of relevant practitioners.

To achieve the report’s aim, the SymfoS partners were requested to complete a survey of literature to research the presence of symbol work in their countries and to undertake a series of interviews with relevant professionals engaged in working with young people and those involved with training staff working in the youth welfare sector. Partners were requested to follow an overarching structure as outlined in the IO1 template (Appendix 1.1).

Section 1 – Literature Search on the use of symbols as an intervention with young people

From the search it emerged that there is very little literature on the use of physical symbols as a method of engagement and intervention with young people such as the SymfoS method, and that the principal use of physical symbols as an intervention is rooted in the field of therapeutic work. There are numerous references to the use of symbols as signs to support work with those with communication and language difficulties, however, this is of a pictorial and directly representative nature and not used in a symbolic way.

When working with young people regarding their future plans in social work, careers guidance and youth work, the methods predominantly involved relationship-based approaches, employing dialogue and the completion of form-based assessments and plans – the disadvantages of such an approach are highlighted by Yates (2010). As Lefevre states, when commenting on the limitations of verbal and written language, “social workers need to draw on much more than just direct and explicit methods of communication when they are working with children and young people... to express themselves more freely, in their own ways, and on their own terms” (2011:130). Spontaneous play and creative, artistic or symbolic imagery is seen as contributing greatly to the exploration and expression of the child’s “inner world”. Creative interventions, particularly those that are arts based, are helpful when working with those that have experienced trauma, as they may struggle with verbal communication as a consequence of their past (Johnson, 1987; Bolton, 1999:62; Lefevre, 2011:132) and that “their experience is locked inside at a symbolic level. Consequently, additional ways of communicating, which are less direct and verbal, must be found” (Lefevre, 2011:133).

Malchiodi (2008) helpfully provides a structural framework to understand the place of creative interventions, listing that they have been formalized “through the disciplines of art therapy, music therapy, dance/movement therapy, drama therapy or psychodrama, poetry



therapy, and play therapy, including sandtray therapy” (p. 10/11) (see Appendix 1.2 “Definitions of Creative arts therapies/Expressive therapies”). Webb (2015: xiv) states “creative methods of art, puppetry, music, drama, and sandplay ... offer effective ways to deal symbolically with frightening experiences that are too upsetting to confront directly”. For those who have experienced trauma, creative intervention “offers a way to contain traumatic material within an object, image, story, music, or other art form; provides a sense of control over terrifying and intrusive memories; encourages active participation in therapy; reduces emotional numbness; and enhances reduction of hyperarousal and other distressing reactions” (Malchiodi, 2008: 19).

As part of the literature search within the field of ‘symbolic’ work there exists recognition of the place of metaphor and analogy. Metaphor can be defined as “the application of a word or expression that properly belongs to one context, in order to express meaning in a different context” (Fox, 1989: 234) and analogy will be defined using Hambly and Bomford (2019:55) explanation that it “compares one thing with another to aid clarification: for example, ‘career today is more like scaffolding than a ladder’” (for further definitions see Appendix 1.3). Metaphor and analogy are frequently found within the context of engagement and interventions with young people, be it direct youth work regarding personal development or working with young offenders; and careers guidance work. The use of physical symbols as a component of interventions appears to be an area which has been neglected and potential for development within the context of SymfoS.

The place of Art Therapy as a creative therapeutic intervention which uses symbolism must be made. Dalley (1984:xi/xii) and Loumeau-May (2008:90/91) describe art therapy as the use of art and a wide range of media used as a means of non-verbal communication to express both the conscious and unconscious through the development of imagery and symbolism.

Symbolism, metaphor and creative interventions in social work

It is claimed that the use of metaphor can provide practitioners with an insight into the client’s world beyond that of literal description whereby “a metaphor condenses complex and even opposite feelings, needs, wishes, fears and experiences. It does so with great economy and apparent simplicity” (Fox, 1989:233-244). It is suggested the benefit of metaphor includes the ability to “compact information, evoke emotion, permits expression of nonliteral experiences, induces expansion of perception and cognition and stimulates recall” (Fox, 1989:234). Moreover, metaphor can enhance rapport, enlighten understanding, minimise resistance, initiate unconscious processes, and assist with the retrieval of memories.

As Lefevre states, with regard to many children and young people in the care system, approaches that use play, symbolism and creativity are “the language of communication with the child client” (Webb, 2003:405). These approaches can contribute to clients’ assessments and plans as they can facilitate engagement and expression of sensitive feelings that can be uncomfortable in disclosing (Lefevre, 2011:144/5).

Horwarth (2010:132) states it is important to consider the mode of communication when engaging with children and young people as when stressed “the expressive and receptive language centres of the brain (Broca’s and Wernicke’s areas) are turned down or even turned off (Gerhardt, 2004; Sunderland, 2006; van der Kolk, 1996)”. Resources that can



reduce tension and enable a creative approach within social work with children and young people include the following:

Magnets, string, glue, Sellotape, fingerpaints, clay, playdough, sand; dolls, animals, puppets, doll's house, cars, trucks, planes, boats, craft kit, games, puzzles, Lego, baby equipment, books, writing stories, soft toys, treasure box, music, telephone, hats, masks, candles, face paints, finger and hand puppets. (Horwarth 2010:133/4)

Youth Work, symbols, metaphor and creative methods

The significance of symbols, symbolism and symbolic behaviour cannot be understated when referring to the private and social life of many young people. To varying degrees, physical, pictorial and metaphoric symbols are employed as semiotic expressions of identity and the cultural life for young people (Clarke, 2006, Hebdidge, 1991). This can range from the use of clothing, hairstyles, accessories and adornments, piercings, body modification, tattoos, modes of transport (skateboards, scooters, motorcycles, cars), possessions, consumer products, artistic expression, amongst others.

Furthermore, particularly in the industrialised western world in the second half of the 20th century (Kehily, 2007; France, 2007), the place of youth subculture as a location to demonstrate symbolism for many groups of young people has been explored by numerous authors (Gelder, 2005; Haenfler, 2014), and from a variety of perspectives - notably those from the Centre of Contemporary Cultural Studies (Jefferson and Hall, 2006) and from Post-subcultural theorists (Muggleton, 2003; Thornton, 1995). However, the ability of subcultural participation to provide solutions to shared structural problems amongst groups of young people is itself for some theorists seen as symbolic, given that it can be seen as providing "magical" solutions which are not grounded in fundamental societal change (Brake, 1995; Bradford, 2012:117).

As Wood et al. (2015:117) states, when engaging with young people, youth workers use a wide variety of skills to include workshops, music, performing arts, outdoor pursuits, sports and even circus skills. Indeed, youth work practice has predominantly focused on using creative methods of engagement to enthuse young people, such as art, drama, music, games, amongst others.

As Batsleer (2008: 118) states "In the context of art-based work, it is particularly important to pay attention to narratives, symbols and metaphors, as places of 'pretend' in which young people can move outside themselves and yet stay connected with themes that are of the utmost significance for them".

Examples of the use symbolism in youth work are frequently used in the form of metaphor and analogy with young people. This is typified in youth work such as that of Macbeth and Fine (2011) when working with young people to reduce levels of aggression taking the form of pictorial and linguistic metaphor and analogy around the subject of fire, used in the process of group work as a creative method of exploring and engaging with young people. This is then explored with peers mirroring aspects of the SymfoS "Peer Buddy" system.

Youth Justice Work, creative methods, metaphor and analogy

Direct work using innovative approaches to engage young offenders who are predominantly those from disadvantaged and marginalised backgrounds requires mention. Wright et al. (2014:2-7) identify that for positive behavioural, emotional and cognitive engagement in resettlement, not only is the quality of the relationship between the practitioner and young person seen as being essential, but that interventions and activities offered need to be “enjoyable, rewarding, practical, exciting or challenging” (2014:4). As Hazel (2018:16) states, to engage and motivate a young person for positive change and to develop resilience to negative influencing factors, effective engagement and high quality trusted relationships are fundamental.

Of relevance to SymfoS, service engagement is further enhanced by:

- Individualised and flexible programmes of activities;
- Resources allowing staff contact time to develop relationships;
- Using fun activities to deepen bonds and improve motivation;
- Involving young people in activity planning and goal setting;
- Managing young people’s expectations (Wright et al., 2014:6)

Current developmental work in the UK with young offenders when engaging in the assessment and planning of resettlement work by Youth Offending Teams (YOTs), is increasingly focusing on creative techniques and methods to include working with metaphor and analogy (see www.beyondyouthcustody.net and appendix 5c).

Youth counselling and metaphor

Dacey (2006) suggests that as part of the process of adolescent development, young people are increasingly able to use creative thinking and are more able to understand and use metaphor. Indeed, this concurs with Jean Piaget’s findings that during adolescence cognitive development progresses to what is categorised as the “Formal Operations Stage” enabling abstract thinking and hypothetical reasoning (Halpenny, 2013).

Within the context of youth counselling, Geldard (2016: 134) highlights the importance of metaphor within young people’s verbal communication patterns and a method to encourage personal exploration in the counselling encounter. Kegerreis (2010:48) recognises that the use of metaphor to alleviate the potential intensity of psychodynamic counselling interactions. Working in metaphor with physical objects such dolls and animals, allows the exploration of emotions and relationships without direct reference to the child’s own experience and can enable both the client to symbolically provide alternative descriptions of situations or processes and the counsellor to explore and extend the client’s perceptions more fully (Geldard, 2016:171/3). This encourages the client to fully ‘tell their story’.

Metaphor can:

- Heighten the client’s interest in the counselling process (Sommers-Flanagan, 1996: 105-14);
- Stimulate insight and present new constructs and paradigms for adaptive behaviour (Divinyi, 1995: 27-37);



- Provide solutions to problems (Peterson, 1994: 107-21);
- Promote behavioural change (Brown, et al. 1996: 53-65);
- Promote significant life changes involving roles;
- Allow the client to gain therapeutically by staying with the metaphor and not making the transition to real-life statements;
- Help in the exploration of conflicts (increase empathy – Leavitt and Phil, 1995: 137-49), exploration of feelings (Holland and Kipnis, 1994: 316-42);
- Set the scene for safe, non-threatening conversation and self-disclosure (Kingsbury, 1994: 241-427);
- Enable a person to tell their life story (Mazurova, 1991: 47-53);
- Help the avoidance of resistance (Briggs, 1992: 39-52);
- Provide a link to other elements of the client situation (Angus, 1990: 5-11).
- Be used within narrative therapy to provide a more in-depth and holistic understanding of the young person's situation (Hoffman, 1993)
- Allow connections to be made between thoughts, feelings and behaviours.
(from Geldard, 2016:172/3)

As Alvarado and Cavazos (2008: 51) suggest, “the use of metaphors and other symbols provide a creative, non-intrusive, and non-confrontational approach to counselling” which can contribute to the promotion of self-awareness through the use of stories, fables, parables, rituals and even motion pictures (see appendix 5c). The use of metaphors is also seen as “supportive of relationship and intimacy building, accessing and symbolizing emotions, uncovering hidden assumptions, working through resistance, and providing alternate frames of reference” (2008:52).

Youth counselling and physical symbol work

It is within the field of therapeutic youth counselling work that physical symbols are most systematically utilised. The range of creative strategies that can be used when working therapeutically with young people includes art, role play, journals, relaxation, and imagination and dream work - the choice of which must be left to the young person. All these strategies, to a greater or lesser extent, may involve symbols in the process of expressing feelings and meaning and are beneficial to use with young people given that they can be experienced as interesting and dynamic. Interventions that are referred to specifically as “Symbolic work” (Geldard, 2016:147) within the counselling process with young people includes the use of metaphor, ritual, symbols, sand tray work and miniature animals enabling the exploration and representation of emotions.

Kegerreis (2010:78) identifies that children use art and craft materials to express and explore their ‘inner worlds’. The psychodynamic counsellor will often observe the client’s behaviour in their use of art materials and formulate a subsequent interpretation regarding the child’s emotional state. Kegerreis (2010:79) suggests it is “important to observe and try to make sense not just of the finished product but also how a child builds up a picture”. The use of art allows the individual to process emotional issues “without having to put them into words – to do some all-important non-verbal ‘thinking’ – and gives us a window into their worlds which can tell us much more than it would be possible for them to talk about.” (2010:81)

Furthermore, Geldard (2016: 176) explores the place of physical objects as symbols to “represent feelings, thoughts, beliefs, people, and relationships” and suggests objects should be chosen by and be of interest to the young people and, as Jung (1968) proposed, enable



the 'uncovering of unconscious material' which can contribute to self-awareness. Symbol work is seen to have the benefit of maintaining engagement, interest and enthusiasm with the young person and

1. Helps the young person access and disclose information consciously;
 2. Enables the young person to get in touch with, and explore, feelings, beliefs and thoughts;
 3. Represents particular alternatives so that these alternatives can be anchored for comparison;
 4. Represents polarities within self so that these can be explored;
 5. Represents particular people so that role-played dialogue between these people can be created;
 6. Represents something of positive or negative value that may need to be discarded or dealt with in some way.
- (Geldard, 2016: 177)

During the counselling encounter, the very process of choosing and describing a symbol may be the source of inquiry by the counsellor. This may involve an exploration of the emotions associated with the choice of object, particularly if the task had been difficult and the source of ambivalence. The counsellor may invite the young person to choose more than one symbol to adequately represent what they are feeling or thinking. Subsequently, the young person is encouraged to "describe the symbol and its qualities" to cultivate exploration rather than provide an interpretation, allowing the subconscious to be more readily accessible. A respectful and sensitive approach by the therapist is required when concluding the counselling session through inviting the client to tidy the symbols away or through the preservation of the client's work (Pearson, 2001; Geldard, 2016).

Further examples of the use of physical symbols within a therapeutic intervention could be to represent alternatives for comparison or ranking/ordering. Dialogue between alternatives as represented by symbols can be encouraged by the counsellor particularly regarding troublesome relationships. Geldard (2008 and 2016) highlights the use of miniature animals as symbolic representations which can be approached both as a light-hearted or more structured exercise. Either way, this method can initiate engagement in the counselling process and potentially enable accessing suppressed thoughts and feelings. It is also described as a "projective technique" to explore interpersonal relationships of the young people through a less threatening and less inhibited form of intervention. It allows the young person to "project ideas from their family, peer group or other social system on to the miniature animals that are used as symbols, but have the freedom to exaggerate or modify these projections" (2016: 184). As part of the process the counsellor invites the young person to choose an animal that represents themselves and to describe the animal's qualities and characteristics and therefore discover greater self-awareness. Additionally, exploration of significant relationships can be made through the arrangement and re-arrangement of the animals and the process concludes by the young person rearranging the configuration in a way that make them feel comfortable.

As part of the process of individuation as a young person develops their identity, Geldard discusses the possibility of symbols being used to "represent polarities within the self" (2016:180) such as the ability to be good or bad, callous or compassionate, and introvert or extravert. This enables the young person to accept these characteristics and become more comfortable choosing and controlling their personal development and subsequent behaviour.



Symbols and Metaphor in Play Therapy

Webb (2015:51) defines Play Therapy as “a helping interaction between a trained adult therapist and a child for the purpose of relieving the child’s emotional distress by using the symbolic communication of play” (see also appendix 3). Reid (2001:15) states that it is through the metaphor of play that children are able to process and express their emotional conflicts. Indeed, Freud recognised the significance of play referring to it as “poetic creation” (cited in Schaefer and Cangelosi, 1993:1).

The interpretation of metaphors created in the course of play therapy interventions is discussed by Webb (2015) with regard to the client playing with such materials as clay which can be further interpreted as representing elements of the individual’s life in that it is malleable, manipulated, changing one’s life. Kegerreis (2010) recognises the importance of the use of equipment to help express the workings of the child’s internal world and the unconscious and sees play offering an insight into the child’s mind correlating to Winnicott’s (1953) concept of play occupying ‘potential space’ between the child and the external world.

From a psychodynamic perspective, the use of metaphor through the medium of play can also allow the reduction in ‘Object Anxiety’ – fear of the external world, feelings of helplessness, reliance on others, fear of abandonment, providing an illusion of power and control; and that of ‘Instinctual Anxiety’ – an infant’s feelings (anger, fear, sexual curiosity, destructiveness) that are sensed as being frowned upon by adult society as play allows exploration of feelings without repercussion from adults.

Schaefer and Cangelosi (1993) identify a range of Symbolic Play Techniques whereby the client is provided with the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings through the medium of play equipment which includes the following: dolls; puppets; finger puppets, mask making; costume; telephones; block play; sandplay; water play; the use of food; and mud and clay.

Sandplay and Symbol Work/ Sand Tray Work

Perhaps the closest methodological relative to SymfoS is that of Sandplay (often referred to as Sand Tray Work) which uses physical symbols as a therapeutic intervention to promote non-verbal expression, and is “less influenced by rational thinking” (Gerdard, 2016: 181). It taps into a universal vocabulary of symbols to circumvent the need for verbal language for those who may find “verbal exchanges difficult or who work best in a visual, non-verbal mode” (Pearson and Wilson, 2001:3). As Ferreira (2014:113) suggests, it has further potential value as an intervention to use with both children who speak a different language to the facilitator and those that have language and communication difficulties.

Pearson and Wilson suggest that Sandplay and symbol work is a method which contributes to the development of personal insight, individuation, articulation of inner processes, creation of congruence between our inner and outer worlds or can be used as a therapeutic tool to encourage emotional healing of unresolved inner conflicts and help the client to “simply begin to feel better” (2001:1). Sand tray therapy has also been proposed by some as an appropriate intervention with juvenile offenders given a perceived potential for developmental immaturity (Parker and Cade, 2018:87).

Mention must be made of the work of Margaret Lowenfield (1967 and 1979), an early pioneer of the Sand Tray method from 1926 through the use of miniature figures to “create a symbolic representation of their world in concrete form” (Cockle, 1993:2). It is proposed by Mitchell and Friedman (1994) that Lowenfeld’s approach to the use of symbols in sandplay is “congruent with Jung’s conceptualisation of the collective unconsciousness as an inherent state that is beyond logical and verbal expression” (p18). Wang et al. (2017) add that ‘Sandplay therapy’ has its roots in the Jungian psychological therapy approach as developed by Dora Kalff (herself a student of Carl Jung) in 1956 with the characteristics of both play therapy and art therapy and can be effectively used to enhance an individual’s resilience (Wang et al. 2017; Kalff, 1991 and 2004). A detailed mass of research, catalogue of publications and history of Sandplay can be found in the writing of Mitchell and Friedman (1994). Items used as symbols in Sandplay can include rocks, shells, stones and pieces of wood, small boxes and containers with lids, ornaments, beads, padlocks and keys, toy fences, vehicles, animals, trees and small figures.

As Ferreira (2014: 108) describes the method as the client creating a three-dimensional picture with miniature figures in a tray of sand and as an approach that has cross-over with “visualization and imagery, psychodrama, body work and movement, and cognitive restructuring”. The sandtray composition can then be used to tell their story; explore situations, thoughts and feelings; determine significance and relationships between objects; and gain greater understanding of life events.

The choice of symbol is seen as highly significant as individual figurines are seen as representing parts of the client and are objects to project inner meanings on to. Pearson and Wilson (2001:1) state that when choosing a symbol the individual may feel greatly “repulsed or attracted – that’s usually a clue that a symbol is important ... and can be an expression of the unconscious”.

Pearson and Wilson (2001:5) recognise the importance of moving from cognitive and verbal expression to that of involvement in the kinaesthetic and play nature of Sandplay which provides boundless creative freedom and “enables clients to drop any defences”. The use of symbols is seen as enabling the “unconscious and conscious mind to project multiple meanings” that can then become clearer and more structured (2001:4). Clients are observed in the Sandplay process to shift from a negative to positive mood as the act of being creative enhances the individual’s self-esteem, satisfaction, inner resources and tendency to become instinctively problem-solving.

From their perspective, Pearson and Wilson differentiate between Sandplay and Symbol work in that, congruent with the SymfoS method, Symbol work is categorised as an extension of Sandplay in that it is a directed, theme-based process that encourages exploration and discussion enabling the counsellor to develop rapport, and gain valuable information useful for an initial assessment (Pearson and Wilson, 2001; Cockle, 1993). Furthermore, Symbol work focuses on specific, troubling situations or problems with the client and can be used in individual and group counselling and personal development programmes.

Careers Guidance and metaphor

Metaphor can be encouraged to be used in careers guidance by both the practitioner and the client and encourage career development described as ‘metamorphization’ by Mignot (2004). It can convey a message through “sensory language” for impact and longevity, as Gladwell (2000) refers to “stickiness” in terms of ideas affix in the client’s mind. The use of

metaphor, referred to by Hambly and Bomford (2019), is through visual metaphor and linguistic description, and requires consideration of cultural contextualization, vocabulary and limitations through disability. They suggest metaphor and analogy can make linkages between the neocortex and limbic system of the brain and continue by stating that symbolic images can resonate “more deeply than a factual description” (2019: 55).

Amundson (2015), comments on metaphor being a helpful method of more gently challenging the client’s negative perceptions towards a more positive vision of the future and that “metaphors play an important role in the process of meaning and knowledge construction in life and in career” (Amundson, 2010:8).

Inkson (2015) states that there are benefits from using metaphors which include the compelling nature of their images; that they efficiently summarize concepts and make the abstract more concrete; encourage new perspectives; and promote creativity. In contrast, Inkson suggests metaphors “may be used to induce us to see things that aren’t there and to force other views into the background” (2015: 20) and advises practitioners to retain some scepticism, and to verify their relevance through triangulation with additional evidence.

Within the context of careers coaching, Inkson and Amundson describe the use of metaphor to creatively explore, reflect and prompt “new attitudes to career adaptation, career-self-determination and career learning” (2002:105). They proceed by listing a range of examples of creative career thinking using linguistic metaphors ranging from the “Snapshot” (reflections of metaphor in real life) to “The Collective” (group reflections) - (see Appendix 1.).

The use of metaphor within careers guidance is also present in products and resources to engage with clients such as Careers Navigator which uses the depiction of a road to represent where the individual is currently and where they want to progress to and a set of cards to aid reflection on person strengths (see appendix 5c).

Creative activities when working with bereaved children and young people

Mallon (2011:60) cites a number of studies that support the use of creative methods to assist with the promotion of healthy grieving when working with death and palliative care (Bertman, 1999; Bolton, 2007; Hieb, 2005; Wood, 2008). Reference is also made to Storr (1989:143) who suggests that such methods can protect an individual being overwhelmed by depression, provide recovery for those who have lost their sense of personal mastery, and enable the bereaved to repair “self-damage”.

Creative methods could include using a range of different materials, artefacts, pictures, dolls, stories and music from different ethnic origins as highlighted by Hooymann and Kramer (2006). Mallon helpfully references the work of McWhorter (2003), detailing the use of the following methods: making memory boxes, collages, photo murals, masks, stories, biography, poetry, drawing, artwork, puppets, dolls and strategies using natural objects and toys. Mallon (2011), states that by using these media the client has the “opportunity to express their feelings in ways other than verbalisation which for some children is too direct. Instead, through symbols and metaphors they can express their feelings” (p60). Emphasis is also made of the importance of giving consideration to an individual’s cultural background and the choice of culturally-appropriate materials, objects and equipment.



Symbol work and metaphor with mental health issues

Methods of engagement and intervention using symbols and metaphor are also used within the treatment of those with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) and psychosis through the use of Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT) to enhance mentalisation, emotional awareness and self-regulation for individuals who struggle with levels of arousal in interpersonal relationships (see Appendix – MIND website for mentalisation; NHS website).

Clark (2016:142) highlights the place of metaphor in art therapy and DBT as “potentially powerful catalysts for change”. Edwards (2012a:37) is quoted at length with regard to explaining the neurological context of the importance of metaphor. DBT focuses on mindfulness, interpersonal effectiveness, emotional regulation and distress tolerance and Clark (2016:136) suggests that “DBT-informed art therapy features three basic elements - mindfulness, metaphor and mastery”.

Clark quotes Davis (2015: 137) who believes that metaphors are able to “act in concert with images because they help capture the essence of emotion-based associations, and forge links between subjective and objective experience.” Metaphors are seen as being a therapeutic tool for those with BPD in that it can provide multiple interpretations enabling consideration of differing perspective which can contribute to the process of mentalisation and mind-mindedness.

Participatory Action Research with young people using creative methods and symbols

The use of symbols, such as visual images, photographs and arts and craft work, is identified by Alderson and Morrow (2011:52) as an effective method of engagement when undertaking research to record the views of children and young people as it provides “respect, inclusion and protection”. Additionally, Kramer-Roy (2015) highlights the role of creative research methods within the context of participatory action research projects with groups of people experiencing multiple disadvantage such as disability and ethnicity. Such methods were seen to assist expression and allow the individual to take more control of the research process and “facilitated individual reflection, sharing, planning for action, the construction of rich data and the reporting of findings” (2015:1208). Creative methods are seen as benefitting projects as their use accommodates:

- the wide range of ages consulted whereby verbal communication could be deemed for some as alienating;
- the sensitive subject nature necessitating a gentle and “unrushed” approach; and
- for some cultures, symbolism and metaphor are a “familiar way to explore ideas”

It must be noted that, in the course of the research, Kramer-Roy recognised a gender difference with males finding it harder and more reticent to engage in creative methods.

As part of Gawler’s (2005) report on tools for engagement when undertaking participatory evaluation with project stakeholders a variety of creative approaches are referred to including the use of symbols to articulate participants’ thoughts and opinions (see appendix 5c).

Symbols, young people and spiritual expression

As Geldard (2016:17) states “in adolescence, personal experiences, symbols and rituals may play a major part in the development of spiritual beliefs.” As part of Christian faith communities, there has been a developing move to help engage worshippers in activities to include the whole of their senses (Wallace 2000, 2002, 2009) in that the worshipper is encouraged to ascribe meaning to everyday objects.

Of particular relevance are ‘mandalas’ which use a variety of everyday items brought together to form a picture which can be used to symbolise “important steps, incidents, events and experiences” (Bullock and Pimlott, 2008:164). These activities are further extended to work creatively on a variety of topics throughout youth work, some of which will encourage ascribing meaning to everyday objects in order to help personal growth and development in their learning and understanding (see www.vanessarogers.co.uk).

Through these activities the role of youth leader is as facilitator and informal educator not as therapist. If any activities prompt deeper responses, the youth worker will refer on or signpost to professional services such as counselling acting in accordance with their professional ethical guidelines (IYW, no date).

Research regarding additional components of the SymfoS method -

Peer support work/Peer counsellors – using young people to help each other

As Geldard (2009:8) states “most young people prefer to seek emotional and psychological support from their peers in the first instance”. With this in mind, many services working with young people will employ methods of engagement described as ‘peer education’ which has the ethos of being “designed to be by and for young people” (2009:8). This approach is often the source of anxiety for practitioners as they relinquish control over the process of interaction; what is being articulated and the nature of the messages conveyed.

Kegerreis emphasises that children and young people spend a large proportion of their time in groups as part of the school schedule and social life and can prefer group participation in contrast to one-to-one encounters and vice-versa (2010:91). This point requires consideration with regard to determining whether the SymfoS intervention is compatible with certain young people who experience groups negatively.

Kegerreis (2010:91/2) identifies a number of benefits and advantages that group work can provide for young people including:

- efficiency, in that the group can work with a number of young people regarding the same issue and that, for some, it can be an effective intervention;
- compared to individual counselling, group work counselling can be less stigmatizing and imposing;
- group work can be perceived as fun;
- it can initiate those who would not participate in one-to-one counselling.

With regard to the skills required to be a counsellor within a group, consideration must be given to awareness of group dynamics and processes. Group members may have similar worries and anxieties which include concern over acceptability, issues of competitiveness,



rivalry, vulnerability, trust and other issues that may replicate relationships within the client's family (Kegerreis, 2010:92).

The experience of counselling within a group can provide the beneficial experience of other group members "being thought about in the same way" (Kegerreis, 2010:92) providing both insight and, as Foulkes (1990) suggests, contributes to 'outsight' – the recognition of meaning in another's behaviour enabling further personal insight.

Within the context of peer education, Geldard emphasises the importance of prior training with the young people to take into consideration issues relating to "personal growth, the clarification of values, understanding and respecting difference, limits to confidentiality, ethical considerations, expectations/limitations and referral" (2009:8)

Geldard (2009:14) places emphasis on the work of Noak (2000) who states that young people play a significant role with peers in influencing their psychosocial development during the transition to adulthood. Furthermore, Geldard reiterates that it is a feature of adolescent development to separate and individuate from their family as a support system and replacing this role with that of their peers. Additionally, of significance to the SymfoS Peer-Buddy system, Wilson and Dean (2001) found that young people chose who they approached for support, be it from peers or significant adults, on the basis of whether they have a strong positive relationship with the potential help-givers and whether they themselves have experienced the same issues or problems.

Patton and Geldard (2009:33-42) explore the concept of 'peer-counsellors' and related training. They highlight that a common error when providing counsellor-training to young people is to replicate programmes designed for adults, as these are seen as incompatible with young people's communication patterns. It was also noted (2009:35) that peer counsellor-training programmes find the following areas as problematic – skill implementation, in that peer counsellors have a tendency to feel 'awkward, mechanical and phoney' (Carr, 1984); role attribution and discomfort with the corresponding professional expectations (de Rosenroll, 1988); and status differences.

The SymfoS process and the Balint method

It must be noted that the SymfoS process replicates many of the components of the Balint Group process. This is a methodology developed by psychoanalysts Michael and Enid Balint, to assist medical doctors gain enhanced understanding of the emotional content of the doctor-patient relationship and so improve their therapeutic potential and be able to "move forward" and progress with the patient.

The process is based on case presentation by a doctor and discussion in a small group of nine or ten medical practitioners as a support group who are familiar with each other with a psychoanalyst leader – reflecting the Peery Buddy system. During the presentation, the support group listens to the story without interruption. When the presentation has finished, the facilitator invites the group to provide a response and gently discourages interrogation of the person who has presented the issue, encouraging the group to work together on the case.

In a variation of the group process (originating in Germany), following the presentation the facilitator asks if the group has any questions to clarify factual points they wish to ask the

presenter. The next stage requests that the presenter withdraws slightly from the group, remains silent for up to 30 minutes whilst the group works autonomously discussing the issues without further enquiry to the presenter. Finally, the presenter is invited back into the whole group and can provide a response to the group's thoughts.

The common denominators shared in both approaches include protected space; a distinct case and issue to work on; a specialist facilitator; a peer support group; presentation without interruption; strict factual questioning by the group; group discussion without client interruption; and client's response to group's interpretation (<https://balint.co.uk/>).

Section 2 – Practical Research

Introduction

The aim of this part of the research is to contribute to IO1 by addressing element 2 of the Research Paper Template by providing an understanding of the location of symbol work within professional practice in the youth welfare sector throughout the partnership countries.

This section of the report is an analysis of a series of interviews held with a number of relevant service professionals, managers and decision makers that are classified within the Erasmus + SymfoS project as belonging to the "Primary Target Group" (SymfoS bid p32). The organisations identified for consultation are projects, services and institutions that work with, amongst other young people, the "Indirect Target Group", namely disadvantaged young people (aged 15-25) with issues relating to socio-economic integration.

Research methodology

In the UK, 13 organisations were approached and a series of 22 interviews were undertaken with relevant professionals and practitioners (see appendix 2.1) from January to March 2019 using a structured interview process (see appendix 2.2. "Interview questions") with follow-up questions, and conducted either face-to-face with the researcher or by telephone. Ethical research clearance was provided by the University of Gloucestershire. Individual interviews lasted from between 45 minutes to 90 minutes. Interviewees were provided with a SymfoS project information leaflet in advance; a verbal description of the SymfoS methodology; and step by step SymfoS process was delivered by the researcher, followed by an invitation to ask any questions for clarification.

General findings

Throughout the participating countries, despite there being the occasional use of physical symbols as an intervention, no replication of the SymfoS method was reported. Confirming the findings in Section 1, responses from practitioners interviewed identified the interventions that most closely resembled SymfoS were those used in therapeutic work such as Sand Play and systemic work with families. Examples of the use of symbols and symbolism by services can be categorised into the following:

- Physical symbols,
- Pictorial symbols;
- those that were used literally
- those that had a metaphoric quality; and

- Verbal metaphor.

Furthermore, the use of symbols can be subdivided into interventions used as:

- an aid to communication;
- part of therapy;
- an aid for personal exploration and awareness;
- a tool for service and programme evaluation; and
- an aid for personal future planning.

The examples of the use of symbols and metaphor from research undertaken with services and that found in literature are included in the table below (Table 1). Specific descriptions, explanation and photographic representation of the intervention can be found in the appendix (5a-c) and in each partners' reports.

Some of the examples of interventions involving symbols can be cited as originating from specific methodological and theoretical origins, particularly those used within a therapeutic context for those with a psychological issue or who had experienced trauma (e.g. Play therapy) and when working with families systemically (e.g. Family Therapy, Family Constellation work). However, the majority of the interventions used by services lacked such coherence, and were used individualistically by practitioners within the field of 'creative methods'.

It must be also noted that many of the forms of symbol work identified have a commercial element as they are often products available for purchase by service providers (see appendix for web sites).



Table 1. Examples of symbol use from the literature research and primary research with service providers by country

Method	Physical Symbol	Pictorial Literal Symbol	Verbal metaphor	Art & craft materials	Pictorial metaphor	Communication aid	Therapeutic	Personal exploration	Evaluation method	Future planning	Assessment tool	Appendix ref
Lego Therapy	Yes					Yes	Yes				Yes	5.8
Art Therapy	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes			Possibly		
Sand Play/Sand tray & Symbol work	Yes			Yes			Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	5.1
Social work behavioural metaphor			Yes									
Social work linguistic metaphor			Yes									
Mind of My Own		Yes			Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes	Yes	5.21
Queen and King of the Island	Yes			Yes	Yes		Yes			Yes	Yes	5.37
Youth work arts-based work	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes			Yes				
Youth work Theme based group work				Yes	Yes							
Work with young offenders			Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	5.42
Counselling verbal metaphor			Yes				Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	
Counselling Physical & symbols	Yes						Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	
Play therapy	Yes			Yes								
Miniature animals	Yes						Yes	Yes			Yes	5.5
Mandalas				Yes	Yes			Yes		Yes		
Careers guidance metaphors			Yes					Yes		Yes	Yes	



Method	Physical Symbol	Pictorial Literal Symbol	Verbal metaphor	Art & craft materials	Pictorial metaphor	Communication aid	Therapeutic	Personal exploration	Evaluation method	Future planning	Assessment tool	Appendix ref
Participant Action Research	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes			Yes		Yes	5.45
Picture Communication Symbols		Yes				Yes			Yes	Yes	Yes	5.16
Widgit Symbols		Yes				Yes			Yes	Yes	Yes	
Symbolstix		Yes				Yes			Yes	Yes	Yes	5.17
Blissymbols		Yes				Yes			Yes	Yes	Yes	
Buttons	Yes							Yes			Yes	5.2, 5.3,
Stones/ driftwood	Yes							Yes	Yes			5.4
Memory Stones	Yes						Yes	Yes			Yes	5.6
“Objects of reference”	Yes					Yes				Yes		5.7
Now & Then Boards		Yes				Yes				Yes		5.10
PODD		Yes				Yes				Yes	Yes	5.11
Talking Mats		Yes				Yes				Yes	Yes	5.12
RIX Wikis		Yes				Yes				Yes	Yes	5.13
Widgit		Yes				Yes						5.14
Widgit Action Planning map		Yes				Yes				Yes	Yes	5.15
Makaton		Yes				Yes			Yes	Yes		5.19
Talking Cubes		Yes				Yes				Yes		5.20
Information symbols		Yes				Yes						5.22
Emojies		Yes			Yes	Yes			Yes			5.23
Story Cubes		Yes			Yes			Yes				5.24
Blob Tress		Yes			Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	5.25
Hand of Reflection					Yes			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	5.26
Vision Boards		Yes		Yes	Yes			Yes		Yes	Yes	5.27
Mind maps		Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes		Yes	Yes	5.28
Family Island		Yes		Yes	Yes			Yes		Yes	Yes	5.29



Feelings flashcards		Yes			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	5.32
Method	Physical Symbol	Pictorial Literal Symbol	Verbal metaphor	Art & craft materials	Pictorial metaphor	Communication aid	Therapeutic	Personal exploration	Evaluation method	Future planning	Assessment tool	Appendix ref
Mood cards		Yes			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	5.33
Inside/Out characters		Yes			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	5.34
Feelings Xrays		Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	5.35
YOT analogy			Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	5.42
Career Navigator Road Map		Yes			Yes			Yes		Yes		5.43
Spartan Test		Yes			Yes	Yes		Yes		Yes	Yes	5.44
Tree of Life, Personality Tree		Yes		Yes	Yes			Yes		Yes	Yes	5.36



Section 3 - Potential places for the SymfoS approach to be adopted

Introduction

This section provides a summary of policies, legislation and legal requirements of working with disadvantaged young people and outlines the organisations and services that work with young people in the UK.

Definitions of disadvantage within the context of social work and social care work –

When giving consideration to the range of services provided to address “disadvantage” it is important to provide a definition. Parker (2018: 6) suggests that disadvantage can be categorised as economic, resource, physical, social, political and special disadvantage. Parker goes on to state that these “types of disadvantage are structurally determined and imposed from normative positions of power” (2018:6) and have a negative effect on individuals and groups. Thus, disadvantage can come in the form of economic class; social isolation; physical, cognitive and mental disability; age; race; gender; sexual preference and other social divisions and can lead to ‘marginalisation’ – whereby individuals are “pushed to the side-lines of life, made invisible and therefore their wants, wishes and needs can be ignored” (Parker, 2018:9). Parker goes on to suggest that marginalisation can be manifested within the context of socio-spatial (geographic), political and sexual (gender and sexual preference) domains.

Those Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET)

In the UK, the government department responsible for policy relating to employment is the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The DWP and the Department for Education together define NEET as young people who are not in any form of education (full or part-time); employment (paid work – including part-time or temporary, but not including voluntary work or work experience); or training (formal employment-related training course – full or part-time, traineeships, ‘basic skills’ and engagement programmes for the most disengaged). DWP & DfE (2013:2)

In the UK the DfE (2010) highlight that there are numerous consequences of being NEET at age 16-18 to both the individual and society which includes an effect on public finance (£56,000 per life time); higher chance of unemployment later in life; less earning power; receive no training; have a criminal record; and suffer from poor health and depression (Social Exclusion Unit, 1999).

In England, the overall proportion of 16-18 year olds who are classified as NEET were at their lowest rate since records began at 6.3%. Statistics in 2017 for NEETs per age group are as follows: 18 year olds – 10%; 17 year olds – 4.8% and 16 year olds – 3.9% (see appendix for comparison by year 1994-2017). The issue of being NEET is particularly relevant for those aged 18 and 19 - 24 as not only is this the age range following compulsory formal education or training participation, but also the age at which the proportion of young people NEET rises (18.2% in 2013 – see appendix 3.1).

The DWP and DfE state that (2013:2) “Local authorities, working with DfE and DWP (through Jobcentres) each have responsibilities for young people.” When an 18 year old makes a claim for



benefit the local authority is automatically informed – to enable information sharing and joined-up working.

The DWP and DfE (2013) strategy to address the issue of young people who are NEET specifies the role of local authority services in England and includes;

- Raising the Participation Age - young people will be required to participate in education, training, apprenticeship or work combined with accredited part-time learning until their 18th birthday;
- Additional funding of education and training for young people aged 16-19 and 20-24 with a learning difficulty or disability (LDD) in England;
- Support 16-24 year olds with LDD, to participate in education or training and to provide targeted support to those who are NEET;
- Financial support to continue in education and training for disadvantaged young people in England to help them to continue their education or training including those in care or leaving care; or in receipt of a variety of benefits.

Definition of the Youth Welfare Sector in the UK

Given the framework that the “Youth Welfare” sector operates, there is a wide variety of service providers and practitioners that work with young people regarding their wellbeing which provides an expansive scope of opportunities for the Symfos method. This is classified as the “Children and Young People’s Workforce” and includes organisations from the Public Sector (state), Private Sector (business) and Third Sector (voluntary organisations and charities). The approach by the UK government to these sectors is encapsulated in chapters 3, 4 and 5 of the *Civil Society Strategy* (HM Gov, 2018) outlining the strengthening of role of the Third sector, whilst making the public sector more accountable to local partners and stakeholder.

Further explanation is required to clarify “statutory work” (legal obligation) with young people within the age range of SymfoS (15-25). This can be categorised as statutory social work; youth offending work (up until the age of 18), probation work (18 years plus) and will require the holding of a higher education qualification in a Social Work degree.

Alongside statutory work, the intention of government policy is to develop an integrated workforce which encourages multi-agency and partnership work to create a multi-disciplinary approach to supporting positive outcomes for children and young people.

As Oliver and Pitt (2011: 4) state “the children’s and young people’s workforce is broad and diverse. It includes paid staff and volunteers who work with children and young people. Many practitioners combine work with young people with a specialism such as sport, health or the arts.” This workforce can be subdivided into the following subject areas:

- Youth: Youth workers, youth support workers, youth workers in voluntary, community or faith sector, young people’s housing and accommodation support workers;
- Social, family and community support: Children and families social workers, foster carers, play workers, CAF/CASS advisers, private foster carers, outreach and family support workers, staff in family centres, day centres and residential children’s homes, portage workers;
- Justice and crime prevention: Youth Offending Teams, staff of youth offending institutions, secure training centres, secure children’s homes, police in school liaison/child protection roles, probation officers;

- **Education:** Staff and leaders at Further Education Colleges, teachers, school support staff, providers of extended schools activities, learning mentors, behaviour and educational support teams, 14-19 providers, educational psychologists, educational welfare officers
- **Health:** health visiting teams, school nurses, community children's nurses, child psychologists, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), paediatricians and sub-paediatricians, community paediatricians, children's allied health professionals, teenage pregnancy workers (Adapted from CWDC, 2010a:4)

Services for young people who have needs and can be identified as “disadvantaged”

Positive for youth – Services for young people in the UK are currently informed by the UK government's policy document “*Positive for Youth*” (DfE, 2011 – see appendix 3.2). This policy statement outlines service provision for 13-19 year olds and a “vision for how all parts of society – including councils, schools, charities, business – can work together in partnership to support families and improve outcomes for young people, particularly those who are most disadvantaged or vulnerable.” (DfE 2012:2).

When giving consideration to services for “disadvantaged” young people (those defined as not getting “the support or opportunities they need through their families or communities”), *Positive for Youth* earmarks local authorities as having the responsibility “to secure young people's access to sufficient activities and services to improve their wellbeing” (DfE, 2012:6) through funding services.

The position of youth workers and related support services are seen as having a role in

- “supporting young people's personal and social development – which includes developing important skills and qualities needed for life, learning, and work;
- ensure all young people are able to participate and achieve in education or training; and
- raising young people's aspirations”

Specifically, in addition to local authority funded provision, the government stated that “to improve services and opportunities” for young people 63 ‘Myplace’ youth centres would be created in disadvantaged areas; a National Citizenship Scheme would be offered to young people; and there would be an expansion of the Cadet Forces.

Positive for Youth referred to the importance of providing targeted services at an early stage through an Early Intervention Grant to address the needs of young people and their families.

The place of Social work

Much of the statutory work that social workers with children and young people undertake places a heavy emphasis on case management, in the form of assessment and planning, and involvement in the commissioning of direct work to other practitioners.

On a local basis in Gloucestershire, direct work with young people would be undertaken by a combination of public, private and third sector providers with the Youth Support Team (YST) being the most sizeable of services. The YST provides support for young people who are NEET; those in care (under 18 years) and those leaving care (over 18 years); Youth Justice (work with young offenders); housing advice; work with missing young people (run-aways); health (sexual, mental, substance misuse, speech, language and communication needs); Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND); and Careers Advice Plus for schools and colleges.

As such, there will be a wide range of practitioners that will come in contact with young people using the service and this could include: social workers, leaving care workers, youth workers, Programme Officers, Case Responsible Officers, Housing Advice Workers and Education, Training and Employment workers.

The place of youth work:

The Youth Service and youth work has seen a recent transformation from providing universal services to all young people as provided primarily by the public sector to focusing more on targeted work with those with identifiable needs and a service provided by a combination of Public, Private and Third Sectors. Annual spending by local authorities in England on Youth Service funding has declined from £622,000,000 in 2014-15 to £416,000,000 in 2017/18 For a comparison of government expenditure see DfE, 2018b and appendix 3.3)

Figure 1.1 provides an understanding of current youth work provision:

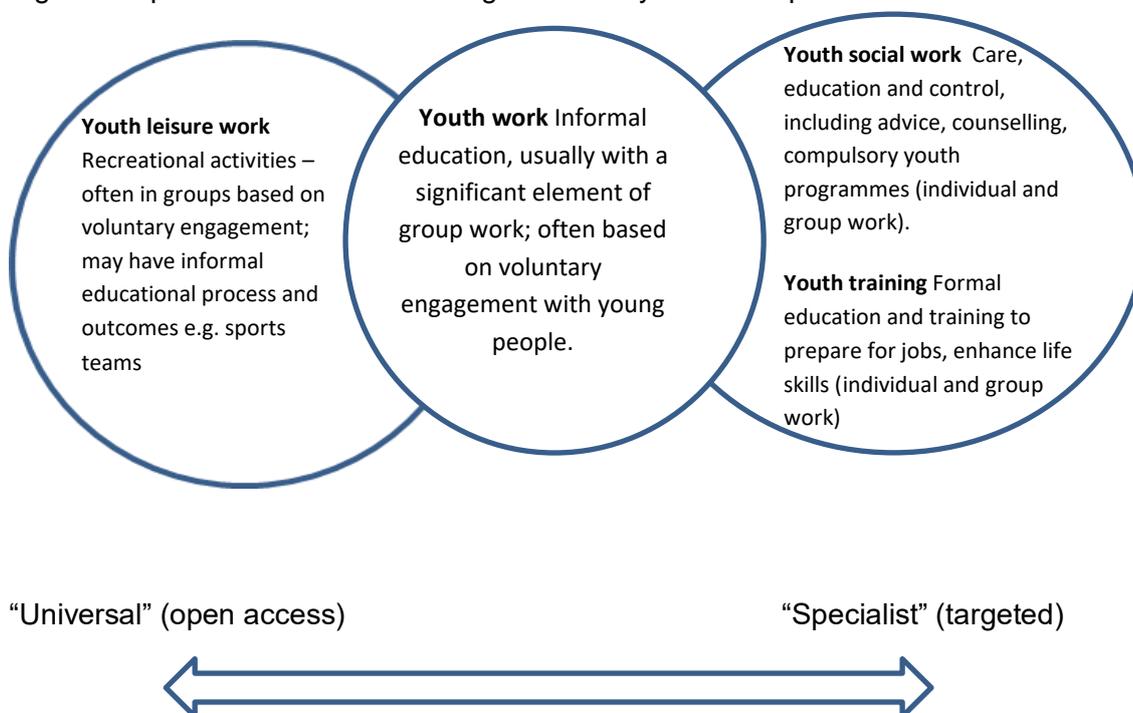


Figure 1.1 A spectrum of work with young people (Banks, 2010:8)

(For further description of youth work see appendix 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6)

Careers Guidance

Careers guidance can be defined as a “purposeful learning opportunity which supports individuals and groups to consider and reconsider work, leisure and learning in the light of new information and experiences and to take both individual and collective action as a result of this” (Hooley et al., 2017: 29).

Currently, oversight and delivery of services for careers guidance in the UK varies. In England, provision is governed by the *Careers Strategy: making the most of everyone’s skills and talents* (DfE, 2017). For young people up to the age of 18 the duty to provide careers guidance now falls to schools and colleges – with further statutory guidance - *Careers guidance and access for education and training providers* (DfE, 2018c) detailing minimum standards as well as best practice. For those above 18 years of age, the National Careers Service (NCS) offers personal appointments with a careers adviser to individuals with certain characteristics. These forms of careers guidance are funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency via schools, colleges, and the NCS.

NCS contracts are tendered out to private organisations from public funds, which then operate local provision for adults across England to an accredited standard (<https://matrixstandard.com/>). Individual face-to-face careers guidance appointments are only available to specific groups which includes young people aged 18-24 who are NEET.

Additional careers guidance services are available to specific groups of young people who access statutory services from a Local Authority, such as for 16 and 17 year olds who are NEET, and 16 to 25 year olds who are in the care or those who are care leavers. It must be noted that the resource and methods applied for this form of careers support varies across England which creates an inconsistent service. A similar variation in quality is mirrored in the education system where schools and colleges have been tasked with providing careers education and guidance.

One to one careers guidance is person-centred using structured interviewing to explore client’s experiences, understanding, and values, and help to increase awareness of opportunities, raise aspiration. Engagement is relationship-orientated, dialogue-based and involves the use of action-planning. In addition, a range of online tools are available to assist with personal understanding and familiarisation of options such as Cascaid’s Kudos tool and the NCS ‘Skills Health Check’.

See summary of Places to Adopt and Opportunities in Section 5 Opportunities

Section 4 - The routes that practitioners can take to get trained to work with young people

Introduction:

This section focuses on the varied routes that practitioners working with disadvantaged young people in the partner countries can become trained and qualified. Primarily, this will focus on the following professionals: Counsellors and Psychotherapists, Social Workers, Youth Workers, Youth Support Workers, Careers guidance workers, Probation Officers, and Youth Offending workers.

Regulation of professions

Given the rudiments of symbol work, distinction must be made between therapeutic interventions and those associated with guidance and coaching. Lefevre, building on the points that Wickham and West (2002) stress with regard to professional competence, states “there should be no expectation that social workers using symbolic and creative modes of communication would function at the level of art or play therapists, who use these forms as primary therapeutic tools and should be formally trained and experienced in their use” (2011:130). With this in mind, it is important to establish what training and qualifications are required to practice as a psychotherapist or psychotherapeutic counsellor.

To prevent confusion, distinction must be made between the wide range of practitioners in the “helping professions” who use counselling skills (Nelson-Jones, 2013:3/4) and the position of counselling as a distinct and institutionally regulated profession.

Counsellors and Psychotherapists Those who can practice as counsellors and psychotherapists need to be registered with the professional organisation, the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) which has in turn been accredited by the Professional Standards Authority (www.professionalstandards.org.uk). To qualify as a counsellor or psychotherapist it is necessary to complete a course recognised by the BACP which amounts to a minimum of 400 hours staff/student contact time, and students undertaking 100 hours of supervised counselling practice.

Social Workers To practice as a social worker and undertake statutory work with children and young people, you must be registered with the Health and Care Professions Council ([HCPC](http://www.hcpc-uk.org)) and have successfully completed an approved degree or postgraduate programme in social work. Courses take three or four years full time and have a standardized syllabus. A degree apprenticeship in social work has also been approved. Courses differ but all include:

- law as it applies to social work
- ethics and values
- assessments and interventions
- mental health, disability and other issues
- practical work with clients and placements in social work settings

Youth Workers: The National Youth Agency (NYA) states the following routes to become a youth worker:

- a Youth Work Apprenticeship – being trained to level 2 to 6 whilst working;
- Youth Support Worker – this refers to the bulk of the youth work workforce and are those workers who have achieved level 2 or 3 in youth work practice;
- Professional Youth Worker – gaining a qualification at level 6 – degree, or above provided by an institute of higher education and is a course that is JNC recognised and validated by the NYA (<http://nya.org.uk/careers-youth-work/getting-qualified/>)

Careers Guidance workers The Careers Development Institute (CDI) is the organisation that oversees the National Occupational Standards for careers professionals and recommends that a ‘qualified careers adviser’ is someone who has achieved accreditation at QCF Level 6 (Degree Level) or higher (www.thecdi.net/Career-Development-Sector-Progression-Pathway). Also, see appendix 4.1 CDI Code of Ethics).

Probation Officers To qualify as a probation officer to work with offenders over the age of 18 years, it is necessary to complete probation officer training via the Professional Qualification in Probation (PQiP). This entails:

- relevant experience of working with challenging behaviour
- a recognised qualification at QCF Level 5 or above (for example an honours degree, HND, foundation degree, diploma of higher education or higher apprenticeship)
- prior knowledge and understanding in four required knowledge modules: the criminal justice system, crime and criminal behaviour, penal policy and punishment, and the rehabilitation of offenders (see UCAS and Prospects websites).

Youth Offending Team (YOT) Officer To become a qualified YOT Officer, a practitioner requires a wide range of experience of working with young people and a qualification in such subjects as a degree in social work, a degree or diploma in youth and community studies or youth work, or another relevant professional qualification. Many YOTs may allow workers to start without these qualifications and work as Support Workers, working with low risk and medium risk offenders whilst being closely supervised by professionally qualified superiors. This enables practitioners to work to prevent children and young people under the age of 18 from offending and re-offending.

Section 5 - Challenges and opportunities organizations and practitioners may face when implementing SymfoS

Introduction

This section is an analysis of a series of research interviews held with those organisations and practitioners highlighted in Section 2 of this report. The aim of this section is to contribute to IO1 by addressing element 5 of the Research Paper Template to determine which organisations use symbols or have the potential to use symbol work as an intervention; explore the range of opportunities and challenges of using symbol work that the organisations identify; and determine the steps and process required for organisations to trial the SymfoS approach.

Overall, the concept of symbol work was received positively by those interviewed which could be broadly applied throughout services with disadvantaged young people. For those working with young people classified as NEET there was a consensus that creative, informal methods of intervention which involve activities were the most effective form of intervention as they:

- contribute to engagement of service users and retention of group membership;
- encourage personal expression and rapport between client and practitioner;
- provide a contrast to formal educational methods and
- promote the production of outcomes with regard to identification of future goals.

Additionally, those interviewed who work with this group were more amenable to adopting creative methods and informal learning techniques as part of their professional practice and grounding which could ease the integration of the SymfoS approach into their work.

It was found that the general approach of projects to assessing young people's needs and determining their future goals followed a similar pattern which involved relationship-based

interaction with the client, employing dialogue in the form of unstructured conversation and/or the completion of forms.

Some projects used symbols as an intervention although this differed from the SymfoS approach as the symbols used were of a literal and pictorial nature rather than being used as metaphors. Reference made to the use of symbols by service providers is explored in greater detail in Section 2 of this report.

Opportunities and positive comments – Interviewee' responses predominantly confirmed that there are opportunities for Symbol work to be used as an intervention with disadvantaged young people. Positive responses included that the SymfoS methodology aligned with other activity-based approaches and was seen as enhancing the chance of positive outcomes as a consequence of strengthening and invigorating engagement. Symbol work was recognised as being able to be used on a variety of levels, including practical issues and not restricted to NEET work or therapeutic intervention.

The use of symbols as metaphors was also seen as beneficial as it provides a mode of articulation for individuals who may find it hard to verbalise their needs and goals. Furthermore, the SymfoS method was seen as having potential when working with young people with behavioural issues who struggle to express their emotions and those with verbal and communication issues as a consequence of the visual and physical nature of the intervention.

Interviews within youth justice work established that symbolic work is being trialled by using metaphor and analogy when engaging with young people and confirmed that it is a very effective method and is a process that gets to the substance of the issue rapidly. The use of metaphor provides a vehicle enabling the young person to articulate how they see their world and how they want to plan their future. The use of SymfoS methodology could be seamlessly incorporated into the metaphor/analogy work that they do.

The SymfoS method was also seen as having potential with contributing to the process of “co-creation”, whereby the practitioner and the client work together with emotions within a therapeutic context. This correlates with Winnicott's point that “the procedure of getting alongside rather than face to face with children is an important way of facilitating communication” (1996:125).

The use of a “Peer Buddy” system was seen as being positive as it contributes to a shared awareness and insight of the issues being discussed within the group. It was recommended that smaller size groups would be most effective and to avoid large groups.

Giving clients choice within the process was regarded positively as being empowering for the individual. This is apparent within the SymfoS process of providing the client with the opportunity to choose objects as symbols and then determining what they want to use as part of Step 5 of the SymfoS process – (“Agreement on actions”) from elements they have heard during Step 4 (“Interpretation”). This concurs with the National Youth Agency Value Base (http://www.nya.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Ethical_conduct_in_Youth-Work.pdf) (see appendix 3.3).

The SymfoS ethos of being person-centred was welcomed. During stage 1 (“Presentation”) the client provides their story without interruption as this contributes to the process of being person-centred and empowering as it minimizes the chance of others present, particularly adults, imposing their opinion. It was commented that the person-centred nature of SymfoS contributed to the client's ‘ownership’ of the process and increased the likelihood of sustainable problem-solving and the client putting the plan into action.

Participants' ages (both Peer Buddy group and clients') needs to be taken into consideration with regard to receptiveness, as the SymfoS process was thought to be most effective with those over the age of 14 due to maturity and those sharing the same stage in life-course development. This was ratified by other interviewees who identified age as relevant in that pupils approaching the transition point of leaving secondary education would be more receptive to the process as there is a readiness due to a sense of urgency given the proximity of impending transition to training/employment or further/higher education.

In contrast, some respondents suggested that younger service users would be most receptive to the method as they may find creative forms of engagement and intervention more fun and less inhibiting. It was mentioned that the use of symbols could be employed at an early stage of engagement with young people who may find it hard to articulate and verbalise their opinion.

Within the context of mentoring, comment was made that SymfoS has potential for those who are struggling to make decisions and for those that there is a blockage and barrier to progress and moving forward.

Those practitioners working with children and young people in the care of local authorities identified that there is potential for using the SymfoS method with individuals who have experienced trauma, such as abuse, and have areas of their life that they cannot talk about due to being highly sensitive issues or not knowing how to verbalise.

The use of SymfoS was regarded as being highly suitable with young people who are located in a supportive environment (be it through service provision or their home-life) and whose emotional responses can be contained by available and accessible practitioners and carers, or those young people who are already involved in an ongoing programme of counselling or psychotherapy.

It was also identified that the SymfoS method could have potential when working with those young people who are categorised as having Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), as creative techniques are highly conducive with this group.

Those working with disabled young people are keen to be involved in a pilot as they try to involve creative methods in the process of supporting the transition from specialist educational provisions. For some disabled young people, the concept of making a transition is accompanied by high levels of anxiety. As such, the SymfoS method could provide an opportunity to explore the emotions connected with a transition in a non-threatening way. SymfoS was regarded as a potentially helpful tool for working with those with cognitive and verbal communication impairments as it was suggested that signing (such as British Sign Language) is unable to fully capture the messages, nuances and goals being transmitted by communicators. Due to the variety of interventions commonly used with disabled young people, SymfoS could also provide a central focal point and coordinated approach thus reducing the potential for "drift" by the use of multiple interventions.

Within the context of statutory social work (work that has a legal and legislative demand to be undertaken), an observation was made that the SymfoS method could contribute to the process of Child in Care reviews. Currently these reviews are highly process-driven and invariably involve form completion and meetings with relevant practitioners which can be experienced by the child or young person as inhibiting and alienating given the meetings' orientation to adult procedures. Use of SymfoS methodology within the review process could provide an empowering and young-person-centred component. It is understood that the Independent Reviewing Team in Gloucestershire (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/section/25B>) that oversees the statutory review process is currently revising and updating the methods used.

It was suggested that the assessment, planning and review process, can further be experienced by the service user negatively as the same personal questions are repeatedly asked which becomes exhausting and can reinforce negative and traumatic experiences. In contrast, the use of symbols and metaphor to explore issues from a variety of perspectives allows a greater chance of determining what is possible and cultivates a more positive experience.

The SymfoS method could contribute to the process of "Life Story" work (see corambaaf.org.uk and <http://www.steppingstonetherapy.co.uk/>) for those children and young people who are in the care of the local authority (residential or foster care) and are dealing with emotionally laden and intense experiences and life-course information. This is within already established supportive environments which would minimize and address concerns regarding emotional distress and the effect of trauma.

Similarly, the SymfoS methodology could be used with Care Leavers to replicate and enhance the Pathway Plan Review process (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/35/contents>) which, due to its reliance on form completion, can again be perceived as a negative process the product of which is often ignored. By including SymfoS methodology, it could make the review process increasingly attractive, involving and young person-centred.

As symbol work has the potential to encourage the articulation of thoughts and feelings, emotional awareness and insights, this was remarked as a contribution to the young person's developmental task of identity achievement (Erikson, 1980; Marcia and Josselson, 2013). Those working with young offenders remarked that SymfoS could have the beneficial effect of assisting the young person to engage primarily with themselves (development of emotional Intelligence) and then influence their subsequent positive engagement with society. Of particular relevance to young offenders is the propensity for low levels of literacy (Snowling et al., 2000) and high levels of dyslexia (Kirk and Reid, 2001) which the use of symbol work could address and supplement.

Additionally, for young people in general, involvement with the SymfoS intervention could assist with the development of personal insight and awareness which could contribute to preliminary work prior to progressing on to involvement with formal counselling and psychotherapy.

In terms of opportunities within the youth welfare sector, the SymfoS process was commented on by one project as being very conducive to the ethos of many of the staff within the sector and "fits in" to their professional approach which is to "give things a go" and being involved in innovative, informal and creative techniques. The use of symbols was seen as "not a step too far" from current practice and therefore possible to integrate with current service provision.

In summary, the SymfoS methodology was confirmed as having potential with the following young people:

- those who struggle to articulate their goals
- with behavioural issues
- excluded from mainstream education and those at risk of being excluded;
- with communication issues and problems, low levels of literacy, dyslexia
- young offenders
- bereavement work with children and young people
- those engaged with mentoring work
- students approaching transition stages (end of Secondary education (15year olds)
- those who have experienced trauma/abuse
- young people in supportive environments

- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
- Children in Care as part of the review process
- those undertaking “Life Story” work
- Care Leavers’ Pathway Plans
- those receiving careers guidance work
- preliminary work prior to initiation into counselling

Summary of Places for Adoption and Opportunities

Place/Organisation	Activity	Worker	Client group
Careers Guidance Services	Careers orientation, education guidance, careers guidance	Careers Guidance Workers & Coaches, Careers counsellors	NEET young people, pupils, students
Alternative Education Provisions	Careers orientation, Emotional Intelligence, Engagement in education, work with behaviour	Support workers, mentors	Pupils, Students
Youth Offending Teams (YOT)	Future planning, Self-awareness, Emotional Intelligence, Desistance work	YOT Workers, YOT Support Workers	Young offenders under 18 years who are NEET
Probation Service	Future planning, Self-awareness, Emotional Intelligence, Desistance work	Probation Officers	Ex-offenders 18 years plus
Social Services	Pathway Planning	Social Workers, Leaving Care Workers	Care Leavers
Social Services	“Life Story” Work	Social Workers, Leaving Care Workers	Children in Care Care Leavers
Social Services	Child in Care Reviews	Social Worker, Independent Reviewing Officer	Children in Care
Youth Centres	Future life planning, Self-awareness	Youth workers, Youth support workers	Young people aged 15 plus
Mentoring Organisations	Future life planning, careers orientation	Mentors	Young people aged 15 plus
Specialist schools and colleges	Future life planning, careers orientation Communication		Young people who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Speech and Language Teams (SALT)	Communication	Speech and Language therapists	Young people with issues with speech and language
Counselling Organisations	Therapeutic work	Counsellors, psychotherapists	Young people
Bereavement organisations	Therapeutic work	Practitioners, therapists	Bereaved young people

Challenges –

Marketing SymfoS to young people

There needs to be a clear and unambiguous explanation of the SymfoS process by practitioners to the client and Peer Buddy group to enable the young people to quickly “get the point” and fully understand the purpose and function of involvement and the value and benefits that it could provide. This is as a consequence of unfamiliarity with such a structured process as SymfoS, as much of traditional intervention with those who are NEET is undertaken through supportive conversations and participation in practical activities such as skills workshops.

Practitioners working with young people with complex needs and those who are hard to engage (particularly young offenders and those excluded or at risk of exclusion from mainstream education) stressed the importance of how SymfoS is presented, promoted and “sold” to the client group. For these young people to engage in interventions they must make a rapid connection with the process. If it is “sold” ineffectively it could fail and be rejected by the young people. Indeed, a challenge for the promotion of SymfoS is that much of the process has the potential to be perceived as abstract and cerebral.

A further consideration marketing the intervention with young people, is that there is the potential for SymfoS and the use of physical symbols to be perceived as being “childish” and therefore risks refusal of some to participate. Indeed, this was confirmed to have been the case from the clients’ negative reaction when introducing Sand tray work with young offenders.

It was commented that the SymfoS method would have an enhanced chance of success if consideration is given to how and when it is introduced to the young people. It could be integrated into a theme-based group such as one focusing on “anxiety”. Additionally, young people would “sign up to it and own it (the process)” if they understand and recognise an issue to work on and have a sense of personal need. Timeliness can be of importance particularly with young offenders being resettled following a custodial sentence as it is recognized that there is a window of opportunity when young people are “enthusiastic to change” (Hazel, 2018:8).

Relationship with practitioner

Often, when engaging with young people, particularly young offenders and those with complex needs, not only does the intervention need to be fun and perceived as of value, attention needs to be given to the quality of relationship with the practitioner. These factors increase the possibility of ‘co-creation’. A practitioner’s genuineness is critical, as the young person may immediately disengage from the process if it is at all sensed that they are being manipulated in any way.

Involvement with the SymfoS intervention is seen as benefitting from the participants having a good quality working relationship with their mentor who could introduce the intervention in a relaxed, informed and informal manner. Furthermore, the timing of introduction to the method is seen as important in that if in the course of an informal interaction it was seen as an appropriate progression to address an issue.

Peer Buddy System

In terms of the client and the Peer Buddy group, the participants' personalities and attitude is seen as being important as there would be a higher chance of it working with the "right group" – this was defined as being both open-minded and like-minded and sure of each other. Receptiveness to innovation and trusting inter-personal relationships are therefore of value. Within the context of freshly-created groups of young people, comment was made that group processes would need to have progressed to the point whereby group members feel comfortable with each other.

It was remarked by those working with young people with behavioural issues and complex needs that there is a high probability of individuals finding it very hard to trust their peers. It was anticipated that this may make it difficult or impossible to employ a Peer Buddy system requiring an adaptation of the SymfoS method to be delivered on a one-to-one basis with the practitioner. This was also highlighted as a necessary adaptation for practitioners who predominantly work on a one-to-one basis or those that work with individuals who cannot tolerate group work.

It was questioned whether individuals in the Peer Buddy system would fully understand the SymfoS process. This stresses the importance of preparatory work by practitioners with the group prior to the intervention. The group would need to be composed of a favourable combination of members to avoid the potential for conflict. This is particularly pertinent when working with young people who display challenging behaviour in group settings.

Additionally, involvement with the SymfoS method could benefit from an established group that know each other and whose familiarity and depth of interpersonal relationships could influence the quality of feedback and interpretation (stage 4).

The Peer Buddy system may require an assessment of risk when working with some groups of young people due to the potential for "cross-contamination" in terms of the exchange and transfer of pathological or negative behaviour, such as substance misuse and criminal activity. It was mentioned that association between young offenders can increase the potential for "upskilling" with regard to criminal techniques as a consequence of the Exposure Effect and Differential Association (Sutherland, 1978).

A further challenge, when working with young offenders - particularly those who have gang involvement, is that the ability to make personal disclosures and be candid can be limited and compromised due to the culture that they have been used to. Strict confidentiality and the management of risk are of particular relevance when working with this cohort.

Disabled young people

When working with those experiencing complex mental health issues such as Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD), the early onset of psychosis or extreme emotional distress, the perception by the client of the "Interpretation" could be problematic when undertaking the SymfoS method. Similarly, it was questioned how the client is going to relate to what they hear and issues

relating to trusting the feedback from those experiencing BPD. Often the issue of whose agenda is pertinent for those with BPD. In cases where the interpretation feedback is negative or perceived as negative, how is the potential for conflict and the need for support going to be managed by the practitioner?

Mention was made that many disabled young people have a limited social network and experience social isolation that can be restricted to the immediate family. This is particularly the case within the deaf community who can be highly affiliative with those sharing the same disability. For disabled young people the ability to trust and feel safe with others is an essential prerequisite to sharing personal information. Consequently, it was asked whether the Peer Buddy group can be comprised of people they already familiar with, such as the client's family and relevant professionals. This was also an issue pointed out by practitioners working with specific young offenders who may have a very limited social network. Additionally, to address feelings of insecurity within the context of the group, the establishing of ground rules was seen as imperative.

Practitioners who may only have limited and temporal contact with service users, such as careers guidance workers and learning disability transition workers, questioned whether the SymfoS method could be undertaken and completed within one interaction contact and on a one-to-one basis with the practitioner, obviating the need for a Peer Buddy system.

An observation was made that there should be consideration that when working with deaf young people there is the potential for them to be very blunt when sharing their opinion to others which may influence stages 3 and 4 of the SymfoS process. It would also be remiss if practitioners did not acknowledge that young people do have the potential to display and express hurtful messages to other young people which can compromise their ability to be tactful.

The unfortunate reality for many disabled young people is that there are limited possibilities and opportunities within the careers/vocational field. Concern was expressed that the use of SymfoS (given the expansive nature of symbols and metaphor) within the context of careers guidance could encourage inflated and false expectations about what is achievable – these expectations would need to be managed. A similar limitation was also expressed by Austria, stating that some refugees are barred from employment and have further restrictions placed on their mobility and access to further education. Their situation is further compounded by the possibility of impending deportation as a consequence of coming to the “end of the road” with regard to appeal processes.

For some disabled young people the SymfoS method would require adaption as those with learning difficulties and disabilities may struggle with the following elements of SymfoS:

- the abstract concept of using symbols and the SymfoS process;
- the task of creating a composition with symbols;
- perceiving, processing and handling 3 dimensional objects and using physical symbols;
- the presentation (stage 1) and interpretation (stage 4)

It was suggested the impact of individual cognitive need with respect to unaccustomed processes and objects as symbols could be addressed by encouraging familiarity with the symbols in advance of the intervention.

Adaption of the method is an additional consideration when working with those that are non-verbal.

When working with autistic young people it is important that the practitioner is highly familiar with the needs of the individual and knows them well. It was remarked that some autistic young people

have highly developed coping-mechanisms with regard to self-presentation to enable them to function in mainstream society which can be deceptive to the uninitiated and inexperienced.

Practitioners, managers and organisations

The effectiveness of the SymfoS process would be highly dependent not only the personality of the client, but also on the qualities, competence and skills of the practitioner. It was found in both the UK and Spain that the practitioner would need to be both interested and committed to the methodology. A challenge within the current context of the youth welfare sector is pressure from statutory demands, workloads and time constraints which can increase workers' propensity for exhaustion and stress at work (www.communitycare.co.uk) causing reluctance to be involved in innovative practices as an appendage to their statutory duties.

It was also highlighted that for SymfoS to be sustainably integrated into service delivery, not only would there need to be appropriate investment by organisations in resources, practitioners would need to be given protected space and time by management, not only to undertake the SymfoS approach with clients, but also for training and to practice the method. For innovative approaches to be successfully embedded in service delivery there needs to be a commitment from the entire organisation.

In summary, the following challenges require addressing:

- Marketing the product to young people
- Unambiguous explanation
- Understandable process
- Recognise value/benefit
- Avoid abstract concepts
- Timing of initiation
- Quality of product
- Quality of relationship with practitioner
- Consideration of client and peer-buddy group personality – open-minded and trusting
- Consideration of Peer-buddy composition
- Adaptation to one-to-one format for individual work and those who cannot join group work
- Peer Buddy risk assessment and potential for cross-contamination
- Cognitive functioning of those with disabilities or experiencing mental health issues
- Those with limited social networks
- Group ground rules
- Peer tactlessness
- Minimizing unrealistic expectations
- Practitioner commitment to SymfoS
- High levels of practitioner training
- Practitioner core workload pressures
- Commitment to the process from management and practitioners
- Protected time and space for practitioners from management
- Cost of materials (SymfoS cases)
- Securing consent from parents and guardians for under 18 year olds

Areas of Concern

It is important that SymfoS practitioners are professionally qualified and have the relevant training to be able to competently use the method. There needs to be a clear understanding of where the SymfoS intervention stops as a method for determining an individual's future goals and strays into the realm of counselling or psychotherapeutic processes which demand higher levels of pastoral support and practice regulation, qualification and certification. At this point it is seen as essential that the SymfoS practitioner is able to determine, through their professional judgment, the limit of their skills and indicate that this is when referral and signposting to counselling and/or psychotherapeutic expertise, skilled clinical supervision (Doyle, 2005) and support are needed. As Lefevre states with regard to practitioners using therapeutically orientated interventions, "it is important that workers do not step outside the boundaries of their skill and experience" (2011:130). It is essential to define what SymfoS is and what it is not. Furthermore, Pearson and Wilson (2001:54) caution against unqualified practitioners using Symbol work within a psychotherapeutic context stating that "exploring the individual's psyche at depth is not a field in which inexperienced or untrained players flourish. Learning about the power and depth of symbols ... can continue for a lifetime'.

From a therapeutic perspective, concern was expressed regarding the SymfoS ethos of "how processes, including solutions and changes, can be accelerated and shortcut" and "getting to the point quickly" (SymfoS "Train the Trainer":p10) . It was stressed that it would be beneficial to acknowledge the work of David Winnicott who recognises the importance of sensitivity to the psychological readiness of the client to process material and to have "metabolized" issues. This point was also made by another respondent, who remarked on the importance of recognising individuals' readiness to become involved in symbols work. This echoes Lefevre's axiom that "where a social worker intends to carry out a more focused therapeutic intervention using the creative arts of play, the child's need and readiness for the intervention should be determined by a suitably qualified and skilled practitioner" (2011:131).

Indeed, Malchiodi (2008) makes reference to Rothschild (2000) concept of "titration" whereby for those young people who have experienced early life traumas, practitioners need to help individuals manage the processing of distressing thoughts, feelings and memories in small gradual steps and at an "appropriate pace" (2008:36). Rothschild (2004:1) goes on to state in relation to clients who experienced rapid psychological decline when dealing with the consequences of traumatic experiences, "traumatic material was addressed before the client was equipped to manage it". It is therefore essential that the practitioner is "confident that the flow of their [client's] anxiety, emotion, memories, and body sensations can be contained at will" (2004:1).

It was questioned whether SymfoS has been clarified as being a safe method and does it increase people's risk and vulnerability? With this in mind, what support systems are in place and is the method undertaken within a structured, supportive environment? The use of symbolic work was acknowledged as having the potential to be a powerful force when working with intra-psychic processes and there is the possibility of disturbing thoughts and feelings being unearthed. With regard to creative interventions within the context of symbolic work, Lefevre emphasises that "It is essential for workers to recognise how powerful these ways of working are ...strong or unexpected reactions may occur. These methods and techniques require sensitive and skilled use and children's artwork must be accorded the utmost respect" (2011:145).

Indeed, this correlates with the National Occupational Standards for Youth Work KU3 whereby youth workers need to understand "Techniques for creating an environment where it is safe to talk openly and honestly about experiences, learning and aspirations" (National Occupational Standards, 2008:6). Dealing with strong emotional reactions and responses would necessitate the need for a supportive plan to address the psychological and emotional consequences. However, it

was commented that some organisations that are multi-disciplinary in composition have access to services that provide mental health support which could be utilized.

Additionally, if physical touch (in the form of hugging and hand contact) is considered as a source of comfort as part of the plan for support following client upset, practitioners' reference to the project's relevant policies is essential. Consideration needs to be given to whom the expressions of comfort are benefiting – the young person or the practitioner?

For those who have had a history of experiencing trauma, the SymfoS method would be more suited to those who have a system of support around them rather than for young people who live in semi-independent or independent accommodation and could find that the intervention brings up unresolved psychological and emotional issues making them feel very alone. It was highlighted that care needs to be given to who the method is used with as it is important to consider safeguarding and protection for the vulnerable.

Reservation was expressed by those interviewed regarding the possibility that the interpretations being offered by the peer-buddy group may not be palatable to the client or helpful for the client.

There needs to be a protected and safe space for undertaking SymfoS sessions. This includes setting the boundaries, developing a sense of trust throughout the group, providing a place for the group to be uninterrupted and ensuring a protected period of time.

Given its therapeutic nature there is the need for discussing expectations regarding the intervention's potential and limitations.

In summary the following concerns were expressed:

- Need for qualified and regulated practitioners
- Readiness of service user
- Is it a safe method?
- Are support systems in place
- Consideration of Safeguarding

Steps required to trial SymfoS:

It was requested by some organisations that there was the need for clarification of the SymfoS logic, epistemology, origin and the theoretical base that underpins the method. This could also include consideration regarding a statement about the benefits and value of SymfoS. A number of respondents highlighted the need for the provision of empirical findings and research into the effectiveness of the method to underpin it as an evidence-based intervention i.e. what issues could it be used for? What value could it give to the service user and service provider?. This is particularly relevant within the context of time pressures and service resource constraints (both human and financial) which means that commissioning managers would need to be convinced that SymfoS would be worth investing in. It would be helpful to have an understanding of which client groups the method has been used, experiencing which issues and with what effectiveness. This could include identification of definite outcomes from previous pilot groups. Alongside this, evaluations and feedback from SymfoS practitioners and testimonies from young people (both clients and peers) would contribute to an appreciation of the method's impact.

However, for some projects which are receptive to the use of creative interventions, the provision of empirical findings was not a pre-requisite to being involved in a pilot project.

Require a clear sense of the SymfoS programme, comprehensive training, practitioners' role and the purpose of the group. Clarification of whether the process is over a number of sessions and the length of the sessions. The implication for budgets in terms of the investment required in human, material and financial resources.

It would be beneficial for service providers to gain a clear understanding of and more information about the SymfoS method through pictorial and audio-visual examples demonstrating the intervention being used with a client and through using case studies. This would be most illustrative and informative if the audio-visual examples were "service-specific" e.g. examples of working with hard to engage young people with the relevant practitioners. Clear guidelines of how SymfoS works and how it could be adapted for specific client groups including case studies would be beneficial.

It was also requested that focus groups and training provision in SymfoS needs to enable a discussion between service-specific practitioners – particularly those working with young people with behavioural issues that may find it initially harder to engage in the process and have a higher potential to experience difficult situations.

Clarification would be needed that there is no duplication of this intervention by another provider.

A positive suggestion was to involve project alumni who are mentors trialling SymfoS as practitioners but also as clients/peer-buddy system members. Also, evaluation – during the trial there needs to be a point at which there is evaluation and reflection on the effectiveness of the SymfoS process.

Practical steps to trialling the process would require permission from managers responsible for commissioning services and then authorisation by senior managers. Some organisations have specific processes if there is a cost implication which can mean activating a competitive process through inviting applications to tender for contracts.

There is a need for determining and establishing its ethical regulation and governance framework – is it safe to use? Which steps are put in place to insure a supportive environment? First trial SymfoS with young people who have a supportive system around them. If not then restrict the methodology to careers guidance only rather than include its therapeutic derivative.

In summary, the steps required to trial SymfoS include:

- Clarification of theoretical origins and SymfoS logic
- Empirical findings regarding the method's efficacy
- Statement of value and benefits to clients and services, including testimonies
- Specify SymfoS practitioner training programme
- Clarification of SymfoS process and duration of sessions
- Audio-visual examples of SymfoS method – including service-specific examples
- Service-specific (disabled young people, young offenders, etc.) focus groups and training
- Mid-point evaluation during trialling of SymfoS
- Authorisation by relevant managers
- Clarification that SymfoS is a safe intervention

Section 6 Challenges and opportunities for Higher Education, Further Education and training organizations when seeking to implement SymfoS

Introduction

This section focuses on analysis of interviews undertaken with decision makers from universities, colleges and training providers who are involved in educating and training students and practitioners who currently work or intend to work in the youth welfare sector ("Primary Target Group 2" SymfoS Erasmus Plus bid, page 32).

Further Education colleges, Higher Education Institutions and independent trainers and organisations were contacted regarding the use of symbol work in their training programmes and qualification frameworks. They were asked the following:

Universities

It must be noted that with regard to practitioners gaining a qualification in the use of interventions such as SymfoS (e.g. Motivational Interviewing, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, and Brief Solution Focused Therapy), in-depth training programmes are provided by private consultants and companies who are contracted by service providers to provide bespoke training for their staff. Higher Education institutions offering courses validated to provide a professional qualification within the youth welfare sector (Youth Work, Social Work, etc.), invariably are restricted to providing information and knowledge about the intervention rather than a qualification in the intervention's use.

Suzanne Sheldon (Head of School of Health and Social Care at the University of Gloucestershire), suggested that information about the existence of SymfoS and the use of symbol work as an intervention could be embedded at levels 4 and 5 into a Cert HE apprenticeship framework for Working with Children, Young People and Families, or could be incorporated into the Social Work qualification within the 2019/20 academic year. This however, would be on the basis of being information about the SymfoS intervention, its underpinning theory and logic rather than a complete training programme which would lead to a qualification.

Lyn Boyd (University of Huddersfield) stated that the institution would require higher levels of information and detail about the process, application and practice. She stated that a better understanding of what is meant by physical symbols, with evidence of its use through research or real examples and case studies. She was interested in critiques of its use and the theories behind it so that she could identify its intended use and would need to see how its theory and practice related to other interventions already being used.

After the research into the theory and practice of symbol work, Lyn would explore whether it was a practice-based technique and would then look for the most relevant skilled based module. For instance, depending upon the theoretical substance to the work with symbols, Lyn suggested that the information given so far pointed towards a place within a Reflective Practice module on a Youth Work programme.

Training providers

For Symbol Work to be incorporated into training programmes it was suggested that a robust knowledge base with empirical evidence would be required. Jean Arnold (Workforce Development Officer at Dorset County Council) stated that much more information was needed before symbol work could be brought into any training. She felt that the information given so far does not illustrate a clear enough picture of what symbol work is and how it could be used in a youth work context.

Ruth Rickman-Williams, West Midlands Regional Youth Work Development Officer stated that she had heard that symbols can be used to enable young people to express themselves, helping them to 'tell their stories'. She went on to say that she had used symbols around building a picture rather than the signs themselves, and felt that the use of physical objects would be an interesting area to explore in the context of youth work.

Gill Millar, independent trainer, suggested that it could be utilised within a Training Unit exploring Communication Skills at Level 2 or 3, especially exploring barriers to communication and how one could work with people of all ages on this aspect.

It was suggested by a few respondents that within a Youth and Community Work course, at any level, this type of skill or tool could be useful when exploring methods of working with young people to talk about difficult subjects or uncomfortable issues. It was stated that 'it might help lighten the mood a bit.'

In summary:

- Symbol work was received positively;
- No education or training providers offer symbol work in their programmes;
- Qualifications for skills-based interventions are provided by private training companies and consultants;
- Universities can include information and knowledge about SymfoS in their professionally validated courses;
- Robust empirical evidence regarding SymfoS' efficacy and theoretical underpinning is required by education and training providers; and
- Training providers identify SymfoS could be used at level 2 and 3 on a Communications module.

Opportunities and Challenges
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• SymfoS was received positively;• No education or training providers offer symbol work in their programmes;• It is possible for universities to include information and knowledge about it in their professionally validated courses;• Training providers identify it could be used at level 2 and 3 in a Communications module. <p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Qualifications for skills-based interventions are generally not provided by university courses for youth welfare practitioners but are instead delivered by private training companies and consultants;• Robust empirical evidence regarding its efficacy and theoretical underpinning is required by education and training providers

Section 7 - What could be the national/regional/local strategic routes through which SymfoS could be quickly disseminated?

Introduction

This section explores whether there are any national bodies or specific professional groups which would aid the adoption of SymfoS. A summary of the approach of each country and the identification of specific organisations is presented in the following table.

Strategy
<p>To assist with the dissemination and promotion of SymfoS contact could be made with the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Youth Work - Nationally youth work organisations to include the National Youth Agency, UK Youth, Youth for Christ, Prince's Trust• Social Work – British Association of Social Workers (BASW) – this national organization supports and develops the careers of social workers;• Prisons and Probation - National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO) – this is a social justice charity providing services in education, housing, substance misuse treatment, health and reduction of re-offending;• Youth offending – Beyond Youth Custody – this is a national programme with promotes best practice in resettlement of young people leaving custody;• Lecturers - Contact through the Professional Association of lecturers in Youth and Community Work (TAG)• Counselling and psychotherapy - British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)• Careers guidance – Career Development Institute (CDI) – this professional body promotes careers guidance skills and knowledge, integrates current research and theory into practice, and informs practitioners of sectoral developments. Also, National Careers Service (NCS) – provide information, advice and guidance on education, training and employment

Appendix

1 IO1 Template for research

IO1 - Research paper and national Adoption Plans for Implementing Symbol Work		
What?	Size?	When by?
<p>The end produce will be documents appropriately 7-8000 words in length which summarizes the situation in your own country in relation to current youth practice and the use of symbols, the potential places where practitioners could be trained in the use of SymfoS and possible routes for the methodology to be more widely adopted.</p> <p>Please use the following sections to structure your review. Please make use of appendices.</p>		<p>All individual partners to complete the report and have an English translated copy 28/2/19</p>
Introduction regarding the aims of your report	200 words	
<p>Section 1 – Literature Search</p> <p>Literature research on the use of interventions with young people (aged 15-25 years) which use symbols or physical objects as part of the process.</p> <p>What interventions are mentioned, how are they used, what are the findings?</p>	500-1000 words	
<p>Section 2 - Practical Research</p> <p>Undertake research with organizations that currently or who could use symbols or physical objects as part of an intervention process.</p> <p>Ensure you follow the ethical research process</p> <p>Undertake interviews with service providers – we need 10 different opinions (x2 focus groups of 5 ideally or separate interviews).</p> <p>Summarize any findings which discuss current practices which use symbols or physical objects as part of the interview process</p>	500-1000 words	<p>End of January 2019</p> <p>Mid Feb 2019</p>
<p>Section 3 - Potential places for the SymfoS approach to be adopted</p> <p>Discuss the national, regional and local policies and legal requirements that seek to address working with disadvantaged young people</p> <p>Discuss the types of organisations that will deliver services to meet the needs of young people</p>	500-1000 words	
<p>Section 4 - Describe the routes that practitioners can take to get trained to work with young people in your country</p> <p>What is the training sector?</p> <p>How does training of practitioners working with young people happen?</p>	500-1000 words	

Where could symbol work fit?		
Where would symbol work fit in to courses provided by Further Education and Higher Education Institutions?		
Section 5 - Challenges and opportunities that such organizations and practitioners may face when implementing SymfoS		
Summarize any findings from the focus groups/interviews which discuss what the opportunities and challenges may be.	500-1000 words	
What would be the best approach to support individual organizations?		
Section 6 - Challenges and opportunities that training organizations and Universities may face when seeking to implement SymfoS		
What is required to be able to use symbols?	500-1000 words	
What proof/evidence would be required?		
How could SymfoS be incorporated as a method of intervention within the training sector and professional higher education courses?		
Section 7 - What could be the national/regional/local strategic routes through which SymfoS could be quickly disseminated?		
Are there any national bodies or specific professional groups which would aid the adoption of SymfoS?	500-1000 words	
Conclusion	200 words	
Summarize your report		
Once completed send the report to the University of Gloucestershire who will then write up the final report - UoG to provide a short summary of each country's findings. Total length will be between 15-20 pages not including appendices. Partner reports to be included in the appendices.		Completed 31st March 2019

1.2 Definitions of “Creative arts therapies/Expressive therapies”

- *Art Therapy* is defined as the use of art media, images, and the creative process and respects client responses to the created products as reflections of development, abilities, personality, interests, concerns, and conflicts. It is a therapeutic means of reconciling emotional conflicts, fostering self-awareness, developing social skills, managing behavior, solving problems, reducing anxiety, aiding reality orientation, and increasing self-esteem (American Art Therapy Association, 2007).
- *Music therapy* is the prescribed use of music to effect positive changes in the psychological, physical, cognitive, or social functioning of individuals with health or educational problems (American Music Therapy Association, 2007).
- *Drama therapy* is the systematic and intentional use of drama/ theatre processes, products, and associations to achieve the therapeutic goals of symptom relief, emotional and physical integration, and personal growth. It is an active approach that helps the client tell his or her story to solve a problem, achieve catharsis, extend the depth and breadth of his or her inner experience, understand the meaning of images, and strengthen his or her ability to observe personal roles while increasing flexibility between roles (National Association for Drama Therapy, 2007).

- Dance/movement therapy is based on the assumption that body and mind are interrelated and is defined as the psychotherapeutic use of movement as a process that furthers the emotional, cognitive, and physical integration of the individual. Dance/movement therapy effects changes in feelings, cognition, physical functioning, and behavior (American Dance Therapy Association, 2007).
- Poetry therapy and bibliotherapy are terms used synonymously to describe the intentional use of poetry and other forms of literature for healing and personal growth. • Play therapy is the systematic use of a theoretical model to establish an interpersonal process wherein trained play therapists use the therapeutic powers of play to help clients prevent or resolve psychosocial difficulties and achieve optimal growth and development (Landreth, 1991; Webb, 2007).
- Sandplay therapy is a creative form of psychotherapy that uses a sandbox and a large collection of miniatures to enable a client to explore the deeper layers of his or her psyche in a totally new format; by constructing a series of “sand pictures,” a client is helped to illustrate and integrate his or her psychological condition. • Integrative approaches involve two or more expressive therapies to foster awareness, encourage emotional growth, and enhance relationships with others. This approach distinguishes itself through combining modalities within a therapy session. Integrative approaches are based on a variety of orientations, including arts as therapy, arts psychotherapy, and the use of arts for traditional healing (Barba, Fuchs, & Knill, 1995; Estrella, 2005).

(Malchiodi, 2008:11))

1.3 Definitions – Metaphor and Analogy

To assist with an understanding of symbolic work with metaphor and analogy it is important to provide definitions.

Metaphor

Cambridge dictionary "An expression, often found in literature, that describes a person or object by referring to something that is considered to have similar characteristics to that person or object"

Geldard (2016:171) uses Meier and Davis (2011) definition of metaphor as “a figure of speech containing an implied comparison: it expresses one thing in terms of something else”.

Inkson (2015:20) adds “a metaphor is a figure of speech in which a point is made about one thing by substituting something else that demonstrates a particular quality of the first in a dramatic way. Thus instead of saying, ‘the soldier was strong and ferocious’ we might say, ‘the soldier was a lion’.

Fox (1989: 234) states metaphor is “the application of a word or expression that properly belongs to one context, in order to express meaning in a different context.”

Analogy

Cambridge dictionary “A comparison between things that have similar features, often used to help explain a principle or idea”

Oxford dictionary “A comparison between one thing and another, typically for the purpose of explanation or clarification.”

1.4. Inkson and Amundson – metaphors in careers guidance

1. *The Snapshot*: Have the person fully describe their metaphor. Look for concrete examples of how the metaphor is reflected in real life. Also, look for any contrary examples.
2. *Dynamics*: Examine the metaphor in depth. Some dynamics that you might want to explore include level of optimism, relationships, responsibility, sense of direction, cultural or social influences, and self-confidence.
3. *Perspectives of Others*: If other people were constructing the metaphor, how would it be the same or different? Also, what is the person's response to the perspectives of others?
4. *Time Line*: If the person looked back to an earlier time, what would the metaphor look like? If the view was more forward looking, how might the metaphor change with the passage of time?
5. *Changing Concepts*: What might the metaphor look like if one came at it from another conceptual framework? For example, if the metaphor uses a growth or organic image, how would it look if it were approached from the perspective of a journey?
6. *The Collective*: Each person constructs his or her own unique metaphoric images. What if the challenge was to also look at the metaphors of others and bring these images together to form a broader metaphor, that is, a collective perspective.

(Inkson and Amundson, 2002: 106)

2. 1 List of Organisations and Practitioners interviewed

- Faith-based charity working with young people who are at risk of, or who are experiencing exclusion from main stream schooling (Cheltenham) – interview with Operations' Manager ;
- Young people's charity providing a drop-in service offering information, advice, counselling and support services, and specialist mental health services to individuals experiencing severe emotional distress and early psychosis (Plymouth) – interviews with Service Manager and Mental Health Project Manager;
- Local branch of a national charity working with young people who are NEET (Gloucester) – interview with Team Leader;
- National charity focusing on young people's empowerment and working on future goals (London) – interview with Youth Engagement Officer and Employment Project Leader;
- Local provision of a national charity working with young people with disabilities both physical and intellectual impairment (Totnes) - interviews with Service Manager and Employment Team Leader;
- Private sector managed provision of targeted services through multi-disciplinary teams to young people who are at risk of not making a successful transition into adulthood including young people in the care of the local authority, care leavers, and young offenders (Gloucestershire) – interviews with Youth Justice Team Manager, Assistant Team Manager, 11-25 Permanency Team manager, and NEET Case Responsible Officer;
- Local division of UK Government service for unemployed people (Gloucester) – interview with Work Coach Team Leader;
- Children and young people's bereavement charity (Cheltenham) – Interview with Senior Practitioner;
- A not-for-profit social enterprise providing careers support to young people (Exeter) – interview with Transitions manager;

- Social enterprise providing mentoring, youth projects and alternative education provision (Gloucestershire) – interview with Careers/Employability Manager;
- Youth Offending team working with 10-18 year olds to prevent offending and stop young people going into custody – interview with Operational Manager (Medway)
- Local office of National charity working with young offenders with the aim of reducing re-offending and encouraging rehabilitation to employment (Butleigh, Somerset) – interview with Training and Development Manager; and
- Independent specialist further education college for people with physical disabilities, acquired brain injuries and associated learning difficulties (Cheltenham) – interviews with Occupational Therapy Team Manager and Lead Information Advice and Guidance Officer.
- Alternative education provision working with permanently excluded pupils from mainstream schools for behavior issues, school refusal and for other pupils who – because of illness or other reasons – would not receive suitable education without such arrangements being made (Cheltenham) interview with Head of key stage 3 and 4

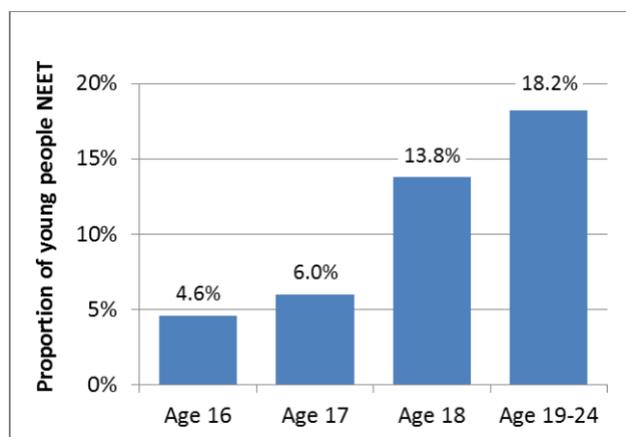
Supplementary interviews were undertaken with:

- Balint Group Leader and Art Psychotherapist; and
- Portfolio GP & Freelance Medical Educator and Balint Leadership trainer

2.2 Structured interview Questions for Section 2 and 5

1. Name of the organisation and practitioner:
Background of organization? What work is it involved in? What are the aims?
2. Any knowledge of use of physical symbols? –
3. Please describe the process a young person may go through when your organisation works with a young person who needs additional support.
 - a. How do you assess the needs of a young person?
 - b. What interventions do you commonly use, as a result of assessing them?
4. When undertaking assessment and planning work with young people regarding their futures, do you use any other methods apart from dialogue (question and answer) and form completion?
5. Please describe the intervention process that is used to help the young person reflect on their current situation and set goals for future positive outcomes.
6. Within this process, what tools are used and how are they used?
7. Why do you use the process and the tools?
8. Given what you have heard about Symfos, what would be the opportunities and challenges/barriers that such an intervention might have, if applied in your organisation and practice?
9. What steps would need to be taken to trial the SymfoS approach?

3.1 NEET statistics



Source: SFR 16/2013 (cited in DWP and DfE, 2013:2)

3.2 Positive for Youth

The policy identifies that all elements in society contribute to the position of young people through the following roles:

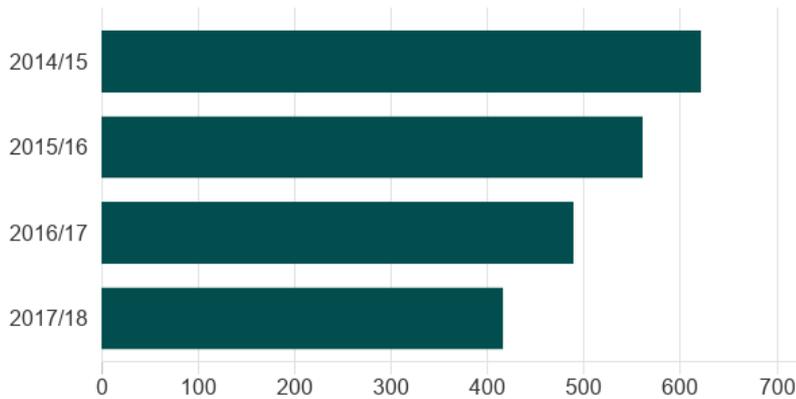
- **Young people** – with the emphasis on them taking responsibility, using available opportunities, and articulating concerns.
- **Parents, carers and families** – through nurturing young people to adulthood.
- **Other adults** – providing an interest and being positive role models.
- **The media** – taking responsibility for the impact of the images of young people that they promote.
- **Businesses** – building partnerships through which to give time, expertise, and money to projects to support young people.
- **Teachers** – helping young people aspire and attain, and working in partnership with other services to address early any barriers they face.
- **Youth workers** – supporting young people’s personal and social development and helping them develop strong aspirations.
- **Other professionals** – providing specialist early help to young people to address issues and stop them escalating and causing harm.
- **Local authorities** – having the primary responsibility for improving young people’s outcomes and commissioning appropriate services.
- **Other commissioners** – having a responsibility for specific outcomes such as crime and health outcomes for young people.
- **Government** – promoting new ways of working, facilitating reform, and monitoring overall progress.

(DfE, 2012:3)

3.3

Youth service funding

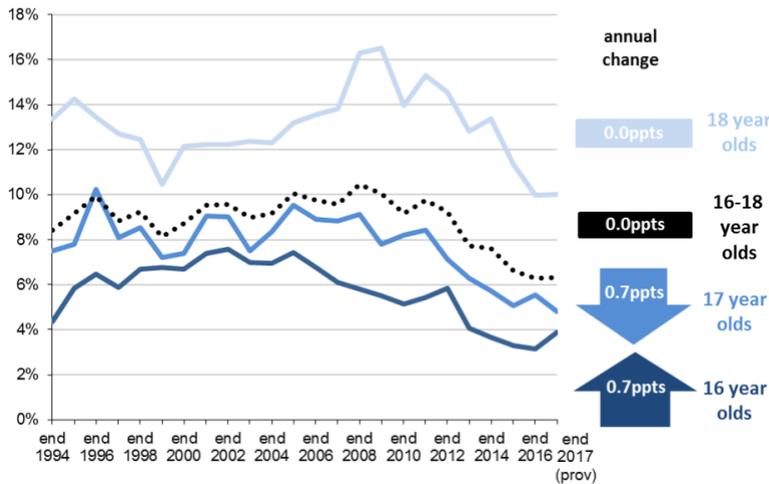
Annual spend in £m by local authorities in England



Source: Department for Education (Table SR48 2017)



Proportion NEET by academic age, England



Department for Education (2018) *Participation in education, training and Employment by 16-18 year olds in England: End 2017* DfE

3.4 Description of Youth Work as specified by the National Youth Agency (NYA)

NYA is committed to youth work. Youth work is complex series of professional principles, practices and methods which we often describe as the science of enabling young people to believe in themselves and build positive futures.

Youth work takes a holistic approach with young people. It starts where they are at in terms of developmental or physical location (open access or detached/street work) – the relationship between young people at youth worker is entirely voluntary – youth work often only works because

of the voluntary relationship. Many professionals work with young people, but principally, only in youth work is it the choice of the young person to engage with the professional.

Youth workers usually work with young people aged between 11 and 25 years, although with adolescence starting younger in the modern age, the NYA recognised youth work from ages 8-25. Their work seeks to promote young people's personal and social development and enable them to have a voice, influence and place in their communities and society as a whole. It builds resilience and character and gives young people the confidence and life skills they need to live, learn, work and achieve. This approach is at the heart of all of our work.

Youth work offers young people safe spaces to explore their identity, experience decision-making, increase their confidence, develop inter-personal skills and think through the consequences of their actions. This leads to better informed choices, changes in activity and improved outcomes for young people.

<https://nya.org.uk/careers-youth-work/what-is-youth-work/>

3.5 Summary of the statement of principles of ethical conduct for youth work Ethical principles

Youth workers have a commitment to:

1. Treat young people with respect, valuing each individual and avoiding negative discrimination.
2. Respect and promote young people's rights to make their own decisions and choices, unless the welfare or legitimate interests of themselves or others are seriously threatened.
3. Promote and ensure the welfare and safety of young people, while permitting them to learn through undertaking challenging educational activities.
4. Contribute towards the promotion of social justice for young people and in society generally, through encouraging respect for difference and diversity and challenging discrimination.

Professional principles Youth workers have a commitment to:

5. Recognise the boundaries between personal and professional life and be aware of the need to balance a caring and supportive relationship with young people with appropriate professional distance.
6. Recognise the need to be accountable to young people, their parents or guardians, colleagues, funders, wider society and others with a relevant interest in the work, and that these accountabilities may be in conflict.
7. Develop and maintain the required skills and competence to do the job.
8. Work for conditions in employing agencies where these principles are discussed, evaluated and upheld.

National Youth Agency (2004) *Ethical Conduct in Youth Work* Leicester: NYA

http://www.nya.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Ethical_conduct_in_Youth-Work.pdf

3.6 LS1 YW00 National Occupational Standards Youth Work Values

The value base of youth work
1. Young people choose to be involved, not least because they want to relax, meet friends, make new relationships, to have fun and find support.
2. The work starts where young people are in relation to their own values, views and principles, as well as their own personal and social space.
3. It seeks to go beyond where young people start, to widen their horizons, promote participation and invite social commitment, in particular by encouraging them to be critical and creative in their responses to their experience and the world around them.
4. It treats young people with respect, valuing each individual and their differences and promoting the acceptance and understanding of others, whilst challenging oppressive behaviour and ideas.
5. It respects and values individual difference by supporting and strengthening young people's belief in themselves, and their capacity to grow and to change through a supportive group environment
6. It recognises respects and is actively responsive to the wider networks of peers, communities, families and cultures which are important to young people, and through these networks seeks to help young people to achieve stronger relationships and collective identities, through the promotion of inclusivity.
7. It works in partnership with young people and other agencies which contribute to young people's social, educational and personal development
8. It recognises the young person as a partner in a learning process, complementing formal education, promoting their access to learning opportunities which enable them to fulfil their potential
9. It is concerned with how young people feel and not just with what they know and can do.
10. It is concerned with facilitating and empowering the voice of young people, encouraging and enabling them to influence the environment in which they live.
11. It safeguards the welfare of young people and provides them with a safe environment in which to explore their values, beliefs, ideas and issues

<http://www.nya.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/National-Occupation-Standards-for-Youth-Work.pdf>

National Occupational Standards (2008) *National Occupational Standards for Youth Work*
London: Lifelong Learning UK – available at

http://www.youthworkessentials.org/media/2859/national_occupational_standards_for_youth_work.pdf

4.1 Careers Development Institute (CDI) Code of Ethics

The CDI also have a Code of Ethics that determines the boundaries and working practice of career guidance professionals and a number of elements would benefit from attention when considering the integration of SymfoS methodology into working practice. The Code of Ethics includes:

1. Accessibility
2. Accountability
3. Autonomy
4. Competence
5. Confidentiality
6. Continuous Professional Development
7. Duty of Care – to Clients, Colleagues, Organisations and Self
8. Equality
9. Impartiality
10. Transparency
11. Trustworthiness

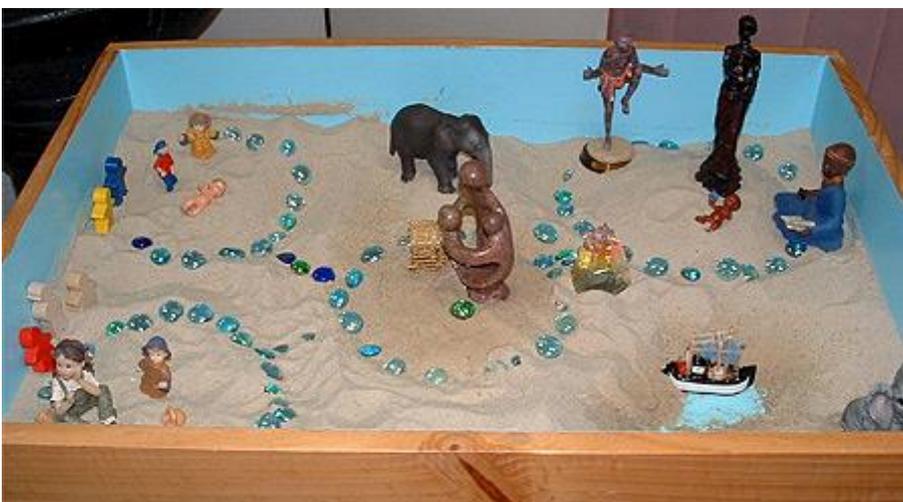
https://www.thecdi.net/write/Documents/Code_of_Ethics_update_2018-web.pdf

5. Examples of Physical and Pictorial Symbol use

Physical objects –

Youth Offending Team

5.1. Use of **Sand Play** – this was used by the Youth Offending Team interviewed as an intervention and method of engagement with regard to work aimed at reducing offending and criminalisation. The use of Sand Play with the young people was experienced as problematic due to issues with clients struggling to relate to both the process and the practitioner. With regard to the process of Sand Play, service users found it uncomfortable to participate in, confusing, infantile, and repeatedly questioned “what is this?” Additionally, there were difficulties with rapport development between the service users and the Sand Play therapist who was perceived as being “posh” and originating from a different socio-economic group.



<http://www.sandplaytherapist.com/>



5.2. The use of **buttons** from clothing, chosen from a selection of different buttons in a glass jar was identified as being used to describe the young person's life on a time line – this is an effective and positive mode of engagement as the young person is doing something active rather than talking about a subject that could be difficult. Also, the use of buttons to create a composition about the young person's family, social network and people who are important to them (it is thought that this technique originates from GMAP providing AIM training about sexual offending).

Therapeutic intervention project working with those with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) and early intervention for psychosis

5.3. Use of **buttons** and stones as a representation of how the individual is feeling. BPD is “characterized by a pervasive pattern of difficulties with emotion regulation and impulse control, and instability both in relationships and in selfimage” (Bateman & Fonagey, 2010:11). Those experiencing BPD struggle with the concept of mentalization which is defined by Bateman & Fonagey (2010:11) as “the process by which we make sense of each other and ourselves, implicitly and explicitly, in terms of subjective states and mental processes.” Howe (2011:29/30) supports this definition by stating that mentalization is the “capacity to understand how one's own and other people's mental states affect behaviour”. : The following treatments can be used for those with BPD - Mentalization Based Treatment (MBT), which aims to assist the individual's stabilization of both the individual's emotional expression and sense of self; and Dialectical Behaviour Therapy to enable the management of difficult emotions through the process of experience, recognition and acceptance of emotional states (Mind, 2019). With this in mind, the use of choosing buttons or stones to represent affective states contributes to interventions for those who struggle with mentalization. Furthermore, objects, such as buttons and stones can be used to represent people that the individual knows. These are arranged to assist with relationship mapping and developing an understanding of social inter-relationships.

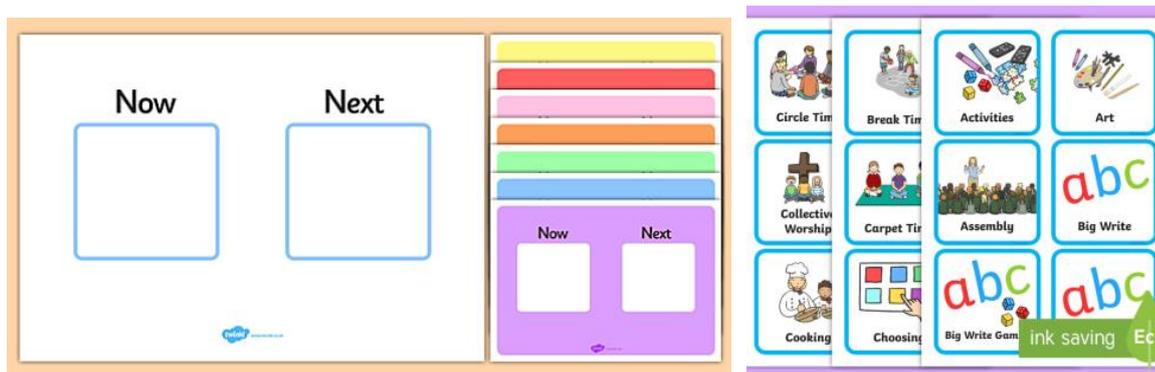
Prince's Trust

5.4 Stones and Driftwood – this is a creative evaluation exercise to encourage participants in youth work activities to create a composition to symbolically represent how they felt following a group residential. This process mirrors elements of the SymfoS technique in that the youth worker leaves the individual group members alone to work on their compositions and returns later to receive a presentation (Stage 1) by the young person as to what the objects represent. This is also seen as a highly personal process whereby the objects take on a valuable representational meaning.



5b Pictorial symbols – There are numerous versions of pictorial symbols to assist young people with communication problems. These are often utilized by Speech and Language Team (SALT) practitioners.

5.10 “Now and Next boards” – pictorial symbols providing literal representation to the disabled student to assist with the transition to the next activity/stage at the school or college



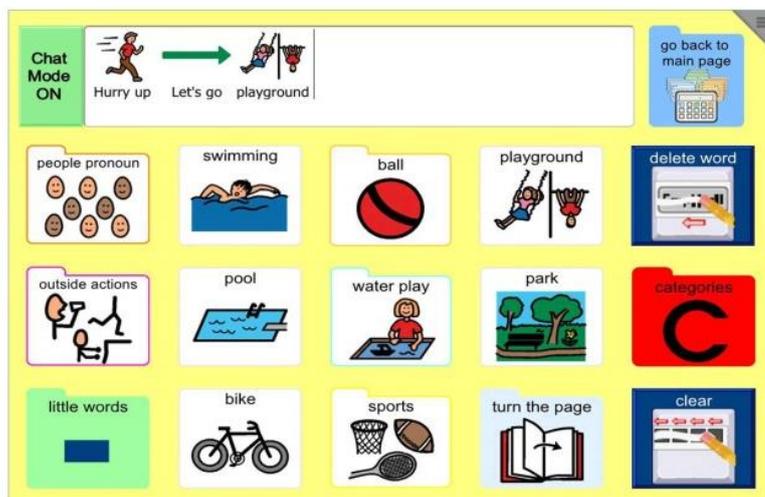
– <https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/t-s-111-now-next-visual-aid>

5.11 Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display (PODD)

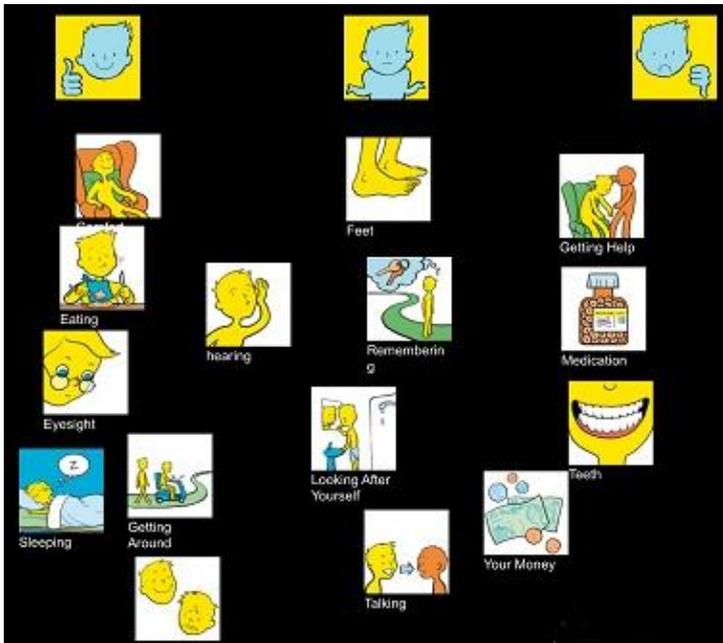
Symbols used with complex learning disabilities

<https://www.novita.org.au/equipment/podd-communication-books/>
originally created by Gayle Porter with the Cerebral Palsy Education Centre (CPEC) Victoria, Australia.

<https://www.tobiidynavox.com/en-US/software/content/PODD-for-Compass/?MarketPopupClicked=true>



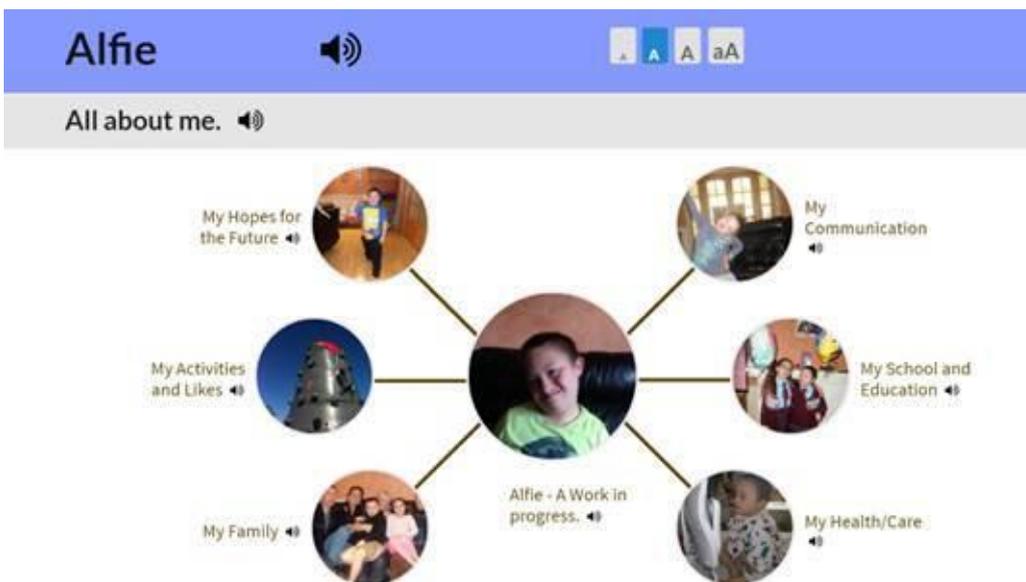
5.12 “Talking Mats” -



An intervention using picture symbols with people with communication difficulties, and those close to them, by increasing their capacity to communicate more effectively – can be used with a physical mat and pictorial cards or on a computer.

<https://www.talkingmats.com/>

5.13 RIX Wikis – this is an intervention developed by the University of East London used with those with an intellectual or learning disability to ensure the individuals needs, wants and aspirations of individuals are stated. This mirrors elements of the SymfoS “Basic Clearing Process” in that it uses a Mind-map arrangement (called a Wiki) which includes various domains of the individual’s life – e.g. hopes for the future, communication, school and education, health/care, family, activities and likes. (<https://rixresearchandmedia.org/>). Photographs, videos, symbols and documents are then uploaded onto the Wiki (<https://wiki.rixwiki.org/wandsworth-local-offer/home/pcp-template-clone-220/>).



(<https://rixresearchandmedia.org/rix/wikis/individuals-and-families/>)

5.14 Widgit – This is a literal pictorial symbol method to enhance communication for people who have difficulty with the written or spoken word and is used frequently with people with learning disabilities.

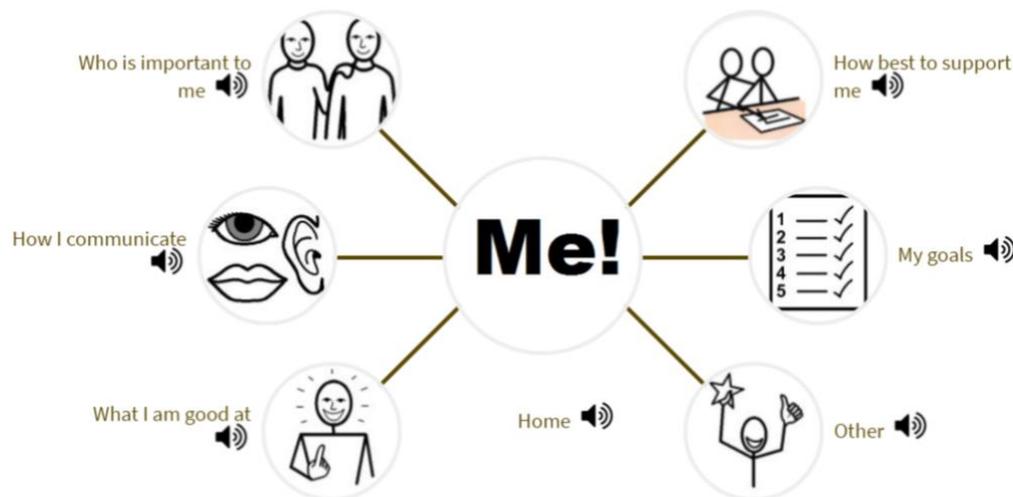


<https://www.widgit.com/symbolupdates/> and <https://www.widgit.com/resources/>

5.15 Widgit Action Planning Map – the Widgit methodology has been adapted by Careers South West for a mapping exercise when undertaking careers guidance work with young people who struggle with communication and cognitive processes. The Action Plan format (see appendix) resembles Symfo’s “Basic Clearing” with the following domains –

What’s important to me? My job ideas? What happens next?
 Home Things I like to do. College or 6th Form. School.
 Other examples below:

Person Centred Planning



<https://thrive.wandsworth.gov.uk/kb5/wandsworth/fsd/service.page?id=Xtd96nSCzcg>

5.16 Picture Communication Symbols (PSC) Mayer-Johnson



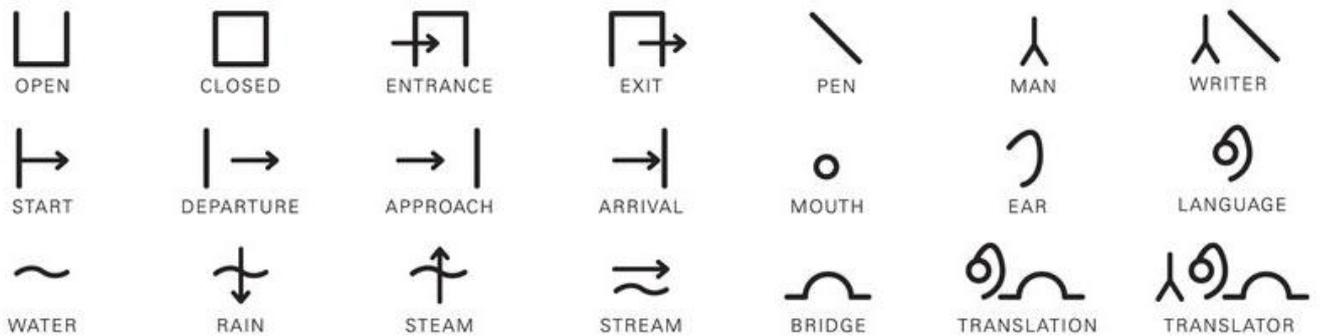
(<https://goboardmaker.com/products/pcs-high-contrast-vol1-cd-win-mac>)

5.17 Symbolstix



(<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/AAC-Story-Unit-At-the-park-Symbolstix-2093208>)

5.18 Blissymbols



(https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Blissymbols-Several-interesting-things-can-be-observed-by-looking-at-blissymbols-such_fig2_300005260)

5.19 Makaton



(https://www.makaton.org/shop/examples_computer_use)

5.20 Talking Cubes

A project interviewed that works with disabled young people provided information about an interesting multi-sensory resource that they use which employs Widgeits, written word and recorded verbal messages to explore the young person's interests and plans for the future. When a button on a face of the cube is pressed, a message regarding the corresponding subject is played



5.21 Mind Of My Own (MOMO)

MOMO is an on-line tool aimed at children and young people who use health, social care and education services to provide an opportunity to communicate with their key workers about elements of their life, opinions about the services that they receive and plan for the future. This is achieved through the use of pictorial symbols and texting.

What's good in your life right now?

Pick all the choices you want and add your own if you like.

 Where I live	 My school/ college	 Sport	 My friends
 My hobbies/ activities	 My family	 My pets	 A place I go
 Something I achieved	 My money	 My care plan	 My health
 My relationships	 My work		

How you feel right now
Pick all the feelings you're having right now and add your own.

 OK	 Calm	 Anxious	 Hopeful
 Confused	 Angry	 Excited	 Enthusiastic
 Unsure	 Unsafe	 Scared	 Ignored

any other feelings? +

What's good in your life right now?
Pick all the choices you want and add your own if you like.

5.22 Use of Directly Representational Symbols for Information Provision

Alcohol

It takes 1 hour for your body to get rid of 1 unit of alcohol

-  • 1 can of lager = 1 ½ units
-  • 1 small pub measure of spirits like gin, vodka or whisky= 1 unit
-  • 1 bottle of alcopops = 1 ½ units
-  • 35cl (small bottle) of spirits like vodka, gin or whisky =13 units
-  • 70cl (medium bottle)= 26 units

The Law
You have to be 18 to buy alcohol

How can it affect you?

- It can make you do things you wouldn't normally do e.g. have sex without condoms
- Can make you feel dizzy, sleepy or sick
- Takes longer for you to react when something goes wrong
- You might not be able to walk in a straight line
- You might become very happy, aggressive or very upset.

(Speech and Language Therapy, Gloucestershire Youth Support Team)

5c Generic Youth Work

5.23 Emojis - Project service evaluation methods frequently cited as using Smiley Face and Emojis – These are used in a variety of contexts.

Do I get it?



Yes



Sort of



No. Help!

Learner comment (optional):

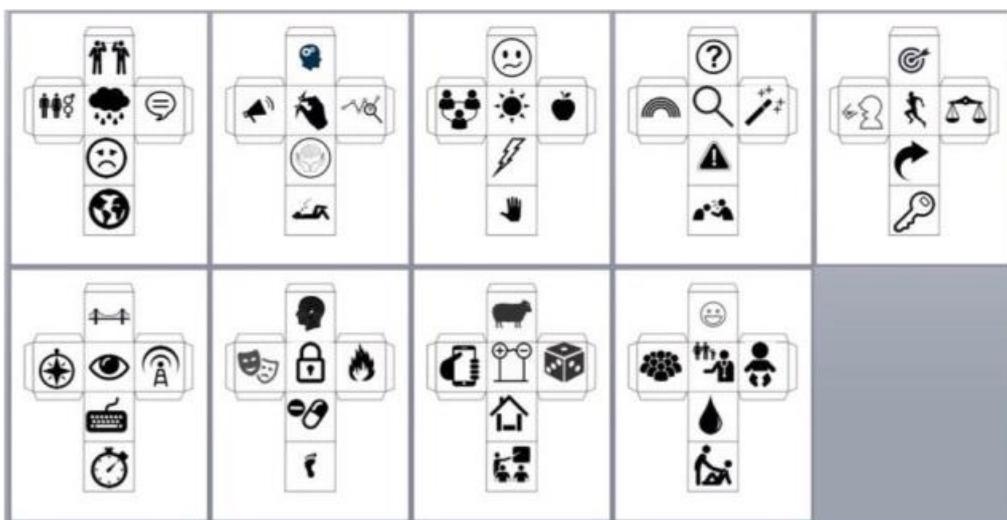
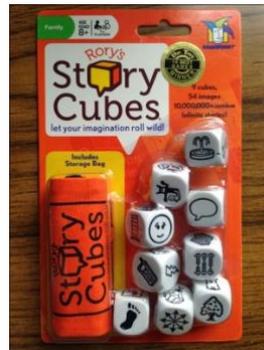
How can we help?

<https://www.tes.com/teaching-resource/lesson-self-evaluation-sheet-emoji-ofsted-approved-grade-1-11666249>

5.24 “Story Cubes”

Story cubes are a collection of dice with different icons on each face. The participants roll the dice and are invited to “think on their feet” and create a story from the presenting icons. They can be used as an Icebreaker and an intervention to articulate young people’s feelings and emotions.

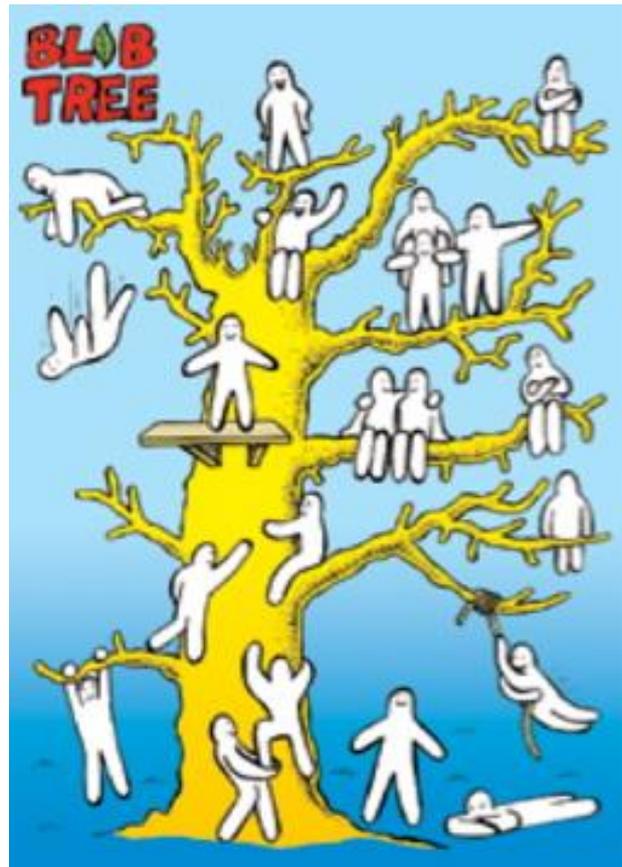
<https://www.storycubes.com/>



<https://slowchatthehealth.com/2017/02/14/story-cubes/>

5.25 Blob Trees –

This method is used very frequently with young people by youth workers to explore and articulate young people's feelings following an activity or part of a structured programme- devised by Pip Wilson. Young people are invited to circle or identify the characters that relate to or who represent how they are feeling.



http://www.pipwilson.com/2004/11/blob-tree_110181146915869209.html

5.26 The Hand of Reflection – A technique to use with young people to assist with evaluation and reflection following participation in activities. Participants are given a piece of paper and access to pens. Ask participants to draw around their hand, and record the following on the fingers of their hand:



- Thumb – something good, something they enjoyed
- Index finger – something they would like to point out (could be good or bad) Middle finger – something bad, something they did not enjoy
- Ring finger – something they will **treasure from the activity/event**
- Little finger – something little they want to add (could be good or bad)
- Palm – A prediction for the future - What they are going to do next?

(<https://woodcraft.org.uk/sites/default/files/Evaluation%20and%20reflection%20activities.pdf>) as part of evaluating participation in a collaborative project between Woodland Folk and the National Citizen's Service

5.27 Vision boards – young people are invited to create a composition which can be a collage of words and pictures to represent goals and aspirations on a large canvass regarding who and what inspires them. Within the context of youth work practice, this process is used as a point of group discussion to promote exploration and awareness through discussion rather than being an endorsement of the process of “visualization” and commitment to the “Law of attraction” which requires scrutiny and analytical criticism



<https://www.makeavisionboard.com/what-is-a-vision-board/>

5.28 Mind maps – Items are selected from the news and current affairs – articles, photos – to create a montage which is central to young people making a presentation to the other young people and corporate volunteers. This is a method to articulate and assist verbalisation regarding goals and the future in a creative and free ranging manner. By presenting back to the group it reinforces the concept that everyone is in the same situation, joining in, opening up, developing trust and relationship building. By sharing what the young people care about this can provide a positive reinforcement regarding their aspirations.

5.29 Family Island

Create an island to represent individual family members out of scrap material to illustrate what makes them a family – then invite the family members to visit each island, giving permission to ask questions and invoke rituals (welcomes, handshakes etc.).

5.32 Feelings Flashcards – these cards are used by practitioners to explore feelings and develop emotional awareness – they have a feeling on one side with its diametric version on the reverse of the card - <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Todd-Parr-Feelings-Flash-Cards/dp/0811871452>



5.33 Mood Cards – These cards are again used by the practitioner with the young person to explore emotions and develop mindfulness. They have a positive affirmation on the reverse



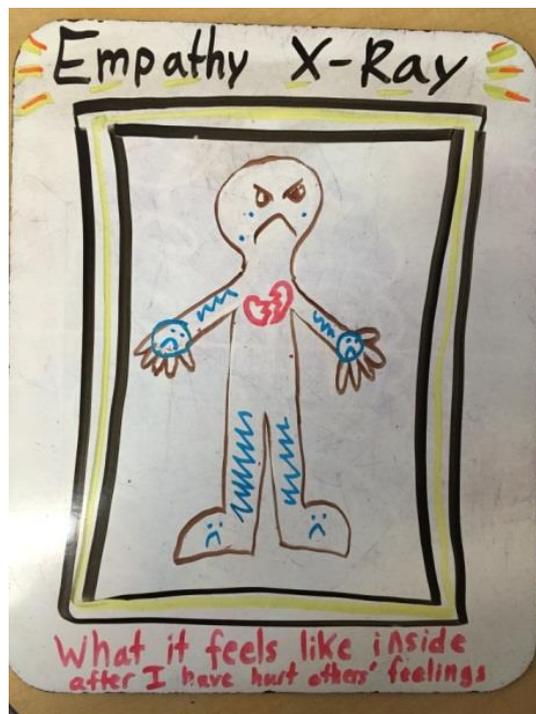
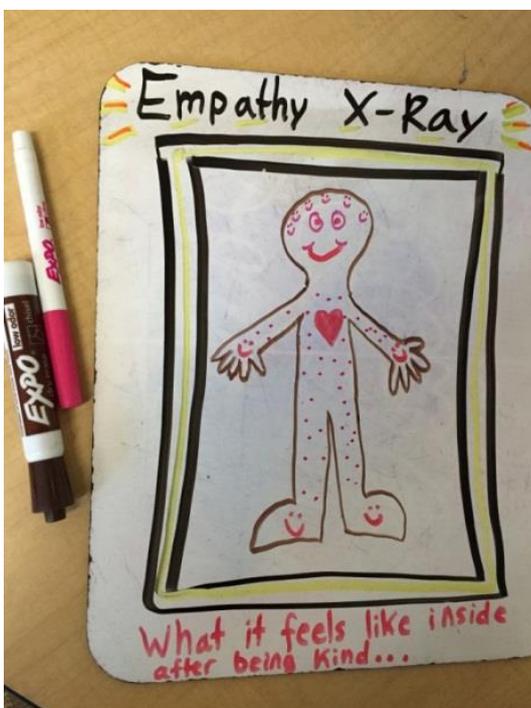
<http://www.themoodcards.com/>

5.34 Inside/Out Film Characters – these are used by the practitioner to have discussions about characters that represent emotional states to encourage emotional self-awareness and expression and exploration, and “unblock” feelings.



<https://www.thehelpfulcounselor.com/20-counseling-themes-in-inside-out/>

5.35 Feelings X-rays – this is akin to Empathy X-ray exercises whereby an outline of the body is drawn to create a body-map. The child or young person draws images or places physical items on the body-map which represents feelings and how different places on their body reacts and responds accordingly.



<https://kristinamarcelli.wordpress.com/2016/02/18/empathy-x-ray-helping-children-notice-the-positive-physical-response-to-connection/>

Queen/King of the island. As you draw a gate at the end of the bridge, state that the young person owns the key to the gate and only they have the power to decide when this gate can be opened (Draw a key on the young person's island). Next draw waves all around the islands. In the waves draw sharks' fins. Put more sharks around the bottom island, some around the island adjoining the child's kingdom, but leave one side of the child's island safe for swimming. Now hand over control to the young person. Explain that they have total control over who goes on to the islands. Ask what would make it the perfect place to live, what would be on the island. Ask which people, places or things would they want on their island ALL THE TIME. They can draw or write these in. Next ask what people or places would be on the next island. State that these are people or places that they would like to see occasionally. The young person is in control and they have the key so they can decide when to see these people or places and can decide when they have had enough. Important information is, "Are these people allowed onto the young person's island or does the young person cross the bridge to visit them?" Ask the young person to draw or write them in. Next, state the young person can then place people or places they hate in one of two places. They can place them in the bottom island (This is a totally secure island. People cannot travel off this island, there are no boats or planes or any means of transportation, and freezing cold shark infested waters surround it). However, they can also choose other people or places to take their chances in shark-infested waters. If the young person draws and completes the task you can ask questions as desired.

<http://www.durham-lscb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/29/2016/06/1415623335-Queen-or-King-of-the-Island-Exercise.pdf>

5d Youth Offending Team, Careers Guidance, Participatory Evaluation

Youth Offending Team

5.42 Use of metaphor and analogy – this can take the form of any creative medium such as sharing the viewing of a favoured feature film with the practitioner, creating a montage, using the project's garden as a special metaphor. This has been found to be a very effective intervention as it provides a young person-centred approach which enables the young person to articulate their goals and provides the professional with an insight into the young person's world. This is in stark contrast to conventional process driven assessment and planning form completion which is often perceived as alienating the young person.

Examples of such work could be a young person and practitioner watching a film together e.g. Rocky



The steps that Rocky runs up become a metaphor for the steps the young person wants to make. The “triumph” stance of Rocky representing what they young person wants to achieve.

Careers

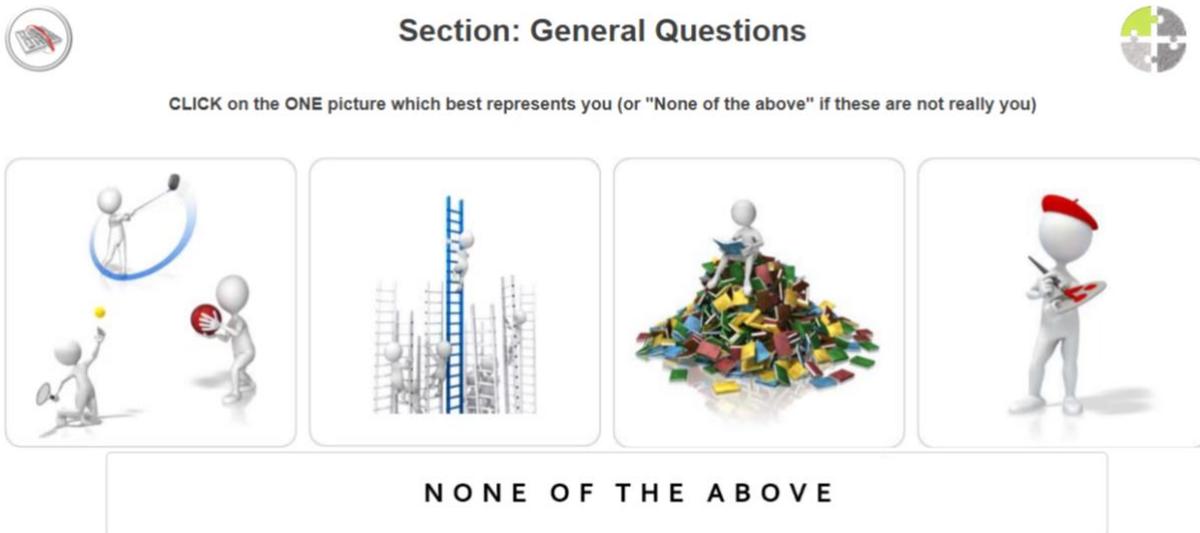
a. Career Navigator Road Map



<http://creativecareercoaching.org/product/career-navigator/>

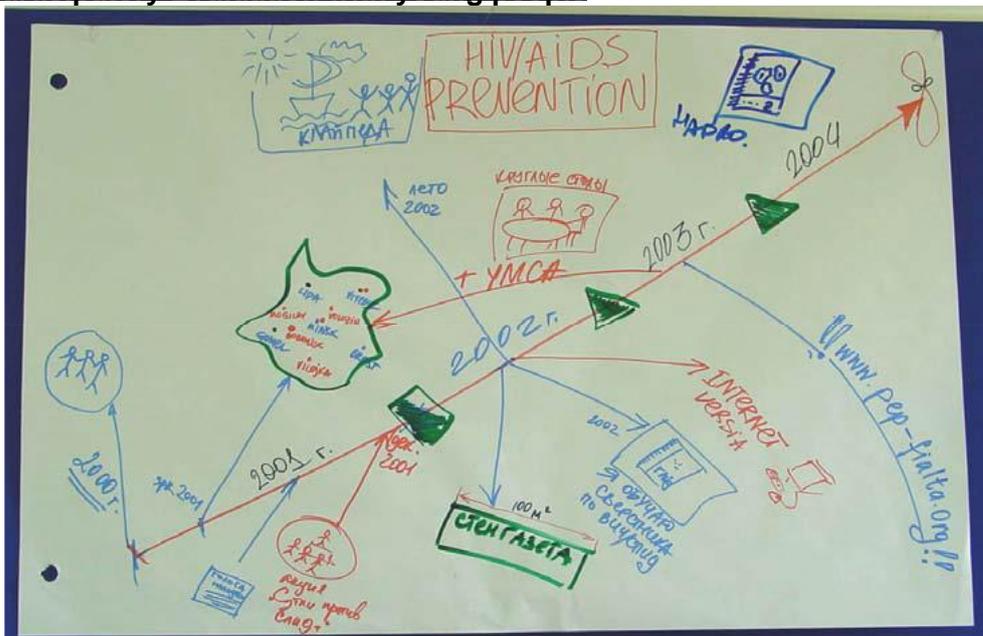
Careers Guidance Symbol Use

5.44 This is a feature of the '**Spartan Test**' created by SACU. This asks participants to repeatedly choose from a selection of 4 images per page the picture that best represents them and then matches the responses to a range of options in education and work for further exploration. An example is provided below.



(https://sacu-student.com/?page_id=2850)

5.45 Participatory Evaluation with young people



(Gawler, 2005: 22)

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<http://www.beyondyouthcustody.net/wp-content/uploads/Engaging-young-people-in-resettlement-a-practitioners-guide.pdf>

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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/182022/DFE-RR065.pdf What works re-engaging young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)? Summary

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/214602/building-engagement-building-futures-summary.pdf Building Engagement, Building Futures: Our Strategy to Maximise the Participation of 16-24 Year Olds in Education, Training and Work Executive Summary

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