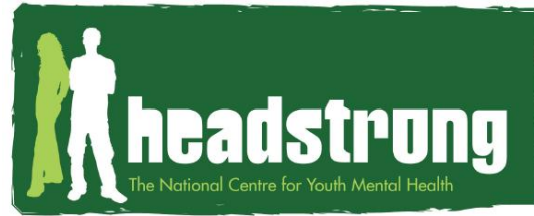


Appendix C

Youth Focus Group

Information Sheet, Informed Consent Procedures, and Protocol



Information Sheet

Title of Study: Community-Level Needs and Resource Assessment for Youth Mental Health

Date of Study: July 2007 to June 2010

My name is Dr. Robert Illback. I am a researcher from the School of Psychology, University College Dublin and Headstrong – The National Centre for Youth Mental Health (along with my colleagues). We invite you to take part in a research project (focus group) about the health and mental health needs and concerns of young people in _____. This information will be used to improve services and supports for young people in this community. The title of our research is Community-Based Needs and Resource Assessment for _____. These community studies are being carried out in 6-8 communities across Ireland during the time period of July, 2007 through June, 2010.

You have been chosen to participate in this evaluation research, along with a number of other young people in _____, because you are between the ages of 15 and 24, and you live, go to school, and/or work in _____. If you agree to participate in this research, you will be asked to take part in a small focus group (about 8-10 young people) which will last for approximately an hour. The focus group will be held at _____.

In the focus group, we will ask general questions about what it is like being a young person in Ireland, what stresses young people experience, and what support and assistance would be most helpful. We will ask that you not discuss personal issues or concerns of a confidential nature, but rather just talk about young people in general based on your experiences. We will also request that participants in the focus groups follow a "no gossip" rule, that is, that the topics and information discussed during the focus group not be discussed elsewhere by the participants. Sometimes, these kinds of discussions raise personal concerns for participants. If you want to talk with someone about a personal concern, we will insure that a qualified mental health professional is on hand to talk after the meeting. All information obtained from the discussion will be kept confidential. The only limit to confidentiality is that if someone tells us information that could indicate significant risk to an individual, we have a professional obligation to follow up.

With your permission, the focus group discussion will be audiotaped so that we can accurately portray the ideas and opinions expressed. We will then create a transcript of the discussion which will not include any personal identification and then we will destroy the audiotape, so that the ideas and opinions discussed are completely anonymous. We may ask to contact you by telephone or mail if we have any follow-up questions after the discussion. All information obtained from you during the evaluation research will be kept confidential. Transcripts and notes about the research will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in our offices. Identifying information about you will not be used in any reports of the research. After this research is completed, we will save the transcripts and notes for the purpose of future research for a period of five years. The same level of confidentiality guaranteed in this research will apply to the storage and use of the materials.

We will provide you with a summary of our analysis for your comments and reactions.

Your participation in this evaluation research is completely voluntary. You are free to refuse to take part at any time, without giving a reason. You may refuse to answer any questions and may stop taking part in the study at any time without disadvantage. You will not be affected by your participation or non-participation in the study in any way.

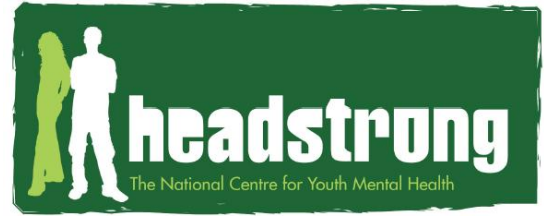
Please take time to consider whether you want to take part in this evaluation research or not.

If you have any questions about the research, please telephone me, Dr. Robert Illback, at 01 7168725 or contact me by e-mail: bob@headstrong.ie.

If you agree to take part in the research, please sign the form on the attached page and keep one copy of this agreement page for your future reference.

Reference HREC-

Date Received:



CONSENT FORM for under 18 years of age

Study: Community-Based Needs and Resource Assessment

Researcher: Dr. Robert Illback

DECLARATION

Young person's assent to participate:

I have read the information sheet and consent form and I agree to take part in this research. I have discussed my participation with my parent/guardian and I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time and that data from the research may be published in the future but that I cannot be identified.

Name of Young Person (in block letters) _____

Signature _____

Date / /

Parent or guardian's consent to allow young person to participate (also to be signed if young person is not 18 or older):

I have read the information sheet describing the above study and this consent form and have had time to consider whether to allow my child to participate. I have also discussed it with my child. I understand that his/her participation is voluntary (it is his or her choice) and that we are free to withdraw from the research at any time without disadvantage. I agree that my child may take part in this research.

I understand that, as part of this research project, audiotapes of my child's participation in the research will be made. Anonymous transcripts of the discussion will then be made and the tapes destroyed. I understand that my child's name will not be identified in any use of these records. I am voluntarily agreeing that transcripts of the audiotapes may be studied by the research team for use in the research project and used in scientific publications.

Name of Parent or Guardian (in block letters) _____

Signature _____

Date / /

**CONSENT FORM for over 18 years of age
Study: Community-Based Needs and Resource Assessment**

Researcher: Dr. Robert Illback

DECLARATION

Young person's consent to participate:

I have read the information sheet and consent form and I agree to take part in this research. I confirm that I am 18 years or older.

I have read the information sheet describing the above study and this consent form and have had time to consider whether to participate. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time without disadvantage. I agree take part in this research.

I understand that, as part of this research project, audiotapes of my participation in the research will be made. Anonymous transcripts of the discussion will then be made and the tapes destroyed. I understand that my name will not be identified in any use of these records. I am voluntarily agreeing that transcripts of the audiotapes may be studied by the research team for use in the research project and used in scientific publications.

Name of Young Person (in block letters)

Signature _____

Date / /

Youth Focus Group Protocol

General Guidelines

1. Try to get 3-5 different subgroups to get a broad representation of the community.
2. Avoid recruiting all of the participants from one clique. If possible, construct groups of young people that do not necessarily know one other well.
3. Get signed consent forms for all (parental permission for individuals under age 18)
4. Arrange chairs in a circular formation for participants, facilitator and notetaker.
5. Provide snacks. This is one of the best ice-breakers.
6. Warmly greet youth as they enter the room. Encourage them to take some snacks.
7. Inform participants where bathrooms are and encourage their use before focus group gets started.
8. Have nametags and black markers available for youth to write their first names only.
9. Ask participants to turn off cell phones.
10. Have the participants help to set the group rules. Discuss confidentiality (why it's important, how it's limited).
11. Stress that the discussion will not focus on them specifically, but rather young people in general. They should not disclose any personal information that would make them uncomfortable.
12. When asking questions, do not focus on the person (self-reporting), but rather ask generic questions in the abstract.
13. Make a distinction between the focus group and a counselling or therapy group. State the purpose clearly.
14. Provide some incentive (e.g., gift certificates) to the young person for participating in the focus group.
15. Keep the pace moving.
16. Avoid long discussions.
17. Ensure that no one dominates the discussion by directing questions to or asking for comments from specific people, rather than always asking for an open response and waiting for someone to respond.
18. Respect all answers and comments, and encourage all group members to respect one another, even if they disagree. It may be useful to have the group members set rules for the discussions that everyone can agree on.
19. Encourage members to keep their comments and answers brief so that everyone has a chance to join in.

20. Pay close attention to the person speaking. Keep side conversations to a minimum, so everyone can hear the person talking.
21. Encourage participants to listen carefully to each other, and consider the opinions of others before disagreeing with them.
22. Encourage listeners to try to find solutions to concerns and problems, rather than just listing their complaints.

Some Possible Opening Statements

Welcome and Facilitator Introduction

"Good morning/afternoon/evening and welcome to our discussion. Thanks for taking the time to join us to talk about the lives of young people. My name is _____ and assisting me is my co-worker, _____ who will be taking notes. We are working on a project to help improve services for young people in the community."

Background on Project and Purpose of Focus Group

"I'm going to tell you a little bit about what we are doing and what you can expect today. We have been talking to various professionals in Galway about the needs of young people and services for young people. We now want to talk to the real experts — yourselves — to find out what you think young people need, and how you would recommend changing the system. We are going to use what we learn from you today and from other discussions to design future programmes."

Expectations and guidelines

"Our focus group discussion is going to last about an hour. Focus groups are different from workshops or classes at school. Once we get started, I am going to ask you questions and you are going to share your thoughts and opinions. You will do most of the talking. I will be doing a lot of listening. Remember we want to learn from you."

"As we talk, you may feel a need to disclose something of a personal nature, but we ask that you not talk about yourself personally, but rather young people in general. We don't want to make this in any way uncomfortable for you. Again, please don't disclose any personal information because we can't guarantee that others will keep it confidential."

If the discussion today does raise some personal issues for you, please see one of us individually after the group and we can talk further."

"We will keep what you say confidential. The only exception is if you share something that leads us to believe you might harm yourself or someone else, we have a professional obligation to get help for you."

"To show our appreciation for what you teach us and for your time, we have _____ that we will give to each of you at the end of the session."

Participation

"I'll be asking you several questions about the experiences of young people over the next hour or so. I want you to know that there are no "right" or "wrong" answers, and it's okay to have a different opinion from other people in the group. It's really important for us to hear all the different points of view in the room. I want you to share your point of view, even if it is different from what others are saying, and I want you all to respect each others' opinions. Please don't make fun of what other people say or argue with them."

"I also don't want you to feel like you have to respond to me all the time. Feel free to talk to each other when discussing my questions. If you want to respond to something someone said, or if you want to agree or disagree, or give an example, you can do that, just be respectful. We want all people to have a chance to share ideas. We may need to interrupt or call on people to make sure this happens. Please do not feel offended if we do this."

Focus Questions

- What's it like being a young person in Irish society today?
- Do young people feel they are appreciated and understood? Is their voice heard? Why or why not?
- What are some of the stresses that young people face in life? What kinds of problems do they experience?
- What is your understanding of mental health?
 - What mental health issues do young people experience?
 - What do you know about specific mental health problems like anxiety, depression, anger and frustration?
 - Which of these problems relate to young people more?
 - Can you see evidence of this around here?
- Where do you think these problems originate from i.e. where is the source of these problems?
 - Is the use of drugs/alcohol as a coping mechanism evident here?
 - Family and friends as a source of the problem?
 - What coping mechanisms do you think young people use to deal with these issues?

Reference HREC-

Date Received:

- Are you aware of help/supports available to young people? What would you recommend they do? What services would you recommend?
- What are the barriers to getting help?
- Is there a stigma in seeking help? Describe how this works. What would make it less of a stigma to ask for help?
- What kinds of services would help young people cope better with the world?