

Final report to the SSA

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

June 2021

Background

In Scotland, substance use amongst young people is a significant public health concern, with many reporting alcohol, tobacco, and/or drug use. Iceland had similar concerns regarding young people and substance use, but since implementation of the Youth in Iceland Model in the 1990s (YiIM, also known as 'Planet Youth'), rates of alcohol, tobacco, and drug use have decreased dramatically. The YiIM is a community-based approach aiming to prevent young people's substance use through reducing risk factors and increasing protective factors. Information about young people's health and wellbeing, including substance use, is gathered through surveys distributed in schools. Protective factors are then developed by the community in response to the data and schools are encouraged to strengthen supportive networks between themselves, parents, and other community organisations. The model has been implemented in more than 30 countries worldwide, with adaptations to suit locally specific conditions.

Project aim

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

Why was the project important?

While rates of substance use amongst young people have reduced in recent years, they are still of concern, with recent increases in alcohol and drug use, indicating a different pattern to other countries. Iceland had high rates of substance use in the 1990s but since implementation of the YiIM rates of alcohol, tobacco, and drug use have decreased dramatically. The key strengths of this programme for potential implementation in Dundee, where drug-related harm in particular is high in comparison to other parts of Scotland, are that it brings people together, has partnership working at the core, is evidence-based and data driven, and has a long-term focus. The approach is about more than just substance use prevention, but also about engaging with activities, families, and education. Crucially, young people and parents/family members are central to the process making it more 'bottom-up' than 'top-down', something that can be missed in health policy and practice. However, as the YiIM has not yet been introduced in the UK, the project was developed in order to understand the approach within a Scottish context, focusing on Dundee in particular.

Project timeline

The project started in August 2019, with the first meeting in November 2019. The time before the first meeting was spent identifying members to join the small project group and identifying a venue for the meetings. We also identified a young person, Millie Strachan, to become the comic artist for the project. Millie captured the process including the meetings through comic drawings. Another important part of the process was filming meetings and interviews with group members for the final film and was done from the very start. The first meeting was spent providing information about the project and the YiIM; setting ground rules for the project; and identifying goals. The group discussed current practice in Scotland, in terms of school-based surveys, prevention activities, and gaps in service provision. A meeting was held in early December 2019 with Joe FitzPatrick (previously Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing/MSP for Dundee West) and Shona Robison (MSP for Dundee East) to discuss the project and how we could involve a range of people in Dundee. Both were interested and keen to see more of a focus on prevention activities. The second group meeting in December 2019 involved a discussion of a project communications strategy and also who else should be engaged with the project, such as youth organisations, education, and

governmental stakeholders (MPs/MSPs, Scottish Youth Parliament). At the January 2020 meeting, we invited Kerry Dalgetty who discussed smoking prevention in schools; and Helen Dolan, who talked about the involvement of libraries. The group also looked at how Planet Youth was implemented in other countries, but unfortunately there was little published information.

In February 2020, we were joined by Margret Lilja Gudmundsdottir from Planet Youth in Iceland, and Emmet Major, coordinator for Planet Youth in Ireland, and held a meeting for wider stakeholders, from NHS Tayside, Dundee ADP, Dundee City Council's Education Department, BBC Scotland, and third sector organisations, as well as Joe FitzPatrick. There was a lot of interest in the model and a desire for increased prevention activities in Dundee, as well as Scotland more generally. This meeting was filmed. We also held a seminar at University of Stirling (funded by Drugs Research Network Scotland) with Margret and Emmet, with around 50 people attending from across Scotland, to share information about Planet Youth and how the YiIM has been implemented. In February 2020, one member of the team (Dr Hannah Carver) presented the work and potential transferability issues at the EPPIC conference in London.

In early March 2020, a small group from the wider project group travelled to Reykjavik to attend the Planet Youth conference. In this conference, we heard from Icelandic researchers about the evidence base, the key components of the Icelandic Model and how it can be implemented, as well as hearing from a range of speakers from countries who have implemented the approach, including The Netherlands, Spain, Chile, Australia and Lithuania. We met with the Planet Youth team, who were keen to support the work in Scotland, and spoke to a range of delegates, to elicit a range of views on the approach. We also spoke with members of the public, including a teacher in a local school, those involved in sports, and young people, about how substance use has changed and their views on the key components of the approach. All of these discussions have furthered our understanding of the approach and how it could be implemented in Dundee/Scotland, and feature in the final project film.

Due to the impact of COVID-19, the project moved online and the timelines were pushed back to accommodate the impact on all members of the group. The next meeting was held in early May 2020 and was on effective communication by Cathy MacDonald (The Art of Communication <https://www.artofcommunication.co.uk/about-aoc>). The purpose of this session was to provide the project team with tools for effective communication to support our project communications strategy and disseminating our recommendations. A second meeting in early June 2020 provided the project team with an opportunity to discuss the future of the project and the impact of COVID-19 on the proposed timeline. It was agreed by the project team that no meetings would take place over the summer given multiple demands, although work continued on various aspects of the work including developing relationships with external partners including schools in Dundee.

During the pandemic we also conducted a small research project (funded by Salvation Army Centre for Addiction Services and Research, University of Stirling) to explore stakeholders' views of the model and whether there would be a desire to implement the YiIM in Dundee/Scotland. We conducted 16 semi-structured interviews with a range of strategic level informants including current group members and other interested stakeholders, such as local council, Scottish Government, and third sector organisations. High-level key findings were that participants were in favour of the YiIM but noted the need to ensure it is relevant to Scotland. This could be achieved by piloting the project. Cultural differences between Scotland and Iceland were noted, highlighting the need for the survey and prevention approaches to be tailored to the Scottish context. The YiIM was seen as necessary due to the lack of prevention programmes in Scotland and the high rates of substance use. Partnership working across all levels and organisations was described as essential in order to ensure the YiIM could be implemented effectively, with adequate long-term funding. A paper on the findings of this study was submitted to BMC Public Health in May 2021.

Additional meetings took place between August 2020 and April 2021, with the final meeting being held in April 2021 in preparation for the final dissemination event. The final dissemination event was held on 26th April 2021 with more than 50 stakeholders to share research findings, premiere the film made as part of

the dissemination outputs (as discussed below), and facilitate discussion about the potential next steps for the YiIM in Dundee. The main aim of this event was to be a starting point for wider involvement and to discuss taking the project forward. This is now being done by the Dundee Alcohol and Drug Partnership (ADP) and Dundee City Council rather than the initial project team at Stirling.

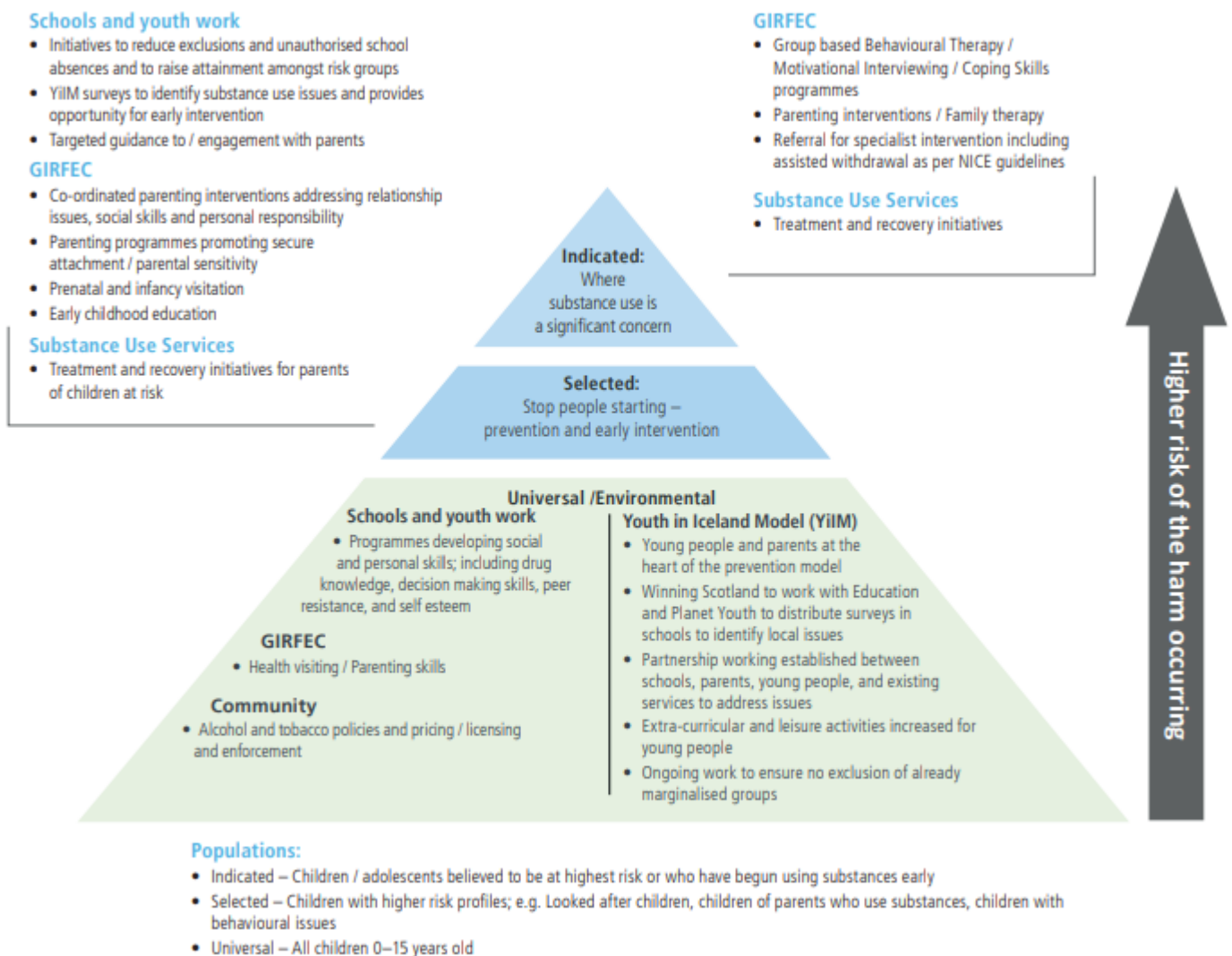
Project outputs

- A study webpage hosted on the SSA site was designed with a description of the study and its aims, as well as links to all outputs described below. The link for the webpage is: <https://www.addiction-ssa.org/yiim/>
- A 30-minute documentary film was produced to outline the reasons for exploring the Planet Youth approach and to follow the process of the group's enquiry, including a trip to Iceland. The title of the film is 'Dundee and the Youth in Iceland Model' and was produced, filmed and directed by Lonnie Wright. The full film is available here: <https://www.addiction-ssa.org/film-dundee-and-the-youth-in-iceland-model/>
- A briefing document for policy makers and communities was created and 100 copies sent out to the research team for wider distribution among their networks. The briefing is available here: <https://www.addiction-ssa.org/youth-in-iceland-final-briefing/>
- Comic strip style A4 posters were created using Millie's comics, and 70 copies distributed to the research team to put up on offices/walls to showcase the project and enhance visibility. The posters had QR codes on them which linked to the SSA study website. The full comic book can be found here: <https://www.addiction-ssa.org/youth-in-iceland-comic-book/>
- Two blogs have been written by members of the research team and uploaded onto the SSA and DRNS websites: <https://drns.ac.uk/planet-youth-we-are-with-you-dundee/> and <https://www.addiction-ssa.org/youth-in-iceland-a-blog-from-reykjavik-march-2020-by-pat-and-hannah/>
- An online dissemination event was held on 26th April 2021 via Zoom. A wide range of people were invited from across Scotland/UK. The purpose of the event was to share project findings; to premiere the film made as part of the dissemination outputs; to hear about the comic output process, and to facilitate discussion about the next steps for the YiIM in Dundee, with Winning Scotland moving forward with Planet Youth surveys in five areas of Scotland, including Dundee, in September 2021. The comic artist who had been commissioned on the project, Millie Strachan, also discussed her process of developing the comics for the project outputs. The event facilitated discussion between people from different areas, with different types of expertise, and dialogue between attendees was excellent. The YiIM was viewed favourably overall, and there were a number of takeaway messages gathered through discussions in preparation for future implementation of the model. For example, it was noted that we should not be scared to say that current prevention approaches have not worked, and there is a need for something different to manage the risk of substance-related harm. The YiIM provides a new preventative approach to try to stop the increasing drug-related harm in future generations – this model is therefore not a 'sticking plaster'. The model represents true partnership and dialogue with key members of the community, including young people themselves. It is a "whole population" approach to working together with schools supporting parents, and parents supporting young people. Indeed, one of the key considerations seen through the discussions was that engagement with young people to build interventions is very exciting, and their voice and views should be at the centre of work moving forward.

What's next?

Continued work is scheduled to happen with the Planet Youth team, with the plan to develop an advisory group. Winning Scotland (<https://www.winningscotland.org/>) is committed to taking the project forward in partnership with Dundee City Council's Education Department and Planet Youth. They are planning to pilot the survey in Dundee, Clackmannanshire, West Dunbartonshire, Highland, and Argyll & Bute. There is an agreement already in place for these areas to take forward the pilot, to conduct the survey in schools in order to gather data and understand the local issues, before developing partnerships in order to address these. A local high school cluster in Dundee will be involved in the Planet Youth work first, as the work sits well with the other work being implemented in the school currently. The project will be trialled here before

moving to other schools. Decisions will be made about funding, commitment, and buy-in before future decisions to scale up. The plan is to deliver the survey in September 2021 with the expectation to get the data back from Planet Youth within 6-8 weeks. Meanwhile, work will be done to identify what activities exist which could run alongside the project. It is important to focus on sports, but there is also the need to consider a range of recreational activities given that not every young person is interested in sports. It is also important to continue to engage with young people to find out what they think about existing issues and what they want in Dundee, especially in relation to the YiIM work. Active discussions are ongoing within the Dundee ADP Prevention sub-group about how to best make structures and strategies work. The Dundee ADP have embedded the YiIM in their key aspirations for next three years. It is important to note that the YiIM would run alongside, rather than replace, targeted interventions. The graphic below shows how the YiIM could fit in to, and add to, the existing prevention agenda.



For more information

Please visit: <https://www.addiction-ssa.org/yiim/>

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