STEREOTYPING
of Young People
RESOURCE PACK

GIVE STEREOTYPING
THE BOOT

THE EQUALITY AUTHORITY
AN tÚDARÁS COMHIONANNAIS

nYci

IDENTITY

STEREOTYPING

THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN STEREOTYPING
& STEREOTYPING BY YOUNG PEOPLE

DIVERSITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE

IDEAS ON WAYS TO CHALLENGE
STEREOTYPING AND INEQUALITY

FOREWORD

As soon as we begin to learn, we are taught to classify, to sort objects and place them in groups. This is fine for objects, but not for people. When people are grouped, it is called stereotyping. The word stereotype comes from the traditional process of printing newspapers and books, when metal plates were used to create a picture. When applied to people, the word stereotyping usually means that we form an instant opinion of a person or a group of people. We label them. This stereotype is often based on misinformation or incorrect attitudes or opinion.

Stereotyping shapes societal expectations of that group and informs decisions made about the group and its members and influences and underpins experiences of inequality and discrimination for many individuals and groups.

Stereotyping also informs the choice made by members of the group as societal expectations are internalised and thus limit their options.
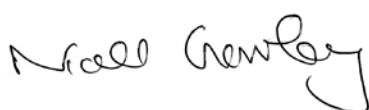
The Equality Authority and the National Youth Council of Ireland share a concern about the stereotyping of young people and the inequalities experienced by young people on foot of this stereotyping. Previously both organisations jointly commissioned research on inequality and the stereotyping of young people.

This research highlighted a widespread stereotyping of young people in a range of arenas – at school, in their local communities and in the media. The research concluded that the young people interviewed saw their institutional relationships with adults as for the most part unequal, troubled and rooted in stereotypical ideas about their attributes and abilities.
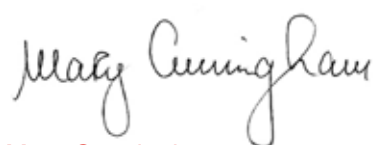
The National Youth Council of Ireland and the Equality Authority are committed to stimulating and supporting a response to this research that would challenge and eliminate this stereotyping of young people. This commitment has inspired the publication and dissemination of this resource pack.

This resource pack should support young people and organisations of young people to recognise stereotyping and to challenge any stereotyping of young people. The resource pack is also designed to challenge any stereotyping of other groups by young people.

The Equality Authority and the National Youth Council of Ireland are grateful to Olivia McEvoy for her work in developing this resource pack. Her creativity and experience have shaped and ensured its high quality. We would also like to acknowledge the work of Tara Coogan from the Equality Authority who managed this project with commitment and skill.

Niall Crowley
Chief Executive Officer
Equality Authority

Mary Cunningham
Director
National Youth Council Ireland

IDENTITY

Social Identity is what makes us similar to some people and at the same time it is what makes us different from other people.

We are all different because we all have qualities that make every one of us a separate person. This is called 'personal identity'. Personal identity is that 'thing' that makes you different from all other people.

Social identity means the way in which we perceive and make sense of each other. Most people identify with certain groups of people to which they feel they belong. Membership of these groups informs their behaviour, provides them with self-esteem and shapes beliefs, values and relationships. Most people can and do belong to a number of social groups.

We can act differently from situation to situation. We are all complex. There are times when one aspect of our social identity becomes more dominant than another. For example, most of us will seek out people of a similar age when we join a youth group. Similarly, at international sporting events, we tend to identify with the country we are supporting.

In short, the term 'identity' may be compared with the notion of 'self'. Identity in its broad sense refers to qualities that make up who you are. It includes those sets of characteristics by which a person is recognisable as a member of a social group.

It is very important to be aware of aspects of our own identity - the following exercises are intended to help you in thinking about the social groups that you might belong to, the social groups that others in your club might belong to and the social groups that you are sometimes identified with by others.

who am I ?

BIG SIS

straight

Activity 1 — How do you describe yourself?

🕐 Approx 20 min   ✎ Flipchart paper and markers

Think about how you identify yourself?
Think of situations where you might identify yourself:

- **By ethnicity?** (for example - I am a Traveller)
- **By age?** (for example - I am fifteen)
- **By family background?** (for example - I live with my father and have three brothers)
- **By disability status** (for example - I have a disability)
- **By sexuality?** (for example - I am heterosexual)
- **By relationship to others?** (for example - I am a friend/granddaughter/pupil)
- **By skin colour?** (for example - I am a Black person)
- **By religion?** (for example - I am a Catholic)
- **By gender?** (for example - I am a woman)
- **By nationality?** (for example - I am Irish)

Activity 2 — Group identity

🕐 Approx 20 min   ✎ Flipchart paper and markers

Please explore the following concepts relating to a person's social identity - their meaning to individual members, how important they are to a person's identity - in group discussion. The group can be split into a number of small groups depending on the numbers:

- Family
- Age
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Disability

- Religion
- Sexual orientation
- Skin colour
- Nationality
- Transsexual

Think about how naming different aspects of various social groups may influence how a person is perceived by others?

Discuss with your group whether it is possible to 'know' enough about a person based on one, two or more aspects of their identity?

PLEASE NOTE: You can carry out this exercise without asking for personal information from the participants. Participants may choose to 'invent' their social identities.

Activity 3   I am… Who are you?

🕐 Approx 20 min   ✏️ Photocopies of identity sheet, pens, markers

YOU and YOUR FRIENDS ……

Who are your best friends?

Why did you choose them?

If your best friend had a disability or was of a different age, skin colour, gender, sexual orientation or a member of the Traveller community, would you still have chosen him/her as your best friend?

Write down why having a disability or being of a different age, skin colour, religion, gender or sexual orientation or being a member of the Traveller community makes a difference or does not make a difference to you when choosing your friends:

We all have identities that are significant to us; identities that have an impact on what we think and do. This is true at school, at home and at work.

Choose ONE part of your social identity (e.g. my age, my gender, my disability, my religion, my sexual orientation, my ethnicity) you associate with yourself, and explain why it is important to you.

Part of your identity:

Why is it important to you?

How does your behaviour at home or at school reflect this aspect of your identity?

Now think about an important part of a friend's identity.
Does this reflect their behaviour at school or at home?

At times, certain parts of our social identities may seem unimportant to us. This allows us to overlook them in others. The flip side of this is that certain parts of our social identities may be significant to us and we may wrongly assume that they are equally significant to other people. Take Tom for example. Tom is heterosexual. He never thinks about his sexual orientation and assumes nobody else thinks about his/her sexual orientation either. He has a friend, Sylvia, who is Black. Tom thinks that Sylvia considers her skin colour to be the most important aspect of her identity.

a) Think about and decide if there is one aspect of your social identity which people assume is important or not important to you.	
b) Choose a person whom you know through the media and discuss an aspect of his/her social identity that you think may be important to him/her.	

When we feel that some aspect of our social identity is being challenged or diminished, for example, when we hear an insulting remark about a social group we belong to, we tend to identify with that aspect more strongly than usual. For example, your religion may not really pay a noticeable part in your everyday life but should you hear someone talking about 'all Protestants are' you feel the need to dispute such generalisations because they simply are not true, may be offensive in tone and even cause hurt.

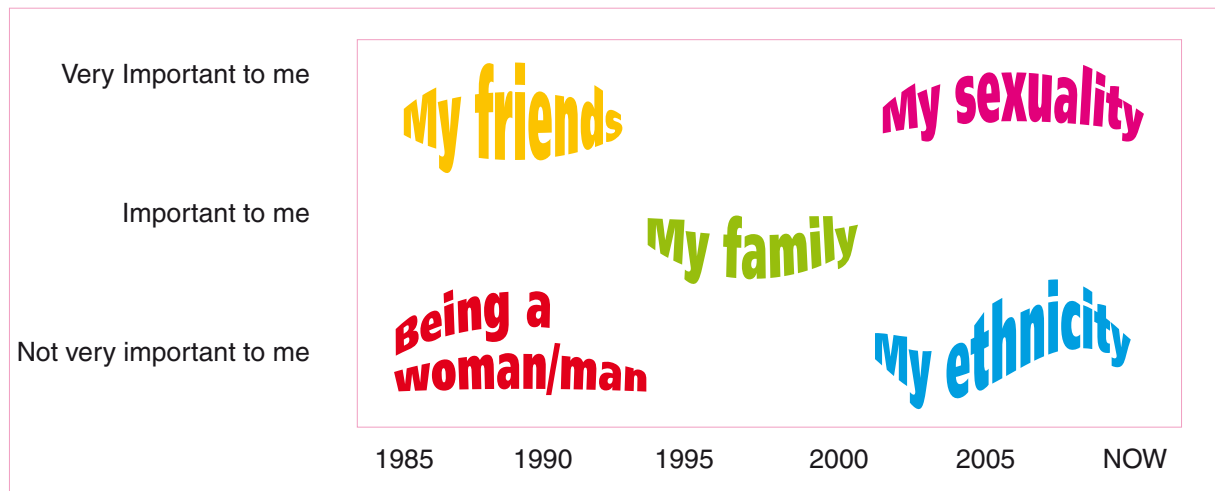| Describe a time when this happened to you.	
Discuss how you dealt with the situation.	

Would you have handled the situation differently?	
Why do you think that we tend to react when our identity is diminished? For example, why does it matter if someone only sees you as a 'young person' or as 'only a girl'?	

Activity 4   **How do you identify your social identity?**

🕐   Approx 30 min   ✎   Colour markers, flipchart paper, paints, glitter, glue

Draw a life-map with all of the aspects of your social identity represented. The bottom axis can be used as a timeline with the vertical axis representing how important that aspect of your identity is to you.

Fig 1.0 Life Map Example

Very Important to me		**My friends**			**My sexuality**	
Important to me				**My family**		
Not very important to me		**Being a woman/man**			**My ethnicity**	
	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	NOW

EXTRA   Identity exhibition

🕐   Allow plenty of time   ✎   Be creative!

Create an exhibition that celebrates your club's member identities. The idea is to explore the aspects of your social and personal identity that you wish to display and how you could do it by means of art. You will need to think about what symbols, images, etc represent aspects of personal and social identities and be able to explain why.

The exhibition could focus on an individual's identity or a combination of two or three individuals. Alternatively, your club could collectively make one large exhibition celebrating the diversity of your club's identities.

Feel free to combine images, symbols, words, colours, materials, texture, sound, etc to express your social and personal identity and to explore how similar/different your chosen concepts are to those of your friends.

Be creative and use pictures and words cut out from print media that represent aspects of your personal and/or social identity; various art materials; textures and colours; etc to design a collage or a sculpture. Alternatively, you could use video or sound, installations or performances to explore and express the identities of your club members. Use your imagination.

STEREOTYPING

What is a stereotype?

A stereotype is a belief that all members of a given group share the same fixed personality traits or characteristics as a result of this group membership. Stereotypes are always based on an oversimplified generalisation of a social group. For example:

- 'All young people have loads of energy and imagination';
- 'All older people are lonely';
- 'All women are great at multitasking'.

Stereotypes can be attached to any assumed marker of group membership, such as age, ethnicity, nationality, skin colour, gender, sexual orientation, family, religion and disability. It is important to note that we also stereotype our own group(s) as well as others. Needless to say, we often tend to emphasise our own 'virtues' by attributing positive labels to them and view other groups in a less flattering light. For example: "Irish are warm and friendly" while "French people are arrogant".

Stereotypes can be negative and/or positive.

Stereotypes do not necessarily need to be negative. Many stereotypes attribute positive qualities to entire groups, such as "Jamaicans are really relaxed" or "gay men have fantastic fashion sense". While positive stereotypes may seem harmless enough it is important to recognise that all stereotypes are problematic because they tend to be patronising in tone and damaging in effect. For example, belief in the stereotypical notion that 'all Asians are brilliant at school' may lead teachers to presume that all people of Asian origin do extremely well in Maths and other subjects and, therefore, should attempt the higher level papers regardless of the individual person concerned.

However, to complicate matters, it is also possible to express contradictory statements about any given group. You may have heard that 'young people' are 'energetic', 'enthusiastic', and 'eager to learn'. However, 'young people', 'youth' or 'teenagers' are also often described as 'binge drinkers', 'loud', 'troublesome' and 'spoilt'.

YOUNG PERSON
HANDLE WITH SUSPICION

The impact of stereotypes

Stereotyping can diminish groups of people by seeking to limit their potential to fixed, and often negative, shared traits or characteristics. Stereotyping can suggest individual behaviour is automatically determined by membership of a single group. The presumption that a person has certain abilities or attributes purely because he/she belongs to a given social group can also result in an individual who does not conform to the stereotype feeling that he/she is excluded from the social group or under pressure to conform to the familiar stereotype.

We learn stereotypes from our personal experiences, the media, parents, friends, and many other sources. The precise nature of any stereotype, and its impact, will depend largely on the situation in which it is used. If people in power hold damaging stereotypes about a social group then they are likely to make decisions informed by those stereotypes. This disadvantages those groups and helps to keep stereotypes alive.

For example, stereotypes indicating that a 'woman's place is in the home' has been used to support the idea that women's participation in the paid workforce is of lesser value than men's and contributes to inequality for women at work. Equally, the stereotype that 'young people need to be protected from themselves' contributes to the practice of excluding young people from decision-making processes on matters that affect them.

Gender and stereotypes

Society tends to stereotype young women in a different way to young men. Studies show how articles about young men often focus on crime while the media paint women as victims and vulnerable. We have all come across statements such as 'boy racers' and 'hysterical girls'. As a result, young men may feel that they experience more hassle in public places than young women.

Interestingly, as males get older, they are more likely to be referred to as 'men' whereas females continue to be described as 'girls'. This may seem harmless enough but referring to women as 'girls', and thus subjecting them to stereotypical images of age and gender, can have a negative effect on the way they are viewed by potential employers and others and, indeed, by themselves.

In conclusion, stereotypes involve rigid images and ideas, and cannot represent complex identities or the diversity that will exist in any social group. For example, any young person will have social identities that are also based on gender, sexual orientation and ethnicity. In addition, a person may or may not hold religious beliefs and/or they may or may not have a disability. We all have some type of family relationships. Most of us hold a diversity of personal and social identities. It is important to acknowledge and value this diversity if we are to achieve a more equal society.

BRAINY

Activity 1   Understanding stereotyping (i)

🕐 30 to 90 minutes   ✎ Post-its, flipchart paper, pens, magazines and glue

- Write up words on a post-it that come into your mind when you hear the word stereotype.
- On a second post-it, write down an example of when you last heard or saw somebody stereotyping another person or group of people.
- Discuss the words, definitions and examples that the group suggests.
- Try and think of a celebrity or person that you know who does not fit with the traditional understanding you may have held in relation to a social group. Discuss.
- Form small groups and discuss various instances where stereotyping has had an impact on your life. Remember that these examples can be from everyday life.

Activity 2   Understanding stereotyping (ii)

🕐 30 to 90 minutes   ✎ Post-its, flipchart paper, pens, magazines and glue

- Cut out advertisements from magazines and discuss if they reflect stereotypes about young people. Are these stereotypes negative or positive?
- Try to design your own advertisement without the use of any stereotypes.

Activity 3   Stereotyping profiles

🕐 40 minutes   ✎ Photocopies of activity sheet 3, markers, pens

- Cut out advertisements from magazines and discuss if they reflect stereotypes about young people. Are these stereotypes negative or positive?
- Try to design your own advertisement without the use of any stereotypes.

Each participant needs to come up with a character with a specific profession or a hobby or an interest and/or family roles such as a teacher, a goth, a skater, a mother, business person, an emo, etc. (If your group is struggling to come up with a pool of characters, please hold a brainstorming session).
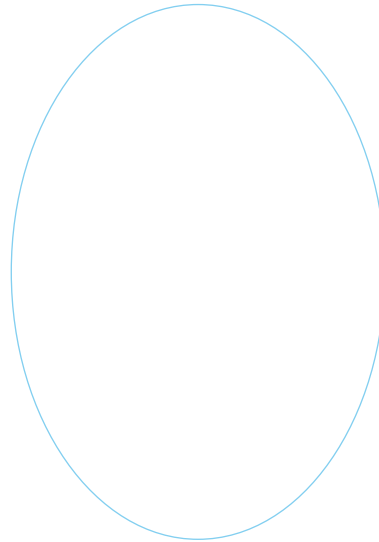
Keep your characters SECRET from other participants. Place all suggestions in a hat and pass around the group. Pick out one. If you happen to get your own character back, return it and go again.

Think about your character. What do you know about them? Photocopy and complete the activity sheet overleaf.

Stereotyping profiles

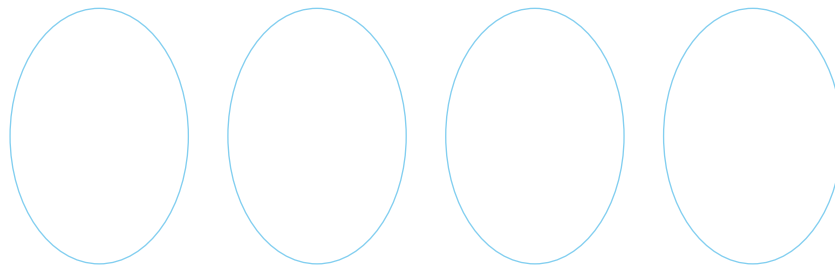|	
You will be given a post-it with the name of a character on it. Don't tell the others in your group what character you have been given. Make up a character profile, draw a picture and choose symbols and adjectives for this character.	
Character profile	
Character portrait	
Particular words that describe your character	
Symbols that represent your character	

After completing their character profiles, share the symbols and particular words you have chosen with others in the group. Do not show your profile to others or state which character you were portraying. Let others in the group guess what character you were profiling.

At the end of the activity each participant should present their character profile and portrait to the rest of the group. Ask the participants to explain why they chose the symbols, particular words and characteristics that they did. Are these stereotypical characteristics?

Questions for group discussion at the end:
PLEASE NOTE: The person leading the activity could use some of these questions to stimulate discussion.

Q.   **In the professional category:** Are some professions more likely to be linked with women? Do you think some professions are more positive than others? Why do you think this is?

Q.   **Age related characters:** Are your images more positive or negative? If your parents or school teachers were completing the same exercise, do you think the profile and portrait would be the same? How would it be different? Is it possible for young people to stereotype negatively other young people?

Q.   **Interest/hobby based characters:** Do you think all, for example, skaters wear the same brands and listen to similar music? Are Goths all alike?

Q.   What have you learned about stereotyping during this exercise? Do you think it would be difficult to change young people's image and ideas about the given characters? What could these characters be or look like?

Actvity 4   ## Gender and young people

🕐   Allow plenty of time   ✎   Be creative!

What types of images to the following words conjure up for you?
- Young person
- Youth/Minor
- Teen
- Youngster
- Vulnerable
- A victim

Discuss in groups whether you think that any of the above words are mainly used when describing young men or young women?

Q.   Why would the use of any of these labels keep stereotypes alive?

Q.   Do you think society stereotypes women and men? Please give examples?

Q.   Can you guess the gender of the following?
- "Teenager tells of 100 mile terror drive"
- "Young science writers sought for competition"
- "Teen diet-craze blamed on glossy magazines"
- "Youth convicted of joy riding again"
- "A minor appears in court for 80th time"

Q.   If you were to be identified by your age, what label would you choose?

EXTRA **Stereotyping and comedy**

🕐 2 to 3 hours

Host a DVD night. Watch episodes of comedies such as 'Little Britain'. Note how these comedies are based on commonly held stereotypes.

PLEASE NOTE: Ensure that the chosen video/DVD is suitable for the group and complies with the Irish Film Censor's recommendations.

Choose a character such as Vicky Pollard for example and:

- Discuss the stereotypes on which the characters are based;
- Why are these characters so funny? Why exactly are you laughing?
- Could they be offensive to some? Why?
- By laughing at some of these stereotypes are you accepting some of the messages conveyed? Are they true?
- Are these characters multilayered? Or are they just one dimensional portrayals of the social group?

100% ALTERNATIVE
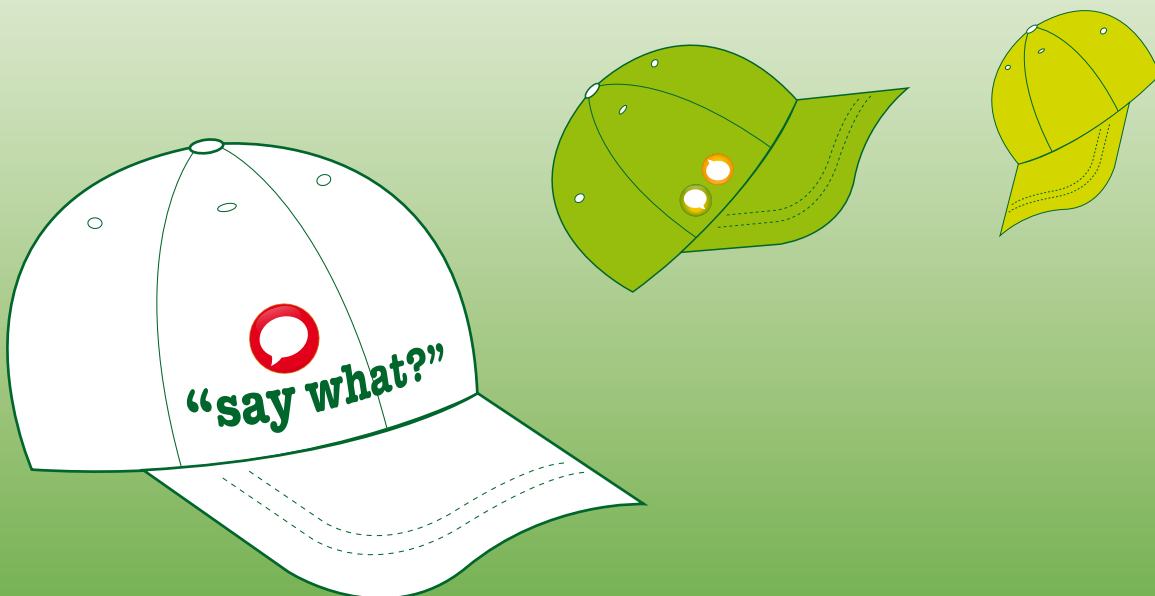
The role of language

The nature and impact of any stereotype will depend largely on the type of relationship that exists between those being stereotyped and those doing the stereotyping. If this relationship is unequal, that is, if the stereotyping is being carried out by someone with power over the other person, then those with power are in a position to attach labels to the other social group and to make decisions based on these labels.

These labels and the stereotypes they reflect rely on language (spoken and written) to communicate concepts, ideas and feelings. Language, our primary means of communication, can shape our relationships. Language carries meaning and insinuations that are culturally and socially agreed and go beyond the dictionary definition of a word. For example, the term 'young people' brings up a lot of images, values, ideas, etc. and not just a simple, single understanding of an age group.

While stereotyping can originate in any sector of society or walk of life, it requires recognition from an influential group or institution for it to have a broader impact on a specific group. For example, you may have a personal stereotypical opinion of a social group based on your personal experience with a member of that group. This may influence your personal relationship with other people from this particular group. However, your personal relationships with the member of this group will not affect the broader group in the same way as when institutions such as the media or powerful individuals such as politicians hold the same stereotype. When the printed media write about the 'problem of adolescence' or a politician calls for 'ASBOs to control problem teens' the impact is much greater. Words, when endorsed by influential people and institutions, have power.

"say what?"

The language of stereotyping often conveys ideas that enable and 'justify' the idea that some social groups are below or less worthy than our social group. The person holding the stereotype can feel that the negative feelings or perceptions he/she has of a social group are perfectly rational and OK. As a result, the person holding the stereotypical views does not have to reassess his/her stereotypes and unequal relationships between groups can go on unchecked.

Our use of language is important. Language can contribute to the exclusion of a group based on a stereotype. By using the language of stereotyping, it is easy for those who make decisions to ignore or exclude young people.

Stereotyping by young people

It is important to recognise that young people are not just 'young'. All young people belong to other social groups as well. While it may seem that ALL young people are stereotyped in the same way, it is valuable to explore how, for some social groups, the issue of age can be a less important concern.

Equally, it is important to be aware how expression of stereotypical images of other social groups can divide groups of young people. This can result in some groups of young people being patronised and excluded by their own age peers.

While it is important that you challenge the stereotyping of young people, it is equally important that you explore the stereotypical opinions that may exist in relation to other social groups. All stereotypical ideas can subtly influence our decisions and actions.

Activity 1   Your language matters!

🕐 30 minutes

Let's look at your own language in the following exercise. Work in pairs. Be honest but think about the words you are using.

How would you or your peers describe a young person who is:
• A Traveller
• Black Irish
• Living with a mother who is in a Lesbian relationship
• A practising Catholic/Protestant/Muslim/Hindu
• Gay or Lesbian
• Born in Poland
• A wheelchair user
• 6 years younger than you
• A young parent
• A girl
• A boy
• Transsexual

Q.   Were you surprised by any of your language?

Q.   Was any of your language influenced by a stereotype? Did you use any slang definitions? If yes, were they negative/positive?

Q.   If so, do you think it would be hurtful for that person?

Q.   What could you do to change any stereotypical language that you use?

Q.   Can you think of any 'every day' phrases that are used by you and your friends that stereotype? What could you say instead?

Q.   How do you think that your peers would describe you?

Acvity 2   Gender and language

🕐 Approx 45 min   ✎ Newspapers, magazines, web articles, scissors

Have newspapers, magazines and/or access to the Internet at the ready. Cut out at least five or six articles to get a sample spread of language. In your group discuss the following questions:

Q.   What are the common words used when describing a young person?

Q.   Is there a difference between the language used for young men and young women? How are young men described? How are young women described?

Q.   Discuss how these words could help to maintain some of the stereotypical images of young people? What about stereotypical images of young women/young men?

Activity 3   Language matters!

🕐   30 to 45 minutes   ✏   Newspapers, magazines, web articles, scissors

Split your group into small groups. Ask each group to come up with as many alternative words to describe the following:

- FEMALE

- HETEROSEXUAL

- A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY

- MALE

- YOUNG PERSON (both genders)

- GAY/LESBIAN

- A PERSON FROM EASTERN EUROPE/CHINA/ASIA/AFRICA

- TRAVELLER

- OLDER PERSON (both genders)

- A MUSLIM/CHRISTIAN/HINDU/SIKH

- YOUNG MOTHER

- TRANSSEXUAL

Circle the words that carry positive connotations with a marker and cross out the words with negative connotations.

Q.   Why do you think that we have so many words to describe a social group?

Q.   Name the groups that had more positive labels rather than negative labels attached to them? What do you think this might say about their standing in our society? What about those that have more negative labels attached to them?

Q.   Why do you think that so many of the words are negative?

Q.   Can you think of reasons why positive stereotyping can have a damaging effect on a group? Try to give examples.

EXTRA

🕐   Up to 1 hour   ✏   Flipchart paper, markers, magazines, glue, scissors, etc.

If you have any extra time you could re-design a poster or an ad campaign that you feel contains stereotypes but without the gender or age related stereotypes! See the difference that the change of language can make!

Understanding diversity

Young people are not all the same. Young people might have lots of things in common but the 'category' of young people is made up of people with different identities and situations. Young people are diverse. Being diverse means young people having a variety of characteristics, beliefs and values. In any one group of young people, people have different:

- ETHNICITY
- FAMILY STRUCTURE
- AGE
- GENDER
- ABILITY/DISABILITY
- RELIGIOUS BELIEF
- SEXUAL ORIENTATION
- SKIN COLOUR

This difference in young people (and in other social groups) needs to be recognised and celebrated if we are to achieve a more equal society.

Activity 1   How diverse are the people that you know?

🕐 25 minutes

Think about the following and see if you can come up with any suggestions. Remember the work that you did on 'stereotypes'. Try not to include any stereotypes in your suggestions:

All young girls like...

All young boys are...

All teenagers are...

All young people feel...

Did you manage to come up with any suggestions? Are any of them stereotypes? There is practically nothing that can be true of all young people as young people are so diverse. As a result, this exercise might be easier...

Take five minutes and make a list of all of your friends and young people that you know. Looking at the list, think about how different all of the young people you know are? Do they have a different gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability or ethnic (including Travellers) origin, skin colour or nationality?

Activity 2   Celebrating diversity

🕐 Allow plenty of time

Below are a few suggestions for how you can celebrate the diversity of young people with the other young people in your club:

Learn more about your community
Find information about the various social groups that live in your community. What is the age profile? What types of different family structures can you find? How many different religions are practised in your area? What about gender, disability, ethnicity (including Travellers), skin colour, nationality and sexual orientation diversity in the community? Make contact with groups representing social groups that are not present in your youth club and invite them to participate in an activity at your club.

Explore attitudes
Carry out a survey on local attitudes to diversity. Discover how many people in your club/area have felt discriminated against in the last two years. Explore the reasons that have made them feel this way.

Look up your local news
Check out your local newspaper and local radio listings for diversity related articles or programmes. Examine the presence of any stereotypes in these articles or programmes.

Activity 3   Equality and diversity charter

🕐   Allocate plenty of time   ✏   Pens, flipchart paper

You will need to select an activity leader for this activity. The activity leader's instructions are below:

1.   Explanation of the activity

An equality and diversity charter will establish the club's ambition for equality and include the ground rules for celebrating diversity. It is important that the ground rules for such a charter are devised by the members themselves. While it is important to be ambitious, it is important to bear in mind that club members must obey the rules that they establish. Within this approach it is important to be clear that the equality and diversity charter and its ground rules must comply with and reflect the provisions of the Equal Status Acts (see Information Sheet on the Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2004).

2.   Establish a list of diverse social identities by using the nine grounds of the equality legislation as a starting point

Break the group into smaller groups and ask each group to come up with a list of social identities that young people can have e.g. gay, with a disability, religious, no belief, from a one-parent family, etc. Allow at least 10 minutes for this so that all identities are explored. Encourage everyone to be far-reaching and exhaustive with their lists. Remember that the focus is on diversity of social identities and the importance of recognising and valuing these. When the individual groups have completed their lists, merge them together to form one big list.

3.   Each group establishes five ground rules for the equality and diversity charter

Drawing from the list of social identities that the groups have come up with, ask each group to come up with a set of up to five ground rules that will:

4.   Feedback ground rules from each group to everyone

Ask a spokesperson from each group to feed the ground rules, one by one, back to the big group. Each rule must be agreed by the whole club as they will be asked to adhere to the ground rules in the club. Check and make sure that the charter and the ground rules agreed ensure compliance with the Equal Status Acts. If not, further ground rules must be included as necessary and agreed ground rules revised as necessary. The accepted and agreed ground rules will now form the equality and diversity charter of your club.

Once all of the above has been completed, ask the participants the following questions:

- Who is responsible for ensuring that the charter is implemented?
- What resources or materials are needed to implement the charter?
- When should the charter be implemented?

You might want to put the answers to these questions on a sheet close to the charter.

It would be useful to devise an action plan for implementation and assign roles to individual club members.

Activity 4   ## Addressing stereotyping

🕐 30 to 60 min   ✎   Copies of scenarios, flipchart paper, markers

Read the following scenario and decide what you would do in that situation:

Scenario 1

You and your school friends are at the local shopping centre on a Wednesday afternoon. You have been out shopping for a couple of hours and decide to head over to the coffee shop for some smoothies. You have had a good day and all are in high spirits. On entering the coffee shop you are approached by a member of staff who says that there are too many of you and that you would disturb the other customers. The waiter refuses to serve you.

Scenario 2

You and your three friends are at the local newsagent. You are looking at magazines and stationery and trying to decide what to buy for your lunches. You are finding it hard to concentrate on what you are supposed to be doing as the other sales assistant has stopped serving customers and is following you and your friends around the shop. As it is lunch time the shop is really busy and the queue is getting longer. You are aware that a lot of people are giving you disapproving glances and you are starting to feel a little uncomfortable. After about five minutes the assistant, who has been getting visibly agitated, tells you to hurry up and make your purchases as the assistant does not have all day to stand around keeping an eye on 'you lot'. You tell the assistant that there is no need to 'keep an eye' and that you do not notice any other group in the shop receiving similar treatment. You are then told to leave the shop without a chance to make any purchases.

Allow the group 5 minutes to discuss each scenario. After this initial period, pose each question, one by one, to the group. If the answers lead to a heated conflict, ask the group to go back to the beginning and start again.

Q. What would you do if this happened to you?

Q. Why might the member of staff act in this way to a group of young people?

Q. Is it OK to make assumptions about every representative of a social group if you have had a bad experience with some members of the group?

Q. How do you think you might feel if this happened to you?

Q. What would you do if you saw another person or a group of people being treated in this way?

Activity 5   Walking in my shoes

🕐 45 minutes   ✎ Identity cards

1. Photocopy and cut out the identity cards printed on the following page.
2. Mix up the cards and place them face down. Let each participant pick a temporary social identity.
3. Give the participants a few minutes to think about their new identities and to ask questions if necessary.
4. Choose an activity leader who will read out the statements below to the rest of the group. If the participant can answer the question with a simple 'yes', then they are allowed to take a step forward. Those who answer with a 'no' or a 'maybe' must remain standing where they are.

Take a step forward if you think it is easy for you to:

- use all forms of public transport
- get married
- collect social welfare
- travel freely to other countries
- purchase alcohol
- drive a car
- get your mail delivered
- get housing suitable for your needs
- get a passport
- adopt children
- get a bank loan
- get a job
- party in the local pub/night club
- visit the GP/dentist
- dress as you like when out in public

Male 35 Irish Separated 2 children	Male 16 Irish Gay/Bi Single Catholic	Female 14 Irish Traveller Heterosexual Single Catholic	Male 27 Polish Heterosexual Single Catholic
Female 21 Bosnian Married Muslim 1 child	Female 28 Swedish Homosexual Co-habiting	Male 46 Nigerian Single Muslim (non-practising)	Female 26 Irish Divorced Pregnant
Female 23 Irish Married Wheelchair user	Male 27 Irish Traveller Single Catholic Carer	Female 56 British Single Homosexual 4 children	Male 14 Irish With a disability Single Bisexual
Male 22 Romanian Heterosexual Single Orthodox Christian	Male 78 Irish Widowed Catholic Disability	Female 18 Nepalese Single Hindu	

Feel free to make additional cards.

When all the statements have been read out look at the position of the players.

Q.   Why are some people so many steps behind?

If you do not know what the situation is in relation to some of the social identities, you may wish to use your library, citizen's information office or the internet to find out more about these groups and their rights in Ireland. The Equality Authority's Annual Report provides further information on various equality issues. You can find the Equality Authority's Annual Report on the web www.equality.ie or in your local library.

'Inequality and the Stereotyping of Young People', a report published by the National Youth Council of Ireland and the Equality Authority, reveals how young people in Ireland see themselves as being stereotyped by so many of the adults with whom they came into contact.

Based on ten focus group discussions in different parts of the country, the report presents young people's perspectives about the groups of adults they have regular contact with, the way they think they are perceived and treated by adults, and their general views on how stereotypical ideas about young people's attributes and abilities have influenced the institutional relationships between adults and young people.

The themes that emerged in these discussions are represented below. They are followed by a few suggestions on how you could begin to change these relationships.

The quotes used in the text have been taken from the report.

The Media

The media, as well as creating images and ideas independently, is a powerful communicator of ideas that may have originated elsewhere. These images and ideas can reflect stereotypes. Stereotypes, as discussed elsewhere, need to be endorsed by influential people and/or institutions for them to have a powerful impact.

The young people in the focus groups for the report 'Inequality and the Stereotyping of Young People' did not argue that the problematic behaviour of young people portrayed in the media does not exist at all. However, they believed that it was reported in a distorted and misleading way. Even though it was felt that positive images of young people do at times get reported in the news, a majority of young people felt that *'they highlight the joy riders, underage drinking, but they never really focus on anything positive to do with young people'*.

Irish news stories, according to the report 'Inequality and the Stereotyping of Young People', tend to portray young people as being a problem or as having problems. By treating young people as problematic and difficult, the media is reflecting stereotypes and maintaining the unequal relationship between generations.

GIVE STEREOTYPING
THE BOOT

Activity 1   Media Monitoring

Start collecting images and stories from newspapers, the internet and magazines about young people. Cut out all the stories and identify the positive ones as well as the negative ones. At the end of three months or even a year, put all of the stories together and see if there are any trends emerging? Report your findings to your club, local schools and local media.

Activity 2   Write your own articles

Contact the editor of your local paper with the idea of featuring a series of articles by, and about, young people.

Activity 3   Community Radio

Approach your local community radio to do a feature on young people or ask to produce a programme yourself. The station might provide young people with training or find opportunities to get young people involved.

The Local Community

The young people in the focus groups for the report 'Inequality and the Stereotyping of Young People' felt that they were not given a chance by many adults in the local community who 'expect the worst from us'. Many adults, they felt, just assumed that young people were drinking or causing trouble. The young people also reported that they were constantly asked to move if they were hanging out in groups especially if the group was big or if there were more than a few lads in the group.

'…All of us get tarred with the same brush. You're a teenager, you hang around in a group, you must be a vandal.'

'It is because you're young. Like, what do they want you to do, sit at home all the time?'

'I think things have gotten worse as new estates have been built…because there's more teenagers now and there's still nothing to do …'

Activity 1   Share the REAL news

When young people in your club or in your community do something good or positive, tell other people.

Activity 2   Partnership works

Invite members of the local resident or community association to your club night. Let them know about the activities you usually do on a club night. Ask them about their association and see if there is any project that both groups could work on together. Explore whether you could jointly identify a space young people could 'hang out'.

Activity 3   Celebrate Young People

Hold an awards event to celebrate the talent and contribution young people make to the community. Find a local celebrity to present the awards and invite adults in the community and the media. Have information stands on all of the work you have done over the year in your club.

The Garda Síochána

The young people in the focus groups for the report 'Inequality and the Stereotyping of Young People' felt that the relationship with young people and the Gardaí was the 'biggest problem'. Unless the Community Garda was a nice person, young people reported that they were asked to *'move on'* all the time if they were in groups, searched randomly for no apparent reason and generally treated badly and ignorantly.

"They get out of the car with an attitude, straight away like. So obviously if they're going to come over with an attitude problem then you're not going to sit there and take it off them. I know you could, say, like, walk away, but it's hard when they are doing it to you, do you know what I mean?"

"When there's a big group of you you've nowhere to go. You can't all go to a friend's house. We were outside a petrol station and the guard came to up and it was like 'Move along' and you're like 'Grand, but where are we going to move along to?' And then they started asking some of the lads to see their IDs for their bikes and stuff like that, and for no reason at all…they put pressure on us."

Even though this might seem like a difficult situation, there are some things you could try to do to challenge the stereotypes that the Gardaí might have of young people.

Activity 1

Contact your local Community Garda and ask them to visit your club. Introduce them to your members and the club's activities and programmes. Explore whether there is some type of activity and/or programme in which the Garda could get involved.

Activity 2

Develop links with the local Gardaí and work with them towards a system that allows young people who feel that they have been treated unfairly by the Gardai to seek change. You could also make links with the Garda Ombudsman's Office.

Security Staff

The difficulties young people experience in relation to shopping and commercial venues were common themes in the focus groups for the report 'Inequality and the Stereotyping of Young People'. The young people reported that they were often 'followed' by security staff and were treated differently because of their age.

"If there's a load of adults standing around, they'll say nothing. Like you know the balcony at the top [of the shopping centre], if we were standing there they'd tell us to move, but if there was a load of adults they'd just leave them there."

"I don't think it is very fair to say if you're wearing a hoodie you're intimidating. I mean you'd get laughed at if you told an adult what to wear…like I mean, 'you can't wear a tie!'

Activity 1   We're just shopping!

If you or your club members are experiencing problems with the security staff of a shopping centre/shop, you could consider doing something about it. How about getting everyone in your club to collect their shopping receipts from the shopping centre for a period of two months or so?
When you have gathered enough 'evidence' why not send a letter outlining your grievances to the manager of the shopping centre? Attach the receipts to the letter and arrange a meeting with a representative of the shopping centre to explore any issues that both sides may have in relation to young people using the facilities.

Politicians & Decision-makers

Many of the young people in the focus groups for the report 'Inequality and the Stereotyping of Young People' believed that politicians had no interest in young people or their issues simply because young people cannot vote. An additional concern was that most politicians are older *'like, they're in their 40s and 50s and there is no bridge between the generations'*. It was also felt that politicians 'categorise' young people as one group and that young people were stereotyped as 'not caring' about politics or issues.

Activity 1

Visit your local politician's constituency office(s) and talk to your local representative(s) about any concerns that you may have concerning your neighbourhood and your rights. You may not be able to vote at this time but that does not mean that you will not be a future voter! Keep your local representative informed of issues that are affecting you and your peers and ask that they ensure that your voices are heard at meetings where decisions affecting young people take place.

Teachers and Schools

Many of the young people in the focus groups for the report 'Inequality and the Stereotyping of Young People' gave examples of caring and supportive behaviour with teachers at school. However, they stated that relationship with teachers were dependent on the personality of the teacher and whether they were prepared to engage with them or not.

'Some teachers are more understanding and more about the individual whereas other teachers kind of just think I'm the teacher, do as I say and I don't have to give you a reason, you know, this is how it's going to be. But they don't seem to recognise that they can be wrong.'

Other young people in the focus groups spoke about a 'lack of respect' from teachers and having 'no voice' in decisions made about how the school was run.

'I think the way schools should be run is it should work between the pupils and the teachers, where the rules would be worked out between the two so it benefits everyone..'

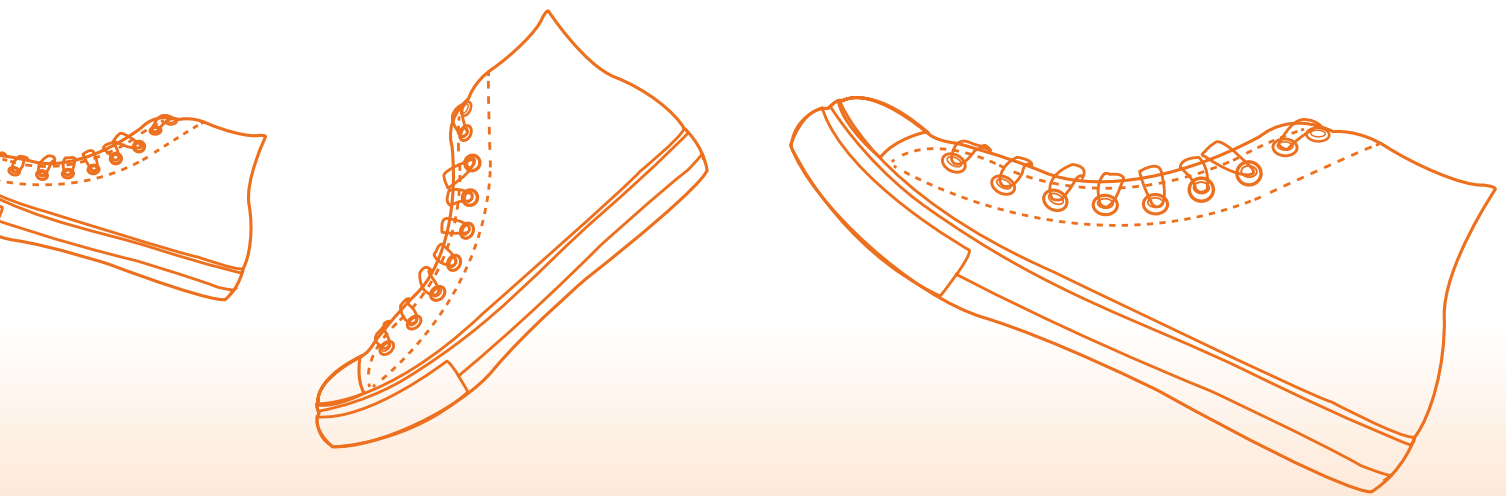## Activity 1   Get involved in the Student Council

Ask your Student Council representative to put the issue of 'negative stereotyping' of young people on the agenda for the next meeting. Get the Council to look at your equality and diversity charter and explore if the School Council could attempt to establish something similar.
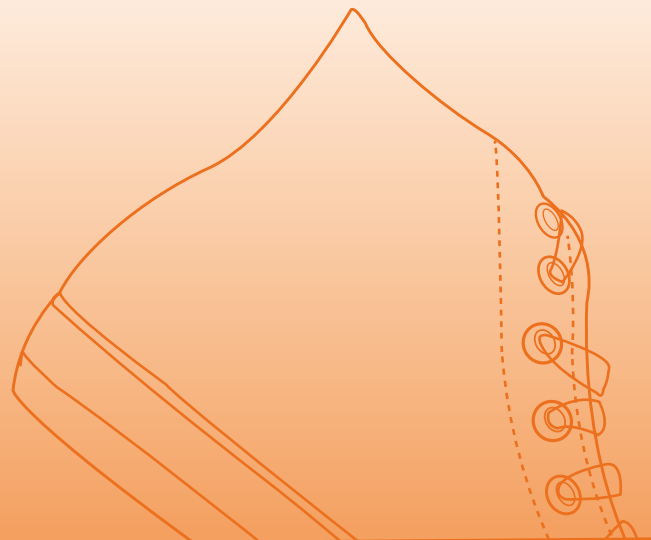
For information on setting up a student council log onto www.studentcouncil.ie

Activity 2

Work with the School Council to promote anti-bullying/harassment policies and procedures for your school. If your school does not have a policy in place, suggest that such a policy is developed with an input from the student body. Make sure that the policy names the nine equality grounds and addresses issues such as sexual harassment and other forms of harassment.

If your school has a policy in place, suggest that a plan of action is drawn up to implement the policy. Make sure that the plan of actions deals with the experience of every social identity group covered by the nine equality grounds.

STAMP OUT
STIGMA

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Diversity of people and groups in society needs to be **recognised**, **valued** and **celebrated** if we are to achieve a more equal society.

STEREOTYPING of Young People **RESOURCE PACK**

THE EQUALITY AUTHORITY
AN tÚDARÁS COMHIONANNAIS

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