

# Cuida-te Programme - taking good care of youth health

Natacha Torres da Silva,  
Instituto Português do Desporto e Juventude, I.P., Portugal

## Introduction

Promotion and prevention among young people has been one of the overarching aims of the “Cuida-te”, a health programme of the Portuguese Institute of Sports and Youth, created in 2008 and dedicated to minimizing the likelihood of behaviour-linked diseases, by promoting health education, health literacy, early detection, counselling and referral to young people, ultimately leading to more meaningful and productive lives.



## Intervention areas

- Counselling on sexual and reproductive health
- Awareness-raising on youth health and healthy lifestyles
- Preventive intervention on addictive behaviours

## Field of action

- Nutrition and physical activity
- Addictive behaviours
- Sexual and reproductive health
- Mental health

## Former Operational Measures

- Mobile Units
- Awareness-Raising Sessions
- Forum Theatre
- Youth Health Counselling
- Other youth health projects financing

## New Operational Mechanism

### Costumized Services

- Mobile Units
- Youth Health Counselling
- Dedicated Phone and E-mail Line

### Health Literacy Promotion Services

- Youth Health Portal
- Health Education
- Capacity Building to Intervention Players

## Objectives

Likewise to most approaches at the time, this programme has primarily focused on warning and informing young people about the consequences of risky behaviour and/or informing them of healthier and safer lifestyles, complementary to competences development to avoid risks. Despite the Portuguese Institute of Sports and Youth has consistently been committed to ensuring that young people have a voice in identifying their health needs, in planning and delivering solutions, and in innovating and experimenting to advance practice, its former intervention model, “Cuida-te”, **fails to take into account the active role of cognitive functions, which calls for other dimensions that complement more traditional approaches.** On the other hand, environmental prevention interventions underline the importance of limiting exposure to risky behaviour opportunities, targeting the **automatic system of behaviours.**

## Renovation Process

The renovation process of the programme was undertaken with the purpose of addressing recommendations emerging from recent literature reviews, which points to:

- A requirement of competency and expertise on prevention principles, theories and practice among those who develop prevention interventions, namely trained and/or specialized professionals.
  - Prevention interventions should form part of a coherent long-term prevention plan, monitored on an ongoing basis allowing for necessary adjustments.
  - Prevention delivered should be based on scientific evidence as an investment in the well-being of young people.
- Hence, this paper proposes a renovation of the former model, taking into account recent literature and also the view of several experts in prevention science, youth professionals, health professionals, public health service providers and policy makers, who were invited to comment, discuss and review a pre-editing version.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

**Wide** multicomponent intervention programmes are the most adequate to **serve the purpose** of promoting healthy lifestyles and to prevent risky behaviours among young people.

The concept of **wide** includes intervention at macro level (state policies), the meso level (recreational settings, schools), and at microlevel (families and young people); and the notion that there are beneficial effects beyond substance use per se.

Young people tend particularly to be influenced by surrounding culture; as such, their risky behaviours are **not simply a result of health illiteracy.**

These facts entail prevention programmes to **go beyond** information/warning and skill/competence development approaches.

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