



## **Youth Wiki national description**

# Youth policies in Ireland

# 2021

The Youth Wiki is Europe's online encyclopaedia in the area of national youth policies. The platform is a comprehensive database of national structures, policies and actions supporting young people. For the updated version of this national description, please visit <https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki>



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# Ireland

## Youth policy in Ireland

Youth policy-making in Ireland is under the responsibility of the Irish government. Youth policy governance takes place at a national level in Ireland. The [Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth](#) (DCEDIY) is the main government department responsible for youth policy in Ireland. However, many pieces of youth policy take a cross-departmental or a whole of government approach. The Youth Affairs Unit within the DCEDIY is to support the alignment of youth policies and services with other Departmental policies and services and the broader policy and services field.

The Irish youth work sector is strongly dependent on non-profit organisations, many of which are at least partially funded by the government.

The [National Youth Strategy 2015-2020](#) was Ireland's last national youth Strategy and the key policy document on youth policy in Ireland. It targeted children and young people aged 10-24 years. The Strategy took a cross-government, cross-sectoral, whole-of-society approach to youth policy.

The National Youth Strategy had its basis in [Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020](#). Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures was Ireland's first National Policy Framework for children and young people aged 0-24 years. An updated framework for children and young people is currently being developed.

## 1. YOUTH POLICY GOVERNANCE

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Youth policy governance takes place at a national level in Ireland. The [Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth](#) (DCEDIY) is the main government department responsible for youth policy in Ireland. The DCEDIY's [Statement of Strategy \(2021-2023\)](#) states that the department 'will develop, implement and influence evidence informed policies and legislation that improve the outcomes for those we serve.'

### **The National Youth Strategy and National Policy Framework**

The main youth policy in Ireland is the [National Youth Strategy](#). The latest of these youth strategies ran from 2015-2020 and targeted children and young people aged 10-24 years. The aim of the National Youth Strategy is to enable all young people to realise their maximum potential, by respecting their rights and hearing their voices, while protecting and supporting them as they transition from childhood to adulthood.

The National Youth Strategy takes a cross-government, cross-sectoral, whole-of-society approach to youth policy. The National Youth Strategy has its basis in [Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020](#), which is Ireland's first National Policy Framework for children and young people aged 0-24 years.

The National Youth Strategy aims to enable all young people to realise their maximum potential with regard to the five national outcomes outlined in Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The national policy framework for children and young people (2014-2020):

The five national outcomes of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures are:

- Outcome 1: Active and healthy, physical and mental wellbeing

- Outcome 2: Achieving full potential in learning and development
- Outcome 3: Safe and protected from harm
- Outcome 4: Economic security and opportunity
- Outcome 5: Connected, respected and contributing to their world

The National Youth Strategy is a universal strategy for all young people in Ireland. However, it also provides for the needs of young people experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, the poorest outcomes. Therefore, marginalised/disadvantaged young people are identified as a target group within the National Youth Strategy.

Marginalised/disadvantaged young people identified in the strategy include:

- Young people marginalised by location or geography or socioeconomic reasons
- Young Travellers, Roma, young people from ethnic or religious minorities
- Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers
- Young people with disabilities or mental health issues
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) young people
- Young carers
- Young people in conflict with the law
- Young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs)
- Young parents
- Young people in care
- Young people in direct provision
- Lone parents under the age of 25 years.

The DCEDIY plans to build on the successes of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures by developing a successor strategy and further developing cross-government, sectoral and inter-agency collaboration. The DCEDIY also plan to establish a new National Youth Sector Engagement Structure, with the implementation of a new Youth Strategy already having begun.

### **The Youth Justice Strategy**

[The Youth Justice Strategy](#) was adopted in 2021 and will run until 2027. This strategy works with 105 Garda [Police] Youth Diversion Projects (GYDP) and aims to develop these programmes through evidence-based development and interventions. GYDPs engage young people in a range of ways including through education, training, employment support, personal development, and social enterprise initiatives.

The main aims of this Strategy include:

- Expanding the GYDP projects
- Preventing further offending by children and young adults
- Enhancing criminal processes including detention and post-detention measures to provide support and positive personal development for young offenders
- Improving the quality of supports available to vulnerable children or young adults.

## **1.1 Target population of youth policy**

The target group of youth policy in Ireland is 0-25 years.

- [Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People](#) (2014 - 2020) defines a young person as any person under 25 years of age.
- The [National Youth Strategy](#) (2015 - 2020) targets young people aged 10-24 years.
- The [Youth Work Act](#) (2001) defines a young person as a person under the age of 25 years.
- The [Youth Justice Strategy](#) relates to young people aged 12-17 years.

## 1.2 National youth law

There is no specific national youth law in Ireland.

Ireland signed the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#) in 1992. The UNCRC is an international agreement that lists the rights of children and young people under the age of 18. This Convention has 41 articles and because Ireland signed and ratified this Convention, the Government must be assessed on how well they implement it.

## 1.3 National youth strategy

### Existence of a national youth strategy

The last policy document on youth policy in Ireland is the [National Youth Strategy](#). This strategy was introduced in 2015 and covered the years 2015-2020. The DCEDIY in their [Statement of Strategy \(2021-2023\)](#) stated that they are developing and launching a successor strategy based on the successes of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures.

### Scope and contents

The main elements of the [National Youth Strategy](#) are:

- The socio-economic context of young people in Ireland
- Youth as a period of development
- The youth policy environment
- The National Youth Strategy Consultation
- The aim, objectives, and priority actions of the strategy
- The implementation framework of the strategy
- Enabling actions across the five national outcomes areas for children and young people

The Strategy's aim is to enable all young people to realize their maximum potential, by respecting their rights and hearing their voices, while protecting and supporting them as they transition from childhood to adulthood. These line up with the five national outcomes outlined in Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The national policy framework for children and young people (2014-2020)

Outcome 1: Active and healthy, physical, and mental wellbeing.

Outcome 2: Achieving full potential in learning and development.

Outcome 3: Safe and protected from harm.

Outcome 4: Economic security and opportunity

Outcome 5: Connected, respected, and contributing to their world.



The National Youth Strategy is the universal strategy for all young people in Ireland. However, it also provides for the needs of young people experiencing, or at the risk of experiencing, the poorest outcomes.

As a result, marginalized or disadvantaged young people are identified as a target group within the National Youth Strategy.

**Marginalized/disadvantaged young people include, but are not limited to:**

- Young people marginalized by location or geography or socioeconomic reasons.
- Young travelers, Roma, young people from ethnic or religious minorities.
- Migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers.
- Young people with disabilities or mental health issues.
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBTQ+) young people.
- Young carers.
- Young people in conflict with the law.
- Young people who are in employment, education, or training (NEETs).
- Young parents.
- Young people in care.
- Young people in direct provision.
- Lone parents under the age of 25 years.

The National Youth Strategy had an long consultation process between December 2014 and March 2015 with over 4,600 people with 4000 of those young people under the age of 25. The main consultation method was online surveys. One survey was aimed at young people and another survey was aimed at those working with young people.

The results of the online surveys helped in the development of specific questions that were used in three consultation events. One of the events was aimed at young people aged under 18 years. Two other events were aimed at other stakeholders; including those working directly with young people and young people aged 18 and over. The results of the consultation events and survey helped to inform key priority areas in relation to the development of the National Youth Strategy.

A review of the National Youth Strategy was conducted in terms of progress, development, and implementation as part of a Mid-term review of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures.

The Implementation Team in the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) held a focus group with young people from the [EU Structured Dialogue](#) (known as 'Young Voices' in Ireland) as part of the review.

### **Responsible authority for the implementation of the youth strategy**

The DCEDIY was the government ministry responsible for the implementation of the National Youth Strategy at a national level and for ensuring that national policy is connected to local implementation.

The DCEDIY established a National Youth Strategy Led Team to coordinate, progress and monitor the implementation of the Strategy. Two sub-groups of the National Youth Strategy Lead Team were also established:

- One to engage with the Advisory Council.
- One to oversee the implementation of the Value for Money Policy Review of Youth Programmes.

The Youth Affairs Unit within the DCEDIY is responsible for the development of youth policies and strategies. The role of the Youth Affairs Unit is to support the alignment of youth policies and services with other Departmental policies and services and the broader policy and services field.

The National Youth Strategy has its basis in Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020, which was Ireland's first National Policy Framework for children and young people aged 0- to 24-years. A new national framework is currently being developed.

## Revisions/updates

The [National Children's Strategy: Our Children - Their Lives \(2000-2010\)](#) was the first national youth policy in Ireland. The National Children's Strategy had a strong focus on the rights of children and young people to be heard in matters that affect their lives.

The National Children's Strategy was succeeded by the National Youth Strategy. The National Children's Strategy targeted children under 0-18 years of age, whereas the National Youth Strategy targets children and young people aged 10-24 years.

The National Youth Strategy also differs from the National Children's Strategy as it takes a cross-government, cross-sectoral, whole-of-society approach to youth policy. Within their Statement of Strategy (2021-2023) DCEDIY has plans for the development and launch of a successor Strategy to the National Youth Strategy and to Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures.

## 1.4 Youth policy decision-making

### Structure of decision-making

Youth policymaking takes place at central government level in Ireland.

The [Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth \(DCEDIY\)](#) is the top-level authority responsible for youth policy. It is a dedicated government department responsible for children and youth affairs.

The DCEDIY brings together several key areas of policy and provision for children, young people, and families. Its mission is to lead the effort to improve the outcomes for children and young people in Ireland.

In 2020, the DCEDIY's remit was expanded by the Government. It's responsibilities now include policy, legislation, and services in the areas of integration, equality, and disability, which were previously held by the [Department of Justice](#). The Government also plans on giving the Department additional responsibility for disability services that will be transferred from the [Department of Health](#).

Included within the Department's remit are the following organisations:

- [Child Policy and Tusla Governance Division](#) (Tusla is the national [Child and Family Agency](#))
- [Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare Division](#)
- [Corporate and Business Support Division](#)
- [Youth Justice, Adoption, Youth and Participation Division](#)
- International Protection and Equality Division.

Other actors formally involved in youth policy making include government departments whose remit includes young people, for example:

- [Department of Education](#)
- [Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science](#)

- [Department of Health](#)
- [Department of Justice](#)
- [Department of Social Protection](#)
- [Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media](#)
- [Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage](#)
- [Department of Rural and Community Development](#)

## Main policy themes

The main policy themes addressed in the [National Youth Strategy](#) relate to the five national outcomes outlined in [Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The national policy framework for children and young people](#):

- Outcome 1: Active and healthy, physical and mental wellbeing
- Outcome 2: Achieving full potential in learning and development
- Outcome 3: Safe and protected from harm
- Outcome 4: Economic security and opportunity
- Outcome 5: Connected, respected and contributing to their world

Chapter 2 of the [National Youth Strategy](#) provides an understanding of the situation of young people in Ireland. This includes presenting youth policy and research related to the five outcome areas under the headings of:

- The socio-economic context
- Youth as a period of development
- The youth policy environment

Several objectives are outlined in the National Youth Strategy under the five outcome areas.

### **Outcome 1: Active and healthy, physical, and mental wellbeing.**

Objective 1: Young people enjoy a healthy lifestyle, about their physical, mental, and sexual health and well-being.

Objective 2: Young people benefit from involvement in recreational and cultural opportunities including youth work, arts, and sports.

### **Outcome 2: Achieving full potential in learning and development.**

Objective 3: Young people's core skills, competencies and attributes are enhanced and promoted through accessible, responsive, formal, and non-formal education and learning opportunities.

Objective 4: Young people benefit from strengthened transition supports at all levels as they move through the education system.

### **Outcome 3: Safe and protected from harm.**

Objective 5: Young people, particularly vulnerable and marginalized young people, are supported to feel safe at home, in school, in their communities and online, and are empowered to speak out when feeling unsafe or vulnerable.

Objective 6: Young people have safe places and spaces where they can socialize and develop.

#### **Outcome 4: Economic security and opportunity.**

Objective 7: Young people are better able to participate in the labour market through enhanced employability skills that complement formal learning and training qualifications and entrepreneurship opportunities.

Objective 8: Young people are a particular focus in policies that address social inclusion and poverty.

#### **Outcome 5: Connected, respected and contributing to their world**

Objective 9: Young people are included in society, are environmentally aware, their equality and rights are upheld, their diversity celebrated, and they are empowered to be active global citizens.

Objective 10: Young people's autonomy is supported, their active citizenship fostered, and their voice strengthened through political, social, and civic engagement

### **The national agency for youth**

The [National Youth Council of Ireland](#) (NYCI) is the representative body for voluntary youth organisations in Ireland. The role of the NYCI is to use their collective experience to act on issues that impact on young people. NYCI's role is recognised in legislation through the [Youth Work Act 2001](#).

The role of NYCI includes:

- Representing the shared interests of voluntary youth organisations
- Building solidarity among its members
- Advocating on issues that impact on the lives of young people
- Promoting the development of evidence informed high quality specialist youth work practice
- Capacity building and professional development.

NYCI design and manage a number of programmes including:

- Child Protection Programme
- Development Education Programme
- Youth Arts Programme
- Youth Health Programme
- Intercultural and Equality Programme
- International Programme
- Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Maths (STEAM) and Digital Youth Work Programme.

NYCI also provide training to youth organisation on these programmes.

NYCI is funded by the Youth Affairs Unit of DCEDIY under the Youth Service Grant Scheme. Youth Service Grant Scheme funding is made available on an annual basis to 30 national and major regional voluntary organisations. NYCI was awarded €633,244 in 2020 under this scheme, an increase from the €608,888 awarded in 2019.

[NYCI called on the government](#) to invest an additional €4.7 million, of the Irish National Budget, into youth work services. This additional funding requested was to provide more supports and activities for young people, to meet the needs of the growing Irish youth population and to strengthen voluntary youth organisations.

NYCI argued for this increased investment in youth, on the basis that:

- Young people have been hit hard by the pandemic especially with the interruption of their education, career, employment
- The pandemic had an impact on young people's mental health including the interruption of support from friends and relevant networks
- Youth employment is over 37.8% because of the pandemic
- Overall, the total Government spending has increased by 17% since 2011, but support for youth work has only increased by 2.7% in the same period.

## Policy monitoring and evaluation

The National Youth Strategy was evaluated in 2017 by DCEDIY to assess progress, examine the process and review the continuing relevance of its objectives and priorities. This evaluation was conducted as part of the Mid-term review of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures.

The DCEDIY have evaluated the successes of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures and will build on these evaluations to implement a successor strategy that is integrated, action-focused and whole of society orientated in its input and application

## 1.5 Cross-sectoral approach with other ministries

### Mechanisms and actors

Youth policy is developed and implemented according to a cross-sectoral approach. Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The national policy framework for children and young people and the National Youth Strategy take a cross-government, cross-sectoral, whole-of-society approach to youth policy.

As part of a cross-sectoral approach to Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures- a high-level [Children and Young People's Policy Consortium](#) was established in 2014.

This Consortium reports directly to the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy, which includes senior officials from government departments, agencies alongside representatives from advisory and local operational fora. The Policy Consortium is chaired by the Secretary General of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) with a deputy chair from the Department of the Prime Minister (Taoiseach).

The development of the National Youth Strategy was overseen by a cross-sectoral National Youth Strategy Task Group brought together by the DCEDIY. This Task Groups work was supported by Advisory Group convened by the National Youth Council of Ireland and comprising some 18 youth voluntary organizations.

€66.8 million in funding was available, from the Irish Exchequer, to support the provision of youth services nationwide in 2021. This was an increase from the €61.471 million in funding available in 2020.

## 1.6 Evidence-based youth policy

### Political commitment to evidence-based youth policy

The Irish government has a political commitment to evidence-based youth policy.

[Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures](#): The national policy framework for children and young people (2014-2020) states 'to be effective, policies and services must be supported by evidence and focused on the achievement of agreed outcomes.'

Similarly, the National Youth Strategy (2015-2020) is evidence informed and outcomes focused. The Strategy takes an evidence-informed approach stating, 'implementation is

guided by the learning from, and research into, policies, strategies and approaches and on best practice in service delivery.’ (Pg. 39)

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) has an Evidence into Policy Programme. The aim of this programme is to support and meet the Department’s research and evidence needs, with respect to core Departmental and Government policy priorities. This is done through a variety of research streams (building the evidence chain) and knowledge-transfer activities (promoting the uptake and use of evidence to drive policy change), that combine to support evidence-informed policymaking.

## Cooperation between policy-making and research

Cooperation between policymaking and research is irregular.

The DCEDIY has a research panel, which academic and independent researchers can apply to be part of. The DCEDIY sends requests for tenders for research projects to approved members of the DCEDIY Research Panel who can then apply to conduct the research. The DCEDIY also conducts training with members of their research panel. In the past, the DCEDIY also funded research master’s and PhDs in child and youth issues.

In the case of longer-term research studies, the DCEDIY has cooperation with research institutes. For example, there is ongoing cooperation between the DCEDIY, and the research institutes contracted to conduct a Longitudinal Study of Children in Ireland called [Growing up in Ireland](#). These research institutes are the [Economic and Social Research Institute \(ESRI\)](#) and [Trinity College Dublin](#). The study began in 2006 and is managed by the DCEDIY in association with the [Central Statistics Office \(CSO\)](#). The ESRI and Trinity College Dublin regularly compile research reports and briefings based on the study’s findings in cooperation with the DCEDIY. There is an annual Growing up in Ireland conference that is supported by the DCEDIY.

The DCEDIY has several funded research programmes, including:

- The National Children’s Research Programme (which funds the Growing up in Ireland study)
- The DCEDIY Research Scholarship Programme
- 2010-12 DCEDIY/IRC Co-Funded Research Development Initiative
- The DCEDIY/IRC Scholarship Scheme.

The DCEDIY also leads a few strategies and schemes, including:

- [Action Plan on School Age Childcare](#)
- [Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures](#)
- [First 5](#)
- [LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy, \(2018-2020\)](#)
- [Migrant Integration Strategy](#)
- [National Childcare Scheme](#)
- [National Disability Inclusion Strategy \(2017-2021\)](#)
- [National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy \(2019-2021\)](#)
- [National Strategy for Women and Girls \(2017-2020\)](#)
- [National Youth Strategy](#)
- [Our Voices Our Schools](#)
- [National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-Making \(2015-2020\)](#)

- [National Traveler and Roma Inclusion Strategy \(2017-2021\)](#)
- [Shared Vision, Next Steps \(2019-2024\)](#)
- [UBU Your Place Your Space](#)
- [What Works](#)
- [Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities](#)
- [National Framework for Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-Making.](#)

The key policy themes informed by research include:

- Understanding of children and young people’s lives
- Youth justice issues
- Traveler and Roma attendance, participation, and engagement with the education system
- Youth participation in decision-making
- LGBTI+ issues.

## **National statistics and available data sources**

Statistics on youth in Ireland are collected by several actors.

### **Central Statistics Office (CSO)**

The [Central Statistics Office \(CSO\)](#) collects data in the Census of Population every five years on areas including education, health, ethnicity etc.

### **Tusla**

[The Child and Family Agency \(Tusla\)](#) collects data on children in the care of the state. Tusla Performance and Activity Reports are published every quarter.

### **The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government**

The lead local authorities for homelessness in each region, under the [Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage](#), collects statistics on the number of young people aged 18-25 years who are homeless in Ireland every month.

### **Oberstown Children Detention Campus**

[Oberstown Children Detention Campus](#) publishes an annual report ‘Key Characteristics of Young People in Detention.’ Statistics include a profile of key characteristics of young people, e.g., age, gender, care history, health issues, mental health issues, behavioral issues, substance misuse issues, engagement in education, learning difficulties etc. The research is aimed at providing a better understanding of the challenges faced by young people in conflict with the law, and to inform services and interventions to assist such young people. It also publishes monthly Occupancy Statistics.

### **Irish Prison Service**

[The Irish Prison Service](#) publishes statistics on young people aged 17-25 years in prisons in Ireland. The data is published and updated on a yearly basis.

### **State of the Nation’s Children**

[The State of the Nation’s Children Reports](#) are an outcome of the publication of the National Set of Child Well-Being Indicators in 2005. The DCEDIY (previously known as the Department of Children and Youth Affairs) published the reports every second year between 2006 and 2016.

## Growing Up in Ireland

[Growing Up in Ireland](#), the National Longitudinal Study of Children in Ireland, tracks the development of two nationally representative cohorts of children: a Child Cohort (recruited when the children were 9 years old) and an Infant Cohort (recruited when the children were 9 months old).

The Growing Up in Ireland study is funded by the DCEDIY, in association with the Department of Social Protection and the Central Statistics Office. The study is being carried out by a consortium of researchers led by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and Trinity College, Dublin.

In the Statement of Strategy (2021-2023) recently published by the DCEDIY there has been an updated plan to deliver a new model of delivery for 'Growing up in Ireland, the national longitudinal study of children and young people.' This plan states that the DCEDIY expects to oversee the delivery of the Growing up in Ireland contract from 2020-2022 and to transfer the Growing up in Ireland into the Department and the CSO from January 2023.

## Ombudsman for Children Office

The [Ombudsman for Children's](#) Office conducts research on topical issues such as education, healthcare, and youth homelessness.

## DCEDIY

[Hub na nÓg](#) is part of DCEDIY and supports government departments, state agencies and non-government organisations to give children and young people a voice in decision-making on issues that affect their lives. DCEDIY's Youth Participation Unit and Hub na nÓg regularly conducts consultations with children and young people on issues that affect their lives.

Consultations conducted with young people include:

- So, how was School Today?
- After School Care
- Cyber Crime
- Direct Provision System
- Ireland 2016 National Commemorative Programme
- Development of the National Obesity Strategy
- Universal Periodic Review.

## Budgetary allocations supporting research in the youth field

Budget allocations which support research in the youth field are provided by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

## 1.7 Funding youth policy

### How youth policy is funded

Youth policy is funded through the [Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth](#) (DCEDIY). The [Youth Justice, Adoption, Youth and Participation Division](#) is responsible for the effective administration of youth service funding, along with the reform of youth funding programmes.

A targeted youth funding scheme called [UBU- Your Place Your Space](#), was launched in December 2019 and began in July 2020. The National Youth Service Funding Scheme works in conjunction with local service providers, who offer young people a dedicated 'place' and a 'space' in their local community. UBU - Your Place, Your Space brought together four already existing, overlapping schemes with a value of over €38.5 million. It



arose from the results of a 2014 'Value for Money and Policy Review' of the Youth Programmes that target disadvantaged young people. UBU – Your Place, Your Space is discussed further in Chapter 4.7 Youth work to foster social inclusion.

As noted in the DCEDIYs Statement of Strategy (2021-2023) UBU has now become fully implemented on a continuous improvement basis.

### **What is funded?**

The youth policy priority areas receiving funding are:

- Child protection and welfare
- Alternative care
- Youth affairs
- Youth justice
- Participation
- Play and recreation
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex (LGBTI+).
- Financial accountability

### **Financial accountability**

Strategic Goal number 2 of the DCEDIYs [Statement of Strategy \(2021-2023\)](#) states that the department 'will ensure the provision of a range of quality and sustainable services, underpinned by strategic investment, that meet the needs of individuals, families and communities.' One of the priority activities of Goal 2 is to develop and enhance youth service provision in Ireland, including through reform of youth funding programmes and strengthening of youth quality initiatives. The performance indicators for this goal shows the departments goals for the period 2021-2023 including the reform of the Youth Services Grant Scheme and the youth quality support mechanisms will be strengthened.

[The Public Spending Code](#) sets out rules and procedures that ensure high standards are upheld across the Irish public service in relation to public funds.

### **Use of EU Funds**

The current European Social Fund programme, [ESF+](#), runs from 2021-2027. The ESF+ is the EU's instrument for investing in people. It aims to improve employment and education opportunities, to enhance social inclusion and to tackle poverty. The main objective of the ESF+ is a more social Europe. It will support the principles of the European pillar of social rights and the implementation of recommendations under the European Semester.

Member States with a substantial number of young people not in employment, education or training will have to dedicate at least 10% of the ESF+ funding to measures in support of youth employment and activation of young people.

Member States must allocate at least 25% of ESF+ funding to measures fostering social inclusion and targeting those most in need, while a target of 4% is also set for supporting the most vulnerable.

ESF+ will be more coherent with and complementary to other Funds that provide support to people, such as [Erasmus+](#), [the Asylum and Migration Fund](#), the [European Globalization Adjustment Fund](#), and the [Structural Reform Support Programme](#) .

The regulations for the upcoming programming period are still under negotiation and Ireland's final allocation for the ESF+ has yet to be decided. The ESF+ is a co-financed programme, meaning that EU funding must be matched by a set percentage of national funding. This co-financing rate varies by region.

[The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform](#), the [Department of Education](#), and the three Regional Assemblies had a consultation process to prioritize EU cohesion funding in Ireland for the period 2021-2027. There were 128 attendees at the workshop and 109 submissions were received.

The European Social Fund (ESF) in Ireland funds several youth schemes under four priority areas:

- Priority 1: Sustainable and Quality Employment
- Priority 2: Social Inclusion and Equal Opportunities
- Priority 3: Education, Training and Life-Long Learning
- Priority 4: Youth Employment Initiative

#### **Key youth programmes funded under Priority 2: Social Inclusion and Equal Opportunities include**

- [Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme \(SICAP\)](#)
- [Youthreach](#) (discussed in Chapter 3.5 Traineeships and apprenticeships)
- [Garda Youth Diversion Projects \(GYDPs\)](#) (discussed in Chapter 4.7 Youth work to foster social inclusion)
- [Young Persons Probation \(YPP\) Projects](#).

#### **Key youth programmes funded under Priority 4: Youth Employment Initiative**

- [Back to Work Enterprise Allowance \(BTWEA\) Scheme](#) (discussed in Chapter 3.9 Start-up funding for young entrepreneurs)
- [JobsPlus Incentive Scheme](#) (discussed in Chapter 3.5 Traineeships and apprenticeships)
- [Youthreach](#)
- [Defence Forces Employment Support Scheme](#)
- [Community Training Centers](#)
- [Youth Employment Support Scheme](#) (discussed in Chapter 3.5 Traineeships and apprenticeships).

#### **Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020**

The European Social Fund along with the Irish Government co-founded the [Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020](#).

[The Youth Employment Initiative](#) aims to tackle youth unemployment and implement the Youth Guarantee by providing jobs, education, and training opportunities for individuals under 25 who are not in Employment, Education or Training.

The key areas chosen for investment under the [Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020](#) focused on:

- helping people get back into education, training, or work.
- helping those at risk of being excluded socially or from the job market; and
- encouraging youth employment and improving access to education.

The Programme provided €1.157 billion in funding to over 20 national measures. It was formally approved by the European Commission in February 2015 and was launched in April of that year. The Programme involves a total investment of €1.157 billion; over €544 million each from the ESF and the Irish Government and a special allocation of just over €68 million from the EU's Youth Employment Initiative.

## Updates

As this Youth Employment Initiative ended in 2020, Social Justice Ireland have called for the adaption of the new Youth Employment Strategy as the current Programme for Government does not mention youth unemployment or a strategy to tackle it. Due to Covid-19, young people will be disproportionately affected by unemployment as the economy recovers from Covid-19. The new Government must build on the European Commission Youth Employment Support package to 'bridge jobs for the next generation.'

Young people face a challenging labour market situation. The European Commission is proposing that a minimum of €22 billion be mobilized for a Youth Employment Support package to mitigate the effects of the pandemic for young people in the labour market. The new Government should use the strands of the Youth Employment Support Package as a guide to designing a strategy to deal with this crisis at a national level.

These strands are:

1. Stepping up the outreach to vulnerable young people across the EU ages 15-29
2. Vocational education and training
3. Renewed interest in apprenticeships
4. Additional measures to support youth employment including start-up incentives.

## 1.8 Cross-border cooperation

### Cooperation with European countries

The PEACE programme is a European Union initiative designed to support peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland.

The last programme, [PEACE IV](#), ran from 2014-2020. The next programme, [PEACE PLUS](#), is currently being finalized and is expected to run from 2021-2027. Further information is provided in Chapter 1.9 Current debates and reforms.

The eligible area for the PEACE IV Programme was Northern Ireland and the Border Counties of Ireland (including Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan, and Sligo). Programme funding was worth €270m. 85% of the Programme, €229m, was provided through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). 15%, was match-funded by the Irish Government and the Northern Irish Executive.

The content was agreed by the Northern Ireland Executive, the Irish Government, and the European Commission. The key objectives of the programme were:

- Share Education: to provide direct, sustained, curriculum-based contact between pupils and teachers from all backgrounds, through collaboration between schools from different sectors to promote good relations and enhance children's skills and attitudes to contribute to a cohesive society.
- Children and Young People: to enhance the capacity of children and young people to form positive and effective relationships with others of a different background and make a positive contribution to building a cohesive society.
- Shared Spaces and Services: to create a more cohesive society through an increased provision of shared spaces and services.
- Building Positive Relations: to promote positive relations characterized by respect, where cultural diversity is celebrated and people can live, learn, and socialize together, free from prejudice, hate and intolerance.

One of the targets of the programme are young people aged between 14-24 years who are disadvantaged, excluded, or marginalized, have deep social and emotional needs and are at risk of becoming involved in anti-social behavior, violence, or dissident activity.

## International cooperation

### National Youth Council of Ireland

[The National Youth Council of Ireland \(NYCI\)](#) is a member of the European Youth Forum and works as part of this platform to influence the decisions of the European Union and the United Nations.

NYCI's International Programme supports young people's involvement in international activities, youth work and youth policy. The programme aims to:

- facilitate and promote the involvement of youth organisations and young people in international activities.
- encourage youth organisations to include an international dimension to their youth work, through creating opportunities for sharing of best practice in youth work and facilitating international collaboration.
- advocates and lobbies on International and European youth policy to ensure young people have an opportunity to add their voice to decisions that affect young people, their youth organisations, and their future.

### UN Youth Delegate Programme

The [UN Youth Delegate Programme](#) supports the representation of young people from Ireland at the United Nations. The programme is sponsored by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in partnership with NYCI.

Each year, two UN Youth Delegates are chosen to form part of Ireland's official delegation to the United Nations General Assembly. The aim of the initiative is to provide a platform for young people from Ireland to be represented at the United Nations, and to facilitate greater engagement with Irish youth on national and foreign policy issues.

### Léargas

[Léargas](#) manage international and national exchange programmes in education, youth and community work, and vocational education and training. These exchanges connect people in different communities and countries, and bring an international dimension to the work of organisations across Ireland. Léargas is the National Agency for Erasmus+ in Adult Education, School Education, Vocational Education and Training, and Youth.

## 1.9 Current debates and reforms

### Forthcoming policy developments

#### PEACE PLUS

The [PEACE PLUS](#) programme will run from 2021-2027. The overall objective of the PEACE PLUS Programme will be to build prosperity and peace within the region, to ensure that this Programme will leave a lasting and tangible legacy. The programme will achieve this by funding activities that promote peace and reconciliation and contribute to the cross-border economic and territorial development of the region. The framework developed for PEACE PLUS includes six themes:

- Building Peaceful and Thriving Communities
- Delivering Economic Regeneration and Transformation
- Empowering and Investing in Young People
- Healthy and Inclusive Communities
- Supporting a Sustainable Future
- Building and Embedding Partnership and Collaboration

For more information on the PEACE programmes see [Chapter 1.8 Cross-border cooperation](#).

## National Youth Policy Updates

In the DCEDIY's [Statement of Strategy \(2021-2023\)](#), the Department has plans for the development, launch and successor strategy to the National Youth Strategy and to Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures.

## Ongoing debates

### Young people and Covid-19

A [new report](#) from DCEDIY has found that the Covid-19 pandemic has had negative effects on young people's health and wellbeing, especially amongst marginalized groups.

The report, based on the findings of research undertaken by SpunOut and the Department's Youth Advisory Group, shows how young people struggled with being separated from their friends, and faced significant mental health impacts because of Covid-19 and the restrictions.

The report found that:

- Missing friends was most cited as a challenge faced during Covid-19 (cited by 35% of respondents), followed by impact on health (20%), school/college problems (18%), and cabin fever (16%)
- Young people's feelings towards the future were mixed. Over one third of respondents reporting optimism for the future. However, negative feelings such as anxiety, uncertainty, pessimism, and fear were also common.
- Young people mentioned a range of positives that they wished to take forward, including maintaining a healthy lifestyle, self-care, quality family time and relief from pressure of commutes and school or college. However, almost one in ten respondents were unable to name any positives.

The Department's Youth Advisory Group was invited to respond to the consultation findings, expressed the need for more empathy and compassion towards young people, and felt that young people overall have been unfairly blamed for spikes in COVID-19 cases.

The Advisory Group said that, now more than ever, mental health services, educational institutions, and youth services need to work together, so that each is aware of the challenges young people have been facing and can help ease them back into everyday life in the next stage of the pandemic and beyond.

### Young people living in Direct Provision

Direct provision is a means of meeting the basic needs of food and shelter for asylum seekers directly while their claims for refugee status, subsidiary protection or appeals for leave to remain are being processed in Ireland. Direct Provision and Emergency Accommodation Centres tend to be isolated, and residents must share rooms with most not having the facilities to cook for themselves or their families. In many Direct Provision centres, meals are only served at set times. The Royal College of Psychiatrists' report on Children in Direct Provision found that a lack of funds, transport, strict mealtimes, and a ban on visitors to Direct Provision centres can exclude Asylum seekers. For example, this can exclude children from afterschool activities and youths from further or third level educational opportunities.

The most recent statistics published by the Irish Refugee Council state that in August 2019 there were 1,647 children living in Direct Provision.

The Government committed, in the Programme for Government, to end Direct Provision and to replace it with 'a new International Protection accommodation policy centred on a not-for-profit approach.'

In February 2021 the Irish Government published [A White Paper on Ending Direct Provision](#) and to Establish a New International Protection Support Service. The Government plans to replace the Direct Provision system with an international protection system. Their two-phased approach intends to close all Direct Provision centres by the end of 2024.

Phase one is expected to take four months. In this phase, accommodation will be provided in reception and integration centres. Six reception and integration centres will be established, and these will be owned by the State and run by not-for-profit organisations.

According to the plan, people including children who are applying for protection will be helped to integrate into Ireland from day one, with health, housing, education, and employment supports at the core of the system. The necessary supports will be in place depending on the relevant needs of the person.

A health assessment will be provided for all new international protection applicants in phase one and there will be a focus on the needs of children who come to Ireland with their families.

Following phase one, applicants will be offered accommodation through several strands in phase two. The plan says after their first four months in Ireland, people whose protection claims are still being processed will move to accommodation in the community. All accommodation will be own-door, self-contained houses, or apartments for families to provide privacy, agency, and independence. Houses will be situated within the community, with supports to encourage interconnections especially for children and young people.

### **Young people experiencing homelessness**

There is a debate on the number of young people experiencing homelessness and living in emergency accommodation because of the current 'housing crisis' in Ireland. This includes young people under 18 years of age living with their parents in emergency accommodation and young people aged 18-24 years living in homeless accommodation. The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government Homelessness Report for May 2021 show that 780 or 13% of young people aged 18-24 years are homeless in Ireland. The main topics debated are the negative impact of homelessness on young people, e.g., lack of space, mental health, education, and lack of social housing.

The Ombudsman for Children published a report on consultations with children and young people under 18 years of age living in homeless accommodation in 2019, outlining their views and experiences of living in Family Hubs.

The main actors involved in the debate are the Irish Government, the Department of the Environment, Housing and Local Government, the Ombudsman for Children, homeless charities, and the media.

### **Homelessness and Covid-19**

Focus Ireland published their third volume of '[Focus on Homelessness](#)' in October 2020. This report represented data that covered the first Covid 'lockdown' period of homelessness. In March 2020 government measures were introduced to prevent people becoming homeless during the pandemic including a block of all evictions and a rent-freeze. In March 2020 when the stay-at-home order came into effect, there was a 12% decrease of individuals in emergency accommodation including young people.

The Homelessness Taskforce met with the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage Darragh O'Brien TD in April 2021 to discuss the proposal of the [Youth Homelessness Strategy](#) because of the effects of Covid-19. The meeting also addressed the ongoing work that happens to protect homeless people at risk of Covid-19 as the vaccine strategy is rolled out.

The High-Level Homelessness Taskforce is made up of representatives from the Peter McVerry Trust, Dublin Simon Community, Focus Ireland, Threshold, DePaul, Cross Care, and the Dublin Region Homelessness Executive and meet regularly by videoconference.

Members of the Taskforce were asked to consider their current role in supporting young people experiencing homelessness, what services they are currently providing to young people in homeless services and what are the key challenges to address youth homelessness from a service provision viewpoint. This Taskforce want to reach realizable solutions and meet the specific needs of young people who end up experiencing homelessness but prevent young people from becoming homeless in the first place.

### **LGBTQI+ Youth Homelessness**

LGBTQI+ youth homelessness has been highlighted as an issue by homeless services. According to Focus Ireland, 'youth services staff have reported high numbers of LGBTQI+ young people are becoming homeless as a direct consequence of their sexual orientation or gender identity.'

A [Qualitative Study of LGBTQI+ Youth Homelessness](#) in Ireland published by Focus Ireland in September 2020 sought for the first time to make visible and give a voice to the specificities of LGBTQI+ youth homelessness in Ireland.

The broad aim of this research included gathering information about:

- the scale and triggers of LGBTQI+ youth homelessness in Ireland
- first-hand qualitative experiences of young LGBTQI+ people who found themselves homeless
- measures that might be adopted to combat LGBTQI+ youth homelessness in Ireland.

To achieve these aims the research aimed to:

- Explore the processes and 'triggers' that contribute to LGBTQI+ young people's homelessness or housing instability in Ireland
- Understand LGBTQI+ young people's experiences of frontline homeless and related support services in Ireland
- Examine the potential obstacles to housing of LGBTQI+ young people in Ireland
- Compare the experiences of LGBTQI+ homeless young people in Ireland with the findings of the international research evidence on this group
- Make recommendations on the development of policies and services to meet the needs of young, homeless LGBTQI+ young people in Ireland, including recommendations on measuring sexuality and/or sexual identity in homelessness statistics.

Some recommendations made include:

- The 'Youth Homelessness Strategy', committed to in the Programme for Government 2020, should include a 'homelessness prevention' pillar with specific reference to the risks and pathways into homelessness which LGBTQI+ youth are likely to experience. The Strategy should put in place educational, family and youth service support to help prevent homelessness among LGBTQI+ youth.
- Tusla should increase funding to extend the lifetime of the existing Youth Homeless Prevention Mediations Service.
- The Strategy should also address the specific challenges which may face LGBTQI children in foster care and residential and review and build on the valuable work already conducted by Tusla to ensure that these challenges are addressed.
- The strategy should ensure that specialist support, information and training is available to teachers and youth workers to enhance their interaction with and support for LGBTQI+ youth.
- Focus Ireland should work with the Homeless Network and LGBTQI+ organisations to develop an awareness raising programme that highlights the presence and specific needs of young LGBTQI+ people including appropriate language and gender pronouns.

## LGBTQI+ Young People

The [National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy](#) is running from 2019 until 2021. This Strategy was the world's first National LGBTI+ Youth Strategy and is essential in identifying and addressing issues that may prevent LGBTQI+ young people from enjoying full equality in practice in Irish society.

The [2019 School Climate Survey](#) conducted by BeLong to Youth Services identified several issues affecting LGBTQI+ young people. These included anti-LGBTQI+ bullying, homophobic remarks, discrimination, harassment, and assault. Impacts on LGBTQI+ young people included absenteeism, lack of sense of belonging, isolation, and stigmatisation.

### Solutions proposed to address these issues included

- Safe and supportive schools with inclusive staff.
- Representation of LGBTQI+ identities in the curriculum
- Explicit anti-bullying policies to reduce levels of anti-LGBTQI+ bullying
- A student body with a higher sense of belonging and better educational outcomes.

### LGBTQI+ Young People, Mental Health and Covid-19

The mental health of LGBTQI+ young people in Ireland has plummeted over the course of the Covid-19 pandemic. The survey conducted by BeLong to Youth Services of more than 3000 young people found that 97% of LGBTQI+ young people are struggling with anxiety, stress, or depression.

The original findings in 2020 found that LGBTI+ youths were two times as likely to self-harm, three times as likely to experience suicidal ideation, and four times as likely to experience suicide and depression, compared to their non-LGBTI+ friends.

In 2021, follow-up research showed that these figures worsened. The study found that 63% of LGBTI+ young people are struggling with suicide ideation compared to 2020's 55%. Meanwhile, the number of LGBTI+ young people struggling with self-harm increased from 45% to 50% in one year.

Overall, 56% of LGBTI+ young people surveyed in 2021 said they experienced feelings of unacceptance in their home environment, including family rejection, feeling unaccepted, and a denial of identity.

## 2. VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES

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[The Department of Rural and Community Development](#) is the main government department responsible for volunteering in Ireland. The Department published Ireland's first National Volunteering Strategy in December 2020.

[The National Volunteering Strategy \(2021-2025\)](#) sets out a long-term vision for volunteering and volunteers in Ireland. This Strategy sets out a general direction for government policy in relation to volunteers and the volunteering environment. The purpose of the Strategy is to recognise, support and promote the unique value and contribution of volunteers to Irish society. This Strategy has five strategic objectives:

Strategic Objective 1: To increase participation and diversity in volunteering including embracing new trends and innovation.

Strategic Objective 2: To facilitate, develop and support the Volunteering Environment so that it contributes to vibrant and sustainable communities.

Strategic Objective 3: To recognise, celebrate and communicate the value and impact of volunteers and volunteering in all its forms.



Strategic Objective 4: To promote ethical and skills-based international volunteering to deliver results for beneficiaries and to enhance Global Citizenship in Ireland.

Strategic Objective 5: To improve policy coherence on volunteering across Government both nationally and locally.

The definition of volunteering is set out in the National Volunteering Strategy and is defined as:

'Volunteering is any time willingly given, either formally or informally, for the common good and without financial gain.'

This definition covers a wide range of 'volunteering activities' for example-

- Formal volunteering taking place within organisations (including institutions and agencies);
- Informal volunteering that which takes place outside an organisational setting; and
- The individual who, in many cases, does not consider what they do as volunteering but sees his or her actions as 'lending a hand' or 'being neighbourly.'

'To put it simply, volunteering is doing more than you have to, because you want to, because you care.'

[Volunteer Ireland](#) is the national volunteer development organisation and a support body for Volunteer Centres in Ireland. The key roles of Volunteer Ireland are:

- To recognize, support and celebrate volunteering in Ireland in a variety of ways including major campaigns like the National Volunteering Week and the Volunteer Ireland Awards
- To advocate on behalf of volunteers and volunteer involving organisations to create the best possible environment for volunteering in Ireland
- To manage I-VOL, the national database of Irish volunteering opportunities and listings
- To support Volunteer Centres based in each country in Ireland
- To deliver training in best practice in volunteer management to organisations that involve volunteers
- To provide support and guidance to companies interested in volunteering
- To develop and support best practice in volunteering and Volunteer Centres.

## 2.1 General context

### Historical developments

Historical developments of volunteering in Ireland are set out in Ireland's National Volunteering Strategy and within the [National Report for Ireland in the Study of Volunteering in the European Union](#).

There has been a long tradition of voluntary activity and charitable service in Ireland that has been shaped by religious, political and economic developments. Volunteering in Ireland has also formed a substantial element of national economic and social life.

The Catholic Church was the key provider of essential social welfare services in Ireland until the 1960s. Volunteerism in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Ireland was also linked to the Gaelic cultural revival before independence from Great Britain. These Gaelic revivalist organisations made a distinct contribution to refining an Irish identity through organisations like Conradh na Gaeilge (formally known as the Gaelic league) and the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) which still thrives today.

According to Volunteer Ireland, volunteers are currently involved in all aspects of Irish society supporting areas including health, education, culture, social services, the environment and the arts. 28.4% of the population, about 1 million people aged 15 and over, volunteer each year, according to the National Volunteering Strategy.

According to [Ipsos MRBI statistics](#) commissioned by Volunteer Ireland, three-quarters of the population volunteered their time since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020. The most popular activities were grocery shopping (40%), befriending someone who was lonely (31%) and collecting prescriptions (29%). 32% of those who volunteered were between the ages of 15 and 34.

According to the European Commissions working document on the [Situation of Young People in the European Union](#) published in 2018, around 30% of young people aged between 15 and 30 years participate in voluntary activities in Europe. Ireland presents an above-average rate of youth volunteering with 40% of Irish young people participating in voluntary activities.

## Main Concepts

### Defining volunteering

Volunteering is defined in the National Volunteering Strategy as 'any time willingly given, either formally or informally, for the common good and without financial gain'.

This definition of volunteering includes:

- formal volunteering taking place within organisations (including institutions and agencies);
- informal volunteering, that takes place outside an organisational setting;
- the individual who, may not consider what they do as volunteering but sees his or her actions as 'lending a hand' or 'being neighbourly'.

However, as the Strategy notes, volunteering is understood differently with people including volunteers themselves.

### Volunteering vs. Internships

According to [Volunteer Ireland](#), volunteering is different from internships in terms of motivation, the nature of role and timeframes. In terms of motivation, volunteering tends to be altruistic and internships tend to be linked to professional development.

The nature of roles also tends to differ between volunteering and internships. While volunteering covers a wide range of roles and skills, internships are generally skilled roles with a view to professional development.

Volunteering and internships differ in relation to timeframes. Volunteering tends to have flexible timeframes whereas internships tend to have more rigid timeframes.

## 2.2 Administration and governance of youth volunteering

### Governance

#### Department of Rural and Community Development

The [Department of Rural and Community Development](#) is the main government department responsible for volunteering. The Department is responsible for Voluntary Organisation Funding. This includes the [Scheme to Support National Organisations](#) (SSNO). SSNO provides funding to voluntary organisations in Ireland. Organisations that want to apply must focus on providing supports and improving the lives of disadvantaged people.

## Volunteer Ireland

[Volunteer Ireland](#) is the national volunteer development organization and a support body for all local Volunteer Centres and Volunteering Information Services in Ireland.

Volunteer Ireland's key roles are:

- To recognize, support and celebrate volunteering in Ireland in a variety of ways including major campaigns like the National Volunteering Week and the Volunteer Ireland Awards
- To advocate on behalf of volunteers and volunteer involving organisations to create the best possible environment for volunteering in Ireland.
- To manage I-VOL, the national database of Irish volunteering opportunities and listings.
- To support Volunteer Centres based in each country in Ireland
- To deliver training in best practice in volunteer management to organisations that involve volunteers
- To provide support and guidance to companies interested in volunteering.
- To develop and support best practice in volunteering and Volunteer Centres.

## Public Participation Network

[The Public Participation Network](#) is a network that allows local authorities to connect with community groups around the country. The Public Participation Network is the 'go to' for all local authorities who wish to benefit from community and voluntary expertise in their area.

## Boardmatch Ireland

[Boardmatch Ireland](#) is the national corporate governance charity in Ireland. It was set up to improve governance in the not-for-profit sector by strengthening boards and management committees, providing both services and support to not-for-profit organisations and charities to help them improve and strengthen their board composition.

It allows candidates to volunteer their time, energy and skills to the non-profit (community and voluntary sector) at a board level. The free Boardmatch service matches a candidates skills and expertise with the needs of a non-profit organisation.

## Cross-sectoral cooperation

While Ireland does not have a national youth strategy on volunteering, there is a [National Volunteering Strategy](#) targeting the general population. This Strategy includes a specific section on young volunteers.

Partnership is a core value underpinning the Strategy. It states "We developed this Strategy through partnership and a collaborative approach and this will continue as we implement the Strategy actions over the coming years." As part of developing the Strategy, the Department of Rural and Community Development issued a Call for Input, which sought input from the public and stakeholders.

The Strategy acknowledges that one of the challenges to Ireland's volunteering infrastructure is a need to encourage cross-sectoral dialogue.

For more information on the National Volunteering Strategy 2021-25 please see [Chapter 2.3 National strategy on youth volunteering](#).

## 2.3 National strategy on youth volunteering

### Existence of a National Strategy

There is currently no national strategy for youth volunteering in Ireland. However, there is a [National Volunteering Strategy 2021-2025](#) that targets the general population including young people. It is Ireland's first volunteering strategy. The Department of Rural and Community Development published the Strategy in December 2020 and it will run until 2025.

Other key policy documents in the area of volunteering are:

- 2000: [Government White Paper- Supporting Voluntary Activity](#)
- 2002: [Tipping the Balance](#)
- 2005: [Joint Oireachtas Report on 'Volunteers and Volunteering in Ireland.'](#)
- 2007: [Active Citizenship Report](#)
- 2016: [Our Communities: National Framework Policy for Local and Community Development](#)
- 2019: [Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities: A Five-Year Strategy to Support the Community and Voluntary Sector in Ireland \(2019-2024\).](#)

### Scope and contents

The purpose of the [National Volunteering Strategy](#) is to recognise, support and promote the unique value and contribution of volunteers to Irish society. The Strategy also provides an opportunity for the Government to acknowledge how important volunteering is to Ireland's well-being and to steer the delivery of an agreed and ambitious vision.

The Strategy provides a vision and road map for both volunteers and organisations who benefit from the work of volunteers. It contains 56 actions to be implemented.

The Strategy recognises that volunteering contributes to making Ireland a more inclusive place and aims for volunteering to be 'representative of our diverse communities which make up Irish society.'

The main purpose of this Strategy as evidenced in one of its objectives is 'to improve awareness of and increase participation in volunteering activities, particularly among those sections of our society that are currently under-represented. It also seeks to reflect diversity in volunteering and to integrate existing initiatives as well as adopting new and innovative ones.'

It sets out 13 actions under this objective including the long-term action to 'Develop programmes aimed at increasing the number of volunteers from under-represented groups.'

Young people, aged 12-25 years, are specifically addressed within the policy and it identifies a range of opportunities and supports in place across both second and third level education. No specific groups within youth population are targeted.

### Responsible authority

[The Department of Rural and Community Development](#) is the responsible authority for the National Volunteering Strategy. The Strategy states that the Department will with relevant stakeholders; deliver, implement and review the Strategy on an ongoing basis.

An Implementation Group was established and is chaired by the Department of Rural and Community Development, will work to deliver on the strategy with, and for society, and includes representation from relevant Government Departments, State Agencies and sectoral stakeholders. According to the Department, 'The Implementation Group will be a

key vehicle to oversee the implementation of the National Volunteering Strategy 2021-2025.'

This group is led by Minister of State with responsibility for Community Development and Charities, Joe O'Brien TD who published the National Volunteering Strategy 2021-2025 in December 2020. The Strategy includes a commitment to work with higher education to deliver high level and ambitious targets.

Within this group an implementation plan will be developed. The Strategy states that 'it is envisaged that a combination of surveys, research and the establishment of baseline data will be used' for measurement and monitoring. Annual updates on the strategy's implementation will be published.

### **Revisions/ Updates**

The [National Volunteering Strategy 2021-25](#) is Ireland's first volunteering strategy. No revisions or updates have taken place.

## **2.4 Youth volunteering at national level**

### **National Programme for Youth Volunteering**

There is no national programme for youth volunteering in Ireland. However, there are a range of programmes and initiatives targeting young people that promote youth volunteering.

#### **Young Social Innovators**

Young Social Innovators (YSI) provides a range of services to young people, including the Junior and Senior Innovation Action Programmes. Their programmes and initiatives target young people in second level schools, Youthreach or youth organisations. YSI programmes and initiatives support young people and their educators to develop innovative solutions to tackle social issues in their communities and the wider society. These programmes promote education for social innovation by empowering and supporting young people to realise their potential as social innovators, giving them the skills and confidence to tackle social issues facing them, their communities and wider society. YSI programmes and initiatives often include volunteering.

YSI's last strategy was called 'Social Innovation Thinking Differently, A Plan to Develop Ireland's Innovators and Entrepreneurs who will Build a Fairer, Inclusive and Sustainable World.' This Strategy featured YSI's history, vision and impact stories from young social innovators across Ireland. It also outlined YSI goals and actions for 2017-2020 and provided commentary on Ireland's potential to be a leader in social innovation, including what steps should be taken to ensure this can happen.

YSI is also endorsed in the Social Inclusion Division under the Department of Social Protection in particular under the recently published [Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025; Ambition, Goals and Commitments](#).

This programme is funded through several public and private sponsors, including the Department of Rural and Community Development.

#### **Gaisce - The Presidents Award**

[Gaisce](#) or 'great achievement' in Irish, is a self-development programme for young people between the ages of 15-25 in Ireland.

There are three levels of Gaisce award- Bronze, Silver and Gold

- The minimum starting age for the Bronze award is 15 years and the average length is 26 weeks;
- The minimum starting age for the Silver award is 16 years and the average length is 52 weeks;

- The minimum starting age for the Gold award is 17 years and the average length is 78 weeks.

The core values of Gaisce are empowerment, inclusion and equality, respect and excellence. There are four different challenge areas in the Award programme. Participants must participate in each challenge area for at least one hour per week to earn an Award.

The four challenge areas are:

- Community involvement- this usually involves some form of volunteering
- Personal skills
- Physical recreation
- Adventure journey.

Young people are supported in their journey to achieving their Gaisce Award by an adult supervisor called a President's Award Leader (PAL). A PAL can be any adult (other than a family member) who is involved in supporting the personal development of young people.

Over 300,000 young people have participated in the Gaisce Programme.

Gaisce is a charitable organisation that receives funding from a number of public and private sponsors. The main public sponsor is the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY).

### **Pope John Paul II Award**

The [Pope John Paul II Award](#) is a faith achievement award for young people between the age of 16 and 18. It is non-competitive, inclusive, flexible and voluntary. It enables participants to take an active part in the life of their Church and in the life of their community and society.

This Award is run by the Diocese and is suitable for

- Students in Year 13 in Northern Ireland
- Students in 4<sup>th</sup> year in Republic Ireland
- Students in full-time education who have completed GCSEs or Junior Certificate
- Students in Transition Year
- Anyone between the age of 16 and 18, not in post-primary education.

The Award is non-competitive, flexible and voluntary and requires an ongoing commitment. Awards are earned by taking part in parish and social activities – 1 hour per week over 8, 14 or 20 weeks. There are 3 Awards – Gold, Silver & Bronze. Those that have completed the Gold Award have a further option of completing the Papal Cross Award.

### **Localise Programme**

[Localise](#) is a youth volunteering programme. The programme engages young people aged 11 and over in local community work. It is a not-for-profit company and is supported by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability and Youth and the Office of Migrant Integration within the Department of Justice. Localise runs the 'Volunteering for All' award that is a nationwide initiative that recognises and affirms volunteering and charitable work undertaken by young people from all backgrounds and circumstances.

### **Other youth volunteering programmes**

Environment:

- [ECO-UNESCO](#)
- [Fridays For Future](#)

Emergency Services:

- [Order of Malta](#)
- [Red Cross Youth](#)

Outdoor Pursuits:

- [Scouting Ireland](#)

Rural:

- [Macra na Ferime](#) (Stalwarts of the Land)

Sport:

- [Gaelic Athletic Association \(GAA\)](#)
- [Football Association of Ireland \(FAI\)](#)

## Funding

Young Social Innovators is funded through several public and private sponsors, including the Department of Rural and Community Development.

Gaisce is a charitable organisation that receives funding from a number of public and private sponsors. The main public sponsor is the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

The Pope John Paul II Award is coordinated by the Derry Diocesan Catechetical Centre in Northern Ireland, and ran in schools and parishes throughout Ireland and the UK.

Localise is a not-for-profit company, supported by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability and Youth and the Office of Migrant Integration within the Department of Justice.

## Characteristics of youth volunteering

Recent information on youth volunteering in Ireland is limited. The National Volunteering Strategy sets out that by 2026 there will be an 'increase in the evidence base of the quantity and demographic breakdown of volunteers, contribution to volunteers and the value and benefits of volunteering individuals, groups and communities.' (pg. 40) To achieve this, the Strategy includes the medium term action of establishing a National Survey on Volunteering to provide baseline data on volunteers.

Statistics from the national database of volunteering opportunities, iVol, show that of 13,148 volunteers registered in 2016, 418 (3%) were aged 16-17 years old and 2,428 (18%) were aged 18-22 years.

A report published by the National Youth Council in 2011 titled '[Lending a Hand: Young People and Volunteering](#)' found that the Transition Year (TY) programme in schools is the main place where young people get involved in volunteering activity. This is usually through national volunteering programmes such as The Gaisce Award (The Presidents Award) or the Young Social Innovators Initiative Programme.

## Youth Volunteering and Covid-19

Since the call for volunteers to support the community response to COVID-19 went out in March 2020, over 30,000 indicated their willingness to volunteer in response to the crisis on the national volunteering database, I-VOL. Although there are no statistics on young persons volunteering during the pandemic, it should be presumed a percentage of newly registered volunteers were young persons.

The Gaisce Award adapted its programme entirely to reflect the Covid-19 realities facing young people and adopted the #GaisceAtHome or Gaisce Sa Bhaile initiative. This enabled young people to still receive their award in a Covid safe way.

## Support to young volunteers

There are no top-level policy measures to support young volunteers established in Ireland, to cover indirect expenses participants might incur. However, individual organisations may cover volunteer's expenses. Legal rights protecting volunteers are covered by the [Civil Law Bill 2010](#).

## Quality Assurance

Volunteer Ireland manages [Investing in Volunteers](#) (IiV) which is the national quality standard for good practice in volunteer management, in the Republic of Ireland. The standards provide organisations with the framework to benchmark the quality of their volunteer programme.

This includes:

- Guiding organisations in putting the necessary steps in place to improve volunteer retention;
- Helping organisations manage volunteer programmes more easily and effectively;
- Helping organisations with their reputation so volunteers want to be involved;
- Helping organisations deliver a quality service to their clients.

Volunteer Ireland is currently piloting a new user-friendly quality standard to support, recognise and reward groups who are good at involving volunteers. The award is funded by the National Volunteering Strategy and is designed to be accessible by organisations of all sizes.

Volunteering Ireland also develops and supports best practice in volunteering and Volunteer Centres. This includes the evaluation of Volunteer Centres according to the quality standard framework.

## Target groups

Young Social Innovators and the John Paul II Award target secondary school students. The Gaisce Award targets young people between the ages of 15-25 in Ireland.

The [National Volunteering Strategy](#) (2021-2025) states that it will 'further promote, develop and nurture the role of volunteering across all youth age categories, from 12 to 25 years of age, and wider society,' but does not target specific groups within youth participation.

## 2.5 Cross-border mobility programmes

### EU programmes

#### European Solidarity Corps

The [European Solidarity Corps](#) funds and supports young people between 18 and 30 to volunteer or work in projects that benefit communities. Young people can volunteer or work, in their own country or abroad, through the Volunteering, Traineeships, Jobs, and Solidarity Projects strands. Its objective is to allow more young people to take part in a wide range of solidarity activities, either by volunteering or through work experience. The European Solidarity Corps is an initiative of the European Union, managed nationally by Léargas.

### Other Programmes

[Voluntary Service International](#) (VSI) is a peace and social justice organisation working primarily through volunteering. VSI is a registered charity funded by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth., the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the European Union under the Erasmus+ programme.



VSI work with young people aged 18+ and their youth workers to:

- promote the social inclusion of young people
- raise young people's awareness of their rights, peace and social justice, sustainable development, the environment and intercultural understanding
- foster young people's active citizenship
- promote young people's civic engagement
- develop young people's skills and competencies and enhance their employability.

VSI arranges both individual and group volunteer projects, year-round, ranging from 1 week to 12 months in Ireland, Europe and in the Global South.

Areas of work include social care, community work, human rights, anti-racism, environmental protection, animal welfare, arts and culture.

VSI provides extra support and funding for many EU-funded projects to enable young people with fewer opportunities to participate.

### **Voluntary Service Overseas Ireland**

[Voluntary Service Overseas \(VSO\) Ireland](#) is an international development organisation that 'fights poverty and inequality through volunteers in some of the world's poorest communities.' VSO works with over 500 local organisations in 23 developing countries.

VSO Ireland volunteer placements are aimed at professionals, requiring a qualification and at least three years professional experience.

VSO Ireland core volunteer programmes are:

- Education
- Health
- Livelihoods

VSO has supported more than 70,000 volunteers.

### **Legal framework applying to foreign volunteers**

Foreign volunteers are eligible to volunteer in Ireland without a visa if they are over 18 years of age and are an EU/EEA citizen or due to the Common Travel Area, a British citizen. Foreign volunteers from certain other countries may be eligible to volunteer in Ireland without a visa but will require preclearance to volunteer in Ireland before they arrive in the country.

The Immigration policy for Volunteering in Ireland was published in 30 April, 2018 under the Department of Justice. This scheme applies to both Visa required and Non Visa Required nationals and anyone who wishes to avail of the scheme should apply before they travel to Ireland and if they intend on staying longer than 3 months.

This scheme gives people permission to remain in Ireland as a volunteer with an eligible organisation for up to two years. This visa allows foreign volunteers to volunteer in Ireland for between 12 and 24 months. Volunteers can also choose to split their time into two periods of 12 months.

Permission to be a volunteer in Ireland allows you to:

- Work in a volunteering role with an eligible organisation
- Your role must match the criteria for volunteering described below
- The organisation must match the criteria for eligibility described below
- Stay in Ireland for 1 year initially, up to of 2 years (with an option to apply for an extension for a third year)

- Apply to change the organisation you volunteer for once in any 12 month period
- Travel abroad for short periods (e.g. holidays and attending conferences) and return to Ireland.

With this permission you cannot:

- Do paid work of any kind
- Bring any family members with you to Ireland
- Apply to change your immigration status while in the State
- Change sponsors more than once in any 12-month permission period while in the State under this Scheme
- Rely on public services or claim any state benefits e.g. health services, education
- Spend more than two years on aggregate volunteering in the State.

You are eligible to apply under this Scheme if you:

- Are aged 18 or older
- Are a non EU/EEA and non-Swiss citizen
- Have been offered volunteering work by an eligible organisation
- Can be fully supported financially for the entire duration of your stay by the organisation that is inviting you to Ireland
- Are qualified and able to do the activities expected of you
- Are of good character and good standing, e.g. you can provide a police clearance certificate or equivalent not more than 3 months old
- Are cleared to work with children and vulnerable adults (if necessary for your role), e.g. you can provide a child clearance certificate from An Garda Síochána (this can be obtained by your sponsor prior to your arrival in Ireland)
- Have medical insurance from a company authorised by the Health Insurance Authority of Ireland to cover you for the duration of your stay.

Please note that the above information is only some of the information about visas, and that this information may change. For the most complete and up to date information please visit the [Immigration Service Delivery website](#).

## 2.6 Raising awareness about youth volunteering opportunities

### Information providers

#### StudentVolunteer.ie

[StudentVolunteer.ie](#) is an online resource connecting students with volunteering opportunities in civil society organisations. Organisations include community groups, charities, schools, hospitals, public bodies and NGOs across Ireland. Studentvolunteer.ie is funded by a number of third level institution members and Campus Engage.

#### Campus Engage

[Campus Engage](#) is a national network set up to promote civic engagement activities in Irish higher education. It is open to all universities and Institutes of Technology staff, students, community organisations in Ireland. The network aims to strengthen community-campus relationships through volunteering, community-based research, community-based learning and knowledge exchange.

## Volunteer Ireland

[Volunteer Ireland](#) is a national volunteer development organization and a support body for all local Volunteer Centres and Volunteering Information Services in Ireland. The key roles of Volunteer Ireland are:

- To support, promote and celebrate volunteering in Ireland in a variety of ways including major campaigns like National Volunteering Week and the Volunteer Ireland Awards.
- To advocate on behalf of volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations to create the best possible environment for volunteering in Ireland.
- To manage I-VOL, the national database of Irish volunteering opportunities and listings
- To support Volunteer Centres based in each county in Ireland
- To deliver training in best practice in volunteer management to organisations that involve volunteers
- To provide support and guidance to companies interested in volunteering
- To develop and support best practice in volunteering and Volunteering Centres.

[I-VOL](#) is a search engine that allows potential volunteers to search by location, cause and activity. Over 8,000 organisations advertise their volunteering opportunities on I-VOL, and at any given time there are about 30,000 volunteering vacancies over about 3,000 different roles.

### Volunteer Ireland's Response to Covid-19

Due to the nature of Covid-19, Volunteer Ireland and the network of Volunteer Centres ran a successful 'volunteer from home' campaign, showcasing a range of ways people could volunteer from home. They also have published information on how to support the most vulnerable members of Irish communities during the pandemic. More information can be found on [Volunteer Ireland's website](#).

### Local Volunteer Centres

Local Volunteer Centres are a key information provider on volunteering. There are 21 Volunteer Centres and 8 Volunteering Information Services across the country.

Volunteer Centres match individuals and groups interested in volunteering with appropriate volunteering opportunities. They also offer advice and support to both volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations through a range of services that include information provision, consultation, training and police (Garda) vetting.

Volunteering Information Services are the same as Volunteer Centres. However, there is no walk-in location in Volunteering Information Services with full-time staff matching volunteers and organisations. Instead, this is done through the website of each Volunteering Information Service.

## Key initiatives

### National Volunteering Week

Volunteer Ireland runs a [National Volunteering Week](#) campaign every year. National Volunteering Week is a week dedicated to highlighting volunteering across Ireland. It is run in partnership with the network of Volunteer Centres and Volunteering Information Services.

### Volunteer Ireland Awards

[Volunteer Ireland Awards](#) are run by Volunteer Ireland. The aim of the awards is to celebrate and recognise volunteers. The Volunteer Ireland Awards are open to people of all ages volunteering with Irish organisations which involve volunteers. Volunteers are nominated by members of the public for the awards.

## 2.7 Skills recognition

### Policy Framework

[Tipping the Balance](#), a 2002 report by the National Committee on Volunteering recommended establishing 'the structures and resources necessary to enable volunteer-involving organisations to nominate individuals or teams to be formally recognised by the State for their voluntary work.' It also recommended that a volunteer training programme be set up at local and national level with links to education and training institutions.

### Existing arrangements

#### Volunteering passport

The [National Volunteering Strategy 2021 – 2025](#) sets out the aim to 'Explore the potential for the introduction of a formal qualification in recognition of the skills, knowledge and competencies acquired from volunteering'.

[I-VOL](#) is the Irish national volunteering database, managed by Volunteer Ireland. It is a search engine that allows potential volunteers to search by location, cause and activity. The National Volunteering Strategy 2021 – 2025 also sets out the action to 'Further develop the IVOL database to include a 'volunteering passport' section that records the accredited skills and competencies of volunteers gained through volunteering role'.

#### National Qualifications Framework

The development of a [National Qualifications Framework](#) (NQF) in 2003 aimed to facilitate and enhance processes for the recognition of different types of prior learning such as volunteering. However, the [National Report for Ireland from a Study on Volunteering in the European Union](#) (2010, pg. 19) stated that 'while mechanisms are in place to enable accreditation and recognition, not all volunteer organisations follow this approach.'

#### Skills Summary

The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) launched Skills Summary in 2019. Skills Summary is both a process and a product.

As a process, [Skills Summary](#) aims to support young people's learning, with a particular focus on those who may find traditional academic learning challenging, by helping them to map the learning acquired through their participation in youth work and other non-formal settings to a set of competences.

As a product, Skills Summary supports young people to articulate the competencies they have acquired both for themselves and potential employers.

There are also Skills Summary resources available on how to include Skills Summary in youth work practice.

A recent adoption to this resource allows people to download different versions of their personal Skills Summary: Depending on the individual purpose, people can choose to download either the full version of their Skills Summary, or a shorter one which does not include contact details, biography or endorsements.

## 2.8 Current debates and reforms

### Forthcoming policy developments

#### A youth engagement strategy

The [National Volunteering Strategy](#) (2021-2025) sets out the long-term action to consult on a Youth Engagement Strategy. It lists the following bodies as responsible for this consultation:

- the Department of Education

- the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
- the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

### **Increased data on volunteering**

The National Volunteering Strategy sets out that by 2026 there will be an “increase in the evidence base of the quantity and demographic breakdown of volunteers, contribution of volunteers and the value and benefits of volunteering individuals, groups and communities” (pg. 40). To achieve this, the Strategy includes the medium-term action of establishing a National Survey on Volunteering to provide baseline data on volunteers.

### **Ongoing debates**

#### **Issues affecting volunteers**

Volunteer Ireland have highlighted several significant issues affecting the volunteering sector, including young volunteers. These include:

- the changing demands from volunteers;
- the lack of understanding that volunteering is not free;
- a concern that volunteering is taken for granted;
- whether or not there should be legal protection for volunteers enshrined in law;
- demographic changes; and
- lack of resourcing.

#### **Volunteering passport**

The National Volunteering Strategy 2021 – 2025 sets out the aim to 'Explore the potential for the introduction of a formal qualification in recognition of the skills, knowledge and competencies acquired from volunteering'.

I-VOL is the Irish national volunteering database, managed by Volunteer Ireland. It is a search engine that allows potential volunteers to search by location, cause and activity. The National Volunteering Strategy 2021 – 2025 also sets out the action to 'Further develop the IVOL database to include a 'volunteering passport' section that records the accredited skills and competencies of volunteers gained through volunteering role'.

#### **Jobseekers and volunteering**

There is an ongoing debate on jobseekers and volunteering. Jobseekers must complete an application form (VW 1 form) to engage in voluntary work. The completed application form is sent to the Local [Intreo](#) Centre (public employment service) or Branch Office and a Deciding Officer determines whether the person may take up the work in question without affecting entitlement to the jobseeker's payment. This application form can be perceived as a barrier to volunteering for jobseekers.

#### **Students volunteering in Transition Year**

There is a debate on the difficulties some young people may encounter to volunteer as part of the Transition Year programme in schools. Some young people, for example, young people from ethnic minorities, might find it difficult to secure volunteering opportunities.

## **3. EMPLOYMENT & ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

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[The Department of Social Protection](#) and the [Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment](#) are the main authority responsible for youth employment at a national level. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment has responsibility for enterprise and youth enterprise policy, at local level supported by the [Local Enterprise Offices](#) (LEO).

Economic Security and Opportunity is one of the five national outcome areas for young people in [Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People](#), 2014-2020 (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2014), the overarching national policy framework for children and young people that ran until 2020.

The onset of Covid-19 and the associated public health measures introduced to curb the spread of the virus have resulted in a sharp rise in youth unemployment with a significant proportion of young people in receipt of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP).

Several youth employment measures were established related to commitments in the [Youth Guarantee](#) (2013) and the [Reinforced Youth Guarantee \(2020\)](#).

These include:

- Youth Employment Support Scheme (YESS) (that ran until 2021)
- JobsPlus for Youth
- Work Placement Experience Programme (WPEP)- this programme took the position of the YESS programme in 2021
- Tús
- Employment and Youth Activation Charter.

Ireland has a developed career guidance support system across the education and training system including post-primary education, higher education and further education and training.

Guidance counselling in Ireland is practiced in a holistic and integrative way, and encompasses the areas of

- social/personal counselling
- vocational guidance counselling
- educational guidance counselling.

## 3.1 General context

### Labour market situation in the country

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in Ireland and the consequent introduction of public health restrictions to curb the spread of the virus, resulted in an abrupt and adverse shock to the Irish labour market. While the impact of these restrictions varied across economic sectors, they ultimately culminated in the closure of almost all non-essential workplaces and amenities in March 2020. In order to support incomes during this time, the Government introduced the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP) and the Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme (TWSS) and this was taken over by the Employment Wage Subsidy Scheme (EWSS) in September 2020.

By early May 2020, there was a need for increased State supports, with close to 1.2 million people receiving income supports to the labour market, including those on the Live Register. As a result, unemployment rates in Ireland increased in 2020, with the Central Statistics Office (CSO) 'Covid-adjusted' monthly unemployment rate- that included all those receiving the PUP- peaking at 31.5% at the end of April 2020. In other years, the 'traditional' unemployment rate peaked at 4/7%.

Young people were particularly impacted by the pandemic owing to their likelihood to work in customer-facing sectors that were most affected by public health Covid-19 restrictions, especially hospitality and retail. The 'Covid-adjusted' monthly youth unemployment rate reached almost 70% in May 2020, with the traditional measure close at 18%.[\[1\]](#)

Despite this downturn, according to the European Commission's Winter 2020 Economic Forecast, Ireland's real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew by 3% in 2020, the only positive growth rate in the EU, boosted by exports from multinational companies.

Over the second half of 2021, Ireland's economy and labour market have witnessed a sharp recovery because of society reopening facilitated by the administration of the Covid-19 vaccination. As a result, the traditional monthly unemployment rates and Covid-19 adjusted unemployment rates have decreased with individuals returning to work.

The latest economic outlooks from the OECD, European Commission, Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and Central Bank of Ireland all forecast further growth in employment and GDP in 2022.

Youth unemployment and long-term youth unemployment are discussed further in [Chapter 3.11 Current debates and reform](#).

## Main concepts

There are two prominent features of the Irish labour market. There are a high proportion of people in employment with a third level degree and in Ireland there is a low level of labour market participation for women aged 35 and over without a third level education.

Irish workers are more likely to be employed as 'professionals' or in sales and service occupations than their European counterparts. Irish employment is concentrated in the service sector, in both relatively high paying export orientated services, and relatively low paying services more geared to the domestic economy.

Another feature of the Irish economy is that Ireland has become a global technology hub for many companies. Many of the top global software companies, technical companies and IT services companies are based in Ireland. For example, Intel, HP, IBM, Microsoft and Apple, Google, Facebook, LinkedIn, Amazon, PayPal, eBay, and Twitter are all situated in Ireland. A lot of legal, financial and consulting companies are located in Ireland and this increases employment opportunities for Irish people.

IDA Ireland states that Ireland is the second largest exporter of computer and IT services in the world. The sector accounts for more than €50 billion of exports from Ireland per annum.

[1] It is important to note that the CSO's COVID-19 measure of Youth Unemployment includes all those under 25 in receipt of the PUP, as well as on the Live Register. A significant proportion of those on the PUP under 25 were enrolled in full-time education and so would not normally be classified as unemployed under the standard International Labour Organisation (ILO) definition.

## 3.2 Administration and governance

### Governance

[The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment](#) is the main government department responsible for youth employment and entrepreneurship in Ireland.

[The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth](#) also play a role in terms of policy making on youth employment and entrepreneurship. For example, Economic Security and Opportunity is one of the five national outcome areas for young people in [Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2014-2020](#) (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2014), the overarching national policy framework for children and young people that ran until 2020.

[The Irish Congress of Trade Unions](#) had two youth committees, one in the Republic of Ireland and one in Northern Ireland. The Youth Committees aim to be a link between

young people and trade unions and play a role in advising the Executive Council of Congress on issues of concern to young workers and young unemployed people.

Other actors include the [National Youth Council of Ireland](#), the representative body for voluntary youth organisations in Ireland, which advocates on the issues of youth employment and social protection for young jobseekers.

The [Union of Students in Ireland](#) (USI), the representative body for third level students in Ireland also runs campaigns and provides information on social welfare issues and young people's rights as workers.

At a regional and local level, the [Department of Social Protection](#) also has a network of Intreo Centres, Local and Branch Offices, Employment Services Offices and offices administering Supplementary Welfare Allowance.

[Intreo - Ireland Public Engagement Service](#) (PES) is the single point of contact for all state employment and income supports. Intreo offers practical, tailored employment services and supports for both jobseekers and employers.

### **Cross-sectorial cooperation**

Economic Security and Opportunity is one of the five national outcome areas for young people in Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures, overarching national policy framework for children and young people. There is cross-sectoral cooperation between all government departments in relation to this national policy framework.

## **3.3 Skills forecasting**

### **Forecasting system(s)**

[The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs](#) (EGFSN), advises the Government on future skills requirements and associated labour market issues that impact on the national potential for enterprise and employment growth.

EGFSN reports combine research, analysis, and horizon-scanning in relation to emerging skills requirements at thematic and sectoral levels.

When producing reports, the EGFSN:

- Engage with the Higher Education Authority (HEA), SOLAS, QQI, the Regional Education Fora, and education and training providers.
- Assemble Steering Groups comprised of experts from relevant enterprise sectors and the education and training sector to guide the research.
- Engage with the relevant stakeholders to produce an agreed action plan to address the skills needs identified.

Membership of the EGFSN includes:

- Government Departments
- Enterprise Development Agencies
- Business
- Unions
- Further Education and Training
- Higher Education Authority.

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in conjunction with the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit, SOLAS, provides the EGFSN with research and analysis support.



## Skills development

Reports produced by the EGFSN often feed into the government action plans on future skills needs. For example, the EGFSN report, [Forecasting the Future Demand for High Level ICT Skills in Ireland, 2017-2022](#), was a key input into the development of the Government's [ICT Skills Action Plan, Technology Skills 2022](#). The report also fed into the Plan's ambition to grow the number of highly skilled ICT graduates by 47,000 over the period to meet the additional demand for new roles coming on stream.

## 3.4 Career guidance and counselling

### Career guidance and counselling services

Ireland has a developed career guidance support system across the education and training system including post-primary education, higher education and further education and training.

At a central government level, there are several Divisions within the [Department of Education](#) which have some involvement with career guidance. However, [Indecon Review of Career Guidance](#) (2019) states there is no explicit structural organisational mechanism which exists to co-ordinate the different areas involved in career guidance.

Career guidance policy within the Department of Education is supported by the [National Centre for Guidance in Education](#) (NCGE). The NCGE develops guidance policies and practice in education on behalf of the Department.

[The Adult Educational Guidance and Information Service](#) was also adopted by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science in Ireland. This is a service that is available to everyone over 18 years of age and to those over 16 years who are not in full time education. The Service prioritizes those who are currently not in employment but is available to all. The Service supports people in exploring their further education and training options while developing a personal progression plan.

The Service offers

- One-to-one educational guidance
- Information on local and national courses
- Help with college applications
- Information on funding sources.

[The Education Act, 1998](#) (section 9c) requires that schools 'use its available resources to' provide students with 'access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices'.

[The Higher Education Authority](#) (HEA) is the statutory planning and policy development body for higher education in Ireland, including policy for career guidance within the sector. With support from the HEA, the Universities and the Institutes of Technology directly provide career guidance supports for students.

The framework for adult career guidance is primarily within the remit of the [Adult Educational Guidance Initiative](#) (AEGI), which is provided by the 16 [Education and Training Boards](#) (ETBs).

[SOLAS](#) is responsible for funding FET Adult Guidance Services. Career guidance in Post Leaving Certificate colleges is delivered through the post primary guidance allocation model. Some participants in FET will also have had engagement on careers issues and options with [DEASP's Intreo service](#).

Guidance counselling in Ireland is practiced in a holistic and integrative way, and encompasses the areas of

- social/personal counselling
- vocational guidance counselling
- educational guidance counselling.

[The Adult Education Guidance Initiative](#) (AEGI) through local AEGS offices offers impartial one-to-one guidance and group guidance.

[The Local Employment Service](#) (LES) are a part of the public employment service Intreo. LES provides a local gateway, or access point, to the full range of services and facilities that are available to help jobseekers to enter or return to employment. This may include the provision of intensive personalized guidance leading to development of a personal progression plan, and career counselling.

In Ireland, measures to support youth employment involve a mix of initial assessment, career guidance and planning, education and training or work experience, aimed at increasing the capacity of the young people to access employment.

The main users of career guidance and counselling services in Ireland are:

- secondary school students
- third level students
- jobseekers.

## Funding

Career guidance and counselling provided in Post Primary Schools and in Further Education and Training are the Department of Education and Skills.

The Irish Department of Social Protection funds guidance services provided in Intreo offices and by EmployAbility and local employment and job placements services.

## Quality assurance

[The National Skills Strategy 2025](#) proposed a review of guidance services, tools, and careers information.

[Indecon Review of Career Guidance](#), a Report of Independent Review of Career Guidance Tools and Information, was launched on the 24 April 2019. The recommendations emphasize the need for evidence-based reform and the involvement of all stakeholders. It is discussed in [Chapter 3.11 Current debates and reforms](#).

## 3.5 Traineeships and apprenticeships

### Official guidelines on traineeships and apprenticeships

A Traineeship combines learning in the classroom and experience in the workplace to improve employment outcomes for participants and increase retention and productivity in the sector.

The national traineeship programme was introduced in 1995 by the training and employment agency FÁS, supported by the EU Operational Programme for Human Development. There have been an estimated 30,000 trainee participants, with over 1,500 participant companies ([The Five-Step Guide to Traineeship in Ireland, SOLAS, 2019](#)). A traineeship aims to provide work-based learning in partnership with employers, improving employment outcomes for participants and recruitment, retention, and productivity within industry. Traineeships are generally 40 weeks in duration, beginning in an education and training environment, with work placement following either during or after the on-campus learning. A traineeship includes a substantial period (generally 30% minimum) in the workplace. Development of a traineeship programme is triggered by identification of a skills need within a particular industry. Successful trainee participants receive an award or

industry certification at Levels 4-to-6 on the [National Framework of Qualifications](#). The work-based component is supported by an in-company mentor/supervisor who oversees completion of each trainee's skills checklist on-the-job.

In Ireland, an apprenticeship is the recognised way people are trained in a craft trade or profession. Craft apprenticeships include carpentry, plumbing, motor mechanics and electrical apprenticeships. Craft trades and professions are designated by [SOLAS](#), the Further Education and Training Authority. Apprenticeships come within the scope of the Statutory Apprenticeship system, which is organized by SOLAS in co-operation with the Department of Education and Skills, employers, and unions.

A new apprenticeship programme called [Generation Apprenticeship](#) was introduced in 2016. New apprenticeships in ICT, finance and hospitality include software development, accounting technician and commis chef.

Key features of new apprenticeships in Ireland include:

- Industry-led by consortia of industry and education partners
- Lead to an award at Levels 5 to 10 on the [National Framework of Qualifications](#) (NFQ)
- Between 2-4 years in duration
- Minimum 50% on-the-job learning
- Flexible delivery – online, blended, off-the-job learning in increments/blocks
- Apprentices are employed under a formal contract of apprenticeship
- The employer pays the apprentice for the duration of the apprenticeship.

[The Apprenticeship Code of Practice](#) sets out participating employers' and apprentices' duties and responsibilities. Apprentices and employers sign up to the Code of Practice as part of the statutory apprenticeship process.

Apprenticeship is overseen by a National Apprenticeship Council. The Apprenticeship Council was set up in 2014. The main aims of the Council are the expansion of apprenticeship into new sectors of the economy and to identifying sectors where new apprenticeships can be developed.

The further education and training authority [SOLAS](#) is the lead agency responsible for apprenticeship on behalf of Government, working in close partnership with the Higher Education Authority, Quality and Qualifications Ireland, industry and education and training providers across further and higher education. SOLAS' responsibility includes maintenance of a national register of employers approved to take on apprentices and a national register of apprentices. The legal framework of the [Industrial Training Act 1967](#) applies to both apprenticeships and traineeships. [The Joint Committee on Education and Skills Report on Hearings Relating to the Uptake of Apprenticeships and Traineeships](#) have recommended updating this Act with an amended to reflect changes in the business environment and facilitate the streamlining of the new apprenticeship development process.

The legal framework of the [Industrial Training Act 1967](#) applies to both apprenticeships and traineeships. The Joint Committee on Education and Skills Report on Hearings Relating to the Uptake of Apprenticeships and Traineeships have recommended updating this Act with an amended to reflect changes in the business environment and facilitate the streamlining of the new apprenticeship development process.

### **Promoting traineeships and apprenticeships**

A special female apprentice bursary to encourage specific sectors to employ female apprentices may be paid to qualifying companies wishing to train apprentices in specific occupations.

There are also several pre-apprenticeship programmes and a pilot "[Access to Apprenticeship](#)" programme run by Technological University (TU) Dublin.

[A Generation Apprentices](#) Showcase event was held in 2019. This was a signposting and recruitment event aimed at apprentices with interactive stands hosted by employers and education providers.

The Generation Apprenticeship Competition was established in 2018. The aim of the annual competition is to highlight the importance and value of apprenticeships as a route to skills development in 21st century Ireland. In 2019, taster sessions were held as part of the programme in 11 different locations around the country. This offered the opportunity to the public to see what an apprenticeship is like in practice and what opportunities they offer.

[The Higher Options](#) event is Ireland's largest expo for second level students who are considering their post-secondary education. In 2019, there was a dedicated 'Skills Village' which featured exhibition stands, a Skills Demonstration Area and a Skills Talk Dome which hosted dedicated panel discussions about apprenticeship and skills development topics. Due to Covid-19, the 2020 Higher Options event took place virtually and in similar fashion its 2021 event will also take place virtually later in the year.

### **New Action Plan for Apprenticeships (2021-2025)**

To ensure that the apprenticeship system continues to deliver for both learners and employers, the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science have created a new Apprenticeship Action Plan. This initiative will ensure we have a modern apprenticeship system that is reflective of Irish society and supports both learners and employers along the way.

Currently, there are 60 programmes leading to valuable qualifications in areas such as finance, accountancy, laboratory technicians, engineering, heavy vehicles mechanics and healthcare. The action plan aims to expand the types of programmes available and increase the number of apprenticeship registrations to 10,000 per year by 2025. Pathways to Work 2021-2025, the Governments national employment services Strategy, further commits to support this ambition through its engagement with jobseekers.

### **Recognition of learning outcomes**

Craft apprenticeships completed successfully are awarded an Advanced Certificate – craft, Level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications. Apprenticeships introduced from 2016 on lead to an award between Levels 5-10 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

### **Funding**

The national apprenticeship system is funded through the [National Training Fund](#) and from the Exchequer. In 2020, the National Training Fund will support a further expansion of the apprenticeship programme with over 7,500 new registrations on craft and new apprenticeships. An additional €8 million will support 7,000 additional participants on [Skillnet Ireland](#) programmes including a new digital skills initiative and an SME upskilling scheme. The [ETB Skills to Advance](#) programme will be supported with an additional €6 million to allow for the upskilling of an additional 3000 people in the workforce.

### **Quality assurance**

The 2012 [Qualifications and Quality Assurance \(Education and Training\) Act](#) underpins apprenticeships, supporting validation and quality assurance arrangements for programmes nationally. This Act was amended in 2019 to safeguard the integrity of the National Framework of Qualifications and the reputation of higher and further education and training in Ireland and to improve standards in the international education sector.

All apprenticeship programmes leading to awards at NFQ Levels 5-9 are validated in accordance with [Core Policies and Criteria for the Validation by QQI of Programmes of Education and Training](#) (2016).

Employers who wish to employ apprentices are required to complete an approval process. Employers must demonstrate that they can provide quality, relevant on-the-job apprentice training as per the requirements of the national apprenticeship programme and the statutory apprenticeship system overall.

The approval process is completed online and through a site visit to the employer's premises from an 'authorised officer' working on behalf of [SOLAS](#), the agency with statutory responsibility for national apprenticeships.

## 3.6 Integration of young people in the labour market

### Youth employment measures

#### The EU Youth Guarantee

The original youth guarantee was created in 2013 following the Council's recommendation and aimed to secure a smooth transition from school to work, support labour market integration and make sure that no young person is left out. Building on seven years of successful experience, member states have now started to reinforce their Youth Guarantee implementation to aid in alleviating the labour market impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on young people.

The 'Reinforced Youth Guarantee' is a commitment by all Member States, including Ireland from October 2020 to ensure that all young people under the age of 30 receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving education.

Central to the reinforced programme is the widening of the youth age bracket to include young people aged 25-29. As part of activation services provided by the Department of Social Protection via Intreo, young people under 25 receive the most intensive engagement. The Department intend to extend this up to age 29, as per the new reinforced Youth Guarantee, and are currently exploring the necessary system changes to allow for this to be put in place.

#### National Measures

Several youth employment measures were established related to commitments in the Youth Guarantee (2013) and the Reinforced Youth Guarantee (2020). Many of these measures were also included in the Irish Government's new Pathways to Work (2021-2025) Strategy which represents the Government's overall framework for activation services and employment supports. These include:

- [Work Placement Experience Programme](#)
- [JobsPlus for Youth](#)
- [Community Employment Schemes](#)
- [TÚS](#)
- [Employment and Youth Activation Charter](#)
- [Vocational Training and Opportunities Scheme \(VTOS\)](#)
- [Youthreach](#)
- [Youth Employability Initiative.](#)

#### Work Placement Experience Programme

[The Work Placement Experience Programme](#) (WPEP) is a new 6-month, 30 hour per week voluntary work experience programme. The programme is for jobseekers aged between 18 and 65 years that are currently getting a qualifying social welfare payment and who have been unemployed for six months (156 days) or more. The weekly rate of payment is €311. The payment is not means assessed and participants retain entitlements for

qualified adults and children and any underlying secondary welfare benefits they had an entitlement to prior to commencing the WPEP placement.

The Educational Training Board (ETBs) have developed an accredited Work Placement Experience module available to WPEP Participants the L3/L4/L5 Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). A WPEP Mentoring training programme was developed and funded by ETBs and is available to Host Organisations to support the mentoring skills of mentors. Funding for the training element of WPEP was included in the Government's National Recovery and Resilience Plan in its application to the EU Recovery and Resilience Facility.

This programme enables people to re-train and gain valuable work experience in a new type of employment whilst also incorporating an accredited training element. A person cannot take a placement where they have already built-up experience in the role.

Time spent on other schemes such as the COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment and Community Employment may also be counted as part of the 6 month (156 day) qualifying criteria. An individual must transfer to a Jobseekers' payment however, before they can take up the placement.

### **JobsPlus Youth**

[JobsPlus](#) is an employer incentive which encourages employers to offer employment to jobseekers on the Live Register. Employers are paid an incentive monthly in arrears over a 2-year period. It provides 2 levels of regular payments, €7500 and €10,000 respectively, depending on the jobseeker's age and duration of employment.

Under the Reinforced Youth Guarantee and Pathways to Work 2021-2025, the qualifying period for jobseekers to avail of JobsPlus for young people has been reduced to 4 months (104 days), in the previous 6 months. Moreover, the age bracket for young people has been expanded to now include all of those under 30 years of age. It is envisaged that this initiative will help those young people facing high barriers to employment to enter into the labour market.

Time in receipt of the Covid-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP) may also be counted towards an individual's eligibility.

### **Public Employment Programmes (CE and Tús)**

#### **1. Community Employment Schemes**

The [Community Employment](#) (CE) programme is designed to help people who are long-term unemployed (or otherwise disadvantaged) to get back to work by offering part time (19.5 hours a week) and temporary placements in jobs based within local communities. The Scheme, which includes opportunities for training and development, acts as a stepping-stone back to employment. The general qualifying age for CE for those on the Live Register was reduced from 25 to 21 years in 2017. In general, all placements for those aged under 55 are for one year only, but if a CE participant is undertaking training to achieve a major award, the participant's time can be extended by up to two years to allow them to complete the training which will enhance his or her overall employment prospects.

#### **2. Tús**

[The Tús initiative](#) is a community work placement scheme providing short-term working opportunities for unemployed people. The work opportunities are to benefit the community and are provided by community and voluntary organisations in both rural and urban areas.

The Tús initiative is managed by local development companies and Údarás na Gaeltacha for the Department of Social Protection, which has overall responsibility for the scheme. Participants work 19.5 hours a week and the placement lasts 12 months.

Under [Pathways to Work](#) 2021-2025, 3000 additional places on public employment programmes (CE and Tús) are being made available, 1000 of which are ring-fenced for young people.

Time in receipt of Covid-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment may also be counted towards an individual's eligibility for CE or Tús.

### **Employment and Youth Activation Charter**

[The Employment and Youth Activation Charter](#) was launched in 2014 as part of the Youth Guarantee commitments. Employers who sign this Charter commit that at least 50% of candidates considered for interview will be taken from the Live Register. Employers also implement a selection of measures which seek to prime those who are out of work to take up jobs.

Under Pathways to Work, the Department of Social Protection commits to partner with employers, to relaunch the Employer Youth Employment Charter in 2022. In doing so, firms will commit to provide work placement and traineeship opportunities to young people referred by Intreo.

### **Vocational Training and Opportunities Scheme (VTOS)**

[The Vocational Training and Opportunities Scheme](#) (VTOS) provides a range of courses to meet the education and training needs of unemployed people. To be eligible for the scheme, participants must be over 21 years of age, unemployed and getting certain social welfare payments for at least six months. The scheme is aimed at unemployed people who are early school-leavers.

The aim of the scheme is to give participants opportunities to improve their general level of education, gain certification, develop their skills and prepare for employment, self-employment and further education and training. VTOS is operated through local Education and Training Boards.

### **Youthreach**

The [Youthreach](#) programme provides opportunities for early school leavers in terms of basic education, personal development, vocational training, and work experience. Learners can gain Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) qualifications that are equal to the Junior and Applied Leaving Certificate. Learners can also progress to other skills training such as apprenticeship courses. As a result of Covid-19 restrictions Youthreach services were moved primarily online, with additional support on site if essential.

### **Skills for Life Employment Support Scheme**

[The Skills for Life Employment Support Scheme](#) is aimed at young people aged between 18 and 24 years who want to train with the Irish Defence Forces. The scheme gives participants an opportunity to learn new skills and gain qualifications that will help them to pursue further education or to enter the workforce. The scheme runs over a ten-week period.

Under Pathways to Work 2021-2025, the Irish Government commits to repeat and expand the 'Skills for Life' training and experience programme for young unemployed people.

### **Youth Employability Initiative**

[The Youth Employability Initiative](#) is a fund of up to €1 million which aims to provide funding to voluntary youth services to support programmes that target young people to improve their employability and achieve career goals. The initiative is supported by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) and funding from the Dormant Accounts Fund which is overseen by the Department of Rural and Community Development. Funding of the initiative is delivered by local Education and Training Boards.

### **Flexicurity measures focusing on young people**

Flexicurity is an integrated strategy for enhancing both flexibility and security in the labour market.

A 2016 report on the [Flexicurity System in Ireland](#) found that 'the flexicurity system is not operating as it should in Ireland and there seems to be very little political impetus to

change the status quo.’ In addition, ‘in relation to the requirement of a modern social welfare system, it is quite clear that the Irish system, in its current format, is not designed to promote the ideals of the flexicurity system.’

## **Reconciliation of private and working life for young people**

In Ireland, there is no legislation that allows employees to apply for flexible working arrangements. Flexible working arrangements are usually at the discretion of the employer.

However, the Civil Service in Ireland does operate flexible work arrangements. These include

- Flexible working hours
- Work sharing
- Shorter working year scheme for civil servants
- Career breaks
- Special Incentive Career Break Scheme for Civil Servants
- E-Working and teleworking
- Guidance for employers on part-time work is set out in The Code of Practice on Access to Part-Time Work. It sets out the opportunities, range of jobs and policies expected to improve access to part-time work.

The rights of part-time employees are covered under the [Protection of Employees \(Part-Time Work\) Act 2001](#).

## **3.7 Cross-border mobility in employment, entrepreneurship and vocational opportunities**

### **Programmes and schemes for cross-border mobility**

#### **EURES Targeted Mobility Scheme**

EURES Targeted Mobility Scheme (TMS), previously Your First EURES Job, is an EU funded project. TMS aims to increase mobility in the EU by matching candidates with employers with hard to fill vacancies, including EURES mobility services and various financial supports.

TMS supports jobseekers to exercise their right to freedom of movement across the EU and helps to address labour market shortages and surpluses. Target groups are jobseekers aged 18 or older and employers from an EU country, Norway, or Iceland. TMS supports jobs and small numbers of work-based traineeships. It is funded by the European Commission through the Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI).

TMS offers jobseekers support in taking up employment in the EU, Norway or Iceland including

- Financial support (allowances for travel to an interview, relocation to another country and recognition of qualifications)
- Language training allowance (if required)
- Induction programme to include information on living and working abroad
- CV preparation/interview skills.



## EU Erasmus Programme for Young Entrepreneurs

[The Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs](#) scheme aims to enhance entrepreneurship, improve international competitiveness of European SME's and to support potential start-ups and newly established SME's in participating countries, including Ireland.

Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs helps provide aspiring European entrepreneurs with the skills necessary to start and/or successfully run a small business in Europe. New entrepreneurs gather and exchange knowledge and business ideas with an experienced entrepreneur, with whom they stay and collaborate for a period of 1- to 6-months. The stay is partly financed by the European Commission.

Benefits for participating entrepreneurs include

- build their capacity to manage a small company
- gain relevant skills and knowledge
- get practical experience
- network.

## Legal framework

Most non-EEA nationals must have an employment permit to work in Ireland. The employment permits scheme is governed by the [Employment Permits \(Amendment\) Act 2014](#).

There are 9 types of employment permits in Ireland. These are

- A General Employment Permit
- A Critical Skills Employment Permit
- Dependent/Partner/Spouse Employment Permit
- Reactivation Employment Permit
- Contract for Services Employment Permit
- Intra-Company Transfer Employment Permit
- Internship Employment Permit
- Sport and Cultural Employment Permit
- Exchange Agreement Employment Permit.

The rights of young workers are protected by the [Protection of Young Persons \(Employment\) Act 1996](#). The aim of the Act is to protect the health of young workers and ensure that work carried out during school years does not put young people's education at risk.

The Act sets minimum age limits for employment, rest intervals and maximum working hours and prohibits the employment of anyone under 18 on late-night work. The Act also requires employers to keep specified records for workers under 18.

There are no nationality conditions attached to Irish social insurance or social assistance schemes. However, a habitual residence condition applies for certain social assistance schemes and for child benefit. Habitual residence means a person is residing in Ireland or has a proven close link to the state.

Where a person is working in Ireland since coming from an EU or EEA country, this condition does not apply for Child Benefit, One-Parent Family Payment or in certain circumstances for Supplementary Welfare Allowance.

For contributory benefits, a person must satisfy the same contribution and other conditions, but the contribution conditions may be satisfied by counting both your current insurance record and that in previous EU or EEA countries.

## 3.8 Development of entrepreneurship competence

### Policy Framework

There is no specific national strategy for the development of entrepreneurship competence and of an entrepreneurial mind-set among young people.

[A National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship in Ireland](#) was published in 2014. The Statement is aimed at the general population. Its objectives include “Ensure that greater numbers of people, particularly in underrepresented cohorts such as females, youths, migrants and older persons start and run their own business”. The Statement defines entrepreneurship as ‘an individual’s creative capacity to identify an opportunity and pursue it to produce new value or economic success.

The Statement

- identifies Ireland’s current skills profile
- provides a strategic vision and specific objectives for Ireland’s future skills requirements
- sets out a road map for how the vision and objectives can be achieved.

The three main aims of the Statement are

- Building the pipeline - Increase the numbers of entrepreneurs, who will actively engage in creating high quality business start-ups and jobs across the country
- Building entrepreneurial capability - Develop entrepreneurial skills among the general population and nurture entrepreneurial thinking and talent
- Building the right conditions - Ensure survival and growth of entrepreneurial start-ups.

### National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019-2022 (2019)

[The National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland](#) was launched in 2019 and is the first Irish national policy on social enterprise. It focuses on three key objectives:

1. Building Awareness of Social Enterprise
2. Growing and Strengthening Social Enterprise
3. Achieving Better Policy Alignment.

The Policy sets out a series of 26 commitments on the part of Government across these three Objectives for the development of social enterprise.

### Formal learning

There is no specific national strategy in entrepreneurship education in general education. However, there are several ongoing initiatives.

[The National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship in Ireland](#) (2014) promotes early and widespread student exposure to entrepreneurship and innovation.

[The National Skills Strategy](#) was published by the Department of Education and Skills in January 2016. The Strategy includes a commitment to develop an Entrepreneurship Education Policy Statement which will inform the development of entrepreneurship guidelines for schools.

The Department of Education supports enterprise in schools through developing a basic understanding of scientific principles and methods and of business. The Department encourages active and collaborative learning, and good arts education, all of which foster creativity, innovation, risk-taking and other key elements in entrepreneurial thinking and action.

At both general and vocational upper-secondary school, entrepreneurship is covered within the curriculum. Entrepreneurs and enterprise skills are covered within Business, an optional subject in the Leaving Certificate (established) state examination. [The Leaving](#)

[Certificate Vocational Programme](#) includes the compulsory module Enterprise Education. The module is designed to give students the opportunity to meet enterprising people and investigate business and community enterprises. Students are also encouraged to set up their own enterprise projects as vehicles of learning.

[Local Enterprise Offices](#) run Student Entrepreneurship Initiatives in secondary schools. These include:

- **The Student Enterprise Programme:** Each year over 22,000 second level students discover what it's like to run their own business by taking part in the Local Enterprise Offices Student Enterprise Programme.
- **Foróige Network for teaching entrepreneurship**
- **The Young Social Innovators (YSI) programme:** YSI promotes education for social innovation. It empowers and supports young people to realise their potential as social innovators, giving them the skills and confidence to tackle the social issues facing them, their communities and wider society.
- **Get up and go mini company project:** In groups, Transition Year students think of a creative enterprise providing a product or service, market this good, and sell it to the target audience, aiming to make a profit.
- **BT Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition:** Science fair for 12- to 19-year-olds. Established in 1965, it has grown to include circa 550 student projects.
- **BT Young Scientist Business Bootcamp (In association with Nova UCD):** An extension of the BT Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition. A four-day innovation and skills camp for second-level students from across Ireland who demonstrate an ability to understand how and why a simple idea can be developed into a commercially viable enterprise. The students are selected from over 1,200 secondary school students who competed in that year's BT Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition.

## Non-formal and informal learning

Foróige run the [Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship](#) (NFTE) youth entrepreneurship education and development programme. Foróige NFTE operates both in-school and out-of-school programmes. The aim of the programme is to help young people in disadvantaged communities to develop core skills in business and enterprise.

## Educators support in entrepreneurship education

**The Student Enterprise Programme** provides teacher resources to support secondary school students taking part in the [Student Enterprise Programme](#). The resources include a teachers' manual, student workbook, sample student business reports and videos including helpful tips from successful entrepreneurs. Free teacher resource packs are available from Local Enterprise Offices and through the student enterprise website.

**The Entrepreneurial Schools Virtual Guide to Entrepreneurial Learning:** is one of the largest entrepreneurship education initiatives in Europe, co-funded by the European Commission through the [Competitiveness and Innovation Programme](#) (CIP). It aims at supporting teacher's professional development in applying entrepreneurial learning in several subjects and learning environments.

The Virtual Guide is a practical and useful tool for teachers in primary, secondary and vocational schools that want to mainstream entrepreneurial education in teaching methods and learning processes they set up in classroom every day.

The guide contains more than 100 tools and methods to support entrepreneurial teaching and learning, good practices, and framework documents from 85 different schools in 10 countries.

It also includes self-assessment and review tools for teachers and schools who want to assess how entrepreneurial their learning process are and to review their progress on a regular basis.

**Exploring Enterprise:** A resource to enhance the teaching & learning of enterprise in 2nd level schools is a resource developed by the County and City Enterprise Boards, in association with the Second Level Support Service. It is a DVD with eight case studies of entrepreneurship and an accompanying '[Teacher Resource Book](#)'. Exploring Enterprise is designed to enhance the teaching and learning of entrepreneurship in second level schools. The resource is aimed primarily at students participating in Enterprise Modules within Senior Cycle Programmes including Transition Year, Leaving Certificate Applied, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and students following Leaving Certificate Business.

**The Skills Summary Guide for Youth Work Organisations (2019)** was created by the National youth Council of Ireland, Accenture and SpunOut.ie, and funded by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. The guide aims are to equip the significant adults in the lives of young people (particularly youth works) to build their understanding of [Skills Summary](#) and thereby provide a basis for introducing this tool to young people who might benefit from it. The Skills Summary is based around 12 transferable skills, one of which is entrepreneurship.

## 3.9 Start-up funding for young entrepreneurs

### Access to information

#### Local Enterprise Offices

[Local Enterprise Offices](#) offer advice, information and support to Startups and growing businesses.

Local Enterprise Office supports include:

- Start-your-own-business training courses.
- Market research information.
- Business planning advice and templates.
- Access to experienced business mentors.
- Feasibility grants.
- Co-investment.

#### Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur

[Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur](#) is run by the 31 Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs), with the support of the Department of Enterprise and Innovation and Enterprise Ireland. It aims to support a culture of entrepreneurship among young people in Ireland, to promote entrepreneurship as a career choice, and to encourage Ireland's young people to set up new businesses which will ultimately create jobs.

The competition is open to people between the ages of 18 and 35 with an innovative business idea, new start-up or established business. Up to 450 young entrepreneurs are invited each year to attend free regional 'Entrepreneur Bootcamps', to help them develop their business and new venture ideas.

IBYE is run across three categories

- Best Business Idea
- Best Start-Up Business
- Best Established Business.

## Young Social Innovators

[Young Social Innovators](#) (YSI) promotes education for social innovation. It empowers and supports young people to realise their potential as social innovators, giving them the skills and confidence to tackle the social issues facing them, their communities and wider society. Social innovation learning builds wellbeing amongst young people and communities and helps build a more inclusive, empathetic, fair society. It asks young people to examine the world through a new lens and to reimagine the type of society they would like to live in. It challenges them to put their ideas into practice and to bring their vision to reality. Alongside private sponsors, it is funded by several public sponsors:

- Department of Rural and Community Development
- Department of Education
- Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY)
- Department of Social Protection
- HSE
- WorldWise Global Schools
- Dormant Accounts.

## Enterprise Ireland

[Enterprise Ireland](#) also offers a range of supports and grants to Irish businesses. Enterprise Ireland is the government organisation responsible for the development and growth of Irish enterprises in world markets.

Enterprise Ireland funding programmes are open to anyone from entrepreneurs with a business idea that have the potential for a Startup to large companies that want to expand their business activities, improve efficiency, and grow sales.

[The Student Entrepreneur Awards](#) is a competition for third level student with a business idea, ran by Enterprise Ireland. First prize is €10,000 and the opportunity to avail of €30,000 worth of specialist advice and assistance to potentially help turn your enterprise idea into a business reality.

The Enterprise Ireland High Potential Start-Up Team works with the leading Irish technology start-ups spinning out of industry, college research and overseas entrepreneurs locating in Ireland. The HPSU Team provide advice, connections, feasibility assistance and investment to start-up companies with the potential to create jobs and export sales.

Enterprise Ireland offers help to those involved in a research project in a Higher Education Institute where there is potential for commercial exploitation via a spin-out company. The Enterprise Ireland Mentor Network can help spinouts and their promoters identify and overcome obstacles to start-up creation, development, and growth. Mentors in our Network can provide tailored advice, guidance, and support, to help accelerate development, build management capability, and grow.

## Other initiatives

Other initiatives offer access to young people and students, alongside the wider population.

Supporting SMEs Online Tool is an interactive guide that lists cross-government supports for businesses. Enterprise Ireland's Tool helps small businesses know which of the over 80 Government supports could potentially fit their business. South East BIC and West BIC are public private partnerships. They support the generation and development of new innovative enterprises and assists existing SMEs to innovate and expand. They provide high quality specialised business consultancy and active incubation.

## Access to capital

### Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur

[Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur](#), described above, has an investment fund of up to €2million. Each of the 31 Local Enterprise Offices awards up to six investments to three category winners and three runners-up at county level. The local winners in the Best Start-Up and Best-Established Business categories at county level will receive investments of up to €15,000 each and the two runners-up will each receive up to €5,000.

### Young Social Innovators

[YSI Den](#), is a social innovation fund, ran by Young Social Innovators. It is made available to groups who successfully pitch for assistance to support or develop an idea, product, or enterprise. Supports can include money, means and mentoring. Young Social Innovators is supported by the Department of Rural and Community Development.

### Student Entrepreneur Awards

First prize in [The Student Entrepreneur Awards](#), described above, includes €10,000.

### Other initiatives

Other initiatives offer access to young people and students, alongside the wider population.

[The Back to Work Enterprise Allowance](#) is designed to provide a monetary incentive for people who are long-term dependent on social welfare payments to make engagement in self-employment financially attractive and viable, while allowing them to retain a reducing proportion of their qualifying social welfare payment over two years (100% in year 1 and 75% in year 2).

The enterprise officers of Local Development Companies and INTREO Case Officers work closely with applicants in developing business plans and projections and providing continuing support to individual start-ups.

[New Frontiers](#) is Ireland's national entrepreneur development programme run by Enterprise Ireland partnership with the Institutes of Technology. The programme is designed to support entrepreneurs with innovative business ideas who are planning to establish and run their own company. A range of supports including mentoring, incubation space and a €15,000 scholarship payment are provided to help accelerate the development of the business and to equip the promoter(s) with the skills and contacts needed to successfully start and grow a company.

## 3.10 Promotion of entrepreneurship culture

### Special events and activities

[Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur](#) (IBYE) run by the 31 Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) with the support of the Department of Enterprise and Innovation and Enterprise Ireland. It is a nationwide competition open to people ages 18-35 years with an innovative business idea, new start-up or established business. IBYE is discussed in further detail in Chapter 3.9 Start-up funding for young entrepreneurs.

The Student Entrepreneur Awards is a competition for third level student with a business idea, ran by Enterprise Ireland. It is discussed in Chapter 3.9 Start-up funding for young entrepreneurs.

### Networks and partnerships

The [Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship](#) (NFTE) is a cutting edge, world recognised, youth entrepreneurship education and development programme. It is managed and provided by Foróige in Ireland and is affiliated to NFTE International.

## 3.11 Current debates and reforms

### Forthcoming policy developments

#### Pathways to Work 2021-2025

Pathways to Work 2021-2025 is the government's national employment services strategy and its overall framework for activation and employment support policy. The aim of this strategy is to assist people back to work as the economy and labour market recovers from Covid-19.

This strategy is a key part of the national Economic Recovery Plan. Its main goal is to ensure that as many job opportunities as possible are filled by people who are unemployed. It is designed to support those unemployed before the pandemic, those looking to return to work or join the workforce and those facing additional barriers to work, in order to promote better job opportunities outcomes for all including young people.

This strategy has five strands of action

1. **Working for Jobseekers** - helping jobseekers prepare for and find employment as quickly as possible
2. **Working for Employers** - making it easy for employers to recruit workers and to encourage recruitment of unemployed jobseekers, including young people
3. **Working for Work** - ensuring that the welfare system supports and makes it easy for people to make the move into employment
4. **Working for All- Leaving no one behind** - extending targeted employment supports to groups facing additional challenges accessing work such as people with disabilities, lone parents and minority groups, including Travellers.

This section also references working for young people with disadvantage specifically and acknowledges the concern about the impact of Covid-19 on the employment and life prospects of young people.

5. **Working with Evidence-** delivering services and supports that are shown to work

### Ongoing debates

#### Youth Unemployment and Covid-19

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the seasonally adjusted youth unemployment rate for 2019 averaged approximately 12.5%. It is well documented that young people in the labour market, (those under 25 years of age), were particularly vulnerable to the disruption caused by the pandemic. Young people account for 11.7% of the workforce but total 20% of all PUP claims. The high share of young people on the PUP during times of lockdown was driven by their likelihood to work in the most impacted sectors such as hospitality and retail. These sectors were typically among the first to close in times of increased incidence of Covid-19 and the last to reopen during the phased easing of restrictions.

As such, the changes in youth unemployment have been sharper than for any other age group, as sectors of the economy closed and then reopened. The CSO's 'Covid-19 adjusted' monthly youth unemployment rate which includes all those in receipt of the PUP peaked at almost 70% in May 2020. It should be noted, that numbers in receipt of the PUP included some who- under standard unemployment definitions- would not be considered eligible for unemployment payments, such as students- the vast majority of whom are young people.

However, since the middle of 2021, there has been a sharp recovery across the labour market as public health restrictions eased and businesses and society were able to reopen. For young people this was evident in June and July 2021 following the reopening of hospitality and retail. Despite the partial re-introduction of public health restrictions in early December 2021, the traditional youth unemployment rate and Covid-19 adjusted youth unemployment rate at the end of the month were 9% and 11.4% respectively. This

represents a sharp decline and convergence in the two rates compared to earlier in the pandemic.

### **Long-term youth unemployment**

Social welfare payments to young unemployed people under 26 years of age are lower than for adult unemployed people. The Jobseeker Allowance rate for those unemployed people aged 18-24 is €117.70 and €208 for those over 25.

However, an individual aged 18-24 can be eligible for the full personal rate of €208 Jobseekers Allowance if they meet any of the conditions listed below

- You have a qualified child
- You are transferring directly to Jobseeker's Allowance from Disability Allowance
- You are participating in an approved training or education scheme- Back to Education Allowance (BTEA)
- If you were in the care of the HSE, Child and Family Agency (TUSLA) during the 12 months before you reached the age of 18
- If you are living independently and you receive Rent Supplement, Housing Assistance Payment (HAP), Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS), Local Authority Housing or housing provided by certain Approved Housing Bodies.

### **Equality for young job seekers**

In recent years, social welfare payments to young unemployed people under 26 years of age were reduced to a lower level than adult unemployed people.

NYCI has called on the government to restore the full adult rate of €198 to young people on Jobseeker's Allowance over the next two budgets. According to NYCI, 'the imposition of lower rates on young jobseekers is contrary to the provisions of Article 40.1 of the Irish Constitution, which dictates that all citizens should be treated equally and must be addressed.' However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been little work completed on restoring the full adult rate to young people.

### **Youth Employment Strategy**

Social Justice Ireland have called for the adaption of the new Youth Employment Strategy as the current Programme for Government does not mention youth unemployment or a strategy to tackle it. Due to Covid-19, young people will be disproportionately affected by unemployment as the economy recovers from Covid-19. The new Government must build on the European Commission Youth Employment Support package to 'bridge jobs for the next generation.'

It is clear that young people face a challenging labour market situation. The European Commission is proposing that a minimum of €22 billion be mobilized for a Youth Employment Support package to mitigate the effects of the pandemic for young people in the labour market. The new Government should use the strands of the Youth Employment Support Package as a guide to designing a strategy to deal with this crisis at a national level.

These strands are

1. Stepping up the outreach to vulnerable young people across the EU ages 15-29
2. Vocational education and training
3. Renewed interest in apprenticeships
4. Additional measures to support youth employment including start-up incentives.



## 4. SOCIAL INCLUSION

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[The Department of Social Protection](#) is the main government department responsible for policy-making surrounding social inclusion.

[The Social Inclusion Division](#) within the Department of Social Protection supports the Minister and Government in developing and implementing Government strategies on social inclusion.

There is no specific national strategy for the social inclusion of young people. However, the social inclusion of young people is promoted through a number of current and recent strategies including

- [National Youth Strategy 2015-2020](#)
- [Better Outcomes Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People in Ireland 2014-2020](#)
- [LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy 2018-2020](#)
- [National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy 2019-2021](#)
- [Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025](#)
- [National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020](#)
- [National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021](#).

Objective 8 of the National Youth Strategy states, “young people are a particular focus in policies that address social inclusion and poverty.”

[The Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020 – 2025](#) defines poverty and social exclusion as

'People are living in poverty if their income and resources (material, cultural and social) are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living which is regarded as acceptable by Irish society generally. As a result of inadequate income and resources people may be excluded and marginalized from participating in activities which are considered the norm for other people in society.'

The main challenges to social inclusion in Ireland currently are child poverty, homelessness and young people living in Direct Provision and Emergency Accommodation Centres (discussed further in [Chapter 4.1](#)). Covid-19 and the pandemic also presented challenges for young peoples social inclusion.

### 4.1 General context

#### Main challenges to social inclusion

According to [Poverty Focus Ireland 2020](#), an annual report from Social Justice Ireland, 199,234 children and young people under 18 years of age lived in households experiencing poverty in 2018.

[Social Justice Ireland](#) is a non-profit organization, partly funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development under the Scheme to Support National Organisations and Pobal (a not-for profit company that manages programmes on behalf of the Irish government and the EU).

#### Child and youth homelessness

Child and youth homelessness is a key challenge to social inclusion in Ireland. The lead local authorities for homelessness in each region provide monthly reports on homelessness that identify the number of people utilizing State-funded emergency accommodation on a regional and county basis. The number of 18 to 24 year olds reported as experiencing homelessness increased by 85% from the 2015-2018 period. In April 2018 there were 924

homeless young people in Ireland with 630 of those being in Dublin. The number of 18-24 year olds experiencing homelessness doubled between April 2014 (440) and April 2018 (924) and fell to 749 in April 2020. This compares with 903 18-24 year olds reported homeless in April 2019 and 793 reported in April 2017.

These numbers represent those counted in monthly figures and does not include those experiencing 'hidden homelessness' among young people. For example, young people who are 'couch surfing,' living in squats, overcrowded accommodation, precarious situations etc. The Irish Coalition to End Youth Homelessness was established in September 2017 as a way of consolidating the work different organisations do who are trying to tackle youth homelessness. This organisation calls the government to act on homelessness amongst young people. They also produce proposals for a Youth Homeless Strategy.

### **Homelessness and Covid-19**

Focus Ireland in their third volume of '[Focus on Homelessness](#)' that was published in October 2020, represented data that covered the first Covid 'lockdown' period of homelessness. In March 2020 government measures were introduced to prevent people becoming homeless during the pandemic including a block of all evictions and a rent-freeze. In March 2020 when the stay at home order came into effect, there was a 12% decrease of individuals in emergency accommodation including young people.

The Homelessness Taskforce met with the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage Darragh O'Brien TD in April 2021 to discuss the proposal of the [Youth Homelessness Strategy](#), in particular regarding Covid-19. The meeting also addressed the ongoing work that happens to protect homeless people at risk of Covid-19 as the vaccine strategy is rolled out.

The High Level Homelessness Taskforce is made up of representatives from the Peter McVerry Trust, Dublin Simon Community, Focus Ireland, Threshold, DePaul, CrossCare and the Dublin Region Homelessness Executive and meet regularly by videoconference.

Members of the Taskforce were asked to consider their current role in supporting young people experiencing homelessness, what services they are currently providing to young people in homeless services and what are the key challenges to address youth homelessness from a service provision viewpoint. This Taskforce want to reach realizable solutions and meet the specific needs of young people who end up experiencing homelessness but prevent young people from becoming homeless in the first place.

### **Young people living in Direct Provision and Emergency Accommodation Centres**

Young people living in Direct Provision and Emergency Accommodation Centres is another key challenge to social inclusion in Ireland. Direct provision is a means of meeting the basic needs of food and shelter for asylum seekers directly while their claims for refugee status, subsidiary protection or appeals for leave to remain are being processed in Ireland. Direct Provision and Emergency Accommodation Centres tend to be isolated, and residents must share rooms with most not having the facilities to cook for themselves or their families. In many Direct Provision centres, meals are only served at set times. A recent [Report on Children in Direct Provision](#) found that a lack of funds, transport, strict mealtimes and a ban on visitors to Direct Provision centres can exclude Asylum seekers. For example, this can exclude children from afterschool activities and youths from further or third level educational opportunities.

The most recent statistics published by the Irish Refugee Council state that in August 2019 there were 1,647 children living in Direct Provision.

In February 2021 the Irish Government published [A White Paper to End Direct Provision and to Establish a New International Protection Support Service](#). The Government plans to replace the Direct Provision system with an international protection system over the next four years with a two-phased approach that plans to close all Direct Provision centres by the end of 2024.

**Phase one** is expected to take four months. In this phase, accommodation will be provided in reception and integration centres. Six reception and integration centres will be established and these will be owned by the State and run by not-for-profit organisations.

According to the plan, people including children who are applying for protection will be helped to integrate into Ireland from day one, with health, housing, education and employment supports at the core of the system. The necessary supports will be in place depending on the relevant needs of the person.

A health assessment will be provided for all new international protection applicants in phase one and there will be a focus on the needs of children who come to Ireland with their families.

Following phase one, applicants will be offered accommodation through a number of strands in phase two. The plan says after their first four months in Ireland, people whose protection claims are still being processed will move to accommodation in the community. All accommodation will be own-door, self-contained houses or apartments for families to provide privacy, agency and independence. Houses will be situated within the community, with supports to encourage interconnections especially for children and young people.

Minister of Children, Roderic O’Gorman said that the Government is taking a step towards a fairer, more compassionate Ireland.

In December 2021, the Department of Justice launched a new landmark scheme to assist long-term undocumented migrants in Ireland. This will allow eligible applicants to remain and reside in the State and become Irish residents.

## Main concept

Ireland uses a long-standing definition of poverty and social-inclusion and this is set out in the [Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025](#) but originates in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy, 1997;

‘People are living in poverty if their income and resources (material, cultural and social) are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living which is regarded as acceptable by Irish society generally. As a result of inadequate income and resources, people may be excluded and marginalised from participating in activities which are considered the norm for other people in society.’

The official Government approved property measure used in Ireland is consistent poverty. This measure was developed independently by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI).

The measure identifies the proportion of people, from those with an income below a certain threshold (less than 60% of median income), who are deprived of two or more goods or services considered essential for the basic standard of living.

These good or services include the following

1. Two pairs of strong shoes
2. A warm waterproof overcoat
3. To buy new clothes that are not second-hand
4. Eat meals with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every single day
5. Have a roast joint or its equivalent once a week
6. Had to go without heating during the last year through lack of money
7. Keep the home adequately warm
8. Buy presents for family or friends at least once a year
9. Replace any worn out furniture
10. Have family or friends for a drink or meal once a month
11. Have a morning, afternoon or evening out in the last fortnight, for entertainment.

## 4.2 Administration and governance

### Governance

The Department of Social Protection is the main government department responsible for policy-making on social inclusion.

The Social Inclusion Division within the Department of Social Protection supports the Minister and Government in developing and implementing Government strategies for preventing, reducing and ultimately eliminating poverty and social exclusion and in promoting greater social inclusion and social cohesion in collaboration with other stakeholders, including, in particular, people experiencing poverty.

### Cross-sectorial cooperation

Previously, inclusion strategy was spread within different documents across each Government Department. However, the [Roadmap for Social Inclusion](#) (2020-2025) moves towards a more streamlined, overarching structure for the various social inclusion and poverty reduction approaches set out in each Department's own sectoral strategy. The Roadmap sets the medium-term direction of social inclusion on a 'whole-of-Government' basis. This allows the Government to identify inter-linkages and dependencies across the various stakeholders.

The Social Inclusion Forum is part of the Government's structures to monitor and evaluate the implementation of its plans to address poverty and social inclusion.

The Social Inclusion Forum annual event is the principle institutional forum for wider public consultation and discussion on social inclusion issues. It provides an opportunity for engagement between officials, community and voluntary organisations and people experiencing poverty in relation to policy.

2020 saw the publication of the Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-25: Ambition, Goals, Commitments, the arrival of Covid-19 and related restrictions on economic and social life, and the publication of a new Programme for Government. This is the backdrop against which the 2021 Social Inclusion Forum will take place. The theme of this year's Forum is "Implementing the Roadmap for Social Inclusion: reducing poverty and improving social inclusion".

## 4.3 Strategy for the social inclusion of young people

### Existence of a National Strategy on social inclusion

[The Roadmap for Social Inclusion](#) (2020-2025) is a national strategy that aims to increase the social inclusion of marginalised people. While it does not solely focus on young people, the Roadmap does address the social inclusion of young people. One of its seven high-level goals specifically addresses the social inclusion of children; 'Support families- reduce child poverty.'

The Social Inclusion of LGBTI+ youths is also promoted through the [National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy](#) (2019-2021) and the [LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy](#) (2018-2020).

While it is not specific to youths, the inclusion of all Traveller and Roma people, including Traveller and Roma youths is promoted by the [National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy](#) (2017-2021).

[The National Disability Inclusion Strategy](#) 2017 – 2021 (NDIS) is a four year plan designed to provide greater supports for Irish citizens including young persons and children living with different kinds of disabilities in their daily lives.

## Scope and contents

[The Roadmap for Social Inclusion](#) (2020-2025) is a national strategy that aims to increase the social inclusion of marginalised people. Its goal is to set Ireland 'on a course for real change and delivery in those areas which matter most to [Irish] citizens and which can underpin a better quality of life for all.'

The roadmap targets

- Older people
- People outside employment
- Workers
- Families and children in poverty
- People with disabilities
- Communities.

## Responsible authority

[The Roadmap for Social Inclusion](#) (2020-2025) was published by the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection in 2020. It sets out 66 key commitments to be delivered across all of the Government. One or more government departments are identified as responsible for each specific commitment.

## Revisions/ Updates

The Irish Government first introduced a National Anti-Poverty Strategy entitled Sharing in Progress (1997-2007). This Strategy subsequently led to the development of the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (2007-2016). Following online public consultation regarding the drafting of the plan in 2019, the Roadmap for Social Inclusion (2020-2025) was published in 2020. It is intended to be a living document.

## 4.4 Inclusive programmes for young people

### Programmes for vulnerable young people

In 2005 the Department of Education introduced DEIS - Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools: an action plan for educational inclusion. The plan brought together several programmes which targeted educational disadvantage throughout the public schools' system under the framework of Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS).

[DEIS Plan 2017](#) Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools is the government's main policy initiative aimed at tackling educational disadvantage. DEIS Plan 2017 is discussed in further detail in Chapter 6.1 General Context, under Social Inclusion.

DEIS is an integrated approach to the issue of educational inclusion which provides for a standardised system for identifying and regularly reviewing levels of disadvantage and a new integrated School Support Programme (SSP) to bring together and build upon previous schemes and programmes.

The School Support Programme, managed by Tusla Education Support Services (tess), includes the Home School Community Liaison Scheme (HSCL) and the School Completion Programme (SCP). The School Completion Programme aims to help students from disadvantaged areas stay in school to complete their Leaving Certificate (final year exams).

The Home-School Community Liaison Scheme aims to improve cooperation between home, schools and communities to advance the educational interests of disadvantaged children. Further details about The School Support Programme are available in Chapter 6.3 Preventing early leaving from education and training (ELET).

Several third level institutes of education have education access programmes. These programmes support people from areas with low progression rates to higher education to reach their full educational potential. They also work in partnership with the local community to engage with local schools and communities to raise awareness of higher education opportunities.

## Funding

DEIS is part of the School Excellence Fund. School Excellence Fund DEIS 2020 expenditure was estimated to be in the region of €450,000 with an increase to €2 million allocated funds in 2021.

## Quality Assurance

The process of identifying schools for participation in DEIS is managed by the Educational Research Centre (ERC) on behalf of the Department of Education and supported by quality assurance work co-ordinated through the Department's regional offices and the Inspectorate.

## 4.5 Initiatives promoting social inclusion and raising awareness

### Intercultural awareness

[National Youth Council of Ireland's \(NYCI\) Equality and Intercultural Programme](#) supports youth services to embed equality, inclusion, diversity and interculturalism into youth work settings. The programme provides:

- Training programmes
- Resources
- Policy development
- Advice
- Networking opportunities

This programme also conducts research to support youth work organisations to engage more effectively with young people from minority ethnic backgrounds. NYCI also runs a Equality and Inclusion Support Network.

[The Young Social Innovators \(YSI\)](#) programme aims to raise social awareness among 15- to 18-year-olds in Ireland so that they might become effective champions for social justice. YSI is supported by the Department of Social Protection and their projects are showcased at an annual event usually held in May.

There are several other youth work programmes that promote social inclusion

- The President's Award (Gaisce) is a self-development programme for young people
- St. Vincent de Paul (SVP) Youth Development Programme is a programme designed for use in school/youth groups that focuses on social action
- ECO-UNESCO is Ireland's Environmental Education and Youth Organisation that works to conserve the environment and empower young people.

### Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)

[SICAP](#) is the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme. The current programme began on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2018 and will run until the end of 2022, replacing SICAP 2015-2017. SICAP is co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the European Social Fund as part of the [ESF Programme for Employability Inclusion and Learning \(2014-2020\)](#).

SICAP aims to reduce poverty and promote social inclusion and equality. It does this through Programme Implementers, agencies and companies, who work with the most disadvantaged and the hardest to reach in communities.

This programme is aimed at

- disadvantaged children and families
- disadvantaged young people (aged 15-24)
- disadvantaged women
- lone parents
- new communities (including refugees and asylum seekers)
- people living in disadvantaged communities
- people with disabilities
- Roma
- the unemployed
- low income workers/households
- Travellers
- the disengaged from the labour market (economically inactive)
- an emerging needs target group selected at local level by the Local Community Development Committees to reflect the specific needs of the local area if not otherwise addressed.

The programme has two goals that focus on supporting communities and individuals

- to support communities and target groups to engage with relevant stakeholders in identifying and addressing social exclusion and equality issues, developing the capacity of local community groups and creating more sustainable communities
- to support disadvantaged individuals to improve the quality of their lives through the provision of lifelong learning and labour market supports.

## Young people's rights

### Ombudsman for Children's Office

[The Ombudsman for Children's Office](#) (OCO) is a human rights institution that promotes the rights and welfare of young people under 18 years living in Ireland. The OCO also investigates complaints about services provided to children by public organisations. The service is free and independent.

The OCO advise the Government and others to ensure that laws and plans respect children's rights. They encourage public organisations to promote children's rights in the work that they do. They also carry out research to get a better understanding of issues that are important in children and young people's lives.

The role and powers of the OCO are set out in the Ombudsman for Children Act (2002). The Ombudsman for Children is a presidential appointment that reports directly to the Oireachtas (legislature of Ireland).

### Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC)

[The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission](#) (IHREC) is Ireland's national human rights and equality institution. IHREC is an independent public body that accounts to the Parliament (Oireachtas) with a mandate established under the [Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014](#). The key aim of IHREC is to protect and promote human rights and equality in Ireland and build a culture of respect for human rights, equality and intercultural understanding in the State.

## Key initiatives to safeguard democracy and prevent radicalisation leading to violent extremism

### PEACE PLUS

[The PEACE PLUS](#) programme is a European Union initiative designed to support peace and reconciliation. It began in 2021 and will run until 2027. The PEACE Programme was initially created in 1995 as a direct result of the EU's desire to make a positive response to the parliamentary ceasefires of 1994.

The overall objective of the PEACE PLUS Programme is to build prosperity and peace within the region and to ensure that this Programme will leave a lasting and tangible legacy. This programme will achieve this by funding activities that promote peace and reconciliation whilst contributing to the cross-border economic and territorial development of the region. The framework developed for PEACE PLUS includes the following six themes

- Building Peaceful and Thriving Communities
- Delivering Economic Regeneration and Transformation
- Empowering and Investing in Young People
- Healthy and Inclusive Communities
- Supporting a Sustainable Future
- Building & Embedding Partnership and Collaboration.

The draft content of the PEACE PLUS Programme has been designed following a comprehensive cross-border stakeholder engagement process, early in 2021 that included 16 different consultation events, with over 1,000 people in attendance. Over 300 survey responses were submitted. The consultation started on Wednesday 10 March 2021 and closed at 5pm on Wednesday 12 May 2021.

The purpose of the public consultation was to provide citizens, and other key stakeholders, with an opportunity to share their views on the content and administrative arrangements of the PEACE PLUS Programme, findings from the Equality Screening exercise and the Strategic Environmental Assessment. While the programme was expected to begin during 2021, the exact date is yet to be realised and some delay is expected due to Covid-19.

The programme builds upon previous PEACE and INTERREG Programmes. The last programme PEACE IV, ran from 2014-2020. The eligible area for the PEACE IV Programme was Northern Ireland and the Border Counties of Ireland (including Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan and Sligo). Programme funding was worth €270m. 85% of the Programme, €229m, was provided through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). 15%, was match-funded by the Irish Government and the Northern Irish Executive. The content was agreed by the Northern Ireland Executive, the Irish Government and the European Commission. It focused on making real and lasting change in terms of Shared Education initiatives, support for marginalised Children and Young People, the provision of new Shared Spaces and Services, and projects to Build Positive Relations with people from different communities and backgrounds.

### Youth Network for Peace

[Youth Network for Peace](#) (YNP) is a Peace IV initiative ran by Youth Work Ireland. It is a regional, cross-border, youth-led initiative. YNP aims to connect 10,000 young people through a Youth Democracy Hub. Young people aged 15–25 years living in the border regions of Ireland and Northern Ireland are targeted. The initiative aims to achieve meaningful, purposeful and sustained contact between young people from different communities to better co-ordinate youth participation and peace building.

Youth Network for Peace's activities include

- Cross-border, youth led Dialogue Events



- Youth Bank committees of diverse young people; trained in good relations, assessment of needs, committee & grant giving skills.
- Cross border cohorts of young people training & leading on Social Action projects, targeting exclusion & encouraging peace building through joint activities.
- Campaigns to be researched & supported by young people each year on legacy & contemporary issues, with cross border conventions led by young people.
- Influencing actions and cross-border, youth led participative democracy events will take place.
- Online, internet regional radio & social media station will be set up & run by young people, connecting young activists with debates, live shows and topical discussions.
- Insight youth polls conducted by young people to test & monitor attitudes.
- Partnership of 13 cross-border, voluntary youth organisations, meeting quarterly to support a youth steering body to monitor & manage activities.
- A Youth Steering Body of 75 diverse young people co-ordinates all activities and contributes to broadcasting targets.

## 4.6 Access to quality services

### Housing

According to the [National Youth Council in Ireland](#) (NYCI), many young people living in Ireland are either unable to afford to move out of home or struggle to access affordable housing. Youth homelessness is also an increasing issue as young people find it difficult to access affordable and quality housing in the private rented sector and/or the social housing sector.

Young people leaving care are at higher risk of social exclusion and homelessness. [The Child and Family Agency \(Tusla\)](#) provide assistance to young people up to the age of 21 who have been in care, or up to 23 years if they are completing an education course. Aftercare plans can include arrangements for accommodation.

### Social services

Young people can access social services through local Social Welfare Offices. Information on social services can be accessed through local Citizens Information Centres. The Citizens Information website also provides comprehensive information on social services.

The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) is a form of social housing support for people who have a long-term housing need. Recipients must qualify for social housing support to be eligible for HAP.

### Health care

Ireland has a government funded public healthcare system called the Health Service Executive (HSE). A person living in Ireland for at least one year is considered by the HSE to be 'ordinarily resident' and is entitled to either full eligibility (Category 1) or limited eligibility (Category 2) for health services.

People who have not been resident in Ireland for at least one year must satisfy the HSE that it is their intention to remain for a minimum of one year in order to be eligible for health services. Dependents of such individuals must also contact the HSE to confirm their eligibility.

#### Category 1 - People with Medical Cards

Over 30% of people in Ireland have medical cards. Medical Cards allow people to get a wide range of health services and medicines free of charge.

## Category 2 - People without Medical Cards

People without medical cards can still access a wide range of community and hospital health services, either free of charge or at reduced cost.

Further details on the HSE and medical cards are available in [Chapter 7](#).

## Financial services

The social welfare system in Ireland is divided into three main types of payments

- Social insurance payments
- Means-tested payments
- Universal payments.

The main target groups of social welfare payments are

- One-parent families
- Job-seekers
- People with a disability
- Carers.

During Covid-19 a lot of young people received the 'Pandemic Unemployment Payment' (PUP) as discussed in Current Reforms and Debates and in the Employment Chapter.

## Quality assurance

[The Health Information and Quality Authority](#) (HIQA) is an independent authority that deals with quality assurance for people using health and social care services in Ireland.

HIQA's role is to develop standards, inspect and review health and social care services and support informed decisions on how services are delivered. HIQA reports to the Minister for Health and engages with the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Affairs.

HIQA inspects children and young people's services including:

- The Child and Family Agency (Tusla)'s child protection and welfare services to measure their compliance with the National Standards for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2012)
- The Child and Family Agency (Tusla) and private foster care services to measure their compliance with the National Standards for Foster Care (2003) and the regulations.
- The Child and Family Agency (Tusla)'s statutory children's residential centres to measure their compliance with the National Standards for Children's Residential Centres (2018).
- The Child and Family Agency (Tusla)'s special care units to ensure that services meet the requirements set out in the Health Act 2007, regulations and the national standards, in order to be registered to operate.
- Oberstown Children Detention Campus to measure their compliance with the Standards and Criteria for Children Detention Schools (2008)
- HIQA also inspects all of the above services for the implementation of Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017).

## 4.7 Youth work to foster social inclusion

### UBU- Your Place, Your Space

In December 2019, the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs [launched UBU- Your Place, Your Space](#). It is informed by the high-level national outcome areas set out in The National Policy Framework for Children and the corresponding objectives in the National Youth Strategy. As outlined in this Strategy, the primary target group for this initiative are 10–24-year-olds who are marginalised, disadvantaged, or vulnerable. UBU- Your Place, Your Space's goals are to provide a young person-centred, community-based, and out of school youth services to young people in need of support and to ensure that each layer of the governance structure (including the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth; Education and Training Boards; and funded organisations) adds value to the direct work with young people.

UBU brings together The Special Projects for Youth (SPY), Young People's Facilities and Services Fund (LDTF) Fund 1 and Fund 2 with a value of over €38.5 million. These programmes are run by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth's Youth Affairs Unit and are targeted 10–21-year-olds in areas where drug problems exist.

### UBU Resilience and Effectiveness Initiative

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June 2021, the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth launched a new initiative to support youth services working with disadvantaged, marginalised and vulnerable young people under the UBU Your Place Your Space scheme. The initiative will help to support smaller youth services to increase their youth work provision and to benefit organisations that have been facing cost pressures.

The funding is support UBU- Your Place, Your Space services to deliver a more efficient service to young people. A total of €800,000 has been set aside for this initiative that will be operated through the Education and Training Boards.

### Garda (Police) Youth Diversion Programme

[The Irish Youth Justice Service](#) (IYJS) funds youth organisations and projects to provide services to young people aged under 18-years who have conflict with the law.

[The Garda \(Police\) Youth Diversion Programmes](#) supports a network of Garda Youth Diversion Projects (GYDP). GYDP's are community-based multi-agency crime prevention initiatives that seek to divert young people who have become involved in crime/anti-social behaviour and to support wider preventative work within the community and with families at risk. There are currently 105 GYDP's state-wide and a further 10 projects with a special focus (e.g. for more challenging children, family support, etc.).

GYDP's aim to bring about the conditions whereby the behavioural patterns of young people towards law and order can develop and mature through positive interventions and interaction of the project.

They primarily targeted 'at-risk' 12- to 17-year-old youths in communities where a specific need has been identified and where there is risk of them remaining within the justice system.

In 2020, €15.6m was allocated to GYDPs. GYDPs are financed by way of a funding agreement between the CBO and the Department of Justice. This is subject to year-on-year approval of the GYDP Annual Plan submitted by the management agencies to the Department of Justice and the Garda Youth Diversion Programme Office.

### Le Chéile

[Together \(Le Chéile\)](#) is a mentoring service for children and young people aged 12-18 years engaged in Young Persons Probation. It was set up to meet the needs of the Mentor (Family Support) Order under the requirements of the Children's Act 2001. Le Chéile runs

a Restorative Justice project in Limerick, funded by the Limerick Regeneration Project, now under Limerick and City Council and Young Person's Probation. Le Chéile is funded by the Irish Youth Justice Services through the Probation Service, until 2020 as part of Ireland's European Structural and Investment Funds Programmes 2014-2020, that is co-funded by the Irish Government and the European Union.

## 4.8 Current debates and reforms

### Forthcoming policy developments

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) have just adopted their [Statement of Strategy](#) that will run from 2021 until 2023. The main priorities of this Strategy include:

- Making sure that the Department has the right policies, legislation, resources and systems in

place to meet the particular needs of children, young people, adults, families and communities within a diverse and equal society.

- Supporting children and young people in active learning and participation.
- Looking at policies across Government through the lens of children, young people, families, communities and diverse groups.
- Working effectively across Government to promote the well-being of Irish society and developing policies that are responsive to its changing nature.
- Ensuring that the Department addresses inequalities and barriers which prevent migrants, refugees, applicants for international protection, LGBTI+ individuals, Travellers,
- Roma, disabled people, and women from participating fully in Irish society.
- Promoting the values of equality, respect for human rights and freedom from racism, xenophobia and discrimination. Critically evaluating the Departments performance, making necessary improvements and taking decisions informed by the best available evidence and research.

The recently established Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth have taken on extra responsibilities and this expanded function presents great opportunities for growth and development.

The Strategic Goals of this [Statement of Strategy](#) include:

Strategic Goal 1: We will develop, implement and influence evidence informed policies and legislation that improve the outcomes for those we serve.

Strategic Goal 2: We will ensure the provision of a range of quality and sustainable services, underpinned by strategic investment, that meet the needs of individuals, families and communities.

Strategic Goal 3: We will help those who are vulnerable, including children, young people and at risk individuals, to overcome adverse circumstances and to achieve their full potential.

Strategic Goal 4: We will promote the development of a progressive, respectful and equal society, informed by the experiences of past generations and seek to respond to the needs of survivors.

Strategic Goal 5: We will work in partnership with individuals, families and communities across Government Departments, Public Bodies and Civil Society to achieve better outcomes.

Strategic Goal 6: We will maintain high standards of performance and corporate governance with engaged, motivated and supported staff.

The latest [National Policy Framework for Children and Young People](#) and the [National Youth Strategy](#) both expired at the end of 2020. According to the above Statement of Strategy, the government have plans to adopt a new National Youth Policy/Strategy but there are no official details as of yet.

## Ongoing debates

### Young people living in Direct Provision.

There is an ongoing debate surrounding young people living in Direct Provision in Ireland. Direct Provision is a means of meeting the basic needs of food and shelter for asylum seekers directly whilst their claims for refugee status are being processed in Ireland.

The main issues debated include young people's safety, the impact of Direct Provision on their mental health, the lack of space, food, education and the long waiting times to be processed.

In February 2021 the Irish Government published [A White Paper to End Direct Provision](#) and to Establish a New International Protection Support Service. The Government plans to replace the Direct Provision system with an international protection system over the next four years with a two-phased approach that plans to close all Direct Provision centres by the end of 2024.

Phase one is expected to take four months. In this phase, accommodation will be provided in reception and integration centres. Six reception and integration centres will be established and these will be owned by the State and run by not-for-profit organisations.

According to the plan, people including children who are applying for protection will be helped to integrate into Ireland from day one, with health, housing, education and employment supports at the core of the system. The necessary supports will be in place depending on the relevant needs of the person.

A health assessment will be provided for all new international protection applicants in phase one and there will be a focus on the needs of children who come to Ireland with their families.

Following phase one, applicants will be offered accommodation through several strands in phase two. The plan says after their first four months in Ireland, people whose protection claims are still being processed will move to accommodation in the community. All accommodation will be own-door, self-contained houses or apartments for families to provide privacy, agency and independence. Houses will be situated within the community, with supports to encourage interconnections especially for children and young people.

Minister of Children, Roderic O'Gorman said that the Government is taking a step towards a fairer, more compassionate Ireland.

### Young people experiencing homelessness

There is a debate on the number of young people experiencing homelessness and living in emergency accommodation, linked to the 'housing crisis' in Ireland. The main topics debated include the negative impacts of homelessness on young people, e.g. the lack of stability, lack of space, mental health, education and lack of social housing.

The main actors involved in the debate are the Irish Government, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, the Ombudsman for Children, homeless charities, and the media.

### Homelessness and Covid-19

Focus Ireland in their third volume of '[Focus on Homelessness](#)' that was published in October 2020, represented data that covered the first Covid 'lockdown' period of homelessness. In March 2020 government measures were introduced to prevent people

becoming homeless during the pandemic including a block of all evictions and a rent-freeze. In March 2020 when the stay at home order came into effect, there was a 12% decrease of individuals in emergency accommodation including young people.

The Homelessness Taskforce met with the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage Darragh O'Brien TD in April 2021 to discuss the proposal of the Youth Homelessness Strategy, in particular regarding Covid-19. The meeting also addressed the ongoing work that happens to protect homeless people at risk of Covid-19 as the vaccine strategy is rolled out.

The High Level Homelessness Taskforce is made up of representatives from the Peter McVerry Trust, Dublin Simon Community, Focus Ireland, Threshold, DePaul, CrossCare and the Dublin Region Homelessness Executive and meet regularly by videoconference.

Members of the Taskforce were asked to consider their current role in supporting young people experiencing homelessness, what services they are currently providing to young people in homeless services and what are the key challenges to address youth homelessness from a service provision viewpoint. This Taskforce want to reach realizable solutions and meet the specific needs of young people who end up experiencing homelessness but prevent young people from becoming homeless in the first place.

### **LGBTQI+ Youth Homelessness**

LGBTQI+ youth homelessness has been highlighted as an issue by homeless services. According to Focus Ireland, 'youth services staff have reported high numbers of LGBTQI+ young people are becoming homeless as a direct consequence of their sexual orientation or gender identity.'

[A Qualitative Study of LGBTQI+ Youth Homelessness in Ireland](#) published by Focus Ireland in September 2020 sought for the first time to make visible and give a voice to the specificities of LGBTQI+ youth homelessness in Ireland.

The broad aim of this research included gathering information about

- the scale and triggers of LGBTQI+ youth homelessness in Ireland
- first-hand qualitative experiences of young LGBTQI+ people who found themselves homeless
- measures that might be adopted to combat LGBTQI+ youth homelessness in Ireland.

To achieve these aims the research aimed to:

- Explore the processes and 'triggers' that contribute to LGBTQI+ young people's homelessness or housing instability in Ireland
- Understand LGBTQI+ young people's experiences of frontline homeless and related support services in Ireland
- Examine the potential obstacles to housing of LGBTQI+ young people in Ireland
- Compare the experiences of LGBTQI+ homeless young people in Ireland with the findings of the international research evidence on this group
- Make recommendations on the development of policies and services to meet the needs of young, homeless LGBTQI+ young people in Ireland, including recommendations on measuring sexuality and/or sexual identity in homelessness statistics.

Some recommendations made

- The '[Youth Homelessness Strategy](#)', committed to in the Programme for Government 2020, should include a 'homelessness prevention' pillar with specific reference to the particular risks and pathways into homelessness which LGBTQI+ youth are likely to experience. The Strategy should put in place educational, family and youth service supports to help prevent homelessness among LGBTQI+ youth.

- Tusla should increase funding to extend the lifetime of the existing Youth Homeless Prevention Mediations Service.
- The Strategy should also address the specific challenges which may face LGBTQI children in foster care and residential and review and build on the valuable work already conducted by Tusla to ensure that these challenges are addressed.
- The strategy should ensure that specialist support, information and training is available to teachers and youth workers to enhance their interaction with and support for LGBTQI+ youth.
- Focus Ireland should work with the Homeless Network and LGBTQI+ organisations to develop an awareness raising programme that highlights the presence and specific needs of young LGBTQI+ people including appropriate language and gender pronouns.

## LGBTQI+ Young People

[The National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy](#) is running from 2019 until 2021. This Strategy was the world's first National LGBTI+ Youth Strategy and is essential in identifying and addressing issues that may prevent LGBTQI+ young people from enjoying full equality in practice in Irish society.

[The 2019 School Climate Survey](#) conducted by BeLong To Youth Services identified a number of issues affecting LGBTQI+ young people. These included anti-LGBTQI+ bullying, homophobic remarks, discrimination, harassment and assault. Impacts on LGBTQI+ young people included absenteeism, lack of sense of belonging, isolation and stigmatisation.

Solutions proposed to address these issues include:

- Safe and supportive schools with inclusive staff
- Representation of LGBTQI+ identities in the curriculum
- Explicit anti-bullying policies to reduce levels of anti-LGBTQI+ bullying
- A student body with a higher sense of belonging and better educational outcomes.

Research published by the [Transgender Equality Network Ireland](#) (TENI) and the University of Limerick (UL) has highlighted the educational inequalities transgender and gender diverse youth face in school settings.

The [Report](#) highlights:

- How transgender and gender diverse youth in Ireland feel marginalised within post-primary schools, which inhibits them coming out and affects their academic attainment.
- The majority of transgender and gender diverse youth disclosed their gender identity to facilitate their transition and this gave them a sense of acceptance and that their best interests were being recognised. However- some transgender and gender diverse young people disclosed their gender identity to a member of school staff who invalidated their gender identity and obstructed their transition, which left them feeling discriminated against because of their gender identity.
- The majority of transgender and gender diverse youth reported that they transitioned from their birth-assigned sex to their self-determined gender identity while attending post-primary school.
- Key transition challenges encountered by transgender and gender diverse youth included: misnaming and misgendering, restrictive uniforms, bathroom accessibility, staff prejudice, peer bullying, barriers to sports and a lack of support.

A review of the [Gender Recognition Act](#) was commissioned recently by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. This review concluded that children of 16 and 17 years of age will be able to self-declare if they wish to be recognised as a different gender provided, they have the support of their parents. If they do not, they will have

recourse to third-party mediation on a voluntary basis. This will happen through the services of the family mediation service of the Legal Aid Board. This review also concluded that there will be no changes for the arrangements of children under 16.

### **LGBTQI+ Young People, Mental Health and Covid-19**

The mental health of LGBTQI+ young people in Ireland has plummeted over the course of the Covid-19 pandemic. The survey conducted by BeLonG To Youth Services of more than 3000 young people found that 97% of LGBTQI+ young people are struggling with anxiety, stress or depression.

The original findings in 2020 found that LGBTI+ youths were two times as likely to self-harm, three times as likely to experience suicidal ideation, and four times as likely to experience suicide and depression, compared to their non-LGBTI+ friends.

In 2021, follow-up research showed that these figures worsened. The study found that 63% of LGBTI+ young people are struggling with suicide ideation compared to 2020's 55%. Meanwhile, the number of LGBTI+ young people struggling with self-harm increased from 45% to 50% in one year.

Overall, 56% of LGBTI+ young people surveyed in 2021 said they experienced feelings of unacceptance in their home environment, including family rejection, feeling unaccepted, and a denial of identity.

### **Young people and Covid-19, Education**

Due to the Covid-19 global pandemic, young people were not allowed to attend school or University for extended periods of time. With most schools taking up virtual education, this led to a lot of difficulties for young people.

The public health measures that were put in place in Ireland as a response to the Covid19 pandemic including the closing of all schools, the requirement for all to physically distance and the requirement to largely stay at home, have resulted in additional challenges for all, and for some more than others. These include adjusting to the challenge of living for large parts of the day with the whole family in a single space, while trying to maintain usual daily activities (work for parents and education for children and young people), within the context of restrictions on movement and restrictions on access to usual support and social networks

There were barriers to the accessibility of educational resources such as laptops due to financial difficulties and access was cut off to key protective factors of young people's mental health including the school support structure, friendships, and physical activity. Covid-19 enabled increased difficulties within family relationships and life at home in general. Leaving Certificate students suffered at the hands of the pandemic regarding the disrupted education they faced when they were preparing for a high-stakes examination and faced increased uncertainty relating to revised examination arrangements.

### **Young people, Covid-19 and Mental Health**

A [report](#) published in 2020 by the DCEDIY found that the Covid-19 pandemic has had negative effects on young people's health and wellbeing, especially amongst marginalized groups.

The report, based on the findings of research undertaken by SpunOut and the Department's Youth Advisory Group, shows how young people struggled with being separated from their friends, and faced significant mental health impacts because of Covid-19 and the restrictions.

The [report](#) found that:

- Missing friends was most cited as a challenge faced during Covid-19 (cited by 35% of respondents), followed by impact on health (20%), school/college problems (18%), and cabin fever (16%)



- Young people's feelings towards the future were mixed. Over one third of respondents reported optimism for the future. However, negative feelings such as anxiety, uncertainty, pessimism and fear were also common
- Young people mentioned a range of positives that they wished to take forward, including maintaining a healthy lifestyle, self-care, quality family time and relief from pressure of commutes and school or college. However, almost one in ten respondents were unable to name any positives.

People aged 18 to 29 years of age reported significantly greater mental health issues during the pandemic than those aged 50 and above, with females reporting significantly poorer mental health during the pandemic than males. Young adults also reported significantly higher levels of loneliness, less tolerance of uncertainty and lower perceived control over anxiety related events. Furthermore, they tended to spend significantly more time on social media than older adults.

Time spent on social media was a strong predictor of mental health during the pandemic. People who spent more time on social media, particularly more than 4 hours per day, reported significantly poorer mental health.

Young people appear to attribute more pressure to attaining the standards set by the content they consume through social media compared to older people. For example, 18- to 29-year-olds reported significantly greater perceived pressure from social media to exercise during the lockdown phases than any other age group.

The greater potential for comparison through age-related similarities, combined with increased exposure to social media content that invites self-comparison and self-judgement, could be the driving force behind the greater mental health difficulties experienced by younger people during the pandemic. Furthermore, the consistent comparison with others through social media may prompt unattainable standards in other areas of life and create a constant feeling of pressure to reach a perceived social ideal.

Another factor contributing to the poor youth mental health observed in this study is their lower tolerance of uncertainty. Young people have experienced a greater proportion of their lives trying to live with the virus. Assuming adult life begins at 18, an Irish 21-year-old has spent about 16% of their adult life having to consider the implications of Covid-19 and public health measures, whereas a 60-year-old has spent about 1% of their adult life dealing with the restrictions imposed by the virus.

### **Youth Unemployment and Covid-19**

As of July 2021, 45% of young people in Ireland are unemployed- with 90,000 people who are under the age of 25 claiming the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP). The Economic and Social Research Institute found that younger workers were the hardest hit by Covid-19 and were subjected to redundancies and lay-offs. Young people account for 11.7% of the workforce but total 22% of all PUP claims. The most recent statistics highlight how 26,000 more young people are signing on the Live Register for unemployment benefits. Economic and Social Research Institute Economist Dr Barra Roantree notes that by the end of April 2020, about half of workers aged 18-24 had lost their jobs, more than double the percentage for older employees.

The National Youth Council of Ireland has called for a €190 million package of measures for education, training, apprenticeships and job subsidies for employers to address the unprecedented surge in youth unemployment. Worryingly, despite the economy reopening as of July 2021, under 25s are moving back into work slower than older age groups.

## 5. PARTICIPATION

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[The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth](#) is the government department responsible for youth participation in Ireland.

Goal 1 of the [National Children's Strategy \(2000\)](#) stated that

children will have a voice in matters which affect them and their views will be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity.

[The National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision Making](#) was published in 2015 by the [Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth](#) (DCEDIY) and builds on the [National Children's Strategy](#) infrastructure for children and young people's participation.

[The National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making](#) defines participation as:

the process by which children and young people have active involvement and real influence in decision-making on matters affecting their lives, both directly and indirectly.

[The National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making](#) was recently published in 2021 and defines participation as

participation with purpose means that when children and young people are involved in decision-making, their views are listened to, taken seriously and given due weight with the intention of leading to an outcome or change.

A key priority of the Strategy is that children and young people who are seldom heard are enabled to take part in decision-making. This is also underscored in the National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making that was recently published in 2021.

[Comhairle na nÓg](#) is Ireland's local child and youth council that recognizes the key national structure for participation by children and young people in local decision-making in all 31 Local Authorities around the country. Child and youth councils were established under the [National Children's Strategy](#) (2000).

Ireland also has a [National Youth Parliament \(Dáil na nÓg\)](#). The role of this body is to provide a national forum for young people to discuss and vote on issues that affect their lives.

### 5.1 General context

#### Main concepts

[The National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making](#) defines participation as:

'the process by which children and young people have active involvement and real influence in decision-making on matters affecting their lives, both directly and indirectly.'

[The National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making](#) was recently published in 2021 and defines participation as

'participation with purpose means that when children and young people are involved in decision-making, their views are listened to, taken seriously and given due weight with the intention of leading to an outcome or change.'

Both definitions are consistent with Article 12 of the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (UNCRC) that underlies these Strategies and Article 24 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

[The Child and Youth Participation Strategy \(2019-2023\)](#) defines participation as:

'the involvement of children and young people in decision-making on issues that affect their lives, as part of a process of enacting their rights as citizens, at both the individual and collective levels.'

## **Institutions of representative democracy**

### **The Oireachtas**

The Republic of Ireland is a parliamentary representative democracy. Legislative power is vested in the Oireachtas, which consists of the President of Ireland and two Houses of the Oireachtas: Dail Éireann and Seanad Éireann,

Executive power is exercised by the Government, that is led by the Taoiseach (Prime Minister), whose deputy is the Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister).

The Cabinet is nominated by the Taoiseach and approved by the Dáil, then appointed by the President.

### **Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann**

Dáil Éireann is the principal Chamber of the Oireachtas and has 158 Members. A Member's official Irish title is 'Teachta Dála' (commonly known as TD) which in English means 'Deputy to the Dáil.'

By law, a General Election to Dáil Éireann must be held at least once every five years.

The Chair of the Dáil is called the Ceann Comhairle. His/her deputy is the Leas-Cheann Comhairle. The Seanad is the Upper House of the Oireachtas and has 60 Senators. The Chair of the Seanad is called the Cathaoirleach with their deputy being the Leas-Chathaoirleach.

### **The President**

The President of Ireland is elected to a seven-year term of office and no person may serve more than two terms. The current President is Michael D. Higgins.

The President, who does not have an executive or policy role, exercises his/her formal powers and functions on the advice of the Government.

The President has the power to refer a bill to the Supreme Court for a judgment on its constitutionality. He/she may seek advice from the Council of State and refer the Bill to the Irish Supreme Court for a ruling on whether it complies with the Constitution.

### **Parliamentary Committee**

Parliamentary committees play an important role in the business of the Oireachtas. They can receive submissions and hear evidence from interested parties or groups; discuss and draft proposals for legislative change; print and publish minutes of evidence and related documents; and require attendance of Ministers to discuss current policies and proposals for legislation.

There are four types of committees

- Standing committee
- Joint committee
- Select committee
- Special committee (rare occurrence).

Voting is not compulsory in Ireland. Voting is cast by ballot box or by post in certain cases.

## 5.2 Youth participation in representative democracy

### Young people as voters

The voting age limit for representative democracy institutions at all levels, including for the European Parliament elections, in Ireland is 18 years. The age limit for voting in referendums is also 18 years. There are no immediate plans to lower the voting age limit however there have been recent calls and debates surrounding this matter and this will be discussed in Section 10- Ongoing Debates and Reforms.

Some groups of people are entitled to a postal vote, e.g.:

- An Irish official posted abroad, or their spouse or civil partner who is abroad with them;
- A member of the Garda Síochána (police);
- A whole-time member of the Defence Forces.

The following groups of young people are also entitled to postal vote

- Those with a physical illness or disability
- Those studying full time in an educational institution in Ireland that is away from their home address where they are registered
- Those unable to vote at their polling station because of their occupation, service or employment
- Those unable to vote at their polling station because they are in prison as a result of an order of a court.

Due to Covid-19 and its restrictions there was an order made in June 2021 to provide a postal vote to electors who, because of public health reason relating to Covid-19, cannot vote in person. This order was made particularly regarding a bye-election in Dublin in July 2021.

The overall voter turnout among young people aged 18-25 years in Ireland has increased in recent years. [The 2011 CSO report](#) on voter participation found that 62% of young people aged 18-25 years voted in the 2011 General Election compared to 50% in the 2002 General Election. In the 2020 General Election turnout rates were lower, likely linked to a storm on the day.

The overall voter turnout in the 2019 European Elections was 49.7%.

### Young people as political representatives

There is no specific legislation that addresses young people as political representatives. To run for election to the Dáil or Seanad, candidate must be over 21 years of age. Candidates must have reached the age of 35 to be eligible to run for election as President.

There is one member of the current (33<sup>rd</sup>) Dáil aged 21-25 years and 11 members aged 26-35 years. This is an increase from the last (32<sup>nd</sup>) Dáil, where there was one member aged 21-25 years and nine members aged 26-35 years. In total, people aged between 21 and 35 account for 7.5% of the overall membership of the current Dáil, compared to the last Dáil's 6.3%.

There is no quota of seats reserved for young people in the Dáil. There are also no functions within the representative assembly reserved for young people.

## 5.3 Youth representation bodies

### Youth parliament

[Dáil na nÓg](#) is the National Youth Parliament for Ireland for young people aged 12-17 years.

## Structure

The National Youth Parliament (Dáil na nÓg) was established under the [National Children's Strategy](#) (2000) to provide a national forum for young people to discuss and vote on issues that affect their lives. The National Youth Parliament ([Dáil na nÓg](#)) is established at a national level and is not referenced in the [Irish Constitution](#) (Bunreacht na hÉireann). The National Youth Parliament (Dáil na nÓg) is funded and overseen by the [Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth](#) (DCEDIY) and is hosted by the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

## Composition

The National Youth Parliament ([Dáil na nÓg](#)) is a biennial event, where 200 representatives from the 31 local child and youth councils ([Comhairle na nÓg](#)) are elected as delegates. The age range of its members are 12 to 17 years old. The topics discussed at this event are chosen by young people themselves within the 31 local youth councils ([Comhairle na nÓg](#)).

Recommendations from the National Youth Parliament ([Dáil na nÓg](#)) are followed-up by the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive for the following two years.

The local child and youth councils ([Comhairle na nÓg Toolkit](#)) recommends that 20% of the delegates present at the Comhairle na nÓg AGM from 'seldom-heard' backgrounds.

To achieve this aim, the councils send a general invitation to schools, youth groups and to a host of other organisations that work with or represent young people, including organisations representing seldom-heard young people.

## Role and Responsibilities

The role of the National Youth Parliament ([Dáil na nÓg](#)) is to provide a national forum for young people to discuss and vote on issues that affect their lives. The main areas discussed include school, home/community, online, public services, sport/leisure.

The role of the National Executive is to take action on behalf of young people on the most voted recommendations that were voted at the previous National Youth Parliament ([Dáil na nÓg](#)). The National Executive has a term of office of two years and this is facilitated and supported by the [DCEDIY](#) to ensure that its members get the opportunity to engage with appropriate Ministers, policy-makers, Oireachtas Committees and other decision-makers.

The Comhairle na nÓg National Executive has direct and structured engagement with the Children and Young People's Policy Consortium and advises the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth on progress relating to the implementation of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures... the national policy framework for children and young people

## Youth Councils and Advisory Boards

### Comhairle na nÓg

#### Structure

Local child and youth councils ([Comhairle na nÓg](#)) were established under the [National Children's Strategy](#) (2000) and are the recognized key structure for participation by children and young people in local decision making in the 31 Local Authorities in Ireland. They are not part of the Irish Constitutional structure. They are supported by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth's Comhairle na nÓg Development Fund. This fund has been managed by [Pobal](#) since January 2011 in cooperation with the DCEDIY.

#### Composition

Local child and youth councils (Comhairle na nÓg) operate in 31 Local Authorities around the country. The age range of its members is 12-17 years. Every local child and youth

council (Comhairle na nÓg) holds an Annual General Meeting (AGM), to which children and young people are invited from schools, local youth clubs and other youth related projects. Attendance usually ranges between 80-150 young people at each local AGM.

At AGMs, participants work on identifying local topics of importance to them. A Comhairle na nÓg Committee is elected at the AGM and is responsible for working on the topics identified during the coming year, as well as being the consultative forum that works with decision-makers.

[The Comhairle na nÓg Toolkit](#) recommends there should be approximately 20% of the delegates at the Comhairle na nÓg AGM from 'seldom-heard' backgrounds.

To achieve this aim, child and youth councils (Comhairle na nÓg) send a general invitation to schools, youth groups and a host of other organisations that work with and/or represent young people, including organisations representing seldom-heard young people.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The main role of child and youth councils (Comhairle na nÓg) is to give young people a voice on the development of local policies and services. Local child and youth councils get young people's voices heard in two ways:

- by working on topics of importance to young people, and
- by acting as a consultative forum for adult decision-makers in the locality.

The main areas of their activity includes:

- mental health
- education
- services and facilities for young people
- how young people are treated by the adult world
- homophobic bullying.

The role of the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive is to act on behalf of young people on the top recommendation voted at the previous National Youth Parliament (Dáil na nÓg).

The National Executive has a term of office of two years and is facilitated and supported by the DCEDIY to ensure that its members get the opportunity to engage with appropriate Ministers, policy makers, Oireachtas Committees and other decision-makers.

The Comhairle na nÓg National Executive has direct and structured engagement with the Children and [Young People's Policy Consortium](#) and advises the [Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth](#) on progress in relation to the implementation of [Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures](#), the national policy framework for children and young people, and its strategies.

Higher education student union(s)

The [Union of Students in Ireland](#) (USI) is the national representative body for the 374,000 students in third level education on the Island of Ireland.

### **Structure**

The [Union of Students in Ireland](#) (USI) is a membership organisation with affiliated members in Students' Unions around Ireland, both North and South. USI is an unincorporated entity and is neither registered as a company nor as a charity. It is a confederal organisation, created by and funded by Students' Unions jointly through its National Council, which serves as the National Executive body of the organisation.

The supreme authority of the Union is the Congress, which is representative of each affiliated students' union, apportioned according to the size of the student body in each union.

Each union also sends one voting member to the National Council – the executive body of the organisation. The Union’s structures include one incorporated entity: USIMS Ltd, a limited company which submits returns in accordance with the laws for regulation of limited companies.

### Composition

USI’s Executive Team is made up of a:

- President
- Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Vice President for Welfare
- Vice President for Campaigns
- Vice President for Equality & Citizenship
- Vice President for the Border, Midlands and Western Region
- Vice President for the Southern Region
- Vice President for the Dublin Region
- Vice President for the Irish Language (An Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge))
- Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs
- NUS-USI President.

USI is a democratic organisation. The supreme authority of the Union is the Congress, which is representative of each affiliated students’ union, apportioned according to the size of the student body in each union. Each union also sends one voting member to the National Council – the executive body of the organisation. The union has a yearly mandate. Meeting of USI are held on a regular basis.

USI staff members include a:

- General Manager
- Administrator
- Public Relations and Communications Manager
- National Student Engagement Programme Co-ordinator
- SAVES2 Energy and Sustainability Manager
- Student Mental Health Project Manager
- Until 2020 there were also three trustees and three Finance Committee External Members. These will be replaced a Governance Committee

### Role and responsibilities

The main role of [USI](#) is to represent the 374,000 students in third level education on the Island of Ireland. The aim of the USI is to work for the rights of students and a fair and equal third level education system in Ireland. USI provide information through their website. They also raise awareness on various student issues through awareness campaigns on issues related to welfare, equality, education and citizenship.

Welfare issues include information on consent; mental health; sexual health; accommodation; personal safety and workers’ rights; equality issues; education and citizenship. Equality issues include a ‘Queer Dictionary’.

Education issues include information on student representation, postgraduate grants, mental health funding, counselling services, social welfare, exams, student grants and the [National Framework of Qualifications](#).

Citizenship issues include information on EU affairs, voter registration, EU elections, Seanad (upper house of the Oireachtas, the Irish legislature) voting registration and USI JI (US) Visa guide.

[The Union of Students in Ireland](#) (USI) believe that in order to realise its potential and achieve its goals it must work with other organisations who share the same values.

They are members of a number of organisations such as:

- [The National Youth Council of Ireland \(NYCI\)](#)
- [The National Women’s Council of Ireland \(NWCI\)](#)
- [Irish National Development Education Association \(IDEA\).](#)

They also have partnerships with a number of organisations including:

- [The Health Services Executive \(HSE\)](#)
- [The Higher Education Authority](#)
- [Spunout](#), a youth information website.

They also have a policy aspect to their work. For example, USI write position papers on policy issues such as funding of higher education, Brexit etc. and pre-budget submissions on various student issues to the government.

The main areas of activity are

- Student welfare
- Equality
- Education
- Citizenship
- Funding.

USI, is a confederal organisation comprised of its member students’ unions on the island of Ireland. It is not a company nor is it a charity. Prior to 2020 a Finance Committee, elected by the National Council of the organisation, oversaw the financial management of the organisation. In 2020 the USI’s constitution was altered, removing the Financial Committee and Trustees, replacing these with a Governance Committee. Annual accounts for the preceding year are presented to the Annual Congress. Quarterly financial updates are given to the National Council each thirteen weeks.

## **School student union(s)**

The Irish Second Level Student Union (ISSU) is the top-level school student representation body in Ireland.

### **Structure**

[The Irish Second Level Student Union](#) (ISSU) activities are based on Article 12 of the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) says that children and young people have the “right to express views freely in all matters affecting them.” [The Education Act](#) (1998) is the legislation that makes provision for student councils to be set up at post-primary level in Ireland. Irish Second-Level Students' Union Limited is a not-for-profit, voluntary student rights’ organisation.

The main organs running the school student union are:

- The National Student Executive
- The National Council of Schools
- The Regional Council of Schools
- The Secretariat



- The Board of Directors.

Membership of the ISSU is through student councils. When a school's student council join the ISSU, the whole school is considered a member of the ISSU.

The highest decision-making body in the ISSU is the annual Congress, where member student councils attend and vote on the policy of the ISSU.

Elections for ISSU bodies take place at the Congress and Regional Councils, creating the National Student Executive, National Council of Schools and Monitoring Committee.

### **Composition**

There are 370 Student Councils affiliated to the ISSU.

The National Student Executive includes a

- President
- Honorary President
- Secretary
- International Officer
- Education Officer
- Communications Officer
- Welfare Officer
- Campaigns Officer
- Irish Language Officer
- Equality Officer
- Student Council Support Officer.

The National Council of Schools consists of eight students elected at the Regional Councils meetings, the ISSU President, Deputy President and the Student Council Support Officer. Each region elects a Regional Officer to represent them on the ISSU National Council of Schools. There are eight people elected to the Board of Directors in ISSU.

### **Role and responsibilities**

[The Irish Second Level Student Union](#) (ISSU) has a dual role:

- to promote the benefits of young people becoming part of the decision-making process that affects their school lives, and
- to provide individual students with support for voicing their views and opinions.

The main objectives of the ISSU are:

- to provide training and development of second-level school Student Councils, in conjunction with relevant bodies;
- to develop policies on issues affecting Irish second-level students and bring the needs and rights of Students to the attention of the relevant authorities;
- to provide a transparent, democratic and reliable organisation; to work in collaboration with other educational institutions and bodies both in Ireland, and Europe;
- to work closely with educational curriculum policy makers and Teachers' Unions to continually develop a transparent, fair and modern education system; and
- to give Students a structured platform through which the voice of the Irish Second-level Students will be heard.
- The National Student Executive coordinates the execution of ISSU policy, campaigns and activities. The National Council of Schools coordinate national policy and

campaigns, and is a forum to ensure that each of the Regional Councils are updated so that they can inform their students about developments in the ISSU or education generally.

## Funding

### Youth parliament

The National Youth Parliament ([Dáil na nÓg](#)) receives public funding through the [Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth](#) (DCEDIY) and is also accountable to the same Department alongside the Irish government.

### Local child and youth councils

Local child and youth councils ([Comhairle na nÓg](#)) receives public funding through the [Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth](#) (DCEDIY) Comhairle na nÓg Development Fund which provides money to local authorities to run effective [Comhairle na nÓg](#).

Local authorities also provide funding and resources for Comhairle na nÓg, as well as other organisations at local level. Local child and youth councils (Comhairle na nÓg) are financially accountable to local authorities, the [Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth](#) and the Irish Government.

### School student union

[The Irish Second Level Student Union](#) (ISSU) is a not-for-profit, voluntary student rights' organisation. ISSU is a company limited by guarantee.

## 5.4 Young people's participation in policy-making

### Formal Mechanisms of Consultation

At national level, a number of Government departments and state agencies have since 2000 developed national policies, strategies, plans, sets of standards and frameworks that name the participation of children and young people in decision-making as a key objective with accompanying commitments.

These include:

- [National Play Policy: Ready, Steady, Play](#) (2019)
- [National Recreation Policy for Young People: Teenspace](#) (2018)
- [National Action Plan for Social Inclusion](#), (2007-2016)
- [The Agenda for Children's Services](#), (2007)
- [Report of the Taskforce on Active Citizenship](#), (2007)
- [National Strategy for Service User Involvement in the Irish Health Service](#), (2008-2013)
- [National Youth Justice Strategy](#), 2021-2027
- [National Drugs Strategy](#) (Interim), 2009-2016
- [Steering Group Report on a National Substance Misuse Strategy](#), February 2012
- [An Garda Síochána Children and Young Person's Strategy](#), 2012-2014
- [Youth Café Best Practice and Toolkit](#)
- [Ireland's National Traveler/Roma Integration Strategy](#), 2011
- [National Strategy for Research and Data on Children's Lives](#), 2011-2016
- [Youth Justice Action Plan: Tackling Youth Crime](#), 2014-2018

- [National Policy Framework for Children and Young People: Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures](#), 2014-2020
- [National Framework for Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-Making](#), 2021.

[The National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision Making](#) (2015-2020) builds on the National Children’s Strategy’s infrastructure for children and young people’s participation. The National Framework for Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-Making was also launched 2021.

### **Citizen Participation Unit**

[The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth](#) (DCEDIY) has a dedicated Citizen Participation Unit, which takes the lead and national role in ensuring that ‘children have a voice on matters that affect their lives and their views will be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity’. The work of the Participation unit is guided by Article 12 of the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (UNCRC) and is directed by the belief that children and young people are the citizens of today and not just the adults of tomorrow.

The work of this Unit is responsible for much of the progress achieved under Goal 1 of the [National Children’s Strategy](#) through the development of effective structures for children’s participation in decision-making, conducting consultations and dialogues with children and young people, and the development of evidence-based policy in keeping with national and international best practice.

The DCEDIY funds and oversees [Comhairle na nÓg](#), [Dáil na nÓg](#) and the Children and Young People’s Participation Support Team and has established an effective mechanism for collaboration with academic institutions on children’s participation. Comhairle na nÓg, and Dáil na nÓg are described in Chapter 5.3 Youth representation bodies.

### **Children and Young People’s Participation Support Team**

The DCEDIY Children and Young People’s Participation Support Team includes:

- staff from the DCEDIY Citizen Participation Unit;
- three regional Participation Officers and;
- a Children’s Participation Administrator from Foróige and Youth Work Ireland, who are contracted by the DCEDIY.

DCEDIY Children and Young People’s Participation Support Team works on building and developing best practice, conducting participation initiatives and supporting existing participation structures.

The regional Participation Officers have a particular role in supporting the work of Comhairle na nÓg and Dáil na nÓg through:

- providing support, advice and training for organisers of Comhairle na nÓg;
- conducting regional networking sessions for young members of Comhairle na nÓg;
- conducting regional networking and development sessions for adult organisers of Comhairle na nÓg;
- working with the DCEDIY in overseeing expenditure under the DCEDIY Comhairle na nÓg Development Fund.

### **Children and Young People’s Participation Hub**

[Hub na nÓg](#) (Youth Hub) is a national centre of excellence and coordination in the area of youth participation. The DCEDIY committed to the establishment of a national Hub to support implementation of the [National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision Making](#) (2015-2020) (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2015).

Hub na nÓg supports Government Departments, State agencies and non-government organisations to give children and young people a voice in decision-making on issues that affect their lives, with a particular focus on those that are seldom heard.

The key objectives of the Hub are to:

- champion and promote participation
- create resources and training materials
- conduct training
- document and disseminate learning
- establish an online children's participation database.

The vision for the Participation Hub includes the establishment by the DCEDIY of strategic formal partnerships with organisations and initiatives in the statutory and non-statutory sectors to develop and document innovative best practice in children and young people's participation in decision-making.

### **Children and Young People's Participation Research Advisory Group**

The DCEDIY Children and Young People's Participation Research Advisory Group was established in 2013. Its aims are:

- to explore mechanisms for the DCEDIY to collaborate with academics and researchers in documenting children's participation initiatives, led and carried out by the DCEDIY, and;
- to develop education and training on children's participation.

The group is comprised of officials from the DCEDIY Citizen Participation Unit and the Research Unit, together with senior academics from third-level institutions with expertise in children's rights and children and young people's participation in decision-making.

The role of the Advisory Group is:

- to support the DCEDIY in finding suitable academic collaborators to write up and co-author the participation initiatives of the DCEDIY;
- to support the DCEDIY in developing education and training materials;
- to collaborate with the DCEDIY in building a strong evidence base for children's participation in decision-making.

### **Actors**

The key youth actors involved in consultative processes are young people from Comhairle na nÓg (child and youth councils). However, young people are generally recruited to be involved in consultations based on the theme on the consultation. For example, young people who have been adopted were recruited to participate in consultations on adoption policy conducted by the DCEDIY.

The DCEDIY Citizen's Participation Unit collaborates with other Government departments, statutory bodies and non-governmental organisations in providing opportunities for children and young people to have a voice in decisions that affect their lives, with a strong focus on ensuring participation by seldom- heard children and young people.

### **Information on the extent of youth participation**

Information on the numbers of young people consulted as part of consultations are recorded in youth consultation reports.

## Outcomes

Since July 2017, Hub na nÓg and the Participation Support Team is working with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth in planning and conducting consultations with children and young people on various issues such as:

- the Oberstown Standards
- the layout of the new Children’s Court
- the voice of the child in Adoption proceedings.

The outcomes of these consultations resulted in young people having a direct input into policymaking.

## Large-scale initiatives for dialogue or debate between public institutions and young people

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth have conducted many consultations with young people on behalf of themselves and other government departments and bodies in recent years including:

- Consultations with young people into youth mental health and well-being in Ireland on behalf of the Youth Mental Health Taskforce
- Consultations with young people on the implications of Brexit on behalf of the Department of the Taoiseach (Prime Minister)
- Consultations on the inclusion of Children and Young People in the Recruitment of the Ombudsman for Children
- Consultations with Children and Young People about Human Rights in Ireland in advance of the United Nations Universal Periodic Review on behalf of the Department of Justice and Equality
- Consultations with young people concerning harmful internet communications including cyber bullying on behalf of the Law Reform Commission
- Consultations with young people on the development of the National Youth Strategy
- Consultations with Young People on Reform of the Junior Cycle on behalf of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

## 5.5 National strategy to increase youth participation

### Existence of a national strategy to increase young people’s political and civil society participation

Ireland’s National Strategy on youth participation is The National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-making. The National Strategy was introduced in 2015 and covers the timeframe from 2015 until 2020.

### Scope and contents

[The National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-making](#) aims to address participation at a national, regional and local level.

The main elements of the national strategy are:

- The background and rationale for the participation of children and young people in decision-making.

The objectives of the strategy

- Definition, model and principles of children and young people’s participation in decision-making

- The legal, policy and infrastructural supports to implement the strategy.

The Action Plan for the implementation of the strategy

The strategy focuses on the everyday lives of children and young people and the places and spaces in which they are entitled to have a voice in decisions that affect their lives.

Therefore, the strategy identifies the following objectives and priority areas for action:

- Children and young people will have a voice in decisions made in their local communities
- Children and young people will have a voice in decision-making in early education, schools and the wider formal and non-formal education systems
- Children and young people will have a voice in decisions that affect their health and well-being, including on the health and social services delivered to them
- Children and young people will have a voice in the Courts and legal.

The strategy contains a series of additional objectives, which include:

- Promoting effective leadership to champion and promote participation of children and young people
- Development of education and training for professionals working with and on behalf of children and young people
- Mainstreaming the participation of children and young people in the development of policy, legislation and research.

A key priority of the strategy is that seldom-heard children and young people are enabled to take part in decision-making. This is considered to be particularly critical in the case of children living in the care of the State or in receipt of child protection and welfare services.

### **Responsible authority for the implementation of the strategy**

[The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth](#) (DCEDIY) is the government department responsible for the implementation, coordination and monitoring of the strategy.

To date, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth have published three annual reports (2016, 2017 and 2019) on the implementation of the actions in the [National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making](#), 2015-2020.

### **Revisions/ Updates**

The National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making, 2015-2020 has not undergone any revisions or updates since its introduction.

## **5.6 Supporting youth organisations**

### **Legal/policy framework for the functioning and development of youth organisations**

The top-level policy framework for youth organisations in Ireland is the [National Youth Strategy](#), 2015-2020. This is the most recent policy framework for young people and youth organisations, however it is expected that a more updated Strategy will be proposed in 2021.

The National Youth Strategy focuses on youth policy commitments. It is one of three strategies developed under [Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures, The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People](#), the National Policy Framework for children and young people aged 0-24 years.

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures captures all children and youth policy commitments across Government departments and agencies in relation to five outcome areas and six key transformational goals.

The six transformative goals are:

- Support parents
- Earlier intervention and prevention
- Listen to and involve children and young people
- Ensure quality services
- Strengthen transitions
- Cross-government and interagency collaboration and coordination.

The main principles central to the National Youth Strategy and its implementation are:

- Young people and those who support them
- Young people are valued in their own right, and recognised as integral to society
- Young people are acknowledged as key drivers in achieving their cognitive, emotional, social, economic and cultural development
- Parents, families, other significant adults and communities are recognised as playing a critical role in the development and progression of young people
- Professionals and volunteers working with young people
- Professionals and volunteers who work with young people are respected, valued and appropriately supported in their work
- Those providing services for young people act in the best interests of young people, and respect and uphold young people's rights.

### **Policies and practices**

An equality perspective is integrated into all policy and practice.

### **Service development and delivery**

Government and other stakeholders work collaboratively, with vertical and horizontal communication and cooperation, to achieve more effective services and supports for young people.

Services for young people are open, accessible, resourced and provide additional support in response to certain needs.

Services for young people are quality assured, outcomes focused and informed by evidence.

### **Public financial support**

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) provides public financial support to youth organisations. It administers a range of funding schemes and programmes to support the provision of youth services to young people throughout the country including those from disadvantaged communities.

In December 2019 the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (now DCEDIY) launched a new targeted youth funding scheme entitled, [UBU - Your Place Your Space](#).

UBU - Your Place, Your Space brings together four already existing, overlapping schemes with a value of over 38.5 million. The scheme aims to provide services that support young people to develop the personal and social skills required to improve their life chances. These include services covering health, education, employment and social connectedness. The scheme targets young people who are marginalised, disadvantaged, or vulnerable.

### **UBU Resilience and Effectiveness Initiative**

On the 3rd of June 2021, the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth launched a new initiative to support youth services working with disadvantaged, marginalised and vulnerable young people under the UBU Your Place Your Space scheme. The initiative will help to support smaller youth services to increase their youth work provision and to benefit organisations that have been facing cost pressures.

The funding is support UBU- Your Place, Your Space services to deliver a more efficient service to young people. A total of €800,000 has been set aside for this initiative that will be operated through the Education and Training Boards.

### **Initiatives to increase the diversity of participants**

Young people aged 10-24 years who are described in the National Youth Strategy as marginalised, disadvantaged, or vulnerable will be the primary target group for services available through UBU Your Place Your Space.

Young people experiencing economic, social and cultural disadvantage includes:

- young people who live in communities with high concentrations of families/individuals who are dependent on social welfare or have low incomes
- experience intergenerational unemployment
- have high levels of addiction
- come from one parent families.

It also includes young people who come from situations of family breakdown and low educational attainment, including young people who live in communities with a deprivation score of below minus ten

Marginalised young people whose specific circumstances limit their opportunities including, but not limited to:

- young carers
- Travellers
- Roma
- immigrants
- young people with disabilities
- young people with mental health issues
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI+) young people
- Young people who are vulnerable or at risk of not flourishing including, but not limited to:
  - young people in or leaving care;
  - young people experiencing or involved in substance misuse; and
  - young people with little or no formal structure in their lives, for example young people not in education, training or employment.

## **5.7 “Learning to participate” through formal, non-formal and informal learning**

### **Policy framework**

There is no specific national strategy which applies to social and civic competences in Ireland.



## Formal learning

Citizenship education is taught in second-level schools in Ireland as a separate subject called 'Politics and Society.' Politics and Society was introduced as a senior cycle subject in 2016 and was examined for the first time in 2018.

The recommended teaching time for Politics and Society is one hour 20 minutes per week, i.e. a double class. Weekly class time includes engagement in participatory learning activities and undertaking project work. The facilitation of the citizenship project takes in the region of 30 hours.

The main learning objectives of Politics and Society are to develop:

- an understanding of the social systems within which people act: locally, nationally and more widely
- an understanding of concepts which underpin contemporary systems of government and of the diverse models for making these concepts operational
- an understanding of and a respect for human rights and responsibilities, for human dignity and for democratic modes of governance
- an understanding of and a respect for sustainable development
- a commitment to and a capacity for active participation in the learner's social and political worlds
- a commitment to and a capacity for critical, discursive and independent thinking
- a commitment to and a capacity for engagement in peaceful and democratic means of resolving conflicts
- a sense of care for others and a respect for and a valuing of diversity in all areas of human life within the parameters of human rights principles
- the capacity to analyse and interpret qualitative and quantitative social and political research data, and to use such data carefully in forming opinions and coming to conclusions.

## Non-formal and informal learning

### Participative structures within formal education

[The Education Act](#) (1998) is the legislation that makes provision for student councils to be set up at post-primary level in Ireland.

Goal 3 of [Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures, The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People](#), aims to create mechanisms to provide children and young people with the opportunity to be heard in primary and post-primary schools and centres for education through Student Councils or other age-appropriate mechanisms.

The main role of a Student Council as set out in the Education Act is "to promote the interests of the school and the involvement of students in the affairs of the school, in cooperation with the board, parents and teachers." Student Councils set their own objectives, which vary from school to school.

According to the [Department of Education guidelines](#) (2002), student councils can actively contribute to the development of school policy in a wide range of areas such as bullying, uniform requirements, behaviour code and extra-curricular activities. It suggests student councils could form sub-committees to consider individual policy issues, to consult with students, staff and parents on those issues and to represent the Council's views on those issues to school management.

## **Measures to encourage student participation in the local community and wider society**

There are no provisions in the national curricula or education regulations/guidelines encouraging or obliging pupils at upper secondary level to take part in activities serving the (local) community outside school.

Student participation in the local community and wider society is encouraged through participation in Comhairle na nÓg. Comhairle na nÓg are local child and youth councils that operate in the 31 local authorities of the country.

Comhairle na nÓg give children and young people the opportunity to be involved in the development of local services and policies.

Every Comhairle na nÓg holds an Annual General Meeting in September or October, to which children and young people are invited from local schools and youth groups.

Attendance at AGMs ranges from 80 -150 young people, depending on the size of the city or county.

Many students participate in [Gaisce, the President's Award](#) in secondary schools as part of Transition Year. Gaisce is a self-development programme for young people between the ages of 15-25.

There is a Community Involvement section of the Gaisce programme that involves volunteering in their local community. This offers young people the opportunity to engage with society and gain an understanding of the importance of your role within their immediate and global community.

## **Partnerships between formal education providers, youth organisations and youth work providers**

The youth work sector works with young people outside, yet alongside, the formal education sector. Section 3 of the [Youth Work Act 2001](#) defines youth work as:

'a planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young persons through their voluntary participation, and which is complementary to their formal, academic or vocational education and training; and provided primarily by voluntary youth work services'.

## **Supporting non-formal learning initiatives focusing on social and civic competences**

### **Foróige Youth Citizenship Programme**

[Foróige Youth Citizenship Programme](#) is a youth development programme that promotes young people's civic and social skills. Foróige is the largest youth organisation in Ireland, working with over 50,000 young people aged 10-18 every year through volunteer-led Clubs and staff-led Youth Projects. The aim of the programme is to enable young people to make a positive difference in their community by taking part in a citizenship project.

The programme involves young people researching the needs of their community, organising practical action in response, evaluating the effectiveness of their work and reflecting on what they're learning along the way.

The programme has an explicit commitment to inclusion of young people who traditionally would not have entered the Citizenship Programme. For example, there has been a significant increase in entries from projects such as Garda (Police) Youth Diversion and Neighborhood Youth Projects in recent years.

[Garda Youth Diversion Projects](#) are community based and supported youth development projects which seek to divert young people from becoming involved (or further involved) in anti-social or criminal behavior. These projects facilitate personal development and promote civic responsibility.

[Neighborhood Youth Projects](#) (NYPs) are community based preventative adolescent projects for young people experiencing adversity

### **Foróige Youth Citizenship Awards**

[The Aldi Foróige Youth Citizenship Awards](#) are open to all young people aged 10 - 18 involved in citizenship projects or activities in their youth clubs or groups. This includes young people involved in Foróige youth clubs or groups, other youth clubs or groups and [Comhairle na nÓg](#) (local child and youth councils).

The Awards Showcase gives young people the opportunity to display their citizenship projects/activities and gain recognition for the work they have done to help improve their communities.

### **Quality assurance/quality guidelines for non-formal learning**

[The Foróige Youth Citizenship Programme](#) is measured against indicators of good practice in youth civic engagement.

These indicators include:

- Organised efforts are required to promote youth civic engagement and encourage young people to see that they can make a difference
- Facilitate young people to input into what citizenship means rather than telling them what 'good citizenship' is
- Programmes should be action-orientated, providing real opportunities for young people to engage in civic action
- Promote skills development and reflection
- Provide clarity regarding the degree of youth ownership, avoid 'adulthood'
- Promote adult-youth partnerships
- Have structured guidelines to encourage project completion
- Encourage exposure to diverse social networks
- Encourage participation of young people who traditionally may not be involved in civic activities

An evaluation report on the [Foróige Youth Citizenship Programme](#) was published in 2012:

[The National Quality Standards Framework](#) (NQS) is the quality assurance framework for non-formal learning in Ireland. The aim of the National Quality Standards Framework (NQS) is to ensure that youth work organisations provide quality services to young people.

## **Educators' support**

### **Our Voices Our Schools**

[Our Voices Our Schools](#) is a resource for schools to support listening to and involving young people in decision making about matters that affect them in school. Our Voices Our Schools is the outcome of a decision made by Comhairle na nÓg National Executive 2016 – 17 to focus specifically on equality in the school setting. It includes resources for teachers and students to help young people have their voices heard in schools. Our Voices Our Schools is supported by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

### **Politics and Society**

Politics and Society curriculum specification is available online to teachers. There are also Politics and Society support materials for teachers.

## Foróige Youth Citizenship Programme

Foróige Youth Citizenship Programme has a Briefing Paper for youth workers. Foróige Youth Citizenship Programme has a 'Citizenship Programme Manual' used to train staff and volunteers which was developed by the Foróige Best Practice Unit is not available online.

## 5.8 Raising political awareness among young people

### Information providers / counselling structures

#### The Referendum Commission

[The Referendum Commission](#) is responsible for disseminating information about democratic rights and democratic values to the wider population in Ireland. The Referendum Commission is an independent body which is neutral and impartial. The aim of the Referendum Commission is to communicate information about referendums.

#### The role of the Referendum Commission is to:

- Explain to the public what the referendum proposal means
- Make sure people know a referendum is being held
- Encourage people to vote

The legislation providing for the establishment of the Referendum Commission is the Referendum Act 1998 as amended by the Referendum Act 2001. The Referendum Commission has a website where information on referendums and voting can be accessed directly.

#### Youth Information Centres

Youth Information Centres (YICs) provide a free, confidential information service to young people and those who work with them on a wide range of subjects including

- careers
- education
- employment matters
- rights and entitlements
- leisure
- sport
- travel
- European opportunities.

Youth Information Centres also provide a variety of outreach activities bringing information to young people through

- information points
- publications
- workshops
- seminars
- exhibitions
- schools and youth club work
- local radio
- press.

Youth Information Centres are funded by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. They are administered by a variety of youth organisations and operate as an integrated part of locally based youth services. Youth Information Centres provide information on counselling and support services for young people. There are currently 26 Youth Information Centres in Ireland.

### **Information on young people's rights**

Sources of information on young people's rights include:

- [The Ombudsman for Children Office](#)
- [The Children's Right's Alliance.](#)

### **Youth-targeted information campaigns about democratic rights and democratic values**

[NYCI](#) launched its "New Age in Voting" campaign in 2009. The campaign called for the extension of voting rights to young people aged 16 and 17 years. In 2013 NYCI provided a submission and presentation on the Constitutional Convention which voted to support the introduction of voting rights for 16 and 17 year olds.

The Government accepted this recommendation and committed to bringing forward a referendum to allow 16 and 17 year olds citizens to vote. However, in 2015 the Government reneged on this commitment.

### **Promoting the intercultural dialogue among young people**

NYCI co-ordinated the No Hate Speech Movement in Ireland from 2014 – 2018 with the support of many national organisations, and a team of Youth Ambassadors. While the campaign has formally ceased, it continues as part of the Council of Europe's and NYCI's ongoing work around human rights and equality.

NYCI offers online information and resources to support individuals and groups maintain the work of tackling on-line hate speech. As a direct result of being involved in the [No Hate Speech Movement](#), NYCI has joined the [Irish Coalition Against Hate Crime](#) which is campaigning to have Hate Crime legislation established in Ireland.

### **Promoting transparent and youth-tailored public communication**

#### **SpunOut.ie**

[SpunOut.ie](#) is Ireland's youth information website created by young people, for young people. SpunOut.ie provides information to around 140,000+ active readers each month. Its vision is to help create an Ireland where young people aged between 16 and 25 are empowered with the information they need to live active, happy, and healthy lives. The website's aim is to educate and inform readers about the importance of holistic wellbeing and how good health can be maintained, both physically and mentally.

#### **CAMHS**

[Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services](#) (CAMHS) provides assessment and treatment for young people and their families who are experiencing mental health difficulties. CAMHS is available for all young people up to the age of 18 years. CAMHS is operated by the [Health Service Executive](#) (HSE), a body that provides all of Ireland's public health services in hospitals and communities across the country.

#### **Jigsaw, the National Centre for Youth Mental Health**

[Jigsaw](#), the National Centre for Youth Mental Health, operates a national network of projects that provide tailored community-based help for young people's mental health needs.

Jigsaw is a free and confidential support service for young people, their mental health and wellbeing, aged 12 – 25. They provide early intervention youth mental services are

designed to be safe and compassionate spaces in and of the community. There are currently 13 Jigsaw projects operating nationally in Ireland.

## 5.9 E-participation

There are currently no e-participation platforms in Ireland.

## 5.10 Current debates and reforms

### Forthcoming policy developments

[The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth](#) (DCEDIY) is currently developing a National Participation Framework. The Framework will include a Planning Checklist based on the Lundy Voice Model used in the [National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making](#) (2015-2020).

Hub na nÓg is currently in the process of developing Guidance for [Children and Young People's Services Committees](#) (CYPSC) on the participation of children and young people in their work.

[The Programme for Government - Our Shared Future](#) (2020) contains a commitment to establish a Rural Youth Assembly as part of a National Youth Assembly to allow young people in rural Ireland identify and influence policy issues that impact on them and their future.

### Ongoing debates

#### Extending the voting age to 16

There is an ongoing debate in Ireland on extending the voting age to 16 years. In recent years, the [National Youth Council of Ireland](#) (NYCI) have been campaigning the Irish Government to extend the right to vote to 16 and 17 year olds for local, national and European elections.

In 2013, the Constitutional Convention recommended the voting age be reduced to 16 years. The [Electoral \(Amendment\) \(Voting at 16\) Bill 2016](#) is currently before Seanad Éireann at the Third Stage. This Bill, supported by the National Youth Council of Ireland, is to change lower the age limit for voting rights in European Parliament and local elections without recourse to a referendum. A referendum would be needed to change the Constitution to allow 16- and 17-year-olds vote in Dáil and presidential elections.

[NYCI](#) argues that lowering the voting age to 16 years will generate greater interest in politics at a younger age, promote and widen political participation among young people and bring Ireland in line with other EU countries.

#### Rights of expatriates to vote

There is an ongoing debate on the right of Irish expatriates to vote. A Constitutional Convention in 2013 recommended allowing expatriate Irish citizens to vote in presidential elections. As a result, the Irish government published a position paper on the issue which promised a constitutional referendum in 2019. However, the referendum was postponed. A Bill on the right of expatriates to vote in presidential elections was introduced into the Dáil in September 2019.

#### Climate change

Climate change is an ongoing debate involving young people, NGOs, networks and the Irish Government. The Schools Climate Action Network is a network of students, teachers and their schools in Ireland that calls for urgent action to prevent climate breakdown and ensure a just and sustainable future. Thousands of Irish students have taken part in the Schools Strikes for Climate to date. The theme of Dáil na nÓg (Youth Parliament) 2019 was Climate Change.

In 2021 the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) approved funding for 14 youth-led projects around climate justice. In line with the recommendations of a specially convened Selection Committee, funding of almost €400,000 is being allocated to projects involving 23 youth organisations.

[The Youth Climate Justice Fund](#) supports youth-led action on climate justice. The aim of the fund is to raise climate justice awareness amongst young people and to empower young people to influence and sustain local, regional and national climate justice change.

## 6. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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The Irish state requires that 'children receive a certain minimum education, moral, intellectual and social' under Article 42 3 1° of the [Constitution of Ireland](#) (Bunreacht na hÉireann, 1937). Full-time education is compulsory from 6 to 16 years, or until the completion of three years of second-level education. Both state-funded and private education is available at all levels in Ireland.

### 6.1 General context

#### Main trends in young people's participation in education and training

##### Increasing enrolment rates

Ireland's population has grown in recent years. This increase has caused a surge in the number of students enrolled in post-primary schools. [The Education Indicators for Ireland](#) in 2020 show that 371,450 post-primary students enrolled in school in 2018. This is an increase of over 25,900 students from [data](#) collected in 2015. Regional Projections of full-time enrolments Primary and Second Level, 2019 - 2036 (DES, 2019) forecast that post-primary enrolments will continue to rise until 2024, when it will reach 402,175 enrolments. Cumasú Empowering through learning, [Statement of Strategy](#) 2019-2021 (DES, 2019, pp. 8) notes that 'Growing numbers of students at second and third level will present many challenges across the education and training system, including the requirement for a significant programme of capital expenditure'. These increasing enrolment rates also intensify the existing challenge of supplying enough teachers for the national education system.

[The Chief Inspector's Report: Excellence in Learning for All](#) (2018) noted the difficulties in sourcing teachers at post-primary levels. Teacher Supply Action Plan (DES, 2018) and the [Action Plan for Education 2019](#) (DES, 2019) also aims to address the supply of teachers.

The Department of Education published a [Technical Report](#) in 2021 that aims to Develop a Teacher Demand and Supply Model for Ireland 2021-2038. This report addresses the many challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic and acknowledges the innovative responses and flexibility required from everyone in the education sector. This is a working document that will be updated to reflect changes to the teacher demand and supply model for post-primary teachers.

##### Early School Leavers

Eurostat data on [Early Leavers from Education and Training](#) by sex and labour status (2020) showed, Ireland's number of 18- to 24-year-olds, who leave further education and training with at most a lower secondary education, fell to 5% in 2017, remaining relatively stable in 2018 at 5%, in 2019 was 5.1% and dropped to 5% in 2020.

As noted in the [National Reform Programme](#), this is one of the lowest rates in the EU and substantially below Ireland's Europe 2020 target of 8%. Nevertheless, the [National Reform Programme](#) also recognises that 'Ireland still faces challenges in the area of early school

leaving and young people not engaged in employment, education or training (NEETs) in disadvantaged areas' and within certain groups, including Irish Travellers.

Travellers are formally recognised as a distinct ethnic group within the Irish nation. [The Equal Status Act 2000](#) defines the 'Traveller community' as 'the community of people who are commonly called Travellers and who are identified (both by themselves and others) as people with a shared history, culture and traditions including, historically, a nomadic way of life on the island of Ireland' [Equal Status Act, 2000, Section 2 (1)]. Early school leaving is much more common amongst the Traveller community in Ireland. In the last [Census 2016](#) (Profile 8 Irish Travellers, Ethnicity and Religion)

- 13.3% of Traveller females were educated to upper secondary or above compared with 69.1% of the general population
- 57.2% of Traveller men were educated to at most primary level compared with 13.6% of the general population.

The unemployment rate among Irish Travellers is substantially higher than amongst the general population. 80.2% of Irish Travellers were unemployed (Profile 8 Irish Travellers, Ethnicity and Religion) compared to 12.9% of the general population (Profile 11 Employment, Occupations and Industry).

## Social Inclusion

### Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools

A priority of Ireland's previous youth policy framework, [Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2014-2020](#) (DCEDIY) is to 'Work together to protect young people at risk.' [The Department of Education's Social Inclusion Unit](#) develops and promotes a coordinated Department response to tackling educational disadvantage in second-level education.

One of the Unit's key methods is the [DEIS Plan 2017 Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools](#). It provides a standardized system to identify levels of disadvantage and an integrated programme of Supports to DEIS Schools. Of the 723 second-level schools in Ireland, 199 are included in the [DEIS School List 2021-2022](#).

[The Evaluation of DEIS at Post-Primary Level: Closing the Achievement and Attainment Gap](#) was published in 2018 by Weir and Kavanagh and its aim was to monitor the implementation of DEIS

and assess its impact on students, families, schools, and communities at primary and post-primary levels. Some findings from this evaluation included:

- There are significant positive trends in retention rates for both state examinations, the Junior Certificate Examination and the Leaving Certificate Examination.
- A selection of subjects in the Leaving Certificate Examination may be taken at higher, ordinary or foundation level. The proportion of students, in DEIS schools, sitting the English and mathematics exams decreased at foundation level and increased at higher level exams.

The significant improvement in trends like this seems to be greater for DEIS schools than non-DEIS schools.

### National Traveller Roma Inclusion Strategy

[The National Traveller Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021](#) (Department of Justice and Equality, 2017) takes a whole of Government approach to improving the lives of Travellers and Roma in Ireland. It aims to improve public service engagement with Traveller and Roma communities. It proposes:

- Traveller and Roma women should be supported in key areas including education, employment, and economic development.
- Improved educational access, participation and outcomes for Travellers and Roma.



- SOLAS [the national Further Education and Training (FET) Authority] and the Education and Training Boards consider the needs of disadvantaged groups, including Travellers and Roma, when planning FET provision.
- Addressing the high rate of early school-leaving in the Traveller and Roma communities, by strengthening the cooperation between formal education and non-formal learning sectors.

### Mobility

[The National Strategy for Higher Education for 2030](#) (DES, 2011) recognises an upward trend of Irish students studying abroad. The main route for Irish third level students to study abroad is through the European Union's [Erasmus+](#) programme.

[The Erasmus+ Annual Report Factsheet for Ireland](#) from 2019 outlined that there were a total of 3972 outgoing students and trainees during the period of 2018 to 2019. This increasing internationalisation of higher education is also visible in the rates of incoming Erasmus+ students. The Erasmus+ Annual Factsheet reports 8,463 incoming higher education students and trainees in 2018/19, an increase of over 1,246 students from the period of 2015/2016.

### Organisation of the education and training system

Full-time education is compulsory from 6 to 16 years, or until the completion of 3 years of second-level education. Both state-funded and private education is available at all levels in Ireland.

	Typical Age of Attendance	Awarded level on <a href="#">National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)</a>	Awarded level on <a href="#">European Qualifications Framework (EQF)</a>	Awarded level on <a href="#">International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED)</a>
Lower Second Level / Post-Primary Education	12-15	4	3	2
Upper Second Level / Post-Primary Education	15-18	5	4	3
Further Education and Training	16 onwards	1-6	1-5	1-4
Higher Education	16 onwards	7-10	5-8	5-8
Adult Education	16 onwards	1-4	1-3	1-2

A diagram describing the Irish education system can be found on page (i) of [A Brief Description of the Irish System](#) (Department of Education and Science, 2004).

Post-Primary Education may take place via secondary schools; vocational schools; community and comprehensive schools; or special schools. The majority of post-primary students study in secondary schools. Secondary schools are owned and managed privately. There are three secondary school models:

- Community Colleges - established by the local [Education and Training Board](#) (ETB) which is also the sole patron of the school. Community Colleges are funded by the [Department of Education](#) through the ETBs and deliver the post-primary curriculum determined by the Minister for Education supported by syllabuses, guidelines for teachers, circulars to schools and prescribed material for the examinations.

- Community Schools - established by one or more private or religious patrons coming together with an ETB patron or as the result of the amalgamation of voluntary secondary and ETB schools. Community Schools are funded by the Department of Education and deliver the post-primary curriculum determined by the Minister for Education supported by syllabuses, guidelines for teachers, circulars to schools and prescribed material for the examinations.
- Voluntary Secondary Schools - privately owned and managed post-primary schools, usually under the patronage of an individual body such as a religious community, a charitable trust or a private charitable company. Voluntary Secondary Schools are funded by the Department of Education and deliver the post-primary curriculum determined by the Minister for Education supported by syllabuses, guidelines for teachers, circulars to schools and prescribed material for the examinations.

Post-primary education is divided into two cycles. A 3-year Junior Cycle ends with the State Examination known as the Junior Certificate Examination. This leads onto a Senior Cycle of 2 or 3 years (depending on whether an optional Transition Year is taken at the start of the Senior Cycle). A second state examination is typically taken following the completion of the Senior Cycle. This exam may take the form of the Leaving Certificate (Established), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme or the Leaving Certificate Applied. Students can progress into further education and training (FET) or higher education.

Full-time FET includes Post Leaving Certificate Courses, Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme and Youthreach. Part-time FET includes Back To Education Initiative, Community Education, and Adult Education.

Apprenticeships can take place within FET or higher education, leading to an award at level 5-10 NFQ/4-8 EQF. They are 2-4 years duration, with a minimum of 50% on-the-job learning. Apprentices are employed under a formal contract and paid by the employer for the duration of the apprenticeship.

The Government aims to increase the apprenticeship scheme over the coming five years as outlined in the [Action Plan for Apprenticeships \(2021-2025\)](#). An ambitious target of 10,000 new apprentice registrations per year by 2025 underlines the Governments commitment to reforming the position of apprenticeships in the wider education and training sector, especially post Covid-19.

According to [Review of Pathways to Participation in Apprenticeship](#) (Generation Apprenticeship, 2018) there were 14,953 apprentices in October 2018, and of these, 85% were males under 25 years old. For further details on apprenticeships see Youth Wiki Chapter 3.5.

Higher Education, also known as Third Level, is primarily provided by Universities, Colleges of Education, and Institutes of Technology. The [Education Indicators 2020](#) shows that the total number of pupils taking the Leaving Certificate programme (across both 5th and 6th year) has increased from just under 79,000 in 2015 to over 86,000 in 2019.

Adult Education may be formal or non-formal, and often overlaps with community education. Formal adult education is often provided through Education and Training Boards or non-governmental organisations.

## Main concepts

### Early School Leaving

Multiple definitions of early school leaving are used in Ireland.

- The legal definition is 'non-participation in school before reaching the age of 16 years or before completing 3 years post-primary education, whichever is later'.

- The [Central Statistics Office's Educational Attainment Thematic Report](#) defines 'early school leavers as persons aged 18 to 24 whose highest level of education attained is lower secondary or below and have not received education since.'
- A commonly used interpretation is 'those who leave the education system without a minimum of 5 passes in the Leaving Certificate or equivalent qualification'.

### **Inclusive Education**

Under the [Education for Persons With Special Educational Needs Act 2004](#) [No. 30.2] 'inclusive education' is educating children 'with special educational needs [...] in an inclusive environment with children who do not have such needs' unless it would go against the child's best interests or negatively affect the other children's education.

Inclusive education is commonly known as special education. The same Act [No. 30.1] defines 'Special educational needs' as 'a restriction in the capacity of the person to participate in and benefit from education on account of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or learning disability or any other condition which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition...'

### **Youth Work**

'Youth work' is defined by the [Youth Work Act, 2001](#) as

a planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young persons through their voluntary participation, and which is—

- (a) complementary to their formal, academic or vocational education and training; and
- (b) provided primarily by voluntary youth work organisations.

## **6.2 Administration and governance**

### **Governance**

Much of the Irish education system's administration is centralised in the Department of Education.

At regional level, the 16 Education and Training Boards are education authorities which have responsibility for a range of statutory functions including youth work, education, and training. At local level, the governance of schools is provided for in the [Education Act, 1998](#) (Government of Ireland, 1998). Further information on the general distribution of responsibilities is available in articles Administration and Governance at Central and/or Regional Level and Administration and Governance at Local and/or Institutional Level in the Eurydice national description for Ireland.

### **Main Actors**

#### **The Department of Education**

The Department of Education is a department of the Irish state with responsibility for education and training. It is under the direction of the Minister for Education. The Department of Education's mission is to enable individuals through learning, to achieve their full potential and contribute to Ireland's social, cultural, and economic development. There are 18 Education Agencies which operate under the aegis of the Department of Education. Further information on the Department of Education's role is available in the article Administration and Governance at Central and/or Regional Level in the Eurydice national description for Ireland.

#### **Curriculum and Examination**

Ireland's primary and post-primary schools' curriculum is determined by the Minister for Education, who is advised by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

NCCA was established on a statutory basis in 2001, to lead developments in curriculum and assessment and to support the implementation of changes resulting from this work.

The State Examinations Commission (SEC) was established in 2003. It is responsible for the development, assessment, accreditation and certification of the Irish state's second-level examinations; the Junior Certificate and the Leaving Certificate. SEC is a non-departmental public body under the aegis of the Department of Education.

### **Education and Training Boards and Education and Training Board Ireland**

Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and Education and Training Board Ireland (ETBI) were established under the Education and Training Boards Act 2013. There are 16 ETBs in Ireland. They are education authorities which have responsibility for a range of statutory functions including youth work, education, and training. ETBs manage and run:

- second-level schools,
- further education colleges,
- pilot community national schools,
- adult and further education centres delivering education and training programmes.
- ETBI collectively represent education and training boards and promote their interests. Its main aim is to promote the development of education, training and youthwork in Ireland. Its role includes:
  - representing, negotiating and advocating on behalf of member ETBs
  - consulting and negotiating at national level on behalf of ETB members with Government Departments, Trade Unions and with a range of other relevant bodies and authorities
  - promoting the development and implementation of appropriate education and training policies, procedures and guidance for member ETBs
  - Conducting research, devising and delivering education and training programmes.

### **The Higher Education Authority**

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) is the statutory planning and policy development body for higher education and research in Ireland. The HEA has wide advisory powers throughout the third-level education sector. It is also the funding authority for the universities, Institutes of Technology and a number of designated higher education institutions. Further information on the Governance of Universities is available in the article Administration and Governance at Local and/or Institutional Level in the Eurydice national description for Ireland.

### **Quality and Qualifications Ireland**

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) is an independent State agency responsible for promoting quality and accountability in education and training services in Ireland. QQI was established in 2012 by the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012. QQI is responsible for the external quality assurance of further and higher education and training (including English language provision) and validates programmes and makes awards for certain providers in these sectors. QQI is also responsible for the maintenance, development and review of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

### **National Council for Special Education**

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) was established as an independent statutory body in December 2003. It was set up to improve the delivery of education services to persons with special educational needs arising from disabilities, with particular emphasis on children.

## **Skillnet Ireland**

Skillnet Ireland is the national agency responsible for the promotion and facilitation of workforce learning in Ireland. It was established in 1999 and is funded from the National Training Fund through the Department of Education. Skillnet Ireland funds learning networks that provide subsidised training to companies and employees, and free training to jobseekers. Each year, Skillnet Ireland funds over 50 industry representative groups, supporting over 15,000 companies and 50,000 trainees.

## **The Teaching Council**

The Teaching Council is the professional standards body for the teaching profession, which promotes and regulates professional standards in teaching.

## **Teachers' Union of Ireland**

The Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI) is a Trade Union organising teachers and lecturers engaged in post-primary, higher and further education in Ireland. TUI represents over 19,000 members in the education service.

## **Teacher Education Section**

The Department of Education's Teacher Education Section (TES) promotes the quality of teaching and learning through the provision of quality teacher training programmes, Continuing Professional Development and support for principals and teachers. This is done through the teacher education programmes, education centres and support services for teachers at primary and post-primary level.

## **Cross-sectoral cooperation**

As stated in Cumasú Empowering through learning, [Statement of Strategy 2019-2021](#) (2019), the Department of Education works with other Government Departments to ensure the advancement of its strategic priorities and on cross-cutting priority areas. These departments include:

- Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
- Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
- Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media
- Department of Environment, Climate and Communications
- Department of Foreign Affairs
- Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
- Department of Health
- Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
- Department of Justice
- Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
- Department of Rural and Community Development
- Department of the Taoiseach.

The Department of Education also chairs the Sponsors Group; a cross-departmental group to progress implementation of the [Online Safety Action Plan 2018-2019](#) (Government of Ireland, 2018). Other members of the group are the Departments of Business, Enterprise, and Innovation; Communications, Climate Action and Environment; Children and Youth Affairs; Health; and Justice and Equality.

## 6.3 Preventing early leaving from education and training (ELET)

### National strategy

The term 'early leaving from education or training' (ELET) is not commonly used in the Irish context. The terms 'early school leaving' (ESL) and 'not in education, employment or training' (NEET) are used more frequently.

[The DEIS Plan](#), discussed below, is the main policy initiative aimed at improving retention in schools. In addition, a range of strategies and policies exist, within a broader policy framework, to encourage young people to engage in education, training, or the labour market.

The Child and Family Agency (Tusla) was established in 2014. It is responsible for ensuring that every child either attends school regularly or receives an appropriate alternative minimum education. It also advises the Government on school attendance and education provision.

[Education \(Welfare\) Act, 2000](#) emphasises the promotion of school attendance, participation and retention. Under Section 22, every school must have a statement of strategies to encourage regular attendance among students. Schools must keep attendance records for all their students. Under the Act, a parent/guardian must inform the school if their children will be absent on a school day and give the reason for the absence. If a child is absent for more than 20 days in a school year, the school must inform the Child and Family Agency's Educational Welfare Service (part of Tusla Education Support Service).

### DEIS Plan 2017

[DEIS Plan 2017](#) Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools is the Department of Education's main policy initiative aimed at tackling educational disadvantage. It aims to improve attendance participation and retention in schools. Amongst schools participating in the DEIS scheme, the rate of students completing their Leaving Certificate [state examination] has risen to 85% (compared to 93.5% for Non-DEIS schools) amongst the group of students who began post-primary school in September 2011, from a level of 68.2% in September 2001 (National Reform Programme April 2019, Department of the Taoiseach, 2019).

DEIS Plan 2017 is discussed in further detail in Section 6.1 General Context, under Social Inclusion.

### Tusla Education Support Services

[Tusla Education Support Services](#) (tess) operates under the [Education \(Welfare\) Act, 2000](#). There are three strands within tess; the Statutory Educational Welfare Service (EWS) and the two school support services the Home School Community Liaison Scheme (HSCL) and the School Completion Programme (SCP). The three strands work together collaboratively with schools, families and other relevant services.

Educational Welfare Service (EWS) deal with children and families who have difficulties in relation to school attendance, participation, retention. EWS aims to ensure that attendance concerns are addressed before attendance becomes a crisis issue. Educational Welfare Officers work with families and children in a child-centred way to overcome barriers to their school attendance, participation, and retention. They also work closely with schools, educational support services and other agencies to support school attendance and resolve attendance problems.

The Home School Community Liaison Scheme (HSCL) operates under DEIS to promote partnership between parents, teachers, and community family support services. HSCL Coordinators are teachers from participating schools who are released from teaching duties, for a maximum of five years, to work intensively with and support

parents/guardians. A HSCL Coordinator's main goal is to improve educational outcomes for children through their work with the key adults in the child's life. Home Visits are the primary point of contact for HSCL Coordinators, to build strong relationships with parents/guardians. HSCL Coordinators also run parent classes in schools to provide parents/guardians with information and guidance about accessing community-based programmes and supports.

The School Completion Programme (SCP) is a support under the DEIS Programme, funded by tess. SCP supports primary and post-primary children and young people who have been identified as potentially at risk of early school leaving, or who are out of school and have not successfully transferred to an alternative learning site (i.e. Youthreach, Community Training Centre etc.) or employment. It aims to achieve improved attendance, participation, and retention. There are 122 SCP projects across 467 primary and 222 post-primary schools. Its annual programme funding is €24.7m. SCP provides the following interventions:

- Evidence based/informed interventions at universal level to whole class/school groups.
- Brief interventions, lasting 8 weeks or less, for students identified as needing an immediate short-term SCP led intervention.
- Targeted interventions to children and young people with significant support needs who have been identified through the SCP Intake Framework.

### **Further Education and Training Strategy 2020 - 2024**

The current [Further Education and Training Strategy 2020 - 2024](#) (2020) was published by SOLAS (the National Further Education and Training Authority). The Strategy (pp. 52) recognises that:

It is also important that FET continues to support early school leavers by offering them routes back into education and training and potential careers through Youthreach centres and [Community Training Centres]. While a recent evaluation found clear value from this provision, there is a need to more closely link it to pathways within FET and beyond, and to ensure that it continues to evolve to meet the changing and more complex needs of its learners.

The previous strategy, Further Education and Training Strategy 2014 – 2019 (SOLAS, 2014), stipulated that the further education and training sector provides:

- Education, training, skills-development and related supports for young people, such as Youthreach, Community Training Centre provision, enabling unemployed early-school leavers, those not in employment, education or training (NEETs), to access /reentry/completion of mainstream lower and/or upper second level education to meet individual, personal, career and employment aspirations.

### **Action Plan for Education 2021**

Each year the Department publishes its high-level work programme in an [Action Plan for Education](#). These plans articulate the Department's ambition, values and goals, based on its Statements of Strategy. The current statement is [Cumasú Statement of Strategy 2019 - 2021](#). The last action plan was the [Action Plan for Education 2019](#) [Department of Education and Skills (DES), 2019]. During 2019 the Department engaged in a public consultation regarding the upcoming Action Plan for 2020, however, this plan was not published. [The 2021 Action Plan](#) was published in 2021 and will run until 2022. The goals of this [Action Plan for 2021](#) are to:

- Ensure education standards and improve the learning experience to meet the needs of all pupils, in schools and early years settings
- Ensure that all pupils experience equity of opportunity in education and are supported to fulfil their potential

- Together with our partners, work to ensure that we provide strategic leadership and are supporting the delivery of the right systems and infrastructure for the sector.

## **Formal education: main policy measures on ELET**

### **Guidance Counselling**

[Guidelines for Second Level Schools on the Implications of Section 9 \(c\) of the Education Act 1998](#) identifies the school guidance service as playing a major preventative role in helping young people at risk to remain in the formal education system. Under this Act, schools' guidance sections should support early identification and support, through counselling and other measures, of students at risk of early school leaving. Schools' guidance sections should also raise awareness among students of the consequences of early school leaving.

### **Financial support mechanisms**

Different schemes have been established to aid students with school costs.

Financial supports for secondary school students include:

- The Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance. This scheme helps to cover the costs of uniforms and footwear for school. To be eligible, the total household income must be below a certain amount and a parent/guardian must be receiving certain social welfare benefits/payments for training/employment schemes or adult education.
- Allocations to schools for books. Under the Free Education Scheme, these allocations are available to State primary and post-primary schools to help with the cost of schoolbooks. Funding comes from the Department of Education and the scheme is administered in each school by the school principal. The scheme is mainly aimed at pupils from low-income families and families experiencing financial hardship. It can be used to set up a book rental scheme within the school or help individual students buy books. In January 2020 a pilot book scheme was announced for 102 DEIS schools. The objective of the scheme is to remove all costs associated with schoolbooks for the 15,500 students attending those schools. It involves an increase in the book grant to €85 per pupil and is intended to ease the financial burden on their families and improve educational outcomes.
- Exemption from examination fees for the Junior and Leaving Certificate state examinations. These are available to students whose parent/guardian have a current medical card. Medical cards are discussed further in Chapter 7 Health and Well-Being.
- Under the Remote Area Grant Scheme funding is available to support students living far from a school which can provide a suitable free second-level education.

### **Other policy measures**

Other youth employment schemes include

- [Vocational Training and Opportunities Scheme](#)
- [Youth Employment Support Scheme](#)
- [Tús](#)
- [Employment and Youth Activation Charter](#)
- [Vocational Training and Opportunities Scheme](#)
- [Skills for Life Employment Support Scheme](#)
- [Youth Employability Initiative](#).

These are discussed in section 3.6 Integration of young people in the labour market.

[The Back To Education Initiative \(BTEI\)](#) provides second chance education opportunities to early school leavers and adult learners who want to upgrade their skills. It enables



individuals to combine learning with family, work and other responsibilities. Anyone who has left full-time education can take part in a course, but priority is given to those with less than upper second-level education. A pro-rata training allowance may be paid to a participant that has no entitlement to a social welfare payment but is eligible for Youthreach. Individuals receiving a social welfare payment, may keep their payment and participate in BTEI once they continue to satisfy the conditions attached to their payment. A pro-rata training allowance may be paid to a participant who has no entitlement to a social welfare payment but is eligible for [Youthreach](#).

[The Department of Justice](#) runs employment placement, education and training services for offenders where they can train to develop work-related skills. For many of these training opportunities, accreditation or certification may be gained upon completing the required course to the approved standard.

## **Addressing ELET through non-formal and informal learning and quality youth work**

### **Youthreach**

[Youthreach](#) is a mainstream provision for early school leavers, taking place in a non-formal context. It provides opportunities for basic education, personal development, vocational training, and work experience. It is typically a full-time, 2-year course of integrated education, training, and work experience. However, longer courses, 1-year courses and part-time courses are also possible. A Foundation Certification or the Junior Certificate are awarded for completing a Foundation Programme. This may lead to:

- the Leaving Certificate Applied course,
- a higher-level award, or
- other skills training, such as an apprenticeship course.

There are almost 6,000 places available nationwide under the Youthreach umbrella. Almost 3,700 of these places are provided by ETBs in over 100 Youthreach centres. Youthreach centres managed by ETBs, are designated as 'centres of education' under the [Education Act, 1998](#) (Government of Ireland, 1998). Many of the remaining places are provided in Community Training Centres. Youthreach is funded by SOLAS and in certain ETBs it is co-funded under the European Social Fund. Youthreach is discussed in more detail in section 3.6 Integration of young people in the labour market.

## **6.4 Validation of non-formal and informal learning**

### **Arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning**

[The Qualifications \(Education And Training\) Act, 1999](#) gave individual citizens the right, in law, to have prior learning validated by the further and higher education system. The recognition of informal and non-formal learning (NFIL) can enable learners to:

- gain access to programmes, credits or exemptions within programmes,
- earn partial accreditation in the form of minor awards, or
- achieve complete qualifications at every level of the Framework.

However, recognition and validation of NFIL is inconsistent within Ireland across different sectors for access, programmatic credits, awards and for professional accreditation. Some fields of learning are prevented by law from validating NFIL.

In Ireland, the validation of NFIL is known as the recognition of prior learning (RPL). [Quality and Qualifications Ireland](#) (QQI) describe RPL as 'a process used to evaluate skills and knowledge gained through life outside of formal education and training, for the

purpose of recognising life achievements against a given set of standards or learning outcomes’.

[The Qualifications and Quality Assurance \(Education and Training\) Act 2012](#) establishes the statutory basis for QQI’s engagement with RPL. Under Section 56 (1) and (2) of this Act, providers must establish and implement policies, criteria and procedure for learner access, transfer, and progression. These must ‘include procedures for credit accumulation, credit transfer and identification and formal assessment of the knowledge, skills or competence previously acquired by learners’ [Section 56 (3)]. These procedures must be submitted for approval to QQI [Section 56 (4)]. Where learners meet standards that QQI has established, they may apply to QQI for awards, and QQI may request providers’ assistance to assess their achievements [Section 50 (3)(7)]. While methods for assessing prior learning differ, portfolios are a common method.

Objective 44 of the [Action Plan for Education 2016-2019](#) [Department of Education and Skills (DES), 2016] states the Department of Education commitment to develop a national policy for RPL. RPL is integrated into the [Further Education and Training Strategy 2020 - 2024](#) (SOLAS, 2020), the [Action Plan for Jobs 2018](#) (Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, 2018), the [National Strategy for Higher Education for 2030](#) (DES, 2013), and the [National Skills Strategy 2025](#) (DES, 2016). Other guides about/including RPL are [Access, Transfer and Progression Policy Restatement 2015](#) (National Qualifications Authority of Ireland, 2003; QQI republished 2015); the Principles and Operational Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Learning in Further and Higher Education and Training (National Qualifications Authority of Ireland, 2005; QQI republished 2015); and [Policies and Criteria for the Validation of Programmes of Education and Training](#) (QQI, 2013).

## Information and guidance

QQI directs individuals with questions about gaining recognition through an RPL process, to talk to their local adult education guidance service or education and training provider. [The Adult Education Guidance Initiative](#) (AEGI) offers impartial adult education information, one-to-one guidance and group guidance, through local AEGS offices. [The National Centre for Guidance in Education](#) (NCGE) supports guidance practitioners and provides resources to support adults with RPL.

The RPL Practitioner Network is a community of practice for people working and interested in RPL, founded in 2015. The network’s main activities are:

- networking: facilitating the practitioners to meet, share experience and build relationships with each other.
- Community of Practice: where members share their knowledge and experience, assist in answering fellow members queries and providing a voice to give input to policy.
- awareness raising: where through sharing knowledge and giving a voice to practitioners we can raise the public’s awareness of the use and role of RPL in individuals and communities learning and development.
- contribution to policy: as a group representing practitioners we can give our opinion on RPL policy and related matters of importance to us around RPL.

The network is run by practitioners and supported by the [Education and Training Boards Ireland](#) (ETBI), [the Irish Universities Association](#), Institutes of Technology Ireland, National Centre for Guidance in Education, the National Forum for Teaching & Learning, and Quality and Qualifications Ireland.

[European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training](#) (ECVET) Ireland hosts events, such as conferences for practitioners and policy makers, to promote the value of nonformal and informal learning, and for practitioners to exchange best practices around RPL. ECVET Ireland also nominates practitioners and policy makers to attend international training ECVET conferences and peer learning activities on RPL. ECVET Experts are

individuals who are recognised for their expertise in the area of vocational education and training, who promote RPL throughout their professional networks. ECVET is co-funded in Ireland by the European Commission and by [SOLAS](#) (the national Further Education and Training Authority). ECVET is managed in Ireland by [Léargas](#), the National Agency for Erasmus+ in the fields of School Education; Vocational Education and Training; Adult Education; and Youth.

Adult and Community Education: Supported Learner Pathways 2020-2021 aims to build the capacity of community educators and develop new guidelines for using RPL in working with marginalised and vulnerable groups, and with employees with low qualifications. The programme is run by [AONTAS](#) (the national Adult Learning Organisation), as Irish National Coordinator for the European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL). EAAL is funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union and co-financed by the Department of Education through SOLAS.

[The Adult Literacy Organisers' Association](#) (ALOA) provides collective representation of Adult Literacy Organisers, funded by [Education and Training Boards](#) (ETBs). [The Community Education Facilitators' Association](#) (CEFA) is the professional representative association for Community Education Facilitators, who work within the Education and Training Boards (ETBs) to give support to local community groups. Both the ALOA and CEFA host training events and conferences, highlighting the value of non-formal and informal learning, and offering guidance on RPL.

## Quality assurance

QQI has a statutory role to develop QA guidelines under [the Qualifications and Quality Assurance \(Education and Training\) Act 2012](#), Section 27(1). The Policy on Quality Assurance Guidelines (QQI, 2016) recognises that QQI Quality Assurance (QA) guidelines are a crucial component of a variety of QQI's functions, services and policies including RPL. These guidelines set out QQI's approach to developing and organising QA guidelines. It applies to the validation of formal, non-formal and informal competences.

[The Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines](#) (QQI, 2016) sets out eleven core areas in which providers are expected to have quality assurance procedures in place, and what is expected of provider procedures in these areas. These core areas are:

- Governance and Management of Quality
- Documented Approach to Quality Assurance
- Programmes of Education and Training
- Staff Recruitment, Management and Development 12
- Teaching and Learning
- Assessment of Learners
- Supports for Learners
- Information and Data Management
- Public Information and Communication
- Other Parties Involved in Education and Training 20
- Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review.

The guidelines require that provider policies and procedures for learner admission, progression and recognition include 'fair recognition of education and training qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning' and that the provider ethos enables flexible learning pathways. These Guidelines should be considered in conjunction with QQI's sector and topic-specific QA guidelines.

[The Qualifications and Quality Assurance \(Education and Training\) Act 2012](#), requires providers to “have regard to” QQI’s QA guidelines when establishing their own quality assurance procedures. Providers must ‘establish an internal quality system appropriate to their individual context which incorporates both operational procedures and a system of review to monitor the effectiveness of those procedures’ ([Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines, 2016](#)).

The quality assurance framework for RPL is provided for within the [QQI Policy Restatement: Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training](#) (QQI, 2015), and the Principles and Operational Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Learning in Further and Higher Education and Training (QQI, 2015).

The professional development of staff engaging in RPL is the responsibility of the individual provider.

DES actively monitor with relevant national agencies, RPL through performance framework and reporting systems.

## 6.5 Cross-border learning mobility

### Policy Framework

Under the [Irish Educated Globally Connected An International Education Strategy For Ireland, 2016-2020](#) [Department of Education and Skills (DES), 2016], a strategic priority for the Irish higher education sector is to pursue internationalization ‘as an inclusive and holistic strategy for the enhancement of the quality of the student-learning experience.’ The strategy’s aims include increasing the numbers of international students coming to Irish institutions, and increasing the number of Irish students on outward mobility programmes. The strategy establishes that Enterprise Ireland (the government organisations responsible for the development and growth of Irish enterprises in world markets), the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and the Department of Education, will identify and develop links with other Governments and their Agencies in targeted overseas markets to develop collaborative projects.

The International Education Strategy supports several policies and strategies:

- National Skills Strategy 2025 – Ireland’s Future
- Entrepreneurship policy
- Foreign Languages strategy
- Supporting the Irish Labour Market strategy – the role of International Education
- Trade, Tourism and Investment Strategy and the Export Trade Council.

The Strategy makes the continued growth in numbers of international students studying in Ireland a priority area. It recognizes that ‘International students enrich the culture of Irish campuses and have a vital role to play in supporting the international engagement upon which Ireland, as a small, open economy, relies, as well as providing an important source of income for’ Higher Education Institutions. It also considers the outward mobility of students, researchers, and staff ‘a crucial element of a modern, globally-focused internationalization strategy’. The strategy recognizes and accommodates that different Irish Higher Education Institutions are moving at different paces in terms of engaging with student and staff mobility.

Further information on mobility and in education is available in the EU Mobility Scoreboard.

In 2021 there is little evidence of a new Education strategy.

## Main cross-border mobility programmes for students in formal education

### Erasmus+

[Erasmus+](#) is the European Union programme for education, training, youth, and sport, 2021-2027. It provides funding and support for organisations to operate projects that encourage European exchange, co-operation, and learning. Erasmus+ is funded by the European Union through the contributions of member states, including Ireland. Funding of almost €170 million has been allocated to Ireland for the duration of the programme. Léargas is the National Agency for Erasmus+ in the fields of School Education; Vocational Education and Training; Adult Education; and Youth. The Higher Education Authority is the National Agency for Erasmus+ in the field of higher education.

Erasmus+ aims to modernise and improve the quality of teaching, training, and youth work across Europe, and to support the development, transfer and implementation of innovative practices. Duration varies from a number of days to months, depending on the specific action within Erasmus+. Both incoming and outgoing students participate in Erasmus+. Grants are awarded to successfully applying organisations in the fields of School Education; Vocational Education and Training; Adult Education; and Youth. This can cover eligible expenses such as flights, accommodation, subsistence, etc. The grant may also cover eligible expenses to support learners facing additional barriers (e.g. sign language interpreters' fees, etc.). Eligible third level students receive an Erasmus+ grant provided by the European Commission, paid through their institution, to contribute towards additional costs which may be encountered when studying abroad.

### Erasmus+ and Coronavirus

Travel restrictions and the closing of universities due to the Coronavirus pandemic meant that participants in cross-border mobility programmes including the Erasmus+ student exchange faced challenges. The most updated data presented in May 2020 highlights how 25% of student exchanges were cancelled due to Covid-19, 37.5% of students experienced at least one major problem related to their exchange (couldn't go home, accommodation problems etc). Half of the students whose programme continued have moved to online classes and 34% of the programmes moved to partial online offers or partially postponed classes.

The European Commission confirmed that they would assist young people who are taking part in Erasmus+ by making the programmes as flexible as legally possible. All exceptional costs in connection with Covid-19 are to be reimbursed and exchange students do not lose the academic year and can obtain ECTS credits through remote study arrangements.

### IAESTE

[The International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience](#), commonly known as IAESTE, offered paid internships abroad for third level students studying the fields of engineering, science, technology, and applied arts. Applicants were in the third year of an undergraduate degree or above (although some second-year students may be accepted), or any year of MSc or PhD. Graduates can apply within the first year of their graduation. Traineeships last from 6 weeks to 12 months.

Until June 2020, IAESTE Ireland arranged both incoming and outgoing internship placements in cooperation with the other National Committees in nearly 90 countries. IAESTE Ireland also worked with companies to help them access high calibre, motivated STEM students from around the world to undertake internships in Ireland. IAESTE Ireland was funded by the Department of Education and managed by Léargas. Trainees paid for their own travel costs to the host country, personal travel insurance and a €200 placement fee. There could also be fees involved in obtaining work permits or visas. Once on placement, trainees receive a salary sufficient to cover the local cost of living and accommodation.

Since June 2020, Léargas has ceased to deliver the IAESTE Programme in Ireland. IAESTE is no longer open to new participants from Ireland. However, there are still a number of students completing placements which were arranged prior to June 2020, supported through the international IAESTE A.s.b.l. network.

### **The Intern Work and Travel**

[The Intern Work and Travel](#) (IWT) Programme enables Irish and US post-secondary students and recent graduates to undertake internships and travel in each other's countries for up to twelve months.

The scheme allows Irish citizens who are eligible for the programme to enter the US on a J1 Exchange Visitor visa. The job or internship must be a minimum of 32 hours per week, related to the student's area of study and cannot be an unskilled or casual labour position. They do not need to have a job or internship lined up before entering the USA. Fees for Irish students include

SEVIS fee (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) of US \$180

- US Embassy visa application fee of US \$160
- Flight costs
- Health Insurance
- Travel insurance

programme application fees (which differ depending on the sponsoring organisation).

The Intern Work and Travel Programmes response to Covid-19 was to put a temporary suspension on their in-person programmes and gave participants lifetime credit that enabled each participant to credit all program fees received by this programme toward future experiences that can be virtual or in person.

### **International Experience Canada**

[The International Experience Canada](#) (IEC) enables Irish citizens between the ages of 18 to 35 to live and work in Canada. The International Co-op (Internship) category is one of the three strands of the IEC, alongside The Young Professionals category and The Working Holiday category. The International Co-op (Internship) category is for students registered at a postsecondary educational institution in Ireland who want to complete a work placement or internship in Canada as part of their academic curriculum. This is for a maximum of 12 months. Students applying for the International Co-op (Internship) pay a participation fee of C\$150 (approximately €100) and employer compliance fee of C\$230. Students must cover their own costs (e.g. accommodation). Students do not need to secure a work placement or internship before moving to Canada and therefore should budget for periods of unemployment by having access to enough money to support themselves financially, as they may not find a job straightaway.

IEC is part of a reciprocal agreement between the Government of Canada and the Irish Government. Ireland's Working Holiday Programme offers two different categories of visas to Canadians aged 18-35 year old: Working Holiday Authorisation; and International Co-op Internship Authorisation. The International Co-op Internship Authorisation is valid for one year, for students who intend to complete a paid work placement or internship in Ireland. It is open to Canadian citizens registered as students in post-secondary Canadian institutions and has a \$100 fee.

The IEC response to Covid-19 underscored the Government of Canada's response to the pandemic. One measure that the Government of Canada has put in place is to limit travel to Canada. This restriction had an impact on youth who come to come through one of Canada's 36 youth mobility arrangements. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) is the federal department responsible for International Experience Canada (IEC) the program that manages these youth mobility arrangements on behalf of Canada. At this point in time, only essential travel to Canada is permitted.

## Further Information on Mobility in Education

Further information on mobility and in education is available in the EU Mobility Scoreboard.

More detailed information on higher education is published in Eurydice Mobility Scoreboard: Higher Education Background Report 2016 and Eurydice Mobility Scoreboard: Higher Education Background Report 2018/19.

More detailed information on IVET on Cedefop, Platform for IVET Indicators.

Promoting mobility in the context of non-formal learning, and of youth work

Support for non-formal learning through mobility in the youth work sector takes place through two separate EU programmes, the European Solidarity Corps and Erasmus+ Youth in Action.'

## European Solidarity Corps

The European Union initiative, the [European Solidarity Corps](#), funds and supports 18- to 30-year-olds to volunteer or work in projects that benefit communities. Young people can volunteer or work, in their own country or abroad, through the Volunteering, Traineeships, Jobs, and Solidarity Projects strands. Volunteers receive funding for accommodation, food, travel, insurance and pocket money through their sending organisation. The sending organisation receives an organisational support budget also. For traineeship placements, travel costs, organisational support and a relocation allowance are normally paid. For those in an employment placement, there will always be a labour contract as well as a wage paid for by the organisation in accordance with local laws, regulations and collective agreements. All participants receive a certificate detailing the actions they have taken through the European Solidarity Corps.

Education has been hard hit by the Covid-19 crisis. Travel restrictions and the closing of universities mean participants in cross-border mobility programmes, such as the European Solidarity Corps are facing challenges. The European Commission are providing maximum flexibility to those engaging in programmes, in particular to help those who have had to return to their home countries for safety reasons. All exceptional costs in connection with Covid-19 have been reimbursed with participants of the Solidarity Corps programme retaining their status.

## Erasmus+ Youth

There are three strands of Erasmus+ Youth in Action:

- KA1: Youth Exchange and Mobility for Youth Workers
- KA2: Transnational Youth Initiatives
- KA3: Support for Policy Reform.

**Key Action 1**, Mobility Youth Exchanges bring groups of young people from two or more countries together for between five- and 21-days (while the project can last from 3-24 months). They support the interaction of 13- to 30-year-olds, from different cultural backgrounds. A minimum of one Youth Work or Youth Leader, who must be over the age of 18, should accompany each group of young people. Youth exchanges bring between 16 and 60 participants (excluding the leaders) together from across Europe, with a minimum of four young people per group.

'Transnational Youth Initiatives' are one of the three types of **Key Action 2**, Strategic Partnerships in the Youth field, alongside 'Supporting Innovation' and 'Supporting exchanges of good practice'. Transnational Youth Initiative projects are initiated, set up and carried out by groups of young people themselves. These projects can be reasonably simple cooperation projects that aim to foster social commitment and entrepreneurial spirit.

**Key Action 3**, Support for Policy Reform, promotes the active participation of young people in democratic life in Europe. It stimulates and provides a framework for debate

about issues affecting young people. Youth Dialogue projects involve discussions between young people and decision makers that should ultimately inform policymaking. The project can last for three months to two years. Young people must be involved at all stages of the project and lead the activities.

## Quality assurance

No overarching quality assurance system exists in Ireland for mobility programmes. Each mobility programme is subject to its respective funding providers' rules and regulations.

The Inspectorate is the division of the Department of Education responsible for the evaluation of primary and post-primary schools and centres for education. While there is no specific mechanisms by the Inspectorate for monitoring post-primary mobilities, post-primary schools' overall quality, and therefore mobilities, should be guided by [Looking at Our School 2016 A Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools](#) (The Inspectorate, 2016). Schools must engage in external and internal evaluations and the Inspectorate publishes a range of reports and guides for quality assurance including [School Self-Evaluation Guidelines 2016-2020 - Post-Primary](#) (The Inspectorate, 2016). A principle of the Quality Framework is 'that schools should assume responsibility for the quality of the education they provide'.

Under the [Qualifications and Quality Assurance \(Education and Training\) Act 2012](#), Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) is responsible for the external quality assurance of further and higher education and training. [Irish Educated Globally Connected An International Education Strategy For Ireland, 2016-2020](#) (2016, pp. 23) states that 'The Irish education system has in place strong quality assurance and strategic oversight mechanisms which should continue to ensure that increases in international student-numbers does not jeopardise quality.'

[The European Quality Charter for Mobility](#) is a quality reference document for education and training stays abroad. It complements, the Recommendation on mobility for students, persons undergoing training, volunteers, teachers and trainers (European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, 2001). The Charter is addressed to the Member States, including Ireland, and particularly to their organisations responsible for stays abroad, and provides guidance on mobility arrangements.

The quality of projects funded by Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps is assured on a regular basis according to criteria defined by the European Commission. For some sectors, an accreditation of the organization is necessary requisite before the application process. For example, the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education is a prerequisite for higher education institutions in Ireland which wish to participate in higher education mobility projects. When planning mobility projects organisations are guided by the National Agencies and in the case of vocational education and training mobilities, are advised to use the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training to assist in quality assurance. On application, projects' quality is assured during the application process by pre-defined award criteria. Selection and evaluation committees approve the processes to award and/or the awarding of grants, depending on the sector/action. Projects may also have recommendations made to aid them in enhancing their project's quality. The national agency, Léargas or the Higher Education Authority depending on the sector, carries out technical and financial checks and audits regarding the use of grants, and some projects are selected for on the spot monitoring checks. All projects must submit a final report, and in some actions, organisations may also be required to submit an interim report. If the approved activities are not fully implemented, or if the realised activities/outputs are of insufficient quality, funding can be reduced.



## 6.6 Social inclusion through education and training

### Educational support

#### Special Educational Needs

Children with special educational needs (SEN) have the right to free primary education until the age of 18 years old. Under the [Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004](#) (the EPSEN Act) children with SEN should be educated in inclusive, mainstream settings unless this would go against the child's best interests or negatively affect the other children's education. The Department of Education recognises the need for a continuum of provision for students with SEN:

- support in ordinary classes in mainstream schools, from Learning Support and Resource Teachers and/or Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)
- a special class within a mainstream school
- a special school.

Under the EPSEN Act each child assessed with a special educational need should have a personal education plan. This is discussed in Chapter 6.10 Current debates and reforms.

The Department of Education's policy is moving away from a static definition of disability or special educational need to a more holistic approach which recognises that a young person may have a range of needs which will, with targeted interventions over time, reduce or change. As such, there is overlap in many of the policy documents.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is a statutory body, established under the EPSEN Act. Its main functions are:

- Planning and co-ordinating the provision of education and support services to children with SEN, in conjunction with schools and the Health Service Executive
- Planning the implementation of the EPSEN Act
- Disseminating information on best practice concerning the education of children with SEN
- Providing information to parents in relation to the entitlements of children with SEN
- Assessing and reviewing resources required by children with SEN
- Ensuring that progress of students with SEN is monitored and reviewed
- Reviewing education provisions for adults with disabilities
- Advising educational institutions on best practice
- Consulting with voluntary bodies
- Advising the Minister for Education on matters relating to special education
- Conducting research and publishing findings.

The NCSE employs Special Educational Needs Organisers who are responsible for allocating additional teaching and other resources to support the SEN of children with disabilities at local level.

The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) is an executive agency of the Department of Education. NEPS provides psychological services to primary and post-primary schools, both state and private. NEPS processes applications for 'reasonable accommodation' in the State examination arrangements for children with disabilities. Students with specific learning disabilities may be able to gain an exemption from some of the usual educational requirements. For example, a student with dyslexia may gain an exemption from Irish and/or modern foreign language classes.

In line with the [Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools: Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream School](#) (DES, 2017), the Special Education Teaching allocation provides a single unified allocation for special educational teaching needs to each school, based on that school's educational profile.

There are several Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities for Irish teachers in inclusion and SEN. For further information please see the report [An Overview of CPD Provision for Teachers in the area of Inclusion and Special Educational Needs](#) (2016), written by Dr Carmel Duggan, commissioned by the National Council for Special Education.

Expenditure on special education has significantly grown in recent years. According to the Department of Education and Skills Budget 2020 special education continues to be a priority for investment. In 2020 around one-fifth of the department's entire current budget was allocated to special needs provision.

In 2021 the education Budget was increased by €410 million to €8.9 billion as special education, DEIS schools and all primary and post-primary schools benefit from new investment.

### **Intercultural Education**

[The Equal Status Act, 2000](#) outlaws discrimination outside the workplace, including in certain aspects of education. The Schools and Equal Status Acts information booklet outlines the main features of the Equal Status Acts as they affect primary and second-level schools.

[The Intercultural Education Strategy \(2010-2015\)](#) (DES and the Office of the Minister for Integration, 2010) focused on enabling students to experience an education respectful of diversity while assisting education providers to ensure that integration becomes the norm within an intercultural learning environment.

[The Migrant Integration Strategy: A Blueprint for the Future](#) (Department of Justice and Equality, 2017) sets out a whole Government approach to the issue of migrant integration for the period from 2017 to 2020. It is targeted at all migrants, including refugees, who are legally residing in the State. It also encompasses those who have become naturalised Irish citizens but who were born outside Ireland. The Strategy proposes several targeted initiatives to address particular migrant needs in education.

In 2021, Minister O’Gorman from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth announced €500,000 will be made available to local community-based projects nationwide to support the integration of migrants. There has been no updated Migrant Integration Strategy as of August 2021.

[The Intercultural Education Strategy](#) (2010-2015) ("IES") aimed to ensure that:

- all students experience an education that "respects the diversity of values, beliefs, languages and traditions in Irish society and is conducted in a spirit of partnership" (Education Act, Government of Ireland, 1998),
- all education providers are assisted with ensuring that inclusion and integration within an intercultural learning environment becomes normal practice.

The IES was developed in recognition of the recent significant demographic changes in Irish society, which are reflected in the education system. It is in line with the Department of Education's high level goal to 'support and improve the quality, relevance and inclusiveness of education for every learner in our schools'.

Resources for English-as-an-Additional Language are allocated as part of the special educational needs allocation model for schools. Students whose first language is not English can use dictionaries in second level state examinations.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) issued [Guidelines on Intercultural Education in Second Level Schools](#) (2005). The Guidelines aim to advise teachers

on how to promote inter-culturalism across the curriculum and through classroom practice and to enable schools to identify ways in which intercultural education can be integrated into the curriculum and into broader school policy.

Teachers may opt to undertake Continuous Professional Development related to teaching in an intercultural context.

### **Educational disadvantage**

'Educational disadvantage' is defined in the [Education Act, 1998](#) (Government of Ireland, 1998) as "[... ] the impediments to education arising from social or economic disadvantage which prevent students from deriving appropriate benefit from education in schools."

Income-related grants for secondary school students are discussed in Chapter 6.3 Preventing early leaving from education and training (ELET).

Financial supports for third level students include:

- The Student Grant Scheme: the main financial support scheme for students, established under the [Student Support Act 2011](#) (Government of Ireland, 2011). Student grants are divided into:
  - Maintenance grants: a contribution towards the student's living costs.
  - Fee grants: cover all/part of the student contribution (fee); costs of essential field trips; and/or tuition fees.
  - Postgraduate contribution grant: financial assistance towards the cost of tuition fees for approved postgraduate courses
  - Fund for students with disabilities
  - Student Assistance Fund: for students who have started a third-level course and experience financial hardship which threatens their ability to continue their studies
  - Tax relief is available for tuition fees paid to private third-level institutions, for institutions abroad and paid by repeat students and part-time students.

Further information is contained in the Irish national descriptions on the Eurydice website Chapter 12 on Support Measures for Learners in Higher Education and Support Measures for Learners in Adult Education and Training.

### **Traveller Education**

The Department of Education is responsible for the co-ordination of Traveller education. The Advisory Committee on Traveller Education published a [Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy](#) in 2006. Many of the recommendations of the report have been included in mainstream strategies. A key objective of the report was the phasing out of segregated Traveller provision and the inclusion of Traveller children and young people in mainstream education. The Visiting Teacher Service for Travellers ceased in 2011 in line with Departmental policy on the mainstreaming of supports for all children including Travellers. Traveller children continue to be supported by the Child and Family Agency's (Tusla's) integrated Educational Welfare Service. The Department of Education continues to develop and implement traveller education policy under the National Traveller and ROMA Inclusion Strategy, published in 2017, which includes several education actions. An [Action Plan to Promote Traveller Participation in Higher Education 2019-2021](#) (DES, 2019) sets out actions, which the Department will coordinate or deliver, to achieve targets for traveller education set out in the National Access Plan for Higher Education (DES and Higher Education Authority, 2015).

Information about early school leaving amongst the Traveller community is available in Chapter 6.1.

Information about a proposed bill to include Traveller culture and history in school curriculum is available in Chapter 6.10.

## Social cohesion and equal opportunities

### Social Inclusion Unit

The Social Inclusion Unit sits within the Department of Education and is responsible for developing and promoting a co-ordinated Department response to tackling educational disadvantage from pre-school to second-level education. The unit is responsible for:

- the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) Programme, discussed in Chapter 6.1.
- co-ordination of Traveller Education
- High Support/Special Schools, Youth Encounter Projects (YEPS) and Children Detention Schools
- integration including work on the updated Migrant Policy
- assignment within DEIS Schools of the Home School Community Liaison Co-ordinators, discussed in Chapter 6.3 Preventing early leaving from education and training (ELET).

### National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021

[The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021](#) (Department of Justice and Equality, 2017) takes a whole of Government approach to improving the lives of Travellers and Roma in Ireland in practical and tangible ways. There are 149 actions in the strategy covering the themes of Cultural Identity, Education, Employment and Traveller Economy, Children and Youth, Health, Gender Equality, Anti-discrimination and Equality, Public Services, Accommodation and Traveller and Roma Communities.

Key education-related actions proposed in the strategy include:

- Traveller and Roma women should be supported in key areas including education, employment and economic development
- The development of education resources on Traveller and Roma culture and history for use in primary, post primary and adult education settings
- Improved access, participation and outcomes for Travellers and Roma in education to achieve outcomes that are equal to those for the majority population
- SOLAS [the national Further Education and Training (FET) Authority] and the Education and Training Boards to consider the needs of disadvantaged groups including Travellers and Roma in the planning of FET provision
- Strengthening of cooperation between formal education and non-formal learning sectors to address the high rate of early school-leaving in the Traveller and Roma communities
- A positive culture of respect and protection for the cultural identity of Travellers and Roma across the education system.

### LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy 2018-2020 and Being LGBT in School

[LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy 2018-2020](#) (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2018) is the first Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Intersex (LGBTI+) National Youth Strategy in Ireland and the world. It has three strategic goals:

- Create a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment for LGBTI+ young people
- Improve the physical, mental, and sexual health of LGBTI+ young people
- Develop the research and data environment to better understand the lives of LGBTI+ young people.

Further detail is provided in Chapter 4.3 Strategy for the social inclusion of young people.

[Being LGBT in School](#) is a resource for post-primary schools to prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying and support LGBT students was developed by the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN) in 2016, with the support of the Department of Education, as part of the implementation of the [Action Plan on Bullying](#) (Anti-Bullying Working Group 2013).

[The National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy](#) (2019-2021) provides the Irish Government with an opportunity to implement a strategic approach to addressing the needs of LGBTI+ people including young persons. This Strategy builds on existing equality policy and will be monitored by a Strategy Committee. This Strategy has Thematic Pillars

1. Visible and included
2. Treated equally
3. Healthy
4. Safe and supported.

### **Anti-Bullying Initiatives**

[The Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#) (DES, 2013, pp. 5) defines Bullying as 'unwanted negative behavior, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time [... including] cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying (such as homophobic bullying and racist bullying).' Under the [Education \(Welfare\) Act, 2000](#) (Government of Ireland, 2000) all schools are required to have a code of behaviour in place. Under the [Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#) (DES, 2013) all Boards of Management are required to formally adopt and implement an anti-bullying policy.

An Anti-Bullying Working Group was established by the Department of Education and Department of Children and Youth Affairs in 2012, to develop a plan to identify the priorities that need to be addressed to combat bullying in schools. Their 2013 report [Action Plan on Bullying](#) sets out twelve actions to help prevent and tackle bullying in primary and second level schools, including:

- A proposal to establish an Anti-Bullying Implementation Group
- The Department of Education to engage with book publishers who produce materials for schools to address the issue of stereotyping
- Development of a new National Framework for Anti-Bullying
- Research into how other countries investigate procedures in other jurisdictions
- Encourage social media and telecommunications companies and internet service providers to continue to raise awareness of cyber bullying and how it can be dealt with.

Several providers run anti-bullying programmes in schools. The Cool School programme is an Anti-Bullying initiative for Post-Primary schools developed within the Health Service Executive Dublin North East's Child Psychiatric Service. It is an Anti-Bullying programme and support service tailored to the Irish context. A Multi-disciplinary team is engaged in this work, comprising a Consultant Psychiatrist, a Principal Social Worker, a Research Psychologist, two teachers on full-time secondment, a therapist and a computer assessment developer.

Other anti-bullying school initiatives include teaching resources, discipline plans, student and teacher training, parent meetings and improved playground supervision.

Teachers can specialise in citizenship education and there are also CPD options for teachers in citizenship education. However, citizenship education is not specified in top-level curricula, either as a cross-curricular theme, or under a compulsory integrated or separate approach, in Ireland at upper secondary level. [The Eurydice Citizenship Education at School in Europe – 2017 Report](#) contains further information on citizenship education.

## The Anti-Bullying Centre

The National Anti-Bullying Research and Resource Centre (ABC) is a university-designated research centre located in Dublin City University's (DCU's) Institute of Education. ABC studies the multi-factored causes of bullying and translates its findings into resources and training to tackle bullying. ABC's activities are supported by the Department of Education under the Action Plan on Bullying (Anti-Bullying Working Group, 2013); the EU Erasmus+ Framework Program for Education, Training, Youth and Sport; DCU Research and Innovation Unit; Enterprise Ireland; the Irish Research Council, the Fulbright Commission; the Ireland Canada University Foundation' DCU Institute of Education; the Health Services Executive and the European Commission.

Further information on social cohesion is available in the Eurydice report on [Eurydice Citizenship Education at School in Europe – 2017](#).

## 6.7 Skills for innovation

### Innovation in formal education

#### Innovation's inclusion in the school curriculum

[Towards Learning: An Overview of Senior Cycle Education](#) (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2009) identified 'Creativity and innovation' as a principal of the senior cycle education which informs curriculum planning, development, provision, and implementation in schools. Both traditional and vocational curriculums at senior cycle provides opportunities for learners to develop their abilities and talents in the areas of creativity, innovation, and enterprise.

Transition Year is an optional one-year programme following the completion of the junior cycle. It has a more flexible structure than the other years, with each school designing its own programme, within guidelines, to suit the needs and interests of its learners. Transition Year aims include fostering a spirit of enterprise, for example through students partaking in work experience.

The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) is an intervention designed to enhance the vocational dimension of the Leaving Certificate (established) (a state examination at the completion of upper secondary school). It combines the academic strengths of the Leaving Certificate (established) with a dynamic focus on self-directed learning, innovation, and enterprise. Throughout the programme students are encouraged to be innovative and enterprising. As part of the LCVP, students take a compulsory subject called Enterprise Education. This subject includes students visiting local business and community enterprises; and students meeting and interviewing enterprising people.

Local Enterprise Offices run several Student Entrepreneurship Initiatives in secondary schools which foster innovation within students. These are discussed in Chapter 3.8.

#### Pedagogical tools and support

The Action Plan for Education 2019 (DES, 2019, pp. 7) includes a commitment 'to the principles of continuous improvement, innovation and evaluation which will underpin evidence-based policy development and programme delivery.' It lists innovation as 'an integral element of our approach not only within the curriculum but also in broader education and training policy'. Among its key actions are to 'Foster a culture of innovation in the Department' and to 'Explore innovative approaches to improving the outcomes for learners at greatest risk of educational disadvantage'.

In 'Building Momentum- the Education Action Plan' for 2021-2022, the Department in Priority 2 recognised the need to build on previous improvements and co-operation with Covid-19 related emergency measures.

The TL21 Programme is a workshop-based Continuing Professional Development Programme for teachers and school leaders that promotes innovative practice and professional learning communities in post-primary schools. Its main aims are:

- to strengthen teachers' capacities as co-operative and self-critical authors of their own work
- to enable students to take an active and responsible part in their own learning.

The programme is currently running as a partnership between the Maynooth University Department of Education, five Education Centres and Dublin & Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board. In the 2019-2021 cycle, there are 70+ schools and 400+ teachers/senior school leaders are actively involved. In September 2021 a new cycle will begin and will run until 2023.

University College Dublin offers a Professional Diploma in Creativity and Innovation for Education, which is open to education professionals at all levels. The course aims to aid educators in developing their own Creativity, Entrepreneurial Mindset and Leadership, as well as Teamwork, Resilience and Approaches to Learning.

The Student Enterprise Programme's provides free teacher resource packs to foster innovation and entrepreneurship. These are discussed in Chapter 3.8.

### **Fostering innovation through non-formal and informal learning and youth work**

Young Social Innovators (YSI) promotes education for social innovation. It empowers and supports young people to realise their potential as social innovators, giving them the skills and confidence to tackle the social issues facing them, their communities and wider society. Social innovation learning builds wellbeing amongst young people and communities and helps build a more inclusive, empathetic, fair society. It asks young people to examine the world through a new lens and to reimagine the type of society they would like to live in. It challenges them to put their ideas into practice and to bring their vision to reality. Alongside private sponsors, it is funded by several public sponsors:

- Department of Rural and Community Development
- Department of Education & Skills
- Department of Children & Youth Affairs
- Department of Social Protection
- HSE
- WorldWide Global Schools
- Dormant Accounts.

YSI Den, is a social innovation fund, ran by Young Social Innovators. It is made available to groups who successfully pitch for assistance to support or develop an idea, product or enterprise. Supports can include money, means and mentoring. Young Social Innovators is supported by the Department of Rural and Community Development.

### **Creative Youth**

Aiming to "give every child practical access to tuition, experience and participation in art, music, drama and coding by 2022", the Creative Youth Plan sets out how we will meet the overall Programme objectives for children and young people.

Creative Youth aims to increase opportunities for activity and participation, and to influence public policy around creativity in both formal education and out-of-school settings. We want to create a place where knowledge and creativity are equal partners in the formation of our young people, giving them an opportunity to become creative, active citizens.

In 2020 Creative Youth published a Progress Report regarding their response to Covid-19. In a time of national crisis, the Creative Ireland Programme worked at speed and with agility to activate creative programmes that helped participants to combat isolation, create social cohesion and enhance a sense of wellbeing. This programme worked with partners in government and local authorities, and supported the work of communities, cultural practitioners and other organisations to create initiatives that targeted citizens who were particularly impacted by the pandemic.

The Youth Climate Justice Fund is a fund to support youth-led action and innovation on Climate Justice at community, regional and national level. It aims to support climate action and youth innovation. Applications under the Fund are open to national youth organisations being funded under the Youth Services Grant Scheme, and to the President's Award (Gaisce). In 2021 the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth approved funding to support 14 youth-led projects in the area of climate justice. In line with the recommendations of a specially convened Selection Committee, funding of almost €400,000 is being allocated to projects involving 23 youth organisations.

The Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE) is a youth entrepreneurship education and development programme. It is managed and provided by Foróige in Ireland and is affiliated to NFTE International. Foróige is funded by multiple government departments and agencies (including the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth; and Education & Training Boards), European Social Fund and corporate donations. NFTE also receives specific funding from The Irish Funds grants. NFTE is discussed in further detail in Chapter 3.8.

The Skills Summary Guide for Youth Work Organisations (National Youth Council of Ireland, 2019) is a guide for youth workers, and other adults engaging young in non-formal and informal education, to use the Skills Summary to help young people to develop 12 key skills. One of these skills, entrepreneurship, includes innovation.

## **6.8 Media literacy and safe use of new media**

### **National strategy**

The Online Safety Action Plan 2018-2019 (Government of Ireland, 2018) is the Irish Government's first Action Plan for Online Safety. It covers an 18-month period, commencing July 2018, but acknowledges that further actions will be required in the years following the plan's implementation. The Action Plan's target group is all internet users in Ireland, with a focus on children. The primary objective of the Action Plan for Online Safety is to build safeguards at government level, raising awareness for all users to enjoy the benefits of the internet and what it can offer while ensuring that activities do not give rise to the risks associated with online safety. The Action Plan has five overarching goals

1. Online Safety for All
2. Better Supports
3. Stronger Protection
4. Influencing Policy and Building our Understanding
5. Improve national planning and support services.

Its main measures are 25 specific actions sets out within the plan, with 48 constituent actions.

The Action Plan takes a whole government approach. A cross-departmental group was established to progress the Action Plan's implementation. Members of the group are the Departments of:

- Education
- Business, Enterprise, and Innovation
- Environment, Climate and Communications



- Children and Youth Affairs
- Health
- Justice and Equality
- The Department of Education chairs the Sponsors Group.

A National Advisory Council for Online Safety (Nacos) was also established, as part of the Action Plan, to provide advice to Government on online safety policy issues. It includes representatives from a range of stakeholders including Government departments and agencies, relevant NGOs and industry.

The Online Safety and Media Regulation Bill was approved by government for detailed legal drafting by the Office of the Attorney General on 9 January 2020.

The Bill incorporates a number of actions from the Action Plan for Online Safety 2018-2019 including:

- putting the revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive into Irish law
- creating a regulatory framework to deal with the spread and amplification of harmful online content.

### **Be Safe Online and Covid-19**

The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the critical role the internet can play on young peoples lives. [Be Safe Online](#) is the governments campaign to highlight ways to stay safe online, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic.

## **Media literacy and online safety through formal education**

### **Media literacy through formal education**

The Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020 Enhancing Teaching, Learning and Assessment (DES, 2015) recognises the need to provide media literacy education to primary and post-primary school. The Department of Education announced in April 2021 that the Department is in the process of developing a new Digital Strategy for Schools and will replace the previous strategy.

At upper secondary level, media literacy is addressed through the optional subject Politics and Society. Students' digital and media literacy skills are developed as they use technology for research and presentation purposes.

The Leaving Certificate Applied, a state examination for vocational senior second level students, includes media literacy and digital safety within its module Communications and the Digital World. This is one of the four modules within the subject English and Communications.

However, most media literacy education within secondary school takes place within the lower secondary level/the junior cycle, through the specifically designed, 100-hour short course Digital Media Literacy; and within a compulsory core subject Civic, Social and Political Education.

### **Online Safety through Formal Education**

The Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (DES, 2013) specifically includes cyber-bullying in its definition of bullying. Under these Anti-Bullying Procedures, school's education and prevention strategies must explicitly deal with cyber-bullying. Schools should also provide appropriate opportunities for students to raise their concerns in an environment that is comfortable for the pupil, including concerns about cyber-bullying happening outside of school.

The Education and Training Board Ireland provided the management of school with Cyberbullying in Schools Guidance and Resources for Management (2013). Its

recommendations include taking a whole school approach to addressing cyberbullying and involving parents and guardians.

Webwise is the Irish Internet Safety Awareness Centre, co-funded by the Department of Education and co-financed by the European Union's Connecting Europe Facility. Webwise promotes the autonomous, effective, and safer use of the internet by young people through a sustained information and awareness strategy targeting parents, teachers, and children themselves with consistent and relevant messages. Webwise's remit includes offering support for teachers. It develops and disseminates resources that help teachers integrate internet safety into teaching and learning in their schools.

### **Pedagogical tools and support for teachers**

The Digital Learning Framework was developed by the Department of Education and trailed in the 2017/2018 academic year, before being rolled out to all schools in 2018/2019. This framework was a key part of the Digital Strategy for Schools that ran until 2020. The Framework was established to assist schools in effectively embedding digital technologies into teaching and learning. It provides clarity for school leaders and education providers in how to create a shared vision for how technology can best meet all learners' needs.

Currently, there is an evaluation being undertaken on this framework and this evaluation will take place until 2022.

Camara Education Ireland provides schools with support to develop their digital learning strategy, in line with the Digital Learning Framework. Camara Education Ireland is a non-profit organisation, funded by both public and private sources, including Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, and Department of Culture, Heritage, and the Gaeltacht.

PDST Technology in Education promotes and supports the integration of Information Communication Technology in teaching and learning in primary and second level schools. It is part of the national support service, the Professional Development Service for Teachers, which operates under the aegis of the Department of Education. Among other services, it develops internet safety programmes and subject modules. It advises schools on developing and using Acceptable Use Policies. It also designs and delivers continuing professional development for teachers around integrating ICT into learning and teaching.

### **Promoting media literacy and online safety through non-formal and informal learning**

Be Safe Online is a Government campaign, developed in 2018, to highlight ways to stay safe online. It offers a wide range of Online Safety resources, to support online safety for all citizens, including youths.

During 2020 and 2021 an additional emphasis on non-formal and informal learning about media literacy and online safety emerged in response to Covid-19 measures. Be Safe Online states:

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the critical role of the internet in our everyday lives. We can be connected with loved ones in an instant, no matter where they are in the world; businesses can access markets and staff can work remotely; and students have a wealth of information and resources at their fingertips.

At the same time there are risks associated with the online world. Be Safe Online is the Government's campaign to highlight ways to help you stay safe online, particularly during the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Be Safe Online website also directs visitors to visit Media Literacy Ireland's website.

Media Literacy Ireland is an independent association of members committed to the promotion of media literacy across Ireland. Members include Government initiatives, such as Professional Development Service for Teachers, WebWise, Youthreach, Quality & Qualifications Ireland, SOLAS (the national Further Education and Training Authority), etc.

The Be Media Smart campaign was developed by Media Literacy Ireland to help people tell the difference between reliable and accurate information and or deliberately false or misleading information.

The internet safety initiative, Webwise, offers support for young people, as well as for teachers and parents. It is co-funded by the Department of Education and the European Union's Connecting Europe Facility.

The CARI Foundation is a registered charity which receives donations and State funding from the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) and other statutory agencies. CARI provides InternetSafety guidelines for children and young people.

The National Adult Literacy Association (NALA) provides media literacy resources, training for adult educators on media literacy and promotional campaigns (such as tv and radio advertising, and running events) to increase awareness of media literacy concerns and promote resources to tackle these concerns. While it is an adult education organisation, NALA also works with early school leavers and other young adults who wish to improve their literacy levels.

### **Raising awareness about the risks posed by new media**

The Health Service Executive's website offers advice to anyone who experiences Social Media Abuse.

The annual Irish national Safer Internet Day (SID) is organised by Webwise, to promote safe and responsible use of the internet and mobile phone technologies, especially amongst children and young people. This is part of the international SID. SID is organised by the joint Insafe-INHOPE network with the support of the European Commission, with funding provided by the Connecting Europe Facility Programme. As part of SID, Webwise runs the SID Awards to encourage and reward schools around Ireland who run events, activities, and positive actions for Safer Internet Day.

The Irish Safer Internet Centre (SIC) is a consortium of organisations from Education, Child Welfare, Government, and Industry. SIC's activities are coordinated by the Department of Justice's Office for Internet Safety, and co-funded by the European Union. It runs an Irish Internet Hotline to combat illegal content on the Internet. All reports are assessed and where content is found to be illegal action is taken. Child grooming can be reported on this website. The Hotline works in collaboration with the police service (An Garda Síochána) and it is overseen by the Department of Justice's Office for Internet Safety.

The CARI Foundation provides a low-call and confidential National Helpline which provides information and support to individuals and professionals with a concern about child sexual abuse. CARI also provides advice appointments to parents, professionals or any other individual to explore their concerns in relation to child sexual abuse. Approximately 10% of calls to the CARI helpline concerned online grooming and inappropriate contact by adults with minors.

Jigsaw is The National Centre for Youth Mental Health. Jigsaw has free online resources available on Cyberbullying: what to do if you're being bullied online. Jigsaw is funded by the Health Service Executive, donations, fundraising and pro-bono support.

Several organisations provide helplines freely available to young people, for listening, support and/or guidance. These are detailed in Chapter 7.7 Making Health Facilities More Youth Friendly.

In response to research showing that inappropriate reporting of suicide may lead to imitative behaviour, the Samaritans offer Media Guidelines for Ireland on reporting suicides. This is relevant to both online and offline media.

## 6.9 Awareness-raising about non-formal and informal learning and quality youth work

### Information providers / counselling structures

Under the Education Act, 1998 (Government of Ireland, 1998) guidance is an entitlement in post-primary schools. Guidance in schools 'refers to a range of learning experiences provided in developmental sequence, that assist students to develop self-management skills which will lead to effective choices and decisions about their lives. It encompasses the three separate, but interlinked areas of personal and social development, educational guidance and career guidance' (DES, 2005, pg. 4). This educational guidance should be available for both formal and non-formal learning.

Guidance in post-primary schools is a whole school activity that is integrated into all school programmes. The document Guidelines for Second-Level Schools on the Implications of Section 9(c) of the Education Act 1998, Relating to Students' Access to Appropriate Guidance (The Inspectorate, 2005), indicates that a guidance programme should be part of a school plan and identifies the central role of the guidance counsellor, as well as the important contribution of different members of staff. Guidance also forms part of the curriculum in the Transition Year Programme (an optional year following the junior cycle), and in the state exam which takes place at the end of the senior cycle of vocational school, the Leaving Certificate Applied or the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

Young adults who want to return to education and training, or who are already registered on a Further Education and Training (FET) programme within the Education and Training Boards (ETBs), can seek guidance from the Adult Educational Guidance Services (AEGS). The AEGS are managed by the ETBs. The AEGS provide impartial careers and education information, about formal, nonformal and informal learning. Some ETBs have designated education and training guidance service specifically targeted to 16- to 25-year-olds.

According to the Further Education and Training Strategy 2020 - 2024 (SOLAS, 2020), the nature and quality of guidance provision vary across the different access points into the FET sector. The strategy recognises the need for an integrated FET Guidance approach, discussed in [Chapter 6.10](#).

CareersPortal.ie offers career guidance to young adults, as well as adults, including formal, non-formal and informal educational options. It was developed as a response to a report by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs Tomorrow's Skills Towards a National Skills Strategy (2007), which recommended that Ireland develop a central career guidance portal. The site was officially launched by the Minister for Education and Science in April 2008.

### Awareness raising initiatives

AONTAS (the national Adult Learning Organisation) and its Community Education Network promotes nonformal and informal learning through hosting training workshops for practitioners. AONTAS also run conferences, targeting practitioners and policymakers, where learners themselves highlight the benefits they have experienced through nonformal and informal. It also runs an annual adult learners' festival, which promotes the value and availability of non-formal and informal learning to the public. AONTAS receives funding from the European Union and SOLAS (the national Further Education and Training Authority), among other sources.

The National Adult Literacy Association (NALA) promotes the value of non-formal and informal literacy and numeracy learning to the general public through media campaigns, such as tv and radio advertising. It aims to increase awareness of literacy and numeracy difficulties, and of the learning opportunities available. These campaigns particularly target these with lower literacy/numeracy levels, including early school leavers who may struggle in these areas. NALA also targets employers, through reaching out to employers directly, to encourage them to promote non-formal and informal literacy and numeracy learning

opportunities to their workforce. NALA is a registered charity, which receives funding from SOLAS, government departments, state bodies, the European Union, and the private sector.

The Community Education Programme Operational Guidelines for Providers (DES, 2012) is aimed at the Vocational Education Committee staff managing, administering and delivering community education programmes funded by the Department of Education under the Adult Literacy, Community Education and Special Initiatives for Disadvantaged Adults Scheme. The guidelines acknowledge these providers' key role in cultivating non-formal and informal learning. It establishes that Community Education Service should work in close cooperation with the Adult Literacy Service to develop a Community Literacy Strategy which promotes non-formal and informal learning opportunities. Moreover, the Community Education Service should be actively involved in the development of local awareness raising initiatives such as adult learners' festivals and other promotional events that celebrate non-formal and informal learning and learner achievement.

## 6.10 Current debates and reforms

### Forthcoming policy developments

#### The Higher Education Authority Act, 1971

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) is the statutory funding authority for the universities, institutes of technology and a number of other designated institutions. It leads the strategic development of the Irish higher education and higher education research system and is the advisory body to the Minister for Education in relation to the higher education sector. The Higher Education Authority Act, 1971 established the HEA, set out its functions and provided for its governance. It has been updated on several occasions. The Department of Education argue that the Higher Education Authority Act, 1971 is, in some important respects, not aligned with the current role and responsibilities of the HEA. Therefore, the Government has approved the updating of the act.

The Minister initiated a consultation process on the updating of the HEA Act in July 2018 and hosted a consultation forum in November 2018. The Consultation Report and Response of the Department of Education on the Legislative Reform of the Higher Education Authority Act, 1971 (DES, 2019) is a report on this process. It also includes the DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION' response to the issues raised and the proposed framework for the new legislation. An Outline of the Legislative Proposals for the Reform of the Higher Education Authority Act, 1971 (DES, 2019) is an outline of the main provisions which it is proposed to include in the legislation.

Following review by Government, the consultation report and response of the Department of Education and Skills, and an outline of the legislative proposals for the reform were published in July 2019. The views of stakeholders on the consultation report and the legislative proposals were sought by the end of September 2019. Further consultation was undertaken with the key stakeholders to progress the development of the issues raised.

A further consultation paper was prepared and published on 19 February 2021, Update on the Reform of the Higher Education Authority Act, 1971 – A Shared Approach, seeking the up to date views of stakeholders. This consultation paper outlined the further development of the performance and regulatory framework for higher education which reflected many of the views of stakeholders and the working group. There are no updates to these consultations as of August 2021.

#### Social Inclusion Model

A new School Inclusion Model to support for students with special educational and additional care needs was developed based on policy advice from the NCSE. Piloting and evaluation during the 2019/20 academic year. It is supported by €4.75m funding allocated in Budget 2019 and aims to build schools' capacity to include children with additional needs

and to provide other supports for pupils. 75 primary and post-primary schools 3 areas participated. The model does not require a formal diagnosis for access to Special Needs Assistant support.

Key features of the School Inclusion Model are:

- A new frontloading allocation model for Special Needs Assistants (SNAs). A profiling system for Special Education Teaching will be used to allocate resources, breaking the link with the need for an assessment. An appeals mechanism will be included to deal with exceptional cases in schools.
- National Educational Psychological Service will be expanded to provide more intensive in-school supports.
- SNAs will be offered a new National Training Programme, emphasising the need for students to develop independence and resilience.
- A new national nursing service for children with complex medical needs in schools.

The model is a collaboration across the Departments of Education, Health, and Children and Youth Affairs, as well as the National Council for Special Education and the Health Service Executive.

A School Inclusion Model Group was formed to advise, monitor and oversee the development, coordination and implementation of the trialing of a new School Inclusion Model as approved by Government on 12 February 2019.

### **Education plans**

Under the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 (the EPSEN Act) each child assessed with a special educational need should have a personal education plan. This system is not yet in place but its implementation is being coordinated by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) which has published Guidelines for the Individual Education Plan process (pdf). The NCSE has also published Implementation Report: Plan for the Phased Implementation of the EPSEN Act 2004. This sets out how the Act can be implemented. However there is currently no date for the implementation of the assessment of need and individual education plans.

In 2017, a new assessment was introduced to determine how special education teachers are allocated to mainstream schools. Under the new system, each school gets a single allocation of special education teachers. The number of special education teachers allocation to a school is determined by the size of the school and its educational profile.

Schools are provided with the necessary resources in advance so that students with special educational needs can be enrolled into schools and access additional supports. This enables a school to be inclusive and put in place additional teaching support for students who need it. The Department of Education and Skills provides information for parents and guardians on how your child can get additional teaching support in school (pdf).

It was announced in May 2021, that the introduction of the frontloaded Allocation Model for Special Needs Assistants for students in mainstream classes in primary and post-primary schools will be deferred to the 2022-2023 school year.

### **Short Courses for Leaving Certificate Examination**

Towards Learning. An Overview of Senior Cycle Education (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2009) proposes the introduction of 90-hour optional short courses, alongside the current longer subjects. These would also be examined by the State Examinations Commission. Two sample short courses being developed for consultation in the areas of Enterprise and Psychology.

### **Traveller culture and history**

Traveller Culture and History in the Curriculum: a Curriculum Audit (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2018) recommendations included that Traveller and Roma

culture to be embedded in the curriculum. The Traveller Culture and History in Education Bill 2018 was proposed in 2018, passed by Seanad Éireann (the upper house of the Irish Parliament), and is, as of September 2020, before Dáil Éireann (the lower house of the Irish Parliament). This act would include Traveller culture and history in the curriculum. As of 2021, the Minister for Education supports the adoption of this Bill however there is no implementation of it as of August 2021.

### **Enhanced Media Education**

Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020: Enhancing Teaching, Learning and Assessment (DES, 2015) supports embedding digital learning objectives within future education policy and curriculum initiatives; and a specific strategic action is set out in that regard. This will mean that future curriculum specifications can drive effective application of ICT in learning, and support teachers in developing students' digital learning competencies.

The Department of Education announced the development of a new Digital Strategy for Schools in 2021 commencing with a wide-ranging consultation process.

The new Digital Strategy for Schools will replace the existing strategy, which will run out in the current school year. The new Strategy will build on what has been achieved to date including increased funding to support potential remote learning.

Learnings from the current strategy and the experience of teachers, school leaders, students and parents with the embedding of digital technologies across the curriculum and the opportunities provided by this, as well the impact of remote learning during COVID-19 will inform the development of the new Digital Strategy for Schools. This Strategy aims to address the emerging issues and trends in digital technology.

Under Project Ireland 2040, the government's long-term overarching strategy to make Ireland a better country for all of its people, the ongoing embedding of the use of digital technologies in teaching, learning and assessment through the Digital Strategy for Schools will be supported through a further investment, under the current National Development Plan, of some €200 million up to 2027.

## **Ongoing Debates**

### **School patronage**

While the State provides for free primary education, schools are established by patron bodies. Under the Education Act, 1998 (Government of Ireland, 1998), patrons define the ethos of the school and appoint the board of management to run the school on a day to day basis. Most schools in Ireland are owned and under the patronage of religious denominations. Although they are increasing in number, there are still a very limited number of non-Catholic schools. Their limited number of student places available and their absences in certain areas, has come under criticism in recent years in public discourse and in the media.

### **School admission policies**

Many schools in Ireland are oversubscribed for available pupils/student places. Each school must publish an admissions policy. These admissions policies typically include several contributing factors.

Often a waiting list is formed for admission and children are often prioritized if they have a sibling, parent or grandparent who attended, or is attending, the school. There has been debate that waiting lists and 'siblings first' policies can disadvantage immigrants and Travellers from being offered places at their preferred schools. Under the Education (Admission to Schools) Act, 2018, schools must accept applicants where they have places and a limit of 25% of available places can be prioritised for children or grandchildren of past pupils. Some debate on this topic remains.

## **Reform of the Leaving Certificate**

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) began a major review of the senior cycle and the leaving certificate examination, in 2016. In 2019 NCCA engaged in a public consultation. The next stage of the review is for NCCA to issue an advisory report to the Minister for Education for consideration.

### **The response to COVID-19 in the provisions for education**

Due to COVID-19 and related health measures, a number of temporary reforms to education occurred during 2020. Calculated grades were used instead of the Leaving Certificate Exam for sixth (final) year secondary school students during 2020. This move was highly criticised by many students, parents, members of the teaching community and media. Objections to calculated grades included, some students' fear of teacher bias and some teachers' feeling that they were ill-equipped and/or that it was inappropriate for them to give predicted grades. Teacher and principle representatives also criticised students and parents contacting Leaving Certificate teachers to lobby them about calculated grades.

Following the release of students' calculated grades, three errors in the coding used to generate standardise results were discovered. 6,100 students gained improved marks following a review of the Leaving Certificate calculated grades system. The Minister for Education confirmed that a similar number of students were awarded grades that were higher than they should have been.

The Leaving Certificate 2021 gave students the option of a calculated grade, a written exam or both in each subject. Every student had to opt in to pick which system they would prefer to do in each subject. The exams themselves ran at the normal time in June and was subject to public health advice. The calculated grades will be given to students at the same time as examination results. The decision was made to give students the choice because the government has said that it would be unfair to make students sit exams when a large amount of their time in senior cycle has been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **National Strategy for a Comprehensive Guidance Service for Young People**

The Further Education and Training Strategy 2020 - 2024 (SOLAS, 2020) states that the nature and quality of guidance provision vary across the different access points into the FET sector. The Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019 (SOLAS, 2014) reported that the need for an integrated FET guidance approach was frequently mentioned during the consultation process. Based on these consultations and on research, the strategy recognises the need for an integrated FET Guidance approach. The aim of an integrated model of guidance for the FET sector should build on practice currently in operation within the AEGI services including development of national referral protocols between Adult Guidance Services and 'Intreo' and other national agencies e.g. HSE, disability services etc. The National Youth Council of Ireland has called on Government to develop a National Strategy for a Comprehensive Career and Life Guidance for Young People.

### **Further cyber safety**

The Joint Committee on Children and Youth Affairs published a Report on Cyber Safety for Children and Young Adults in March 2018. The committee believed a national campaign regarding cyber safety is needed, which could be similar to other government safety campaigns, such as those about road safety. While there is some digital literacy lessons in school, as outlined for second level schools in Chapter 6.8, the Committee also suggested that online safety be part of the curriculum in primary and post primary schools, including peer-to-peer workshops on Cyber Safety in schools. this Committee ceased with the dissolution of the 32nd parliament (Dáil) on the 14 January 2020.



## QQI reengagement

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) was established in 2012 under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 (Government of Ireland. 2012). It has taken over the functions of the following 4 bodies:

- National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI)
- Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC)
- Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC)
- Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB).

Re-engagement describes the process by which education and training providers whose Quality Assurance was previously agreed with HETAC or FETAC are now required to demonstrate how their governance and Quality Assurance systems meet with the QQI guidelines. In 2017/2018, QQI piloted the re-engagement process, with 12 providers, to test its efficacy. The Reengagement process for independent and private providers formally commenced in 2018.

Many providers criticise the reengagement process arguing that it is a time-consuming and expensive process. These providers argue that some providers, particularly smaller non-profit providers, may not have the necessary resources to dedicate to the process.

## 7. HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

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16 years old is the most common cut-off point where a child ceases to be a child for the purposes of health reasons. In the [Healthy Ireland Survey 2019](#), 93% of 15- to 24-year-olds rated their health as good or very good. This is the most up to date survey that relates to young peoples health and the [Department of Health](#) have launched the [7<sup>th</sup> Annual Healthy Ireland Survey](#) for the 2021 period.

Ireland has a comprehensive, government funded public healthcare system. A person living in Ireland for at least one year is considered by the [Health Service Executive](#) (HSE) to be 'ordinarily resident' and is entitled to either full or limited eligibility for health services. People who have not been resident in Ireland for at least one year must satisfy the HSE that it is their intention to remain for a minimum of one year to be eligible for health services. Dependents of such individuals must also contact the HSE to confirm their eligibility.

Over 30% of people in Ireland have Medical Cards. Medical Card holders have full eligibility for health services, allowing people to get a wide range of health services and medicines free of charge. Medical cards are typically distributed on a means-tested bases. Some people are eligible without a medical test:

- people with EU (European Union) entitlement
- asylum seekers living in direct provision
- people affected by the drug Thalidomide
- women who lived in certain institutions
- women who have had a symphysiotomy.

Others who do not qualify under the means test, may be able to qualify for a discretionary medical card. 16- to 25-year-olds who are dependent on a parent/guardian, are eligible for a medical card if their parent/guardian has a non-discretionary medical card. Children in foster care, children who receive the Domiciliary Care Allowance (a payment for children with disabilities) and children who are under 18 years old and were diagnosed with cancer within the last 5 years, are also eligible.

People without medical cards have limited eligibility for health services. They can access a wide range of community and hospital health services, either free of charge or at reduced charges for hospital care and emergency services.

## 7.1 General context

### Main trends in the health conditions of young people

#### Health in Ireland: Key trends

[The Department of Health](#) publishes an annual report 'Health in Ireland: Key Trends'. It covers several areas, including demographics, population health, hospital and primary care, employment and expenditure and highlights Ireland's significant achievements in key health outcomes in the past decade. [Health in Ireland: Key Trends 2019](#) was the twelfth such report. While most of the report is about the whole population and/or older populations, it also provides some figures specifically related to youths.

The report found that while the overall number of people with a medical card (discussed in the introduction to Chapter 7) has decreased, the number of 12- to 24-year-olds with a medical card has increased, from 2009 to 2019.

[Health in Ireland](#) cites World Health Organization's data on [Health Behavior in School-aged Children](#), demonstrating a downward trend from 2010 to 2018 in the levels of risky health behavior among 11- to 17-year-olds. These trends relate to the numbers who:

- smoke monthly or more frequently
- have ever used alcohol
- have used cannabis in the last year.

[Health in Ireland](#) also showed a slight downward trend in the number of children waiting 6 months or more for elective procedures. In November 2019, there were 1,785. The number of people waiting 52 weeks or longer for an outpatient appointment and the total number of people on outpatient waiting list increased from 2018 to 2019, although the figures for youths are not available.

#### Healthy Ireland Survey

[The Healthy Ireland Survey](#) is an annual face-to-face survey, commissioned by the Department of Health. Interviews are conducted with a representative sample of the population aged 15 and older living in Ireland. The sample size is typically in the region of over 7500 people. This programme was launched in 2013 and provided a cross-government focus to deliver the vision for a Healthy Ireland. The Healthy Ireland public engagement and communications campaigns highlighted where people can find trusted information to start their journey to better health. So far there has been over €30 million invested in projects from 2017 until 2020.

The new [Healthy Ireland Strategic Action Plan 2021-2025](#) gives the government a clear roadmap of how society can address the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. This action plan will build on the work and progress made to date and focus on the remaining years of the Healthy Ireland Framework from 2021-2025. This plans vision is:

A Healthy Ireland, where everyone can enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential, where wellbeing is valued and supported at every level of society and is everyone's responsibility

This Framework aims to:

- bring a concerted focus on life-long wellbeing, prevention of illness
- seeks to reduce health inequalities
- address the settings in which health and wellbeing is impacted, and

- emphasise the need to empower people and communities to better look after their own health and wellbeing.

[The Healthy Ireland Outcomes Framework](#) was established in 2018 to monitor the targets of Healthy Ireland. This framework sets out four high level outcomes:

1. Responsibility is shared in addressing the social determinants of health and wellbeing.
2. People of all ages and abilities participate in education, work, and leisure activities to their full potential.
3. Children are active and healthy, with positive physical and mental wellbeing.
4. We live longer healthier lives in safe, healthy environments in resilient communities.

### **My World Surveys**

The [My World Survey](#) is a survey about the mental health of 12- to 19-year-olds in Ireland. It aims to understand what can lead to an increased change of mental health difficulties among youths, and what can help to support a young person's mental health and wellbeing. The original My World Survey took place in 2012. Its sequel, [My World Survey 2](#), was carried out in 2019 with more than 19,000 12- to 25-year-olds across Ireland. The surveys were a collaboration between Jigsaw ([The National Centre for Youth Mental Health](#)) and University College Dublin.

Comparisons of the My World Surveys 1 and 2 indicate that there has been a notable increase in anxiety, depression, and body esteem among young people, particularly amongst females. [My World Survey 2](#) found that

- 40% of adolescents reported experiencing levels of depression outside the normal range
- 49% reported levels of anxiety outside the normal range
- 6% of adolescents reported they had made a suicide attempt.

Comparing the studies also shows a decrease in protective mental health factors – such as self-esteem, optimism, and resilience - and an increase in anger. There was a decrease in the numbers reporting drinking, but adolescence in [My World Survey 2](#) who reported more drinking engaged in more problematic drinking than adolescence in [My World Survey 1](#).

### **National Self-Harm Registry Ireland**

[The National Self-Harm Registry Ireland](#) is a national system of population monitoring for the occurrence of hospital-treated self-harm. It was established, at the request of the [Department of Health](#), by the [National Suicide Research Foundation](#). It is funded by the [Health Service Executive's National Office for Suicide Prevention](#).

According to [Interim Report January to June 2019](#) (National Self-Harm Registry Ireland, 2019), in the first six months of 2019, there were 6,252 presentations to hospital as a result of self-harm. This is 2% higher than the number recorded for the same period of 2018. 51% of presentations were by persons under 30 years of age. The highest rates of self-harm for both males and females were among adolescents and young adults. In many age groups, there was little difference in incidence rates by sex. An exception was among 10- to 14-year-olds where hospital presenting self-harm was more than three times more common among girls compared to boys. Presentations by adolescents aged 15-19 years were almost twice as common among girls as boys. This has been a consistent pattern in recent years.

### **Main concepts**

[The National Youth Health Programme Statement of Strategy 2018-2022](#) defines health as

'everyone achieving their potential to enjoy complete physical, mental and social wellbeing. Healthy people contribute to the health and quality of the society in which they

live, learn and grow up. Health is much more than an absence of disease or disability, and individual health, and that of the country, affects the quality of everyone's lived experience'.

The [Statement of Strategy](#) defines wellbeing as

'an integral part of this definition of health. It reflects the quality of life and the various factors which can influence it over the course of a person's life. Wellbeing also reflects the concept of positive mental health, in which a person can realise their own abilities, cope with the normal stresses of life, grow up productively and fruitfully, and be able to make a contribution to their community'.

Ireland's healthcare system aims to provide integrate care. In the [Sláintecare Implementation Strategy](#) the Committee defines Integrated Care as

Healthcare delivered at the lowest appropriate level of complexity through a health service that is well organised and managed to enable comprehensive care pathways that patients can easily access and service providers can easily deliver. This is a service in which communication and information support positive decision-making, governance and accountability; where patients' needs come first in driving safety, quality and the coordination of care.

## 7.2 Administration and governance

### Governance

#### Main actors involved in policymaking

[The Department of Health](#)'s mission is to improve the health and wellbeing of people in Ireland by delivering high quality health services and getting best value from health system resources. The Minister for Health has overall constitutional and political responsibility for the Department. The Department's main role is to support the Minister and Ministers of State in the development and implementation of policy for the health services. There are 3 Ministers of State assigned to the Department with responsibility for:

- Disabilities
- Health promotion and the National Drugs Strategy
- Mental health and older people.

The department also monitors the performance of health services.

Health services are delivered by the Health Service Executive (HSE). The HSE was created by the [Health Act](#), 2004.

The Chief Medical Officer advises the Minister, Minister of State, and the Department on medical issues. The Chief Medical Officer also has responsibility for patient safety and quality, clinical effectiveness, health protection and promotion, tobacco control policy, health and wellbeing, social inclusion, and bioethics.

[The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youths'](#) mission is to lead the effort to improve outcomes for children and young people in Ireland. Among its high-level goals is to collaborate with stakeholders, including across Government, in monitoring and promoting the physical, emotional, and economic well-being of children and young people and reducing inequalities.

[The Services Industrial Professional and Technical Union](#) (SIPTU) Health Division represents over 50,000 workers in hospitals, other healthcare facilities and within communities throughout the island of Ireland. Its members are organised in both the public and private sector. There are six Sectors within the Division:

- Nursing and Midwifery Sector

- Allied Health Professionals Sector
- Ambulance Sector
- Support Grades Sector
- Intellectual Disability Sector
- Care Sector.

## General distribution of responsibilities between top-level and regional/local authorities

The HSE was established in January 2005 as the single body responsible for meeting Ireland's health and social care needs. As of 2019, the HSE's services are organised through six administrative areas:

- North Dublin, Meath, Louth, Cavan and Monaghan
- Longford, Westmeath, Offaly, Laois, Kildare and parts of Dublin and Wicklow
- Tipperary South, Waterford, Kilkenny, Carlow, Wexford, Wicklow and part of South Dublin
- Kerry and Cork
- Limerick, Tipperary and Clare
- Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Roscommon, Mayo and Galway.

Each of the HSE Areas has a Regional Health Forum, composed of representatives from the relevant city and county councils. Each Regional Health Forum makes representations to the HSE on the range and operation of health and personal social services in their area.

There are also Regional Health Offices, each led by a Director. Their functions include:

- Supporting the Regional Health Forums
- Facilitating work at an area level, including managing the interface with the Parliament (Oireachtas) members
- Undertaking specific projects on behalf of the Office of the CEO.

The Local Health Office is often the first port of call for the public to access community services. There are 32 Local Health Offices in Ireland, each with a Local Health Manager. Each Local Health Manager works closely with the hospital managers in their geographic area to ensure that patient/client needs are met. The wide range of services that are provided through Local Health Offices and from Health Centres include general practitioner services, public health nursing, child health services, community welfare, chiropody, ophthalmic, speech therapy, social work, addiction counselling and treatment, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, psychiatric services and home help.

## Cross-sectoral cooperation

### Sláintecare

[Sláintecare](#) is the ten-year programme to transform Ireland's health and social care services. The [Parliament \(Oireachtas\) Committee on the Future of Healthcare](#) was established to devise cross-party agreement on a single, long-term vision for health and social care and the direction of health policy in Ireland. The committee produced the [Sláintecare Report](#), which was adopted by the government and published in May 2017. The [Sláintecare](#) vision is to achieve a universal single-tier health and social care system where everyone has equal access to services based on need, and not ability to pay. Over time, everyone will be entitled to a comprehensive range of primary, acute and social care services. In response to the Sláintecare Report, the government approved the Sláintecare Implementation Strategy on 17 July 2018. It sets out the actions to be taken in the first three years of the Sláintecare implementation process. The Sláintecare Programme

Implementation Office was established in September 2018 with the initial task of reviewing and refining the strategy into a more detailed Sláintecare Action Plan for 2019 (Government of Ireland, 2019).

In 2021 there was a new [Sláintecare Implementation Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2023](#) established. This plan sets out the priorities and actions for the next phase of the reform programme in light of Covid-19. The aim of this Strategy is to deliver a universal health service that offers the right care, in the right place, at the right time, at low or no cost.

The Reform Programmes are:

**Reform Programme 1:** Improving Safe, Timely Access to Care and Promoting Health & Wellbeing

**Reform Programme 2:** Addressing Health Inequalities- towards Universal Healthcare

### Healthy Ireland

[Healthy Ireland](#) is a government-led initiative aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of everyone living in Ireland. A [Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing 2019-2025](#) supports Government's response to Ireland's changing health and wellbeing profile. It has four main goals, to:

- increase the proportion of people who are healthy at all stages of life
- reduce health inequalities
- protect the public from threats to health and wellbeing
- create an environment where every individual and sector of society can play their part in achieving a healthy Ireland.

It has targeted actions grouped under six broad themes:

- Governance and Policy
- Partnerships and Cross-Sectoral Work
- Empowering People and Communities
- Health and Health Reform
- Research and Evidence
- Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation
- National Youth Health Programme.

[The National Youth Health Programme](#) (NYHP) is a partnership between the [National Youth Council of Ireland](#) (NYCI), the [HSE](#) and the [Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth](#). Its aim is to provide a broad-based, flexible health promotion/health education support and training service to youth and community organisations and to all those working with young people. This work is achieved through the development of programmes and interventions specifically for and with youth and community organisations throughout the country along with the training and support of workers and volunteers involved in addressing health issues with young people. The NYHP is dedicated to developing and promoting a culture within the youth sector which focuses on health and wellbeing by building the capacity of youth workers and volunteers. NYHP also acts as a conduit between grass roots experience and the development of public policy and national strategy in youth health and wellbeing. The NYCI's strategy is set out in [The National Health Promotion Strategy – Statement of Strategy 2018-2022](#). NYCI is funded by the Irish exchequer, the European Commission, the HSE, Science Foundation Ireland, the Arts Council, Irish Aid and Irish Human Rights and Equality Ireland.

### Connecting for Life

[Connecting for Life](#) is Ireland's national strategy to prevent suicide 2015-2020. It is a cross sectoral strategy. A Cross-Sectoral Group comprising high-level representatives from

Government Departments and key State agencies has been established to support the implementation of Connecting for Life. The Group monitors and evaluates implementation over time and provides clear communications channels across Government.

## 7.3 Sport, youth fitness and physical activity

### National Strategies

[Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2014-2020](#) aims to ensure that children and young people are active and healthy, with positive physical and mental wellbeing. Outcome one 'Active and Healthy' aims for all children and young people to be physically healthy and able to make positive health choices.

Due to Covid-19 the progression of a new framework, policy successor to Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures has been delayed until 2022.

[Get Ireland Active! National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland](#) complements [Better Outcomes Brighter Futures](#). It was published in 2016 and updated in 2019. It aims to help children and young people gain knowledge about and positive experience of physical activity, to ensure that physical activity becomes part of their everyday life. [The Get Active! Framework](#) sets out to create a coordinated approach to physical education, physical activity and sport in school and community settings for children and young people. It recognises the need for a coordinated approach to the development and provision of high-quality physical education and the effective delivery of physical literacy programmes.

As of 2021 there are no updates to this Get Ireland Active! Plan.

[The National Children's Strategy: Our Children: Their Lives](#), states that 'children will have access to play, sport, recreation and cultural activities to enrich their experience of childhood'.

[The National Guidelines on Physical Activity for Ireland](#) sets the target of at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity every day for all children and young people aged 2-18 years. This should include muscle-strengthening, flexibility, and bone-strengthening exercises 3 times a week.

[The National Sports Policy](#) 2018-2027 sets out a vision for Irish Sport in 2027. It notes the drop-off in the numbers of youths engaged in sports after moving into secondary school and aims to reduce this change. Its high-level goals include:

- Increased participation
- More excellence
- Improved capacity.

[Sport Ireland](#), the statutory agency for sport in Ireland will develop initiatives with the National Governing Body, Local Sports Partnerships, schools, third level institutions, the CARA Centre a national organisation providing a collaborative platform to enhance sport and physical activity opportunities for people with disabilities and other relevant parties to address participation in sport among adolescents and young adults, particularly females, those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, persons with a disability, the LGBTI+ community, the Traveller community and other ethnic minorities.

Recognising the impact of Covid-19 restrictions on the sports sector, it has been announced that Sport Ireland is to receive an increase of €36 million, bringing the overall budget for 2021 to €104.5 million.

[Teenspace: National Recreation Policy for Young People](#)'s action points included:

- Local Sports Partnerships will develop programmes to increase participation in physical activity, promote lifelong involvement and address key issues such as gender bias

- The Irish Sports Council will include in its Strategy on Lifelong Involvement a greater emphasis on recreational sport and non-traditional activities in order to promote physical activity.

[Student Sport Ireland CLG](#) is the governing body for third level sport on the island of Ireland. Working for Third Level Sport and Physical Activity is its Strategic Plan for period 2017-2020. It highlights the need for co-ordination between institutions and sectors to increase participation levels in Irish Third Level Sport.

[The Sport Ireland Act 2015](#) established Sport Ireland as the Statutory Agency for sport in Ireland. It is tasked with the development of sport in Ireland. It has developed a network of 29 Local Sports Partnerships to promote sports participation. It targets:

- Young people
- Women and girls
- People with disabilities
- Ethnic minorities
- Unemployed
- Disadvantaged areas
- Older adults.

The Local Sports Partnerships' actions are grouped within four outcome areas:

- Working to develop clubs, coaches and volunteers and supporting partnerships between local sports clubs, community-based organisations, and sector agencies
- Creating opportunities for access to training and education in relation to sports and physical activity provision
- Provision of targeted programmes, events, and initiatives to increase physical activity and sport participation
- Providing information about sport and physical activity to create awareness and access.
- Promoting and supporting sport and physical activity among young people.

### Policy

[The National Sports Policy 2018-2027](#) includes an action point for the [Department of Tourism and Sport](#) to increase their promotion of the positive relationship between sports participation and exam performance, to teachers and parents/guardians. [Keeping Them in the Game: Taking Up and Dropping Out of Sport and Exercise in Ireland](#) was a study of participation in sport and exercise. It found there is a significant drop off in engagement in sports during second-level school, especially for girls. The [National Sports Policy](#) aims to reduce the drop off that occurs in participation levels around exam years.

### Funding

[The Sports Capital Programme](#) is the primary vehicle for Government support for the development of sports and physical recreation facilities and the purchase of non-personal sports equipment throughout the country. It is a [Project Ireland 2040](#) initiative. [The Sports Capital Programme](#)'s objectives include assisting [Education and Training Boards](#) and schools to develop facilities and provide appropriate equipment to help maximise participation in sport and physical recreation. It also aims to prioritise the needs of disadvantaged areas and groups (such as people with disabilities) in the provision of sports facilities. All equipment and facilities funded by the Programme must be accessible to people with disabilities, and all capital projects must conform to the principles of universal design.

The 2020 [Sports Capital Programme](#) closed for applications in March, 2021. Over 3,100 applications were submitted and the assessment process will take several months.



[The Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund](#) aims to provide Exchequer support for larger sports facility projects, which may or may not relate to youth. It relates to projects where the Exchequer investment would be greater than the maximum amount available under the [Sports Capital Programme](#). In some cases, these may be projects where the primary objective will be to increase active participation in sport. In other cases, these may be large scale venues/stadia where the focus is more related to social participation and high-performance sport. The Government has provided a capital allocation of at least €100m over 2018-2027 for the Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund. The first set of allocations were announced on the 10 January 2020, totalling €77.4 million with 25 individual projects benefitting.

[The Sports to Impact Fund](#) was created by [Social Innovation Fund](#) Ireland in partnership with the [Department of Rural and Community Development](#). The Department provides match funding for all philanthropic funds raised by [Social Innovation Fund](#) Ireland, via the Dormant Accounts Fund. The goal of the fund is to support the innovative use of sports to improve physical and mental health and to promote social inclusion for children, adolescents, and adults.

In 2017 DCEDIY announced the local youth club equipment scheme, under which €6.35 million was made available to volunteer-led clubs and groups that worked with young people in communities throughout the country. The scheme was designed to support youth work activities at a local level, with priority given to clubs/groups catering for young people aged 10-21 years. The scheme enabled these volunteer-led clubs to purchase equipment for sports, arts, adventure, and other much needed items. The fund is advertised and administered by the Education and Training Boards.

## **Promoting and supporting sport and physical activity among young people**

[Sport Ireland](#) is the Statutory Agency for sport in Ireland, tasked with the development of sport in Ireland. Sport Ireland Participation Unit works, with Local Sports Partnerships and other partners, to increase participation in sport nationwide. It promotes both local and European initiatives to increase sports participation. Sport Ireland runs an annual campaign to encourage more people to get active more often. This includes social media campaigns and a Physical Activity Week as part of the European Week of Sport. One method [Sport Ireland](#) uses to encourage teenage engagement is through its Coaching Children Programmes. These programmes aim to equip coaches with specific knowledge, skills, and competencies to cater for children's needs. Their goal is to achieve a higher proportion of children gaining both movement skills and love of activity that will remain with them into their teenage years, and eventually adult years. Sport Ireland is committed to the development and implementation of evaluation systems. A mix of quantitative and qualitative tools are used to understand what works when trying to get people to be active, whom it works for and what conditions must exist for it to work. These overarching questions govern all evaluations undertaken across a breadth of Sport Ireland investments.

[Local Sports Partnerships](#) were established under Sport Ireland's (previously the Irish Sports Council) strategy A New Era for Sport 2000-2002. They promote participation in sport at a local level, including giving out grants at a local level. For example, Waterford Sport Partnership has, under its Coaching and Development Funds, allocated 1,697 separate grants totalling €47,379 funding 25 new clubs and 716 coaches from new and established Clubs in Waterford.

[The Youth Leadership Programme](#), which aligns with the [National Physical Activity Plan](#) Action Number 48 'Develop programmes to address transitions and drop out from physical activity and sport', develops generic leadership skills that can be applied to a variety of sports and/or recreational situations as well as contributing to the personal development of the learner. The initiative provides training for young people, keeping them engaged, increasing their responsibility, and developing their confidence and self-esteem and supports an opportunity for lifelong volunteering. The programme also has the potential

to impact on both early school dropout in disadvantaged areas and dropout rates from sport. It is funded by Sport Ireland through the Dormant Accounts Funds.

[Cara](#) is a national pan-disability sport organisation providing a collaborative and partnership platform to increase sport and physical activity opportunities for people with disabilities across Ireland. Cara is funded by Sport Ireland, Institute of Technology of Tralee, and Hyundai. Fit For All was a national initiative aimed at increasing awareness among people with disabilities, families/carers and disability services on the benefits of regular exercise, healthy lifestyles and opportunities to participate within the local community. It took place in October 2020. It was part of [The Cara Xcessible Initiative](#), which aims to heighten participation opportunities for people with disabilities within their communities through the development of a national focused programme implemented at local level through the support of the Local Sports Partnerships' Sport [Inclusion Disability Programme](#).

Fit for All 2021 took place from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> of October 2021.

[Student Sport Ireland](#) CLG is the governing body for third level sport on the island of Ireland. Its mission is to promote and develop sport and physical activity in third level colleges in Ireland. It is funded by [European University Sports Association](#), [Sport Ireland](#), [Sport Northern Ireland](#), and [International University Sports Federation](#).

[The President's Award \(Gaisce\)](#) is a self-development programme, targeted at all 15- to 25-year-olds in Ireland. To achieve a [Gaisce](#) award, a young person must complete a challenge in 4 different areas of activity:

- physical recreation
- community involvement
- personal skill
- adventure journey.

It is a registered charity funded by [Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth](#), [Central Bank of Ireland](#), The Ireland Funds, corporate sponsorship, and donations.

During 2020, the Irish government promoted staying active during COVID-19. This campaign included specific guidance for different age groups to stay active during the pandemic. National Active School Week took place in Ireland in April 2021.

## Physical education in schools

Physical education is not a compulsory subject at secondary school. A new Physical Education for Senior Cycle programmes was introduced as part of a phased implementation from 2018 and rolled out as an optional subject to all schools in 2020. Under the programmes, physical education can take place within secondary schools as an optional examined Leaving Certificate Physical Education (LCPE) subject and/or as an unexamined Senior Cycle Physical Education Framework (SCPE). Prior to 2018, physical education had never been examined as part of the Leaving Certificate (the state examination for the senior cycle of second level).

LCPE is designed to be taught in approximately 180 hours. It has two strands. Strand 1 Topics are:

- Learning and improving skill and techniques
- Physical and psychological demands of performance
- Structures, strategies, roles and conventions
- Planning for optimum performance.

Strand 2 Topics are:

- Promoting physical activity
- Ethics and fair play
- Physical activity and inclusion
- Technology, media and sport.

There are three assessment components in LCPE:

- Physical activity project – 20%
- Performance assessment – 30%
- Written examination – 50%.

Typically, teachers need a relevant qualification recognised by the Teaching Council to teach physical education. A programme of continuing professional development became available to teachers who are timetabled to teach LCPE from September 2020.

According to the [Physical Education Framework](#) 'Physical education is an integral part of young people's education in senior cycle'. SCPE took effect from September 2020 and is guided by the [Physical Education Framework](#). SCPE aims to encourage students to participate in physical activity in a confident, enjoyable and informed way, both during the senior cycle and in their future lives. The Framework is structured around six curriculum models. Each model provides a detailed map, including a rationale, planning, implementation and assessment guidance. The models are:

- Health-related physical activity
- Sport education
- Contemporary issues in physical activity
- Adventure education
- Personal and social responsibility

Teaching games for understanding.

[The National Guidelines on Physical Activity for Ireland](#) are aimed at "everyone involved in promoting health and physical activity in Ireland including:

- teaching and non-teaching staff at pre-school, primary, secondary and third level;
- youth workers such as youth club leaders, children's activity club leaders and after-school service leaders".

[Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport for Children and Young People A Guiding Framework](#) sets out the roles of different school stakeholders in promoting physical education, physical activity and sport (PEPAS). Each board of management should ensure that their school plan includes a [PEPAS](#) plan and that school partners (including the trustees/patron, parents and young people) are consulted about its content. It sets out a range of measures through which the principal can support the preparation and implementation of an effective PEPAS programme. Post-primary physical education teachers have the potential to act as a key reference point in the development and implementation of the [PEPAS plan](#). All teachers and staff have a role in the promotion of a physical activity culture within the school. Young people should be encouraged to be active agents in their own learning when involved in physical education, co-curricular or community-based physical activities or sport.

[The Active School Flag](#) is awarded to schools that strive to achieve a physically educated and physically active school community. The process aims to get more schools, more active, more often. It is a [Department of Children, Education, Disability, Integration and Youth](#) initiative supported by [Healthy Ireland](#).

## Collaboration and partnerships

[The National Sports Policy](#) 2018-2027 includes that 'All entities in our sporting community will be highly regarded for the quality of their staff and volunteers, their standards of governance, ethics and accountability, and their spirit of collaboration including with partners beyond the sporting sector'.

## 7.4 Healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition

### National Strategies

#### National Youth Strategy 2015-2020

Ireland's first-ever youth strategy, the [National Youth Strategy 2015-2020](#), was launched in 2015 by the Minister for Children, Education, Disability, Integration and Youth. It aims to enable all young people to realise their maximum potential, by respecting their rights and hearing their voices, while protecting and supporting them as they transition from childhood to adulthood. The Youth Strategy identifies more than 50 priority actions over the 2015–2017 period. Its health-related commitments include:

- Developing a National Obesity Policy and Action Plan which will focus on prevention, treatment, and research, and will include consultation to ensure that young people's views are heard.
- Involving young people in the development and management of drug and alcohol-free venues and programmes for young people (e.g. youth cafés, alcohol-free music and dance venues, and sports venues), with an emphasis on those most at risk.
- Children and young people will be consulted by services seeking to respond to parental substance misuse or substance misuse in families as targeted by the 'Hidden Harm' initiative.

The Strategy's implementation is the shared responsibility of Government, State agencies and other stakeholders who are involved in developing policy and providing services. This implementation is led by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. Progress on implementation of the National Youth Strategy is included in the annual report for [Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People](#), 2014-2020.

There has been no National Youth Strategy implemented for the 2021 period as of January 2022.

#### Obesity Policy and Action Plan 2016 – 2025

[A Healthy Weight for Ireland: Obesity Policy and Action Plan](#) 2016 – 2025 aims to increase the number of people with a healthy weight and make a healthy weight becomes the norm. The Policy also aims to remove the stigma associated with obesity, especially in children. It sets short-term (five-year) targets for overweight and obesity:

- a sustained downward trend (averaging 0.5% per annum as measured by the Healthy Ireland Survey) in the level of excess weight averaged across all adults
- a sustained downward trend (averaging 0.5% per annum as measured by Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative) in the level of excess weight in children
- a reduction in the gap in obesity levels between the highest and lowest socioeconomic groups by 10%, as measured by the Healthy Ireland and Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative surveys.

Progress on achieving the targets is to be reviewed every two years during the Policy's ten-year lifespan. The need to revise targets will be considered in the context of contemporary prevalence data, ongoing modelling exercises and the impact of specific policies and interventions.

## **A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing 2013 – 2025**

[A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing](#) 2013 – 2025, aims to achieve an island where everyone can enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential, where wellbeing is valued and supported at every level of society and is everyone's responsibility. While the framework does not specifically target any section of the population, it does include references specific to youth and sub-sections of youth throughout. It has three dominant themes: equality, wellbeing, and empowerment. The Cabinet Committee on Social Policy oversees the framework's delivery. [The Health and Wellbeing Programme](#) in the Department of Health has responsibility for strategic planning and co-ordination of the implementation of the framework actions. Regional specific implementation plans have also been devised for differing time periods. A Healthy Ireland research plan will be developed to build the knowledge base and ensure that the highest quality and most up-to-date data, scientific knowledge and evaluation tools are available to support the implementation and monitoring of the framework's actions and guide the development of new policies into the future.

[The Healthy Eating and Active Living Policy Priority Programme](#) was established in late 2016 by the HSE to mobilise the health services to improve health and wellbeing. It aims to do so by increasing the levels of physical activity, healthy diet and healthier weight across services users, staff and the population as a whole, with a focus on families and children. The National Policy Priority Programme Team work to co-ordinate and lead activity across the health services to ensure implementation of two policies:

- [A Healthy Weight for Ireland: Obesity Policy and Action Plan](#) 2016 – 2025
- [Get Ireland Active! The National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland](#) 2016
- [The Healthy Eating and Active Living Programme National Implementation Plan](#) 2017-2020 (HSE, and Healthy Ireland, 2017) sets out the strategic priorities and actions for the next three years. The Programme will work with the Community Healthcare Organisations, Hospital Groups and funded agencies to deliver priority actions.

## **National Sexual Health Strategy 2015 - 2020 and Action Plan 2015 - 2016**

In 2015, Healthy Ireland and Department of Health released the [National Sexual Health Strategy](#) 2015 - 2020 and Action Plan. The action plan sets out the main actions which were to be taken in 2015 and 2016 to commence the implementation of the [National Sexual Health Strategy](#) for Ireland 2015 – 2020. [The National Sexual Health Strategy](#) 2015 – 2020 is a strategic framework for the sexual health and wellbeing of the Irish population and was launched in October 2015. While Ireland had previously developed regional sexual health strategies and national strategies to address specific sexual health issues, the National Sexual Health Strategy is the first time a coordinated approach has been developed at national level to address sexual health and wellbeing and to reduce negative sexual health outcomes. It targets 'at risk' groups for specific interventions. The ambition behind the strategy is that everyone in Ireland experiences positive sexual health and wellbeing, and has access to high quality sexual health information, education, and services. It takes a life course approach to sexual health which acknowledges the importance of developing healthy sexuality throughout childhood and adolescence and builds on that foundation for positive sexual health and wellbeing into adulthood and older age. The three key goals of the strategy are:

- to ensure that everyone has access to appropriate sexual health education and information
- to ensure that high quality sexual health services are available and affordable
- to ensure that good quality data is available to guide the service.

The Strategy is implemented under the Healthy Ireland Framework. The Health and Wellbeing Division of the Health Service Executive (HSE), supported by government departments, statutory and non-statutory bodies, professional bodies and NGOs, will lead

the Strategy's implementation through the appointment of two posts – a National Clinical Lead and a National Programme Lead – and the establishment of a HSE implementation group with service user and non-statutory service provider representation. Coordination is required both within and between the three key identified areas: promotion, education, and prevention; services; and health intelligence.

### **Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2014-2020**

[Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People](#), 2014-2020 aims to ensure that children and young people are active and healthy. Outcome one, 'Active and Healthy', of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures aims for all children and young people to be physically healthy and able to make positive health choices, have good mental health and have a positive and respectful approach to relationships and sexual health.

### **Report on Tackling Childhood Obesity**

The Joint committee on Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth released a [Report on Tackling Childhood Obesity](#) (2018). Its 20 recommendations include:

- Whole system approach – suitable to implement all policies relating to tackling childhood obesity
- Socio-economic inequalities – setting clear targets to reduce inequalities and consider further targeted interventions for those of lower socio- status
- Sport and physical activity – promotion of sport for children through public programmes and encouraging local sporting bodies to work with schools in communities to encourage children to find a sport they enjoy economic
- School environment – banning junk and fast-food outlets in school and its perimeter, normalising drinking water and making Home Economics compulsory in Junior cycle curriculum. Along with ensuring the physical activity facilities in schools are satisfactory
- Marketing and advertising – creation of a nutrient profile and introducing further statutory code and monitoring of the marketing of food and beverages to children on broadcast and non-broadcast media
- Early years interventions – increasing provisions to support breastfeeding in Ireland
- Further research – investigate potential links between obesity, mental health and portrayal of body image on social and traditional media to allow measures to be implemented to protect children

The Joint Committee recommended that the Government take a whole system approach in relation to the implementation of all policies related to tackling childhood obesity.

### **The Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative (COSI) in the Republic of Ireland**

In 2018, the Department of Health gathered data and released a [survey](#) surrounding obesity and children in Ireland. It found that 1 in 5 primary school children are overweight or obese, with obesity being more prevalent in girls and in disadvantaged schools. Most schools are free from food and drink advertisement with sugar-sweetened beverages unavailable at most schools. 100% of schools who participated in this survey do not have a vending machine present on the school grounds.

## **Encouraging healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition for young people**

### **UBU - Your Place, Your Space**

In December 2020, the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth launched [UBU - Your Place, Your Space](#). The scheme aims to help to deliver the [National Drugs Strategy](#)'s goal of improving services for young people at risk of substance misuse

in socially and economically disadvantaged communities. The primary target group are 10- to 24-year-olds who are described in the National Youth Strategy as marginalised, disadvantaged, or vulnerable. Further details are available in Chapter 4.7.

### **National Youth Health Programme**

[The National Youth Council of Ireland](#) (NYCI) [National Youth Health Programme](#) (NYHP) is a partnership between the NYCI, the HSE and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. NYHP is discussed further in Chapter 7.2.

The NYCI produced [Promoting Health in the Youth Sector: A Practical Manual in 2013](#). It aims to introduce those working with young people, in the youth sector, to good practice in health promotion. NYCI, in partnership with the National University of Ireland, Galway, have also developed a Specialist Certificate in Youth Health Promotion course. It is a Level 7 course on the [National Qualification Framework](#) (Level 6 on the European Qualification Framework). The certificate targets those working in the youth sector and aims to help learners to gain the skills to encourage, support and facilitate youth organisations to become effective settings for health.

### **Foundation Programme in Sexual Health Promotion**

The HSE Health Promotion and Improvement Departments nationally facilitates a 10-day Foundation Programme in Sexual Health Promotion. It is a comprehensive foundation training programme for professional and voluntary service providers who wish to develop their confidence, skills, and knowledge in sexual health promotion. There is no participant fee. It is funded by the Health Promotion and Improvement Department in partnership with the [HSE Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme](#).

### **REAL U programme**

[Foróige's REAL U programme](#) (Relationships Explored and Life Uncovered) was developed to enhance Foróige's service delivery to young people in relation to their sexual health. It is a high quality, comprehensive programme designed to be used in the non-formal learning environment. It is aimed at young people aged 12-18 years in a groupwork setting. Foróige worked closely with [The Rape Crisis Network Ireland](#), [The Marie Keating Foundation](#) and the [HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme](#) and [BeLonG To](#) in developing this manual. It aims to equip young people with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to develop healthy relationships, make responsible decisions in relation to their sexual health and ultimately delay the onset of early sexual activity.

### **Leave It Till Later Training Course**

Leave It Till Later Training Course explores the concept of delaying early sex among young people, including causes and effects of early sex, the influence of the media and peer pressure, and helping young people to build healthy relationships and make positive decisions for them. This course is offered by [NYCI](#) in conjunction with the Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme's [b4uDecide](#) campaign.

### **Be Healthy, Be Happy programme**

The [Be Healthy, Be Happy](#) programme was developed in relation to the needs of today's adolescents by Foróige, in consultation with staff, volunteers and young people. It aims to enable young people to take charge of their health and well-being to enhance the quality of their lives by developing strengths and assets in areas of physical, mental, social, and spiritual health. The programme consists of 2 modules, each containing over 14 hours of facilitated content to achieve specified learning outcomes. Issues, such as stress, bullying, alcohol/drug use and depression are dealt in a way that enhances the young people's capacity to cope with challenges as they emerge and aims to build their resilience and social support network in a real and tangible way. The programme targets 12- to 18-year-olds and can be used in all youth work settings, volunteer-led clubs, youth projects or schools.

## Healthy Education and Healthy Lifestyle Education in Schools

[The Education Act](#), 1998 emphasises that schools should promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them.

The Department of Education's [Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018–2023](#) was published in 2018 and revised in 2019. The policy statement and framework provide an overarching structure encompassing existing, ongoing, and developing work in the area of Well-being Promotion in schools. It sets out to ensure, that by 2023:

- the promotion of wellbeing will be at the core of the ethos of every school and centre for education
- all schools and centres for education will provide evidence-informed approaches and support, appropriate to need, to enhance the wellbeing of all
- Ireland will be recognised as a leader in wellbeing promotion in schools and centres for education.

[The Health Promotion Strategic Framework](#) identifies education as one of the key settings for health promotion. It advocates the implementation of a nationally agreed framework for Health Promoting Schools at both primary and post-primary levels. *Schools for Health in Ireland: Framework for Developing a Health Promoting School, Post-Primary*, offers a framework to schools against which they can look at their school, assess health needs and begin a process of working towards better health for all members of the school community. *Schools for Health in Ireland: Co-ordinator's Handbook for Developing a Health Promoting School, Post-Primary* was developed to assist schools with the implementation of this framework. The framework was developed by the HSE with input from the Department of Education, and is intended to support and guide the implementation of Health Promoting Schools at post-primary level.

Some schools provide Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) in Transition Year (an optional year between the junior and senior cycles) and to a lesser extent, in the Leaving Certificate (established) (the non-vocational state examination curriculum).

There are many professional learning opportunities available to support teachers and school leaders to engage with aspects of wellbeing. These include supports provided by the Department of Education's Support Services and the HSE's Health Promotion Team to assist the promotion of wellbeing across school communities.

The Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Programme in schools aims to provide opportunities for children and young people to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way. Section 4 of the [Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools](#) requires schools to have an agreed policy for RSE and a suitable RSE programme in place for all students at both junior and senior cycle. It is the responsibility of the board of management to ensure that an RSE programme is made available to all students. Resource materials to support the teaching of RSE in the Senior Cycle are available on the SPHE website (social, personal and health education). According to the HSE's website [B4UDecide.ie](#), although RSE is a mandatory programme, it is not taught in all schools, or in all classes in all schools.

Home Economics, an optional subject for the Leaving Certificate (established), covers topics including Food science and nutrition; Diet and health; and Preparation and processing of food. The Biology curriculum, another optional Leaving Certificate (established) subject, includes nutrition.

Social Education is a mandatory part of the Leaving Certificate Applied (vocational state examination). It covers topics including nutrition, exercise, rest, sleep, meeting psychological need for belonging, self-esteem, relations, sexual health, the effects of drug and alcohol misuse, etc. In-service training is provided specifically for the Leaving Certificate Applied Social Education course.



[BeLong To Youth Services](#) is the national organisation supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI+) young people in Ireland. They advocate and campaign on behalf of young LGBTI+ people and offer a specialised LGBTI+ youth service with a focus on mental and sexual health, alongside drug and alcohol support. BeLong To also runs training courses for teachers including LGBT Awareness Training and LGBT young people and drug use. BeLong To receives statutory funding alongside donations.

## Peer-to-peer education approaches

### SpunOut.ie

[SpunOut.ie](#) is an Irish youth information website created by young people, for young people. It provides information to more than 180,000 active readers each month. Established in 2005, its vision is to help create an Ireland where 16- to 25-year-olds are empowered with the information they need to live active, happy, and healthy lives. SpunOut.ie aims to educate and inform its readers about the importance of holistic wellbeing and how good health can be maintained, both physically and mentally. The website provides resources on health and wellbeing related topics, including:

- Abuse
- Alcohol
- Contraception
- Drugs
- Exercise
- Gambling
- General health
- Healthy Eating
- Mental Health
- Recipes
- Sexual Health
- Sleep
- Smoking
- Sexually transmitted infections.

SpunOut.ie's editorial team writes all of their professionally proofed factsheets and consult with relevant subject matter experts and young people. It also publishes articles written by readers aged 16 to 25 in the website's Opinion section. SpunOut.ie is funded by the Health Service Executive; the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth; Google; and the Innovate Together fund

### Bodywhys

[Bodywhys](#) is national voluntary organisation supporting people affected by eating disorders. It aims to ensure support, awareness and understanding of eating disorders amongst the wider community as well as advocating for the rights and healthcare needs of people affected by eating disorders. Bodywhys' Youth Panel is made up of young people aged 13-25 who meet with the Bodywhys Youth Development Officer on a regular basis to represent the views of young people. Their activities include:

- Helping to spread the 'Be Body Positive' message and ideas for how to do so
- Thinking up new ideas for services for young people
- Helping to develop a Youth Version of our website
- Developing a 'Be Body Positive' programme for schools

- Helping to design/develop leaflets and other stuff for young people
- Being a Bodywhys representative at events
- Substance Use Peer Education Responses (SUPER) programme

[Youth Work Ireland](#)'s (previously known as the National Youth Federation) [Substance Use Peer Education Responses](#) (SUPER) programme aims to transfer knowledge, skills and competencies through a structured training programme to youth work staff and volunteers wishing to develop initiatives with young people. It aims to support trainees to become key agents of change by supporting peer-led approaches to drug issues in local communities. Its approach is set out in *The Substance Use Peer Education Responses Manual: a Resource for Developing Peer Led Approaches to Drugs Education*.

[Promoting Health in the Youth Sector: A Practical Manual](#) lists a range of different approaches to health education, including peer education. It specifies that peer education "Involves young people working with others of the same age group or younger under supervision of workers. Extensive training and support is required to enable young people to act as peer educators"

### **National Peer-Led Life Skills Programme**

[The National Peer-Led Life Skills Programme](#) was developed by EPIC (Empowering People in Care), in collaboration with professionals from relevant services: Mental Health, Homelessness, Probation, University Access Programme and Alternative Care. The programme began in 2016 and was updated in 2017. It aims to ensure that young people leaving care are equipped with the lifelong skills to live independently. The life skills programme containing five modules that are designed and delivered by adults who have care experience, targeting youths aged 17 years or older who are leaving state care. The topics covered in the five modules are:

- Aftercare,
- Mental Health,
- Drug and Alcohol Addiction,
- Healthy Relationships,
- Budgeting (which includes distributing a booklet containing easy and cost-efficient recipes).

EPIC receives funding from the Child and Family Agency (Tulsa), charity donations and fundraising. The Ulster Bank Skills & Opportunities Fund also helped to fund the National Peer-Led Life Skills Programme.

### **Collaboration and partnerships**

[A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing](#) 2013 – 2025, states that "emphasis and priority [is] being placed on partnership and cross-sectoral involvement". The framework sets out that:

The Health and Wellbeing Programme in the Department of Health will co-ordinate the development of models and supports to promote and foster advocates for health and wellbeing in all sectors of society and develop key partnerships with voluntary and other organisations, which can favourably influence health and wellbeing.

The SPHE (social, personal and health education) Inter-Departmental Partnership is a formal agreement between the Department of Education, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Department of Health and the HSE to support the delivery of SPHE in schools.

The HSE works in partnership with the Department of Education on the implementation of their Wellbeing Policy and Framework for Practice. The HSE plan to unveil a new website with information on the training and resources provided by its Schools Team.

The National Youth Health Programme is a partnership between the National Youth Council of Ireland, the HSE and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. It is described in further detail in Chapter 7.2.

[NYCI](#) and the Irish Heart Foundation produced a [Healthy Eating Active Living](#) (HEAL) resource to tackle the escalating problems of poor nutrition and declining levels of physical activity amongst Irish teenagers. The aim of HEAL is to equip those working with children and young people with the skills necessary to promote healthier living among these age groups by providing guidance on health education, good eating, active living, and health policies.

## **Raising awareness on healthy lifestyles and on factors affecting the health and well-being of young people**

Wellbeing promotion is a government priority as set out in [A Programme for a Partnership Government](#) and this is reflected through a range of strategies and cross-departmental groups.

### **Healthy Ireland campaign**

The 2019 [Healthy Ireland](#) campaign aims to raise awareness of Healthy Ireland. Healthy Ireland is a Government-led initiative which aims to improve the health and wellbeing of people living here. More information about Healthy Ireland is in Chapter 7.2.

### **Simple Changes**

[SpunOut.ie](#) launched a promotional campaign called Simple Changes in 2019. The campaign aims to help youths to find ways to introduce small changes to your life that can help to improve their physical and mental wellbeing. The campaign included information and guidance articles on subjects such as healthy eating, exercise, and mental wellbeing.

### **Health Quality Mark**

NYCI (discussed further in Chapter 7.2) developed the [Health Quality Mark](#) (HQ Mark) as a health promotion initiative with a view to enhancing best practice and a high standard of quality in all aspects of health promotion in youth organisations. The HQ Mark is a set of quality standards in youth health promotion.

### **safefood**

[safefood](#) is an all-island implementation body set up under the British-Irish Agreement with a general remit to promote awareness and knowledge of food safety and nutrition issues on the island of Ireland. safefood in partnership with the [Irish Nutrition and Dietetic Institute](#) (INDI) in the Republic of Ireland and the British Dietetic Association in Northern Ireland, have developed a booklet which provides general advice for 13- to 17-year-olds who are involved in sport. It provides information about what to eat and drink to perform at your best in sport, stay healthy and feel great.

### **HSE Relationship Campaign**

The HSE launched a campaign in 2020 about how parents can talk to their children about relationships and growing up. It includes a list of resources and sources of support for parents or carers about talking with teenagers on these topics.

### **Bodywhys**

[Bodywhys](#) (described above) offers the service [YouthConnect](#); a free, online support group for people with eating disorders aged 13-18 years. It's website includes a specific section on Information For Young People around eating disorders. Bodywhys is supported by the HSE.

## 7.5 Mental health

### National Strategies

#### National Youth Strategy 2015-2020

[The National Youth Strategy](#) 2015-2020 aims to enable all young people to realise their maximum potential, by respecting their rights and hearing their voices, while protecting and supporting them as they transition from childhood to adulthood. It provides for the needs of young people experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, the poorest outcomes. The strategy identifies over 50 priority actions over the period 2015–2017. It includes the commitment for the Health Service Executive (HSE) to develop mechanisms, including consultation and feedback mechanisms, for the participation of service users, families and carers in the decision-making processes of mental health services for young people at local and national levels. It also commits to 'Promoting quality-assured, online youth mental health services among young people and within youth work and education settings.' The strategy's implementation is the shared responsibility of Government, State agencies and other stakeholders who are involved in developing policy and providing services. It sets out DCEDIY's role in providing national leadership in this collective effort, and in ensuring that national policy joins together with local implementation.

#### Mental Health Act, 2001

[The Mental Health Act](#), 2001 establishes how and why a person can be admitted to a psychiatric hospital, the patient's rights under the act and their mental health team's responsibilities towards them. A key element of the Act is that it provides the right for patients to have their involuntary detention automatically reviewed, by an independent group called a Mental Health Tribunal, within 21 days of the person's admission. The Act applies to both adults and children. Reference to children and young people are spread across parts of the Act, rather than contained within one section. The Mental Health Commission is responsible for implementing the provisions of the Act in relation to involuntary admission, for setting up mental health tribunals and ensuring that the rights of patients are respected.

In 2015 an Expert Group appointed by the then Minister for Mental Health published a [Report of the Expert Group Review of the Mental Health Act](#), 2001. It aimed to bring Irish mental health law in line with best international standards and to better protect people who go into hospital for mental health care and treatment. Among its 165 recommendations to update the Act is to create a new standalone section to outline the rights of children, setting out a list of child-specific guiding principles in line with international human rights standards. The report, implementations of its recommendations and criticism surrounding the Act/the implementation of the report's recommendations, are discussed further in Chapter 7.8.

In March 2021 the Department of Health called for submissions to a public consultation on draft legislation to update the Mental Health Act 2001. The consultation is currently being reviewed.

#### Connecting for Life

There is no Irish national strategy to prevent suicide specifically among the youth population. However, [Connecting for Life](#) is Ireland's national strategy to prevent suicide 2015-2020 amongst the general population. Connecting for Life has a vision of an Ireland where fewer lives are lost through suicide, and where communities and individuals are empowered to improve their mental health and wellbeing. It sets out 7 goals:

- Better understanding of suicidal behaviour
- Supporting communities to prevent and respond to suicidal behaviour
- Targeted approaches for those vulnerable to suicide
- Improved access, consistency, and integration of services

- Safe and high-quality services
- Reduce access to means
- Better data and research

Its aims include better evaluation of suicide prevention strategies, with an emphasis on universal approaches such as building resilience among young people.

Connecting for Life takes a whole-of-government approach. It states that its implementation process “is particularly complex because it is a cross-cutting, whole-of-society strategy, which requires consistent co-operation and communication between relevant stakeholders”. The strategy establishes a cross-sectoral leadership team, with “expertise and ‘boundary spanning’ skills” to drive implementation. This includes:

- Cabinet Committee on Social Policy and Public Service Reform
- National Cross-Sectoral Steering and Implementation Group
- National Office for Suicide Prevention
- Local Cross-Sectoral Implementation Structures Individual Agency and Implementation Systems.

The strategy’s main outcomes aimed for are:

- Reduced suicide rate in the whole population and amongst specified priority groups
- Reduced rate of presentations of self-harm in the whole population and amongst specified priority groups

It also states that the planning process will include Service delivery personnel and professionals from the start and that all stakeholders on whose involvement and co-operation success depends will be involved in implementation. There will be ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the strategy to guide the on-going implementation process, with formal systems for capturing and sharing learning put in place.

In November 2020, the Connecting for Life programme was extended until 2024. The extension of Connecting for Life now provides an opportunity to further advance and embed many already-established local Connecting for Life implementation structures throughout the country. The 17 local Connecting for Life Action Plans that are already in place, will in turn be extended and updated to reflect a new national implementation plan.

National implementation structures, most notably the National Cross Sectoral Steering and Implementation Group, will continue to coordinate different government departments and (departmental) strategies. The HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) remains the named provider of cross-sectoral support for implementation of Connecting for Life.

The NOSP has now published a new and responsive implementation plan for 2020 to 2022, which is rooted in the principle of learning from previous experience of implementation to date. Specifically, this plan has been informed by the findings of the 2019 independent Interim Strategy Review of the implementation of the strategy, and consistent consultation with implementation partners, stakeholders and government departments.

### **Sharing the Vision**

[Sharing the Vision: A Mental Health Policy for Everyone](#) is a strategy document setting out a policy framework for the direction of Mental Health Services in Ireland. It is an action-oriented policy, focusing on better outcomes for people experiencing mental health difficulties to bring about tangible changes in their lives and achieve better results. It is a broad based, whole system mental health policy for the whole of the population. The policy assigns a proposed completion timeframe to every recommendation/associated action that is either short (18 months), medium (36 months) or long (36 months – 10 years).

Sharing the Vision: A Mental Health Policy for Everyone is the successor of [A Vision for Change](#) (AVFC). It describes a framework for building and fostering positive mental health across the entire community and for providing accessible, community-based, specialist services for people with mental illness. The policy was developed by an expert group, which combined the expertise of different professional disciplines, health service managers, researchers, representatives of voluntary organisations, and service user groups. AVFC recommends that the National Directorate should be comprised of mental health service managers, clinicians and service user representatives, charged with responsibility to coordinate and implement the recommendations. It proposes a holistic view of mental illness and recommends an integrated multidisciplinary approach to addressing the biological, psychological and social factors that contribute to mental health problems. It proposes a person-centred treatment approach which addresses each of these elements through an integrated care plan, reflecting best practice, and evolved and agreed with service users and their carers.

Several reviews were conducted following AVFC, including:

- From Vision to Action? An Analysis of the Implementation of a Vision for Change was published in 2009 by the Mental Health Commission.
- Implementation of 'A Vision for Change' for Mental Health Services was commissioned by Amnesty International Ireland and Mental Health Reform, to provide an economic assessment of the progress on A Vision for Change.
- The Psychiatric Nurses Association of Ireland (PNA) commissioned the Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery, RCSI to explore the progress of implementation in An Impact Evaluation of "Vision for Change" (Mental Health Policy) on Mental Health Service Provision: A national Descriptive Evaluation project in 2012.
- Mental Health Reform published a progress analysis, A Vision for Change Nine Years On: A Coalition Analysis of Progress, in 2013.
- Mental Health Reform submission on review of A Vision for Change was published by Mental Health Reform in 2017, with the support of the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government's Scheme to Support National Organisations 2016-2019.

### **Well-being in post-primary schools: Guidelines for mental health promotion and suicide prevention**

The Department of Education, the HSE, and the Department of Health produced [Well-being in post-primary schools: Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention](#) in 2013. The guidelines aim to support schools in developing a whole-school approach to mental health promotion and suicide prevention. They promote building and integrating school self-evaluation processes, implementing the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum, developing the whole-school guidance plan, adopting the National Educational Psychological Service continuum of support, and building effective inter-agency relationships. No specific target groups within the youth population is identified by the guidelines. It specifies that a guidance counsellor or other designated member of the student support team should liaise with other staff members, student support team, class tutor, year head, subject teachers, etc., in order to monitor and review the intervention's effectiveness. It is also necessary to document the outcomes arising from the monitoring and review process.

### **Improving the mental health of young people**

#### **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services**

[Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services](#) (CAMHS) provides assessment, specialist treatment and care for young people up to 18 years and their families who are experiencing mental health difficulties through a multidisciplinary team. It aims to provide

timely high-quality assessment and treatment of mental health difficulties for young people and their families. Some conditions treated in CAMHS include:

- moderate to severe depression
- moderate to severe anxiety
- eating disorders
- self-harm.

The service is provided by the HSE.

### **Youth Mental Health Signposting tool**

A key finding from the [Rapid Mental Health Needs Consultation: National Youth Health Programme](#), a Mental Health Needs Assessment carried out by the National Youth Health Programme in 2015, was the need to support organisations, practitioners and young people to access appropriate mental health services. In response to this need a Youth Mental Health Signposting tool was developed and launched in 2017 by the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI). It provides information on available youth mental health services, training programmes, community supports and children's rights. It includes four sections:

1. Services
2. Training Programmes
3. Community Supports
4. Children's Rights

It is available from the NYCI.

### **Yourmentalhealth.ie**

The HSE's website [Yourmentalhealth.ie](http://Yourmentalhealth.ie) provides free mental health support resources which can be filtered by age group.

### **Covid-19 health campaign**

In response to Covid-19 the Government launched several mental health related initiatives. These included a mental health and wellbeing initiative to support people during COVID-19 launched by the Minister for Health. This campaign, developed by the Department of Health and HSE, in collaboration with a range of cross-Government partners, offered support and resources to help to cope with the stress, anxiety and isolation experienced during Covid-19 restrictions. The campaign is supported by the local authorities.

An online resource, In This Together, offer advice to help people cope at home and promote the mental health supports and resources available on the HSE's [YourMentalHealth.ie](http://YourMentalHealth.ie). Minding your mental health during the coronavirus pandemic is a web-resource offered by the HSE, which specifically includes a section on Young people's mental health during the Covid-19 pandemic.

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Other groups that provide counselling for people affected by Covid-19 and the pandemic include; MyMind, Shine, the Clanwilliam Institute and Helplink Mental Health.

There are also a wealth of phone, email and text support from organisations like Connect Counselling, Samaritans, Text 50808, Pieta House, Aware, Mental Health Ireland, LGBT Ireland and Bodywhys.

### **Childline and Teenline**

The Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children operates the helplines [Childline](#) and Teenline, which provides services on a 24/7 basis where young people affected may turn to for advice and guidance. It is co-financed by the European Union's Connecting Europe Facility.

### **Jigsaw**

[Jigsaw](#) is The National Centre for Youth Mental Health. It provides supports to young people with their mental health by working closely with communities across Ireland. Jigsaw Online offers mental health information via articles, videos, and audio recordings to support young people, parents or those working with young people. Jigsaw support line is a helpline for 15- to 25-year-olds and parents or concerned adults who live in the Republic of Ireland. It was developed as a response to Covid-19. Jigsaw is funded by the Health Service Executive, donations, fundraising and pro-bono support.

### **SpunOut.ie**

[SpunOut.ie](#) is an Irish youth information website created by young people, for young people. It offers articles and factsheets for specifically targeting youth, around mental health, alongside other health and wellbeing related topics. More information about SpunOut.ie is available in Chapter 7.4.

### **Bodywhys**

[Bodywhys](#) provides support to people affected by eating disorders and their family. It is described in Chapter 7.4.

### **Pieta**

[Pieta](#) supports people and communities in crisis by providing freely accessible, professional services to all. There are 15 Pieta Centres and five Outreach services. Its services include an LGBTI+ Outreach service for 14- to 23-year-olds within the LGBTI+ community. Pieta offers a free 24-Hour Support helpline, texting service and up to twelve free counselling sessions with a therapist to work through suicidal thoughts. It also runs The Resilience Academy, a six-week programme for second-year students aimed at equipping students with emotional resilience tools. It is a skills training programme aimed to increase protective factors such as coping skills, problem solving, decision making, and cognitive skills. By targeting risk factors and giving youth important skills, its goal is to prevent the development of suicidal behaviour. The Pieta Amber Flag Initiative recognises the individual efforts of primary and secondary schools, companies, and groups to create healthy, inclusive environments that support mental well-being. Its objective is to unite these groups in their efforts, to work together toward a happier, healthier Ireland and eradicate the stigmas associated with mental health issues. Pieta receives funds through fundraising, corporate donations, and statutory funding from the National Office of Suicide Prevention, regional HSE initiatives, and TUSLA.



## Samaritans

The [Samaritans](#) offer multiple service to support mental health in Ireland, including:

- free listening service,
- hotline,
- email and letter writing support,
- school talks about emotional health, the value of listening, coping strategies (including self-harm) or about Samaritans and the importance of accessing support and where it can be found.
- Step by Step; a programme providing practical support to help schools, colleges, and higher education communities to prepare for and recover from a suspected or attempted suicide.
- DEAL (Developing Emotional Awareness and Listening); a free resource for teachers and other educational professionals designed to help develop resilience in young people.

The Samaritan's work in Ireland is funded through the Health Service Executive, corporate sponsorships, and fundraising.

## Aware

[Aware](#) provide support and assistance to people affected by depression, bipolar and mood disorders. Aware runs support groups around the country, a freephone helpline and a next-day email support service. Its website includes information specifically tailored to young people and it runs a free, positive mental health education programme Life Skills for Schools for 15- to 18-year-olds. The programme is designed to help young people learn new ways to deal with challenges in life, using principles based in cognitive behavioural therapy. Life Skills for Schools contains eight modules delivered over four weeks in 75-minute sessions.

## turn2me

[turn2me](#) is an online counselling service. It receives support from several sources, including the Health Service Executive (HSE) National Office for Suicide Prevention, and the Department of Health's SlainteCare Integration Fund. It offers counselling, online peer support and support groups for 12- to 17-year-olds and for those over 18 years. It also offers wrap around support for parents and guardians. The HSE provides some funding for free sessions to people resident in Ireland.

## Youth Work Ireland

[Youth Work Ireland](#) is the largest youth organisation in Ireland and its work includes running initiatives to support young people's well-being. Be Well: Supporting Young People to Identify and Address Anxiety is its one-hour workshop which supports young people to identify and address anxiety. The workshop aims to introduce the issue of anxiety with young people, and explore the signs and symptoms of anxiety, personal triggers, and coping skills. Youth Work Ireland also run Friends Resilience, a cognitive behavioural therapy based early intervention and prevention programme focusing on reducing anxiety and depression through building resilience.

## National Office for Suicide Prevention

[The Connecting for Life Education and Training Plan 2019-2020](#) (Health Service Executive's National Office for Suicide Prevention, 2019) provides the National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) with an overarching framework to support the coordination, quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation of education and training actions identified in the strategy. This work builds the capacity of government departments, funded agencies, the HSE, community organisations, groups and individuals to identify and respond appropriately to people at risk of suicide and self-harm. The Department of Education and the National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP), in partnership with the network of

Education Centres, offers teachers a continuous professional development training programme in safeTALK, 'suicide alertness for everyone' training. safeTALK is available to a limited number of Further Education Colleges. In 2018 the Minister for Education announced that by 2020 teachers in every post-primary school in the country will receive training on how to respond when a critical incident occurs in their school community. In this context, a critical incident was defined as an incident or series of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school.

In response to Covid-19 there was an information booklet published '[Responding to Critical Incidents during School Closures and Public Health Restrictions arising from Covid-19.](#)' There was also another booklet published entitled 'Supporting Bereaved Students and Staff Returning to School following COVID-19 and Public Health Restrictions: Information Booklet for Schools.' Both booklets are available to all schools in Ireland.

## 7.6 Mechanisms of early detection and signposting of young people facing health risks

### Policy framework

There is no overarching policy framework specifically for mechanisms of early detection and signposting of young people facing health risks. However, there are policy frameworks which include mechanisms of early detection and signposting which affect young people facing health risks.

#### Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery

The national drug strategy for 2017-2025 is [Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery](#) is a health-led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland 2017-2025 (Department of Health and Healthy Ireland, 2017). While it is targeted at the general population, one of its objectives (1.2) is to 'Prevent use of drugs and alcohol at a young age'. Actions include:

- To support the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) by promoting effective communications between schools and Drug and Alcohol Task Forces
- To improve supports for young people at risk of early substance use by prioritising initiatives under the new DEIS programme [Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools, described in Chapter 6.1] to address early school leaving; and providing a continuum of support for young people encountering difficulty in mainstream education
- To facilitate increased use of school buildings, where feasible, for afterschool care and out-of-hours use to support local communities
- To improve services for young people at risk of substance misuse in socially and economically disadvantaged communities by developing a new scheme to provide targeted, appropriate and effective services

#### National Youth Strategy 2015-2020

[The National Youth Strategy](#) 2015-2020 sets out that DCEDIY will provide leadership at national level, to ensure that national policy joins with local implementation and with the implementation structures under Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures. The aim is to ensure quality services, focus on prevention and early intervention, improve collaboration and coordination, and improve access to quality information and supports. An action it set out was to enhance "effective prevention and early intervention through the reformed targeted youth programme as recommended in the Value for Money and Policy Review of Youth Programmes (2014), while ensuring a preventive focus in and across all other universal programmes and schemes within DCEDIY, which focus on the development of young people". In 2020 this reformed targeted youth programme was launched as [UBU - Your Place, Your Space](#) (discussed in Chapter 7.4). The National Youth Strategy also set the target of "Developing efficient and user-friendly ways of collecting and analysing quantitative and qualitative data at local, regional and national level to inform service

planning, delivery, assessment and continuous improvement.” To support implementation, the strategy stated that DCEDIY would establish a National Youth Strategy Lead Team, drawing from experience in DCEDIY and technical assistance from relevant experts, as required.

## Stakeholders

The National Drugs Strategy names the following organisations as involved in achieving the actions in Objective 1.2, to ‘Prevent use of drugs and alcohol at a young age’:

- Department of Education
- Health Service Executive (HSE)
- The Child and Family Agency (TUSLA)
- Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
- Department of Health
- Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY)
- Drug & Alcohol task force

The Child and Family Agency (Tusla) recommends that parents/guardians who are concerned about a teenager’s risky behaviour should ask their family doctor for a referral to a psychologist or other mental health professional, or they should speak with the child’s school counsellor.

Secondary schools must provide Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) during the junior cycle, and some provide SPHE in Transition Year (an optional year between the junior and senior cycles) and to a lesser extent, in the Leaving Certificate (established) (the non-vocational state examination curriculum at senior cycle). Schools may also choose to provide additional School-based life-skills training programmes.

Assessment Consultation Therapy Service is a small national specialised clinical service that provides multidisciplinary consultation, assessment and focused interventions to young people who have high risk behaviours associated with complex clinical needs. It also supports other professionals in their ongoing work with young people and their families.

Jigsaw is The National Centre for Youth Mental Health. Jigsaw is a multi-systemic early intervention and prevention model. In this context, it:

- Promotes positive mental health for young people by deploying strategies that target the whole population to enhance strengths, thereby reducing the risk of subsequent negative outcomes (e.g., community-level mental health awareness training);
- Utilizes universal prevention strategies designed to address risk factors in the whole population without attempting to discern which young people are at elevated risk (e.g., anti-stigma media campaigns and youth advocacy);
- Targets groups of young people at risk for developing mental health difficulties through selective prevention strategies (e.g., Youth Centred Practice training for front-line providers);
- Provides indicated early intervention/prevention supports and services for young people with mild / emerging mental health difficulties (e.g., brief interventions delivered through the Jigsaw Hub).

Jigsaw is described in further detail Chapter 7.5.

Youth Work Ireland’s launched the Detached Youth Work Programme in 2015. It is an outreach programme that engages with vulnerable and socially excluded young people and helps them connect with supports that will aid them in addressing their needs and achieves successful outcomes. While the target population for this programme may have

needs in relation to issues as diverse as mental health, sexual health, and homelessness, most young people engaged struggle with substance misuse. Detached Youth Workers engage with young people on the street during key times when young people are involved in dangerous activities related to substance misuse.

## Guidance to stakeholders

[The National Drug Strategy](#) includes the strategic action to promote a health promotion approach to addressing substance misuse. This is to be delivered in line with the Action Plan for Education a) Commencing and rolling out a national programme to support the implementation of the Wellbeing Guidelines to all primary and post-primary schools; and b) Developing Wellbeing Guidelines for Centres of Education and Training.

The Department of Education issued Guidelines for developing a School Substance Use Policy to all primary and post-primary schools.

The HSE's Alcohol Programme published [Alcohol and Drugs: A Parent's Guide in 2018](#). It was written specifically for parents and includes insights directly from young people. The Guide has advice on topics such as getting the conversation started, how to stay close to your child and help them to resist pressure from their friends and the media, how to set boundaries and further practical advice and helpful tips. There are also several resources related to young people and alcohol for parents on the HSE's website.

The HSE also run the website [drugs.ie](#) which offers free information and resources about substance misuse. It includes information specifically for parents/carers about young people.

[Promoting Health in the Youth Sector – A Practice Manual](#) is a manual which aims to introduce those working with young people to good practice in health promotion. It targets youth workers working in the area of health but is designed to be used by anyone working with young people with an understanding and appreciation of youth health.

[A Mental Health Resource for Youth Workers and Volunteers](#) (2011) was published by Jigsaw (previously Headstrong) in association with belongTo, Foróige and ReachOut.com. This resource helps youth workers and volunteers to understand more about mental health and how young people can best be supported.

## Target groups

[The National Drug Strategy](#)'s targets include:

- the children of parents who misuse substances
- Young people leaving care and detention services, particularly from residential or hostel accommodation
- third level students
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) young people
- those who have already started to use substances
- communities that are most impacted by socio-economic disadvantage, marginalisation, and exclusion
- those who have or who are at risk of early school leaving and/or not in employment, education or training aged 15-25 years
- migrant communities

## Funding

Capital Public Health Expenditure on mental health has significantly increased from 25million euro in 2009 to 81million euro in 2019.

Over €38.7 million was made available in targeted funding in 2020 to form the basis of the [UBU – Your Place, Your Space](#) targeted youth funding scheme (discussed in Chapter 7.4).

In 2022 the Budget is set to increase by €1 billion for Covid-19 related measures. The health expenditure in Ireland for 2022 will increase 5.3% from 2021.

## 7.7 Making health facilities more youth friendly

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) is a service that provides assessment, specialist treatment and care for young people up to 18 years of age. It is discussed further in Chapter 7.5.

[Get Connected - Developing an Adolescent Friendly Health Service](#) is a strategy which focused on the health of 12- to 18-year-olds in Ireland. It recommended an adolescent friendly health service, including:

- accessibility: services provided in an appropriate and accessible manner; recommendations related to this include GP registration, free access to primary care, physical accessibility of buildings and involvement of adolescents in service planning
- flexibility in service delivery, particularly in relation to timing and setting 12 Executive Summary
- staff with appropriate skills and training; service planning should take staff training needs into account
- availability of good quality information on services and health issues in appropriate formats
- partnership working, involving adolescents, parents/carers, relevant service providers and a wide range of agencies and government departments.

The Strategy described the importance of addressing adolescent health services and its recommendations form the basis for the development of the Adolescent Friendly Assessment Tools.

The Health Service Executive published the [Adolescent Friendly Quality Assessment Tools](#) in 2006. It was designed to provide a method for health service providers and planners to assess the quality of services for young people in relation to adolescent friendly quality standards. The tools identify key areas for consideration in reviewing services for 12- to 18-year-olds and are designed to encourage achievable standards in new and existing services.

The Children’s Mental Health Coalition consists of over 70 members, including organisations receiving funding from the Exchequer. Membership is open to organisations and individuals interested in children and young people’s mental health needs. The coalition has advocated for the development of child appropriate mental health services and an end to the admission of children and adolescents to adult wards.

## 7.8 Current debates and reforms

### Forthcoming policy developments

[The Mental Health Act](#), 2001 establishes how and why a person can be admitted to a psychiatric hospital, the patient’s rights under the act and their mental health team’s responsibilities towards them. Details of the Act are discussed further in Chapter 7.5.

In Ireland, the age of medical consent is generally 16 years old, including for physical, dental, or surgical treatment. However, currently 16- and 17-year-olds are not given the right to consent or refuse mental health care. There is also no review by the Mental Health Tribunal if a 16- or 17-year-old is admitted to hospital against their will, which there would

be for other patients who are involuntarily admitted. The admission of a 16/17-year-old is considered 'voluntary' if a parent or guardian has given consent.

In 2012, the then Minister for Mental Health, appointed an Expert Group to review the Act. They published a [Report of the Expert Group Review of the Mental Health Act, 2001](#) in 2015, which aimed to bring Irish mental health law in line with best international standards and to better protect people who go into hospital for mental health care and treatment. It set out 165 recommendations to update the Act. These included creating a new standalone section to outline the rights of children, setting out a list of child-specific guiding principles in line with international human rights standards. Following the report, the former Mental Health Minister said a general scheme of a new Mental Health Act would be published. As of July 2020, two recommendations have come into effect, under the [Mental Health \(Amendment\) Bill 2017](#) and [Mental Health \(Amendment\) Act 2018](#).

In March 2021 the Department of Health called for submissions to a public consultation on draft legislation to update the Mental Health Act 2001. The consultation is currently being reviewed.

## Ongoing debates

### Bed shortage and hospital waiting lists

There is a shortage of available beds in Irish hospitals, including in Accident and Emergency Departments. According to The Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation, 118,367 patients went without hospital beds in 2019, 9% higher than in 2018. Over 1,300 of the patients were children under 16 years.

One of the areas particularly experiencing a bed shortage is children and adolescent mental health inpatient units. Only 72 of these beds funded by the Health Service Executive across the country. However, not all available beds are operational due to staff shortages, as noted in *Sharing the Vision: A Mental Health Policy for Everyone*.

There has also been criticism of long waiting lists for children to access many procedures and services, such as speech and language therapy or MRIs. Moreover, the postponing of elective procedures due to pressure on the system has been debated. While this problem existed before Covid-19, it became worse during 2020 and 2021, due to the implementation of health measures in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic. Throughout the pandemic, intensive care units have been under pressure to provide beds for Covid-19 patients and this has lengthened the waiting list for children waiting to access vital procedures.

### Accessibility of youth mental health services

Following the publication of the [My World Survey 2](#) (discussed in Chapter 7.1), which revealed an increase in anxiety amongst youths, calls have been made to improve the level and accessibility of youth mental health services in Ireland. The desired changes include reducing waiting periods for youths to access mental health services and increased mental health services funding and resources. Amongst those advocating for these improvements are health professionals; charities including Jigsaw and the Mental Health Reform; and some political parties including Fianna Fáil, the Social Democrats and Sinn Féin.

### Reform of the Mental Health Act, 2001

Delays in rolling out the recommendations from the 2015 Report of the Expert Group Review of the [Mental Health Act, 2001](#) has been criticised by several politicians, including Fianna Fáil's James Browne and Sinn Féin's Pat Buckley. Mental Health Reform have launched a campaign calling for the reform of the Mental Health Act 2001. The campaign has been backed by 74 member organisations across Ireland. Two of the key areas that Mental Health Reform are calling on the Government to address regard the rights of young people and children:

## **The right to consent to mental health care at 16 and 17 years old**

### **Guiding principles for children and young people.**

Mental Health Reform is the national coalition on mental health in Ireland and receives under the Department of Rural and Community Development's Scheme to Support National Organisations. It receives core funding from the Health Service Executive (alongside membership fees, philanthropic funding, grants, corporate donations, and individual donations).

### **Increasingly co-ordinated mental health approach**

There has been calls for an Increasingly co-ordinated approach to young people's mental health, with enhanced early interventions including counselling and psychotherapy. Advocates include some education professionals (such as some school principals) and Senator Joan Freeman.

### **First Aid and Mental Health in Schools**

There is an ongoing debate that mental health education should be included in schools, with several health professionals and NGOs lobbying for its inclusion.

A 2018 bill, [First Aid and Mental Health in Schools \(Existing Teachers\) Bill 2018](#), proposed:

- to provide for the introduction of a requirement that all existing school staff be trained in occupational first aid response and mental health first aid
- to require that training in occupational first aid response and mental health first aid forms part of a continuing professional development requirement for school staff
- to provide for the approval of first aid response courses and mental health first aid courses; and to provide for related matters.
- The Bill lapsed with the dissolution of the lower house (the Dáil) and upper house (the Seanad) of the Irish Parliament (the Oireachtas) in 2020.

### **Covid-19 Health Campaign**

In response to Covid-19 the Government launched several mental health related initiatives. These included a mental health and wellbeing initiative to support people during COVID-19 launched by the Minister for Mental Health. This campaign, developed by the Department of Health and HSE, in collaboration with a range of cross-Government partners, offered support and resources to help to cope with the stress, anxiety and isolation experienced during Covid-19 restrictions. The campaign is supported by the local authorities.

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## 8. CREATIVITY AND CULTURE

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[Creative Ireland](#) (discussed further in Chapter 8.3) is a five-year Programme, from 2017-2022. It is a cross-government wellbeing strategy to place culture and creativity at the centre of citizen's lives. Its vision is that every person in Ireland should have the opportunity to realise their full creative potential. The Programme is built around key themes which include Creative Youth.

[Culture 2025: A National Cultural Policy Framework to 2025](#) is a policy framework that defines the scope and sets the direction of Government policy for the whole cultural sector. [Culture 2025](#) is Ireland's first national cultural policy. [Creative Youth - A Plan to Enable the Creative Potential of Every Child and Young Person](#) sets out how Creative Ireland will meet the overall Programme objectives for children and young people.

### 8.1 General context

#### Main trends in young people's creativity and cultural participation

Trends in visitor figures for the [National Cultural Institutions](#) are available, however, they are not broken down by age.

[Growing up in Ireland](#) is a National Longitudinal Study of Children in Ireland, tracking the development of two nationally representative cohorts of children: a Child Cohort (recruited when the children were 9 years old) and an Infant Cohort (recruited when the children were 9 months old). Further details about Growing up in Ireland are in Chapter 1.6 Evidence-based youth policy.

Based on the findings in [Growing up in Ireland](#), Arts and Cultural Participation among Children and Young People: Insights from the Growing Up in Ireland Study and [Arts and Cultural Participation Among 17 Year Olds](#) highlighted a number of findings related to youth's participation in the cultural activities varying depending on their type of school. This research was commissioned by the [Arts Council](#) and carried out by the [Economic and Social Research Institute](#) (ESRI). The research found that children in larger schools had greater opportunities to engage in cultural activities in school. In Ireland, most schools are segregated by gender. Students in girls' schools were more likely, than students in boys' schools, to have access to a choir (90%, compared with 50%), to dance (55%, compared with 4%), or to learn an instrument (67%, compared with 57%). [DEIS Plan 2017](#) Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools is the Department of Education and Skills' main policy initiative aimed at tackling educational disadvantage (discussed further in Chapter 6.3 Preventing early leaving from education and training). DEIS schools were somewhat more likely to provide choir (82%, compared with 76%). Provision of drama is slightly higher in non-disadvantaged schools, but the difference is small. Dance provision varies somewhat by school size but not as markedly as for other activities. In contrast to the other cultural activities, dance is more likely to be provided in DEIS schools (54%, compared with 37%).



## Barriers to Participation

[Arts and Cultural Participation among Children and Young People: Insights from the Growing Up in Ireland Study](#) identified household income, as a barrier to engagement as most structured cultural activities in Ireland, outside of school, require payment. It also identified language as a barrier for immigrant families with young children. It found low participation levels amongst young people with special educational needs in structured cultural activities.

[The National Youth Council of Ireland's Young People, Creative Action and Social Change: A report on the value of participation in the arts for young people](#) listed the main barriers to participation as:

- Lack of interest
- Lack of time
- Lack of information (about the organisation/project) and opportunity (including financial resources)
- Perceptions about the arts (e.g. that youth arts are not 'cool' enough, not mature enough, not being for serious artists, etc.)
- expectations and anxieties about what participation involves
- not knowing other participants before starting.

Other potential barriers discussed were perceptions about where the activity is located and a lack of transport.

## Main concepts

### The Arts

The arts are as defined in the [Arts Act, 2003](#) as

'any creative or interpretative expression (whether traditional or contemporary) in whatever form, and includes, in particular, visual arts, theatre, literature, music, dance, opera, film, circus and architecture, and includes any medium when used for those purposes.'

### Heritage

[The Heritage Council](#), a statutory body under the [Heritage Act, 1995](#), defines heritage as being comprised of:

- the tangible - our historical sites, buildings, monuments, objects in museum artefacts and archives
- the natural - our waterways, landscapes, woodlands, bogs, uplands, native wildlife, insects, plants, trees, birds and animals
- the intangible - our customs, sports, music, dance, folklore, crafts, skills, and knowledge.

Natural heritage is defined under the [Heritage Act, 1995](#) as including national heritage, including monuments, archaeological objects, heritage objects, architectural heritage, flora, fauna, wildlife habitats, landscapes, seascapes, wrecks, geology, heritage gardens and parks and inland waterways.

### The Gaeltacht

The Gaeltacht are the regions in Ireland where the Irish language is, or was until the recent past, the main spoken language of the majority of the community. The Gaeltacht covers large areas of counties Donegal, Mayo, Galway and Kerry as well as sections of counties Cork, Meath and Waterford. Six of Ireland's inhabited islands are also in the Gaeltacht.

According to the [2016 Census](#), of Ireland's 4,761,865-person population, 96,090 people (2.02%) live in the Gaeltacht. Of the Gaeltacht's population, 63,664 (66.3%) indicated they could speak Irish. 20,586 (21.4%) of the Gaeltacht's population who could speak Irish, spoke it daily.

The Gaeltacht regions are recognised in Government orders and successive Governments have acknowledged that particular legislation, structures and funding are required to ensure the viability of the Gaeltacht communities.

## 8.2 Administration and governance

### Governance

#### Main actors involved in policy-making

[The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage](#) is a Government department responsible for housing, local government, heritage and planning. The majority of heritage functions were transferred to this Department from the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht from 9th September 2020, under the [Heritage \(Transfer of Departmental Administration and Ministerial Functions\) Order 2020](#).

[The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media](#) oversees the protection and presentation of Ireland's cultural assets. Amongst the Department's divisions are the Culture and Arts Division and the Gaeltacht Division. The Gaeltacht are the regions in Ireland where the Irish language is, or was until the recent past, the main spoken language of the majority of the community. The Gaeltacht is further discussed in Chapter 8.1. The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media's mission is to:

- support the tourism industry in increasing revenue and employment through enhancing competitiveness and through marketing and product development
- promote, nurture and develop Ireland's culture and arts
- support and promote the use of the Irish language and to facilitate the development of the Gaeltacht
- contribute to a healthier and more active society by promoting sports participation, and by supporting high performance and the provision of facilities
- develop broadcasting and media policy, including online safety legislation, and to provide oversight of the Broadcast Authority of Ireland, RTE [Ireland's National Television and Radio Broadcaster] and TG4 [public service television channel which broadcasts in Irish].

[The Department of Education and Skills](#) is a department of the Irish state with responsibility for education and training. Its mission is to facilitate individuals through learning, to:

- achieve their full potential, and
- contribute to Ireland's social, cultural and economic development.

Arts education is primarily the responsibility of the [Department of Education and Skills](#) and of education providers. Further details about the Department of Education and Skills are in Chapter 6.2 Administration and governance.

[The Arts Council of Ireland](#) is the Irish government agency for developing the arts. It was established in 1951, to stimulate public interest in, and promote the knowledge, appreciation, and practice of, the arts. The Council is funded primarily by an annual grant from [Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media](#). The Arts Council's statutory functions, under the [Arts Act, 2003](#) are to:

- stimulate public interest in the arts

- promote knowledge, appreciation, and practice of the arts
- assist in improving standards in the arts
- advise the Minister and other public bodies on the arts.

[The Arts Council](#) supports and promotes children and young people's engagement with the arts from birth to early adulthood. An objective of The Arts Council's ten-year strategy, [Making Great Art Work](#) (2016-2025) is to Plan and provide for children and young people, including to:

- make provision for children and young people a key focus of its relationship with local government
- incorporate its commitment to young people into the mainstream of its decision-making and, where appropriate, into its funding agreements with arts organisations.

[The Heritage Council](#) is a statutory body under the [Heritage Act, 1995](#). It works with others, particularly at local level, to increase awareness of our national heritage and to highlight its importance to public policy and everyday life. County Heritage Officers are employed by Local Authorities in partnership with the Heritage Council with the support of the Heritage Officer Programme. Local Authority Heritage Officers promote heritage awareness, aid in developing policy and provide advice and information on local and national heritage issues.

There are several trade unions involved in creativity and culture, such as [The Musicians Union of Ireland](#) and Irish Equity. [Services Industrial Professional and Technical Union](#) (SIPTU) also directly represents several workers who earn their living from the arts, including professional musicians, writers, actors, other performers, film staff, broadcasting staff and theatre staff.

[National Youth Council of Ireland](#) (NYCI) works to realise the potential of young people through good quality youth arts practice within youth work organisations and the non-formal educational sector, and to develop appropriate policies and activities at local, regional and national level. NYCI represent young people's interests and to shape and influence legislation and emerging policy and programme development initiatives that may impact on the lives of young people. [The NYCI Youth Arts programme](#) provides evidence-based policy and programme advice and represent young people's interests and works to shape and influence legislation and emerging policies that impact on the lives of young people and their engagement in the arts. Among NYCI Youth Arts' recent activities has been a submission to Joint Oireachtas Committee on Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht on the theme [The Arts in Ireland Today](#) from NYCI's perspective, and the development of a Youth Arts Forum testing NYCI's principles of high-quality youth arts from a young person's perspective. The [NYCI Youth Arts Programme](#) is co-funded by the [Department of Children \(DCEDIY\)](#) and the [Arts Council](#).

[Youth Theatre Ireland](#) is the development organisation for youth theatre in Ireland. It supports youth drama in practice and policy by advocating the benefits of young people's participation, promoting quality youth theatre practice, and providing leadership for the sector. Youth Theatre Ireland receives funding from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth; and The Arts Council.

[The National Youth Orchestra of Ireland](#) receives funding from the Department of Education; and Strategic Funding from the Arts Council in the area of Young People, Children and Education (YPCE). Its guiding principles are:

- to provide an opportunity for young Irish musicians to engage with music professionals
- to promote equal access to our activities, overcoming financial and geographical barriers, to benefit young musicians in all parts of Ireland
- to promote classical music to audiences and communities at home and abroad.

[The Design and Crafts Council of Ireland](#) is the national economic organisation for the Design and Crafts Sector. It aims to stimulate innovation, champion design thinking, and inform Government policy. Its activities are funded by the [Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment](#).

## **Distribution of responsibilities between top-level and regional/local authorities**

[The Local Creative Youth Partnerships](#) was a pilot initiative of [Creative Youth - A Plan to Enable the Creative Potential of Every Child and Young Person](#) as part of the [Creative Ireland Programme](#) (discussed in Chapter 8.3). Under the pilot initiative, three Education and Training Boards (ETBs) established networks, to enable information sharing and collaboration between local creative youth service providers to bring about better use of existing resources, practices and initiatives in an ETB area. The pilot was announced in 2018 and a total of €300,000 was made available for the pilot up to the end of 2019.

This LYCP response to Covid-19 highlighted how as a nation Ireland recognised even more the powerful contribution that creativity can make to our health and wellbeing. The [Creative Ireland Programme](#)'s work in 2020 was recognised through the prism of the emergency brought about by COVID 19. In a time of national crisis, the Creative Ireland Programme worked at speed and with agility to activate creative programmes that helped participants to combat isolation, create social cohesion and enhance a sense of wellbeing. Working with partners in government and local authorities, we supported the work of communities, cultural practitioners and other organisations to create initiatives that targeted citizens who were particularly impacted by the pandemic.

Each local authority has its own Culture and Creativity Strategies, to identify, activate and support the creative life of in that area from 2018-2022. They were developed by local authority Culture Teams in consultation with artists, creatives, cultural and heritage organisations, community groups, the creative industries, centres of education and schools across the country. €2 million was allocated among all 31 local authorities to allow them to implement these strategies.

The Gaeltacht is the name for the areas in Ireland where the Irish language is, or was until the recent past, the main spoken language (discussed further in Chapter 8.1). The Gaeltacht Authority (Údarás na Gaeltachta) provides assistance towards language, culture and arts events and activities aimed at promoting the Irish language in the community. Support is available for the provision of Irish language classes and courses and for classes that are taught through the medium of Irish.

## **Cross-sectoral cooperation**

Numerous organisations and bodies play a role in developing cultural policy and delivering cultural services. They include Government Departments, State bodies, cultural institutions, local authorities, commercial bodies, the media, the voluntary sector, and various other national, regional and local organisations.

[Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People](#), 2014-2020 states the government's commitment to enabling greater access to arts and culture for all children and young people. It promotes cross-agency collaboration for the benefit of young people.

[Creative Ireland](#) (discussed further in Chapter 8.3) brings an enhanced level of coordination, focus and leadership to existing policies and initiatives across national and local government, State agencies, the arts and culture sector, Irish language speaking areas (Gaeltacht) and Irish language organisations, and will provide linkages to the private business and NGO sectors. Under Creative Ireland, the Government committed to encouraging strong mutually beneficial links between business and the arts community. [The Creative Ireland Programme](#) describes itself as a "collaboration – between central and local government, between culture and industry, between artists and policy makers – to facilitate an ecosystem of creativity".

Increased collaboration in recent years between the [Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media](#), and the Department of Education and Skills has provided the foundation for the Creative Youth - A Plan to Enable the Creative Potential of Every Child and Young Person (Government of Ireland, 2017) (Creative Youth Plan), under Pillar One of the Creative Ireland Programme (discussed further in Chapter 8.3).

The Arts Council is the Irish government agency for developing the arts. It works in partnership with artists, arts organisations, public policy makers and others to build a central place for the arts in Irish life.

An Invitation to Collaboration scheme is run by the Arts Council of Ireland. The scheme is open to local authorities to apply for projects or initiatives that they identify as being of strategic significance to arts development locally, regionally and nationally. The maximum grant is €75,000. It is open to projects which focus on the following areas:

- Policy development
- Public engagement
- Artists-focused programmes.

## 8.3 National strategy on creativity and culture for young people

### Existence of a national strategy

[Creative Ireland](#) is a five-year, cross-governmental Programme, from 2017-2022.

[Culture 2025](#) A National Cultural Policy Framework to 2025 was published in 2020 by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

[Project Ireland 2040: Investing in our Culture, Language & Heritage](#) 2018-2027 was published in 2018.

### Scope and contents

#### [Creative Ireland and the Creative Youth Plan](#)

Creative Ireland connects people, creativity, and wellbeing. It is a major cross-governmental culture and wellbeing initiative. It is also a legacy project of Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme (discussed in Chapter 8.4 Promoting Culture and Participation). Creative Ireland's vision is that every person in Ireland should have the opportunity to realise their full creative potential. The Programme is built around the key themes: Creative Youth; Creative Communities; Creative Places; and Creative Nation.

[Creative Youth - A Plan to Enable the Creative Potential of Every Child and Young Person](#) sets out how Creative Ireland will meet the overall Programme objectives for children and young people. It aims to give every child practical access to tuition, experience and participation in art, music, drama, and coding by 2022. The Creative Youth Plan aims to increase opportunities for activity and participation, and to influence public policy around creativity in both formal education and out-of-school settings. Creative Youth's four long-term strategic objectives are:

- Supporting collaboration between formal and non-formal approaches to creativity in education
- Extending the range of creative activities for our young people
- Embedding the creative process by developing programmes that will enable teachers to help young people learn and apply creative skills and capacities
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for teachers working in Early Years, Primary and Post Primary Schools.

While the plan is aimed at all youths, Objective 13 'Creativity programmes for young people in disadvantaged communities will be developed' targets 'young people in disadvantaged communities' (Pg. 50).

## Culture 2025

Publication of [Culture 2025](#) was identified as a priority in [A Programme for a Partnership Government](#). [Culture 2025](#) is a policy framework that defines the scope and sets the direction of Government policy for the whole cultural sector. Culture 2025 is Ireland's first Framework Policy to embrace the whole cultural sector. It is a living document, subject to on-going review and additional public consultation where appropriate. It will evolve in line with new developments in the cultural sector. While Culture 2025 is aimed at the general population of Ireland, one section specifically targets children and young people.

The framework sets out the current state of affairs in a broad range of categories across the sector, the Government's aspirations for those categories, and the Government's commitments to achieve those aspirations. Many of the aims of Culture 2025 will be achieved through more detailed policies and implementation plans in specific areas. The fundamental purpose of Culture 2025 is to ensure a unified and coherent approach to cultural policy across government and to planning and provision across the cultural sector. Through this Framework Policy, the Government seeks to nurture creativity, boost citizen participation, help more people to follow a sustainable career in the cultural sector, promote Ireland's cultural wealth and ensure a cultural contribution to wider social and economic goals.

## Project Ireland 2040: Investing in our Culture, Language & Heritage 2018-2027

[Project Ireland 2040: Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage](#) 2018-2027 is a ten-year plan setting out the Government's objectives for capital investment in Ireland's culture, language and heritage. In line with the [Creative Ireland Programme](#) (Pillar 3), the plan recognises that high quality infrastructure is critical for a vibrant arts, heritage and culture sector and that investment in our cultural heritage underpins social cohesion and supports strong, sustainable economic growth. It aims "to provide much better social, economic and cultural infrastructure so that every individual and every part of the country can reach its potential". Its target groups including children and families. The plan's objectives include influencing the delivery of an enhanced education for children and young people.

## Responsible authority for the implementation of the strategy

### Creative Ireland and the Creative Youth Plan

[The Creative Youth Plan](#)'s implementation is led by a Working Group including the Creative Ireland Programme office in the [Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media](#) in partnership with the [Department of Education and Skills](#), the [Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth](#), and the [Arts Council](#). An increased combined investment of €6m was secured, to support its implementation. A Creative Youth Expert Advisory Group assists and advises the Programme and working group.

The Creative Youth Plan states that a research project would be resourced and initiated in 2018. Its first task will be to establish a robust baseline of qualitative and quantitative information, on arts education, arts-in-education and the broader issues of creative engagement in the lives of young people. The research project would assess the impact of the measures introduced under the plan.

Several assessment reports have been published about, or including a section on, Creative Youth Plan:

- [Creative Ireland End of Year Report 2017](#) (Working Group for the Creative Youth Plan, 2017)
- [Creative Ireland End of Year Report 2018](#) (Working Group for the Creative Youth Plan, 2018)

- [2018 Progress Report and Renewed Commitments 2019](#) (Working Group for the Creative Youth Plan, 2019)
- [Creative Ireland Progress Report 2021](#)

The Creative Youth Conference 2021- 'Creativity: the connection to our future, now' took place on the 13<sup>th</sup> of May 2021. This conference was hosted online and discussed questions surrounding the provision of opportunities for creative engagement by young people within the school and their community. This Conference was an opportunity for stakeholders to reflect on progress to date and input their views concerning the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

This event, was opened by the Taoiseach, and included contributions from the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Catherine Martin, the Minister for Education, Norma Foley and the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Roderic O' Gorman.

### **Culture 2025**

[Culture 2025](#) states the Government's commitment to working collaboratively to implement the aims and objectives of the Creative Youth Plan to enable the creative potential of every child and young person.

Achievement of the aims of Culture 2025, as well as the Creative Ireland Programme, is overseen by a broad-based Expert Advisory Group, comprising representatives from key public agencies as well as representatives from the broader creative and cultural sector.

### **Project Ireland 2040: Investing in our Culture, Language & Heritage 2018-2027**

[Project Ireland 2040: Investing in our Culture, Language & Heritage 2018-2027](#) is implemented by the [Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media](#). The plan also sets out two implementation bodies for North-South Co-Operation: Waterways Ireland; and the Language Body (An Foras Teanga), which is comprised of the Irish Institute (Foras na Gaeilge) and the Ulster-Scots Agency.

## **Revisions/updates**

### **Creative Ireland and the Creative Youth Plan**

[The Creative Youth Plan](#) was published in 2017 and updated in March 2018. In 2019, Creative Youth Plan's Working Group refined the Plan's actions. A total of €1.86 million of the Exchequer was allocated to the implementation of the Creative Youth Plan in 2019.

### **Culture 2025**

[Culture 2025/Creative Ireland \(Éire Ildánach\) A Framework Policy](#) to 2025 was a draft policy published in 2016. This underwent a round of consultations, with submissions received from Government Departments, local authorities, and cultural bodies and stakeholders in the cultural sector. The draft framework policy was submitted to the Joint Parliament (Oireachtas) Committee on Arts, Heritage, Regional Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in July 2016, who published its Report on Culture 2025 – Éire Ildánach, Framework Policy to 2025 in July 2017. Culture 2025 A National Cultural Policy Framework to 2025 was published in 2020 by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

## **8.4 Promoting culture and cultural participation**

### **Reducing obstacles to young people's access to culture**

[The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media](#)'s core policy goal in relation to culture is "To enhance access to and to recognise the social and economic role of the arts, culture and film sectors in Ireland by promoting and encouraging artistic expression, cultural awareness and participation, through an appropriate policy, legislative and resource framework". The Department's website lists four key issues related to

culture, which includes “To encourage the cultural institutions to maximise their appeal to the general public and, in particular, to young people, the socially disadvantaged and visitors from abroad”.

A key objective within the [Arts Council](#) Strategy is to plan and provide for children and young people. The Arts Council provides funding to a wide range of organisations and artists that develop work with and for young people. The Arts Council has a specialist team focusing on Young People, Children and Education. In addition to supporting arts organisations that work entirely with children and young people, and running specialised schemes such as the Young Ensembles Scheme, the Arts Council supports young people’s participation in the arts across the full range of funding agreements and partnerships with local authority arts offices; multi-disciplinary arts centres; and art form specific organisations. The Arts Council leads out on a number of development initiatives, including Creative Schools, Artist residencies in Initial Teacher Education, and Laureate na nÓg.

### **Policies and Frameworks**

[Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People](#), 2014-2020 recognises the arts as an area that contributes to young people’s wellbeing and states that the government commits to enabling greater access to arts and culture for all children and young people. Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures is Ireland’s first National Policy Framework for children and young people aged 0-24 years and is discussed further in Chapter 1.3.

A key action of [Culture 2025](#) A National Cultural Policy Framework to 2025 is increasing access to and participation in the arts and boosting our creative industries. Culture 2025 is a policy framework that defines the scope and sets the direction of Government policy for the whole cultural sector. It is discussed further in Chapter 8.3.

[The Creative Ireland Programme](#) (2017) commits that by 2022 every child will have access to tuition in Music, Drama, Art and Coding. It sets out that ‘This will ideally be achieved through strategic alliances and partnerships between the formal and non-formal sectors’. This commitment is re-stated by the Creative Youth Plan as ensuring that every child in Ireland has practical access to tuition, experience and participation in music, drama, art and coding by 2022. Creative Ireland and Creative Youth Plan are discussed further in Chapter 8.3.

### **Projects and initiatives**

#### **Facilitating young people's access to cultural environments by removing financial constraints.**

Admission to many cultural locations, is free to the public, including the [National Museum of Ireland](#), [Irish Museum of Modern Art](#), [Chester Beatty Library](#), and [Crawford Gallery](#). Entry to the National Gallery of Ireland’s permanent collection is free and while there may be an entrance fee for individual exhibitions, these exhibitions are free for those under 18 years and for full-time students.

[The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media](#)’s Culture and Arts Division provides the capital infrastructure for the National Cultural Institutions, funding their day-to-day activities and by providing financial support for projects supporting the cultural infrastructure in Ireland. [The Council of National Cultural Institutions](#) (CNCI) includes representatives from each of the National Cultural Institutions. The Learning and Engagement Group of the CNCI includes representatives from the education, participation or engagement teams/departments of each institution, and is a forum for sharing policy and practice across the institutions.

The Free Educational Visits for Schools Scheme offers qualifying primary, secondary and special needs school groups free visits to certain Heritage Sites under the Office of Public Works.



## **Facilitating young people's access to cultural environments by removing geographical constraints.**

One of the five pillars of [Realising Our Rural Potential - Action Plan for Rural Development](#) is Fostering Culture and Creativity in rural communities. The Pillar's Key Objectives include:

- Increase access to the arts and enhance cultural facilities in rural communities
- Further develop and enhance culture and creativity in rural Ireland through the establishment of culture teams and creativity hubs as part of the Creative Ireland programme.
- Progress reports on the Action Plan for Rural Development are produced every six months.

[AskAboutIreland.ie](#) and the Cultural Heritage Project is an initiative of public libraries together with local museums and archives in the digitisation and online publication of the original, the unusual and the unique material from their local studies' collections to create a national Internet resource for culture. It offers a 'learning zone' for primary and secondary school students, which includes resources on environmental and cultural subjects. AskAboutIreland.ie is managed by Libraries Development, LGMA, supported by the [Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications](#) with funding from the Information Society Fund.

[Music Generation](#) is Ireland's National Music Education Programme. It is a Music Network Initiative, founded in 2009. It is co-funded by U2; The Ireland Funds; The Department of Education and Skills; and Local Music Education Partnerships. Music Generation believes in the musical potential and innate artistry of every child and young person and the right to access and participation as a musical citizen. It aims to transform the lives of children and young people through access to high quality performance music education in their locality. Through partnership, it creates rich and diverse ways for participants to engage in vocal and instrumental tuition delivered by skilled professional musicians, across all musical genres and styles. The initiative creates some 48,500 opportunities each year for children and young people to access tuition in their local communities.

## **Disseminating information on cultural opportunities**

[Cruinniú na nÓg](#) (Youth Meeting) is a flagship initiative of the [Creative Ireland Programme's](#) Creative Youth plan. It aims to celebrate and encourage children and young people's participation in culture and creativity by providing free, activity-based action in their own locality. It is a national day of free creativity for children and young people under 18 years and specifically targets 'Harder to reach' children and young people. It began in 2018. In 2019 over 750 free creative events took place nationwide, while it took place online in 2020 due to Covid-19 restrictions. It is funded by Creative Ireland and each of the 31 Local Authorities lead on creating a programme of local events. It takes place in partnership with the 31 Local Authorities and is supported by the national broadcaster Radio Television of Ireland (Raidió Teilifís Éireann).

Culture Night is an annual, all-island public event that celebrates culture, creativity and the arts. On Culture Night, arts and cultural organisations and venues, from independent studios and art-spaces to national cultural institutions, extend their opening hours to allow increased access for the public. Special and unique events and workshops are specifically programmed at participating locations and all activities are made available free of charge. Different events target different age-groups, including many events targeting youth and families. In 2019, over 40 towns, villages and cities across the island of Ireland participated in Culture Night with a diverse mix of more than 2,708 free indoor and outdoor events in over 1,490 venues. Over 430,000 people attended events in Culture Night 2019. It is an initiative of Dublin City Council (Temple Bar Cultural Trust) and became a national event with the support from the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media from 2008 onward. In 2020, responsibility for steering and funding Culture

Night on a national level was transferred from to the [Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media](#) to the [Arts Council](#). Culture Night's aims include to:

- encourage more people to visit cultural venues and experience culture in their locality
- encourage people to try new things and to get into the habit of engaging more regularly with cultural venues and activities in their locality, providing vital support for artists and arts organisations and driving investment in the cultural sector
- promote diversity and inclusion through celebration of all cultures.

Galway, a city in Ireland, was the Cultural Capital in 2020. A key focus of was placing children and young people at the centre of Galway 2020. It targeted citizens, artists and cultural operators and those who use their creativity skills in many sectors of society. The theme of Galway 2020 was Making Waves. The year-long programme was designed to make waves across the whole of Ireland and Europe and to celebrate new voices, young voices and traditions, both new and old. Making Waves was about the renewal, disruption and transformation of culture, both Irish and European.

### **Knowledge of cultural heritage amongst young people**

There is currently no policy provision specifically for the promotion of youth's contact with heritage. However, there are several programmes and initiatives to support young people's discovery and appreciation of the cultural and artistic heritage of European countries.

The Heritage in Schools Scheme, run by the [Heritage Council](#), provides a panel of 160 Heritage Specialists who visit schools throughout the country, online schools tutorials and resources for teachers. However, the scheme only supports primary schools, targeting among 4- to 12-year-olds.

[SEED](#) is a national network of educational centres and professionals with experience in Primary and Post Primary environmental education, specialising in all aspects of organic school gardening. It aims to establish living classrooms in every school to demonstrate that school gardens have unlimited cross curricular potential. It particularly ties into SESE, SPHE, Art, Languages, History and Maths curricula. SEED also develops training materials and literature for schools and runs teacher training courses through their local Education Centres. SEED is supported by the Irish National Teachers' Organisation and the majority of core members are also listed as Heritage Specialists in the Heritage in Schools Scheme.

Heritage week is an annual week in August highlighting heritage activities in Ireland. The week includes many national and hundreds of local community organisations running events throughout the country, including several events targeting young people and families. The aim of Heritage Week is to build awareness and education about Irish heritage, thereby encouraging its conservation and preservation. 2020's Heritage Week theme is 'Heritage and Education: Learning from our Heritage' and includes the three sub-themes:

- Heritage on your doorstep
- Relearning skills from our heritage
- The heritage of education

National Heritage Week is part of European Heritage Days. These are a joint initiative of the [Council of Europe](#) and the European Union in which over forty countries participate each year. National Heritage Week is coordinated by The Heritage Council.

[Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme](#) was the Irish Government's programme to mark the hundredth anniversary of the rebellion of Easter 1916 (the event that is generally regarded as having led to Ireland's independence six years later). The Programme included thousands of largely culture-based events exploring issues of identity, community, culture, heritage, and citizenship. [The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth](#) consulted with children and young people as part of the [Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme](#). It included specific events for schools and for young people.

## 8.5 Developing cultural and creative competences

### Acquiring cultural and creative competences through education and training

The [Arts Council](#)'s ten-year strategy [Making Great Art Work](#) (2016-2025) sets out the Council's objective to advocate for the centrality of the arts in formal education at all levels and for the provision of quality vocational training in the arts.

#### Arts in Education Charter

[The Department of Education and Skills](#) and the (former) Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht made a joint commitment to promote and integrate the arts in education, with the 2013 launch of the [Arts in Education Charter](#). This agreement placed new responsibilities on Government Departments, agencies, cultural institutions and arts organisations to provide and promote arts education to children and young people both in formal and non-formal education. It was implemented by a Charter Implementation Group. The Arts in Education Charter aims to embed artistic processes in education. An annual National Arts in Education Portal Day takes place.

The Charter drew on the Report of the Special Committee on the Arts and Education, Points of Alignment. The Arts Council's work to develop and lead out on Creative Schools, in partnership with the relevant government departments, stems from the Arts in Education Charter, and in particular the Charter's commitment regarding the promotion of Arts Rich Schools.

[The Arts Council's Making Great Art Work](#) (2016-2025) strategy states that it will work with the Departments of Arts and of Education to achieve full implementation of the Arts in Education Charter.

#### Subjects at State Examination

Through the Leaving Certificate (applied), a state examination at the end of senior cycle, creativity is addressed through the optional subjects: Music; and Art. Culture is studied in the leaving certificate through the mandatory subject English and the optional subjects: Geography; Arabic; Classical Studies; French; Irish (Gaeilge); German; Hebrew Studies; History; Italian; Japanese; Latin; Russian; Spanish; Antient Greek; and Other Language.

In the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme, a state examination for the vocational senior cycle, Culture is studied in the compulsory subjects of English and Communication; Irish; and a Modern Foreign Language or Sign Language for participants from the deaf community. Creativity is addressed through the compulsory subject Arts Education (Dance, Drama, Music, Visual Arts) and the optional subjects Graphics and Construction Studies; Craft and Design; Hair and Beauty.

#### Creative Engagement

[The Creative Engagement programme](#) is an initiative created and managed by the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals. The scheme entails a partnership approach to the promotion and development of the arts in second-level schools, based upon positive interaction between artist, teacher and learner. The funding goes directly to provide arts services and materials to participating schools. It has been jointly funded by the [Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media](#), and the [Department of Education and Skills](#) since 2005. More than 100 schools took part in 2019.

#### Artist in Schools Schemes

Artists in Schools Schemes, ran by local authorities, facilitate a professional artist to make a series of visits to a school in their county, to work with students on a specific project. Projects can range across artforms.

## Writers in Schools Scheme

The Writers in Schools Scheme is run by [Poetry Ireland](#) and funded by the [Arts Council](#). The Scheme part-funds visits by writers and storytellers to primary and post primary schools throughout the Republic of Ireland. There are over 250 writers and storytellers for schools in the Writers in Schools Web-Director of Writers.

## The Children's Laureate

[Laureate na nÓg](#) (The Children's Laureate) participates in selected events and activities around Ireland during their term. The laureate is chosen for their internationally recognised, high-quality children's writing or illustration and the positive impact they have had on readers, as well as other writers and illustrators. The initiative aims to engage young people with high quality children's literature and to underline the importance of children's literature in our cultural and imaginative lives. It is an initiative of the [Arts Council](#) with the support of [Arts Council of Northern Ireland](#), the [Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth](#), [Children's Books Ireland](#) and [Poetry Ireland](#).

## Design and Crafts Council of Ireland's Panel

[The Design and Crafts Council of Ireland](#) has put together a panel of craftspeople for school programmes, talks, residences and/or practical workshops. The Council is funded by the [Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment](#) via [Enterprise Ireland](#).

## Encountering the Arts Ireland Limited

[Encountering the Arts Ireland Limited](#) is an alliance of organisations and individuals whose main objective is the development, promotion and practice of the arts and education in Ireland particularly in the context of arts and education for children and young people. It was established as a response from the arts and education sectors to the Interdepartmental Committee's findings in [Points of Alignment](#) (2008) and the [Arts In Education Charter](#) (2013), which places new responsibilities on government departments, agencies cultural institutions and arts organisations in terms of providing education to children and young people. Members are composed of Statutory Bodies, Organisations, Agencies, Networks, Communities, Institutions and any individual, who expresses interest in and a commitment to the development, promotion and practice of arts and education in Ireland.

## Youth Arts Advocacy Programme

[National Youth Council of Ireland](#) (NYCI) has developed a [Youth Arts Advocacy Programme](#) for young people and their leaders. The Training Programme's objective is to embed experience and expertise in local organisations, supporting them to raise the profile of arts activities and undertake actions of their own. An additional objective was to develop relationships which allow the programme meaningfully engage with young people and inform aspects of our work. The training has included several expert inputs on how decisions in Ireland are made, communications and working with the media, working with elected representatives and using your voice to promote your message.

## Irish Youth Music Awards

[The Irish Youth Music Awards](#) is an all island youth music educational programme for young people aimed at supporting, developing and empowering future young musicians and creatives across the island of Ireland. It provides young people with the opportunity to learn new skills like recording, social media and public relations as well as working collectively and getting the opportunity to attend industry master classes at its annual National Day. The programme is run by National Youth Council of Ireland and has strategic partnerships which include a national media partnership with RTÉ 2FM, and industry partnerships with IMRO and BIMM Institute Dublin who we have developed a bursary with to support the progression of young people from the IYMA's programme to third level education opportunities.

The programme is launched annually in youth clubs and projects across Ireland, as well as partner organisations in Northern Ireland. Each region holds a local live selection event and chooses an act and original song to represent their region at the National Day in Croke Park. The remaining performers form a team/ mini music industry, and learn new skills such as recording, photography, social media and public relations. A songwriter and national recipient are selected at the National Day. The national recipient region receives professional recording, mastering and the launch of an album, which includes all the team members from the winning region.

## **Specialised training for professionals in the education, culture and youth fields**

### **Artists~Schools guidelines**

[The Artists~Schools Guidelines](#) (2006) is designed to provide practical guidelines that will empower artists and teachers to work in structured and respectful partnerships with young people in order to enhance their learning, enrich their experience of the arts and develop their creativity. It targets teachers, artists, primary carers, schools, arts organisations, policymakers, providers, and all those interested in Artists~Schools practice. It is a product of a partnership between the Department of Education and the Arts Council. The document was devised by a Steering Committee and a Core Group drawn from both the arts and the education sector.

### **Continuing Professional Development**

[The Creative Ireland Programme](#) support Continuing Professional Development (CPD) initiatives for teachers in both primary (Teacher/Artist Partnership – TAP) and post primary (Arts in Junior Cycle) schools. TAP provides a summer course and funded in-school Artist in Residency opportunities in which participating teachers and artists work collaborating during the following academic year. In summer 2019, 276 teachers and 80 artists took part. Programmes are co-funded by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, and the Department of Education and Skills. It aims to create a critical mass of education and arts professionals who are equipped with the relevant skills and techniques is vital to ensuring children and young people can unlock their innate creative potential.

### **Creative Schools**

[Creative Schools](#) (Scoileanna Ildánacha) is a flagship initiative of the Creative Ireland Programme, led by the Arts Council in partnership with the [Department of Education and Skills](#) and the [Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media](#). [Creative Schools](#) draws on the commitments set out in the [Arts in Education Charter](#). The initiative aims to understand, develop and celebrate the arts and creativity, as a core aspect of school life, and to foster children and young people's creativity and participation in the arts as an integral part of their education in Ireland. Creative Schools recognises that the arts are a powerful means through which children and young people can explore communication and collaboration, stimulate their imaginations to be inventive, and harness their curiosity. 150 pilot schools took part in Creative Schools in 2018 and an additional 150 schools were added in 2019. The Creative Schools also run a week-long celebration of arts and creativity in schools.

### **Creative Clusters**

[Creative Clusters](#) is a pilot initiative of the Department of Education and Skills, led by and in partnership with the Teacher Education Centres, and funded through the Schools Excellence Fund. [Creative Clusters](#) are groups of two to five schools working together on a creative project. It is open to both primary and post primary schools. It aims to:

- Improve teaching and learning
- Promote new ways of working and collaboration between schools and the arts and cultural sector

- Provide an opportunity for clusters of schools to experiment, innovate and collaborate on the design, implementation and evaluation of a bespoke creative learning project
- Develop the creativity of learners and teachers
- Understand, whether clustering schools at different stages of their journey in using the creativity in the classroom and in developing longer term partnerships is an effective model for developing and embedding practice in schools.

The initiative began in the 2018/19 academic year with 23 clusters nationwide, made-up of 71 schools. In 2019/20, an additional 21 clusters, made-up of 77 schools, were created. A facilitator provided by the Education Centre helps each cluster formulate their plan and a fund of €2,500 is provided to each cluster. Projects include coding, drama, Green Forest and Wellbeing.

### **Diploma in Creativity and Innovation for Education**

[University College Dublin](#) offers a Professional Diploma in Creativity and Innovation for Education, which is open to education professionals at all levels. The course aims to aid educators in developing their own Creativity, Entrepreneurial Mindset and Leadership, as well as Teamwork, Resilience and Approaches to Learning.

### **Youth Arts Regional Networking Hubs**

The objective of the Regional Networking Hubs is to support training and development needs that respond to local/regional variation and capacities, to develop better regional partnerships and better support youth arts provision in youth work organisations. In partnership with Mayo, Sligo, Leitrim ETB, NYCI support a hub in the NorthWest, and a hub in Cavan and Monaghan in partnership with Cavan and Monaghan ETB and Cavan and Monaghan Arts Services. Training inputs have been provided on youth film, youth drama, visual arts and youth circus.

### **Trainings by National Youth Council of Ireland**

[National Youth Council of Ireland](#) (NYCI) also offers different arts training for available to anyone working with young people in a youth work, out-of-school or non-formal education setting. These training include topics such as photography, film making and film editing. The trainings aim to explore the given art form as a creative and exciting medium for engaging young people. Its objective is for participants, through developing practical skills in the art form, to become inspired and more confident about using that art form when working with young people.

### **Arts Charter Summer Course**

The Arts Charter Summer Course is a summer course for teachers and artists. The courses focus on and best practice in the partnership between artists and teachers, working together in schools. It is designed by members of [Encountering the Arts Ireland Limited](#) and is a joint initiative between the [Department of Education and Skills](#) and the [Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media](#).

### **Design Thinking Pilot Programme**

[The Design Thinking Pilot Programme](#) for Schools is an action research study run by designCORE and the Department of Humanities in IT Carlow, supported by the Design and Crafts Council of Ireland. It aims to develop a design thinking pilot programme for post primary schools in Ireland. In response to the needs of teachers and students, the research takes the form of collaborative co-design workshops with six designers, six teachers and twelve students from four participating second level schools. The research and workshops investigate ways that designers can support teachers and students to develop creative approaches to problem solving. The programme strives to develop students' 21st century learning skills such as creative problem solving, critical thinking, divergent thinking and imagination.

## Providing quality access to creative environments

[The Young Ensembles Scheme](#) is to support groups of young people between the ages of 10-24 years to create or critically engage with ambitious and original work together in any artform. Groups/ensembles must be made up of three or more members. The maximum award is €25,000.

[The Arts Council](#) runs a [Festivals Investment Scheme](#), recognising the distinctive role arts festivals play in sustaining a vibrant and sustainable arts profile at a local level. The scheme is open to multi-disciplinary festivals and single artform festivals. Depending on the type of festival, funding is available up to €35,000.

[Fighting Words](#) is a free service helps children and young people, as well as adults who did not have this opportunity as children, to discover and harness the power of their own imaginations and creative writing skills. All are welcome, with priority access for those with additional needs. The Fighting Words model has been shown to positively impact on personal, social and academic development. In 2019 a partnership between Fighting Words and Dublin City University's Institute of Education was launched, formalising a longstanding connection. Building on an Evaluation of the Fighting Words Model, carried out by researchers at the Institute of Education, this partnership has been established to explore ways to integrate the Fighting Words model at all levels of teacher education. Funded by the Department of Education and Skills, there is a full-time Fighting Words Fellow based on the campus, working with academic staff across a variety of disciplines.

[The Irish Association of Youth Orchestras](#) (IAYO) is the all-Ireland resource organisation for youth orchestras in Ireland, funded by the Arts Council. Membership is free and open to all Youth Orchestras in Ireland. IAYO represents over 5,000 young musicians in 108 youth orchestras in Ireland and assists in the development of youth orchestras in all parts of the country. IAYO is grant-aided by The Arts Council and supported by Cork City Council; The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht Sport and Media; and Music Network through the Music Capital Scheme 2010.

[The National Youth Orchestra of Ireland](#) is funded by the Department of Education and Skills the Arts Council. Its mission is to inspire young Irish musicians through the study of challenging and exciting repertoire under the guidance of music professionals, encouraging performance of the highest standard on national and international platforms. Its principles include promoting equal access to its activities, overcoming financial and geographical barriers, to benefit young musicians in all parts of Ireland.

[Youth Theatre Ireland](#) is the national development organisation for youth theatre. It supports a network of youth theatres who deliver year-round programmes of drama workshops and performance opportunities for 12- to 21-year-olds from cities, towns and villages across Ireland. [Youth Theatre Ireland](#) was established in 1980 and with support from the Creative Ireland Programme, rolled-out a new nationwide expansion programme during 2019. This project established new partnerships with local groups and youth service providers, and designed a structure for the development, training and start-up of youth theatre groups.

[The National Festival of Youth Theatres](#) is the largest gathering of Irish youth theatres in the year. The festival takes place over five days in early July and involves a residential programme of theatre skills workshops delivered by expert facilitators and a packed calendar of social activities. The festival is ran by Youth Theatre Ireland and participation is open to Youth Theatre Ireland affiliated youth theatres. The festival aims to give participants the opportunity to learn new skills, work with specialist facilitators and get to know young people from youth theatres all around the country.

[The Creative Youth Plan](#) commits to working with key partners to develop a programme aimed at encouraging creative and sustainable engagement with singing and choral music for young people. In 2019, [Sing Ireland](#), with the support of the Creative Ireland Programme and funding from the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media commenced YouthSing Ireland. Informed by research commissioned in 2018

by the Creative Ireland Programme, this project enhances opportunities for engaging young people in singing. It also supports teachers with an enhanced continuous professional development offering, and new resource material in Irish (or of Irish origin), together with an online resource for teachers. A Sing Space will bring young people and children, teachers and musicians together to work collaboratively.

## 8.6 Developing entrepreneurial skills through culture

### Developing entrepreneurial skills through cultural activities

Trinity College Dublin offers a [Postgraduate Certificate in Creative & Culture Entrepreneurship](#).

### Support young entrepreneurs in the cultural and creative sectors

[Business to Arts](#) is a membership-based, charitable organisation that brokers, enables and supports creative partnerships between businesses, individuals and the arts. It builds creative partnerships between arts and business; so that the creativity and acumen of both communities develop quality cultural experiences and world-class collaborations in Ireland. Business to Arts teams its business members up with arts organisations and artists to develop solutions in areas such as sponsorship, commissioning, brand development, training, leadership development, internal and external communications and events. Some Business to Arts initiatives are supported by Dublin City Council and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

[Get up and Go mini company project](#) is an optional competition targeting Transition Year students (students in the year between junior and senior cycles). In groups students think of a creative enterprise providing a product or service, market this good, and sell it to the target audience, aiming to make a profit.

## 8.7 Fostering the creative use of new technologies

### New technologies in support of creativity and innovation

[Culture 2025 A National Cultural Policy Framework to 2025](#) is a policy framework that defines the scope and sets the direction of Government policy for the whole cultural sector (described further in Chapter 8.3). The framework recognises that “Rapid developments in technology, new methods of communication and the internet have changed the way people create, access, and participate in culture. This is particularly true for young people”. It states that there will be a requirement for “continuous investment to ensure that the cultural sector remains at the cutting edge of digital developments”.

[The Design and Crafts Council of Ireland](#) is the national economic organisation for the Design and Crafts Sector. It aims to stimulate innovation, champion design thinking and inform Government policy. Its activities are funded by the [Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment](#) via [Enterprise Ireland](#). The Council recognises has developed online Second Level Design and Craft Education resources and information to engage second level students and further their interest and understanding of craft and design.

[Learn Craft Design](#) is a digital resource that supports learning about craft and design for children of all ages in Ireland. It provides support and information for primary and second-level teachers and for craftspeople delivering craft-based education programmes in schools and other learning centres.

### Facilitating access to culture through new technologies

[The Arts and Culture in Education Research Repository](#) (ACERR), was launched by the Department of Education and Skills in 2019. It is a free online archive to showcase creative activity of teachers, artists, researchers, and others. ACERR is open to people working in education and the public, allowing them an insight into the inspirational ideas being



developed for schools. ACERR has been developed as part of the Creative Ireland Programme and has been supported by the Dormant Accounts Funds.

[The Arts in Education Portal](#) provides a platform through which good collaborative practice in arts-in-education and arts education is supported. The portal was established under the Arts in Education Charter.

[The National Youth Council of Ireland](#) have put together a list of podcasts, film, photography, visual art, creative writing and reading resources and book recommendations for young people.

In response to Covid-19 measures, the [Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media](#) established several online cultural initiatives:

- Ireland Preforms is a joint initiative by the Department, through [Culture Ireland](#), and Facebook Ireland. They have come together to support and present live presentations by Irish artists, in English or Irish. Funding of €100,000 is being made available on a match funded basis by FACEBOOK Ireland and Culture Ireland.
- partnering with the national broadcaster Radio Television of Ireland (Raidió Teilifís Éireann), TG4 (a public service television channel which broadcasts in Irish) and others to bring a broad range of cultural, heritage and language content to the public from archive and new sources in partnership with organisations such as Druid and Other Voices.
- a new Creative Ireland partnership with [Healthy Ireland](#) to promote wellbeing and creativity, including sharing of new Design and Crafts Council Ireland online resources to engage young people and adults in home-based making activities
- TG4 to partner with the Society of the Musicians of Ireland (Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann) for a reimagined Festival of Music (Fleadh Ceoil) and TG4's television show Recommended/Praise Story (Molscéal) to showcase language-based Arts and stories from Gaeltacht communities in collaboration with Gaeltachta Art (Ealaín na Gaeltachta), TechSpace and others.

## 8.8 Synergies and partnerships

### Synergies between public policies and programmes

There are several apprenticeships available in the arts and cultural sectors. These include:

- The Computer Generated Imagery Technical Artist apprenticeship, awarded at NFQ Level 8/ EQF Level 6 BA. This apprenticeship is a partnership between SOLAS, Technological University Dublin, Screen Skills Ireland, Animation Skillnet and a consortium of industry partners.
- Hairdressing apprenticeship awarded at NFQ Level 6/ EQF Level 5. It is coordinated and delivered by Limerick and Clare ETB, and also delivered in other ETBs throughout the country.
- Stonecutting and Stonemasonry awarded at NFQ Level 6/ EQF Level 5.
- Wood Manufacturing and Finishing apprenticeship awarded at NFQ Level 6/ EQF Level 5.

For further synergies between public policies and programmes, please see the subheading Cross-sectoral cooperation in Chapter 8.2.

### Partnerships between the culture and creative sectors, youth organisations and youth workers

[The Arts Council](#) is the Irish government agency for developing the arts. It works in partnership with artists, arts organisations, public policy makers and others to build a central place for the arts in Irish life. Its ten-year strategy, [Making Great Art Work](#) (2016-

2025) states its objective to invest in artists, arts organisations and key programmes dedicated to developing high quality work in arts-in-education and youth arts, and to support the provision of excellent arts experiences for young people in the public domain.

Under the [Local Creative Youth Partnerships](#) pilot initiative, three Education and Training Boards (ETBs) establish networks which enable information sharing and collaboration between local creative youth service providers to bring about better use of existing resources, practices and initiatives in an ETB area. Further details about the Local Creative Youth Partnerships are in the subchapter Distribution of responsibilities between top-level and regional/local authorities in Chapter 8.2.

[National Youth Council of Ireland](#) (NYCI) partners with the [Arts Council](#) and the [Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth](#) in running their Youth Arts Programme. NYCI also published [Young People, Creative Action and Social Change](#): A report on the value of participation in the arts for young people.

[The Artist and Youth Work Residency Scheme](#) is designed to promote innovative partnerships between youth groups, artists and (where relevant) arts organisations. A residency may take the form of an artist in residence in a youth work setting and/or a youth group in residence in an arts setting. There are two strands to the Artist and Youth Work Residency Scheme.

Strand One – Youth Arts Explorer Grant is for projects, services and organisations that are beginning to explore introducing youth arts experiences to their youth work setting but are not yet sufficiently experienced/confident to develop or manage a larger scale residency project. The aim of the grant is to support an organisation to explore the introduction of arts practice to the youth service through a flexible approach. Potential activities could include to test an idea or concept, host introductory sessions, facilitate exploratory meetings between artist, young people and youth service, or connect the group to a local arts centre, cultural venue, etc. for a performance, workshop, or exhibition. The grant is worth €1,500.

Strand Two - Artist and Youth Work Residency Grant aims to promote innovative partnerships between youth groups, artists and (where relevant) arts organisations. A residency may take the form of an artist in residence in a youth work setting and/or a youth group in residence in an arts setting. This grant is intended to support residency programmes that have been jointly developed by the partners involved (i.e. the artist, youth group and any other key partner organisation) and that fully meet the criteria for the award. The grant is worth €5,000.

[Arts Council](#) schemes and initiatives run in conjunction with external agents, including:

- [The Children's Laureate](#) (Laureate na nÓg)
- [Local Authorities](#), through the Artist in Schools Scheme
- [Poetry Ireland](#), through the Writers in Schools Scheme
- [National Youth Council of Ireland](#), through the Artist and Youth Work Residency Scheme and the Youth Arts Development Award
- Music Network, through the Music Capital Scheme
- Create, through the Artist in the Community Scheme

## 8.9 Enhancing social inclusion through culture

### Fostering equality and young people involvement through cultural activities

[The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union](#) applies directly to Ireland. The practice of diverse cultures is guaranteed under the Charter of Fundamental Rights and

must be safeguarded unless practices conflict with other inviolable European rights or with national law.

Action 69 of the [Migrant Integration Strategy 2017-2020](#) states that Arts and culture programmes and policy will assist in the promotion of the arts and culture of diverse communities across Ireland. The [Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media](#) is responsible for implementing this action.

[Arts and Disability Ireland](#) is the national development and resource organisation for arts and disability. It promotes engagement with the arts at all levels – as professional artists, audience members and arts workers – for people of all ages with disabilities of all kinds. It works towards arts programmes and arts venues becoming fully accessible experiences for all audiences. Arts and Disability Ireland also advocates for inclusive policy and practice which provides real access to all aspects of the arts for people with disabilities, and for everyone.

Through the [Communities Integration Fund 2021](#), the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth announced €500,000 in funding. This is the fifth year of the Communities Integration Fund that celebrates the rich cultural diversity within local communities and enables local community-based organisations across Ireland to play a greater role in supporting the integration of migrants. Eligible organisations can apply for grant funding of €1,000 – €5,000 to support local integration initiatives.

The [Heritage Council](#) has offered funding for activities that promote integration. In some cases, this funding has targeted migrants, refugees or new arrivals to Ireland.

Further cultural initiatives focusing social inclusion are discussed in Chapter 8.4 Reducing obstacles to young people's access to culture.

## **Combating discrimination and poverty through cultural activities**

[Culture 2025 A National Cultural Policy Framework](#) to 2025 considers a range of important issues including:

- supporting artists and creative workers,
- improving access to culture,
- breaking down barriers in areas of social exclusion and disadvantage,
- how culture is enriched by greater cultural diversity.

The policy is underpinned by key values including:

- the right of everyone to participate in the cultural life of the nation
- the value of cultural diversity, informed by the many traditions and social backgrounds in Ireland.

[Culture 2025](#) is described in further details in Chapter 8.3.

Under the [Programme for a Partnership Government](#), the [Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media](#) was committed to commemorating the most significant events in the State's history, ensuring that these commemorations are inclusive, and aiming to enhance understanding of shared history, particularly among children and young people.

## **8.10 Current debates and reforms**

### **Forthcoming policy developments**

[Heritage Ireland 2030](#) – Keeping you in the picture

Heritage Ireland 2030 is Ireland's upcoming national heritage plan. It will be a comprehensive framework of values, principles, strategic priorities and actions to guide and inform the heritage sector over the next decade.

In preparation for the national heritage plan, over 70 public consultations workshops took place during 2018 and the [Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media](#) have published a report on the Heritage Ireland 2030 Public Consultation (November 2018). In 2019 submissions were invited to address the themes of National Leadership and Heritage; Heritage Partnerships; and Communities and Heritage. The Heritage Council's Analysis of Submissions Received (2019) is also available.

An indicative timetable published by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht advised that Heritage Ireland 2030 was scheduled for drafting during Summer 2019 and publication in Spring 2020. As of August 2021, Heritage Ireland 2030 is still pending.

### **National Youth Singing Project**

A National Youth Singing Project has been proposed in research (2019) commissioned by the Creative Ireland Programme Office of the [Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media](#). It was commissioned in response to an action within the Creative Youth Plan to support a strategy to develop and extend choral singing and the creation of a model for the National Choral Singing Project: Youth and Singing. It is proposed as a creativity programme, equally located in education and the arts, potentially delivered by a consortium of stakeholders in the group singing sector and principally with Sing Ireland. It aims to mainstream cultural and creative experiences, build audiences, and expand access to creative opportunities through the medium of group singing in and across school and community settings.

As of September 2021, there has been no updates on this National Youth Singing Project.

### **National Mapping of Youth Arts Provision**

[National Youth Council of Ireland's National Youth Arts Programme](#) has engaged University College Cork to undertake a National Mapping of Youth Arts Provision. This will provide data and evidence on young people's engagement with the arts in youth work settings across the country. A census took place in January and February 2020, including Youth workers, youth arts practitioners, youth work organisations, youth ensembles and anyone participating in youth arts in youth work settings. This will provide data and evidence on young people's engagement with the arts in youth work settings across the country. Alongside the research, an online map of practice will be developed, to showcase the work of these organisations.

As of September 2021, there are no updates on this research or the online map

## **Ongoing debates**

### **Equality of access to the arts**

[The National Youth Council of Ireland](#) (NYCI) has called on the Government to develop and implement an action plan which would guarantee each child growing up in Ireland equality of access to the arts (both in and out of school) and tackle economic, geographical and educational disadvantage as barriers to participation and deliver on the arts access promised to each child as part of the five National Outcomes for Children contained in [Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People](#), 2014-2020. NYCI also calls on the Government to fully implement the 'Arts in Education Charter' and to further develop the Charter to incorporate non-formal education and youth arts.

As of September 2021 the government is yet to develop and implement this action plan or the 'Arts in Education Charter.'

## Support for artists during Covid-19

Calls from the arts and cultural sector, have requested greater supports to artists and the wider cultural sector. Groups have lobbied for increased supports include the media, Literature groups, actors, the National Campaign for the Arts and festival organisers. Criticisms include that the available supports are not sufficient and do not cover the many workers in jobs which are necessary to support the cultural sector.

In 2020, the Government introduced measures to assist those impacted by the COVID-19 crisis, that apply to all sectors of the economy, including those who work in the culture sector. The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht has also taken additional measures to support the cultural sector, including bringing forward the payment of grants awarded in 2020 to ensure financial commitments can be met and waiving eligibility requirements which no longer apply due to the COVID-19 crisis.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, Arts Council exchequer funding in 2020 increased by €25m from €80 m at the start of the year. This has enabled the Arts Council to significantly increase its support for artists and arts organisations, including those working with and for children and young people. 2020 saw the expansion of bursaries for artists, and the introduction of new awards in the area of Young People, Children and Education (YPCE), including YPCE Project Award and YPCE Commissions. Arts Council funding for 2021 is €130 million. The Arts Council strategy continues to place priority on planning and providing for children and young people.

The Music and Entertainment Business Assistance Scheme (MEBAS), and the MEBAS II, were also introduced for businesses in the live entertainment sector that have been significantly negatively affected by COVID-19 restrictions.

The Events Sector COVID Support Scheme is for small and medium-sized businesses in the events sector, which have been negatively impacted by COVID-19 restrictions.

Eligible businesses can get a once-off payment up to €50,000. To be eligible you must be ineligible for support under the Covid Restrictions Support Scheme (CRSS).

## 9. YOUTH AND THE WORLD

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All Irish young people being 'Connected, respected and contributing to their world' is a goal outcome of the [Irish National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2014-2020](#). The framework states that young people should 'be civically engaged, socially and environmentally conscious, and [...] aware of their rights as well as being responsible and respectful of the law' (pp. 6). This is discussed further under Chapter 9.1 General context.

Young people's contributions towards long-lasting climate solutions are specifically encouraged under the Irish government's [Climate Action Plan 2019](#). The plan seeks to maximize young people's engagement and contribution through identifying concrete activities to amplify their voices and give them the space to contribute to climate change solutions.

[The National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development 2014-2020](#) provides a framework to support the education system in working toward a more sustainable future. It includes the recommendation that students should be consulted on the issue of Education for Sustainable Development to inform future policy. The strategy is described further in Chapter 9.4 Raising awareness about global issues. The development of a National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development that will run until 2030 is currently part of joint public consultations by the Irish government.

## 9.1 General context

### Main concepts

Ireland's first National Policy Framework for children and young people is [Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures, The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2014-2020](#). The framework, targeting 0- to 24-year-olds, includes the desire that all children and young people in Ireland should be 'Connected, respected and contributing to their world'. It states that children and young people should be supported and encouraged to both play a full role in society and to recognise that they themselves can heavily influence their own lives now and in the future. The framework also states that young people should 'be civically engaged, socially and environmentally conscious, and [...] aware of their rights as well as being responsible and respectful of the law' (pp. 6). The framework is discussed further in Chapter 1-Youth Policy Governance.

Education for Sustainable Development is defined as 'what you learn in school to make the world a fairer and better place for everyone'. This child friendly explanation of education for sustainable development was developed by The Department of Education, in collaboration with Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth's Citizen Participation Unit. The definition was informed by the National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development; UNESCO; Global Education Network Europe; and The World We Want: A Guide to the Goals for Children and Young People.

### Youth interest in global issues

The Irish government specifically do not monitor young people's awareness of, or interest in global issues.

However, [Youth 2030](#) is a global youth work and development education project funded by Irish Aid, which strives to increase the integration, quality, and spread of global youth work and development education in non-formal youth work education, organisations, and projects. Its aim is to create an enabling and coherent policy and practice environment for global youth work at both a national, European, and global level.

This Agenda aims to empower young people to develop the knowledge and skills to engage with global issues and to explore their own values, beliefs, and connections with the wider world.

### GenZ Index

GenZ Index is a three-part research report investigating Generation Z (those born between 1995 and 2009) in Ireland. The first part of the research report, [GenZ Index: Initial Findings \(Young Social Innovators and Amárach Research, 2019\)](#), reported asking participants which of several issues they would see themselves contributing their time to:

- Climate change
- Depression or Anxiety
- School or exam stress
- Being different (diversity)
- Consent
- Fear or anxiety about the future
- Sex education
- Drugs or Alcohol
- Housing
- Poverty
- Loneliness

- Cyber bullying
- Terrorism or Conflict
- Other
- None

Climate change was ranked as top issue, with 64% of respondents contributing most of their time towards this issue. Participants were also asked to select what they personally considered the greatest sign of a successful life, from:

- Making a difference to your community/world
- Being financially secure
- Loving your job
- Being a good parent
- Owning your own home
- Having good friends
- Being happy/good mental health
- Having a loving partner/good relationships
- Making a difference to your community/world was the highest selected response (39%).

Part 2 of the Gen Z Index was published in July 2019 and relates to phone usage, social media influence, unrealistic beauty standards and peer pressure.

### **A Generation for Change**

[A Generation for Change: Spotlight Report on Young People, the Sustainable Development Goals and Ireland](#) was written by Ireland's UN youth Delegates and published by the National Youth Council of Ireland in 2018. The report details issues affecting young people at a local and global level; how these issues relate to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); and Ireland's commitments in relation to these. Generation for Change's summary report lists key messages as that:

- Young people want the Government to recognise their potential to be a force for good in Ireland and in the world. They want both the Government and the international community to allow them to play an active role in achieving the SDGs.
- Young people want the Government to tackle poverty (including homelessness) in Ireland and internationally.
- Young people want Ireland to mainstream the SDGs throughout all Government actions and policies. Young people want Ireland to be a leader internationally and help other states achieve the SDGs to ensure that no one around the world is left behind, reaching the furthest behind first.

The role of education will be central to Ireland and to the world in achieving the SDGs by 2030. Young People are calling on the Irish Government to recognise the importance of SDG 4.7 in providing educational opportunities to better understand the world in which we live, our role in society, and support our empowerment to bring about change at personal, local, national, and global level

4.7: By 2030 ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development

## National Volunteering Strategy (2021-2025)

[The National Volunteering Strategy \(2021 - 2025\)](#) sets out a long-term vision for volunteering and volunteers in Ireland. With actions to be implemented over five years, the Strategy sets out a general direction for government policy in relation to the volunteers and the volunteering environment, including young volunteers. It also builds upon and strengthens the renewed relationship and partnership between Government and the voluntary sector which has developed during its preparation.

The purpose of the Strategy is to recognise, support and promote the unique value and contribution of volunteers to Irish society. The Strategy also provides an opportunity for Government to acknowledge how important volunteering is to the well-being of the nation and to steer the delivery of an agreed and ambitious vision. The contribution of volunteering to our society has never been more prevalent than during the response in the last number of months to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### The Strategic Objectives include:

Strategic Objective 1: To increase participation and diversity in volunteering including embracing new trends and innovation.

Strategic Objective 2: To facilitate, develop and support the Volunteering Environment so that it contributes to vibrant and sustainable communities.

Strategic Objective 3: To recognise, celebrate and communicate the value and impact of volunteers and volunteering in all its forms.

Strategic Objective 4: To promote ethical and skills-based international volunteering to deliver results for beneficiaries and to enhance Global Citizenship in Ireland.

Strategic Objective 5: To improve policy coherence on volunteering across Government both nationally and locally.

### An ethnically diverse population of young people

Throughout its history, Ireland has experienced periods of mass emigration. In particular, the famine in the 1840s led to a subsequent population reduction of more than 50 per cent (Fanning, 2018: 81). Moreover, when one considers the more recent large-scale immigration occurring from 1996 to 2007 in Ireland (Quinn et al., 2008), it can be easy to forget about the corresponding increase in the number of young people arriving to the country, or being born in Ireland, with at least one immigrant-parent. Census 2016 provides the most up-to-date data (see table below) available on ethnicity and cultural background in Ireland. The next Census is scheduled to take place on 3rd April 2022. There will be amendments to the framing of several questions regarding ethnicity, ethnic identity, nationality, and religion, to accommodate the ever-changing context of Irish society.

Notably, the 2016 Census acknowledges that, 'White Irish' (82.3%) is the largest ethnic group for young people aged, 15–24 years. Moreover, the nationally focused report, *Make Minority A Priority* (Walsh, 2017) reveals that, in Ireland, nearly "1 in 7 people (15%) aged, 15-24 are minority ethnic;" increasing to 16.1% for young people aged, 0-14 (Walsh, 2017: 38). In addition, the report stresses the need for intercultural youth work in Ireland to do more to support the specific needs of young people from minority ethnic backgrounds. Refer to *Access All Areas* by Walsh et al. (2020) for a comprehensive toolkit to support and develop diversity and inclusion best practice within a youth organisation.

Minority-led organisations in Ireland have been playing a key role in shaping conversations around diversity, inclusion, discrimination, and racism. One particular organisation, *Black and Irish* – which is both ethnic minority and youth-led – was founded in June 2020 following the untimely death of George Floyd in the US. The founders, Leon, Boni, Femi, and Amanda, set an aim to highlight and celebrate the identity of black and mixed 'race' Irish people. The organisation, with over 53,000 Instagram followers, have gained national recognition with their very own RTÉ podcast series on Spotify. In addition, they have used



their platform to engage with government officials and other stakeholders to discuss the challenges and obstacles facing young people from minority ethnic backgrounds in Ireland.

### **Ethnic or cultural background of young people aged 15-24 (extracted from census 2016)**

#### **Ethnic or cultural background**

White Irish	462,994	82.3%
White Irish Traveller	5,705	1%
Any other White background	45,650	8.1%
Black or Black Irish	9,485	1.7%
Asian or Asian Irish	13,350	2.4%
Other (inc. mixed background)	10,437	1.9%
Not stated	14,684	2.6%
Total	562,305	100%
Ethnic minority only	84,627	15.1%

## **9.2 Administration and governance**

### **Governance**

#### **Main actors**

The main Governmental authorities and public actors involved in policymaking, in the field of youth's contribution to global processes of policymaking include:

- [the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth \(DCEDIY\)](#): the main government department responsible for youth policy in Ireland. The Participation Unit is a dedicated department of DCEDIY that works to ensure that children and young people have a voice in the design, delivery and monitoring of services and policies that affect their lives.
- [Hub na nÓg \(Youth Hub\)](#): established by DCEDIY, Hub na nÓg supports Government Departments, State agencies and non-government organisations to give children and young people a voice in decision-making on issues that affect their lives, with a particular focus on those that are seldom heard.
- [the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications](#): responsible for the areas of Communications, Climate Action, Environment, Energy and Natural Resource sectors.
- [the Department of Foreign Affairs](#): responsible for promoting the Ireland's interests in the European Union and the wider world. It is also involved with international aid and promoting youth engagement. For example, the Department partners with the National Youth Council of Ireland to provide the opportunity for young Irish people to participate in the UN Youth Delegate Programme.
- [the Department of Foreign Affairs' Development Cooperation Division](#) manages and delivers the Government's overseas aid programme, Irish Aid.

- [Youth councils \(Comhairle na nÓg\)](#): youth councils in the local authorities, which give children and young people the opportunity to be involved in the development of local services and policies.
- [The National Youth Parliament \(Dáil na nÓg\)](#): the annual national parliament for young people aged between 12-18 years.

Further details are provided in Chapter 5.4 Young people's participation in policymaking.

### **The main non-public actors involved in policymaking, in the field of youth's contribution to global processes of policymaking, include:**

- [An Taisce](#): Ireland's national trust. It is the National Operator for all international environmental education programmes of FEE (Foundation for Environmental Education), including the Green flag Schools programme (discussed in Chapter 9.4 Raising awareness about global issues).
- [ECO-UNESCO](#): Ireland's Environmental Education and Youth Organisation. ECO-UNESCO works to conserve the environment and to promote the personal development of young people through practical environmental projects and activities. It is affiliated to the World Federation of UNESCO Clubs, Centres and Associations (WFUCA).
- [Foróige](#): an Irish youth organisation which aims to enable young people to involve themselves consciously and actively in their development and in the development of society.
- [The National Youth Council of Ireland \(NYCI\)](#): the representative body for voluntary youth organisations in Ireland. Further information about NYCI is available in Chapter 1.4 Youth policy decision-making.

### **General distribution of responsibilities between top-level and regional/local authorities**

As illustrated above, the responsibility for youth's contribution to global policymaking, implementation, and follow-up, is divided between the government, local authorities, and non-governmental organizations.

### **Cross-sectoral cooperation**

The Children and Young People's Participation Support Team collaborates with other Government departments, statutory bodies, and non-governmental organisations in providing opportunities for children and young people to have a voice in decisions that affect their lives, with a strong focus on ensuring participation by seldom heard children and young people.

Ireland was the first country in Europe to have developed a cross-Governmental National Strategy on children and young people's participation in decision making ([Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2014-2020](#))

## **9.3 Exchanges between young people and policy-makers on global issues**

### **Global issues exchanges with policy-makers at the domestic level**

The Participation Unit is a dedicated unit under the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY). It takes the lead in ensuring that young people have a voice on matters that affect their lives and that their views are given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity.

[Youth Hub \(Hub na nÓg\)](#) supports Government Departments, State agencies and non-government organisations to give children and young people a voice in decision-making on issues that affect their lives, with a particular focus on those that are seldom heard.

The Participation Unit and Youth Hub (Hub na nÓg) works with DCEDIY to plan and conduct consultations with children and young people. Further details on the Participation Unit and Youth Hub (Hub na nÓg) are provided in Chapter 5.4 Young people's participation in policymaking.

### **Youth Council (Comhairle na nÓg) and the National Youth Parliament (Dáil na nÓg)**

[Youth Council \(Comhairle na nÓg\)](#) are child and youth councils in the 31 local authorities. It is the recognised national structure for participation by children and young people in decision-making in all 31 local authorities. These councils give children and young people a voice on the development of local policies and services. Delegates from the councils are elected, by the councils, to the [National Youth Parliament \(Dáil na nÓg\)](#).

The National Youth Parliament is the annual national parliament for 12- to 18-year-olds. It is held every two years. Approximately 200 representatives from the 31 youth councils are elected as delegates. The DCEDIY funds and oversees National Youth Parliament, which is hosted by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

The topics discussed at National Youth Parliament are chosen by young people in the youth councils. The theme for 2019 was Climate Change. Recommendations from National Youth Parliament are followed-up by the Youth Council's National Executive, supported by the DCEDIY Participation Unit and carried through a full process of engagement with relevant influencers, stakeholders, and policy makers to ensure their views are reflected appropriately and meaningfully in government decision-making. The Comhairle na nÓg National Executive 2020-21 are working on the theme of Climate Change with a specific focus on climate conscious transport solutions. Further details on the Youth Council and the National Youth Parliament are available in Chapter 5.3 Youth representation bodies.

## **Global issues exchanges with policy-makers at the international level**

### **UN Youth Delegate programme**

[The UN Youth Delegate](#) programme in Ireland is organised by the Department of Foreign Affairs, Irish Aid (the Government's overseas aid programme) and the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI). Its goal is to support young people to be agents of change through active engagement in the United Nations. Youth Delegates are selected by NYCI via a public competition to represent the young people of Ireland at the United Nations General Assembly.

The role of Ireland's UN Youth Delegates includes direct consultation with youth groups throughout the country and abroad during their year long term of events. The delegates work with young people at home and abroad to bring the issues that matter most to them to national and international attention. UN Youth Delegates have worked closely with staff at the Department of Foreign Affairs and have accompanied the Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister) and Ministers of State to events to help ensure that the voice of young people is heard.

### **Congress of Local and Regional Authorities Youth Delegates**

From October 2014, one Irish young person has been invited to become a youth delegate, by the [Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe](#). The youth delegates come from different backgrounds, including activists of youth, youth workers, students, young politicians. One young person from each of the 47 member states is selected.

These delegates take an active part in the two annual sessions in Strasbourg, France. The sessions are formal gatherings where the Congress members examine reports, hold

thematic debates, and adopt recommendations. The youth delegates sit alongside the Congress members for both sessions. The delegates are invited to give their views during the debates and to have an exchange with the members of the Congress on the issues on the agenda. The delegates also develop their own grass-roots project in their home countries, under the Congress' aegis.

The 37<sup>th</sup> and most recent session took place on the 29<sup>th</sup> of October 2019.

### **Youth Assembly on Climate**

The Youth Assembly on Climate took place, on 15 November 2019, in the Dáil (the Irish parliament), in collaboration with RTE (the national broadcaster). 10- to 17-year-olds were invited to apply. 157 young people from all over Ireland were selected to partake, to match the number of TDs (members of the Dáil). These young people attended the Dáil to discuss what Ireland needs to do to tackle the climate crisis. 10 recommendations were put forward to the government. These are discussed in Chapter 9.7 Current debates and reforms.

In June 2021, the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth approved funding for 14 new projects proposed by 23 youth organisations surrounding Youth Climate Justice at community, regional and national level.

## **9.4 Raising awareness about global issues**

### **Formal, non-formal and informal learning**

#### **Formal learning**

[The National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development 2014-2020](#) provides a framework to support the education system in working towards a more sustainable future. It aims for learners to be equipped with the relevant knowledge, dispositions, skills, and values that will motivate and empower them, throughout their lives, to become informed active citizens who act for a more sustainable future. This is to be achieved through the existing curriculum and pedagogical approaches to develop key skills, dispositions, knowledge, and values. The Strategy also includes the recommendation that students should be consulted on the issue of Education for Sustainable Development to inform future policy.

[Irish Aid](#) is the Irish Government's programme for overseas development. It includes development education funding, which aims to increase awareness and understanding of global development issues among the Irish public. The long term goal of [Irish Aid Development Education Strategy 2017-2023](#) is that through the provision of development education, people are empowered to analyse and challenge the root causes and consequences of global hunger, poverty, inequality, injustice and climate change. Irish Aid works in partnership with educators across the primary, post-primary, higher education, youth and adult and community education sectors, to increase the accessibility, quality, and effectiveness of development education in Ireland. Irish Aid is managed by the Development Co-operation Division of the Department of Foreign Affairs.

[WorldWise Global Schools](#) is Ireland's Global Citizenship Education programme for post-primary schools, established in 2013. The programme has worked with 350 schools nationwide, aiming to integrate Global Citizenship Education into all aspects of teaching and learning at post-primary level. WorldWise Global Schools is funded by Irish Aid. It is implemented by a consortium of organisations: Self Help Africa; Concern Worldwide; and The City of Dublin Education and Training Board Curriculum Development Unit.

The Irish approach to Education for Sustainable Development, within the senior cycle, includes both the integration of Education for Sustainable Development across the curriculum (for example, within essays in language subjects) and the provision of Education for Sustainable Development specific programmes and courses in school.

## Transition Year

Transition year is an optional year in secondary school, which may take place as the first of three years in the senior cycle. Transition year is discussed further in Chapter 6.1 Youth Policy Governance. There are several short transition year courses, each designed to be taught over 45 hours and these courses discuss global issues.

[Global Development Issues](#) is a course for Transition Year students that introduces development issues. It engages students in analysis, reflection, and action for local and global citizenship. Teachers can choose to teach 3-4 thematic strands: Poverty; Conflict; Gender Inequality; Sustainable Environments; Trade; Health and HIV/AIDS; and Human Rights. This transition unit aims to:

- help students gain knowledge and understanding about the unequal development in our world
- enable students to become more skilled and independent in researching, analysing and understanding our world
- foster a positive attitude so that students feel empowered to act to make the world a more equal and just place.

**Pamoja-Together for Rights** helps students to explore development and human rights issues in a global context. It supports a student-centered approach to learning as students examine a human rights issue of interest to them, complete a project and undertake awareness-raising actions. It aims to:

- engender a sense of empowerment, agency, and personal effectiveness amongst students
- cultivate empathy and understanding towards other people, particularly towards those in the developing world.

**What's with the Weather** explores the impact of climate change. Through experiments, role-plays and project work, students decide how they can change their own habits to make a difference. It aims to:

- help students understand the global concern of climate change and global warming
- encourage students to look objectively at evidence of global warming in the world today
- promote students to consider their role in and responsibility for caring for the environment and the planet's future health.

**Environmental Studies** encourages students to explore issues that are affecting their environment. Students carry out practical projects and actions such as developing a community garden, recycling, tree planting, bulb planting, wildlife gardens, environmental surveys etc. It aims to:

- develop an awareness of the local and global environmental issues that affect us
- promote an appreciation of the positive aspects of the local environment and its potential
- encourage students to develop their abilities to plan, prepare and present their project
- develop students' belief in the positive actions that they can take
- help students recognise through practical participation the positive impact that they can have on their environment.

Setting up a **Green School** encourages students to audit, evaluate and change their school environment for the better. Its objective is to lead schools to being awarded the status of 'Green School' from [An Taisce](#). An Taisce is the national trust, and its funders include the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications. Setting up a Green School aims to:

- provide students with a forum for finding working solutions to environmental issues affecting their school
- develop students' appreciation of their role as stewards of the environment and a sense of their power as agents for change
- foster the development of a range of skills including communication, teamwork, and portfolio presentation
- enhance the quality of the school environment through the students' actions.

**How the World Works** provides students with the opportunity to explore how structures of poverty and inequality are maintained on a global level and how they can help change the way the world works by assuming their responsibility as global citizens. It aims to:

- promote awareness about the causes of global inequalities
- create an understanding of how individuals and organisations can bring about change through their actions
- cultivate empathy towards people in the Global South linked to a sense of responsibility towards working to support justice in the world

### **Leaving Certificate**

The Leaving Certificate Examination is the Irish state examination that takes place during the senior cycle. The Leaving Certificate is discussed further in Chapter 6.1 Youth Policy Governance.

The Leaving Certificate Established Subject Politics and Society includes global issues, such as Human Rights and Responsibilities (in Ireland, Europe, and the wider world); Globalisation; and Sustainable Development. Climate change is covered within optional Leaving Certificate Established Subjects Geography and Agricultural Science. Politics and Society, Geography and Agricultural Science each have 180 hours of class time, over a two-year period

## **Non-formal and informal learning**

### **Green-Schools**

[Green-Schools](#) is an international environmental education programme and award scheme. It is a student-led programme with involvement from the wider community. Green-Schools promotes long-term, whole-school action for the environment. Internationally it is known as 'Eco-schools'. In Ireland, Green-Schools is run by An Taisce, operated in partnership with Local Authorities and supported by several government departments. The award part of the scheme comes in the form of a green flag. To ensure schools maintained environmental standards, the green flag award requires renewal every two years.

### **European Youth Parliament Ireland**

[The European Youth Parliament \(EYP\) Ireland](#) is a non-profit, non-partisan organisation that runs several weekend long conferences every year for young people. It is open to all fourth- and fifth-year students. EYP Ireland is one of 36 national committees of the European Youth Parliament International. EYP Ireland's mission is to develop an interest in European issues in young people in Ireland. It seeks to empower youth to question the world around them and come up with innovative solutions to global problems, while emphasizing concepts of cooperation and respect. EYP is volunteer-run and there is an entry fee for each participant. Participants can progress from regional, to national and international levels.

## SDG Challenge Schools

[SDG Challenge Schools](#) is a World Wise Global Schools funded programme. This programme focuses on the increased capacity of schools to raise awareness and action of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

SDG Challenge Schools involves Teacher Training; Parent Workshops; Classroom Visits; and School Action Projects. A development education approach is at the centre of SDG Challenge Schools. This interactive and creative educational process aims to increase awareness and understanding of the interconnected world which we live in. SDG Challenge Schools allows schools to explore the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values necessary to become global citizens. It facilitates schools to act for a more just and sustainable world.

The SDG Challenge 2021 call will support solutions that contribute to SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages, and related goals and targets.

## Games 4 The Goals

[Games 4 The Goals](#) was a training course in 2019, ran by Development Perspectives and funded under the European Commission's Erasmus+. It was aimed at youth workers, trainers, educators, and mentors who wished to explore the Sustainable Development Goals through gamification. The eight-day training course aimed to develop Global Education competences of youth workers and educators through game-based learning, with a focus on the SDGs. It aimed to harness the power of games to develop media literacy and critical thinking skills, examine values within society and encourage young people to take informed action related to the SDGs.

In terms of quality assurance mechanisms, assessment criteria are applied during the application for Erasmus+ funding. Following the application and reporting, feedback may be given by the national agency for Erasmus+, which in Ireland is [Léargas](#). Should the organisation fail to meet quality standards, Erasmus+ funding can be withheld or taken back.

## Educators' Support

[Sustainable Energy Ireland \(SEAI\)](#) provides free resources to secondary school teachers focused on sustainable energy use in the home. Multimedia resources about various topics related to sustainable energy are available on SEAI's website. SEAI is Ireland's national sustainable energy authority.

[WorldWise Global Schools](#) provides a comprehensive range of supports and interventions for schools- including grant funding, training, events, resources, and personalized support from its staff team. It equips both educators and learners with the knowledge, skills, and values to act ethically and sustainably in a world that is both complex and highly interconnected. WorldWise Global Schools is funded by Irish Aid. [The Global Passport Award](#) is an EU recognised quality mark, which offers schools a framework to integrate Global Citizenship Education into their teaching and learning. It is a self-assessed and externally audited accreditation, and it is open to all post-primary schools in Ireland. The Passport Awards for 2021 are currently being assessed.

Educators' Week is ran by ECO-UNESCO and includes a series of short workshops and events for Teachers, Youth Leaders and Mentors to learn more about the SDGs.

[The National Youth Council of Ireland](#) runs trainings for youth workers on working with youths to address global issues, such as the SDGs. Some examples of these courses are:

- Action – Youth work and the SDGs
- Going Global – Connecting and Threading Practice and Organisation
- Intro to Global Youth Work and Development Education
- Youth Work Can Make a Difference in How We Address the Climate Crisis.

## Youth-targeted information campaigns on global issues

[One World Week](#) is a week of youth-led awareness raising, education and action where young people learn about local and global justice issues and are empowered to take action to bring about positive change. Each year has a different theme. In 2019 this was climate action and the sustainable development goals. 2020's theme was power in youth work. The theme for 2021 is ACT NOW FOR OUR CHILDREN'S WORLD. Throughout the week young people and youth organisations will take part in local and regional activities funded through One World mini grants. The initiative includes a youth climate summit; free training; and a resource pack. The training, taking the form of a two-hour workshops, use non-formal development education methods to connect young people and youth workers with Climate Change and help act in their community. Over 400 young people from different parts of the island of Ireland came together for the 2019 youth climate summit. One World Week is run by National Youth Council of Ireland in partnership with Concern Worldwide, Trócaire, and Goal.

[Green-Schools' Climate Action Week](#) takes place in October in schools across Ireland. The annual awareness campaign on climate action highlights how climate change is impacting Ireland. The weeklong initiative encourages students, teachers, and the wider community to talk about climate change and get involved in local climate action.

### Information providers

There is no specific public authority or body responsible for disseminating information on global issues among young people. However, some relevant departments providing youths with information on global issues are:

- [the Department of Education \(DES\)](#): responsible for education and training
- [The Department of Environment, Climate and Communications](#): responsible for communications, Climate Action, Environment, broadcasting, energy, natural resources, and postal services.

### Key initiatives

#### [ECO-UNESCO's Young Environmentalist Awards](#)

ECO-UNESCO's Young Environmentalist Awards features environmental projects from 10- to 18-year-olds in schools, youth, and community groups across the island of Ireland.

#### **BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition**

[BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition](#) is a competition open to Second Level students aged between 12–19 years. Categories include 'Biological and Ecological Sciences' and many entries are related to environmental issues.

#### **Climate Ambassadors**

[An Taisce's Climate Ambassador programme](#) is Ireland's first ever initiative to train and support individuals acting on climate change. The programme is coordinated by the Environmental Education Unit of An Taisce with support from the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications. The Climate Ambassador programme is open to second and third level students and members of the public aged 18+. Ambassadors are given the tools, resources, and network to instigate change in their schools, campuses, and communities.

#### **Neat Streets**

[Neat Streets](#) is an Anti-Litter and Waste Programme for Secondary Schools. Participating students design a project to tackle litter and waste, which they feel will be effective in reaching their schoolmates and engaging the wider community. It is run by An Taisce, which provides ongoing support, training, and equipment.



## 9.5 Green volunteering, production and consumption

### Green volunteering

Better Outcomes Brighter Futures The national policy framework for children and young people 2014 – 2020 includes the aim (5.3) that children and young people should be 'Civically engaged, socially and environmentally conscious'. It also commits the government to 'Promote and recognise young people's active citizenship and engagement in democratic processes, participation in social and environmental activism and innovation, volunteering and social entrepreneurship' (pp.104). There are currently no other government policies or frameworks specifically addressing green volunteering.

[The European Solidarity Corps](#) is a volunteers-based initiative which enables 18- to 30-year-olds to make a hands-on contribution in areas such as disaster relief, social integration, environmental protection, and poverty reduction. The European Solidarity Corps is an initiative of the European Union and is managed nationally in Ireland by Léargas. Further information on the European Solidarity Corps is available in Chapter 2.5 Cross-border mobility programmes.

[I-VOL](#) is the national database of volunteering opportunities and listings. It includes several youth green volunteering positions. Further information about I-VOL is available in Chapter 2.6 Raising awareness about youth volunteering opportunities. I-VOL is run by [Volunteer Ireland](#), the national volunteer development organisation and a support body for all local Volunteer Centres in Ireland. Volunteer Ireland promotes and celebrates volunteering, including green volunteering, in Ireland.

Further information about volunteering is available in Chapter 2. Voluntary activities.

### Green production and consumption

Public transport offers reduced fares for children and young people up to the age of 18. The Student Leap Card is the national student travel and discount card. The card saves third level students money on public transport services and encourages green transport.

[The National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland, 2014- 2020](#) includes production and consumption patterns in the list of policy areas that can be linked to education for sustainable development.

[UNICEF Lessons](#) discuss the impacts that climate change, conflict and poverty have on children and young people. It includes a lesson on based around Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12 responsible consumption and production. These classes are aimed at 13- to 18-year-olds. They aim to support participants to start a global movement for change beginning in our own communities. UNICEF Ireland with the support of Irish Aid.

[The Sustainable Development Goals and Youth](#) is a resource pack created by the National Youth Council of Ireland. encourages young people and those who work with young people to learn about the new [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) and think about how these Goals can be incorporated into our everyday lives. It includes activities to teach youths about sustainable consumption.

[The Young Reporters for the Environment \(YRE\)](#) Litter Less competition is open to students in Green-Schools secondary schools. Participants investigate and report on local litter and waste issues in their schools and communities and produce an article, video, or photograph for the competition. There is an overall competition prize fund of €1,500 available for the National winners, who will then go on to represent Ireland on the International stage. In 2020 the competition was linked to SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production. Green-Schools are discussed in Chapter 9.4 Raising awareness about global issues.

## 9.6 Intercontinental youth work and development cooperation

### Intercontinental youth work cooperation

[Comhlámh](#) is the Irish association for development workers and volunteers. It promotes responsible, responsive international volunteering and development work. Comhlámh targets returned volunteers, partner organisations and member groups. It works to mobilise for an equitable and sustainable world, with the objective of fostering just, inclusive societies, through progressive grassroots activism in Ireland and internationally. Its work is supported by [Irish Aid](#), [Concern](#), [Léargas](#) and [Erasmus+](#).

### Development cooperation activities

Please see information in Chapter 1.8 Cross-border cooperation.

## 9.7 Current debates and reforms

### Forthcoming policy developments

The government is expected to publish a volunteering strategy for 2020-2025. However, the [Working Draft of Volunteering Strategy 2020 – 2025](#) does not contain anything specifically related to Green Volunteering.

### Ongoing debates

In recent years there have been an increasing number of discussions, debates and actions by young people surrounding environmental issues. This includes debates around the need and methods to reduce negative impacts on the environment (such as carbon emissions, food waste, etc.) and how to increase positive sustainable actions (such as rubbish collections, tree planting, etc.).

Young people are calling on the Irish government to make climate action a priority. As part of an international movement, thousands of Irish students took part in school climate strikes and marches on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 2019. The demonstrations protested governments' alleged inaction regarding climate change. In Ireland, the events were organized by Irish secondary schools. The main protests took place in Dublin and Cork, with smaller demonstrations in other counties. It received much media attention and public debate. The then Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Richard Bruton TD, met with student protesters in Dublin.

[The Youth Manifesto on Climate Justice](#) was created by the National Youth Council of Ireland's Young People's Committee. The Manifesto was based on the findings from 2019's Climate Revolution Youth Summit, which included over 400 young people. The gathering and manifesto were created to give voice to young people's ideas and concerns on Climate Change. Through the manifesto, young people call on the government to prioritize climate action and adapt a social justice lens to viewing climate action. The manifesto advocates for a socio-environmental transformation of the Irish economy.

The Youth Assembly on Climate (discussed in Chapter 9.3 Exchanges between young people and policymakers on global issues) have issued the following recommendations for action to stop climate breakdown:

- From your corner store to your supermarket, we call on the house to incentivize and obligate the installation of glass doors on open refrigerators
- For Ireland to ban the importation of fracked gas and invest solely in renewables
- Implementing measures that will allow that Irish goods be both eco- sustainable and affordable in today's Irish Market

- Implement a tiered Tax on Emissions from large companies including those under capital ETS. This tax must be increased every year while threshold decreases, shifting the burden from individuals to corporations
- Investment in industrial hemp processing facilities to provide a viable, sustainable, and alternative land use for farmers as well as employment in rural Ireland
- A labelling and pricing system showing the climate impact of food products based on criteria such as impact of packaging and distance travelled
- Ireland to outlaw acts of ecocide – being the widespread and systematic loss of ecosystems, including climate and cultural damage
- Protect existing forests and make compulsory that at least 10% of all land owned for agricultural uses is dedicated to forestry
- A targeted nationwide Information campaign to educate the population about the climate crisis regarding the causes, the effects, and the solutions
- Mandatory "Sustainability" education from primary level to the workplace including a new compulsory Junior Cycle and optional Leaving Certificate subject.

## 10. YOUTH WORK

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Youth work in Ireland has generally been implemented by non-statutory or non-governmental organisations. However, under the [Youth Work Act 2001](#), there is a statutory responsibility to ensure the provision of youth work programmes or youth work services. This Act also creates a statutory responsibility to ensure the development and co-ordination of policies relating to youth work programmes and youth work services in both the Irish and the English languages.

[The Youth Work Act 2001](#) (Section 3) defines youth work as a:

planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young persons through their voluntary participation, and which is –

- (a) complementary to their formal, academic or vocational education and training; and
- (b) provided primarily by voluntary youth work organisations.

### 10.1 General context

#### Historical developments

Irish youth work arguably rose from Britain's foundations in youth work in the early to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. During the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, much of early Irish youth work was established by religious and political organisations. The 1920's and 1930s were the begin of Irish youth club work. For more information, please see [The Historical Development of Irish Youth Work](#).

[The National Youth Council of Ireland](#) was established in 1968. Part of the national budget was first allocated to sport and youth organisations in 1969/70. The first national youth policy, 'National Youth Policy: In Partnership with Youth', was published in 1985.

Youth work has generally been implemented by non-statutory or non-governmental organisations, but, under the [Youth Work Act 2001](#), there is a statutory responsibility to ensure the provision of youth work programmes or youth work services. This act also creates a statutory responsibility to ensure the development and co-ordination of policies relating to youth work programmes and youth work services in both the Irish and the English languages.

The first Irish framework for the delivery of a comprehensive youth service at local and national level was established in Ireland's [National Youth Work Development Plan 2003-2007](#).

## National definition or understanding of Youth Work

[Youth Work Act 2001](#) (Section 3) defines youth work as a:

planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young persons through their voluntary participation, and which is —

- (a) complementary to their formal, academic or vocational education and training; and
- (b) provided primarily by voluntary youth work organisations.

According to the National Quality Standards Framework, [Youth Work Act 2001](#)'s above definition highlights four important dimensions of youth work. That it is:

- planned;
- educational;
- based on voluntary participation;
- provided primarily by voluntary youth work services.

[The National Youth Council of Ireland \(NYCI\)](#) lists youth work's purposes as:

- To build young people's self-esteem and self-confidence;
- To develop their ability to manage personal and social relationships;
- To offer worthwhile and challenging new experiences;
- To provide learning opportunities to enable young people to gain knowledge and develop new skills;
- To build young people's capacity to consider risks and consequences and make informed decisions and take responsibility;
- To help young people to develop social awareness and a sense of social solidarity;
- To give young people a voice in decision-making which affects their lives;
- To enhance young people's role as active citizens;
- To listen to and hear what young people have to say.

Youth work is provided primarily by voluntary organisations. It receives some statutory support from the [Department of Education](#) and the [Education and Training Boards](#).

## 10.2 Administration and governance of youth work

### Governance

#### [Main actors involved in policy-making on youth work](#)

[The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth](#) (known as the Department of Children and Youth Affairs until 2020) is the main government department responsible for policy-making on youth work. The Department's mission is to lead the effort to improve the outcomes for children and young people in Ireland. The Department also supports national and local youth work organisations, services and programmes throughout the country. [The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth](#) has recently published a [Statement of Strategy 2021 – 2023](#).

The main priorities of this Strategy include:

- Making sure that the Department has the right policies, legislation, resources and systems in

place to meet the particular needs of children, young people, adults, families and communities within a diverse and equal society.

- Supporting children and young people in active learning and participation.
- Looking at policies across Government through the lens of children, young people, families, communities and diverse groups.
- Working effectively across Government to promote the well-being of Irish society and developing policies that are responsive to its changing nature.
- Ensuring that the Department addresses inequalities and barriers which prevent migrants, refugees, applicants for international protection, LGBTI+ individuals, Travellers, Roma, disabled people, and women from participating fully in Irish society.
- Promoting the values of equality, respect for human rights and freedom from racism, xenophobia and discrimination.
- Critically evaluating the Departments performance, making necessary improvements and taking decisions informed by the best available evidence and research.

The recently established [Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth](#) have taken on extra responsibilities and this expanded function presents great opportunities for growth and development.

The Strategic Goals of this [Statement of Strategy](#) include:

Strategic Goal 1: We will develop, implement and influence evidence informed policies and legislation that improve the outcomes for those we serve.

Strategic Goal 2: We will ensure the provision of a range of quality and sustainable services, underpinned by strategic investment, that meet the needs of individuals, families and communities.

Strategic Goal 3: We will help those who are vulnerable, including children, young people and at risk individuals, to overcome adverse circumstances and to achieve their full potential.

Strategic Goal 4: We will promote the development of a progressive, respectful and equal society, informed by the experiences of past generations and seek to respond to the needs of survivors.

Strategic Goal 5: We will work in partnership with individuals, families and communities across Government Departments, Public Bodies and Civil Society to achieve better outcomes.

Strategic Goal 6: We will maintain high standards of performance and corporate governance with engaged, motivated and supported staff.

Other actors formally involved in youth policy making include government departments whose remit includes young people, for example:

- [Department of Education](#)
- [Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science](#)
- [Department of Health](#)
- [Department of Justice](#)
- [Department of Social Protection](#)
- [Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media](#)
- [Department of Rural and Community Development.](#)
- Youth work is provided primarily by voluntary organisations. There is some statutory support provided by the [Department of Education](#) and the [Education and Training Boards](#).

Non-public actors, such as voluntary youth work organisations, are involved in policy-making, for example through advocating for change and through partaking in policy consultations.

### **General distribution of responsibilities between top-level and regional/local authorities**

Youth policy-making takes place at central government level in Ireland. Policy-making on youth work is primarily the responsibility of the [Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth](#). (DCEDIY)

Under the [Education and Training Boards Act 2013](#) (Section 10), each [Education and Training Board](#) (ETB) has the legislative responsibility of supporting the provision, coordination, administration and assessment of youth work services, within the ETB's functional area. Many ETBs have established a Youth Work Committee, with support from the [Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth](#). These committees are made of key stakeholders and have the responsibility for provision of services to support young people. Youth work services are also provided, on behalf of ETBs, by several voluntary youth organisations.

### **Cross-sectoral cooperation**

The [Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth](#) works with the youth work sector, the voluntary youth services, the [Education and Training Boards](#), other government departments and agencies and consults with young people themselves in the development and delivery of policies and services for children and young people.

## **10.2 Administration and governance of youth work**

### **Governance**

#### **Main actors involved in policy-making on youth work**

The [Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth](#) (known as the Department of Children and Youth Affairs until 2020) is the main government department responsible for policy-making on youth work. The Department's mission is to lead the effort to improve the outcomes for children and young people in Ireland. The Department also supports national and local youth work organisations, services and programmes throughout the country.

Other actors formally involved in youth policy making include government departments whose remit includes young people, for example:

- [Department of Education](#)
- [Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science](#)

- [Department of Health](#)
- [Department of Justice](#)
- [Department of Social Protection](#)
- [Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media](#)
- [Department of Rural and Community Development.](#)

Youth work is provided primarily by voluntary organisations, with statutory support from the Department of Education and the Education and Training Boards.

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## **10.3 Support to youth work**

### **Policy legal framework**

The [Youth Work Act 2001](#) is the main legal framework for youth work in Ireland. It defines youth work (as discussed in Chapter 10.1) and sets out a legal framework for the provision of youth work programmes and services. The Act does not establish specific domains for youth work but recognises youth work as being complementary to formal, academic or vocational education and training. The act does not define the general types of activities that are considered part of youth work, but it sets out that Vocational Education Committees (which have since been replaced by Education and Training Committees) are responsible for coordinating youth work activities. It also identifies voluntary youth work organisations as the primary provider of youth work.

### **Funding**

An additional €5 million allocation for youth services was assigned in the 2021 budget, bringing the total 2021 allocation for youth organisations to approximately €70m. This budget supports:

- [UBU Your Place, Your Space](#), a targeted youth funding scheme ran by The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (discussed further in Chapter 5.6 Supporting youth organisations).

- The Universal Youth Services Grant Scheme. This grant is awarded to national and major regional voluntary organisations, to ensure the emergence, promotion, growth and development of youth organisations with distinctive philosophies and programmes aimed at the social education of young people.
- The implementation of the [LGBTI+ National Inclusion Strategy 2018-2021](#).
- Continuation of the Youth Climate Justice Fund.
- Youth information centres, local youth clubs and other local, national and international initiatives.

[The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth](#) provides public financial support to youth organisations. It administers a range of funding schemes and programmes to support the provision of youth services to young people throughout the country including those from disadvantaged communities.

Further information is available in Chapter 1.7 Funding youth policy and Chapter 5.6 Supporting youth organisations.

## Cooperation

[Ireland’s National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020](#) stated that politicians, policy-makers, educators, health professionals, youth workers, the police (Gardaí), the judiciary and legal professions, social workers and all who work with children and young people need to work collaboratively across boundaries.

[The National Youth Strategy 2015-2020](#) also recognised the importance of collaboration between statutory bodies/agencies and non-governmental organisations in the pursuit of better outcomes for young people. A principle of the National Youth Strategy and its implementation is that the ‘Government and other stakeholders work collaboratively, with vertical and horizontal communication and cooperation, to achieve more effective services and supports for young people’ (pg iv).

[The National Quality Standards Framework \(NQSF\)](#) for Youth Work is a support and development tool for youth work organisations. It is based on partnership and cooperation, with clearly defined roles and boundaries. The NQSF is discussed further in Chapter 10.4- Quality and innovation in youth work.

## 10.4 Quality and innovation in youth work

### Quality assurance

#### National Quality Standards Framework

[The National Quality Standards Framework \(NQSF\)](#) for Youth Work is the [Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth’s \(DCEDIY’s\)](#) Professional standard for youth work. It was published in 2010 and introduced in January 2011. The [NQSF](#) applies to all staff-led youth work organisations, services, projects, and programmes which are funded under the following schemes:

- Youth Service Grant Scheme
- Special projects for youth
- Young People’s Facilities and Services Funds 1 and 2
- Youth information centres.

The [NQSF](#) is a developmental process, which allows youth work organisations to assess service provision and to identify areas for development. It also provides an opportunity to express youth work through the development of a common language within a structured framework. The [NQSF](#) aims to:



- provide a support and development tool for youth work organisations providing services to young people
- establish standards in the practice and provision of youth work
- provide an enhanced evidence base for youth work
- ensure resources are used effectively in the youth work sector
- provide a basis for 'whole organisational assessment'.

The [NQSF](#) identifies key criteria which quality youth work should meet:

- Young person-centred
- Based on partnership and cooperation
- Solution-focused
- Challenging and developmental
- Realistic and clear
- Focused on the benefits.
- The NQSF also includes a detailed ten-step process for engagement.

Support and guidance on the [NQSF](#) are provided to local youth work services by the local Education and Training Boards Youth/Liaison Officer, and to national youth organisations by the [DCEDIY](#).

Evaluation of youth work is based on self-assessment and some external assessment that is used to ensure that the self-assessment process is correct. For the self-assessment, the youth organisation must complete a scale of attainment. External assessment is performed by the Youth/Liaison Officers for local youth work services or by the NQSF Standards Officer for national youth work organisations. The external evaluation includes observations on practice. This provides the opportunity for more practical examples of quality youth work and this may inform the ongoing development of the NQSF. The views of stakeholders including staff, management, young people and volunteers must be considered. Following the external assessment process, the Implementation Team and the Youth/Liaison Officer or the NQSF Standards Officer review the youth work organisation's self-assessed scale of attainment. The two parties should discuss if this is an accurate reflection and either agree or adjust the position on the scale. This position should be used as a baseline for a Continuous Improvement Plan, to inform the completion of the annual Progress Report.

If the assessment identifies an issue that needs immediate action, addressing these concerns is part of a separate process outside of the NQSF. In such instances, the management within the organisation or the managing organisation and funding body will be informed and will assume their responsibility for ensuring effective youth work provision and practice within the organisation.

### **National Quality Standards for Volunteer-led Youth Groups**

[National Quality Standards for Volunteer-led Youth Groups](#) is a set of standards that apply to volunteer-led youth activity and youth work groups. Groups funded under the DCYA's Local Youth Club Grant Scheme and related schemes operating in Dublin and Waterford cities are required to engage with the standards. Other youth groups are not required to adhere to these standards but are encouraged to do so.

These standards require that each participating organisation should complete an Annual Plan and Progress Report. This is based on a model of 'Plan, Act and Review.' The form should be reviewed and updated on an annual basis and used to inform the work of, and processes within, the youth group. During this process, organisations should consult or liaise with the Regional Youth/Development Officer of their parent organisation, or with a

Youth/Liaison Officer from their local Education and Training Board. The Officer also completes a section within the Progress Report that gives feedback to the organisation.

There are no sanctions associated with this process. For example; public funding is not awarded or withheld if projects or programmes do not meet the established quality criteria.

### **North/South Education and Training Standards (NSETS)**

[The North South Education and Training Standards Committee for Youth Work \(NSETS\)](#) works to ensure and promote quality standards in the education and training of youth workers, through an endorsement process based on a rigorous assessment of all aspects of programme content and delivery. [NSETS](#) professional endorsement represents a formal recognition by the youth-work sector that programmes of study in youth work have met the required criteria and are fit-for-purpose.

[NSETS](#) was established in an all-Ireland basis in 2006, by the [Department of Education for Northern Ireland](#) and the [Republic of Ireland's Youth Affairs Unit of the Department of Education and Science \(now DCEDIY\)](#).

Institutions apply to the [NSETs](#) for professional endorsement. A panel of experts look at each application based on set criteria. The panel then visits the institution and holds a series of interviews with the management, programme developers, tutors, students, practice teachers and other stakeholders to determine if the programme and infrastructure supporting the institution meet the NSET standards. This panel may also collect documentary and observational data.

Endorsement may be conditional on specified improvements or amendments to programmes. The endorsed programmes are subject to annual monitoring and to a full re-endorsement exercise every five years.

NSETS is supported by the [DCEDIY](#) and the [Department of Education for Northern Ireland](#), through providing funding to employ a part-time Development Officer, who is contracted by the [National Youth Council of Ireland](#).

### **Research and evidence supporting Youth Work**

The [DCEDIY](#) has a research panel to which researchers, both academic and independent researchers, can apply to be part of. The [DCEDIY](#) sends requests for tenders for research projects to approved members of the DCEDIY Research Panel who can then apply to conduct the research. In the past, the [DCEDIY](#) has funded research Masters and PhDs in the area of child and youth issues.

[The National Youth Council of Ireland](#) (NYCI) also carries out research related to youth work in Ireland. NYCI collects and publishes resources, including examples of best practices, and organizes seminars and conferences to discuss youth work outcomes.

### **Participative Youth Work**

For information on the participation of young people in policy making, including policy making related to youth work, please see Chapter 5.4- Young people's participation in policy-making.

### **Smart youth work: youth work in the digital world**

Web Safety in Youth Work Training

NYCI provides [Web Safety in Youth Work Training](#). It aims to equip youth leaders to engage with young people's online life and to promote online safety. The training objectives are for participants to:

- Increase their knowledge of what young people are doing online
- Be able to identify the common risks for young people online
- Identify the opportunities that exist for young people to learn online

- Recognise indicators of cyberbullying and how to deal with it
- Explore what digital citizenship means and what a digital footprint is
- Receive an introduction to NYCI's Websafety in Youth resource.

NYCI receives funding from several national public bodies and the European Commission.

### **Screenagers and the Digital Youth Work Guidelines**

[Screenagers](#) is a collaborative international research project, on the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), digital and social media in youth work. It is a partnership between agencies in [NYCI](#) (Republic of Ireland), the [Youth Council for Northern Ireland](#) (Northern Ireland), Verke (Finland), the Centre for Digital Care (Denmark) and WienXtra (Austria). The project is funded by the [EU Erasmus+ programme](#).

[NYCI's report; Using ICT, Digital and Social Media in Youth Work](#) presents an overview and synthesis of five research studies produced within the Screenagers project. It explores the extent, value and development of the use of ICT, social and digital media as a tool in youth work. It also provides an evidence-base for recommendations to promote the development of ICT in youth work at organizational, national and European levels.

[The Digital Youth Work Guidelines](#) was developed by NYCI in 2019, in response to the recommendations identified in the Screenagers International research project. The guidelines accompany a Screenagers workshop with policy makers and youth work organisations, exploring:

- An introduction to digital youth work
- Using digital media and technology safely and effectively in youth work settings
- Using social media in youth work settings
- Training and resources for digital youth work

### **Youth Work in an Online Setting during Covid-19**

[Youth Work in an Online Setting](#) during Covid-19 was produced by NYCI in 2020. It is a guidance document for youth workers and those working with young people in an online setting during Covid-19. It contains information under the following headings:

- What is Digital Youth Work?
- Moving Offline Youth Work Online – Digital Youth Work Best Practice
- Media Literacy and Online Safety
- Consent.

Currently, the NYCI are surveying people for the Youth Work Sector's Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic-12 months on.

### **TechSpace**

[TechSpace](#) is an education programme, by Camara Education Ireland, to support facilitate Digital Media, STEAM and Creative Technology activities with young people in a youth setting. [TechSpace](#) designs and deliver training, activities, resources and opportunities through English and Irish for youth workers, teachers and volunteers. Camara Education Ireland is a non-profit organisation, funded by both public and private sources, including the [DCEDIY](#), and the [Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media](#).

### **Skills IT- Digital Pathways for Youth Work**

[Skills IT- Digital Pathways for Youth Work](#) is an [Erasmus+](#) project coordinated by [Youth Work Ireland](#), with partners Camera Education (Ireland), Fundacja Samodzielni Robinsonowie (Poland), Fundatia Danis Romania Partner and Norsensus Mediaforum

(Norway). The project aims to increase the quality and relevance of youth work through digitalisation, resulting in increased opportunities for young people in the 21st Century.

The project includes a [Competence Framework for Digital Youth Work Practice](#); Training Toolkit; and Digital Learning Planning Toolkit. The Competence Framework for Digital Youth Work Practice identifies the competences needed by youth workers to be effective in the areas of ICT, digital and social media. The Toolkit provides detailed scenarios and instructions on how to hold workshops for young people around selected Digital and Future Skills. It also presents theory and research-based facts on Digital Skills attainment for Young People. The Digital Learning Planning Toolkit helps organisations to strategically plan to improve their use of digital technologies.

## 10.5 Youth workers

### Status in national legislation

There is no legal regulation for the status of a youth worker in Ireland. Until recently, more emphasis has been placed on experience rather than qualifications when hiring youth workers. However, a recognised qualification in community development work is increasingly required for paid frontline workers in youth services/organisations.

Under the [National Vetting Bureau \(Children and Vulnerable Persons\) Acts 2012-2016](#), it is mandatory for people working with children (anyone under the age of 18) to be vetted by the Garda Síochána (police) National Vetting Bureau.

### Education, training and skills recognition

While a recognised qualification is not always necessary, a qualification in youth work, community development work or social work is often required for paid frontline workers in youth services/organisations. Other degrees that are commonly held by youth workers include degrees in anthropology, psychology, social sciences or sociology.

Postgraduate programmes in youth work are usually open to those with a primary degree, have appropriate Garda vetting and have relevant experience. Some postgraduate courses may also be accessed through the recognition of prior learning as an alternative to a primary degree.

Continuing professional development is available through courses, seminars and conferences. Organisations offering training for youth workers include the [National Youth Council of Ireland](#), [Youth Work Ireland](#) and [Léargas](#).

### Mobility of youth workers

Under [Erasmus+ \(Key Action 1\)](#) youth workers can spend time abroad to build their life experience, learn about different cultures, improve their language and other skills and build on their professional development. These activities support the professional development of youth workers and the improvement of their youth work practice. Youth workers can learn about cultural diversity and different practices in youth work in other countries. Opportunities are available for youth workers involved in the personal, educational and social development of young people.

## 10.6 Recognition and validation of skills acquired through youth work

### Existing arrangements

#### Youthpass

Participants in youth activities supported by Erasmus+: Youth in Action and European Solidarity Corps programmes can gain recognition of their acquired skills and competences via a [Youthpass](#) certificate. Youthpass is an online self-assessment tool, where participants list the skills and competences they acquired throughout the learning period.

A [Youthpass](#) certificate is a confirmation of participation, by the organisers of a specific Erasmus+: Youth in Action or European Solidarity Corps activity. It does not give any rights to the recipient and it is not a formal accreditation of competences. Accrediting a Youthpass certificate, towards a qualification, would be unusual in Ireland. It is the individual educational institutes' choice to accredit a Youthpass certificate and if so, how to do so.

#### The key competences address by Youthpass are:

- Multilingual competence
- Personal, social and learning to learn competence
- Citizenship competence
- Entrepreneurship competence
- Cultural awareness and expression competence
- Digital competence
- Mathematical competence and competence in science, technology and engineering
- Literacy competence.

#### Skills Summary

[Skills Summary](#) is a free, online tool that measures the skills young people gain through participating in youth work or other forms of non-formal education, such as volunteering. [Skills Summary](#) supports the dialog between a young person and a youth worker or mentor. It can be used as a self-assessment and self-reflection tool for young people and as a measurement tool for organisations. While it is available to anyone working on, or interested in, their personal/professional skill development, it is particularly tailored to young people aged 16-25. The tool aims to build young people's confidence, so that they can better communicate the value of these essential skills to future employers.

[Skills Summary](#) was created by the [National Youth Council of Ireland](#), [Accenture](#) and [SpunOut.ie](#). It is funded by the [Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth](#) and recognised as a measurement tool in the Youth Employability Initiative.

There are 12 core competencies measured by Skills Summary:

- Communication Skills
- Interpersonal Skills
- Teamwork
- Decision Making
- Problem Solving
- Organisation Skills
- Adaptability

- Leadership
- Entrepreneurship
- Drive and Resilience
- Ethics and Integrity
- IT Skills.

## Skills

Ireland's [National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020](#) recognised quality youth work's value "both as a protective factor contributing to the young person's overall development and in reaching out to young people at risk of crime or anti-social behaviour" (pg. 30).

[Ireland's National Youth Strategy 2015-2020](#) recognised that 'Involvement in youth work can enhance young people's connection with and contribution to their community, and enable them to be confident individuals, effective contributors, successful learners, and responsible and active members of society' (pg 14).

## 10.7 Raising awareness about youth work

### Information providers

The [National Youth Council of Ireland \(NYCI\)](#) is the representative body for voluntary youth organisations in Ireland. It represents organisations working with over 380,000 young people nationwide. NYCI spreads information about youth work through its website, newsletters and events.

[Youth Work Ireland](#) is the largest youth organisation in Ireland. It is made up of 21 Local Member Youth Services and a national office. It actively engages with over 76,000 young people every week. Youth Work Ireland distributes information about youth work to young people through its website, newsletters and events.

[Eurodesk](#) is a European youth information network. It distributes information to young people and to local youth information providers about EU funding and opportunities to work, study, volunteer and travel in Europe. Eurodesk Ireland's work includes distributing information about EU youth work opportunities, for example through national and regional events and through contributing to the [European Youth Portal](#), a [European Commission](#) website which publishes articles, news and events for young people. Eurodesk is funded by Erasmus+ and is managed in Ireland by Léargas.

[Youth Information Centres](#) (YICs) provide a free, confidential information service to young people and those who work with them, on a wide range of subjects including careers, education, employment matters, rights and entitlements, leisure, sport, travel and European opportunities. YICs also disseminate information about local youth work opportunities, for example through their offices, at events, and through their online presence.

The [Digital Youth Information Chat Service](#) enables users to chat online with a Youth Information Worker. It supports 16- to 25-year-olds, parents/guardians, and people who work with young people. It is ran by [Crosscare](#), [SpunOut](#), [YMCA Ireland](#) and [Youth Work Ireland](#). Information about youth work may also be disseminated through the chat service.

Youth work providers also spreads information to their service users and referral channels about the youth work opportunities that they provide.

## Key initiatives

### Youth Work Ireland Week

[Youth Work Ireland Week](#) is an annual week that celebrates the work of local youth services around Ireland. This week targets young people, youth workers and volunteers. It aims to celebrate and highlight what communities and young people can do in partnership to build a better Ireland.

A central element of [Youth Work Ireland Week](#) is that a common activity (chosen based on the year's theme) takes place nationally, in youth clubs, projects and services across the Youth Work Ireland Federation. The initiative also includes an annual Political Briefing where TDs and Senators will meet with local youth services from around the country to discuss issues relevant to young people and those who work with them. While the week is normally celebrated through events and workshops in person, during 2020 and 2021 the events were moved online due to Covid-19 restrictions. The initiative is organised by Youth Work Ireland, the largest youth organisation in Ireland.

### Youth Work Changes Lives

[Youth Work Changes Lives](#) was a national campaign ran from 2017-2019. It aimed to highlight the positive contribution of youth work to young people, local communities and Irish society as a whole. The campaign was initially aimed at national politicians, and later also targeted local politicians, civil society and the population as a whole. It was organised by the [National Youth Council of Ireland](#) (NYCI) in partnership with its member organisations and the wider youth work sector.

[NYCI](#) in partnership with member organisations is running a campaign in advance of Budget 2022 to ensure that the Government is aware of the need to increase investment in youth work at this challenging time for young people.

## 10.8 Current debates and reforms

### Forthcoming policy developments

[Ireland's National Youth Strategy](#) and [National Policy Framework for Children and Young People](#) both ended in 2020. Both documents recognised benefits of youth work. The government has announced its intention to publish a new youth strategy and new framework. The strategy is reported to include mechanisms for the voice and views of young people to be part of decision-making at community, county and national levels. It is also expected to include a 2- to 3-year Action Plan. Currently timelines for publishing these documents are not available.

The first strategic goal of the [Statement of Strategy \(2021-2023\)](#) recently published by the [DCEDIY](#) states that the department 'will develop, implement and influence evidence informed policies and legislation that improve the outcomes for those we serve.' The department plans on building on the successes of [Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures](#) by developing a successor strategy and further developing cross-government, sectoral and inter-agency collaboration. The [DCEDIY](#) also plan on establishing a new National Youth Sector Engagement Structure and the implementation of a new Youth Strategy has already begun.

### Ongoing debates

#### A lack of reliable wifi/broadband restricting digital youth work

A lack of reliable broadband in Ireland has been referenced for limiting digital youth work. This issue had previously been raised, for example in [NYCI's 2019 research into Youth Work in Rural Ireland](#) identified a lack of quality broadband infrastructure in some rural areas as a significant limitation to digital youth work. This problem has been further highlighted during the Covid-19 pandemic. [NYCI's Review of the Youth Work Sector](#)

[Response](#) to the COVID-19 Pandemic identified broadband access and connectivity as particularly affecting rural youths and young Travellers.

This issue was expected to be addressed by the National Broadband Plan. However, there has been criticism of gaps in the scheme and its roll out by the Oireachtas (Irish legislature) Committee on Transport and Communications Networks.

### **National Digital Plan and ICT Support Unit for the youth work sector**

[The National Youth Council of Ireland \(NYCI\)](#) called for the development and resourcing of a National Digital Plan for the youth work sector, to support the sector to embed social and digital media in youth work practice. [NYCI](#) recommended that such a plan should incorporate supports to promote continuous training and professional development for all youth workers and include measurable actions to:

- encourage and support youth workers to embed social and digital media in their youth work practice
- enhance ICT capacity and awareness in youth work in partnership with relevant Government Departments and stakeholders
- encourage a culture of innovation and creativity
- increase investment in the ICT infrastructure to support and enhance the use of social and digital media in youth work and improve broadband infrastructure throughout the country particularly in rural regions
- provide information, advice and tools to promote safer, more responsible and more effective use of the social and digital media.

[NYCI](#) also recommended the establishment of an ICT Support Unit for the Youth Work sector, which would be responsible for implementing the National Digital Development Plan. The Unit would support youth workers in all aspects of ICT use in their youth work practice. This would include coordinating training, offering on-line safety guidance and assisting youth organisations to develop organisational policy on use of ICT.

### **The effect of Covid-19 on Youth Work**

The global Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on youth work in Ireland. However, the [Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth](#) (DCEDIY) confirmed that the Irish government considers youth work as an essential service.

The DCEDIY has issued Guidance for Youth Work Organisations - Informed by the Government's [Resilience & Recovery 2020-2021: Plan for Living with COVID-19](#). This guidance was prepared within the broader context of the Government's Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021: Plan for Living with COVID-19, and the [Return to Work Safely Protocol](#).

Details on the pandemic's effects to youth work in Ireland are described in the National Youth Council's Review of the Youth Work Sector Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Recently, the NYCI have published [Updated Covid-19 Guidance- Version 5](#) that provides information for youth organisations on resuming full services after Covid-19. This new guidance recognises that youth work provides a controlled environment for young people.

The NYCI has also developed supporting information for phased resumption of youth services with guidance sheets, templates and checklists to help youth workers in planning and resuming youth services.



## GLOSSARY

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### **An Garda Síochána**

The Garda Síochána are Ireland's National Police and Security Service. They are also referred to as 'the Gardaí' or 'the Guards.'

### **Comhairle na nÓg**

Comhairle na nÓg are child and youth councils for young people under the age of 18. They operated in the 31 local authorities of the country and give children and young people the opportunity to be involved in the development of local services and policies.

### **Dáil Éireann**

Dáil Éireann is the lower house of the Irish Parliament.

### **Dáil na nÓg**

Dáil na nÓg is the National Youth Parliament in Ireland for young people aged 12-17 years. It is a biennial event to which 200 representatives from the 31 local child and youth councils (Comhairle na nÓg) are elected as delegates. The topics discussed there are chosen by young people themselves in the 31 local child and youth councils (Comhairle na nÓg).

### **Direct Provision**

Direct Provision is a means of meeting the basic needs of food and shelter for asylum seekers directly while their claims for refugee status, subsidiary protection or appeals for leave to remain are being processed in Ireland. People are accommodated in residential institutions known as Direct Provision centres across the country.

### **Garda Youth Diversion Programmes (GYDPs)**

GYDPs are community-based multi-agency crime prevention initiatives which seek to divert young people who have become involved in crime/anti-social behaviour and to support wider preventative work within the community and with families at risk.

### **Hidden homelessness**

Hidden homelessness refers to people who are living in squats or 'sofa surfing' with friends. The number of people in hidden homelessness are not included in official statistics.

### **Family Homeless Hubs**

Family homeless hubs provide short-term emergency accommodation for families experiencing homelessness. They are funded by the local authorities.

### **Hub na nÓg**

Hub na nÓg (youth hub) is a national centre of excellence and coordination in youth participation. It supports Government Departments, State agencies and non-government organisations to give children and young people a voice in decision-making on issues that affect their lives, with a particular focus on those that are seldom-heard.

### **Oberstown**

Oberstown Children Detention Campus (Oberstown) is a national service that provides a safe and secure environment for young people remanded in custody or sentenced by the Courts for a period of detention.

### **Oireachtas**

The House of the Oireachtas is the Irish Legislature. It is the only body in Ireland which can make laws. It consists of a Lower House, Dáil Éireann; an Upper House, Seanad Éireann; and the President of Ireland.

## Open Policy Debate

An Open Policy Debate brings together key stakeholders in an area to discuss the first steps in developing or revising policy. For example, government departments may bring together government and non-government key stakeholders in a particular area when developing or revising policy.

## Reduced Timetable

The term “reduced timetable” is used to describe:

- a reduced day in school where, by arrangement with the school authorities, a student arrives to school after the usual starting time or leaves before the end of the school day, and/or,
- a reduced week where a student may not attend the full five days each week.

## Seanad Éireann

Seanad Éireann is the upper house of the Irish Parliament.

## Taoiseach

Taoiseach is the Prime Minister and head of government in Ireland.

## Tusla

Tusla, The Child and Family Agency, is the dedicated State agency responsible for improving wellbeing and outcomes for children. Under the [Child and Family Act 2013](#) the Child and Family Agency is charged with supporting and promoting the development, welfare and protection of children, and the effective functioning of families. Services include child protection and welfare, educational welfare, psychological services, alternative care, family and locally-based community supports, early years services and domestic, sexual and gender-based violence services.

## Young carers

Young carers are children and young people under the age of 18 whose lives are in some way affected because they provide care, assistance or support to another family member.

Young adult carers are recognised as a separate group, and are aged between 19 and 25.

## Young Travellers

Young Travellers are young people who are members of the Traveller Community in Ireland. The Traveller Community are recognised as a distinct ethnic group in Ireland. Traveller identity and culture is based on a nomadic tradition.

## Young Voices

EU Youth Dialogue is known as ‘Young Voices’ in Ireland.

## Youthreach

The Youthreach programme provides opportunities for early school leavers in terms of basic education, personal development, vocational training and work experience.

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<https://www.aai.gov.ie/en/>

An Garda Síochána (police)

<https://www.garda.ie/en/>

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/camhs/>

Citizen's Information

<https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/>

Civil Defence

<https://www.civildefence.ie>

Central Statistics Office (CSO)

[www.cso.ie](http://www.cso.ie)

Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC)

<https://www.cypsc.ie>

Children's Rights Alliance

<https://www.childrensrights.ie>

Comhairle na nÓg

<https://www.comhairlenanog.ie/?redir=1>

Dail na nÓg

<https://www.comhairlenanog.ie/dail-na-nog/>

Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation

<https://dbei.gov.ie/en/>

Department of Children and Youth Affairs

<https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-children-and-youth-affairs/?referrer=/>

Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

<https://www.chg.gov.ie>

Department of Education and Skills

<https://www.education.ie/en/>

Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection

<http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/home.aspx>

Department of Health

<https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-health/>

Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government

<https://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/housing>

Department of Justice and Equality

<http://www.justice.ie>

Department of Rural and Community Development

<https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-rural-and-community-development/?referrer=/>

Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI)

<https://www.esri.ie>

ECO-UNESCO

<http://www.ecounesco.ie>

Educational Research Centre

<http://www.erc.ie>

Enterprise Ireland

<https://enterprise-ireland.com/en/>

European Social Fund in Ireland

<https://www.esf.ie/en>

European Solidarity Corps

<http://www.europeansolidarity.ie>

Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN)

<http://www.skillsireland.ie>



Foróige

<https://www.foroige.ie>

Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA)

[www.gaa.ie](http://www.gaa.ie)

Gaisce Presidents Award

[www.gaisce.ie](http://www.gaisce.ie)

Generation Apprenticeship

<http://www.apprenticeship.ie>

Health Information and Quality Authority

<https://www.hiqa.ie>

Health Service Executive

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/>

Higher Education Authority

<https://hea.ie>

Hub na nÓg

<https://www.hubnanog.ie>

Irish Girl Guides

<https://www.irishgirlguides.ie>

Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC)

<https://www.ihrec.ie>

Irish Second Level Students Union (ISSU)

<https://www.issu.ie>

Irish Youth Justice Service

<http://www.iyjs.ie>

Jigsaw, The National Centre for Youth Mental Health

<https://www.jigsaw.ie>

Le Chéile Mentoring and Youth Justice Support Services

<https://lecheile.ie>

Local Enterprise Offices

<https://www.localenterprise.ie>

Localise

<https://www.localise.ie>

Macra na Feirme

<https://www.macra.ie>

National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE)

<https://www.ncge.ie>

National Youth Council of Ireland

[www.youth.ie](http://www.youth.ie)

Oberstown Children Detention Campus

<https://www.oberstown.com>

Ombudsman for Children Office

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Our Voices Our School

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Reception and Integration Agency (RIA)

<http://www.ria.gov.ie>

SOLAS

<http://www.solas.ie>

Scouting Ireland

<https://www.scouts.ie>

Spunout- Ireland's youth information website

<https://spunout.ie>

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<https://www.refcom.ie>

Tusla, The Child and Family Agency

<https://www.tusla.ie>

Union of Students in Ireland (USI)

<http://usi.ie>

Voluntary Service International (VSI)

<https://www.vsi.ie>

Voluntary Service Overseas Ireland (VSO)

<https://www.vso.ie>

Volunteer Ireland

<https://www.volunteer.ie>

Young Social Innovators

<https://www.youngsocialinnovators.ie>

Youthreach

<https://www.education.ie/en/Learners/Information/Youthreach/>

Youth Theatre Ireland

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Youth Work Ireland

<https://www.youthworkireland.ie>

## **ARCHIVE**

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Information from previous years can be accessed and freely downloaded through the PDF files below.

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### **2020**

[Ireland\\_2020.pdf](#)

### **2019**

[Ireland\\_2019.pdf](#)