



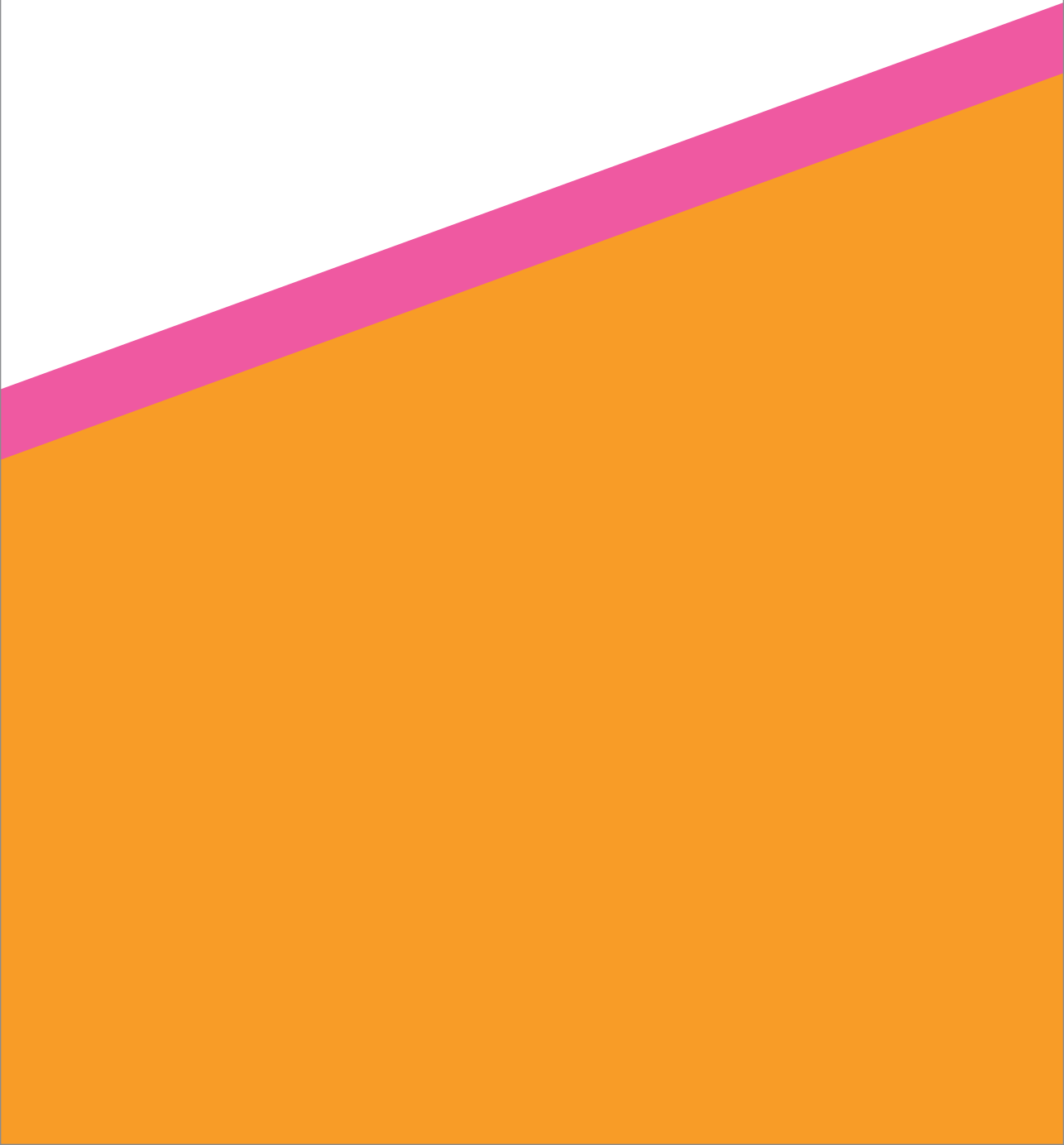
Youth Work Ireland

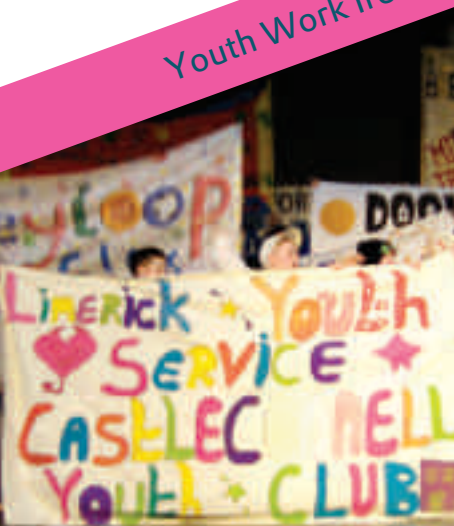
# STRATEGIC PLAN 2009–2013





Youth Work Ireland





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## Introduction

Youth Work Ireland is passionate about improving the situation of young people. This Strategic Plan sets out how we intend to translate that passion into making a real and sustainable improvement to the lives of young people.

The Plan has been written in consultation with the many agencies and individuals who have a stake in our federation and, most importantly with the interests of young people at it's heart. It sets out clearly how the plan was developed, the context in which we work, our beliefs and principles and how we intend to inform and shape our work over the five year period covered by this plan.

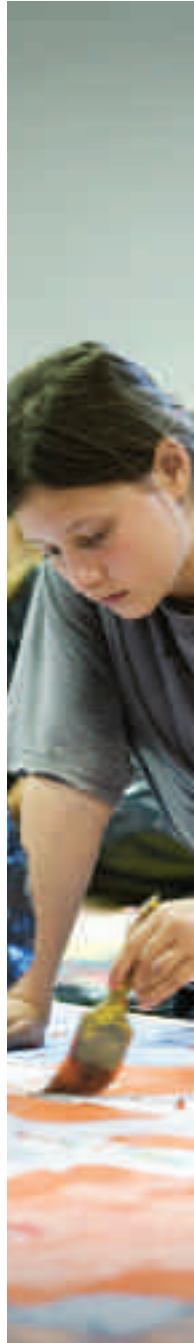
A number of key pieces of legislation and instruments have helped shaped our strategic direction. In particular the 'U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child' forms an important foundation to our ethos and direction as does 'The Youth Work Act 2001' and we subscribe fully to the definition of Youth Work set out in that Act.

We recognise that young peoples lives are complex and varied and the agencies and the systems that respond to their needs are similarly complex. A strategic, integrated and coordinated approach to addressing this complexity stands the best chance of success. Youth Work Ireland resolves to place collaborative potential before selfish motives in the interests of young people.

The realisation of the outcomes aspired to in this Plan are, of course, dependent on the resources at our disposal. We will endeavour to secure and develop the necessary, human, financial and organisational resources to deliver on our aspirations and to ensuring we apply those resources as effectively as possible in delivering positive outcomes for young people.

The effectiveness of our work is of course dependent on our ability to learn from our experience and to respond creatively to the emerging and changing needs of young people. Only through a process of continuous review and evaluation can we ensure that our efforts are most fruitful. We recognise that young people are the real experts in relation to their experience and that therefore they are key informants in shaping our future direction.

Finally our commitment to quality remains central to our approach because we believe that young people in Ireland deserve the best possible responses to their needs and the realisation of their rights as citizens.



## How was the Plan Developed?

The development of the Strategic Plan was underpinned by three key strands:

- a review of Youth Work Ireland's last Strategic Plan (2003 – 2007)
- an analysis of the external environment in which Youth Work Ireland operates including a scoping of the emerging policy and legislative context related to youth work and related issues
- a national consultative process with internal and external groups and bodies who have an interest or involvement in Youth Work Ireland or in youth work and related issues (see Appendix 1 for participants in the consultative process).

A series of planning workshops that involved the Board, members and staff of Youth Work Ireland were supported by a Strategic Plan Steering Group and by independent facilitators.





## Context for Strategic Plan 2009 – 2013

This Plan was drafted in a rapidly changing policy, economic and social environment and as an organisation we are committed both to being responsive to that environment and to playing our own part in influencing for positive change in that environment.

Young people are often problematised by Irish society. They are not fully valued as citizens and are frequently subjected to discrimination and prejudice viewed as intolerable if directed towards any other marginalised group. It is our responsibility as an organisation working with and for young people to advocate strongly on their behalf and to support young people in having their own voices heard in the shaping of policy, legislation and public opinion.

The increasing diversity in our society impacts on young people just as with everyone else. This challenges us to ensure access to our services for all young people without fear of discrimination and to support young people in valuing that diversity as a positive resource to be welcomed.

The importance of youth work playing a valued part in an integrated approach to meeting the needs of children and young people is fully recognised by Youth Work Ireland. We are committed to having the purpose, ethos and approach of our profession understood and recognised by those who work with us to make a real and sustainable difference in the lives of young people. We are also committed to a collaborative and coordinated approach which draws on the knowledge skills and experience of a range of disciplines for the benefit of young people.

Our model of youth work combined with the range of relevant legislation and policy are significant influences on how we do our work. We subscribe to a situational view of disadvantage and apply a clear rights perspective to our approach.





# Structure of Youth Work Ireland

Youth Work Ireland is a federation of local youth services throughout the country who work in the interest of young people through the provision of a range of service and who share a common ethos and approach.

The federal structure supports shared learning and development and is supported through a range of networks and communication systems. The National Board of Youth Work Ireland is drawn from the membership with senior volunteers and managers accounting for most of the places. A small number of places are also reserved for external individuals in order to draw particular knowledge and skills into the Board. The National Board are responsible for the strategic direction and governance of the organisation with operational management responsibility delegated to senior management.

The Board draws it's mandate from the membership through general meetings which take place at least once per year and additional soundings of the views and analysis are drawn from the various networks.

## Members of Youth Work Ireland

Youth Work Ireland members are local Youth Work Ireland Youth Services represented through their Boards. The priority roles of our members are to:

- Communicate key challenges facing the development of youth work based on local experience
- Communicate key issues facing young people
- Input into policy positions to be adopted at national level
- Contribute to governance of Youth Work Ireland
- Contribute to development, implementation and review of Strategic Plan.

## Internal stakeholders

**The internal stakeholders of Youth Work Ireland are:**

- Staff and Regional Directors of member youth services (MYS)
- Volunteers of MYS
- Young people in local youth clubs, projects, activities and services of MYS
- Volunteers in local youth clubs/projects of MYS
- Staff in local youth clubs/projects of MYS
- National Office staff.

**The priority roles of our internal stakeholders are:**

- Contribute to the implementation of specific aspects of Youth Work Ireland's work at national level
- Implement Quality Standards Framework and input into future development
- Input into review and evaluation of national activities/programmes
- Share practice learning locally and nationally.

## Our Vision

Youth Work Ireland has a clear and unambiguous view of the kind of society we want to contribute to developing.

Our vision states this clearly as;  
**'A more equal and sustainable world where all young people are valued and involved.'**

## Our Mission

Our mission is  
**'to contribute to changing society for the benefit of young people.'**

We will achieve this by deploying the resources of the Federation, both nationally and at a regional level through the engagement of Boards, staff and countless volunteers in order to:

- Promote quality youth work
- build our capacity
- work to realise the rights of young people
- influence decision making and policy.



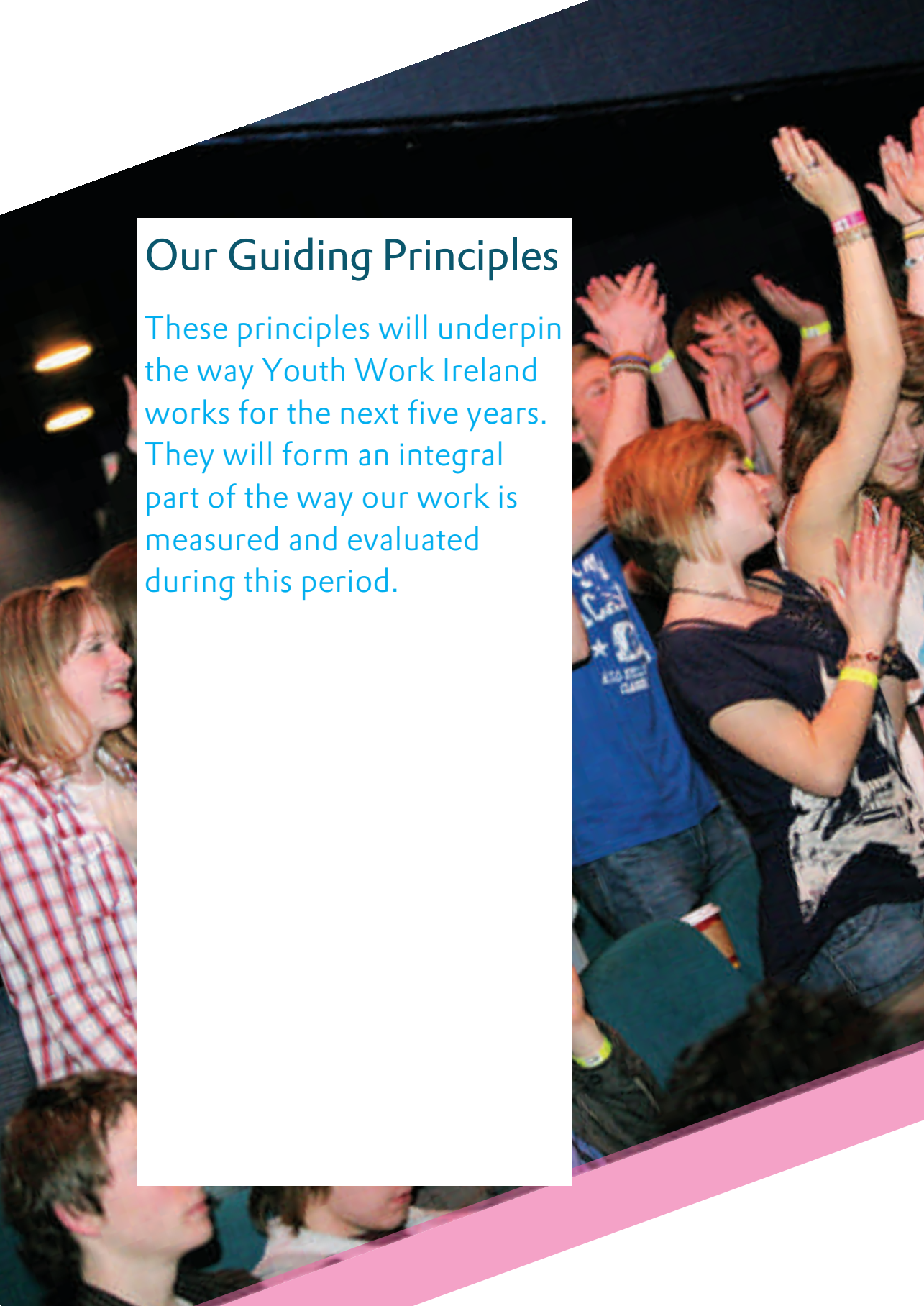
## Our Beliefs

- We have a positive view of young people, their dignity and worth
- All young people have rights and should be supported to realise these
- Young people have the potential to effect change.



## Our Guiding Principles

These principles will underpin the way Youth Work Ireland works for the next five years. They will form an integral part of the way our work is measured and evaluated during this period.





### Participation of Young People:

We will support young people to voluntarily participate in our work.

### Valuing Volunteers:

Volunteers are vital to our work. We will support their active involvement and development.

### Equality:

We will actively promote young people's equality and challenge inequalities experienced by them, their families and communities.

### Quality:

We are committed to quality Youth Work practice

### A Learning Organisation:

We are committed to reflection and innovation in our work and to learning through monitoring, review and evaluation.

### Solidarity and partnership:

We will work with others to realise our vision and to strengthen the youth work sector

### Federalism:

We recognise our autonomy and value our collective contributions and responsibilities as members of a federal organisation

Youth Work Ireland supports the understanding of youth work as described in the Youth Work Act 2001.




## Strategic Objectives

In order to realise our Vision and Mission four core strategic objectives will guide our work over the next 5 years. The achievement of these objectives will be supported through comprehensive planning, monitoring and evaluation at an operational level.



## We will work:

- 1 To promote quality youth work practice, as a developmental process with and for young people
  - 2 To create a climate where the right of young people to participate equally in decisions affecting them is realised
  - 3 To create an environment for the benefit of young people, through influencing legislation, policy and public opinion
  - 4 To strengthen and develop an effective, innovative and cohesive organisation that can achieve its mission
- 



# Our Objectives and Goals

Key goals will contribute to the achievement of our strategic objectives as follows:

## **OBJECTIVE 1:**

**To promote quality youth work practice as a developmental process with and for young people**

Young people in Ireland deserve the very best quality of provision. Youth work has a tradition of critical reflection and developmental supervision which supports the improvement of our work and this together with a range of other mechanisms will continue to be applied in the interests of improving quality. We also face the challenge of convincing our partners in delivering an integrated response to the needs of young people, that Youth Work has a strong and unique contribution to make as a distinct and professional discipline.

## **Goals**

- To further develop a culture of continuous practice improvement within the organisation
- To contribute to the development and promotion of a shared understanding of youth work externally

## **OBJECTIVE 2:**

**To create a climate where the right of young people to participate equally in decisions affecting them is realised**

Youth Work Ireland operate from a perspective which is strongly supportive of the realisation of children and young people's rights and to young people realising those rights through their participation as active and equal citizens. This can be achieved through critiquing and improving our own actions in this regard and through supporting young people in influencing the actions of others.

### **Goals**

- **To support young people to realise their right to participate as an end in itself**
- **To work alongside young people in ensuring their voices are heard and have an influence in our society**
- **To work with and alongside young people to influence the work and practice of Youth Work Ireland**

### **OBJECTIVE 3:**

**To create an environment for the benefit of young people, through influencing legislation, policy and public opinion**

We feel strongly that the negative stereotyping of young people significantly diminish their opportunities to achieve and we have a responsibility to challenge this and to promote the vitality and energy of youth at every opportunity. Our experience of direct practice with young people provides with a unique perspective on their situation and this together with research demands that we advocate, either independently or in partnership with others, for positive change.

### **Goals**

- **To continue to promote positive images of young people**
- **To advocate and lobby founded on practice and evidence based research**
- **To collaborate with other organisations and agencies**

## **OBJECTIVE 4:**

**To strengthen and develop an effective, innovative and cohesive organisation that can achieve its mission.**

A strong organisation maximises our capacity and capability for effecting significant change. We must develop further our ability to learn from experience and build a federation that is robust and capable in building an improved and sustainable future for young people.

### **Goals**

- To build on our effectiveness by nurturing a learning organisation that values the sharing of expertise and practice at all levels.
- To further develop and improve the governance of the Federation to maximise our collective effectiveness.
- To continue to build a shared identity with and ownership of the values and principles of the organisation.
- To continue to develop management structures and systems that maximise the use of human, financial and physical resources.



## Appendix 1:

### Participants in the consultation/planning process

#### **Youth Work Ireland Members**

Canal Communities Regional Youth Services  
Carlow Regional Youth Service  
Clare Youth Service  
CDYS Youth Work Ireland  
Youth Work Ireland Cork  
Donegal Youth Service  
FDYS Youth Work Ireland  
Youth Work Ireland Galway  
Kerry Diocesan Youth Service  
Kildare Youth Service  
Youth Work Ireland Laois  
Limerick Youth Service  
Youth Work Ireland County Longford  
Youth Work Ireland Louth  
Meath Youth Federation  
Midlands Youth Service  
Youth Work Ireland Monaghan  
North Connaught Youth Service  
Ossory Youth  
Youth Work Ireland Roscommon/  
North East Galway  
Tipperary Regional Youth Service  
Waterford Regional Youth Service

#### **Strategic Plan Consultants**

Maureen Bassett  
Joan O'Flynn  
Youth Work Ireland Board of Directors  
Youth Work Ireland National Office Staff

#### **National Voluntary Bodies/ NGOs**

Barnardos  
Belong To Youth Project  
Children's Rights Alliance  
Irish Youth Foundation  
National Youth Council of Ireland  
New Communities Partnership

#### **Statutory Bodies/Partnership Bodies**

City of Dublin Youth Services Board  
Department of Education and Science, Youth Affairs  
Donegal VEC  
Family Support Agency  
National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism  
Office of the Minister for Children

#### **Academic Bodies**

Dundalk Institute of Technology  
Larkin College, Dublin

#### **Others**

Richard O'Rawe Associates Ltd.





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