



Youth Work Ireland

## **Power to the (young) people: Almost 70% of young people questioned believe they have the power to change society for the better**

- ***Data supports the release of Youth Work Ireland's five-year Strategic Statement, launched by Minister Roderic O'Gorman.***
- ***Youth Work Ireland aims to reinvigorate the scope of Youth Work in Ireland with support for over 250 youth clubs and training for over 4,000 volunteers.***

A survey of over 170 young people aged between 16 and 24 carried out by Youth Work Ireland, the largest youth organisation in Ireland, reveals that the majority of young people questioned believe they can improve the future of society in Ireland.

The information found echoes the sentiment of Youth Work Ireland's Strategic Statement; a five-year plan, developed with longevity, sustainability and, most importantly, young people in mind. Launched by Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Roderic O'Gorman on April 2nd, the strategy enables Youth Work Ireland, members, youth clubs, and affiliate organisations to move forward into the next five years with hope - focusing on the positive impact the organisation can have on young people.

**CEO of Youth Work Ireland Dr. Patrick Burke said:** "Our learnings from the past two years have shown that, although the nature of our society has changed, the demand for youth services prevails. Youth Work Ireland advocates for its Member Youth Services and young people on a local, national and European level, with this in mind, in 2021 Youth Work Ireland, along with their stakeholders, embarked upon a process to develop a new Strategic Statement that clearly articulates their vision, mission, and the direction of their work in the coming five years. Designed to innovate the scope of youth work in Ireland, this Strategic Statement is intended to be moulded and shaped to fit the diverse needs of its Member Youth Services in an ever-changing world."

To support the Strategic Statement launch, a survey was carried out to discover which topics matter most to young people when they think about their future, from education to equality, or the environment to the economy.

When asked how they felt the current situation for young people in Ireland will change, **40% of young people said they are unsure if life will continue to improve for young people in Ireland over the next five years.** Youth Work Ireland believes the implementation of this five-year strategy can tackle this uncertainty and be a positive and impactful first step in reassuring young people that there is not only grounds for change, but hope for Ireland's youth.

On the topic of youth work in Ireland, **almost 10% of young people believe that getting involved in youth organisations is the most important action young people can take to improve society over the next five years.** With the launch of the Strategic Statement, Youth Work Ireland is determined to

boost that number by demonstrating the impact the organisation can have on creating a brighter future for, and with, young people in Ireland.

The survey also found that:

- 68% of respondents believe that young people have the power to change Irish society for the better
- More than a third of the young people questioned believe that voting in elections is the most important action that young people can take to improve society over the next five years.
- 21% of young people believe life is better for them in Ireland today than it was five years ago. However, 43% do not believe that life is better now, and 35% were unsure.
- 36% of young people questioned say health issues, including mental health and reproductive rights, are the biggest issues facing young people today.
- 1 in 4 young people surveyed are least hopeful about progress on climate justice in the next five years.

**Speaking at the launch of the Strategic Statement, Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Roderic O’Gorman said:** “We often overlook the potential power of young people in Ireland, but this shouldn’t be the case, we must see them for what they are - the future leaders of our country. Youth Work Ireland, along with its Member Youth Services, volunteers and young people, have been working tirelessly to improve the situation for young people in our society. Through mental health supports, drug and alcohol supports, music and creative industry programmes, LGBTI+ youth work, employability programmes and counselling services, Youth Work Ireland is preparing young people to become a generation who will enact change for the better of our society. This Strategic Statement is only the beginning of where youth work can go in Ireland and we are at an exciting, pivotal point in providing a better future for us all”.

Young people are at a defining stage of their lives. They need more safe spaces in which to grow, develop and reconnect - something they have been lacking over the past two years. With this Strategic Statement, Youth Work Ireland aims to reinvigorate over 250 youth clubs nationwide; provide support and appropriate training for 4,000 volunteers; and ensure that young people will have spaces within their local communities to meet, feel safe, have active youth provision, socialise, make friends and work towards improving their social, physical, emotional and mental health.

Youth Work Ireland’s vision is an Ireland of equality, access, and participation for all young people. The relevance of this vision is starkly evident as we come to terms with the ways the pandemic has impacted on the lives of some young people. This relevance is further underpinned as we work to anticipate our new challenges in welcoming Ukrainian young people, supporting their integration, needs and aspirations.

**\*\*\*ENDS\*\*\***

**Press queries:**

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**Notes to editors:**

- In depth interviews available with Youth Work Ireland representatives, volunteers, young people involved with Youth Work Ireland
- Launch event photography available
- The online survey of 174 young people living in Ireland aged between 16 and 24 was conducted between the 21st March and 4th April 2022

**Strategic Statement launch:**

- Youth Work Ireland's Strategic Statement for 2022 to 2027 launched on the 2nd of April 2022 by Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Roderic O'Gorman at Youth Work Ireland's head office on Dominic Street, Dublin 1.
- The launch event saw speeches by key members of the Youth Work Ireland network including; Deborah Fakeye, President of Youth Work Ireland; Catherine Durkin, Chair of Youth Work Ireland's National Board, Dr Patrick Burke, CEO Youth Work Ireland; and a selection of Youth Work Ireland volunteers ranging from the ages of 14 to 69.
- [Link to online Strategic Statement here](#)

**About Youth Work Ireland:**

- Youth Work Ireland is the largest youth organisation in Ireland, aimed at improving the lives and futures of young people. The organisation works on developing various innovative services, supports and programmes, including mental health supports, resilience building, anxiety programmes, drug and alcohol supports, music and creative industry programmes, LGBTI+ youth work, club development, employability programmes, counselling services, rural outreach, and fun safe spaces for young people to gather.
- Youth Work Ireland and its Member Youth Services places in-person engagement with young people at the core of its work through a network of youth clubs throughout Ireland. With over 250 youth clubs in Ireland, 726 staff and 3,331 trained and Garda Vetted volunteers, Youth Work Ireland engages with over 76,000 young people every week.