



Youth Work Ireland

Final Declaration

As Agreed at Youth Work Ireland's 2017

We are going through a significant amount of change in relation to the approach to the youth sector funding. In effect all areas of funding are under review. The amount of time and effort given to issues of governance, audit and reporting is at an all-time high. Youth Work Ireland members work through an Integrated Youth Service model. This means that one regionally based service provides for all the needs of young people in a catchment area in an accessible way consistent with the five national outcomes of [Better Outcomes Brighter Futures](#).

We reassert the role of the voluntary sector as set out in the [Youth Work Act 2001](#). As Youth Service Organisations we need to look back to our origins to refocus for the future. We believe that the concept of a "Youth Service" rather than free floating uncoordinated projects is a valuable one. In the end of the day the clue is in the title. Our members can illustrate how our model (including how we use the YSG) fits and rhymes with the major policy documents. The [Value for Money Report](#) was positive about Youth Work Ireland Projects. The hugely important support, management and oversight that is rightly demanded of voluntary youth services cannot be created out of thin air. It is our view that this critical piece of infrastructure is what the Youth Service Grant supports and it offers good value for money. We are always happy to talk about the future and how to improve things for young people in Ireland of course.

Young people face into a period of considerable change. With no input or say young peoples near future will be dominated by Brexit a process over which there is still no clarity but potentially huge impact. We have worked with our partners and young people in the UK to surface the key issues for young people and interact with decision makers across the 5 jurisdictions. Addressing the British Irish Parliamentary Assembly young people have identified the key issues and as organisations we are soon going to make more concrete plans on how to address these.

Housing

We hear a great deal about the housing crisis today and its impact on society. We hear less about its impact on young people. Every year we see a crisis in student accommodation leading to higher and higher rents and poorer and poorer standards. Beyond this there are many other housing issues impacting on young people. At the sharpest end we see an escalating problem of youth homelessness which is hardly in the public domain. We are happy to endorse the [Irish Coalition to end Youth Homelessness](#) campaign which hopes to bring a far greater focus on this issue. Spiralling housing costs cascade in many other ways in to young people's lives. Often, they delay the process of leaving home, an important transition in young people's lives, this delay has many implications for young people and families. It is now time for a dedicated Government strategy on youth homelessness.

Future of Work

We live in a time of rapid change and this will be even more pronounced for today's young people, the internet of things, driverless cars, the gig economy and enhanced artificial intelligence may sound like science fiction but they are increasingly becoming a reality and will be the norm when today's young people reach adulthood. These are new political issues that need to respect familiar concepts like a rights based approach. Young people will still need protection in the world of work even if this takes place in a different way. Similarly, young people will often be the innovators in applying new technologies to solve societal problems. We need to promote digital entrepreneurship amongst young people.

Votes at 16

These dominant questions bring us back to a more basic one, the presence, or indeed lack of presence, of young people in decision making fora. While youth services take part in and support Comhairle na nOg and Dail na nOg we see them as a start rather than the whole picture. We need to move beyond consultations in our approach to involving young people on decisions that impact on them. Votes at 16 has long been a demand from many people to further extend young people's say over their lives. However, it is now clear that the majority of politicians will simply not countenance such a change. In fact, the two largest historic parties came together to vote down a modest proposal in the Seanad in this area last year. It is our intention then to take our own initiative next year in the context of the next European elections to demonstrate that young people can easily take part in the democratic process in 2019.