

Bringing the Strands Together

Conference Report



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Executive Summary

At the outset, it is important to state the Youth Work Ireland National Conference process is one which is envisaged as a key process for developing Youth Work Ireland is a representative body for a constituency that includes communities, young people, volunteers, professional youth workers and member organisations. Through the national conference the concerns, strengths, successes and support needs of this constituency are articulated to YWI as a corporate body and to policy makers and funders. This is a process that began with the first “consensus conference” in 2012 and is in the process of being refined with every successive year.

In January of 2013 the Board of Youth Work Ireland decided that the key issue to be addressed in the 2013 National Conference would be “Joined-up Service Delivery”. Joined-up service delivery is a critical concern for Youth Work Ireland Member Youth Services (YWI MYS) as they find their place within the current and on-going development of the statutory infrastructure for youth work and services to young people. Likewise, the members of Youth Work Ireland have invested significantly in joined up service delivery through devoting time, expertise and staff resources to developing external and internal links that facilitate to facilitate effective joint working. This includes developing integrated youth services

Youth Work Ireland and its Member Youth Services have committed to the delivery of an integrated youth service to young people. In the context of the local youth service, “...integration means combining, bringing together, or integrating our shared values, guiding principles, shared vision, staff, projects, training, programmes, activities, spaces and volunteers to ensure that when young people engage with our services they are engaged with us as a “whole youth person”(Integrated Services in Youth Work Ireland 2011).

This 2013 conference was an opportunity for Youth Work Ireland to take a lead on addressing joined up service delivery for young people, to hear from experts and policy makers and to share our good practice on the ground, as well as the challenges that we face in working with related agencies. The event was provided for the entire youth work sector and featured inputs from key thinkers and policy makers. YWI MYS played a key role in the day through materials and inputs that were will collect with MYS through regional workshops that will took place in the week of the 22nd of September 2013.

The pre-identified aims and outcomes for the conference were:

Outcomes

- Policy development will be influenced and policy makers will be aware of the YWI Model of integrated service delivery
- Policy makers will become aware of YWI MYS good practice
- Policy makers will be asked to address and consider issues and challenges identified by YWI MYS
- YWI MYS share and learn of good practice

Outputs

- Documentation of YWI MYS work in the area of integrated service provision
- Development of a YWI Integrated Youth service model

A number of important achievements should be noted here:

1. The event was rated as highly successful by attendees with elements that YWI NO was directly responsible for receiving particularly high ratings.
2. The actual event was successful in attracting and engaging some of the most significant civil servants and policy makers in Ireland for the youth work sector and for the country as a whole.
3. The rapporteur, John Bamber of the Centre for Effective Services identified 20 Key Questions for Irish Youth Policy makers (see appendix three). These were communicated directly to Conor Rowley in the DCYA for consideration in the development of the upcoming National Youth Strategy
4. Key messages from workshops has been communicated directly to the Minister, the Secretary General of the DCYA, Robert Watt, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Centre for Effective Services
5. Learning and case study examples have been identified and which will inform the revision of our integrated youth services document.
6. The event provided visibility for the integrated youth services model and was another step towards making the IYSM part of the parlance of senior policy makers.

Pre Conference Workshops

Youth Work Ireland as a federal organisation has developed and continues to develop processes through which young people, volunteers and staff can share their practice, develop an understanding of themselves as members of a federal organisation, provide their views on how YWI should develop and have their voices heard by policy members on a national level.

The 2013 pre-conference workshops provided another opportunity to refine and develop this process. The results of these workshops became the key messaging and briefing notes for policy makers attending the 2013 national conference. Details of these messages are provided on the next page.

The workshops were scheduled from 6:00 p.m. till 9:00 p.m. to accommodate young leaders, volunteers and board members and took place in the following venues.

- Mon 23rd September Mallow Youth Centre CDYS
- Tues 24th September Castleblaney YI Centre/Youth Café YWI Monaghan
- Weds 25th September Phoenix Youth Café, Ballaghadreen YWI Roscommon N.E.
Galway
- Thursday 26th September Bagnalstown Youth Centre CRY5

The workshops used a number of participatory practices to name and share the chief concerns of participants. All of the results of the workshops were reviewed by the Youth Work Ireland Board Sub-group on practice to identify the key learning and messages provided below.

Key Messages and Themes Communicated to Policy Makers, Funders and Attendees

In preparation for the national conference, workshops were held with volunteers, young people, staff and management of YWI MYS to capture learning from their experience of providing integrated youth services. Through mapping, peer-to-peer reflection and group discussions a number of key messages and themes have been surfaced which will inform the discussions to take place at our “Bringing the Strands Together” conference. These messages and themes are:

Message 1 – Because Youth Work Ireland Members are integrated youth services, we are well placed to facilitate joined-up service delivery.

- YWI MYS provide effective access to multiple services for young people. We have multiple entry points for young people, including referral, self-referral, peer referral that allow us to firstly engage with young people and then connect them to appropriate services, whether internally or externally. We successfully engage with target groups that other service providers have difficulty in reaching. We can do this because we have developed trusting relationships with young people, their families and communities as well as internal and external referral processes and pathways. In instances where there are no appropriate services we attempt to develop and provide these.
- YWI MYS facilitate the development of joined-up services locally. We are in a position to identify gaps and disconnects in service delivery locally, challenge problems that exist, propose solutions to problems and champion change.
- YWI MYS have geographic reach that facilitates the engagement of young people in services regionally. YWI MYS span rural and urban areas and link young people into services across the region.

Message 2 - YWI MYS bring added value and values to joined-up service delivery through integrated service provision.

- YWI MYS see the young person as a whole. We attempt to provide opportunities for all the needs and interests that make up that whole young person. We recognise and serve the issue(s) that brought the young person to our service, but link them into services that facilitate them to address all their interests and needs.
- Volunteers are core to how YWI MYS provide integrated services. Volunteers add value to the services that we are funded to deliver and they add reach and facilitate connections because they are based in the communities where we work.
- YWI MYS maintain durable relationships with young people and communities. Young people never go off our books and we seek to maintain a relationship and facilitate connections with them throughout their lives; as young people, as older young people, as adults as volunteers and as parents to children and young people in our services. We are here to stay – we have consistent community presence and have been working in some communities for over 50 years.
- YWI MYS provide significant out of hours provision. We maintain flexibility in order to be available for young people we work with.

- YWI MYS leverage significant resources into integrated service provision. We bring in volunteers and leverage in funding through grants and local fundraising to support the initiatives we are funded to provide.
- YWI MYS approach to integrated service provision is value based. We don't just offer a set of integrated services; we offer a partnership with young people, their families, their communities and volunteers that facilitates their engagement. This relationship is based on respect and trust.

Message 3 – Everyone needs to work together to realise joined-up service delivery.

- Young People's voices need to be heard. YWI MYS work to ensure that young people have a say in how services are planned and provided. This must be the first step in all service planning.
- Joined-up service delivery is time and resource intensive. Creating integrated youth services and participating in arrangements for joined-up service delivery locally involves significant costs. We believe that this is the best way to deliver services and this commitment requires recognition in planning and providing services locally.
- Defining what partnership means is critical. Partnership with statutory agencies has moved from a situation in which there was recognition of the expertise that local youth services bring to partnerships - to the present situation in which local youth services are considered contractors and service deliverers only. The change is one of attitude; there is no longer consultation, or consideration of the value of the views of YWI MYS. Even worse, it is sometimes the case that partnership is hidden and the work of the YWI MYS is not named or recognised. In this context, defining what partnership means is critical.
- YWI MYS need to have a say in joined-up service delivery. Developing effective joined-up service delivery requires that YWI MYS are in the room when plans and policies are developed.

Conference Programme

9.30 Registration – staff member on desk all day
9:30 Coffee and tea
9:55 Opening of conference with drumming performance

Opening of Conference

10:10 – 10.15 Mairéad McCluskey YWI President
10:15 – 10.30 Minister Frances Fitzgerald
10:30– 10.45 Senator Jillian ‘Van Turnhout – Keynote Speech

Session One ‘Setting the Scene’

10:45 – 11.00 Robert Watt Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
11.00 – 11.15 Ita Mangen
11.15 -11.30 Q&A
11:30 – 11.45 Tea / Coffee break
11:45 – 12.15 Montage of YWI Work related to Joined up Service delivery

Session Two – Children & Young People’s Services

12:15 – 12.30 Gordon Jeyes
12.30 – 12.45 Dr. Stella Owens, Centre for Effective Services
12:45 – 1.00 Q and A
1:00 – 2.00 Lunch

Session Three - Workshops / Discussion Spaces

2:00 – 3.00 Discussion spaces
3:00 – 3.10 Paddy Casey – Performer, Singer/Songwriter

Session Four - Youth Work Specific

3.10 – 3.25 Dr. John Bamber, Centre for Effective Services
3.25 – 3.40 Jim Breslin, Department of Children and Youth Affairs
3.40 – 3.55 Q&A
3.55 Close

Workshop Results

Workshop Aim: The aim of the workshops is to clarify the place of the youth service in joined up service delivery locally. This will assist in our messaging to policy makers and funders on the day and also assist in “populating” our existing Integrated Youth Services model with examples of best practice and development strategies.

Context: Our messaging around the conference is that YWI MYS have a key role to play in joined-up service delivery and that they are well placed to do this. The workshops will attempt to clarify the place of the youth service in joined-up service delivery locally.

This will be accomplished through workshops that have the following objectives:

Workshop Objectives:

1. Provide a space for delegates to share and discuss their thoughts and concerns about joined up service delivery and to process what they have heard so far
2. Surface and depict what joined up service delivery actually looks like.
3. Identify how we make sure that people are working together.
4. Identify how do we actually do it, how do we do it well?

Key learning arising from the workshops

How do we make connections work?

1. Good Communication. (10 votes)
2. We need to educate the decision makers i.e. politicians and civil servants. (10 votes)
3. Ensuring ‘parity of esteem’ amongst members/participants (5 votes)
4. Understanding Boundaries, Avoid Duplications. (8 votes)

How do we get the right role for youth services?

1. Developing Relationships (13 votes)
2. Youth Workers automatically invited to the table on Youth Issues. (10 votes)
3. Valuing Diversity of contribution i.e. Finance, Staff, Time, Building & Volunteers. (8 votes)
4. By being clear about what we do and being strong in strategy. (10 votes)

Evaluation Results

Question One How would you rate the following inputs on the day?

The top rated elements of the day were in order of preference as follows

1. The Youth Work Ireland Collage
2. The Keynote from Jillian Van Turnout
3. The workshops

From this we would like to conclude that elements of the day directly planned and implemented by the Youth Work Ireland Conference team were particularly successful. The

Question Two: How do we improve next year's Conference?

1. Prepare Regions need to have questions prepared Q & A sessions -
2. Fewer inputs
3. More workshops
4. More discussion

Question Three: How would you rate the day?

| | |
|------------|-----|
| Poor | 0% |
| Don't Know | 4% |
| Good | 60% |
| Very Good | 36% |

Question Four: Did you feel that your voice was heard on the day?

87% yes

13% no

Question Five: Do you have any ideas or suggestion as to how we can better bring young people, policy makers and practitioners together at next year's conference?

- Largely respondents fed back in their qualitative responses that they felt the event was successful, but would have benefited from a better mix of presentations and workshops as well as more performances.
- The process of developing the conference would have benefitted from earlier and better buy-in from members on the content of event and the involvement of young people in design process.

Question Six: On a scale from 1-5 (one being completely disagree and five being completely agree) please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about Bringing the Strands Together:

| | |
|---|------|
| I had fun and met people | 4.08 |
| I learned about Youth Work Ireland Member Services and the work they do | 3.96 |
| I understood and learned from the speakers and inputs | 4.00 |
| I was able to have my say about the day in the workshops | 4.08 |
| I liked the food | 4.25 |
| The staff and organisers were friendly and helpful | 4.68 |
| The venue was good | 4.80 |

Appendices

Appendix One: Young People's Workshop Results

Examples of Lack of Connections to Services

What? = Online Friends.

What? = School Friends.

What? = Sports Clubs.

What? = ChildLine/Community. Why? = Bullying, not enough information.

What? = Teachers/Trainers & Coaches. Why? = Sometimes they can bully and put young people down.

Peer Pressure, drugs and Alcohol. Why? = Friends & School.

What? = Last day of secondary school. Why? = School.

What? Complete the leaving cert. Why? = library/google and councillors.

What? = What? = Debs. Why? = School & committee.

What? = Relationships. Why? = Family Friends.

What? = Coming Out/ Why? = LGBT community and BelongTo.

Examples of Good Connections to Services

What? = Youth Leaders and Workers. Why? = Community Services.

What? = Counsellors. Why? = Community Services.

What? = Teen Aware. Why? = Gardaí, Colleges – Lectures and Societies.

What? TeenText. Why? = Adults that know that aren't parents.

What? = Childline.

What? = Youth Café - Peer support/Friends. Why? = A place for young people to be when they don't want to go home.

What? = Youth Worker/Councillors (Mental Illness). Why? = Family, when there is a problem at home the Youth Worker is there to support.

What? - Youth Worker. Why? = 1 to 1 chats with support workers.

What? = Schools (Link to Youth Service). Why? = Key to keeping young people in school is teachers linked young person to a youth worker.

What? = Sports Clubs. Why? = Promoted by Youth Service.

First day of school. Why? = Teachers & Parents.

Communion & Confirmation. Why? = Church, Teachers & Parents.

Debs. Why? = School & committee.

Relationships. Why? =

Coming Out/ Why? = LGBT community and BelongTo.

Youth Service Good Relationships. Why? = Guards & Youth diversion.

Bridges – Good Connections to Services

School, Parents (family), church (religious organization). Spun Out, BelongTo, Youth Groups and Two Valleys Project. Why? = Schools & Parents/Guardians.

Communion & Confirmation. Why? = Church.

Making friends. Why? = Introduction days Youth groups. Big Brother/Big Sister.

Racism Why? = No Valley Project.

Relationships (coming out). Why? = Spun Out, Shout, BelongTo.

Moving out. Independence & 3rd Level Education. Why? = Student Union, Grants/scholarships.

Drugs/Alcohol peer pressure. Why? = Gardaí, Youth Groups.

What? = School, Parents (family), church (religious organization). Spun Out, BelongTo, Youth Groups and Two Valleys Project. Why? = Schools & Parents/Guardians.

What? = Making friends. Why? = Introduction days Youth groups. Big Brother/Big Sister.

What? = Leaving Certificate. Why? = Study Skills, Library, School.

What? = Debs. Why? = Student Council.

What? = Relationships (coming out). Why? = Spun Out, Shout, BelongTo.

Appendix Two. Other Workshop Results

Blue Workshop (Youth Work Staff)

How do we make connections work?

1. Understanding Boundaries, Avoid Duplications. (8 votes)
2. Taking time for tea! (8 votes)
3. Equality = Approve Representation. Equal balance & weighting to the work with JSD. Share work. Acknowledgement of Youth Services role in JSD 5 Mutual Respect = Take the time to build relationships & Trust. Parity of esteem must work both ways. (6 votes)

How do we get the right role for youth services?

1. By being clear about what we do and being strong in strategy. (10 votes)
2. State clearly what we do in terms of our role as Youth Workers. = to myself, to each other and others outside (10 votes)
3. Insure that the voices of young people are heard. (10 votes)
4. To ensure Youth Service Role on JSD is NOT tokenistic. (7 votes)
5. Young person centred. (6 votes)

Purple Workshop (Youth Work Staff)

How do we make connections work?

1. Ensuring 'parity of esteem' amongst members/participants (5 votes)
2. Recognise & Embrace Diversity – each partner has their strengths, expertise (4 votes)
3. By Investing time in relationship (4 votes)

How do we get the right role for Youth Services?

1. Valuing Diversity of contribution i.e. Finance, Staff, Time, Building & Volunteers. (8 votes)
2. Clarity role & contribution of each partner (6 votes)
3. Advocacy – the voice of young people. (6 votes)
4. 5 Unique insight into the needs of young people because they tell us. (5 votes)

Yellow Workshop (RDs and External)

How do we make connections work?

1. We need to educate the decision makers i.e. politicians and civil servants. (10 votes)
2. Common Agenda = National Strategy. (7 votes)
3. Equal responsibilities! (6 votes)

How do we get the right role for youth services?

1. Youth Workers automatically invited to the table on Youth Issues. (10 votes)
2. To get the best person/people. (6 votes)
3. We need to outline clearly what we do & what we can offer. (5 votes)

Green Workshop (Vols Workshop)

How do we make connections work?

1. Good Communication. (10 votes)
2. Clear strategy – vision, objectives. = Process –When lines of communication, who. (8 votes)

3. Inter-agency – support – co-operation. (7 votes)

How do we get the right role for youth services?

1. Developing Relationships (13 votes)
2. Advocate for young people. (10 votes)
3. Youth Focused – Committees (responsibility). (10 votes)
4. Be the voice of youth. (6 votes)
5. Developing youths to meet their own potential. (6 votes)

Appendix Three: Additional Evaluation Feedback

1. Too many speakers and some inappropriate to the debate which was not clear anyway!!
2. We can work more effectively with the money we have available by utilizing my collaborative approaches.
3. The message I came home with was that Youth work in Ireland despite the biting funding cuts is vibrant and dynamic. There is room for all strands of youth work provision; that it does matter to our youth that there is a choice for them of clubs and organisations for them to join, that one size doesn't fit all, although maybe the govt. funders would like it to be as it would make state provision funding very easy for them (actually was a bit alarmed by some of what Robert Watt had to say regarding funding of YW). Somehow we must make the government funding providers understand the relevance of all aspects of youth work and that they must continue to support both the salaried sectors and voluntary sectors as theirs is a symbiotic relationship in youth work provision and neither could function so successfully without the other.
4. The need for integration and clear partnerships
5. There were valuable insights into PO's thinking - frightening in some ways but useful to know what value base they operate from. While inputs were good the absence of engagement from people especially Gordon Jeyes was dreadful practice.
6. That youth work is still not being recognised as important to young people from government level
7. I didn't feel that the content of the speeches of all of the speakers was particularly relevant
8. The importance that young people need to be a central focus in all decision making.
9. Youth Work is starting to be recognised as a key element in joined up service delivery.
10. Good fun day but if more young people got their say on the day it would have been more memorable. Listening to older people/speakers hardly benefitted myself & two other young people I met on the day.
11. That youth work ,clubs etc. can change people's lives :D
12. Excellent work undertaken by Youth Work Ireland and brilliant example of volunteers and staff working together to provide service.
13. That we as youth services better keep on top of things in order to be on the same page as government departments, keep up with the volunteers and young people workshops, many new friends were made last Saturday, and we as volunteers need to start again and build on this.
14. Integrated service delivery, what this is and what it might look like. Challenges and opportunities it may bring.
15. the importance of working together with other agencies
16. I understand working together we can do more than just all doing stuff separately
17. Those in power still don't understand youth work on the ground and the value of volunteers. It's not all about 'young people at risk'
18. To be more efficient in collaborative engagement.
19. Youth Work is very much about the relationship with young people. I feel that Government departments who are responsible for our funding don't fully understand what our work is about. NQSF and Logic Model should be enough to prove the quality, needs based, outcome focused work we do and not to be competing even more for funding.
20. Youth Work will no longer be a protected market.

21. It is essential that everyone and every sector works together in order to achieve an effective and efficient service in order meet the needs of our young people appropriately.
22. Consolidation is going to happen and we need to act more collaboratively to be as effective as we can be.
23. That the work we are doing in relation to integrated services is on the mark. That the policy makers are hearing that.

Appendix Four: Tweets from Workshops



Good to see that if a young person comes to a youth service 4, 1 thing they have access to a range of services to meet their needs.



@ywirl Ossory Youth Service points out the real – and right – basis of youth work relationship building. #ywistrands



Is today about educating Robert Watt in youth work? I thought it was us coming together. #ywistrands



Instead of making Youth Groups compete for funding, they should encourage improvement of service quality.



Funding and a lack of communication between the funders and service provision. Are we providing “crisis management”?



The Youth Café needs to connect more with the community.



Needed more emphasis on young people.



Where is the acknowledgement of the quality, evidence based work, we are already doing as professional Youth Workers? #ywistrands



Who provides the service, does matter. They must have a track record, be community based, accessible to young people & families.



Direct YW is already affected by Admin/Evidence gathering etc. How will JSD further stretch and impact on YW?



Where do children & youth services fit into the changing local development landscape? What is the national vision for this?



Interagency works well when it's based on relationships but how do we build choice & responsiveness without the politics.



Small Youth Services was on 20+ integrated committed in 90's.



Concerned that Youth Service may need to be represented by single rep. formally reporting up & down to Youth Service.



There is a strain on resources, concerned that youth participation is lost, the threat of competition between groups, where is the fun?



WATTS THE STORY? Now he knows S.W issues should focus 4 Youth a chance is everything @ywfl for young people timely & holistic Intervention.



More emphasis on young people, need better time management. #yolo



Too much information, too little time. Saturday is not a school day. #notconvince #ywistrands



Unfortunate to see policy makers can't use more friendly language.



Not enough input from volunteer, too much ranting from politicians.



@YWI reflecting our roles, cutbacks, lack of promotion, building up from bottom, more for less, structure in place. #issues/concerns.



Resourcing is a key issue as is interagency co-operation.



'Reform' must consider youth workers identity, however messy #ywistrands @ywirl



Capitalism is Good! Invest the profit in Youth.



Do the statutory agencies Gov. understand the meaning of 'Partnership...and do we? V's direction/contract/single agenda.



Quality Youth work must be universal allocated sufficiently resourced & the expertise of the youth workers be valued in decision making.

Need for balance between Specialisation and 'Jack of all Trades'

Jackie Flannery was an inspiration because she was a volunteer and she gave us a personal story that the other speakers could not portray.

Gardaí was helpful as they came into Youth Club to talk about Safety, drugs & alcohol.

Build Partnerships, Not Dictatorship.

Relationships are essential part of Youth & Community development.

You can't cowboy build Youth Work. The value is in the profession #ywistrands

Youth Work is about quality human contract which must not be underestimated and cannot be systemised and controlled.

We are hearing what you are thinking & liking your better understanding & appreciation of Youth Work. We are ready for real partnership.

Will competitiveness for resources fracture the Young Person – Centred approach?

Are volunteers recognised as being integral partners in Youth Work?

Who delivers does matter!
Established infrastructures can offer more beyond a 'contract'.

Concerns Re: C+F agency – Youth Work model of working with young people will be lost!

Change, Collaboration, Coordination. What does this mean for us? #ywistrands

#ywistrands think about a different conference approach. Interact with youth you're trying to help.

The stories from young people were interesting because they changed their lives through Youth Work Ireland #inspirational.

