

Navigating the Transitional Years:

Youth Work Ireland's Youth Information Model

by

Youth Work Ireland, 2011

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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 services and who share a common ethos and approach.

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



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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to ***Navigating the Transitional Years, Youth Work Ireland's Youth Information Model.***

There is no doubt but that we live in an age of information saturation. We are all being constantly bombarded with information coming at us from a whole range of written and electronic media. How do young people in particular navigate through this information and evaluate the veracity, usefulness and appropriateness of the information they receive?

In this paper Youth Work Ireland presents its vision of youth information provision as an integrated part of youth work delivery. Our model has been developed in collaboration with young people, practitioners, workers and volunteers across the country. Youth information provision is a critical element in facilitating young people to identify and develop their own resources, skills and strategies to enable them to take their own actions and make their own choices. The role of youth information and youth work is one of enabling young people to better make sense of the information and advice made available to them, to make sense of their lives and make reasoned decisions. Over the last number of years we have been working to modernise our youth information model and ensure that youth information operates within integrated youth services. Youth Work Ireland has developed outreach approaches to youth information provision and has developed use of new media such as online social media and old media such as film and radio, to present and engage young people in different ways. Our provision is open and accessible to all young people but has also worked with young people who have not had easy access to services traditionally such as asylum seekers and refugees, LGBT young people and isolated communities both urban and rural.

As the largest provider of Youth Information in Ireland we currently operate 20 Youth Information Centres and 30 outreach centres, servicing approximately 150,000 contacts with young people. We currently engage 20 staff, almost 50 trainees and 40 volunteers in frontline provision. Our services also operate out of office hours delivering evening and weekend provision.

I hope you find Navigating the Transitional Years helpful.

Patrick J. Burke

*Note: Youth Work Ireland's model of integrated service provision is explained in detail in our publication, *Integrated Services in Youth Work Ireland* available from: Youth Work Ireland, 20 Lower Dominick Street, Dublin 1. Tel: 01 8584500 Email: info@youthworkireland.ie Web: www.youthworkireland.ie*

Vision Statement

“Young people will have the ability, skill and confidence to use and apply information to become active citizens and to fully participate in society. This process will empower young people to challenge inequality, to advocate for change and build a more democratic, inclusive and prosperous society.”

Rationale

In this age of ‘information saturation’ young people are constantly bombarded with information, they need more than ever to be supported to navigate their way. In an ever changing society Youth information helps young people to identify and develop their own resources, skills and strategies enabling them to take their own actions and make their own informed decisions.

Article 19 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that:

“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers”

Youth Information projects support young people to understand this right and associated responsibilities as well providing opportunities to develop and practice with skills to exercise this right.

The new EU Youth Strategy, a *“Renewed Framework for European Cooperation in the Youth Field (2010-2018)”*, sets out a strategy for European cooperation in the youth field over the next decade, and lists the following among a number of initiatives by Member States and the Commission within their respective spheres of competence:

- Encourage the development or use of already existing guidelines on youth participation, information and consultation in order to ensure the quality of these activities.
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Model of Youth Work

Youth Information projects employ the personal development and critical social education models of youth work.

Characteristics of Youth Work Ireland Youth Information Projects

- Youth Information Projects are front line services.
- Young people are empowered as information manipulators and disseminators.
- Youth Participation is central to the provision of youth information project work.
- Information provision is an integral part of an integrated local youth service.
- There is a strong emphasis placed on the relationship between the young person and the worker/s.
- The work of the project is primarily about informal education enabling young people to reflect on the choices they have and how they make critical next step decisions and life choices.
- Youth Information has led the way in the use of a multimedia approach to the provision of information to young people.
- Youth Information bridges the gaps between separate Youth projects. It links young people and projects leading to more efficient use of scarce resources.
- Works with partners nationally, at a European and international level.
- Has developed a strong regional and national network despite lack of a central coordination.

Process

Youth work supports young people by offering personal and social development, education and life skill programmes tailored to individual and group need, providing social, economic, educational and recreational opportunities designed to encourage social inclusion and life-long learning (National Youth Agency 2006).

Youth Information Projects employ the youth work process which is characterised by the following elements:

- Active Learning involving young people in the design, planning, delivery and evaluation of programmes/services.
- Young People engage on a voluntary basis.
- Participation: involving young people in decision making processes that effect them.
- Working from an Equality perspective.
- Adult youth partnership.
- Relationships created supports personal learning & development.

Service Provision

Youth Information projects provide a wide range of programmes which include European Youth Work Programmes, Citizenship and Youth Participation Programmes, Social Innovators Projects, Health Education Programmes, Advocacy Programmes. Services include information provision, career guidance, and Teen Between.

Methodology includes group work, information giving and support, creative expression, peer education and training, media and technology training, focus groups, questionnaires and surveys and innovative use of social media.

Settings where Youth Information Projects are Delivered

- Community Settings
- Other Youth Projects
- Centre Based
- Youth Clubs
- Schools/Colleges
- Residential
- Workplace
- Youth Work Forums
- Career and Volunteer Fairs
- Youth Cafés
- Comhairle na nÓg

Youth Information Project Objectives for Youth Work Ireland

- To enable young people to interpret and disseminate information so that they can apply it to their own lives and wider society, which will translate into effective actions and decisions at a personal and societal level.
- To actively encourage young people to use information sources, and develop information skills, as a basis for personal advancement, thereby helping them to develop personal autonomy and resourcefulness.
- To engage young people as partners in the delivery of information services.
- To advocate for young people to ensure their voices are heard in wider society and their human rights are respected.
- To assist young people in producing their own information and disseminating it amongst their own peers through different media for example magazines, radio projects, social media, youth conferences etc.
- To operate youth information services on the basis of equality and open access so that services are made available to all young people.
- To assemble information for use by young people on matters relevant to their personal, social and vocational development and disseminate it in a format and

style which they can understand, and in settings which they find comfortable and convenient to use, using all available forms of media and all forms of contact to reach the different groups of young people.

- To refer young people to other specialist organisations and services, as necessary, thereby acting as a link between a young person with a need or a problem and the agency which can meet their need or solve their problem.
- To equip those to whom young people may turn for assistance e.g. parents, teachers, youth workers, social workers, and guidance counsellors with the necessary information and skills to enable them to respond effectively.

Outcomes

Equality of Opportunity

Young people will have increased understanding, awareness and acceptance of race, gender, sexuality, disability, religion and other ways in which people are discriminated against and better placed to challenge stereotyping.

Young people will have developed the capacity to define 'their position' in their world and the skills to act to change it if they sought to.

Young people are aware of the inequities which institutions promote but often lack the platform to articulate. Young people will be active in mobilising groups at local level to seek changes within existing structures, promoting active citizenship.

Participation

Young people are prepared for an active role in society.

Young people will be able to recognise their strengths, participate in active citizenship and have their voices heard.

Young people will have improved decision making skills, increased community involvement making a positive contribution, improved political literacy, increased understanding of their rights & responsibilities and new skills in peer education.

Health

Young people will have healthier lifestyles through increased awareness & knowledge in areas such as: sexual health & relationships, drug and alcohol use, mental & physical well being.

Young people develop respect for themselves and others and have the ability to build and maintain relationships.

Information & advice

Young people will be better informed on;

- How to access & use information.
- Making appropriate decisions.
- Opportunities including employment and education opportunities, volunteering, travel, sport and leisure.
- Awareness of issues: bullying, crime, drugs, healthy relationships etc.
- Linking in with other agencies and projects, strengthening community ties and bridging gaps.

Young people have developed the ability to analyse and assess alternatives.

Personal & Social Development

Young people will have improved independent living skills, strong interpersonal skills, confidence, and employability.

Young people will be challenged/inspired, have raised aspirations and will be supported to create social change. Young people have a sense of control in their lives and believe that they can succeed if they try hard enough.

The outcomes for young people having progressed through the youth work programme to include elements of the Radical Social Change model.

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