



Youth Work Ireland

Press Release
Youth Work Ireland
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“Youth Justice Strategy Continues in the Right Direction” says Leading Youth Organisation

The principles and values expressed by the new Youth Justice Strategy published today clearly mark a potential transition in thinking in terms of how the justice system treats some of the most vulnerable, at-risk young people in our society according to Youth Work Ireland whose members run close to 40 Garda Diversion Projects.

Central to the operation of the Youth Justice System in their view is the JLO System. The organisation feels this is in keeping with best international practice in terms of diverting young people away from the criminal justice system, including the courts and detention. Those methods should only be used as a last resort. For low level offences community-based sanctions, restorative justice and other means should be prioritised.

“The need for a joined up and holistic approach arises again and again in the document. Our experience is of running youth services that do precisely this and engage with young people under a variety of policy headings and in conjunction with several agencies and departments across policy headings. More than any, we see the need for a joined-up approach beyond the silos. We also have seen that regardless of a variety of plans and aspirations this approach is rarely in evidence in delivery by the State and those of us who do work across these boundaries encounter a lot of obstacles. In all matters of inter-agency working and alignment the key question will be who decides in the final instance” Said Michael Mc Loughlin Head of Advocacy with Youth Work Ireland

“Youth Services whether running Garda Youth Diversion Projects or not, have tremendous reach with young people from disadvantaged communities. Youth Work Ireland’s Integrated Youth Service Model has for some years operationalised the need to work across policy, funding, and departmental lines. This ensures the needs of the young people drive the service while professionals look after the back office and the complex reporting that this gives rise to. We are well respected and identified by young people and local communities for this work” Mc Loughlin added

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