



Youth Work Ireland

Press Release  
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**“Leaving Cert Saga Illustrates How Distant Decision Makers are From Young People’s Lives and Concerns” Says Leading Youth Organisation**

The overdue decision to provide certainty to 60,000 young people on the Leaving Cert Exam has been welcomed by Youth Work Ireland. The organisation, whose members provide educational and employment intervention for many disadvantaged young people, also said that the long drawn out saga illustrated there was still a long way to go to ensure decision makers had a connection and understanding of issues relating to young people and their concerns. The organisation cited the lack of attention to the state exams in the recently published road map and the central focus on the economy and other sectors of society as key issues in this regard. The organisation has warned that there will be a number of other challenges relating to young people emerging in the post Covid 19 environment which the new Government will need to focus on.

“The critical certainty needed for young people who are already under enormous stress in exam year has finally being provided which is of course welcome however we need to learn lessons from this situation and decision makers need to be closer and more connected to young people and their lives to avoid similar mistakes in the future. The UK was quick to deal with the exams situation and also has a far more flexible college entry system which means they were better able to respond. The second level students union were laying out research and options very early but their voices seemed to go unnoticed. Our education system can be slow and inflexible to change as witnessed in the slow pace of curriculum reform. A new Government must now turn it’s attention to these matters and connecting better with young people. An improved Department of Children and Youth Affairs with more responsive youth participation structures would be central to this” Said Michael Mc Loughlin of Youth Work Ireland

“Young people have developed enormous resilience through this process and the class of 2020 may go on to prove that many of our systems of assessment and evaluation in formal education were long overdue for change. It may be like many other areas that a new improved future will emerge after Covid 19 where the stress and dysfunctionality of our final exam system can be put behind us. Very little attention was paid in this debate to the number of very disadvantaged young people who are out of school and how this crisis may impact on our continuing problem of educational disadvantage. This must now also become a major focus of societies efforts both in recovery and beyond. Many young people will come through this saga and out the other side but those who struggle most in our education system may unfortunately struggle as much after this announcement and we hope the education partners will remember this. “ Mc Loughlin added

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