YOUTH WORK IRELAND

INTEGRATED YOUTH SERVICES

EVIDENCE REVIEW

Final Report from the Evaluation of Youth Work Ireland's Integrated Youth Services Model Evidence Review

Youth Work Ireland
Just economics
An Roinn Leanaí agus Gnóthaí Óige
Department of Children and Youth Affairs
National Lottery

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Foreword

Youth Work Ireland is the largest youth work organisation in Ireland. Our 21 Member Youth Services work with and for young people all over Ireland in both the urban and rural context on a daily basis. As a Federation we work with 76,000 young people and are supported by 3000+ volunteers and circa 700 staff. For many years our Members have operated an innovative "Integrated Youth Services Model" in order to deliver a seamless, holistic and comprehensive service to young people. The Integrated Youth Services Model not only combines services but also encourages the sharing of staff, resources, space and methodologies for the benefit of young people. It also includes the development and maintenance of strategic and operational partnerships with key external agencies in order to address young people's needs in the most comprehensive and cost effect way.

Youth Work Ireland members have been convinced of the value of the Integrated Youth Services Model for years. We have seen first-hand the positive outcomes for young people. In spite of the very real challenges of delivering the model from an administrative perspective, members have remained committed to it. Within Member Youth Services, there are normally a number of diverse funders, each with their own reporting rules and requirements and each, by and large, only concerned with the very specific element of the model they fund. From the perspective of the service then, there are complex reporting requirements, diverse compliance regimes and varied audit demands from each respective funder. Typically, there is no real or formal acknowledgement of the added value a project being delivered in the context of a whole range of other complementary projects from individual funders. Happily, however from the perspective of the young person therefore, the Integrated Youth Services Model delivers a seamless, cohesive, and easy to navigate and understand range of services which may be availed of as needed, in their journey through their teenage years and into adulthood.

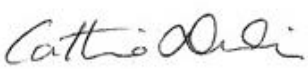
The fundamental principle underpinning the Integrated Youth Services Model is delivering better outcomes for young people through an intentional youth work practice intervention. Consequent to the model is a more efficient, cost effective service provision which avoids duplication and waste of resources.

After a tendering process, Youth Work Ireland commissioned *Just Economics Research Limited*, to carry out a robust independent evaluation of the Integrated Youth Services Model. It was and is important for us to have rigorous scientific research underpinning our model and a sound evidence base for the model. This report now supports and confirms our shared belief and up until now, the anecdotal evidence for both the cost effectiveness of the model, and more importantly, the significant positive outcomes it has for young people. Based on strong international evidence the report concludes that integrated working yields substantial benefits for young people. Ireland's National Youth Strategy, the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, prescribes a very high degree of inter departmental and interagency

working in order to achieve the Five National Outcomes for young people. Our Members on the ground implement this on a daily basis through our Integrated Youth Services Model. A key finding of the research, however, is that one of the main barriers to integrated working as identified by staff, management and partner agencies, is the "rigidity of funding arrangements that make it difficult to work flexibly and holistically". It is our ardent hope that the recommendations arising from this report will, if implemented, address this issue. We in Youth Work Ireland, working at both a regional and national level, and armed with this research, must now develop a systematic approach to building an understanding and recognition of the value of the Integrated Youth Services Model.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the board of Youth Work Ireland and in particular the Integrated Youth Services Sub-Group of the board who took the lead in developing this report. I would also like to acknowledge the leadership of our CEO, Dr Patrick Burke and his team. In particular, I wish to acknowledge Matthew Seebach who co-ordinated the work and his colleague Gina Halpin who assisted with the publication and dissemination of the report.

Finally, I would like to thank Just Economics Limited for their excellent work. It is critical that we all now focus on creating discussions local, regionally, nationally and indeed internationally which will promote the delivery of integrated youth services to young people.



Catherine Durkin
Chair, Youth Work Ireland

Executive Summary

Background and context

Integrated models emerged in response to the multiple needs of many young people and the failure of fragmented service delivery

The transition to adulthood is now a more prolonged and unstable developmental stage, which brings with it increasing risks (McGorry et al. 2013). McGorry et al. describe young people as at the vanguard of these changes but also often "bearing the burden" associated with them. Unsurprisingly the culture and structure of services working with young people have had to respond. Evidence shows that young people concurrently involved in more than one service generally do not achieve better outcomes despite the larger volume of services they interact with (Garlandet al. 2003; Haapasalo, 2000; Harpaz-Rotem, et al. 2008; 2004; Kroll et al., 2002). An important feature of modern youth services is to overcome such fragmented service delivery through integrated models, and these are increasingly the preferred method of service delivery around the world. This is in response to evidence that collaboration between agencies and professionals can improve the quality of provision in children's services (Crawford, 2012; Hammick et al. 2009; Atkinson et al., 2007; Barrett et al. 2005).

There are many definitions of integrated ways of working

While integrated youth work is increasingly considered 'best practice', there is no single definition of what constitutes integrated youth work. There are many models, most of which identify several levels of working between distinct programmes, services, and organisations along a spectrum from basic communication at one end to fully integrated services at the other (Horwath and Morrison, 2007; Turnbull and Turnbull, 2000; Atkinson, et al. 2005).

Given the varied terminology in the field, Brown and Smith (2010) identify the need for clearly articulating what is meant by "integrating children's/youth services". The absence of a clearly defined concept leads to difficulties in determining whether integration has been achieved and what impact it has. According to Brown and Smith (2010), this is part of the reason why it is often difficult to evidence impact. The existing evidence is often fragmented and difficult to summarise and it is not always clear if two models are similar.

Secondary evidence on the effectiveness of integrated youth work

Despite the definitional challenges, there is growing body of work assessing the effectiveness of integrated youth work. The evidence is clustered around three key outcomes: (1) integration as essential to addressing multiple/complex problems; (2) improved outcomes and service quality; and (3) economic impacts.

Integration is key to tackling multiple/complex problems

As noted above, the combined impact of multiple, but separate, interventions on vulnerable young people has been a cause for concern (Ungar et al. 2013) and the development and use of integrated models was advocated to reduce this adverse impact and address needs more effectively.

Brechman-Toussaint and Kogler (2010) found that integration provides a joined-up approach to tackling 'wicked problems' and can be resource-effective, enable knowledge and resource sharing, lead to long-term solutions and foster a sense of responsibility for young people's outcomes. Rosenheck et al (2003) argue that integration can ensure that those with multiple needs are aware of the full range of services and systems that are available to them (Rosenheck et al, 2003). The intention with an integrated approach is that the likelihood of over- or under-consumption of services can be significantly reduced where multiple problem co-occur.

Integrated services can improve outcomes and service quality

In a systematic review of interagency collaboration in children and young people's mental health, Cooper et al (2016) found several studies that showed an association between collaboration and positive outcomes. Similarly, Sanders et al. (2013) found better outcomes were reported when more than one provider worked with youth in respectful and empowering ways that encouraged youth agency and responded respectfully to their circumstances.

Bond (2010) identified the following benefits from integrated working: timely access, improved needs assessment and appropriate referrals, greater coordination of programs, avoidance of duplication, resource sharing and cross-sectoral understanding of needs and gaps. However, she also found that it can be labour-tensive, time consuming and costly to establish. As such, integrated models may require additional funding if they are to yield their full potential benefit.

Much of the literature shows that integrated services for families and children are effective when one worker acts as an access point for all the other professionals that the service users need to engage with (Sloper, 2004).

Integrated service models have the potential to yield economic benefits

There are two means by which positive economic impacts can be derived from integrated service provision: efficiencies in service delivery and by reducing the cost of future social problems through improved outcomes for young people.

According to the OECD (2010), both services and users stand to benefit from the efficiencies yielded by an integrated approach. For the former, they can save time and money by accessing multiple services in one place, or by reducing transaction costs. Services, on the other hand, can lower costs by reducing duplication and over-consumption of services.

The second economic rationale is reducing the cost of future social problems. As Brown and Smith (2010) point out, a single agency or professional working in isolation is unlikely to be able to meet all the needs of a given young person. However, the

costs of a young person's needs not being met are potentially large. For example, in the UK it has been estimated that a programme of supportive multi-agency interventions for children who demonstrate challenging behaviour from an early age could save over £100,000 in direct costs incurred to age 16 (Audit Commission, 2004).

YWI's Integrated Youth Service Model

The YWI Integrated Youth Service Model is aligned with best practice on integrated working

The YWI Integrated Youth Service Model is consistent with international best practice on integrated youth work and based on a shared ethos with the international standard in youth work commonly referred to as positive youth development (PYD).

The main feature of the approach is that it offers a suite of services both locally and regionally that young people can access on a needs basis at different points in their transition to adulthood.

The integrated service has the following five characteristics:

1. **Youth-centred, and assets-based.** Young people are at the centre of service provision and offered a range of supports and resources from point of entry. These supports may be internally delivered and/or referred to externally. Young people engage with youth work not "as a problem" and the activities help them to identify and develop their strengths and resources.
2. **Consistent, structured approach.** All staff are knowledgeable about the integrated model of service delivery and working to it. The integrated model is planned and executed by all youth services. There is a high level of communication between management and staff, ensuring fluidity and effectiveness of delivery of services
3. **Comprehensive and holistic.** The whole of service is open to a young person at any point of entry. If a young person needs additional supports that are available internally, these will be made available. Likewise, if a young person has a strength or interest that can be furthered internally, the necessary resources will be made available.
4. **Co-location and external service integration.** If a young person needs additional supports, or has a strength or interest and these cannot be catered for internally, external opportunities will be sought and made known to the young person. Where these are not available internally or externally, the youth service will develop an appropriate response. Youth workers act as an essential gateway to both internal and external statutory and voluntary services.
5. **Community-based.** Youth services work best when integrated into the community and broader community development. They have a unique position in communities due to the long-standing relationships that have been cultivated – most notably with parents, community and voluntary groups, as well as with local young people.

There is broad awareness of the integrated model in the Youth Service and among partners

There was broad general knowledge of an integrated model of working within the Youth Service. Although many acknowledged that they could not describe the model in detail, they showed an understanding of the key elements when prompted and, likewise, said that in their own professions they were working in a similar way.

Young people describe positive outcomes and value their engagement with the Youth Service

The young people interviewed for this evaluation described their engagement with the Youth Service in extremely positive terms and articulated outcomes consistent with the international literature. Outcomes included making friends and forming positive relationships, having fun, taking personal responsibility for their activities and appointments, planning and goal setting for the future, improved mood, increased confidence, increased resilience, and reduced alcohol/drug misuse. Some of the older cohort demonstrated increased engagement with education/training and improved employment opportunities.

The Youth Service was described positively in contrast to other agencies, such as mental health services. The Youth Service was repeatedly positioned as a welcoming, accessible and tolerant space.

Youth Service staff and external partners support the integrated model

Youth Service staff and external partners repeatedly stated that the integrated service model provides additional value to the services that are being funded, thereby making them greater than the sum of their parts. Youth Service staff described the seamless, 'no wrong door' approach as crucial to achieving progression and positive outcomes for people. Staff in external agencies stated that the work of the Youth Services makes their job easier. For example, CAMHS staff stated that they feel confident that clients will get support in the community between appointments and council staff said that the Youth Service is responsible for reductions in anti-social behaviour.

The youth service was positioned as the backbone of the response in communities to young people's needs. While it was acknowledged that there were other services available to young people - Foróige, Extern, and Jigsaw being examples - the Youth Service is regarded as the most multi-faceted organisation with the broadest reach in providing services for young people. They are seen as having a strong grassroots involvement in local communities, particularly through youth clubs and augmented by a volunteer base with excellent local knowledge. The fact that they have been embedded in communities for so long has engendered trust.

Current funding levels and structures threaten the sustainability of the integrated model

Often the support that is delivered through the integrated model, and crucial to improving outcomes for young people, is not covered by funding. One-to-one support is one example of this. This type of work absorbs staff time and is essential to

progression to other services for young people. The integrated model facilitates this, but it is not directly funded. Another example is external referrals. It can be time consuming to make these referrals effective. Youth workers told us that, guided by the integrated model, they support the young person until they are comfortable accessing an external service on their own. Meaningful referrals should lead to better outcomes, but they require significant amounts of additional time.

Furthermore, staff expressed concern about a lack of funding for core costs and administrative functions, which can be higher for integrated models (although it is expected that this would be offset in the longer term by more efficient use of services). Management told us that they were expected to cross-subsidise these from project funding because there was a reluctance to fund core services. This was also thought to undermine partnership working and collaboration, which is essential to implementation of the integrated model.

Integrated youth work requires a stronger evidence base and systematic data collection around impact

Some of the challenges stem from a lack of recognition among funders, and in policy, of the value of integrated youth work. In order to make the case for integrated models, the evidence base needs to be strengthened. This evaluation has provided strong qualitative findings for the effectiveness of integrated working. However, a measurement framework and data collection system should be developed to routinely and systematically collect data to evidence the impact of the Integrated Youth Service Model.

Conclusion

There is strong evidence from the qualitative research carried out as part of this evaluation that the YWI Integrated Youth Services Model makes a difference to young people, as well as to external services and wider society, and that integrated working is likely to play a key role. Outcomes identified qualitatively resonate with the international literature and include improved mental health and well-being, increased engagement with education/training and employment, and reductions in alcohol/drug misuse and anti-social behaviour. Yet the lack of recognition of the value of integrated youth work externally by funders, threatens its' sustainability. This is consistent with the policy focus of the DCYA, which is emphasising the need for an indicator set to link to its outcomes of policy interest and that these be used a basis for commissioning youth services. Given that this is the direction of policy, it would be opportune for YWI to develop its own metrics that are based on its stakeholders' perceptions of value that could directly address the outcomes of interest to the DCYA. For this reason, it is vital that YWI develops a systematic approach to measuring the outcome of its work, including the added value of integrated work.

Recommendations

Recommendation for the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Health Service Executive, Pobal, Irish Youth Justice Service (IYJS) and TUSLA etc.,

1. Acknowledge, promote and support the Integrated Youth Services Model as a model which delivers on the requirement for the effective and efficient use of state resources.
2. Endorse and support Youth Work Ireland's Integrated Youth Service Model which is aligned with best practice on integrated working internationally and which evidentially improves outcomes for young people and services.
3. State funders need to develop methodologies for streamlining funding, auditing and reporting to facilitate integrated working of services for young people and alleviating the administrative burden on organisations.
4. Financial systems must support a reasonable degree of flexibility to allow integration of services for young people within a catchment, or service area.
5. In the context of the ETB youth work plan – ensure that the Integrated Youth Service Model is identified as adding value to youth services provision in the region.
6. Acknowledge and support the role of Youth Services in multi-disciplinary responses to critical incidents. Youth Services work effectively with local providers including schools to identify other young people who are particularly vulnerable following a critical incident and identify who is best placed to respond.

Member Youth Services Boards are asked to take the following actions:

7. Ensure that the Integrated Youth Service Model is working effectively – this means that staff, young people and volunteers know what the Integrated Youth Service is, are able to describe it within the context of their service and are easily able to navigate within it.
8. Prioritise the development and universal distribution of a young person's guide or map to navigating an integrated service. The guide would facilitate young people's to understanding and access to all the relevant functions of the Local Member Youth Service in youth friendly language.
9. It is recommended that all Member Youth Services develop their own Charter for effectively delivering the Integrated Youth Services Model in their service. The Charter should be based on this research and be accompanied by an Implementation Plan.
10. Ensure that the Integrated Youth Service Model forms part of the Induction process of all new staff, volunteers and young people.

Youth Work Ireland National Office should take the following actions

11. Review the implementation of Targeted Youth Finding Scheme (TYFS) funding and identify/promote examples of how TYFS services can be incorporated into Integrated Youth Services (IYS) Model of working.

12. Use the IYS research to communicate to all stakeholders through a deliberate communications strategy, which will include case studies and testimonies, that illustrate the effectiveness of the Integrated Youth Services Model in terms of cost (effectiveness) and outcomes for young people.

13. Youth Work Ireland develop and provide to funders a funding model including Management Fees, apportionment policies etc., which assures funders and provides absolute clarity to them on how the public funding they administer is being spent.

14. Ensure that the Integrated Youth Service Model forms part of the Induction process of all new Regional Directors.

15. YWI should consider developing and implementing a systematic measurement framework in order to strengthen the evidence base for integrated youth work.

1.0 Introduction

Adolescence is a time of great change in a person's life and one where the trajectory of the transition to adulthood can have long-term repercussions (Steinberg and Sheffield-Morris, 2001). Although potentially a time of great opportunity, for some young people it can also be a time when life chances narrow. For example, 75% of all mental health problems emerge before the age of 25 and environmental factors in adolescence are critical to the development of psychological health over the life course (Dooley and Fitzgerald, 2012).

The challenges facing young people are arguably on the increase. Across the world, young people live in a time of heightened anxiety. Many of the post-war certainties of previous generations: rising prosperity, strong welfare provision, secure jobs and pensions can no longer be taken for granted. Throughout the 20th century there has been a dramatic transfer of wealth from younger to older generations, with many young people finding it harder to access affordable housing and good quality employment and to pay for their education.

However, as Lerner points out, despite the risks and problems that can emerge, most young people navigate this transition well (Lerner, 2005). Despite this, those concerned with youth policy have tended to focus more on the risks than the opportunities (Jenkinson, 2013). As Sercombe has written: 'if youth work could guarantee an orderly, predictable progression through adolescence … we would see youth work budgets increase dramatically' (2010, p. 76). The concern with pathologizing and misrepresenting young people is now widely shared and has underpinned the development of the positive youth development framework (PYD). A key concept is the plasticity of young people's development. This suggests that trajectories are not fixed and that environmental factors can have a big influence (Lerner, 2006). PYD, therefore, focuses on young people's resources and assets, rather than deficits, or agents of risk to be managed (Lerner, 2005). Indeed, this potential for change has been described as a key strength (Lerner et al. 2009).

Whilst plasticity and potential for change is a key strength, it is also the case that the odds of making a successful transition vary depending on the initial circumstances of birth. There is wealth of evidence that young people that come from homes with the greatest economic, social and cultural resources have a clear advantage. This has led to an emphasis in most countries to an early identification and subsequent targeting of resources, which creates a tension for youth workers (Jenkinson, 2013). According to this critique youth workers are being funded to tackle and minimise specific problems that can occur, which runs counter to the PYD philosophy of empowerment and the challenging of negative stereotypes (ibid.). Nonetheless, the point remains that external factors are hugely important in shaping a young person's future life, and as discussed, those external factors are more challenging than at any time in recent memory. The importance of creating protective, positive structures that are accessible to all young people in navigating these challenges remains.

1.1 About Youth Work Ireland

Youth Work Ireland (YWI) is the largest youth organization in Ireland. Made up 21 local member Youth Services, YWI actively engages over 76,000 young people every week. YWI uses an innovative 'Integrated Youth Service Model' which incorporates not just combined services, but also sharing of staff, resources, space, and ways of working. A key element of the model also includes partnership with external organisations to ensure that young people receive a seamless transition between services. The Integrated Youth Service Model aims to ensure that young people receive a high quality, efficient and effective service which treat them as a 'whole person'. YWI delivers a wide range of services, supports and programmes through the integrated programme, including mental health supports, drug and alcohol supports, LGBTI+ youth work, club development, employability programmes, counselling services, rural outreach and fun, safe spaces for young people.

1.2 About this report

This is the final report from the evaluation of YWI's Integrated Youth Service Model. The aim of the model is to achieve, via the pathways set out above, better outcomes for young people than would be possible without this level and type of integration. A second desired outcome of this way of working is improved cost-effectiveness through reduced duplication, efficiency savings and as a result of better outcomes for the young people. This report summarises the primary and secondary evidence around integrated ways of working and YWI's Integrated Youth Service Model, in particular. The report is structure in five parts:

Section 1 (this section) introduces the evaluation and methodology

Section 2 provides background and context on the position of young people in Ireland and explores definitions of integrated working in the literature

Section 3 describes the YWI's Integrated Youth Service Model, drawing on the interviews with staff, young people and external service providers

Section 4 presents the primary and secondary evidence for integrated working, in general, and the YWI's Integrated Youth Service Model, specifically.

Section 5 concludes the report with a discussion of the challenges to implementation of the Integrated Youth Service Model and concludes with recommendations for how these might be tackled.

In addition to the five sections in the main body of the report, Appendix 1 provides a detailed literature review on outcomes from youth work and features of effective youth work.

1.3 Evaluation methodology

This report is based on a combination of primary and secondary research. The secondary research comprised an extensive literature and the primary research consisted of a workshop and interviews with youth work staff, interviews and focus group with young people and interviews with external service providers. This section describes the methods employed for each part of the evaluation.

Literature review

The literature review examined academic and grey literatures with a view to addressing the following five questions:

1. What is the state of knowledge on the evidence for youth work?
2. What are the features of youth work that have been found to be effective?
3. What evidence is there that youth work impacts positively on youth development?
4. What do we mean by integrated working, what are the origins of the concept and how is it understood?
5. What evidence is there that integrated working has a positive impact on public services generally and youth work specifically, both in terms of social and economic outcomes?

The findings of the review are documented in full in Appendix A, as well as in the report where relevant.

Staff

In total, there were 3 workshops, 1 conference call, and 2 phone interviews with staff. The participating youth services were: Limerick Youth Service, Youthwork Ireland, Galway, Youthwork Ireland, Tipperary, Kerry Diocesan Youth Service, Kerry Garda Diversion Project, Waterford and South Tipperary Community Youth Services, Ossory Youth, Youth Work Ireland Louth, Carlow Regional Youth Service, Youth Work Ireland North Connaught, Donegal Youth Service, Kildare Youth Services, Kildare Garda Diversion Project and Youth Work Ireland Midlands. These youth services represent 67% of Youth Work Ireland affiliated members. In all, 28 staff took part. The sample included a mix of managerial, youth worker and other types of Youth Service staff. The purpose of the workshops was to explore the staffs' understanding of the Integrated Service Model and its impact on stakeholders.

Young people

In total, 21 young people were either interviewed or took part in a focus group for the purposes of the research. A majority (17) were in the younger age category (13-15) and four were in the older category (16-21). Of the sample, 15 were female and six were male. The length of engagement with the service varied from 2 months to 5 years. The young people who took part used services in the following areas: Kildare Youth Services, Limerick Youth Service and Youth Work Ireland Galway.

External service providers

A series of telephone interviews were carried out with local service 'champions' in various locations around the country. Participants were working in the following roles:

- Juvenile Liaison Officer, An Gardaí
- Administrative officer, Local Council
- Education and Training Board/Music Generation tutor
- Community Development Co-Ordinator

- Senior Project Manager, TUSLA
- Education and Welfare Officer
- Nurse therapist, CAMHS
- Sports Partnership Co-Ordinator

The interviewees dealt with different staff in the youth service, depending on their role. Where staff were managers or co-ordinators, they tended to deal with staff at similar levels in the youth service. Frontline staff, on the other hand, tended to deal with youth workers, albeit with some crossover. All interviewees had very close contact with their local youth service, describing the contact as ongoing and typically occurring several times a week in various contexts. Largely the types of contact could be described a fitting into referral, partnership, consultancy.

2.0 Background and context

This section provides background and context for the remainder of the report by, firstly, examining the position of young people in Ireland and the resultant need for a youth service and, secondly, by exploring definitions of integrated working in the secondary literature.

2.1 The need for a youth service in Ireland

Ireland has the highest youth population per head of capita in the EU (22%). Although national level data on outcomes for young people are limited, the available data suggests that young people in Ireland face a range of challenges. According to the latest data, Ireland still has one of the highest rates of young people not in education, employment or training in the EU (9.2%) (OECD, 2017). Although youth unemployment is at the lowest rate in 10 years, this is offset by continuing high youth emigration, with the associated negative effect on families and communities.

A longitudinal study of mental ill-health amongst young people in Ireland has found that up to half of young adults will have experienced some form of mental ill-health (Cannon et al. 2013) and Ireland has comparatively high rates of youth suicide, obesity and alcohol and drug use (Powell et al. 2010). Dooley and Fitzgerald (2012), using data from the My World Survey, have also found that one in three young people had elevated rates of emotional problems, and that these were mediated by alcohol use.

At the same time, many positive developments have taken place in recent years. Ireland has the highest second-level enrolment rate in the OECD amongst 15-19 year olds. Attainment of higher education is also above the OECD average (41%) amongst 25-34 year olds in Ireland (51%) (OECD, 2015). Furthermore, in the most recent Pisa scores Ireland came third in reading, and 13th in both science and maths (OECD, 2016). There has been a consistent fall in the number of young people living in poverty since 2004, which is now the 4th lowest in the EU21.

Ireland came 10th in the 2012 index of child well-being amongst developed nations, a rise of 2 places on the previous report. Ireland performed particularly well on housing, environment and risky behaviours, but with a more mixed performance in other areas like child health and some poverty measures (although these have improved recently). A recent online survey by Youth Work Ireland demonstrated high levels of tolerance and low levels of discriminatory opinions amongst young people, with young people reporting that they are significantly more tolerant of differences and more likely to take action to improve society than previous generations (Youth Work Ireland, 2017).

We can conclude therefore, that whilst Ireland performs well on some child and adolescent outcomes, especially education, there is much room for improvement, especially on mental health and well-being measures. The existing research points to a vibrant youth work sector. In addition, participation by Irish young people is high by

international standards, with Eurobarometer data showing that Ireland has the highest percentage of young people participating in youth clubs or youth organisations in the EU (Eurobarometer). However, a gap remains on the evidence of the contribution of the Irish youth sector to outcomes for young people and wider society, which this research sets out to partly address.

2.2 Defining integrated working

Defining integrated service delivery is challenging and has been referred to as a "terminological quagmire" (Lloyd, et al. 2001). There are many models, most of which identify several levels of working between distinct services/organisations along a spectrum from basic communication at one end to fully integrated services at the other (Horwath and Morrison, 2007; Turnbull and Turnbull, 2000; Atkinson, et al. 2005). Brown and Smith in their review identify the following related terms: partnership working, joint working, joined-up working, inter-agency working, multi-agency working, multi-professional working, inter-agency communication, intra and interorganisational collaboration and collaborative working, which are often used interchangeably when discussing integrated working (p. 4).

Often the focus of the integration in these models is on joint back-office functions and collaboration between professionals. For example, Horwath and Morrison (2007) describe a fully integrated service as:

> "A unified management system, pooled funds, common governance, whole systems approach to training, information and finance, single assessment and shared targets."

The Integrated Care Network (2004) describes it as:

> "A single system of service planning and/or provision put in place and managed together by partners who nevertheless remain legally independent."

Such a system would unite mission, culture, management, budgets and accommodation and could apply at any level such as at the team, service or organisation level.

The emphasis in both these definitions is on integrated working between professionals, rather than the provision of a fully integrated service to the beneficiaries of the service.

A definition with a greater focus on the young person's experience is the Children's Work Development Council (CWDC 2008) in the UK, which defined integrated children's services as:

> "Ensuring a child only tells their story once…integrated working is when everyone supporting children and young people works together effectively to put the child at the centre, meet their needs and improve their lives."

Similarly, Bond (2010) contrasts integration in youth centres with 'co-location'. She finds that integration is a:

> "'no wrong door' approach to service delivery in which standard intake, assessment and referral protocols are established. The youth centre reception is managed by a qualified worker who ensures that a holistic approach is taken during the intake and assessment process linking clients to all of the appropriate services."

Sloper (2004) reviewed collaborative practice within the UK and identified many different models that include a focus on integration from the perspective of the beneficiary:

1. Strategic level working (joint planning/decision-making, commissioning etc)
2. Consultation and training (one agency consults or trains another)
3. Placement schemes (placing professionals within other organisations e.g. social workers placed in primary health care)
4. Centre-based service delivery (where professionals from different agencies work together in one place, but do not necessarily deliver services jointly)
5. Co-ordinated service delivery (usually where a coordinator acts as a liaison between professionals offering distinct services, and the professionals may not have direct contact with each other)
6. Multi-disciplinary and multi-agency teams/project (professionals offering distinct services work together on a daily basis as part of a multi-disciplinary team)
7. Case or care management within multi-agency teams (one identified individual ensures a coordinated service is delivered to families/young people)

Atkinson et al (2007) report that these final stages of integrated service for beneficiaries were the least common.

Given the varied terminology in the field, Brown and Smith (2010) identify the need for clearly articulating what is meant by "integrating children's/youth services". The absence of a clearly defined concept also leads to difficulties in determining whether integration has been achieved and what impact it has. According to Brown and Smith, this is part of the reason why it is often difficult to evidence impact. The existing evidence is often fragmented and difficult to summarise and it is not always clear if two models are similar. According to Atkinson (2002), more needs to be done to refine descriptors and vocabulary associated with inter-agency activity to advance general awareness of both the processes and the outcomes. This is especially important where the definition of integrated working is about how the young person experiences services, rather than the process of professional co-operation.

3.0 The YWI Integrated Youth Service Model

Given the varied understandings of integrated working, this section of the report sets out the key features of the model deployed by YWI. The first part provides an overview of the Integrated Youth Service Model, drawing on the qualitative research with young people, staff and external service providers to bring to life each of the five principles underpinning the model. We then examine the level of awareness of the model among YWI staff and describe the activities young people engage with through YWI. Finally, we summarise the model and the key outcomes using a theory of change approach. Our findings on effectiveness and outcomes follow in Part 4.

3.1 Overview of the model

> "A way of working together effectively to put the young person at the centre, meet their needs and improve lives. It is interpersonal, interprofessional and an interagency way of working. At one end of the continuum there is basic communication while at the other end it is full integration between organisations and services." (Youth worker)

The Integrated Service Model (ISM) is the model of working used by Youth Work Ireland affiliated services. The model is based on a shared ethos with the international standard in youth work commonly referred to as positive youth development (PYD).

The main feature of the approach is that it offers a suite of services, both locally and regionally, that young people can access on a needs basis at different points in their transition to adulthood.

In interviews with staff, there was a broad consensus on what constituted the model and staff who participated in this research shared a good understanding of it (see Figure 1). The integrated service has the following five characteristics:

6. **Youth-centred, and assets-based.** Young people are at the centre of service provision and offered a range of supports and resources from point of entry. These supports may be internally delivered and/or referred to externally. Young people engage with youth work not "as a problem" and the activities help them to identify and develop their strengths and resources.
7. **Consistent, structured approach.** All staff are knowledgeable about the integrated model of service delivery and working to it. The integrated model is planned and executed by all youth services. There is a high level of communication between management and staff, ensuring fluidity and effectiveness of delivery of services
8. **Comprehensive and holistic.** The whole of service is open to a young person at any point of entry. If a young person needs additional supports that are available internally, these will be made available. Likewise, if a young person

has a strength or interest that can be furthered internally, the necessary resources will be made available.

9. **Co-location and external service integration.** If a young person needs additional supports or has a strength or interest and these cannot be catered for internally, external opportunities will be sought and made known to the young person. Where these are not available internally or externally, the youth service will develop an appropriate response. Youth workers act as an essential gateway to both internal and external statutory and voluntary services.
10. **Community-based.** Youth services work best when integrated into the community and broader community development. They have a unique position in communities due to the long-standing relationships that have been cultivated – most notably with parents, community and voluntary groups, as well as with local young people.

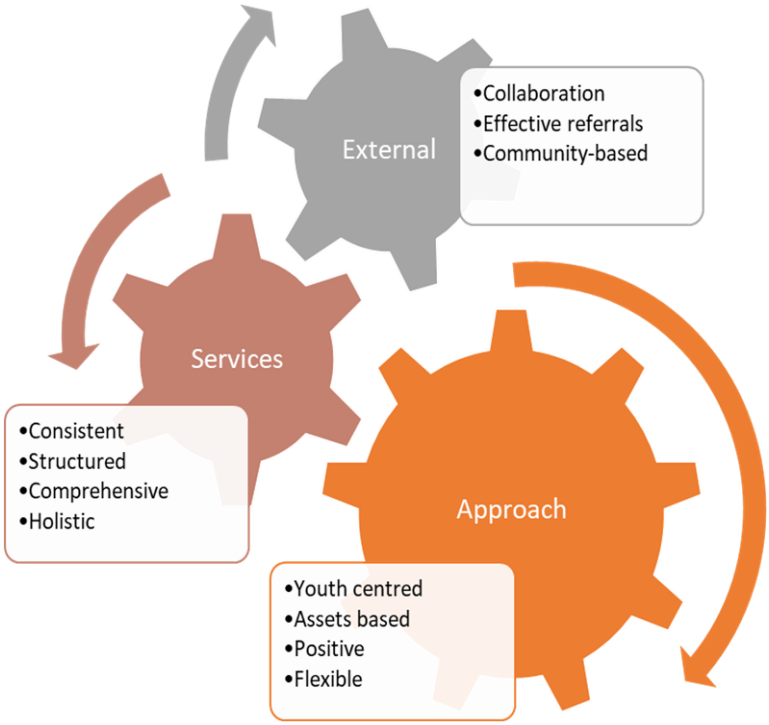


Figure 1: Summary of the ISM approach

In the next sections, we discuss each of these principles in more detail.

Youth-centred and assets-based

The integrated model ensures ease of access to additional supports or new opportunities within the service. There is a progression plan for each young person that would like one. The plan is implemented by both managers and youth workers taking a youth-centred approach and working closely with a shared vision.

> "The young person is given [the] opportunity to be empowered because they know who they go to next, they begin to map and take charge. [It is] really good for not becoming dependent on a particular style and seeing that there are many facets." (Youth worker)

There is strong evidence that the model relies on high quality relationships built up over time between the staff within the services and those external to them, as well as between the service and the communities which they serve.

> "When all the services are part of one youth service, relationships are built up over time which benefits the young person." (Youth worker)

The youth-led focus of projects also ensures that young people are at times designing and indeed co–producing programmes and projects that meet the needs of young people in their communities. This results in buy-in from young people and a sense of ownership.

> "Empowerment, rights-centred approach, integration, participatory, the young person is involved in developing and designing the services, shaped by the young people, things don't happen at young people, and they are partners in it." (Youth Service staff)

The skillset of staff is very important to maintaining such a youth-centred approach. High level awareness of colleagues' skills is key to deploying these successfully. Staff told us that there is a lot of peer learning and mutual support, which aids the journey of the young person.

> "From a staff point of view, you have different skills sets coming and different requirements. There is a synergy of learning from each other. [It is a] centre of excellence, multi-disciplinary, [there is] peer learning, matching one to one work, an awareness of other peoples' skills, a way of working, when you are in an integrated service there are choices of a fit, it's about choice." (Youth Service Manager)

Consistent, structured approach

The integration of services was described as a planned method of working together to achieve the best outcomes with the resources available, rather than an ad hoc process:

> "It is planned. We have tight communications structures. At our staff meeting every month, we fill each other in on our projects, so everyone is familiar with what is going on in specific projects…there is a fluidity to the process." (Regional director)

From the point of view of management, the Integrated Service Model must underpin all staffs' working practices:

> "My objective is to promote it with our workers. Some are in the positions for a number of years, and they have been programmed for operating within a specific programme, so I tell them we can integrate people into other programmes, it evolves over time." (Area co-ordinator)

The consistency of approach means that the young person's needs are assessed in a timely manner and a young person is not left feeling that they are on their own waiting for a service. Rather they are assured of being supported, even if there is a waiting period:

> "No one is turned away, everyone gets the support internally, but they will be held by someone until they wait on the next service." (Youth worker)

A key aspect of the model is overcoming silos so that young people are engaged in a similar style and approach, irrespective of the part of the service they are interacting with. This also applies to external services, where the youth worker will work through the referral to ensure a youth-centred approach is being adopted (see below).

> "Within our service, staff share response work across different teams, deliver training and activities, so there is no silo effect." (Youth worker)

Holistic and flexible

The universal aspect of the service is central to the ethos of youth work (i.e. that there is a comprehensive set of services available to the young people but that there is no requirement to engage with any of them). As with an assets-based approach, staff see the young person as a whole person. However, the universal dimension allows targeted services to exist within it. As discussed in the literature, while there is sometimes a tension between these two principles (see barriers section), they are both important and co-exist successfully and mutually reinforce positive outcomes when well managed.

Youth workers describe it as a wraparound service to meet every potential need that might arise for a young person, and that the service flows from Youth Work Ireland policy and strategy:

> "It is joined up thinking, inter-project collaboration, humane and connected. [It has] flexibility, discretion, easier access for services, more opportunities for young people, multiple services/contacts, optimising resources, where you can see all the policies really integrated…all the strategies meet." (Youth worker)

The staff described a fluidity of movement through the service, where a young person can attend at any point and move freely through the service with information being shared in a confidential way with other services.

This includes a flow between targeted and universal services. Those on Garda Diversion projects, for example, can easily access the broader suite of youth services. Likewise, if a young person is referred through TUSLA, for example, they can engage in many different programmes or one-to-one support.

The youth work model allows staff to work in a more tolerant way with young people who have complex needs. They can achieve more with the young person because of this flexibility.

> "We have a different way of working with young people, when we work one to one we tolerate a lot more behavioural issues that say a school may be not able to, but we try to find solutions. For example, linking with school to get a reduced timetable." (Youth justice worker)

Co-location and external service integration

There are extensive partnerships with other services across all Youth Services. These partnerships take many forms and may involve referrals, networking, side-by-side working in case meetings, holding positions on boards, working groups or steering committees and general partnerships where the youth service may partner formally with another agency or organisation. In many cases, partnership working is less formal and involves regular contact around young people.

> "The infrastructure, the local knowledge, the relationships that are established have added value, over and above what individual organisations can offer." (Youth Service staff)

The partnership model of working was repeatedly described as beneficial. From a professional development perspective, there are benefits for workers in being able to pool resources.

> "It means the young person has a few people working with them on developing options for a pathway of progression. The work involves combining all the resources that are available both internally and externally." (Youth justice worker)

> "Where we pool our resources and we share skills to [the] benefit of colleagues and young persons. We share equipment, information about funding opportunities, services, events etc., actively going out to the projects, teaching leaders how to deliver a programme, or we offer to go out and deliver it. It's an outreach service of flagging about information, signposting" (Youth information service)

The Integrated Service Model is applied across all youth services, regardless of whether the services are available in the one centre or spread across a county in different projects. Where services are co-located, there is physical/geographical and psychological ease of access and referral for the young person. In the instance of the services being spread across various projects in a region, the young person is still offered all the supports of the Integrated Service Model thus ensuring psychological ease of access and referral, if not the same ease of physical/geographical access to services.

There is an obvious advantage when there is a range of services housed in one building:

> "The fact that the youth workers are working with other professionals under the one roof or within a set structure of integrated working gives the young person a joined-up service that puts their needs at the centre. The young people are more at ease because they are in what they consider to be their own space." (Youth worker)

> "When you refer inwards you know that actions will automatically happen. When you refer externally, and if a young person does not show up, then (moving forward) the young person can be supported in keeping their appointments." (Youth Service staff)

As discussed, a key feature of external working is the promotion of the Integrated Service Model. Integration means that everyone is adopting the same way of working. Staff told us that they either support the young person through a referral or they educate the external services about how the model should be applied.

> "When you are doing the external thing, it is down to relationships, there is not necessarily the sense of a shared ethos or understanding of positive youth development externally. That relationship with a youth worker is very individualised. It is important to spend time and build relationships." (Youth worker)

The extensive nature of the networks the Youth Service has with other statutory and voluntary providers, as well as with community development organisations, was evident across all interviews. One rural youth service told us that they partner with as many as 50 organisations. As well as client-facing work, organisations are involved in networking, lobbying and campaigning with partners.

> "There is representation, networking, there is a lot interagency work. We look to advocate for young people's needs, and policy influence. We make sure their needs are on the agenda. The young people are informing what you are bringing, thus the young person's voice is heard, it is stitched into the work. Workers make partnerships with others, they signpost and refer." (Area co-ordinator)

There is considerable evidence, as discussed above, that the Youth Services are working with other youth-focused services, agencies and organisations in formal and informal partnerships. However, despite the partnership ethos and importance of collaboration, some parts of the youth service experience competition for funding and clients. Competition is most likely to take place for targeted funding like the Garda Diversion projects or TUSLA-funded programmes. SICAP also run youth services albeit aimed at primary school children. In some counties, there are many youth services that are the sole providers of certain programmes.

Community-based

Staff told us that youth services have unique positions in communities based on long standing relationships, most notably with parents, community and voluntary groups, as well as with local young people:

> "Because we are an integrated service, we are more on the ground. We are community based. We don't do anything without our community being part of it. We are well known in our area. We are senior in our area." (Youth Service staff)

Staff told us that trust in local youth services improves the quality of outcomes for young people and that the needs of local communities are listened to. The volunteer youth leaders in communities provide vital information about what is going on in the local area relevant to youth. Youth Services are responsive to the needs of local

young people in their own communities in a way that perhaps other youth programmes are not.

> "Youth Work Ireland understand the core principles of youth work. Nowadays the skills set is very comprehensive. It is a myriad of being able to use all those things with a context. We are not afraid to dip into other disciplines. For example, you may have youth workers getting clinical supervision if dealing with complex cases. We promote working with an eclectic set of skills." (Youth Service staff)

Box 1: Case Study

Charlie (20) dropped out of school at the age of 16. At the time of interview, she had been engaged in the youth service for almost 4 years. She joined a youth club in the city where a youth worker told her about a youth service training project. The youth worker accompanied her to visit the centre where she met the teacher and got a placement in the kitchen. She worked in the kitchen for 6 months before she was eligible to join the Leaving Certificate Applied programme. Charlie described her experience of the training programme as follows:

"I loved every minute of it, I got to know people from different walks of life, there was no class system, everyone was on the same level – we were there because we couldn't finish school, there was no judgement from anyone".

While on the LCA programme she met a youth worker who encouraged her to go to the local youth café. The youth worker accompanied her on her first visits because she was too nervous to go on her own. She found the café to be very welcoming and was asked to be on a committee during the first visit. She was immediately interested in the fact that it appeared to be run by the young people.

Gradually, Charlie became involved in other groups within the café. She joined a mental health awareness group and ended up making short films, learning photography, and meeting government ministers. She also went on a trip to Amsterdam to meet members of the United Nations, appeared on television and in newspapers. She is now part of a Youth Advisory panel and is studying at a third level college.

"I figured out I wanted to do youth work myself, and it took a few youth workers to persuade me that I could do anything I wanted."

Although currently in college and largely independent, she still gets help from youth workers when she needs it, for example with her college assignments.

She describes the one-to-one support she got from youth workers over the years as the key to her transition to adulthood.

"If you saw me then you would not think we were the same person, I was extremely depressed and anxious. I was very anti-social, very shy. I was a bit different and I got hassle for that…I wouldn't leave the house without my parents. It was the way (the youth workers) they were able to introduce me to people slowly."

When she told the youth worker she wanted friends like a normal teenage, the youth worker said, "Well, we'll go and find some friends". On her first visit to the youth café she describes how the youth worker supported her socially:

"She sat right beside me. She would start me talking to one person, then another. Then she would come back and then, after a time, I wouldn't even notice. Eventually I would go to the café on my own. It was individual, one to one support and I was listened to".

Although Charlie accessed supports from other professionals, she did not find any of these helpful.

"I had been to counselling and Pieta House but it was like, 'we hear you but we don't hear you'. I wanted to be a teenager, I wanted to do all the things a teenager would do. If it weren't for the Youth Service, I wouldn't be half the person I am. I would be invisible. They gave me a voice. What had happened to me shouldn't define me. I was given permission to realise that I could be whoever I wanted to be with encouragement and help"

3.2 Awareness and understanding of the model in Youth Work Ireland

There was broad general knowledge of an integrated model of working within the youth service. Although many acknowledged that they could not describe the model in detail, they showed an understanding of the key elements when prompted and, likewise, said that in their own professions they were working in a similar way. Where research participants could describe the model, there were very positive:

> "It's a high threshold integration into the services. It's non-judgemental. The young people gain confidence and trust, which they don't have with other statutory services as they are seen as judgemental. The youth service gets the young people back on track, [and] exposed to positive relationships with other young people. The group, via peer influence, help other young people to grow. When they feel they should act in a certain manner, then they often do. In a positive environment, young people can flourish." (Administrative officer, Local council)

The timely and seamless response to a young person's needs was stated as very important, particularly for a vulnerable group:

> "Young people are not pushed around from service to service. They can get it all in one place, and it can help them access other things. If you have vulnerable young persons, this is very important to support them in a timely manner; a referral mechanism that is easy to navigate through." (Community Development co-ordinator)

Those who worked on higher level management had a deeper understanding of the integrated service model:

> "Yes, in relation to strategic planning we would be invited as key partner. It would be seen to be very relevant understanding for us to know how they do their work and it informs us." (Sports Partnership co-ordinator)

Others thought it was a strength of the Youth Service that they work in such an integrated way:

> "It's what we expect. It's what they do and what they are about: they pick up the phone, they ask the questions, they reach out. I think it's their forte." (Nurse therapist, CAMHS)

> "It's flexible and integrated into community, young persons at whatever level can access the support that they need." (Nurse therapist, CAMHS)

The integration into communities was also viewed as a strength of the Youth Service:

> "They have a good understanding of local information. They have ground level knowledge. Having the good relationships makes our work easier to roll out. We end up saving time on projects." (Sports Partnership co-ordinator)

Engaging young people in the communities in which they live was thought to have a positive long term social impact. They described an intergenerational reach, with people in their twenties coming back to work as volunteers in the Youth Service and, in some cases, even going on to train in social care.

The co-location of services within the overall Youth Service was seen as positive for young people. While it was acknowledged that young people may not be aware that there is an integration of services, they are nonetheless recipients of many services in a seamless way, whether physically under one roof or within the one service in different locations.

> "I think it's brilliant. You will have cross over in different projects. If you don't play an instrument but you may want to be involved in a music project, you are good at art, so you'd get to design the poster for the band. Everything feeds in." (Music Generation tutor)

> "They have a diverse range of services available, it's a hub of community activity for young people, [it is] easy to access, that makes a huge difference." (Project manager, TUSLA)

However, it was noted by rural area services that co-location of services was not always possible. The Youth Service centres are not generally based in low population areas. This presents a difficulty for young people and the services that engage them. While outreach can help towards meeting this gap in services, it cannot not fully meet the needs of young people living in rural areas.

There was agreement among interviewees that a centrally-funded Youth Service would be a positive change for the service. It was felt that planning into the medium-term future is very difficult for Youth Service because of the piecemeal nature of funding. It was felt that a central fund for core services would improve the overall offer for young people.

> "I think that you could plan ahead. [Being] piecemeal is not allowing youth service to be strategic. The projects are funding-led at the moment, but if central piece was in existence it would be more evidence-based and driven by that." (Community Development co-ordinator)

Some interviewees thought staff resources were being wasted on preparing funding applications.

> "I think the way the service is funded is awful, but that is generic of the industry. They are doing fantastic work in order to support young people and I think they should be properly resourced. They are applying to different departments and surely that must be costing the government heaps of money in doing all that applying, and administration associated with that." (Community Development co-ordinator)

> "Having core funding, would be invaluable to them and would secure their general things, like youth clubs, groups, community-based youth support." (Project manager, TUSLA)

It was often said that youth workers, and by association the Youth Service, go above and beyond their job description and the remit of their funding:

> "Youth workers work more hours than any other person in a job. They go above and beyond what is contractual." (Juvenile liaison officer)

3.3 The activities for young people

Younger participants tend to engage in after school groups as their primary ongoing activity. This was generally augmented with other programmes, such as special interest activities. Generally, the young people self-refer because they have heard about the youth group through word of mouth. Table 1 sets out the activities young people engaged in while attending a youth club/cafe.

Table 1: Activities attended at youth club/cafes

Type of activity	Examples
Hobbies	Arts and crafts, drama, ping pong/games, swimming, ice skating
Training	Leadership and mentoring programme, internet safety, community radio training programme
Specific supports	Mental health services, mental health support group, LGBT support, one-to-one support
Trips/outings	Erasmus/other, European projects, day trips, student exchange,
Competitions/gatherings	Comhairle na nÓg. Youth Council,
Clubs	Summer camps, homework club

Social	Sleep overs, discos, drop in

There are also location specific programmes, for example, a preparation for transition to second level school programme. In another club, a group of young teenage boys painted and decorated a room in their Youth Service.

There were high levels of satisfaction with the quality of service and the range of activities. It evident that the Youth Service is valued by the young people that use it. Consistent with the literature (see Appendix 1), there was an emphasis on enjoyment with the activities provided:

> "It's really fun. You get to meet new people, they do fun activities, all different types like swimming ice skating… you get to go new places, you get to learn skills, cooking, communicating." (Young person,16, Galway)

The young people talked about the skill of staff and their flexibility:

> "I get to know what is going on around my area. The staff are respectful of what you say to them. They won't shout at you like teachers, the staff are so sound." (Young person, 14, Galway)

Many young people said that they could drop into the youth service any time they wanted, either for company or support. When asked what the young people liked about the youth service, the responses all mentioned the friendliness of the staff and the welcoming atmosphere. The following quotes from young people in Limerick illustrate this:

> "The staff make it. They are like our family on Wednesdays. They are friendly. You feel like you know them for years. They are understanding. They are funny. They make you want to laugh when you want to cry."
>
> "If you're having a bad day, they try their hardest to resolve your problems."
>
> "I just love it. It's a good help. You have a laugh. The staff are friendly."

The youth centred/assets-based approach is also valued. Young people often distinguished between the centre and other services or school. They value the informality, the friendly style and the fact that they have someone that they can speak to who is non-judgemental. These qualities are also evident from the targeted approach used in the Garda Diversion Project (Box 2).

> "It's because it's so friendly. When you walk in, it doesn't look like something that's run by TUSLA. It doesn't look scary. You don't feel nervous. It feels like someone's house, it doesn't feel like school or work. It was just where I went to get education, but in a good way." (Young person, 20, Newbridge)
>
> "It's useful and it is advice you wouldn't get anywhere else. They go further than school would: they get to find out how you are actually feeling…they are not going to turn around and snap at you. They are qualified and know how to approach things professionally." (Young person, 16, Galway)

Box 2: Garda Diversion Project Case Study

Marina left school after a few weeks at secondary school. She was arrested several times in her early teens for anti-social behaviour and had a history of substance use. Home schooling did not work out for her. She was eventually referred to residential care, where she lived for a year and a half. She really enjoyed her time there but reported feeling lonely for her family. When she returned to the family home, she was referred by the Juvenile Liaison Officer to the Garda Diversion Project. She started attending an educational programme there a few times a week and got several national qualifications. She subsequently moved on to attend a FAS course and is currently studying for qualifications in childcare. She also secured employment for a period. She said that she continued to engage with the Garda Diversion programme because she felt welcomed by the staff and began to trust them. She did not feel judged and was supported in her development as a young person.

"Great support. Really nice. I get along so well with them. That's what made the education so easy, because I got on with them"

Marina attributes her progression directly to the support she received through the Youth Service:

"I wouldn't have had a future. I wouldn't have gotten into FAS or gotten a job or a Level 3. I wouldn't have been able to talk to people"

She continues to drop into the programme whenever she needs emotional or practical support.

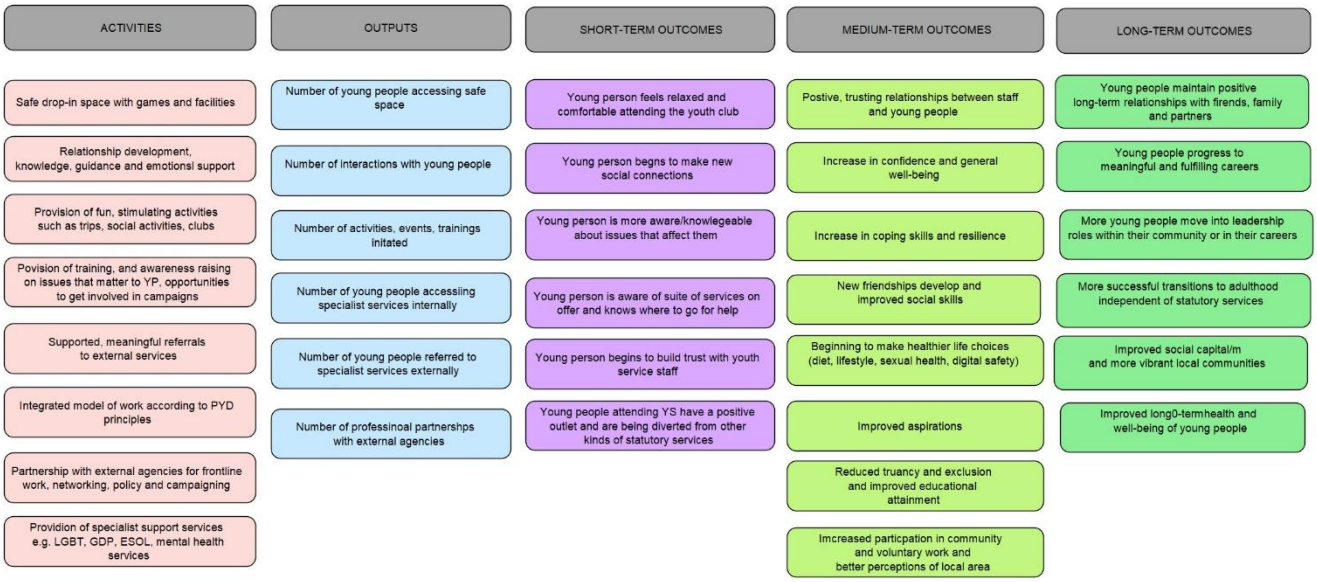
3.4 Theories of change

Theories of change (or logic models) are a widely accepted best practice approach to evaluation, and is an approach endorsed by the DCYA (2014). It describes the relationship between inputs into an organisation, or an intervention, and the short-, medium- and long-term changes that then occur. These changes can be positive or negative, intended or unintended.

One of the aims of this evaluation has been to further develop the theories of change. This strand of work has been informed by the qualitative work and literature review. Setting out a comprehensive theory of change is vital to the overall research design as it informs what will be measured in the next phase of the research. Some work on theories of change had already taken place at YWI. Whilst comprehensive, this was intended as an internal process and a 'first step' and did not follow the usual participatory and exploratory process to theory of change development.

Figure 1 provides an overview of the ToC for young people. Other ToCs will be developed for social services and the local community. As we can see, the outcomes link closely to the seven proximal outcomes identified by DCYA as a priority.

Figure 1: Theory of change for young people



4.0 Evidence for the integrated model

This section considers the primary and secondary evidence for integrated working, in general, and the Integrated Youth Service Model, specifically. We do this in three parts. The first part considers the secondary literature on integrated working. The second part looks at examples of integrated working in the UK, US and Australia. The third, and most substantial section, draws on our primary research to evidence the effectiveness of YWI's Integrated Youth Service Model.

4.1 Secondary literature on integrated working

Most studies on integration focus on the *process* of integrated working rather than the *outcomes* achieved (Cameron and Lart 2003; Sloper 2004; Brown and Smith 2010). From the perspective of building an evidence base, this is compounded by the varied definitions of integrated working. As Brown and Smith (2010) point out, whilst the focus on process is important and understandable, there is a danger that this becomes the primary focus and detracts from the aim of improving outcomes for young people. Indeed, even where positive outcomes are reported, it is often difficult to attribute them to partnership or integrated working (Percy-Smith, 2005).

The existing evidence on integrated working tends to fall into the following three categories:

1. Multiple needs and the failure of fragmentation
2. Improved outcomes and service quality
3. Economic impacts

Multiple needs and the failure of fragmentation

Multiple needs/co-occurring problems is the most commonly cited reason for developing an integrated model of working with young people engaging with public services (e.g. Hood, 2014). Several barriers (e.g., fragmented treatment plans, specialised clinicians, limited funding) were found to limit the capacity of single-service providers to meet complex needs (SAMSHA, 2002). This approach is seen as especially suited to young people presenting with mental health and substance abuse issues (O'Reilly et al. 2013). The combined impact of multiple, but separate, interventions on vulnerable young people was a cause for concern (Ungar et al. 2013) and the development and use of integrated models was advocated to reduce this adverse impact and address needs more effectively.

Young people concurrently involved in more than one service generally do not achieve better outcomes despite the larger volume of services they interact with (Garlandet al. 2003; Haapasalo, 2000; Harpaz-Rotem, et al. 2008; 2004; Kroll et al., 2002).

In a study that directly explored the impact of service consistency on youth outcomes, Sanders et al. (2013) found better outcomes were reported when more than one provider worked with youth in respectful and empowering ways that

encouraged youth agency and responded respectfully to their circumstances. The research concluded that practitioners need to:

> "…attend carefully to how other providers engage with youth, because inconsistent service experience had an equally strong relationship with poor outcomes as did negative service experiences; even one provider working in disempowering and disrespectful ways appeared to undermine outcomes for this group of vulnerable youth." (Sanders et al. p 695).

Brechman-Toussaint and Kogler (2010) found that integration provides a joined-up approach to tackling 'wicked problems' and can be resource-effective, enable knowledge and resource sharing, lead to long-term solutions and foster a sense of responsibility for young people's outcomes.

There is also a concern that, in the absence of integrated service provision, vulnerable populations who require several services are not aware of the full range of services and systems that are available to them (Rosenheck et al, 2003). The intention with an integrated approach is that the likelihood of over- or under-consumption of services can be significantly reduced.

Improved outcomes and service quality

While it has come to be widely accepted that collaboration between agencies and professionals can improve the quality of services for children and young people (Crawford, 2012; Hammick et al., 2009; Atkinson et al., 2007; Barrett et al., 2005), a repeated theme of evidence reviews is the lack of good quality data on outcomes (e.g. Sloper 2004; Oliver et al. 2010; Wong & Sumsion 2013). This lack of evidence has hindered the planning and implementation of these types of care delivery models (Armitage, 2009).

In a systematic review of interagency collaboration in children and young people's mental health, Cooper et al (2016) found several studies that showed an association between collaboration and positive outcomes. However, the studies were mixed and some also found negative outcomes. The study also found that interagency collaboration was perceived as helpful and important by both service users and professionals. However, there was also some evidence that interagency collaboration across childcare services may lead to increases in workload, as well as professional identity confusion (Oliver et al. 2010).

Bond (2010) identified the following benefits from integrated working: timely access, improved needs assessment and appropriate referrals, greater coordination of programs, avoidance of duplication, resource sharing and cross-sectoral understanding of needs and gaps. However, she also found that it can be labour-tensive, time consuming and costly to establish.

Much of the literature shows that integrated services for families and children are effective when one worker acts as an access point for all the other professionals that the service users need to engage with (Sloper, 2004). A report by the OECD (2012) found improved outcomes where child mental health services are better integrated with educational institutions. It also found that professionals speaking on behalf of

the user, in interaction with other professionals, can be more effective than service users advocating for themselves as professionals are more likely to have the skill sets to communicate effectively with other professionals. Within such a model, families also have one point of contact, which should create efficiencies for both the service user and provider.

Economic impacts

There are two means by which positive economic impacts can be derived from integrated service provision: efficiencies in service delivery and by reducing the cost of future social problems through improved outcomes for young people.

According to the OECD (2010), both services and users stand to benefit from the efficiencies yielded by an integrated approach. For the former, they can save time and money by accessing multiple services in one place, or by reducing transaction costs. Services, on the other hand, can lower costs by reducing duplication and over-consumption of services.

The second economic rationale is reducing the cost of future social problems. As Brown and Smith (2010) point out, a single agency or professional working in isolation is unlikely to be able to meet all the needs of a given young person. However, the costs of a young person's needs not being met are potentially large. For example, in the UK it has been estimated that a programme of supportive multi-agency interventions for children who demonstrate challenging behaviour from an early age could save over £100,000 in direct costs incurred to age 16 (Audit Commission, 2004).

There have been several further attempts to monetise the costs of service failure for young people in the UK:

- It has been estimated that the costs of youth unemployment – at £155 million per week – is equivalent to £8.1 billion a year. These are just the immediate costs of benefits payments and productivity losses and do not include costs to individuals. Youth unemployment can have a lasting impact on employment and earnings prospects. Coles et al. (2010) estimate the lifetime costs of young people not being in employment, education and training at between £22 and £77 billion for the UK.
- Home Office data from 2003/4 suggest that the total cost of problematic drug use among young people is almost £3 billion a year. This includes the cost of drug-related crime, health service costs, social care and drug-related deaths.
- The cost of youth crime (i.e. convictions for crime committed) by young people between 10 and 17 years old is estimated at £391 million per year. For those aged between 18 and 21 years-old, the estimate increases substantially to over £834 million per year.
- Using figures that calculate the cost of treatment for a range of mental health disorders, the cost of depression alone in young people in the 15 to 24 age group totals roughly £340 million per year.
- A report on the economics of investing in preventative services in the UK found that the cost to the UK economy of social problems such as crime, family breakdown, substance use, ill-health and obesity amounts to £4 trillion

> over a 20-year period. Investing in a dual investment package, including targeted interventions, universal childcare and paid parental leave, could help address as much as £1.5 trillion worth of the cost of these social problems (Aked et al. 2009).

Finally, there will also be fixed capital costs to introducing such a system and the ongoing running costs will require sustainable streams of public investment. According to the OECD (2012), this is particularly important for integrated services:

> "If a public body withdraws funding from an agency in an integrated setting, there is the obvious potential for a 'domino-effect' in belt-tightening or closure. If the funding for an integrated service comes from several different Ministries, for instance, then the potential for this 'domino effect' is multiplied due to a set of unrelated risks and competing interests in each sector …commitment to integrated working by professionals and allocation of their time is likely to depend on the amount of funding each agency receives for the same project."

While not specifically focused on integrated working, in the Irish context research for the National Youth Council (2012) has estimated a net economic return of €1.21 billion, or a Benefit-Cost Ratio (BCR) of 2.22:1 for Exchequer funding of youth work over a 10-year period. These benefits were found to derive from justice, health and welfare related benefits as well as from increased economic activity from direct employment and volunteering. However, these findings must be treated with caution as the youth-related outcomes are derived from assumptions that are not based on evidence.

4.2 Integrated services in other jurisdictions

This section reviews the evidence from three geographical locations: the UK, US, and Australia. Each of these countries has had experience of the development of integrated models. However, much of this thinking has been led by the UK, which is where our discussion begins.

United Kingdom

Integrating public services became a key policy priority for the Labour Government in 1997 (Integrated Care Network 2004; Cameron & Lart 2003; Johnson, Wistow, Rockwell and Hardy 2003). The Children's Act 2004 had a significant influence on the way in which professionals collaborate and share information. The Act made it a statutory duty for all those involved in working with children to report any safeguarding concerns. This enshrined in law a responsibility to collaborate and share information for the protection of children. The Act was developed as part of the UK government's response to the death of Victoria Climbié, and to prevent children "falling through the gaps" in services.

At the same time, the UK Government launched the "Every Child Matters" (ECM) initiative, which focused on children's holistic needs and emphasised wellbeing as a human right. A key approach of the ECM initiative was to make children's services more integrated, child-centred and strategically planned. This was described as follows:

> "The key feature of an integrated service is that it acts as a service hub for the community by bringing together a range of services, usually under one roof, where practitioners work in a multi-agency way to deliver integrated support to children and families." (Every Child Matters, UK Government green paper, 2003)

This led to a sea change in the provision of children's services and directly encouraged the formation of integrated children's services, including Sure Start Centres (which aimed to provide early education, health and family support with an emphasis on outreach and community development).

A study in 2010 found positive effects of Sure Start Local Programmes on both children (lower BMIs and improved physical health) and parents (more stimulating and less chaotic home environments, less harsh discipline and greater life satisfaction) (National Evaluation of Sure Start, 2010). Other schemes set up in the wake of the ECM initiative, including Children's Trusts, Early Support and Team Around the Child, all aimed to promote greater collaboration between services and are international best practice models for integrated children's hubs (Moore et al, 2008). However, these programmes tend to focus specifically on early childhood, rather than adolescence or youth work.

Following the ECM green paper in 2003, the "Youth Matters" green paper was published in 2005, outlining the UK government's vision for young people aged 13 to 19. One of the initiatives within the Youth Matters programme was "Connexions" which aimed to provide information, support and advice to young people aged 13 to 19 (and up to 25 for those with learning or physical disabilities). Connexions Centres were developed around the UK, often several in each county, which offered services ranging from education, housing, health, relationships, substance misuse and finance. Though significant progress was made in achieving these working arrangements through Connexions, reviews of the impact concluded that successful partnership remained elusive. Barriers to successful partnership included the size and complexity of the system, the baggage that services carried from previous arrangements, including previously failed relationships.

The Every Child Matters programme, Connexions, and the Children's Work Development Council were initiatives of the Labour Government in the UK and are no longer actively supported by the UK Government. However, the Children's Act 2004 legislation and integrated approaches to service delivery for children and young people remain influential. The flagship programme of the new administration was the Troubled Families Programme, which aimed to "turn around" the lives of 120,000 families with multiple and complex needs in England, with a focus on early intervention. However, an external evaluation of the programme found little evidence of impact (Day et al, 2016) for a variety of reasons, including problems with the payment-by-results approach.

In the UK, integrated working is often seen in terms of safeguarding children, namely with a focus on risk and the prevention of child abuse and neglect (Parton, 2006). The shift towards integrated working is also part of a broader trend in public services, where an ecology of autonomous professions is giving way to a more fluid,

interdisciplinary world of practice (Carnwell and Buchanan, 2005). This is particularly the case in the conjoined sectors of health and social care, where both demographic and political changes have made it necessary to deliver a range of specialist services in various "person-centred" combinations (Koubel and Bungay, 2008), and indeed fully integration of the two sectors in Scotland.

The most recent policy initiative to promote service integration is the Co-location Fund, a cross-government initiative that provides funding for capital projects to enable the co-location of two or more services for children, young people and families. The fund enables an integrated delivery of services that contribute to improving outcomes for local children, young people and families (including reducing inequalities) (Atkinson, 2009). The objective is to improve access for service users and assist integrated working between professionals. The Co-location Fund supports projects on sites where universal services are already located, such as schools and primary health care services, that enable simple and direct access for children and families (UK Department for Education, 2012c).

Australia

The Headspace programme in Australia aims to provide integrated, youth-centred, holistic and evidence-based services that improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people aged 12 to 25 years old. Headspace was established in 2006 to reduce the high prevalence of mental health problems, the low uptake of services, and poor outcomes among young Australians with mental illness (Patulny et al, 2013). Headspace centres are located in urban and rural locations and provide integrated care across four domains: mental health, physical health, drug and alcohol use, and social and vocational participation. This is usually delivered via a lead agency working alongside local partner organisations, each with expertise in different areas (such as primary health care, mental health care and vocational training).

A recent evaluation of Headspace found that it is accessed by a large and diverse group of young people. In particular, the centres were successful in engaging young people from marginalised groups, such as those who identify as LGBTI, are homeless, and not in work or study. Also, the proportion of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander clients was twice their representation in the general population. Several factors were found to promote service access and engagement. These included the "youth-friendly" nature of centres, friendly and non-judgemental staff, free or low-cost services, the wide range of services, and innovative modes of engagement.

Overall the evaluation findings were mixed. The evaluations found small, but statistically significant, improvements in the mental health of headspace clients relative to two matched control groups. This included reduction in psychological distress, suicidal ideation and self-harm. Young people treated by Headspace whose mental health improved, also benefited from a range of positive economic and social outcomes. The strongest economic benefits came from a reduction in the number of days lost due to illness and the number of days where their activities were cut down due to illness, compared to the matched controls.

> "It is clear that headspace centres provide a range of services that frequently meet the varied needs of young people. To this end, only a small proportion of young people receive formal referrals to other services in the system. This ensures that young people frequently receive a variety of services in a single location, thereby reducing the likelihood that they will disengage from the service." (Social Policy Research Centre, 2015: 74).

United States of America (US)

The US context is interesting because it provides evidence from experimental studies. A recent meta-analysis of 31 Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs) compared integrated primary care interventions with non-integrated care for youth with mental health issues in the US (Asarnow et al, 2015). They concluded that youth from the trials involving integrated care models had a 66% probability of having a better treatment outcome than those accessing non-integrated care. This increased to 73% for those trials which evaluated a 'Collaborative Care' approach, which is a specific model of integrated care.

Collaborative Care (CC) is an innovative approach to integrated mental health service delivery that focuses on reducing access barriers, improving service quality and lowering health care expenditure. CC is one of the most common integrated care models and reflects one of the best-tested and most effective models for overcoming barriers to treatment and improving outcomes for mental health conditions (Lyon et al. 2015).

Specifically, in studies addressing adolescent depression, Asarnow et al. (2005) and Richardson et al. (2014) both found positive effects, relative to controls, of a) CC models on some intervention processes (Asarnow et al., 2005) and b) client outcomes, such as depression symptoms and remission rates (Asarnow et al., 2005; Richardson et al., 2014).

Conclusion

These three examples from peer countries point to several conclusions about integrated working. First, integrated working has a long provenance, especially in the UK where the first policy initiatives are now over 20 years old. In that time, the thinking and practice on integrated working has grown and evolved, and there is now a good international understanding of its impacts as well as the implementation challenges. There have been notable successes like the Surestart, Headpsace and Collaborative Care, as well as clear failures like the Troubled Families initiative. What these demonstrate is that simply calling an initiative integration, or a synonym is insufficient. The type and quality of services that are being integrated matter as does the means through which that integration takes place i.e. where it is in a true spirit of collaboration.

There is little academic or policy analysis of integrated working in Ireland. A recent evaluation of a service for homeless young people in Limerick found positive outcomes and identified the partnership approach as a key innovation (Lawlor and Bowen, 2017). Our international review did not uncover comparable examples of a network of voluntary youth services operating a national integrated service. Such

services may well exist but may not have been evaluated. This underscores the importance of building an evidence base for the integrated approach to which this report will contribute, a discussion to which we now turn to.

4.3 Evidence from primary research on YWI's Integrated Youth Service Model

The primary research with staff, partners and young people provides evidence of the benefits of the specific integrated approach adopted by Youth Work Ireland. We summarise this here under four headings:

1. Better outcomes for young people
2. External referrals
3. Value to wider services and society
4. Partnership working/consultancy

The evidence collected for this research is qualitative in nature and, while robust, could be strengthened by instituting a systematic data collection process to evidence key outcomes also quantitatively. We set out this recommendation in more detail in Part 5 of the report.

Better outcomes for young people

> "Young people vote with their feet. If they get a sense of value, they will keep coming." (Youth worker)

Staff described the process through which young people have a positive experience of youth work. Their descriptions resonate with the secondary literature (see Appendix 1). To begin with, young people are given the opportunity to engage with new people and become involved in special interests, educational opportunities, practical skills, group outings. Throughout this process, they can make new social connections as peer support is very important to young people's development. In the engagement with youth workers, they also experience the positive effects of having a relationship with a trusted adult. This relationship takes time to foster and can lead to other positive developments for the young person, including referral to other activities within the Youth Service, or referral to external services/programmes. One youth justice worker described the range of outcomes she observed as follows:

> "[They have] increased confidence and self-esteem, social and coping skills, resilience. They either have better mental health or have begun a conversation about mental health. We see changes in educational attainment, the identification of [a] pathway to education or employment, improvement in family dynamics, behavioural improvement and reduction in criminal activity. These will usually be preceded by better engagement with services, referral to other services or engagement with some recreational activity that they have identified. They will also usually have positive role models in [their] trusted adult."

The young people in the older age group consistently reported an improvement in their overall well-being since participating. This group reported taking personal

responsibility for their activities and appointments, planning and goal setting for the future, improved mood, increased confidence, and increased resilience.

With the younger cohort there was greater emphasis on enjoying the activities, making friendships and the opportunity to meet new people:

> "Get a lot of laughter out of it. It's fun because you can meet new friends, you can interact with others, you get to know other people, you play games there and you have a good time." (Young person, 12, Naas)

Consistent with their age, their responses reflected less on the impact that the service has on their lives. As well as the emphasis on fun, they described being able to share their daily worries with someone outside the home:

> "Helped me if I was fighting with my friends, wanting a pair of shoes, trouble at home. They give advice, listen." (Young person, 16, Newbridge)

> "It's fun. It's great for making friends, nice way to meet people. Good way to research, to do projects. If you are getting bullied or something, you can talk to a youth worker. It helps you understand that everyone is the same on the inside, they teach us that through games and activities and through talking to us." (Young person, 13, Naas)

This age group reported more engagement with the local community. They said that the engagement gave them a sense of relaxation and the opportunity to learn new skills. Young people who engaged in Youth Council or Comhairle na nÓg were very politically aware and engaged. In one instance, a group designed a community needs survey which they were disseminating to the local residents. Those involved in these activities were able to articulate their activities and journeys:

> "Keeps you busy, entertains us, keeps us off the road. You can meet new people, allows us to hang out in a group." (Young person, Galway)

Others described how transformative the experience of the Youth Service was in their lives. There were many examples of youth workers building confidence, assertiveness and motivating young people.

> "It was when I went to the café. I was sitting here for a while with others - it got to be a heated debate - usually I'd be sitting there smiling, and then someone said something that irked me and I put up my hand and said I have something to say and everyone said, "Go on, say it!" I felt confident and I felt part of a group. They were my people, people I could turn around and talk to." (Young person, 20, Limerick)

> "My youth worker got me to ring someone on a phone and I stayed on to them and I did the phone call all on my own. I was really proud of that. I would have run away before." (Young person, 16, Kildare.)

> "I didn't care at the time. I didn't care about anything, but I care about everything now." (Young person, 16, Garda Diversion Project, Kildare)

The younger age group (12-16) said that, if the Youth Service did not exist, they would spend time with their friends on the street, take part in sports activities, attend

discos, or go to friends' houses. However, the older age group tended to describe negative situations that would have resulted, if it had not been for the Youth Service.

> "It helped me through a lot. I don't know what I would have done without it." (Young person, 20, Kildare)

> "I'd have gone insane." (Young person, 19, Limerick)

> "If there wasn't a Youth Service for you to go to what would you do with your time? Sitting in a dark room, doing nothing." (Young person, 16, Galway)

External referrals

The young people showed a good awareness of additional supports that are available through their local service, including counselling, family support, Garda diversion project, youth café, youth exchanges, dance classes, and one-to-one support.

Most of the young people in this research (15/21) had experience with other statutory services, such as TUSLA, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, the criminal justice system, education and welfare officers, juvenile liaison officers, or school completion/behavioural teachers. Their experiences often predated their time in the Youth Service or were ongoing. All research participants in the older age group had been supported by a youth worker in making and/or attending external appointments.

The staff interviewees described themselves as working very closely with the local youth service on referrals:

> "When I have a young person who I think would benefit, we work together closely to see if we get something that suits that child. The co-ordinator then takes it up from there. I link in with her to see how things are going." (Juvenile liaison officer)

The referrals they send to the Youth Service were described as effective and well supported. Youth workers are known for their expertise in dealing with young people and provide an extra level of support that is thought to be missing in statutory organisations.

> "They [youth workers] certainly exhaust the hand holding, and it can very difficult, the young persons can be very difficult, they go way beyond what I would expect from a referral." (Education and welfare officer)

The Youth Service intervention was described as a very important piece in the overall development of the young person:

> "I think when we can refer early, and they can build relationships and social competencies, there is a high probability of succeeding. If it is later, then change can be more difficult." (Project manager, TUSLA)

It was also seen as important that the Youth Service continues to support a young person beyond the age of 18, if needed. The specialist support that youth workers provide was described as very valuable:

> "We had a youth traveller worker supporting a traveller project years ago and that really helped to have that specific support. Made a huge difference to participation." (Education and welfare officer)

Value to wider services and society

Staff told us that the Integrated Service Model provides additional value to the services that are being funded, thereby making them greater than the sum of their parts. Staff told us that it was important to be able to document this added value. The lack of recognition of the value of the integrated model means that work to enhance it is not directly funded at the moment.

> "There is not enough recognition, of what is an international standard of working with young people. it is not officially being recognised as an asset in the community." (Youth Service staff member)

There is a lot of underfunded and unfunded work that happens between young people and youth workers. One-to-one support – which is so crucial to the trusting relationships – is one example of this. This type of work absorbs staff time and is essential to progression to other services for young people. Although the integrated model facilitates this, it is not directly funded. External referrals are another example of underfunded work, as it can be time consuming to make these referrals effective. Youth workers told us that they support the young person until they are comfortable accessing an external service on their own. Meaningful referrals should lead to better outcomes, but they require significant amounts of additional time, which is again unfunded.

> "Mediating and navigating on behalf of the young person is the added value. A youth worker understands that a young person needs hand-holding in navigating their way through external services especially but perhaps also with accessing internal services." (Youth Service staff)

As described above, the increased support a young person may need in accessing external services is essential and is made possible by the many positive relationships that youth workers have with external stakeholders.

> "The Youth Service worker cannot guarantee the same standard of positive youth interface with those external services. The journey for the young person in navigating external services can be threatening. The young person may lack the confidence in attending an external appointment, in travelling beyond their immediate community to access a service. A youth worker can ease this transition by providing practical supports such as accompanying to new services within the youth service, for example a youth café, or indeed accompanying a young person to a first appointment in a new service. At the least level of input, a youth worker signposts. At the highest level of input, they will accompany a young person and/or follow up with them after an appointment." (Area co-ordinator)

The interviewees from external organisations agreed that the presence of the Youth Service helps their work with young people. All described the Youth Service as being very important.

> "Yes, takes the pressure off me. They are keeping an eye on how things are going as well." (Juvenile liaison officer)

In terms of wider impacts on communities and society, there was a consensus that the Youth Service contributes to reducing crime and anti-social behaviour:

> "If it [the Youth Service] wasn't there, there would be a lot more anti-social behaviour. There would not be same level of participation with communities. While it is a youth service, it is also a community hub. It's where everyone goes, families, friends, people in trouble or not in trouble, it's the 'go-to' service." (Administrative officer, Local council)

> "It has to be having an impact. Things like anti-social behaviour, vandalism. If young people are in a better place, then there is less demand on other services. There has to be a cost saving." (Juvenile liaison officer)

> "I definitely think so. There would be higher caseloads, especially around peer mentoring, young carers, [if the Youth Service didn't exist]. There is huge support available, almost immediately. There are no major thresholds or waiting lists. It does take the demand off." (Education and welfare officer)

> "The Gardai, the HSE and local authority are really impacted by a youth service in the area…referrals are definitely down because of youth service." (Administrative officer, Local council)

The youth service was positioned as the backbone of the response in communities to young people's needs. While it was acknowledged that there were other services available to young people - Foróige, Extern, and Jigsaw being examples - the Youth Service is regarded as the most multi-faceted organisation with the broadest reach in providing services for young people. They are seen as having a strong grassroots involvement in local communities, particularly through youth clubs and augmented by a volunteer base with excellent local knowledge. The fact that they have been embedded in communities for so long has engendered trust.

> "As a local authority we have seen an increase in people wanting to stay in their own areas. The transfers in housing have reduced. There is more employment regardless of one's address, the taboos are lifting… They sustain communities and foster positive change and influence." (Administrative officer, Local council)

Although interviewees acknowledged the difficulties around evidencing attribution to the Youth Service for the positive outcomes of young people, there was agreement that the Youth Service work impacts positively on wider public services either by reducing demand for those services (e.g. by diverting them through the Youth Service) or by making services more efficient or effective.

> "I worked before there was a Youth Service and we could not discharge because there was no step-down service. Now I don't have to see a young person three or four times a week, because I know they have additional supports to go to. You can discharge people in a more timely manner." (Nurse therapist, CAMHS)

External services providers find that the Youth Service provides support for young people in between appointments. The Youth workers are seen as open to communication and responsive to local needs:

> "You can ring up and talk about the client needs, and they may even set up a group responding to a few specific young people's needs" (Nurse therapist, CAMHS)

The fact that the Youth Service responds to all young people regardless of their interests and/or needs was seen as very positive:

> "People from different backgrounds hang out together, people from different societal groups are in evidence…and an awareness of each other's lives and that may not necessarily happen in other places." (Music Generation tutor)

Partnership working and consultancy

All interviewees described their working relationships in terms of partnership. Sometimes these were formal. For example, they could involve working together on boards, committees, and working groups. Other types of partnerships included working closely, either formally or informally, with youth workers or co-ordinators on providing bespoke services for young people.

> "Limerick Youth Service staff are a key partner. Day-to-day we engage on various projects and programmes for disadvantaged youth where they lead, or we lead." (Project Manager, TUSLA)

In some cases, the external service was a funder of a specific Youth Service programme. In many cases, Youth Service spaces are used for meetings by external service providers.

> "We support different projects, we hold our meetings in Youth Work Ireland building. There's a great co-operative relationship." (Community Development co-ordinator)

Often the partnerships formed on a needs basis or because of a funding arrangement:

> "We look at partnership on specific projects where we pool our resources. We have set programmes that we know work and get good traction, so we link in around timetabling, timelines and availability." (Sports Partnership co-ordinator)

In some cases, partnerships formed in response to external services rolling out projects through the Youth Service:

> "We go in with a youth worker into schools, we have a talk about mental health. We talk in smaller groups for an hour. There would be a musician a visual artist, a drama practitioner, or a sculptor. At the end of the workshop, there is an invitation to come to the youth services." (Tutor)

In all sites visited, there was evidence of significant networking and partnership working between external service providers and the Youth Service. Apart from sitting on inter-agency managerial groups together, there was evidence of widespread

collaboration between the Youth service and most other services tasked with helping young people (e.g. Foróige, Extern, Crosscare, SICAP, Family Resource centres, local area centres).

The relationships with Youth Service staff and management were consistently described as being very helpful, close, and mutually beneficial for young people as well as for the external organisation. The youth service was often described as being the "professionals" in the area of youth work; the "go to" people.

There was widespread praise for the youth work model:

> "It's flexibility is fantastic." (Nurse Therapist, CAMHS)
>
> "They provide a non-threatening space. It's very child centred, ensures youth participation. The statutory services are just catching up with that." (Project manager, TUSLA)
>
> "They are youth workers and they are cool. They are a great support to the work I do." (Community Development co-ordinator)
>
> "The staff are so open to having a conversation with you, having a phone call. We share a vision. They come to a lot of my meetings." (Education and welfare officer)
>
> "We don't have a youth worker employed so we see them as the experts to provide youth work in this area" (Administrative officer. Local council)

The range of services available was seen as a key strength of the service:

> "The range of things they have is so broad, there is a huge volunteer base, and they go back to training in social care and they come back and are so experienced." (Project manager, TUSLA)
>
> "Young people need the different supports and we would refer in for them. We would keep in touch with the workers and, depending on the needs, that communication could be extensive or very little." (Nurse therapist, CAMHS)

The welcoming space was also noted by the external service providers:

> "CAMHS, for example, are very scary buildings, whereas the Youth Service is sugar-coated, they are quite attractive, they are child centred. The other services are so clinical." (Nurse therapist, CAMHS)

The supplementary educational programmes provided by the Youth Service are seen as important for those young people not suited to school-based education:

> "They provide bespoke educational infrastructure for those who do not fit mainstream services. They have always been to the forefront in providing opportunities to young persons who would not have education or training without them." (Project manager, TUSLA)

> "School is one thing, but the youth service is seen as completely separate. Young people will tell you things as a youth worker that they won't necessarily tell you as a teacher. The relationship is very trusting when there is a good youth worker." (Music Generation tutor)

4.4 Conclusion

There is evidence from both the secondary literature and primary research for this evaluation that suggests integrated working can yield substantial benefits for a range of stakeholders. For the young people, it can make it easier to access a range of supports seamlessly and, in turn, improve outcomes. This has implications for wider society. In preventing future problems, such as those associated with drug/alcohol misuse and offending, integrated ways of working have the potential to reduce long-term social and economic costs. In the short term, it can also yield benefits for services by making them more efficient and reducing demand. While there was resounding endorsement in our qualitative research of the value of integrated working, and this resonated with the secondary literature, the evidence base could be strengthened by collecting evidence on outcomes more systematically. We set this out in more detail in the following section.

5.0 Current challenges and recommendations

The research for this report demonstrates strong support for integrated working and the Integrated Youth Service Model, specifically. It also, however, revealed that there are a series of challenges to pursuing this way of working. In this chapter, we begin by exploring some of those challenges and then turn to how they might be addressed, with a focus on strengthening the evidence base for integrated ways of working.

5.1 Challenges to effective working using the integrated model

The main barrier to integrated working, which emerged repeatedly in the interviews with staff and external partners, centred on the rigidity of funding arrangements that make it difficult to work flexibly and holistically. This was often seen to stem from failure by funders to recognise the value of integrated ways of working.

Funding structures and lack of recognition of the importance of integrated working

A number of staff felt that there was a lack of recognition from government departments about the importance of integration to the youth work model:

> "You need to be able to change and be flexible. Policy makers don't understand how you can work in an integrated fashion. It has to be managed in fluidity and discretion, and there can be a blurring of lines across the funding streams. I can give an hour of my time to somebody, perhaps strictly outside of my remit, if that is a better use of resources, but how does that reflect on reporting?" (Manager, Youth Service)

Some management told us that it is challenging to provide a fully integrated service given the pattern of funding being project-led or targeted and because of distinct professional cultures and ethics:

> "The challenge going forward is the more targeted working demanded by the funders. Then it is hard to keep the integrated model" (Manager, Youth Service)

> "There is not enough flexibility around capacity, funding, protocols, and the ethics of the different services. Each aspect has its own professional ethics. It's not entirely fluid like it should be. That can be frustrating for staff and families" (Youth Service staff)

This was also thought to undermine the flexibility in the approach:

> "A worry is how resources are being administered, the more prescriptive the funding streams become, then the less flexible we can be in our approach", Manager, Youth Service.

There was also a view that the tendering and commissioning process tended to undervalue youth work. There is concern that sticking strictly to protocols of working with young people based on the Hardiker model[1] can be restrictive and reduce the scope for preventative work. For example, when you need to work on a targeted project with young people who have a range of difficult issues this takes more staffing hours:

> "The higher end kids we encounter have more difficult issues and it takes longer for one-to-one work, thus more time from the youth worker. They need more supervision with some of the issues that are coming up and being presented to them. More detailed analysis of the referrals, for example: homelessness, lack of food in the house etc is needed." (Youth Service staff)

Staff were of the view that if this cohort could have been targeted earlier, when they were at a lower threshold according to the Hardiker protocol, then the staff input hours would be fewer and the work could potentially prevent more complex issues.

A further concern was the lack of funding for core costs and administrative functions. Management told us that they were expected to cross-subsidise these from project funding because there was a reluctance to fund core services. This was also thought to undermine partnership working and collaboration, which is essential to implementation of the integrated model.

> "We need to be careful about working with other organisations. You could be expected to absorb a project within your own structure, for no fee for administration for example" (Manager, Youth Service)

Finally, the was a sense that Youth Work Ireland could promote the value of their work more to funders. Given that Youth Services have a long track record of successful delivery, it was felt that they should be at the forefront of rolling out programmes.

> "We are perhaps not as good at promoting our profile (as other youth work organisations)" (Youth Service staff)

Measurement and building an evidence base

The difficulties around ensuring that funding is structured to support integrated working points to the need for a strong evidence base for the Integrated Youth Service Model and integrated working, more generally. Without this, it will be difficult to make the case to funders to support such models.

The primary research pointed to a number of challenges in establishing such an evidence base.

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[1] The Hardiker Model (1991) is a service planning framework widely used in the UK and Ireland. It outlines four levels of intervention from mainstream services (Level 1) that all children access to very high needs (Level 4).

Firstly, there is an understandable frustration among senior staff about gathering outcomes evidence for young people. This stems in large part from the fact that funders and programmes often have different requirements for what evidence needs to be collected. As one service told us, "different measuring tapes are being used".

Secondly, the service currently lacks a centralised way of recording overall outcomes for young people. As a result, although many projects may be recording similar outputs and outcomes, there is a lack of consistency and youth workers acknowledged the difficulty in measuring the impact of what they do. They were especially concerned with demonstrating the impact of the integrated approach and identified a need for support in how to measure this. Things like the impact of group work was also identified as lacking an evidence base.

The lack of a centralised approach may lead to duplication of effort, as well as the issues around consistency that have already been identified. Several Youth Services spoke about trying to find a system of data management to capture what they do. Managers were interested in capturing the journey of young people through the Youth Service. Many spoke about how they capture this journey through case studies in annual reports, or anecdotally through staff, but wanted a more systematic way of documenting this.

Finally, due to the lack of a centralised approach, the level of sophistication in measurement varied across local Youth Services. Some services are using pre- and post-measurement, some are using tools such as the Outcome Star, others are relying entirely on case studies or anecdotal evidence. However, there was an awareness across the board that the information being gathered does not adequately capture impact.

In general, it was thought to be easier to measure the impact of targeted programmes than universal work. Targeted programmes tend to have a reporting structure, and the progression and outcomes for the young person are measured using the initial assessment and follow up tools. Those who use these assessment tools find them very beneficial. It was noted that the Garda Diversion programmes have a good tracking system but that SPY projects are not tracked as successfully. There was broad welcome for the assessment procedures being used on Value for Money projects. Managers and Directors interviewed felt that there should be an investment of money in a data collection system that would capture all Youth Services outputs.

Conclusion & Recommendations

There is strong evidence from the qualitative work that the Youth Work Ireland model makes a difference to young people, as well as to external services and wider society, and that integrated working is likely to play a key role. Yet the lack of recognition of its value externally by funders, threatens its' sustainability. For this reason, it is vital that YWI develops a systematic approach to building understanding and recognition of the value of this model. Further, the model and society which it

serves are not static and must evolve and improve on an ongoing basis. The below recommendations suggest steps which will involve all stakeholders in working towards these objectives:

Recommendation for the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Health Service Executive, Pobal, Irish Youth Justice Service (IYJS) and TUSLA etc.,

1. Acknowledge, promote and support the Integrated Youth Services Model as a model which delivers on the requirement for the effective and efficient use of state resources.
2. Endorse and support Youth Work Ireland's Integrated Youth Service Model which is aligned with best practice on integrated working internationally and which evidentially improves outcomes for young people and services.
3. State funders need to develop methodologies for streamlining funding, auditing and reporting to facilitate integrated working of services for young people and alleviating the administrative burden on organisations.
4. Financial systems must support a reasonable degree of flexibility to allow integration of services for young people within a catchment, or service area.
5. In the context of the ETB youth work plan – ensure that the Integrated Youth Service Model is identified as adding value to youth services provision in the region.
6. Acknowledge and support the role of Youth Services in multi-disciplinary responses to critical incidents. Youth Services work effectively with local providers including schools to identify other young people who are particularly vulnerable following a critical incident and identify who is best placed to respond.

Member Youth Services Boards are asked to take the following actions:

7. Ensure that the Integrated Youth Service Model is working effectively – this means that staff, young people and volunteers know what the Integrated Youth Service is, are able to describe it within the context of their service and are easily able to navigate within it.
8. Prioritise the development and universal distribution of a young person's guide or map to navigating an integrated service. The guide would facilitate young people's to understanding and access to all the relevant functions of the Local Member Youth Service in youth friendly language.
9. It is recommended that all Member Youth Services develop their own Charter for effectively delivering the Integrated Youth Services Model in their service. The Charter should be based on this research and be accompanied by an Implementation Plan.
10. Ensure that the Integrated Youth Service Model forms part of the Induction process of all new staff, volunteers and young people.

Youth Work Ireland National Office should take the following actions

11. Review the implementation of Targeted Youth Finding Scheme (TYFS) funding and identify/promote examples of how TYFS services can be incorporated into Integrated Youth Services (IYS) Model of working.
12. Use the IYS research to communicate to all stakeholders through a deliberate communications strategy, which will include case studies and testimonies, that illustrate the effectiveness of the Integrated Youth Services Model in terms of cost (effectiveness) and outcomes for young people.
13. Youth Work Ireland develop and provide to funders a funding model including Management Fees, apportionment policies etc., which assures funders and provides absolute clarity to them on how the public funding they administer is being spent.
14. Ensure that the Integrated Youth Service Model forms part of the Induction process of all new Regional Directors.
15. YWI should consider developing and implementing a systematic measurement framework in order to strengthen the evidence base for integrated youth work.

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Appendix 1: Literature Review

A1.0 Introduction

In 2013, the Centre for Effective Services commissioned a 'systematic mapping' of international youth work research (Dickson et al. 2013). Although it stopped short of a synthesis, it is a comprehensive repository of reports relevant to the field. We have drawn on this to summarise the evidence for different kinds of youth interventions and youth work generally. It reached several relevant conclusions:

1. The ethos of youth work in Ireland, which emphasizes participation, empowerment and personal and social development, is shared by much of the international research literature.
2. The importance of maintaining open access services on positive outcomes for all children and young people alongside targeted youth provision
3. Activities within Irish provision fell within similar domains to international practice (e.g. social and personal development), although in Ireland there was more emphasis on sports and outdoor pursuits, and less on social action.
4. The international research literature is particularly relevant to Irish youth work because it shares a focus on young people's 'sense of self' and the development of their personal, social and emotional skills, such as confidence and self-esteem, through educational, developmental, recreational and volunteer activities.

The report identified several research gaps in relation to a) work in an Irish context, b) fidelity with youth work practice and c) evaluations that consult with and/or include young people as research partners, d) evaluations that include cost or cost-effectiveness implications.

The contribution of our review here two-fold. First, we will review the content of those reports identified by Dickson et al. as containing evaluation data to address the research questions relating to effective youth work practice. A second objective is to update the review with papers published since 2013. These will be identified initially by searching for papers using generic search terms such as 'youth work' plus 'impact'/'outcomes'. A second round of searches will focus on the themes that emerged from the initial mapping such as 'non-cognitive skills', 'positive youth development' and 'adolescent well-being'.

A1.2 Review questions

This is a literature review of the evidence for outcomes from youth work; both the ingredients of youth working that have been found to be effective and the evidence of impact across the life course. As part of this, the quality of evidence is also discussed. The research questions for the review are as follows:

1. What is the state of knowledge on the evidence for youth work?
2. What are the features of youth work that have been found to be effective?
3. What evidence is there that youth work impacts positively on youth development?

A1.3 Youth work and evidence

There have been some attempts to systematically review the evidence from youth work (e.g. DuBois, 2011; Fouche et al. 2011) which have not been particularly successful, and evidence of this type is limited. Of the 93 evaluations identified in the systematic mapping, only 3 were from Ireland, and only 2% contained cost-benefit data. Whilst 50% evaluated impact, only a small number followed an experimental design and in general there are a greater number of qualitative studies. One so-called 'empty' systematic review concluded that amongst the quantitative studies available there was no 'clear and consistent' evidence that youth work had any effect on youth outcomes (Fouche et al. 2011). A crucial point here, which the report acknowledges, is that it is logistically very difficult to carry out experimental research on an intervention that is 'drop in' by nature, as researchers cannot know who will be attending to systematically allocate them to study and control groups. This is even more pronounced in Ireland, where voluntarism is a key feature of youth work provision.

What our review found is that whilst evidence of this kind is not present, there are plenty of studies that explore the impact that recreational, educational, social and emotional activities with young people can have. Much of the evidence (especially quantitative evidence) is from the US and focuses on interventions like after school clubs. However, there is a growing number of studies from the UK and other locations using a variety of methods, including some well-designed qualitative studies. We can conclude, therefore, that there is a reasonable amount of evidence available, once the epistemological constraints of systematic reviews are relaxed.

A response by some practitioners and academics to the rigidity of the pressure for a particular kind of evidence has led some to reject measurement entirely (Jeffs and Smith, 2002). However, Spence and Wood (2011) caution against this. They argue for more systematic gathering of data, using methods appropriate to the situation in question. This view is echoed by McKee (2011). Cooper (2011) makes a case for 'practice driven' evaluation where practitioners are involved in research, and where standardised instruments are used to monitor outcomes. Veerman and Van Yperen develop an inclusive framework (2007) that can incorporate more complex types of evidence along with practitioner-led approaches.

A1.4 Youth work in Ireland

There is a comparatively limited amount of research on youth work in Ireland, but the evidence base is growing. A study from 2010 identified over 43,000 young people participating in youth work groups across Ireland (Powell et al. 2010). A more recent study by the National Youth Council estimates that 382,615 young people

participate in and benefit from the various activities and programmes provided by youth organisations (43.3% of those aged 10-24). As outlined above, the difference in these figures indicates the difficulty of doing research in this sector because of the 'drop in' nature of the offer.

Youth work is mainly located in the voluntary sector in Ireland. In total, there are about 40 voluntary youth organisations (NYC, 2012). As well as Youth Work Ireland, some of the larger youth services include Foróige, Involve Youth Services Ltd, ECO-UNESCO, the National Association for Youth Drama, Catholic Youth Care and YMCA Ireland. However, these are predominantly state funded, with funding channelled through Education and Training Boards, which are tasked with identifying local youth needs.

The growth in state funding is partly a result of the growth in funding for targeted objectives relating to crime, substance misuse, teenage pregnancy or early school leaving. In 2012, 70% of state funding for youth programmes was channelled through three targeted programmes: The Special Projects for Youth (SPY), Young People's Facilities and Services Fund (YPFSF) and the Local Drugs Task Force (LDTF). The intake for these programmes is predominately young people from disadvantaged backgrounds (Powell et al. 2010). This trend towards targeting has been criticised by some observers (Jeffs and Smith, 2002, 2008. Kiely, 2009) as undermining the principles of youth work (i.e. inclusiveness, voluntarism and informality). In Scanlon et al.'s review of the impact of targeting, they conclude that there is a consensus that some form of targeting is necessary to reach those most in need of support but that this should not displace mainstream youth work. Ensuring that targeted interventions could take place without undermining the values of youth work was described as a key challenge. It is also the case that a wide variety of generic youth work activities are also taking place. One study found that 80% of youth work organisations provide recreational, arts and sports-related activities, while over half are engaged in activities focussed on welfare and wellbeing (NYC, 2012). In addition, participation by Irish young people is high by international standards, with Eurobarometer data showing that Ireland has the highest percentage of young people participating in youth clubs or youth organisations in the EU (Eurobarometer).

Alongside the growth in the importance of the state as a funder of youth work has come a concern for value for money. A consequence of limited research on youth work in Ireland is a limited amount of evidence for its impact. Two value for money reviews were carried out by the DCYA in 2009 and 2012. The most recent was carried out as part of the Value for Money and Policy Review (VFMPR) and was scoped to focus on youth programmes such as the local drugs task force, rather than youth work per se. It concluded that there was insufficient evidence to support investment decisions and, in the structures, and processes that govern overall delivery of programmes. It recommended several governance and data gathering activities be designed to support these in the future. It also found evidence from interviews of service delivery that was well aligned with purpose and consistent with features of youth work that are found to be effective (DCYA, 2014).

The sector itself has responded with a ramping up of evidence generation and economic analysis. Research for the National Youth Council (2012) has estimated a net economic return of €1.21 billion, or a Benefit-Cost Ratio (BCR) of 2.22:1 for Exchequer funding over a 10-year period. These benefits were found to derive from justice, health and welfare related benefits as well as from increased economic activity from direct employment and volunteering. However, the findings for youth-related outcomes are only indicative as they are derived from estimates that are not based on evidence.

A clear contribution to the evidence base is the Foróige Best Practice Unit, which has undertaken a range of mixed methods studies, including experimental designs. The first RCT undertaken in Ireland was of Foróige's Big Brothers, Big Sisters. This indicated a positive impact on young people through increased levels of hopefulness and perceived social support (Dolan et al. 2011). Other studies have included studies of youth leadership (Redmond et al. 2013) and citizenship (Brady et al. 2014). Brady et al. have reviewed the evidence gathered as part of this programme using Veerman and Van Yperen's framework described above. Using this approach, they gathered different forms of evidence encompassing theory-based evaluations, self-evaluations and experimental studies. Practitioners were trained to embed evaluation findings in their practice, closing the loop between data gathering, implementation and programme management. (Brady et al. 2016). Building on this, Brady et al. (2017) also explore the impact of 'manualised' youth work. They find that evidence-based resources have a valuable role to play in youth work if designed collaboratively and with respect to core values.

Youth cafes are another innovation in Irish youth work, which have also received research attention. These are relaxed, drug-free environments where young people can gather. There has been a significant expansion of youth cafes, with 190 believed to be in operation. An evaluation found that the attraction of the model for young people is that it respects their individualised preferences for engagement whilst providing them with a sense of ownership and connection (Brady et al. 2017).

A1.5 Features of effective Youth Work

This section focuses on the types of youth work activity that have been found to be effective. These include:

- Activities aimed at improving social, emotional and other non-cognitive skills
- Engagement in positive activities, especially sports
- Relationships with at least one trusting adult
- Positive Youth Development (PYD), where this is defined as taking an assets based and collaborative approach

Non-cognitive skills development

A central objective of youth work is to build the social and emotional skills of young people. It is widely accepted that social and emotional skills are as important as cognitive skills in enabling young people to do well in life (McNeill, 2012). For

example, there is evidence that social and emotional skills are important for educational attainment, employment and health (McNeil, 2012), contact with the criminal justice system, teenage pregnancy and smoking (Heckman et al. 2006). Heckman et al. also make a case for focusing on these skills because they are malleable throughout adolescence. Carniero et al. (2007), using data from the National Child Development Study, found that non-cognitive skills were important for outcomes like education, employment status and wages, health and risky behaviour. Skills studied included persistence, attentiveness, getting on with others, truthfulness, and help-seeking. In addition, Goodman and Gregg (2010) found that attitudes and behaviours account significantly for attainment gaps between children from rich and poor backgrounds. Self-belief, self-efficacy and agency were also found to predict school performance. A review of experimental studies by the Institute of Education (IoE) has found factors such as self-control and school engagement are correlated with academic outcomes, financial stability in adulthood, and reduced crime, but that there were issues with demonstrating causality. They also found that there is no single non-cognitive skill that predicts long-term outcomes but that key skills are inter-related and need to be developed in combination with each other.

In terms of intervention studies, in a meta-analysis of after-school programs that focused on personal and social skills of young people, participants demonstrated significant increases in their self-perceptions and bonding to school, positive social behaviours, grades and levels of academic achievement, and reductions in problem behaviours. Although the study also found that a need for further research to identify programme characteristics that can help us understand why some programmes are more successful than others (Durlak et al. 2010). Examining the developmental processes that occur during participation in extracurricular and community-based activities, Dwokin et al. (2003) found evidence from focus groups of improved interpersonal skills, time management and team working skills. Holdsworth (2005), reporting on longitudinal findings from a youth development programme, found that young people reported strong improvements in all the outcome areas tracked, with the biggest improvements being in their skills, knowledge, confidence and teamwork. The IoE study concluded that there was low to medium effects on non-cognitive outcomes from programmes such as 'service learning' and outdoor challenge activities but that most studies were from the US.

A recent small scale RCT from Brazil on an expressive art and theatre programme has found positive short-run employment and earnings impacts: a 33% increase in the probability of being employed and a 23.6% increase in earnings (Calero et al. 2017). They argue that the estimated labour market impacts are due to a combination of both skills formation and signalling of higher quality workers to employers. An evaluation of OneGoal, an intervention in the US that supports disadvantaged students to complete college by teaching non-cognitive skills has found that it increases college enrolment by 10 to 20 percentage points, and reduces arrest rates by 5 percentage points for males (Kautz and Zanoni, 2014). They also demonstrate that improvements in non-cognitive skills account for 15 to 30 percent of the treatment effects. Algan et al. (2014) show that an intervention focused solely on non-cognitive skills at age 7 can change the lifetime trajectories for children,

improving education achievement and outcomes in early adulthood, such as criminality, education, employment and social capital. Their results, showing improvements in trust and self-control explain much of the impact on education and young adult outcomes. They also estimate lifetime economic benefits to the individuals of 14:1 from the programme. Finally, Curran and Wexlar (2017) found that school-based PYD programmes in the US enhance predictors of well-being such as self-worth, decision-making abilities, social skills and building confidence.

Engagement in positive activities

The contexts in which adolescents spend their out-of-school time have been found to be important to their pathways into adulthood as they can in part predict future life chances (Feinstein et al. 2005). Youth work is often based on the premise of fun and enjoyment being an important part of a young person's development and that positive activities can provide novel experiences and learning opportunities. According to Larson (2000), participating in clubs and team activities have three impacts on youth development. First, they increase motivation. Second, they develop concentration and cognitive effort. Thirdly, they require a cumulative effort over time to achieve a goal. His research has found that adolescents participating in sports, arts, clubs, and hobbies report higher levels of both intrinsic motivation and concentration than when they are in school. These contrast with passive unorganised activities, such as hanging around with friends or watching television, or indeed being in school where adolescents often report feeling bored (ibid.).

A report by C4EO (2010) found that participation in positive activities can help young people to develop personal, social and emotional skills and improve relationships with adults, which can in turn translate to better learning. Where those activities are community-based this can also help build social capital. Whilst there is lots of evidence of the positive impacts of school-based provision, this can also be a barrier, particularly for older youth. Some 'network effects' have also been identified where projects bring together the riskiest young people. It is recommended that earlier, long-term interventions (C4EO, 2010) and the provision of an effective structure can mediate these risks (Feinstein et al. 2005). However, it is those most in need of targeted provision that are often found in unstructured settings. Young people from lower-income families are less likely to participate in positive activities and where they do, it is a narrower range of activities (Dickson et al. 2013). A review of youth arts and sports interventions in the UK found that the evidence was limited due to a lack of standardised measures to evaluate impact (Clarke et al.). This study also identified the features of out-of-school activities that were most effective. Again, they emphasised the importance of a structured approach, including having:

- specific and well-defined goals
- direct and explicit focus on desired outcomes
- trained facilitators and the use of a structured manual
- implementation over a longer period of time.

Morgan et al. (2014) examine the literature on self-regulation and recreation programmes. They argue that practitioners can leverage fun and enjoyment, activities that have developmental attributes and a positive social context to promote self-regulation. More specifically, they recommend activities that are goal-oriented, challenging and build skills.

Relationships with trusting adults

A defining feature of adolescence is the search for autonomy and independence from parents. Yet it is also a time when young people may benefit hugely from guidance as they make formative choices that affect their future (Meltzer et al. 2016). Long-term, consistent involvement of a supportive adult who views them positively has been found to be important for young people to achieve positive outcomes (C4EO, 2010). In general, the resources available to young people at critical times matter and supportive relationships with at least one high-resource adult is crucial (Dooley and Fitzgerald, 2013). According to Meltzer et al. (2014), these adults provide motivational, emotional, and instrumental support to young people. Supportive adult relationships have been identified as a feature of successful positive youth development programmes (Schulman and Davies, 2007). Indeed, some authors describe relationships as the activity that distinguishes youth work from other work with young people (Martin 2006; Todd and Stewart, 2009).

This has been borne out in several evaluations. Good adult relationships have been found to be positively associated with pro-social school behaviour (Anderson-Butcher et al. 2004) and reducing the risk of youth homelessness (Dickens and Woodfield, 2004). They have also been found to be the most effective influence on young people (Astbury and Knight 2003). Jarrett et al. (2005) describe the stages in relationship building as moving from a stage of suspicion and distrust, to a stage of facilitated contact, to a stage of meaningful connection. The authors also found that these relationships provided youth with access to adult resources, such as information, assistance, exposure to adult worlds, support, and encouragement. Again, structured activities have been found to be important to promoting meaningful youth-adult role relationships (Sullivan and Larson, 2010).

Young people's trust in program leaders is considered a key to the positive impact of youth programs. Griffith and Larson (2015) sought to understand how trust influences young people's program experiences from their perspective. They interviewed 108 ethnically diverse youth (ages 12–19) participating in 13 arts, leadership, and technology programmes. Analysis of these accounts suggested five ways in which youth's trust in leaders amplified programme benefits. Trust increased youth's (1) confidence in leaders' guidance in program activities, (2) motivation in the program, (3) use of leaders for mentoring, (4) use of leaders as a model of a well-functioning relationship, and (5) experience of program cohesiveness. Across benefits, trust allowed youth to draw on leaders' expertise, opened them to new experiences, and helped increase youth's agency.

Pisani et al. (2013), in a study of over 7,000 high-school students in predominantly rural, low income communities, found that emotion regulation difficulties and a lack

of trusted adults at home and school were associated with increased risk for a past-year suicide attempt, above and beyond the effects of depressive symptoms and demographic factors. The study also found that having a trusted adult in the community (outside of school and family) was associated with fewer suicide attempts (controlling for some confounding variables). The authors argue that the findings point to emotion regulation and relationships with trusted adults as complementary targets for suicide prevention.

Assets-based, collaborative approach

Youth work, in general, and PYD, in particular, are assets-based approaches and see young people as partners, or collaborators, in youth development. McGachie and Smith (2003) found that organisations that have a culture that shares power and removes constraints on young people's participation were found to be instrumental in improving youth participation. Larson and Angus (2011) found that programmes that gave youth control and non-directive assistance were successful in promoting strategic thinking (ability to anticipate real-world scenarios and plan work). There is also evidence that programmes that take a PYD approach report improved outcomes, including a decrease in risky behaviours (Schulman and Davies, 2007; Dennison 2004; Harden 2007). However, Schulman and Davies (ibid) also found a need for standardised outcome measures to demonstrate that approaches that take a more positive approach are more effective than other types of youth programmes.

Other research has also found a role for adult-driven programmes. Larson et al. (2005) explored the difference between the two approaches. Rather than finding that one approach was categorically better than the other, the analysis suggested that each provided distinct developmental experiences. In the youth-driven programs, the youth experienced a high degree of ownership and empowerment but in the adult-driven programs, the adults crafted student-centred learning experiences that facilitated youth's development of specific talents. Elsewhere White (2010) has found no effect of youth participatory evaluation on PYD.

A1.6 Impact of youth work on development

As discussed in the introduction, a key assumption underpinning PYD is the plasticity of adolescence and the ability of environmental factors to influence the development trajectories of young people. To evidence this, it is necessary to look at the impact of participation in youth work on short-, medium- and long-term outcomes for young people. The literature reviewed in this section is therefore structured by outcome area.

Well-being

Improving the well-being of young people is a central objective of youth work. Anderson-Butcher (2002) found that belonging scores were positively related to programme attendance over a 6-month period. A cross-sectional analysis found that having purpose in life was associated with greater life satisfaction at three life stages (Cotton-Bronk et al. 2009). A Canadian study of a structured arts programme for low

income young people found a significant reduction in emotional problems for the intervention group compared with a control (Wright et al. 2006).

Positive identity

There is some evidence that programmes aimed at girls can have an impact on feelings of self-efficacy and body image (Steese et al. 2006) and on other measures of empowerment (LeCroy, 2004). Similarly, findings from the US with ethnic minorities has found positive impacts from youth work on ethnic identity, racism awareness and youth activism (Thomas et al. 2008). However, there is limited evidence for these kinds of programmes in a non-US context.

Education

Anderson-Butcher (2003) found participation in a youth club was independently related to enhanced academic achievement and fewer risks. Although problem behaviours increased with age, youth work participation successfully mitigated these, especially in relation to academic outcomes. Similarly, Bundick (2011) found that participation in extracurricular activities can promote educational attainment and reduced problem behaviours. This was echoed by Fredricks et al. (2006) who found greater involvement in extracurricular activities is associated with academic adjustment, psychological competencies, and a positive peer context. The results were strongest for the oldest group of youth. A New Zealand youth development programme found an improved ability to master academic activities, including amongst Maori and low-income students (Qiao and McNaught, 2007). Grossman et al. (2002) found positive impacts on school attitudes and behaviours from an extended-service schools initiative. In a meta-analysis of PYD interventions, Ciocanel et al. (2016) found a small but significant effect on academic achievement and psychological adjustment.

However, not all studies find positive results. A longitudinal analysis of a community youth study found no significant difference in student outcomes (Brown et al. 2009). Whilst Lauver (2002) found positive impacts from an after-school programme on time spent doing homework and educational aspirations, they found no effect on grades, behaviour or school attendance.

Civic/Community engagement

As well as being an end in itself, engagement in community activism has been found to have an effect on efficacy and behavioural change (Berg et al. 2009). Only a small number of evaluations that addressed this question were identified.

Two evaluations have taken place of the Global Youth Summit, which was designed to foster connections and to empower youth toward environmental and humanitarian activism at local and global levels (Johnson et al. 2009). Both found some evidence of self-efficacy, environmental awareness and activism following the programme (Johnson et al. 2007; Johnson et al. 2009).

An evaluation in Ireland of the Foróige Youth Citizenship Programme found that youth awareness of social needs in the community increased and that youth were perceived to have a greater connection to the community as a result (UNESCO

Child and Family Research Centre 2010). In the UK, Merton et al. (2004) found evidence of impacts upon communities including improved social cohesion and enabling young people to have an influence on, and improve, civic life. Lakin and Mahoney (2006) found that a community service programme increased young people's self-reported empathy and intent to be involved in future community action compared to a group of matched controls.

The promotion of social capital is a key outcome for youth work in Ireland. However, two studies (Devlin and Gunning; Scanlon et al.) have found less of an emphasis on awareness-raising and the promotion of social change compared with other jurisdictions. There is also limited evidence for the impact of youth work on social capital per se.

Reducing risky/anti-social behaviour

Although focusing on this outcome runs counter to much of the philosophy of PYD, it is important for policy and underpins much of the statutory funding behind youth work. This is in response to the fact that, in line with the plasticity argument, engagement in risky behaviours at this age is associated with poorer outcomes in adulthood. There is mixed evidence of the impact of youth work, although conclusions are difficult to draw due to the variability in interventions and study limitations.

The 4H afterschool programme in the US is based on the principles of PYD and has been rigorously evaluated. Hudley (2001) found strong programme effects on perceived behavioural competence but less on academic performance. A PYD programme from the UK (Tebes et al. 2007) found that adolescents receiving the intervention were significantly more likely to view drugs as harmful at programme exit. They also exhibited significantly lower increases in alcohol and drug use one year after beginning the programme.

An evaluation of a sports programme in the US found positive impacts on pro-social behaviour through efficacy-related beliefs (Gano-Overway et al. 2009). Those that completed a youth programme in Chicago were found to have performed substantially better than those that dropped out of the programme across a range of outcomes including involvement with illegal activities. An interesting finding was that finances were a major factor predicting drop-out and the authors recommend financial incentives to encourage participation. They also found that those that had dropped out still reported benefiting from the programme (Kalish et al. 2010). A comparison between young people involved in Project PATHS – a youth development programme in Hong Kong - showed lower levels of problem behaviour than did the control students (Shek at al. 2011).

The TYS programme in the UK – an intervention to target teenage pregnancy and promote positive behaviours - has been found to reduce emotional and behavioural problems, including offending, school exclusion and truancy (C4EO, 2010). The evaluation also found that it had positive impacts on participants' confidence and sense of autonomy, regardless of whether or not reductions in teenage pregnancy occurred.

However, several studies, including systematic reviews find no effect or even a negative impact. A systematic review of the impact of PYD interventions on risk factors concluded that they did not have an effect on illicit drug or alcohol use (Melendez-Torresa et al. 2016). However, the authors acknowledge that the interventions were diverse in content and delivery and may not be exemplars of the PYD approach. In addition, the evaluations were highly variable in quality. A similar conclusion was reached by Ciocanel et al. (2016) in a meta-analysis of the impact of PYD interventions. They found no significant effect for risky behaviours and found that low risk young people derived more benefit than high risk youth. The authors also call for better quality research in this field. In the UK, Wiggins et al. (2008; 2009) found a higher instance of teenage pregnancy within the intervention group. One possible explanation put forward by the evaluators was the 'network effect' described earlier. A further issue was the quality of the programme; it was short-term and the expectations that it could substantially influence long-term, entrenched problems in the often-chaotic lives of vulnerable young people was not considered realistic. Again, the authors pointed to methodological challenges in measuring impact in this field.

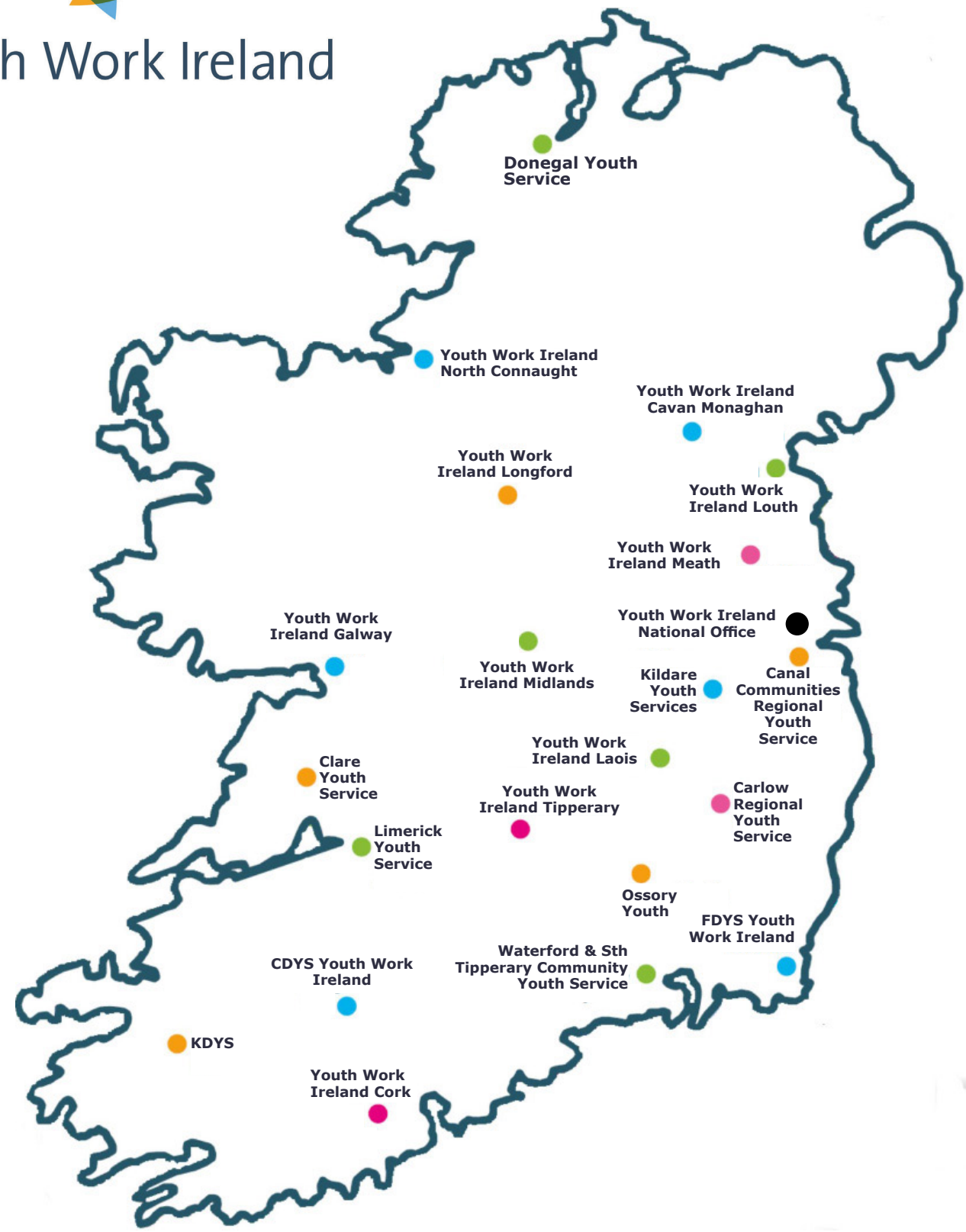
Employment/careers

There is very little research in this area. This perhaps points to the lack of longitudinal studies and difficulties with tracking young people over the long-term. Although an older cohort, one study from the US describes a programme that sought to improve educational and employment outcomes for out-of-school youth ages 18 to 25 and to improve their personal development. It found statistically significant, positive impacts for programme participants on the likelihood of having worked for pay since programme enrolment and working a larger number of total hours since programme enrolment (Jastrzab et al. 1996).

A1.7 Conclusion

The international literature on youth work helpfully points us to some of the key features of effective youth work and some of its potential benefits. It also, however, draws attention to the methodological challenges around demonstrating effectiveness and impact in this field. These are challenges that relate, firstly, to the importance of context and the specificities of programmes which make it difficult to generalise and, secondly, to the nature of youth work interventions themselves (e.g. the 'drop in' and voluntary ethos that can make it difficult to track participants). Therefore, while learning from the literature, the review highlights the importance of putting in place a robust measurement of the specific programme and context of interest in order to evidence impact and effectiveness in situ.

Youth Work Ireland



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