



Integrated Services in Youth Work Ireland



Youth Work Ireland

YOUTH WORK IRELAND

By

Youth Work Ireland

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Youth Work Ireland

Youth Work Ireland is a federation of local youth services throughout the country who work in the interest of young people through the provision of a range of services and who share a common ethos and approach.

Our Vision

Youth Work Ireland has a clear and unambiguous view of the kind of society we want to contribute to developing.

Our vision states this clearly as:

'A more equal and sustainable world where all young people are valued and involved.'

Our Mission

Our mission is:

'to contribute to changing society for the benefit of young people.'

We will achieve this by deploying the resources of the Federation, both nationally and at a regional level through the engagement of Boards, staff and countless volunteers in order to:

- Promote quality youth work
- Build our capacity
- Work to realise the rights of young people
- Influence decision making and policy

Our Beliefs

We have a positive view of young people, their dignity and worth

All young people have rights and should be supported to realise these

Young People have the potential to effect change

Contents	Page
Introduction.....	6
What do we mean by Integrated Services.....	8
What does this mean for Young People... ..	12
Conclusions.....	14
Youth Work Ireland Integrated Youth Service Model.....	15

INTRODUCTION

Youth Work Ireland is committed to the development of quality youth services throughout the Country delivered through our twenty-two member services.

Our Members work with 7,554 volunteers, employ 847 staff (including 357 staff on employment schemes) and support 72,182 young people (21,669: youth clubs, 50,517: other programmes/projects) in a range of targeted and mainstream programmes.

Effective Youth Work is dependent on the quality of the relationship built between young people and adults.

Youth work is a process which:

- Is educational and promotes learning and development.
- Enables young people to try out new opportunities and experiences.
- Works to empower people identifying their strengths and enabling them to meet their individual and collective needs, helping them to be creative, active and participative within society.
- Is young person centred.

Youth work is about:

- Participation – by young people in the choices and decisions that affect them.
- Strengths based: recognising young people's importance within communities.
- Empowerment – of young people so that they can have a greater influence on matters which affect them.
- Support – for young people to explore their personal, social and political responsibilities.
- Opportunities – for young people to learn, develop and express themselves.

Youth Work Ireland is committed to an integrated model of youth work delivery and this paper sets out what that model is.

On the basis of taking a young person centred approach to our services we can begin to construct what an integrated youth service looks like. The following description contained herein should provide a clear picture of our services to other key stakeholders namely:

- secondary users such as the parents and community
- funders
- other services and providers
- service deliverers (boards, management, volunteers and staff)

What do we mean by Integrated Services?

In the context of the Local Youth Service integration means combining, bringing together, or integrating our shared values, guiding principles, shared vision, staff, projects, training, programmes, activities, space and volunteers to ensure that when young people engage with our services they are engaged with as a "*whole Young Person*" (our model of integration is not about crises intervention/management nor is it driven by crises it is about combining our resources so that we can engage with the whole young person).

Youth Work Ireland believes in a strengths based approach to youth work that recognises at times the value of supporting young people in need.

When we talk about integration we are talking about: How we work.

How our work is perceived and understood by young people, families of young people we work with, our staff and volunteers, communities, other agencies, and funders

There are some basic but important principles which begin to suggest an integrated service to us. The view of our services should be seen from the perspective of the young people using the service:

- Young people engage with youth work not as a problem
- Youth work will help young people identify their strengths and resources
- Youth work will help them further develop these strengths and resources
- Youth work will seek to provide appropriate supports where needed
- The whole of service will be open to a young person at any point of entry to the service

- If a young person needs additional supports that are available internally these will be available
- If a young person has a strength or interest that can be furthered internally these will be available
- If a young person needs additional supports that are available externally these will be made known to the young person
- If a young person has a strength or interest that can be furthered externally these opportunities will be made known
- If a service or interest is not available locally either internally or externally youth service will develop an appropriate response with young people

It is important to stress that our role is not always in the direct delivery of services but may involve enabling young people to advocate and campaign for services, to give them the skills and support to address a need, seize an opportunity, use their skills (for example; developing peer support projects; refer or signpost young people to other providers and services; to campaign and advocate for services as an organisation.

Integrated service are planned, this means establishing clear outcomes for young people, and meeting with stakeholders and being clear about what a service is and does and what it does not do. Youth services are not a panacea and not all areas of support for young people fall into our remit; however we are well placed to work with young people and other stakeholders in supporting the development of appropriate responses, strategies and services. Sometimes our role is to make sure young people are heard, we are uniquely placed to work with young people on identifying needs and issues impacting on their lives.

Integrated services are delivered by staff teams who are clear about the role of the organisation and what their contribution to delivery is. Staff of an integrated service will see their work as part of the offer to young people and as complimentary to rather than separate from the rest of the offer. This means staff should spend time together in a number of forums developing the work and delivery of the service. This in turn means that workers and services need to share information on what is happening to

and with the young people they work and are in contact with. Some examples of what this means in practice will help illustrate this point we would like RDs to identify integrated practice within their services.

Key points concerning integrated services for Youth Work Ireland are:

- That it is within youth work delivery and based on the principles and values thereof.
- That it is young person focused (as opposed to issue or service).
- That integration should be from the point of view of the young person.
- That the service offer is based on a local profile and is determined locally with young people and key stakeholders.
- The service offer should be clearly understandable and accessible.
- That integration should be understood by staff and volunteers and they should be clear about signposting and referral routes both internally and externally.
- That staff and volunteers should be able to work across boundaries to support a young person. As an example: a GDYP might as part of its work with a young person sign post them to a youth club. The youth worker might support the young person and club to engage with each other. The role of the youth worker here is one of supporting the young person to engage with the club this may involve high support initially but over a period there should be no need for the youth worker as the youth club is now accessible and filling the need identified by the initial referral to the youth club. Similarly a youth worker may refer a young person to a counselling service. The role of the youth worker is to support the young person to engage with and participate in that service.
- That Youth Work Ireland integrated services are clear and understandable to parents and communities.

- That a Youth Work Ireland integrated service is clear and understandable to other agencies and service providers who may wish to direct into the service.

- That a Youth Work Ireland integrated service is clear and understandable to funders and any other stakeholders.

What does this mean for Young People?

Young People using a Youth Work Ireland Integrated Service can expect the following:

- Youth Work Ireland Youth Services will work with them to create a safe space; physically, mentally and spiritually.
- Youth Work Ireland Youth Services will work primarily from a person centred strengths based approach.
- Young people will be able to understand the local Youth Service and how it works.
- Services and programmes provided by Youth Work Ireland Youth Services are young person centred.
- Young people will know what services and programmes the Youth Services offers.
- Young people will be involved in the development of programmes within the Youth Service.
- Where a need for additional support is identified a young person may be signposted and supported to access other services that may or may not be provided by the Youth Service.
- Young people will know that all Youth Work Ireland Services are committed to the delivery of quality youth work.
- Young people will know that their participation within services and projects of young people is voluntary.

- Young people will know that all Youth Work Ireland Youth Services will comply with Child protection legislation.

- Young people will know that all Youth Work Ireland Youth Services will comply with Health and Safety legislation.

- Young people will know that all Youth Work Ireland Youth Services will comply with equality legislation and best practice.

- Young people will know that all Youth Work Ireland Youth Services will comply with Data Protection legislation.

- Young people will know that Youth Work Ireland Youth Services can provide opportunities, for help and support.

- Youth Work encourages Young People to take on new challenges, face issues, reach potential, etc.

- All Youth Workers and Staff are working out of a common ethos and shared youth work philosophy.

- Young people will know that they can rely on the relationships they have with the organisation.

- Young people will know and respect the boundaries of their relationship with the organisation.

- Young people will know the limitations of confidentiality.

- Young people will know that they may be challenged but that any challenge will be respectful, supportive and involve reflection and facilitated analyses of what is being challenged.

Conclusions

There are times where we will work on the basis of need or referral, it will always be clear to a young person why this is and will also be clear that we will work within the values of youth work.

The above expectations that a young person can have of a service can also be held by other stakeholders such as other services, funders, parents, staff and volunteers.

To achieve an integrated service does mean thinking about services and thinking across the organisation. Being clear about how our services look, how they work, what systems are needed, what boundaries are in place and what the role/mission of the service. When reduced to its most basic elements an integrated service has a clear focus on the young person and has a clear stated mission. Everything else is about delivering the mission in a planned, agreed and understandable way by using good planning and making clear what the offer is.

Developing integrated services raises questions and issues within the organisations that we are answering by planning and describing our work. Creating and working towards integrated service delivery has created an opportunity for Youth Work Ireland to be clear about what work we do with creating clarity for our funders, other services, parents, staff, volunteers and most importantly with young people. Whilst taking on a strong commitment to developing integrated services as a principle of our work has created an environment of change it is clear that this change is an agreed and shared direction that is valued by Youth Work Ireland services.

In conclusion an integrated service is about how we do and have been trying to do our work and will not merely be answered by developing the right structures; it is about the culture and focus of youth work. Integrated services have at their heart a commitment to young people, developing quality youth work, ensuring young people's participation, and building on the strengths that young people to ensure their full engagement in society.

Youth Work Ireland Integrated Youth Service Model



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