



# Youth Work Ireland

**“Give us a Break!”**

## **Youth Work Ireland Budget Submission 2023**

Ireland along with the rest of the world is coming out of a traumatic period both economically and socially. As with the previous recession all research has shown young people have been hit the worst by Covid in terms of the economy, their mental health, education, and employment. Their futures need to be front and centre in budget 2023. After the previous financial crash and the global pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis is the latest blow to young people who, while they may not always be paying the energy bills, are still suffering the knock-on effects. A series of measures are required to address critical issue for young people.

### **Youth Services**

Youth Services were cut at nearly 6 times the rate of public expenditure during the recession. We find this unacceptable. Such cuts now need to be reversed as the youth sector have contributed way more to recent adjustments than other areas of public expenditure without any policy basis. There is now a much firmer base of oversight, management, and governance of these projects. Increased funding for youth services in last year's budget are welcome and the trend needs to continue to undo the damage of the past.

Volunteer led Youth Clubs are the lifeblood for many young people in rural communities where there is little or no provision to allow young people to come together outside of school. The local Youth Club is where young people go to have free, unstructured, safe spaces to be with their friends with the support of adult volunteers. Since March 2020, Youth Clubs throughout the country have uniformly found that COVID-19 has seriously impacted on their ability to provide services to young people. The COVID-19 pandemic has financially impacted on their ability to reopen when restrictions ease and they are very concerned about their ability to re-engage volunteers.

Ireland's young population is growing all the time – we will have over 1 million people aged under 24 by the year 2025, a full fifth of our population. Over eight years to 2014, youth work funding from DCYA was cut to €49.8m or a decrease of 31.8%. While there has been an increase in funding since 2014, notably in 2017, overall funding for youth work stands at 9% less than provided in 2008 when there were fewer young people to support, and costs were lower.

### **Recommendation**

- We echo the call of the National Youth Council of Ireland to increase funding to youth work by €12m in 2023 to bring the sector back to pre-recession levels.

## **Cost of Living**

The cost-of-living crisis is impacting on young people although often in a different way to adults. Higher costs for energy and associated areas are passed on and those with lower incomes have to pay more relative to their incomes. The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) has warned that the crisis is forcing many young people to rethink their future in Ireland. The finding of the Youth Council's Report shows that while inflation is affecting all of society, it is impacting young people in a particular way.

Young people surveyed were more likely to report mental health difficulties and challenges with accommodation, education, and public transport expenses. Also, those living abroad reported much lower costs of living and better quality of life for example some reported paying one third of the rent in other major European cities compared to Dublin. UK Research by Demos showed young people are significantly more likely to have fallen behind on domestic bills and credit card repayments in the last six months (31%) than those aged 51+ (3%). Young people are spending more than twice as much as older people (aged 51+) on essentials, equating to nearly £1,300 more per month.

### **Recommendation**

- We support the call to reverse the lower rates of social welfare and minimum wages for young people to enable them cope with the cost-of-living increases

## **Housing and Homelessness**

Housing and Homelessness have been critical issues over the last number of years. Affordability is out of the reach of many ordinary people and this cascades down to many others in society particularly young people. Young people are impacted directly through youth homelessness, high rents, a shortage of student accommodation and being unable to get a foot in the housing market. The number of adults and children who are homeless across Ireland has reached a new record high of 10,568, according to Department of Housing figures for July. The department's statistics show there are 7,431 adults and 3,137 children registered as homeless.

We need to prevent young people from becoming homeless in the first place. The Government must give tenants greater security so young people can plan for their future. If young people become homeless the services and emergency accommodation, they receive must be designed to meet their specific needs. Young LGBTQ+ people are at higher risk of homelessness across the world. Homeless services should be LGBTQ+ – friendly and staff should be trained to respond to specific needs. The Government must guarantee that all young people leaving State Care have a secure home.

### **Recommendation**

Establish a €100m dedicated Youth Homeless Strategy financed from a vacant homes tax and a stricter vacant sites system which would also free up critical supply of homes and land

## **Climate Change**

A political system that would seek to ignore the massive marches and gatherings by teenagers seeking change on climate policy would be tone deaf. Young people in an unmediated way have taken up the issue in the belief that adults have failed them. Most of all the teen led climate protests

have drawn attention to the fact that all the research and facts are there, as indeed are the projections, what is needed is action.

In Ireland's case our contribution to what is needed globally is even more important as we are almost bottom of the EU table in this area and these targets are the minimum needed in the immediate future. Individuals will have to be open to change in all walks of life to meet the climate challenge, but Governments need to take the lead. The key areas that need attention are energy use, transport, and agriculture. The Government should build on its reduced public transport costs initiatives and abolish fares for under 25's. These are a mix of income and expenditure measures.

### **Recommendations**

- An enhanced carbon tax with a rebate scheme for lower incomes and a surplus to fund critical climate change measures (est. €100m) such as;
- Fast track Ireland's move towards being a renewable energy leader particularly in the field of wind. Enhance storage capacity, interconnections, and diversity in renewables to ensure grid security
- Make public transport free for under 25s to embed the habit
- Begin planning for more LUAS lines in Dublin and other cities using funds from the above, the capital fund, PPP's and the EIB
  
- Set a cap on emissions from agriculture which would enable achievement of Paris commitment outcomes
- Levy on single use coffee cups
- Abolish reduced VAT on airline fuel

### **Mental and Physical Health**

The mental and physical health challenges that children and young people face are immense. We have a major problem with obesity illustrated in the Growing up in Ireland Survey. Our Substance Misuse Strategy still needs major support and action. The vision for change document has been poorly resourced for years and more support is needed for child and adolescent mental health teams.

### **Recommendations**

- Implement the National Substance Misuse Strategy (€14m)
- Deliver on the various guidelines on diet and exercise for young people through schools and voluntary youth services for example those recommended by Safe Food Ireland (€2m)
- Halve CAMHs waiting lists (€10m)
- Establish a fund for community-based sports and leisure activity for young people (€8m)
- Use extra Excise duty from minimum pricing to fund the above and other measures in this submission and other expert reports (+€60m)

### **Employment, Education and Training**

Whether in Boom or Bust Ireland has a deep-seated problem relating to educational disadvantage. Early school leaving remains an issue in many disadvantaged areas. The performance of children on key indicators under the PISA system is significantly less in DEIS schools despite some improvement. Non-attendance measured by Tusla (formerly the NEWB) is still high. We are still a way off the generally accepted school completion rates to senior cycle. Curriculum reform at the senior level

needs to be a greater priority. Our members see an upsurge in “Emotionally Based School Avoidance” which needs urgent attention. Data in this area and the related area of vocational education and training is weak since the ESRI’s School Leavers Survey was effectively defunded. We are also now facing into a review of our senior cycles

### **Recommendations**

- Deliver on the Junior Cycle Student Award (no cost)
- Introduce similar reform for the Leaving Certificate (no cost)
- Reintroduce the Early School Leavers Survey (€0.5m)
- Conduct a substantial research study on “Emotionally Based School Avoidance” (€1m)
- Increase support for literacy and numeracy work in schools and voluntary youth services (€5m)
- Increase support for voluntary youth services who work with early school leavers and the hardest to reach young people, support certified learning in these informal settings (€8m)

### **Incomes Measures**

There are several measures which could on a discrete basis fund the changes we wish to see here on health, education and youth services. As a cost-of-living package will be central to the Budget resources from this should be utilised on combatting the crisis for young people. Changes to excise duties and online gambling taxes consistent with Government policy an expert opinion in these areas can also fund these valuable measures. With an increased emphasis on climate in budgetary thinking we also advocate a carbon tax increase. As change in Corporation Tax seems certain in the future some type of minimum effective rate now seems overdue. We have set out the self-funding of the environmental and housing measures.