

Youth Work Ireland Final Declaration 2023

Member youth services of Youth Work Ireland agreed unanimously on this final declaration at their Annual General Meeting on May 13th, 2023.

Now For Real Recovery

There is little dispute that young people have been through a lot in the last few years. The impact of Covid was clear and for once the needs of young people rose up the agenda in public life. The war in Ukraine has been another blow to stability and the economy but the country and the voluntary sector have shown their normal commitment to inclusion and solidarity. The cost-of-living and housing crises are very real for young people. We have seen that the economy is strong, and we are producing enough wealth to deal with the major problems facing our society today. It is no longer enough to say these issues must wait. Now is the time for a real recovery that addresses the needs of young people.

Now is the Time for Quality Premises

In light of the forecasted budgetary surpluses, we believe there are a whole host of infrastructural investments needed to improve the lives of young people. Youth services have worked long and hard to have quality accessible premises and venues for youth work around the country, often in smaller towns and rural areas. This provision has developed with inconsistent and haphazard support from the state. Now is the opportunity to address this.

- Youth Work Ireland call for a real and sizeable capital budget for youth services to support the development of purpose-built youth spaces around the country modelled on best practice in the sector here, in Europe, and beyond. We will be providing research and evidence in this area.

Now is the Time to Support the Grassroots

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 reported significant concerns in relation to the young people who attended their clubs. and that COVID-19 has seriously impacted on their ability to provide services to young people. This impact is still felt today.

- Youth Work Ireland calls for the full funding of our business case for the reinvigoration of youth clubs around the country. This should be funded immediately - the money is there.

Now is the Time to Support Young Healthy Minds

Youth Services are key community services in the field of well-being, youth mental health and resilience, but often are not recognized in this way by the state. We welcome the promised reorientation of agencies like TUSLA and the HSE to enhance relationships with voluntary and community providers. We have begun the task of significantly increasing our relationships at the national level here and with regional management in partnership with our members. We are also broadening our relationships nationally with a range of government departments and agencies that work with or impact on young people. Local youth services have also responded to these needs themselves in an innovative way by creating counselling services with little or no state support. We reiterate our concern about the resourcing of CAMHs and the worrying reports emerging from its review.

- Youth Work Ireland support the call to implement the Mental Health Commission's interim report on CAMHs.
- We call for support for proper counselling services for young people in all Youth Services that wish to provide this service