



Youth Work Ireland

*Be Part of It*

**Transitional Strategic Plan**  
**Youth Work Ireland**  
**2013 & 2014**

February 2013

## PROLOGUE

*Welcome to Youth Work Ireland's Transitional Strategic Plan 2013 and 2014. As our Board evaluated the outcomes and impacts of our last strategic plan and began to put plans in place to consult our key internal and external stakeholders on a new strategic plan, it immediately became clear that something different was required on this occasion. Current external environmental factors indicate that we are experiencing a period of unprecedented uncertainty, radically depleting resources, an uncertain policy environment and significant structural and administrative changes in how the youth sector is supported and funded. Internally, our Member Youth Services are trying to develop and deliver strategies to cope with these challenging external pressures while at the same time ensuring that our supports and services to young people are maintained to the highest levels possible.*

*In spite of all this uncertainty we remain optimistic, creative, innovative and committed to the core work of supporting and providing services to our young people. This is so because we know that our greatest assets are the 150,000 young people we work with each year, the 7,000 volunteers who collaborate with us and the 900 professional staff who are profoundly committed to our work. Robust governance procedures, a commitment of sound financial and HR management and a dedication to quality in all aspects of our organisation underpin our work and continue to sustain us.*

*Nevertheless, the changing external environment in which there are still so many unknowns requires us to plan for what we can plan for, to control what we can control, to find our own solutions where possible and put clear measurable and outcome-focused strategies in place which will guide us through this period of uncertainty. This plan is designed to help steer us through this era of change and uncertainty and future-proof us as a Federation for a new era which has yet to be defined. How this era will look is currently unknown but without doubt it will be a very different landscape in the delivery of supports and services to young people than the one to which we have previously been accustomed. It is our belief that this strategy, if implemented, will position us well as a Federation to ensure the future generation of young people will be supported and provided with services.*

*Patrick Burke,  
CEO*

# 1 Introduction

Over 150,000 young people in 400 communities have their own space in their community - a space where they can have fun, do something that matters and be heard. By participating in local Youth Work Ireland programmes, clubs and projects, young people from every background have a safe space, where they can develop friendships, have a listening ear as well as support if needed. They have the opportunity to participate in creative arts, music, media, sports, formal and informal learning, and a range of targeted projects.

Youth Work Ireland is a national youth organisation with a federal structure. It has 22 regional youth services with a network of local youth clubs and services, which are deeply integrated within communities throughout Ireland. These youth supports and services are built on the strengths of young people as well as addressing the needs of young people locally. Youth Work Ireland support and development services are provided by 900 professional youth workers and by approximately 7,000 local volunteers who work in partnership with young people. Volunteers are at the heart of all aspects of the federation since its inception 50 years ago. Youth Work Ireland is a Federation of Youth Services that shares a common ethos and approach in providing supports and services which are delivered by local communities.

The positive relationships between young people and our trained youth workers and volunteers have consistently proven to have a profound effect on their development. We use evidence-informed approaches to enhance confidence, independence, resilience, and decision making skills and in so doing support their physical and mental well-being. A range of youth work methodologies are used with programmes depending on the outcomes which are required. In addition to our large network of youth clubs and youth cafes our services include: youth Information, youth diversion, social inclusion, family support, second chance vocational education and training, counseling, substance misuse, sports, youth participation and democracy, arts and culture, IT personal and social development, international work, and music. Youth Work Ireland provides both universal and targeted supports and services in an integrated way for a wide range of young people, many of whom are disadvantaged or at risk. Together we organise national events including: Volunteer Achievement Awards, Irish Youth Music Awards, Youth Games, Youth Factor, and other art programmes and festivals.

Young people are integral in decision making, policy development, promotion, and advocacy. Our young person-centred approach serves the public interest by contributing to the delivery of national, regional and local plans that include: the National Drug Strategy, the National Literacy Strategy, the Youth Justice Strategy, the National Children's Strategy, the National Recreation Strategy, Lifelong Learning, Reach Out Mental Health, Community Cohesion, Employability, Rural Development Strategy, City and County Development plans and local area plans.

## 2 Participation and Planning Process

Youth Work Ireland has conducted consultations across the organisation to build a consensus on the priorities in this plan as all the stakeholders have an essential role in implementing it. The consultation was conducted along three main channels:

### 2.1 *Scoping Exercise and Consensus Conference*

Youth Work Ireland conducted a scoping exercise with the constituent Youth Services, involving 500 young people, volunteers and staff. Participation was through workshops, individual responses, and a web-based questionnaire. This helped develop a consensus on the purpose of youth work and the most effective outcomes from that work. This was later supplemented by a Consensus Conference in Farmleigh House in September 2012. Participants voted on the actions that should be taken by YWI and key stakeholders to meet the challenges facing the youth work sector. There emerged an emphasis on collective action, training, resources, reflective practice and showcasing our work in partnership with young people.

### 2.2 *Regional Directors*

The Regional Directors of the youth services were consulted on behalf of their service at a dedicated meeting in October 2012. Building on the outcomes of the Consensus Conference they emphasised the extent of young people's participation throughout YWI, collaborative approaches, the centrality of the role of volunteers, and the further development of youth work practice.

### 2.3. *The National Office - Staff and Board*

The staff discussed the developing plan at a dedicated meeting in October 2012 and had been consulted throughout the planning process. Each head of department made a personal submission to the strategy. Board members and staff considered the development of the organisation, its systems, structures and policies to deliver on the collective approaches emphasised through the planning process. A sub group of the Board which includes two staff members is overseeing the development of the strategy. The Board was presented with a draft plan for review and input in January 2013 and further contributed to the development.

### **3 Plan Structure**

Throughout the plan there are four overarching themes which are critical to all the Strategic Objectives detailed:

- Further involving young people throughout the Federation and in the planning, design, and delivery of the actions outlined in this plan
- Creating a more collective identity through greater integration and collaboration across the Federation
- Prioritising the documentation and promotion of Youth Work Ireland's evidence-informed and outcome-focused youth work
- Collectively promoting the value of youth work and the strengths of the Youth Work Ireland local federated youth work model

The plan identifies five strategic areas of work for Integrated Youth Services:

- 1. Advocacy & Campaigning**
- 2. Youth Work Practice**
- 3. Volunteering in Youth Work Ireland**
- 4. Inclusive Youth Services**
- 5. Sustaining and Developing our Organisation**

## 4 The Plan

### YOUTH WORK IRELAND'S VISION

*Young People create and define a proud New Ireland*

<b>Strategic Area 1: Advocacy and Campaigning</b>	
<b>Key Outcomes (A):</b> <i>Youth Work Ireland continues to develop as a strong campaigning organisation with special emphasis, expertise and commitment in supporting the voice of young people</i>	
<b>Objectives:</b>	
1.1 (A)	Ensure young people are supported in developing and in advocating Youth Work Ireland policy positions at national, regional and local levels through formal and informal YWI structures
1.2 (A)	Continue to support the development of young people's policy, advocacy and media skills
1.3 (A)	Promote positive media coverage of young people's aspirations and achievements
1.4 (A)	Further develop mechanisms by which the experience of Youth Work Ireland practitioners inform and stimulate the policy and campaign work of National Office
<b>Key Outcome (B):</b> <i>Youth Work Ireland continues to develop collective social policy positions which are agreed across the Federation, with a special emphasis on issues of concern identified by young people</i>	
<b>Objectives:</b>	
1.5 (B)	Refine and implement the mechanism for building consensus within and between Member Youth Services and National Office on collective policy positions and campaign work in relation to youth issues and youth work
1.6 (B)	Develop and publish through National Office public policy positions across the organisation on issues which impact on young people and the youth sector
<b>Key Outcome (C)</b> <i>Policy makers have an increased understanding of youth work as an essential social practice and have a greater understanding of how broader social policy impacts on the lives of young people</i>	
<b>Objectives:</b>	
1.7 (C)	Promote the benefits and outcomes of youth work and the programmes and achievements of Youth Work Ireland
1.8 (C)	Lobby and campaign in a coordinated way at a national, regional and local level via political briefings, submissions, campaigns and particularly by linking young people directly with decision makers and ensuring Youth Work Ireland's positions are reflected in official national and regional policies
<b>Key Outcome (D)</b> <i>Youth Work Ireland is considered by the general public and the media as a key source in articulating comment and expertise on youth work and youth affairs</i>	
<b>Objectives:</b>	
1.9 (D)	Partner with other organisations in campaigning to attain common objectives more effectively
1.10 (D)	Include the above objectives and a social media strategy dimension in Youth Work

Ireland's general communications strategy
---

<b>Strategic Area 2: Youth Work Practice</b>	
<b>Key Outcome (A):</b> <i>Youth Work Ireland's practice is documented and disseminated (internally and externally) so as to demonstrate its benefits and contribute to the development of evidence informed practice</i>	
<b>Objectives:</b>	
2.1 (A)	Support the documentation of practices in order to further develop evidence informed approaches.
2.2 (A)	Ensure our expertise in participatory practice is fully utilised and that young people's voices clearly feature in the development of evidence informed practice
2.3 (A)	Develop processes, including a peer support and practice sharing process, to document and share learning in relation to quality and build on our expertise in this area.
2.4 (A)	Develop a process to enhance consistency of practice and measurement where appropriate, building on the work of the Consensus Conference 2012
<b>Key Outcome (B):</b> <i>Continuous Improvement Plans are maintained and developed across the Federation Continuous Improvement Plans are maintained and developed across the Federation</i>	
<b>Objectives:</b>	
2.5 (B)	The Continuous Improvement Plans (CIPs) of the National Quality Standards Framework (NQSF) are maintained and developed across the Federation
<b>Key Outcome (C):</b> <i>Youth Work Ireland's key policies are implemented across the federation</i>	
<b>Objectives:</b>	
2.6 (C)	Ensure Youth Work Ireland's key policies, and specifically the Children and Youth Protection Policies, are fully implemented in all Member Youth Services and in affiliated clubs, programmes, projects
<b>Key Outcome (D):</b> <i>Youth Work Ireland is publishing and supporting a number of research projects on issues relevant to young people or youth work</i>	
<b>Objectives:</b>	
2.7 (D)	Support, publish and share research, evaluation and documentation of practice within our Member Youth Services and the Irish Youth Work Sector through engaging with the Third Level Institutions. Re-focus the work of the Irish Youth Work Centre to support this objective
<b>Key Outcome (E):</b> <i>Youth Work Ireland secures training and development opportunities for young people, voluntary and paid youth workers and youth leaders</i>	
<b>Objectives:</b>	
2.8 (E)	Regularly review gaps in training and supports with Youth Work Ireland voluntary and paid youth workers
2.9 (E)	Develop training opportunities for voluntary youth leaders, volunteers and paid staff throughout the sector
2.10 (E)	Increase young people's understanding of issues relating to global poverty and development through the delivery of Development Education Programmes.

<b>Key Outcome (F):</b> <i>The Irish Youth Work Centre is recognised as a centre of excellence for evidence informed youth work practice in Ireland and internationally and is financially secured.</i>	
<b>Objectives:</b>	
<b>2.11 (F)</b>	<i>Promote the work of the Irish Youth Work Centre in all Third Level Institutions throughout the island of Ireland who provide youth and community studies</i>
<b>2.12 (F)</b>	<i>In co-operation with international partners promote best practices in youth work through the Irish Youth Work Centre</i>
<b>2.13 (F)</b>	<i>Publish resources on-line and create an electronic platform for disseminating resources</i>
<b>2.14 (F)</b>	<i>Secure additional non-state funding to ensure the Irish Youth Work Centre is sustainable</i>



<b>Strategic Area 3: Volunteering in Youth Work Ireland</b>	
<b>Key Outcome (A):</b> <i>The essential role of volunteers in both the governance and delivery of services is recognised internally by policy makers, government and the general public.</i>	
<b>Objectives:</b>	
3.1 (A)	Continue to respect and integrate volunteers within Youth Work Ireland via consultation, engagement, opportunities for leadership
3.2 (A)	<i>Continue to develop the Volunteer Achievement Awards to recognise the contribution of volunteers</i>
<b>Key Outcome (B):</b> Youth Work Ireland volunteers have a strong collective identity and are involved as partners throughout the federation	
<b>Objectives:</b>	
3.3 (B)	<i>Collectively review and update the volunteer policy</i>
3.4 (B)	<i>Learn from, promote, and share volunteers practice through Youth Work Ireland's peer support processes</i>
3.5 (B)	<i>Support volunteer networking and develop structures and opportunities for club volunteers nationally</i>
<b>Key Outcome (C):</b> <i>Youth Work Ireland volunteers benefit from supports to enhance volunteer development</i>	
<b>Objectives:</b>	
3.6 (C)	<i>Agree with volunteers the supports they require such as training and development pathways and the accreditation of Youth Work Ireland training</i>
3.7 (C)	<i>Ensure volunteers contribute to and benefit from YWI peer support</i>

<b>Strategic Area 4: An Inclusive Youth Service</b>	
<b>Key Outcome (A):</b> <i>Youth supports or “targeted” youth work are documented as an integral part of Member Youth Service “strengths based” approach</i>	
<b>Objectives:</b>	
4.1 (A)	<i>Continue to develop and document YWI’s particular approach to the delivery of youth support or “targeted” youth work and youth development or “mainstream” youth work programmes</i>
4.2 (A)	<i>Adopt and use equality proofing tools consistently across the organization.</i>
4.3 (A)	<i>Integrate and prioritise specific social inclusion measures within our evaluations, peer review and reflective practice</i>
4.4 (A)	<i>Develop international relationships which support, inform and inspire social inclusion work with young people</i>
<b>Key Outcome (B):</b> <i>Youth Work Ireland continues to provide opportunities for all young people without exception to participate and achieve outcomes within the Federation of Youth Services.</i>	
<b>Objectives:</b>	
4.5 (B)	<i>Quantify, document, and describe the range and extent of targeted work which is going on within the Membership of Youth Work Ireland</i>
4.6 (B)	<i>Establish and develop key relationships nationally and internationally with organisations which fund and promote youth support work with youth people</i>
<b>Key Outcome (C):</b> <i>Youth Work Ireland continues to communicate our model of integrated youth work services along with the social inclusion issues emerging from our work through our policy, advocacy and campaigning</i>	
<b>Objectives:</b>	
4.7 (C)	<i>Further develop our collective approach to our youth support and identify key policy areas for position papers and advocacy</i>
4.8 (C)	<i>Highlight and promote our practice and values in relation to integrated youth work among policy makers and key stakeholders</i>
4.9 (C)	<i>Co-operate and co-ordinate with other youth organisations providing youth support programmes in order to influence policy and best practice in this area</i>

<b>Strategic Area 5: Sustaining and Developing our Federation</b>	
<b>Key Outcome (A):</b> <i>Youth Work Ireland strengthens its collective identity, impact, and reputation with key stakeholders, policy makers, funders and the general public</i>	
<b>Objectives:</b>	
5.1 (A)	Create additional networking opportunities across the Federation (staff, volunteers, boards, young people, youth leaders)
5.2 (A)	Develop a data system which captures the full range of supports and services we collectively provide to young people. Collate and analyse data to inform policy, practice and internal planning and development
5.3 (A)	Continue to evolve and deliver a range of national events and programmes (Games, Irish Youth Music Awards etc) , ensuring that they remain relevant to young people, are inspired by youth work practice, and promote the federal nature of the organisation
5.4 (A)	Further develop the quality and reach of our National Programmes such as Irish Youth Music Awards, Sports, Talent and Art events, YWI conference and YWI week.
5.5 (A)	Network effectively and develop strategic partnerships with other organisations in order to ensure good communication, efficient and effective use of resources, and develop better policy and practice outcomes for young people
<b>Key Outcome (B):</b> <i>Youth Work Ireland ensures robust governance procedures with clear internal decision making processes and organisational relationships across the Federation</i>	
<b>Objectives:</b>	
5.6 (B)	Develop strategies to ensure that young people and volunteers are an integral part of the governance structure of the Federation at all levels
5.7 (B)	Continue to support and develop robust financial governance throughout the federation, including accountability structures for report on all monies (both public and private) expended by the organization
<b>Key Outcome (C):</b> <i>Youth Work Ireland's operating systems (National Office and Federation) are refined and documented</i>	
<b>Objectives:</b>	
5.8 (C)	Document and articulate all the internal operating systems (financial, policy making, decision etc.), both within National Office and within the Federation
5.9 (C)	Continue to refine and recalibrate our federal structure, including our decision making, through consistent implementation and honoring of our Membership Charter
5.10 (C)	Develop strategies to ensure that the work of National Office enhances and upholds the work of Member Youth Services with management structures devised to reflect this
<b>Key Outcome (D):</b> <i>All stakeholders within the Federation recognise the importance of sustaining our services by supporting our collective Fundraising Strategy and other strategies focused on sustainability.</i>	
<b>Objectives:</b>	
5.11 (D)	<i>Deliver Youth Work Ireland's Fundraising Strategy throughout the Federation, including an emphasis on securing new revenue streams, sustaining existing project and event funding</i>
5.12 (D)	<i>Make Youth Work Ireland increasingly effective in collaborative relationships to maximize resources for support young people</i>

## 5. Implementing the Transitional Plan

- 1. Review and report on the progress of the plan through the development of an implementation plan with targets, performance indicators and evaluation methods, via the Logic Model*
- 2. During this transitional plan, seek agreement to align regional strategic plans with the National plan*