

Scoping
Exercise
Initial
Analysis and
Feedback

Youth Work Ireland

Consensus Conference
September 2012



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Our Youth, Our Nation, Our Future.

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Participants

21 Youth Work Ireland Member Youth Services worked to involve over 500 young people, volunteers and staff in the scoping exercise. 21 workshops were organised, each workshop involved at least 7 participants. In addition, over 360 individual responses were provided by staff, volunteers and young people who completed their own paper, or web-based questionnaires. This report provides a summary of a randomly selected sample of 200 responses from the workshop results provided by the 21 member services.

Purpose

The purpose of the scoping workshops was to develop consensus on the practice and outcomes of Youth Work Ireland Member Services so that we might:

- ⇒ Effectively engage and influence policy development by being able to clearly say what Youth Work Ireland thinks good youth work practice and outcomes are;
- ⇒ Identify actions to demonstrate our outcomes and engage with the outcomes agenda;
- ⇒ Identify actions to improve upon and celebrate our excellent practice;
- ⇒ Identify actions to address gaps and challenges in our practice and service provision;

Key Findings

Across member services there is a great diversity of practice that Youth Work Ireland Member Youth Services can be proud to celebrate. Every question in the scoping workshops was answered thoroughly by respondents who gave excellent answers that indicated that a wide range of excellent and effective practices are in place.

Across all the answers the following themes are readily apparent:

- ⇒ The importance of values was highlighted in response to several questions;
- ⇒ The importance of training was highlighted;
- ⇒ The importance of using both formal and informal methods to achieve outcomes and to document outcomes;
- ⇒ The importance of relationships between youth workers and young people in achieving outcomes;
- ⇒ The importance of group work and group work processes;
- ⇒ Relationships are the cornerstone of youth work.

Key Challenges

Promoting Youth Work

There is much that we do that is excellent and worthy of celebration. We can more easily describe what that is by using the information collected through the scoping workshops. Promoting what we do well is a job for both Member Youth Services and Youth Work Ireland National Office.

Evidencing our Outcomes

Many excellent methods exist for planning, achieving and evidencing outcomes. It is apparent that logic models are in regular use by Youth Work Ireland Member Services and that formal evaluation is employed appropriately. These practices need to be supported and made visible. The use of observation, reflection and informal evaluation is also widely in use and these need to be supported and captured so that the value of these tools can be fully realised and appreciated.

Balancing the Informal and Formal

Answers given by respondents indicate that outcomes are very much dependent on both formal, structured programmes and practices and informal ways of engaging with young people, volunteers and staff. The developing outcomes agenda is important and needs to be engaged with in such a way as to preserve and promote both formal and informal practices in Youth Work Ireland Member Youth Services.

Defining our Practices

In response to questions respondents indicated that there are many common practices across Youth Work Ireland Member Youth Services. Defining these and clarifying how to do these best will be of benefit in terms of both effectively communicating our work and also in continuously improving our practice.

ANALYSIS OF INDIVIDUAL QUESTIONS

1. What works well in your youth service to help young people to become involved in decisions that affect them?

Key findings for this question: An initial review suggests that many of the respondents believed formal structures and regular consultations are often used and are effective, but that supportive relationships and informal listening are found to be important as well.

When all the responses given by young people, volunteers and staff were sorted and combined, the following categories of answer became evident.

- ⇒ Formal decision making structures and processes such as youth committees, youth councils, youth panels;
- ⇒ Planned regular communication with young people about their interests and about decisions in the youth service;
- ⇒ Informal joint adult-youth decision-making;
- ⇒ Planned consultation on all aspects of the youth service with young people;
- ⇒ Volunteers, young people and staff provided with training and support to ensure young people become leaders, are involved in programme implementation and decision-making;
- ⇒ Supportive and positive youth adult relationships open;
- ⇒ Dedicated programmes with either a specific participation element or entirely focused on participation;
- ⇒ Strong values, beliefs and principles that support participation within the organisation;
- ⇒ Advocacy with and on behalf of young people with outside agencies and decision makers.

2. What works well in your youth service to help young people to connect with other young people and become involved in their communities?

Key findings for this question: An initial review suggests that many of the respondents strongly emphasised the effectiveness of organised outreach events for the whole community that involve young people as well as integrated and interagency planning and programmes and activities in the community. Ad hoc and formally planned community service programmes and activities also featured in the responses.

When all the responses given by young people, volunteers and staff were sorted and combined, the following categories of answer became evident.

- ⇒ Integrated planning of activities across communities including interagency and partnership working;
- ⇒ Ad hoc and formal community service programmes for individuals, groups and communities;
- ⇒ Organised outreach events programmes for community with young people involved;
- ⇒ Young people supported to serve on community organisation boards and committees;
- ⇒ Provision of community spaces for young people;
- ⇒ Targeting of excluded groups for community activities;
- ⇒ Opportunities to develop a social analysis;
- ⇒ Opportunities to develop necessary social skills and group work skills;
- ⇒ Community based youth clubs;
- ⇒ Communication of social media;
- ⇒ Youth Work Ireland national programmes;
- ⇒ Values that support young people to be involved in communities;
- ⇒ Training and capacity building for young people, staff and volunteers;
- ⇒ Advocacy and positive media representation for and with young people;
- ⇒ Supporting group work process;
- ⇒ Formal and informal participation processes to involve young people in decisions about communities and youth services.

3. What is happening in your youth service to help young people to learn new things and to keep learning?

Key findings for this question: An initial review suggests that many of the respondents believed that providing a wide variety of programme offerings suited to the evolving interests and abilities of young people was effective in ensuring that young people learn new things and keep learning. Ensuring that young people are consulted and involved in decision making about their own learning was also a focus of responses.

When all the responses given by young people, volunteers and staff were sorted and combined, the following categories of answer became evident.

- ⇒ Group work processes;
- ⇒ Support for young people to engage with appropriate projects within the service;
- ⇒ Linking in with schools;
- ⇒ Consultation/research/young people's participation in developing programmes;
- ⇒ Accredited courses;
- ⇒ Peer education;
- ⇒ Support for self-directed learning;
- ⇒ Participatory Action Research;
- ⇒ Social enterprise – learning by doing;
- ⇒ Safe-supported spaces;
- ⇒ Advocacy;
- ⇒ Individualised programmes;
- ⇒ Progression routes in programmes and tracking systems;
- ⇒ On-going staff development;
- ⇒ Working from a youth work model;
- ⇒ Modelling skills and attitudes;
- ⇒ Youth Work Ireland programmes;
- ⇒ Dedicated PD/Leader class, course, programmes;
- ⇒ Challenging young people with a variety of activities;
- ⇒ Dedicated showing and celebration.

4. What kinds of things are young people learning about or to do in your youth service?

Key findings for this question: An initial review suggests that respondents believed learning was taking place in many areas. However, four main areas were most clearly identified, these included the learning to develop personal interests; learning to develop positive mental and physical health including sexual health; learning to connect to others, including healthy peer interaction in group settings and finally, learning values, skills and knowledge related to active citizenship in society (justice, equality, human rights and related social issues).

When all the responses given by young people, volunteers and staff were sorted and combined, the following categories of answer became evident.

- ⇒ Learn to set personal goals and navigate life's transitions;
- ⇒ Learn to develop personal interests;
- ⇒ Learn to connect to others, including healthy peer interaction in group settings;
- ⇒ Learn positive social norms;
- ⇒ Learn personal efficacy, confidence, self-expression and coping;
- ⇒ Learn practical school, work and life success skills;
- ⇒ Learn to develop and maintain positive mental and physical health including sexual health;
- ⇒ Learn values, skills and knowledge related to active citizenship in society (justice, equality, human rights and related social issues).

5. What difference does work with young people make in your youth service?

Key findings for this question: An initial review suggests that many of the respondents believed that youth work is very effective in providing support to young people, including those in crisis, and assist young people to be resilient and safe. There is some indication also that respondents felt that youth work is very effective in assisting young people connect to others and develop empathy and positive social norms, particularly in group settings.

When all the responses given by young people, volunteers and staff were sorted and combined, the following categories of answer became evident.

- ⇒ Provide support to young people, including those in crisis and assist young people to be resilient and safe;
- ⇒ Assist young people to successfully navigate transitions;
- ⇒ Effectively engage socially excluded young people;
- ⇒ Assist young people in learning and in developing personal interests;
- ⇒ Assist young people to develop and maintain positive mental and physical health;
- ⇒ Assist young people to participate in decisions that affect them, to become active citizens, take leadership roles and develop a social analysis;
- ⇒ Assist young people connect to others and develop empathy and positive social norms;
- ⇒ Strengthen and bring about positive change in families, communities and society;
- ⇒ Provide opportunities for young people to have fun and enjoy themselves.

6. How do you know that work with young people makes a difference in your youth service?

Key findings for this question: An initial review suggests that many of the respondents indicated that they were aware of youth work outcomes because of both formal and informal ways of identifying outcomes. Observation, active listening and reflection were often named as informal methods. Formal summative evaluation, consultations and recorded attendance and completion rates were most often named in terms of formal methods.

When all the responses given by young people, volunteers and staff were sorted and combined, the following categories of answer became evident.

- ⇒ Reflective practice;
- ⇒ Parental/external agency feedback;
- ⇒ Formal qualifications and certificates;
- ⇒ Attendance rates steady or increasing;
- ⇒ Logic model;
- ⇒ Recorded offending rates;
- ⇒ Surveys and consultations;
- ⇒ Folders and portfolios assessment systems;
- ⇒ Progression to junior leadership roles;
- ⇒ Planned regular assessment meetings and assessment activities;
- ⇒ School completion rates;
- ⇒ Evaluation of programmes in consultation with staff and young people formally and informally;
- ⇒ Informal observation;
- ⇒ Donor funder recognition;
- ⇒ Youth Work Ireland awards;
- ⇒ Long term reports/outcomes reported by past programme participants.

7. What works well in your youth service to support volunteers and junior leaders?

Key findings for this question: An initial review suggests that many of the respondents believed that training provision was the key intervention for supporting volunteers and junior leaders. Communication, dedicated support staff and clear policies and procedures featured as well, but not to the same extent as training.

When all the responses given by young people, volunteers and staff were sorted and combined, the following categories of answer became evident.

- ⇒ Communication including Facebook, text and email;
- ⇒ Support including mentoring and supervision;
- ⇒ Planned, evidence-based training;
- ⇒ Parental involvement and support;
- ⇒ Clear, democratic and transparent policies;
- ⇒ Encouragement, awards (including Youth Work Ireland awards) and accreditation;
- ⇒ A philosophy that values volunteers and believes they are best to deliver services in communities;
- ⇒ Review and evaluation;
- ⇒ Board representation for volunteers and young people;
- ⇒ Participation, involvement in planning and decisions;
- ⇒ Support pack of clear roles and expectations – good fit between role and skill;
- ⇒ Progression routes for all volunteers and young people;
- ⇒ Admin support from Youth Work Ireland.

8. What works well in your youth service to involve other relevant agencies and organisations in engaging young people?

Key findings for this question: An initial review suggests that many of the respondents believed that both formal and informal partnerships and networks with other agencies were important for involving other relevant agencies in engaging young people. Communication also appears to be indicated as an effective practice.

When all the responses given by young people, volunteers and staff were sorted and combined, the following categories of answer became evident.

- ⇒ Formal partnership and interagency programmes;
- ⇒ Communication and promotion;
- ⇒ Sharing information and resources;
- ⇒ Informal networking and partnerships ;
- ⇒ Referral systems;
- ⇒ Networking initiatives;
- ⇒ Youth cafes;
- ⇒ Needs analysis;
- ⇒ Interagency committees;
- ⇒ Parent's involvement informal networking;
- ⇒ Networking initiatives;
- ⇒ Youth cafes.

9. What works well in your youth service to involve all young people in programmes?

Key findings for this question: An initial review suggests that respondents were able to name many different factors that assisted in involving all young people. At least four factors appeared to be particularly important to respondents including, trained and skilled staff, participation of young people in programme planning and implementation, a diversity of programmes to engage the interests and challenges and a philosophy of belief.

When all the responses given by young people, volunteers and staff were sorted and combined, the following categories of answer became evident.

- ⇒ Relationships;
- ⇒ Communication;
- ⇒ Focus on building groups and stable group work processes;
- ⇒ Community based response – relationships – outreach in the community;
- ⇒ Needs based evidence;
- ⇒ Youth centred approach;
- ⇒ Strength based approaches;
- ⇒ Inclusion policies and procedures;
- ⇒ Integrated service provision with external and internal agencies;
- ⇒ Planning, review and quality;
- ⇒ Low threshold informal routes into service;
- ⇒ Innovation;
- ⇒ Diversity of programmes;
- ⇒ Volunteers youth leaders peer to peer;
- ⇒ Trained skilled staff;
- ⇒ Participation in decisions and programme implementation;
- ⇒ Philosophy of inclusion, equality, tolerance and flexibility.

10. What works well to reach out to and engage targeted groups of young people?

Key findings for this question: An initial review suggests that many of the respondents believed that providing opportunities for targeted young people to pursue their own personal interests, outreach in a community setting and communicating and networking were effective in engaging targeted groups of young people.

When all the responses given by young people, volunteers and staff were sorted and combined, the following categories of answer became evident.

- ⇒ Consultation of young people, formal and informal;
- ⇒ Provision of opportunities to develop personal interests;
- ⇒ Provision of opportunities to learn to connect to others;
- ⇒ Progressive universalism;
- ⇒ Strength based approach;

- ⇒ Peer to peer engagement;
- ⇒ Outreach to community and young people;
- ⇒ Communication and networking;
- ⇒ Provision of informal, low threshold safe spaces and programmes;
- ⇒ Evidence based and planned services;
- ⇒ Referral system and interagency working;
- ⇒ Philosophy of inclusion, equality, tolerance and flexibility;
- ⇒ Long term supportive relationships;
- ⇒ Passionate and skilled staff and volunteers;
- ⇒ Peer-to-peer engagement.

11. What works well to support young people who are experiencing difficulties?

Key findings for this question An initial review suggests that many of the respondents believed that it is important to develop supportive relationships with young people, ensure that workers are skilled in counselling and therapeutic interventions and that youth spaces that are accessible by young people provide support and referral are provided.

When all the responses given by young people, volunteers and staff were sorted and combined, the following categories of answer became evident.

- ⇒ Integration with county councils;
- ⇒ Counselling skills and therapeutic interventions such as Teen Between;
- ⇒ Issue based group work;
- ⇒ Planned wrap-around supports and key workers;
- ⇒ Formal and informal one to one and listening relationships;
- ⇒ Referrals;
- ⇒ Relationships – supportive, challenging of negative behaviour, but accepting of the young person;
- ⇒ Advocacy for young people;
- ⇒ Volunteers with therapeutic skills and training;
- ⇒ Staff training and skills;
- ⇒ Strength-based approach;
- ⇒ Restorative practices;
- ⇒ Parental family engagement;
- ⇒ Effective, clear policies;
- ⇒ Micro grant programmes to engage young people;
- ⇒ Organisational supports for staff;
- ⇒ Information provision;
- ⇒ Informal low threshold access spaces with support and referral;
- ⇒ Early intervention and rapid reaction;
- ⇒ Assessment of needs;
- ⇒ Incentivise and encourage young people;
- ⇒ Safe spaces.

A Word on Methodology and Results

Rather than providing a list of all of the answers given to each of the 11 scoping workshop questions the Consensus Conference Working Group collected a random sample of 200 responses from all 21 Member Youth Services. These answers were divided up under the relevant question and then the answers to each question were categorised and synthesised. This report provides a summary of these categories. In this way, it gives a clear indication of the *kinds* of answers that young people, volunteer and staff gave to each question. Above, these summaries are provided under each of the questions.

The next step will be to go back through all the answers given by all 500 young people, staff and volunteers and determine how many of the answers fit under each of the categories.

In summary, it can be said that the results of this scoping exercise are *indicative* of what young people, volunteers and staff in Youth Work Ireland Member services believe to be true from their experience. The results are partial, though reasonably comprehensive and can therefore be considered not as an exact reproduction of the view of all young people, volunteers and staff, but rather as representative of the situation in Youth Work Ireland Member Services.

