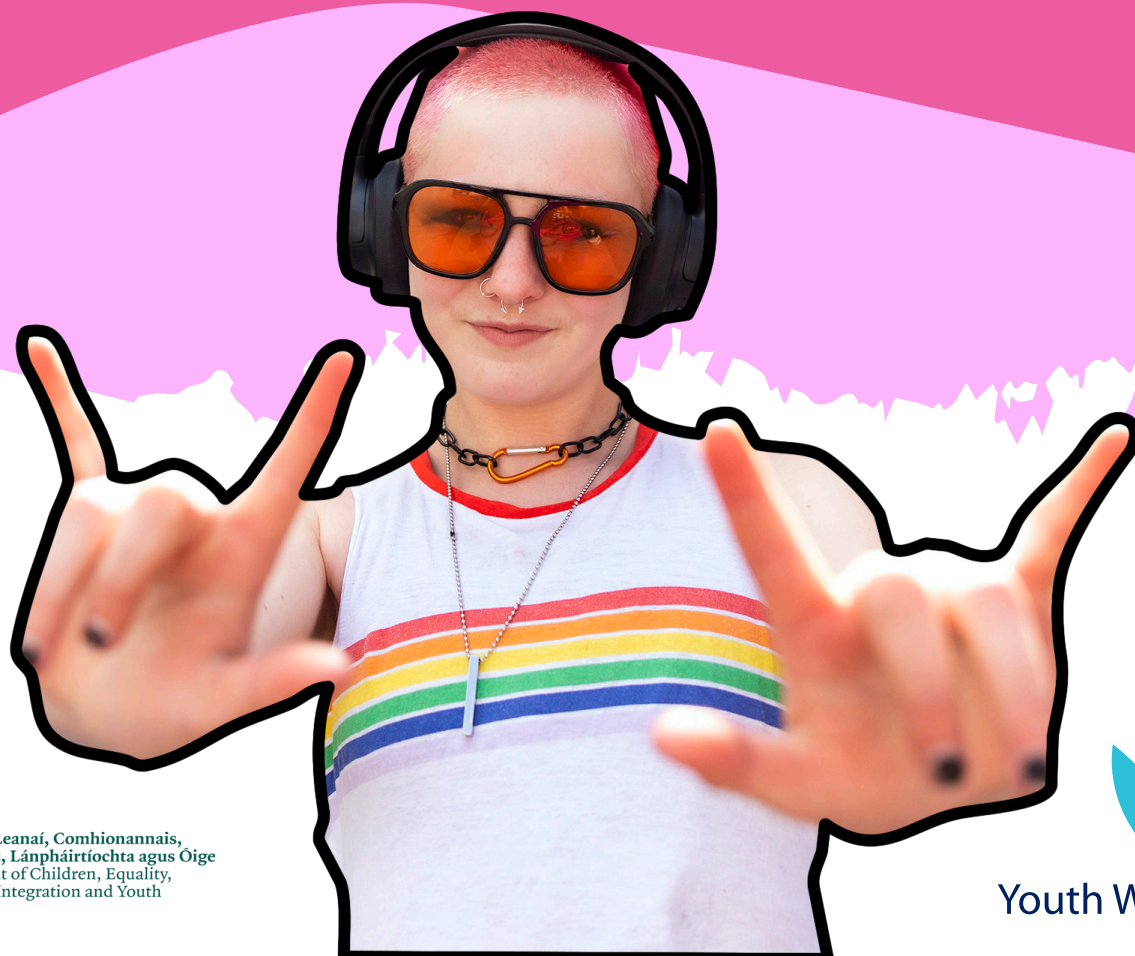


PROUD SPACES

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Creating Proud Spaces in Rural Communities

Youth Work Ireland's Model of LGBTQI+ Youth Work Practice



An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Oige
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth



Youth Work Ireland

PROUD SPACES™

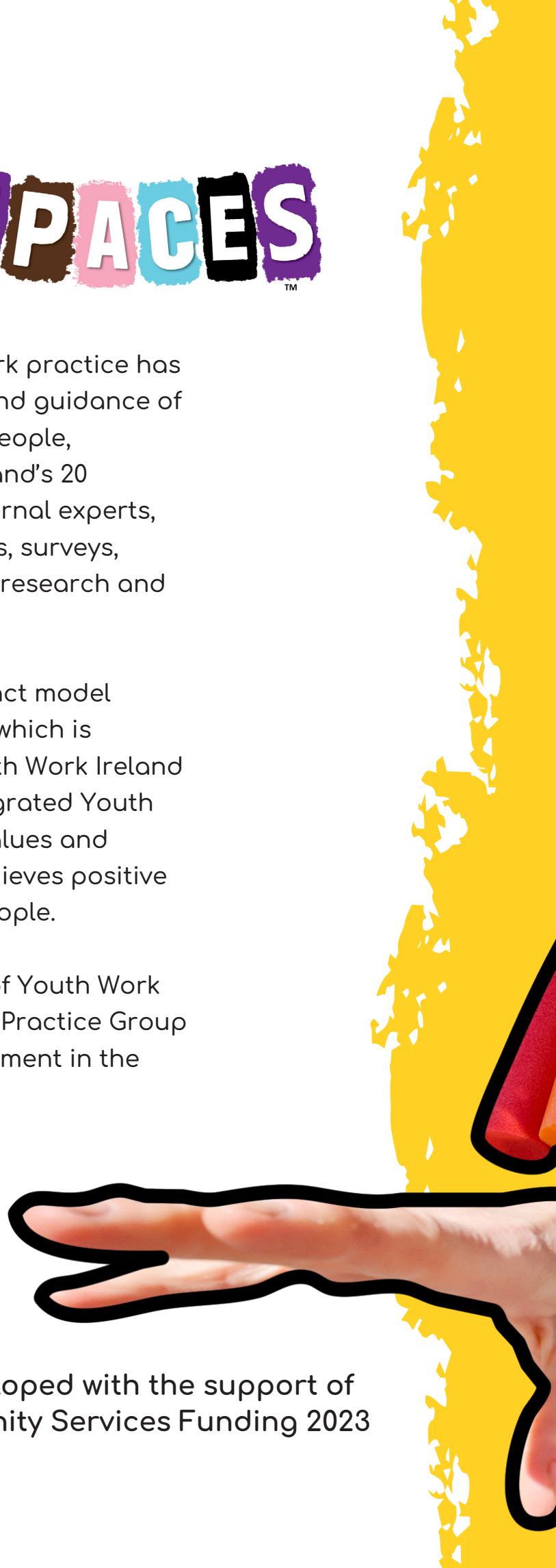
This model of LGBTQI+ youth work practice has been developed with the input and guidance of youth workers, young LGBTQI+ people, volunteers from Youth Work Ireland's 20 member youth services; and external experts, through a range of consultations, surveys, interviews, workshops, trainings, research and discussions.

What this has revealed is a distinct model of LGBTQI+ youth work practice which is evidenced based, unique to Youth Work Ireland members, embedded in our Integrated Youth Services Model, guided by the values and principles of youth work and achieves positive outcomes for young LGBTQI+ people.

Special thanks to the members of Youth Work Ireland's LGBTQI+ Community of Practice Group for their support and encouragement in the development of this resource.

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Proud Spaces Vision

An Ireland where all young people are valued, respected and embraced, regardless of their sexuality or gender identity.



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About Proud Spaces

Youth Work Ireland and its member youth services are the largest providers of LGBTQI+ youth work supports in rural Ireland. These supports are provided through what we describe as a 'Proud Spaces' model of practice. This model is supported by trained and professional youth workers, guided by youth work values, principles and processes and has been shown to create safe, inclusive and brave spaces for young LGBTQI+ people.

Proud Spaces was originally formed as part of an Erasmus+ project between Youth Work Ireland, Youth Work Ireland Laois, Growspace (Poland) and the European Confederation of Youth Clubs (ECYC). The partners worked together for a period of three years to develop European best practice resources to support LGBTQI+ youth work.

Now, Proud Spaces has been developed into an Irish model of practice helping Youth Work Ireland's member youth services deliver the best possible services for and with young LGBTQI+ people in rural Ireland. It is funded by the Department of Children, Equality, Diversity, Integration and Youth.

Evidence Informed Model

Proud Spaces is an evidence based LGBTQI+ model of best practice for youth workers and others working with young LGBTQI+ people in rural Ireland. The Proud Spaces model is informed and guided by the values and principles of youth work and grounded in an Integrated Youth Service model. This ensures that a range of services and policy objectives can be delivered by one community-based youth service in a seamless manner, resulting in better outcomes for young LGBTQI+ people.



Methodology

In our development of this model of practice we have worked and consulted closely with all 20-member youth services, young people, volunteers and external experts through a range of consultations, workshops, interviews, community of practices, training, surveys and discussions. Accordingly we can now clearly articulate the best praxis informed approach to LGBTQI+ youth work that responds to the needs, challenges, and aspirations of young LGBTQI+ people in our rural youth services.

The Proud Spaces model. is unique to Youth Work Ireland as it sits alongside, and is complementary to our Integrated Youth Services Model in achieving positive outcomes and impact for young people.

The steps taken in developing this document are as follows:

- Extensive consultations and research to evidence the practices, activities, methodologies and approaches that achieve safe and inclusive spaces for young LGBTQI+ people.
- Community of Practice group meetings to build a network of youth workers working with LGBTQI+ youth groups across our membership.
- Focus groups to identify the areas or issues youth workers need further support and training on.
- Survey of rural LGBTQI+ young people to evidence their distinctive needs, aspirations and challenges (see pg 18).
- Workshops delivered to youth workers on the gaps of knowledge identified through the above.
- Training delivered to youth workers on the needs of young LGBTQI+ people.
- Workshops with young LGBTQI+ people to support them articulate the elements which create inclusive spaces.

The underlying Premises that guides a Proud Spaces Model of Practice

- Young LGBTQI+ people are as varied in their needs and strengths as all other young people; meeting their needs and assisting them to achieve their aspirations requires a full range of services and opportunities.
- Young LGBTQI+ people face more challenges than their peers and those LGBTQI+ people living in rural Irish communities face additional challenges in relation to isolation, exclusion and loneliness.
- Youth work offers a space which is inclusive, accepting, non-judgmental and can meet the young person where they are at.
- Youth workers take a holistic approach to supporting, empowering, and advocating with and for young LGBTQI+ people, their families, community, and allies.
- Youth workers in Youth Work Ireland member youth services are advocates, supporters, allies and non-formal educators, who recognise there are limits to their role.
- From our research we have found that a high level of young LGBTQI+ people presenting in our groups are also neurodivergent, and so require additional supports.



Proud Spaces Aim and Objectives

- To clearly evidence and describe the praxis of LGBTQI+ youth work that exists, and is unique to Youth Work Ireland member youth services.
- To contribute to the creation of safe and inclusive spaces for young LGBTQI+ people, as defined and described by them.
- To evidence and share methods and practices of inclusive youth work which achieves positive outcomes for young LGBTQI+ people in rural communities.
- To contribute to community spaces in rural Ireland becoming safe, inclusive and welcoming to young LGBTQI+ people and their families.
- To provide training, know-how and support to those supporting young LGBTQI+ people in rural communities including methods and activities to create safe spaces within their communities.
- To build on recent findings from a European project which has identified ways to create safe and proud spaces and adapt the practices to suit Irish rural communities.

Proud Spaces Values

1. Empowerment
2. Empathy
3. Equity / Equality
4. Belonging
5. Intersectionality
6. Acceptance
7. Respect
8. Inclusion
9. Safety
10. Non-Judgement
11. Joy and Celebration
12. Voluntary Participation

Proud Spaces Principles

Youth Led and Youth Centred:

The Proud Spaces research has found that youth work with young LGBTQI+ people has a stronger focus on advocacy and self agency. A Proud Spaces model meets young people where they are at, treats them holistically and creates spaces with them to ensure their voices are to the fore in the planning and directing youth work activities.

Strengths-based and Positive Approaches

The Proud Spaces model has at its core a strengths based and positive approach to empowering young LGBTQI+ people to navigate their own experiences and realised their rights supported by a youth worker in a nurturing and caring environment.

Promoting Equality and Inclusion

The Proud Spaces model creates inclusive and accepting environments where young LGBTQI+ people feel safe and comfortable discussing their concerns, and where empathy, compassion and care are vital components of the youth service.

Safety and Wellbeing of young People.

Young LGBTQI+ people face more discrimination than others, the Proud Spaces model ensures and promotes the safety and wellbeing of young LGBTQI+ people, and creates brave spaces where discriminatory language or actions are challenged.

Nonformal and Developmental Educational

The Proud Spaces model provides a space where young LGBTQI+ people are empowered in their social, educational and personal development through a combination of activities and programmes.

Promoting LGBTQI+ joy

The Proud Spaces model recognises all identities and genders and takes deliberate actions to promote and celebrate individuality in all forms.

Dedicated to the provision of quality youth work

The Proud Spaces model ensures youth workers are up to date with professional practices, issues and topics relevant to young LGBTQI+ people.

Proud Spaces Model of Youth Work in Practice

Proud Spaces is a distinct model of LGBTQI+ youth work practice which is evidence based, embedded within an integrated youth service and provides direction, guidance, and support to those who want to understand, develop and deepen their practice with young LGBTQI+ people.

Working within a Proud Spaces model of LGBTQI+ youth work means youth workers:

1. Respond to the needs, aspirations, and challenges of young LGBTQI+ people in a holistic way taking into account the whole young person and not one aspect of their identity.
2. Recognise young LGBTQI+ people as rights holders in the face of those who do not respect or believe in those rights existing.
3. Advocate with and for young LGBTQI+ people for their rights and aspirations.
4. Challenge words and behaviours that are disrespectful, bullying or motivated by hate and responding to any incidents with unconditional positive regard, providing young people with opportunities for learning (with more serious incidents dealt with through a restorative justice approach).
5. Support young LGBTQI+ people to take a critical approach to the social, cultural, and political environments they are growing up in.

6. Recognise we may have unconscious assumptions and biases, and identify training or supports needed to overcome these.
7. Acknowledge that the young person is the expert in their own lives and even if you are an LGBTQI+ individual, the young people you are working with may have had different life experiences to you.
8. Accept that young LGBTQI+ people have agency and strengths, that when supported through youth work processes, can enable them to actively contribute to solving their own problems and reaching their own goals.
9. Are aware that LGBTQI+ identifying youth workers working to support young LGBTQI+ people may be in need of additional personal and/or professional supports.
10. Work within an Integrated Youth Services model to bring other specialist providers into the process to enhance the provision of support to LGBTQI+ young people.
11. Build networks with allies, peers and organisations who share the values and principles of a proud spaces approach.



Proud Spaces Theory of Change

This theory of change demonstrates how a Proud Spaces model of youth work practice can achieve its vision.

Assumptions:

- Young LGBTQI+ people in rural Ireland are a marginalised minority at high risk of isolation, mental health issues and bullying.
- LGBTQI+ youth work has the capacity to significantly increase positive outcomes and improve the quality of life for young LGBTQI+ people in rural areas of Ireland, by providing supports, connections, safety and community links.

Inputs:

- Youth workers.
- Young LGBTQI+ people.
- Time and space.
- Financial resources to provide groups and spaces.
- Training and development.

Activities:

- Group Work.
- One-to-One Sessions.
- Pride and other events.
- Arts, crafts & youth work activities.
- Information & capacity building
- Campaigning and Advocacy.

Mechanisms of Change:

- Model of Practice.
- Theory of Change.
- Communities of Practice.
- Advocacy campaigns
- Young people's voices

Short Term Outcomes:

- Young LGBTQI+ people can connect with other peers in their area.
- Young LGBTQI+ people know and feel safe and supported.
- Awareness of barriers to young LGBTQI+ people attending youth services is understood.
- Community of Practice for practitioners is developed and supports youth work practice.

Medium Term Outcomes:

- Young LGBTQI+ people have safe spaces where they can gather and be themselves.
- There is enhanced visibility of LGBTQI+ youth services in rural Ireland.
- Centralised resources and training to build capacity of LGBTQI+ youth workers are provided.
- Online supports are developed and provided for young LGBTQI+ people in rural Ireland.
- Young LGBTQI+ people have increased knowledge of LGBTQI+ culture, community and history.

Long Term Outcomes:

- Young LGBTQI+ people feel increasingly safe and supported in their communities.
- There is well-funded, consistent and long-term LGBTQI+ youth work that can be relied on by young LGBTQI+ people.
- Barriers for young LGBTQI+ people attending youth services are reduced.
- Rural Ireland is a safer place for young LGBTQI+ young to grow up in.



Creating your own Proud Space

Here are some suggestions youth workers and young LGBTQI+ people say can and do contribute to creating safe, inclusive and proud spaces.

<i>Actions</i>	✓
There is visual representation that your space is safe and proud, examples given are rainbow flags, posters etc.	
Staff, volunteers and young people check their unconscious bias.	
Staff and volunteers have a general understanding of LGBTQI+ history, issues, topics, or have a willingness to learn more.	
The use of pronouns is common practice, used and welcomed in your youth service.	
Diversity in all forms is welcomed, accepted, embraced and celebrated in your youth service.	
LGBTQI+ events are celebrated in conjunction with the young people.	
Confidentiality in relation to a young person's sexual or gender identity is treated with the utmost importance.	
Efforts are made to provide transport so young LGBTQI+ people can get to your group.	
Your youth service offers one-to-one meetings for young LGBTQI+ people prior to them joining a group.	
Your youth service design and plan activities with the group's input and say.	
Your youth service provides one-to-one slots available to support young LGBTQI+ people throughout the year.	
Your youth service provides information, literature, flyers on rights and sign-posting to other services if and when needed.	
Your youth service provide leadership skills for young LGBTQI+ people.	

Proud Spaces Survey Analysis

120 young LGBTQI+ people from member youth services around the country completed this survey aiming to find out their experiences, what a proud space is for them and how we can improve and equip member youth services to provide proud spaces.

Geography of participants

Young people are represented in this research from services in the following counties:



When asked what the barriers are for rural LGBTQI+ young people attending LGBTQI+ youth groups, the top three issues identified were:

1. Transport
2. Unsupportive Family
3. Not enough information about groups

Respondents were then asked for ideas on how we can break down these barriers:

1. Buses offered to LGBTQI+ groups from rural areas
2. Advertising of groups more widely
3. Having more LGBTQI+ groups available

Difficulties in being LGBTQI+ in rural Ireland:

The four main themes in response to this question were:

1. Homophobia
2. Safety
3. Lack of support or safe spaces nearby
4. Bullying

Positives to being LGBTQI+ in rural Ireland:

Responses to this question were mixed and no clear themes were identified. Answers were wide ranging and included:

- Unsure
- Youth Groups
- Sense of Community
- Stronger bonds with LGBTQI+ people in the area
- More rural prides happening
- Getting to live in more scenic locations

Describe your dream Proud Space:

Very cozy room, with like a mystical forest vibe to it. A small bar area to make hot drinks whether that be tea, coffee or hot chocolate. And some small snacks to nibble on. Plenty of comfy seats to sit and chat. Activities and ideas on a board. And some small garland with some of the LGBTQI+ flags hanging around.

A place where I can be myself

My dream proud space is somewhere where everyone is free and safe to be themselves. Somewhere where everybody is welcome and no one is judged no matter what. Where everyone can be themselves without feeling anxious or afraid. Literally any accessible space with transport and support. Somewhere you can be fully yourself.



“ My proud space would be a place where I could exist without judgement, and I wouldn't have to pretend to be something or someone I'm not.

I could be me, and that'd be enough lots of diversity, easy access by transport. A space with equal amounts of queer people as trans people, dedicated activities and opens 2 days a week.

”

“ A place I could attend without being outed. ”

“ A place were you can feel safe to talk about the person you are and want to become. ”



What in your LGBTQI+ youth group makes it feel like a Proud Space?

- The people.
- Support from youth workers.
- Respect and used of pronouns.
- Pride flags.
- Open mindedness.
- Inclusivity.
- Peers.

What does your youth service do to make you feel safe?

- Welcoming space.
- No discrimination tolerated.
- Everyone is respectful
- Closed groups.
- Youth workers advice and guidance.
- Feeling safe to be yourself.
- Confidential.
- Having visible pride flags and posters.
- No judgement.



What would you like to see covered in your LGBTQI+ youth group

LGBTQI+
History

29%

Mental Health
Workshops

26%

Coming out
workshops

14%

LGBTQI+
Sexual Health

24%

Other

7%

What would you like workers to know so they can best support LGBTQI+ young people?

Answers included (in no particular order)

- Everyone is different.
- That some people may not be out.
- Education on the intersectionality of neurodivergence, disability and LGBTQI+ people.
- LGBTQI+ history.
- Use pronouns.



What have you gained from being part of an LGBTQI+ Youth Group?

Connection to LGBTQI+ peers

38%

Feelings of Safety

15%

LGBTQI+ Awareness

7%

Increased Social Inclusion

5%

Increased Social Skills

13%

Advocacy Skills

5%

Awareness of Local and National Supports

4%

Increased Confidence

7%

Other

6%



Proud Spaces in Ireland

Youth Work Ireland Member Services LGBTQI+ Groups

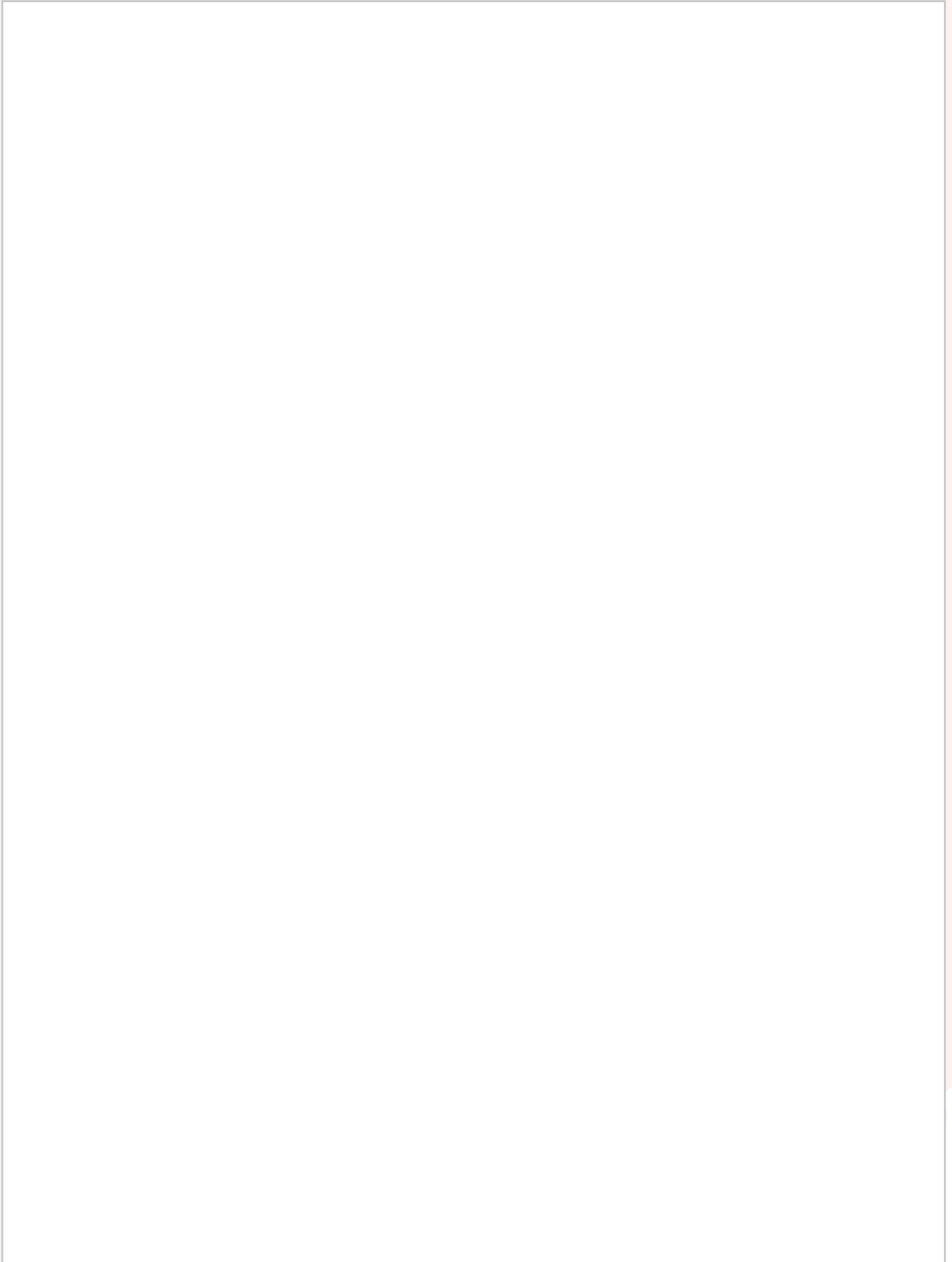


Youth Work Ireland Member Youth Services

- Youth Work Ireland Cavan/Monaghan
- Youth Work Ireland Galway
- Youth Work Ireland Laois
- Youth Work Ireland Louth
- Youth Work Ireland Meath
- Youth Work Ireland Midlands
- Youth Work Ireland North Connaught
- Youth Work Ireland Tipperary
- Canal Communities Regional Youth Service
- Carlow Regional Youth Service
- CDYS Youth Work Ireland
- Clare Youth Service
- County Longford Youth Services
- Donegal Youth Service
- FDYS
- In Sync Youth and Family Services
- KDYS
- Limerick Youth Service
- Ossory Youth
- Waterford & South Tipperary Community Youth Service

Notes





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