



Youth Work Ireland

## *Statement of Strategy Submission*

### *The Department of Rural and Community Development*

Youth Work Ireland is a Federation of 20 Member Youth Services and a National Office who work together to support, empower, inspire and educate young people through the delivery of best practice youth work services. Our Vision is an Ireland of equality, access and participation for all young people. We are an inclusive and member-centred organisation. Our work is in service to our membership as they in turn work to develop the potential of young people and strengthen communities in Ireland.

Our 20 Member Youth Services work in practically all rural communities in Ireland and are leaders in rural youth work. They service some of the most rural and isolated communities and engage with over 7,000 volunteers. With limited time and resources, we are emphasising two key issues for the Department in its statement of strategy

- 1 The need for enhanced support and engagement with youth work services working in rural areas

Youth Services have a unique reach and role in rural communities. In many isolated villages they can be one of the few out of school services that young people can engage with. Being part of a national organisation assists local youth services to engage with these communities. There is tremendous scope for the Department to enhance its work with this sector in a wide range of areas and we wish to encourage this.

Previous strategies have emphasised the need to engage with young people in decision making directly and we wholeheartedly support this. The next strategy should also set out to engage with local youth services who provide the backbone of this support and can engage in a flexible way with funding, facilities and direct provision of services.

While all those active in youth work recognise the need for charity regulation and despite the 2024 Act there is a greater need to ease the regulatory burden on very small local youth clubs and ensure flexibility with the regulator in preserving these key pillars of the rural community by not deterring local volunteers through over regulation.

- The need for a dedicated strategy for quality built facilities for young people in Ireland

We believe there is a need and considerable scope to develop quality built facilities for young people around the country particularly in the small towns that serve rural Ireland. We have seen excellent good practice and collaboration locally, for example in Ballinamore and parts of Waterford in our own organisation that have worked with a variety of local funders including LEADER, Local Authorities, the OPW and others to progress this. We believe the Department in conjunction with others can promote this model around the country with its bottom-up community focused orientation.

We are examining the current types and form of provision of built youth facilities in Ireland in close co-operation with Youth Work Ireland members and others in the broader youth sector. As a result of the this we will identify models of provision covering a broad range of issues like the different types of premises and buildings, availability to the public, shared or youth only facilities, role of other actors or partners.

Similarly, this work will identify the precise ownership of facilities and the role of the youth sector and young people in their ownership and management. Also freehold, trusts, long lease or other forms of ownership or control including mortgage and funders.

We would like to examine in light of the above the potential different funding models and sources to quality funding for partnerships, refurbishments, long leases, sub-letting, social enterprises, disposals, community gain, and partnering with developers. We are open to further discussions with the Department and others in this area.