

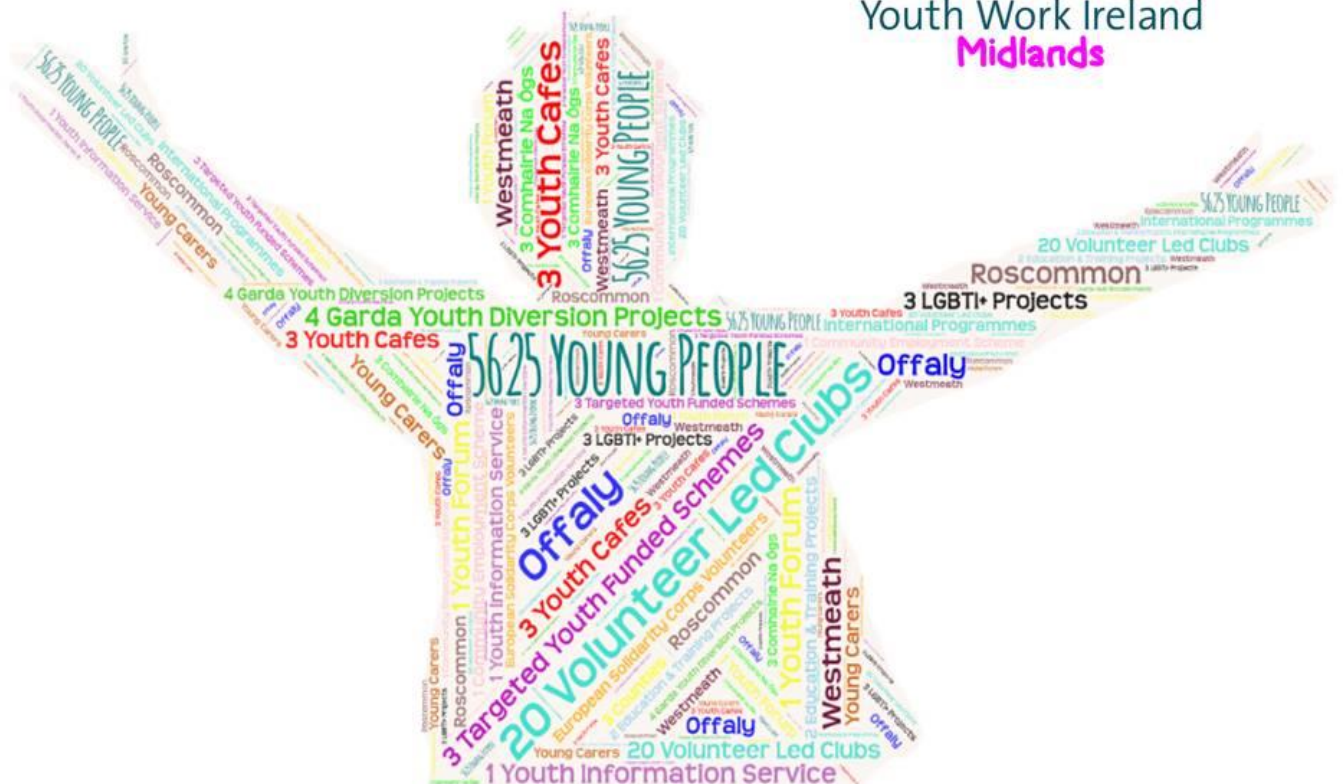


2020 - 2024



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Strategic Plan 2020 - 2024

Our Past, Present and Future

As we present our 6th Strategic Development Plan since formal incorporation as a legal entity in 1998, we are full of pride after reflecting on all we have accomplished in that time. Not discounting all the wonderful work that was initiated since the 1960s, when the organisation started as a Voluntary Organisation without Company Status and known as MRYS (Midlands Regional Youth Service).

At the end of the 1980s, the first funded youth worker was employed in the region. The first of the youth community projects were established in Athlone and Tullamore in 1988, and by 1995 MRYS Ltd was fully established.

We became incorporated as a legal entity in 1998, transforming from a volunteer led organisation with a remit to train other volunteers to support rural youth clubs to a large volunteer led Regional Service.

Rebranding as Youth Work Ireland Midlands in 2015 we employ a team of professional Youth Workers and others, to deliver funded projects across the region and maintain the supports to volunteer led youth clubs, keeping young people at the centre of our growth and development.

The needs of these young people and their families, coupled with our focus on providing youth led services, has been our greatest strength. Reflecting on our values in executing a new Strategic Plan has reinforced our vision and mission

to ensure that we can work with and for young people in Offaly, Roscommon and Westmeath.

We are mindful of the environment and policy context surrounding youth work in Ireland. Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures, the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, the National Youth Strategy (2015), Youth Justice Strategy and other key Policies keep our focus firmly on delivery of youth work in our organisation.

We have an opportunity now to showcase and promote the reach, variety, and impact of our work, given the emphasis on value for money, evidence based practice and outcomes based work. Considering this, we are still very aware of the glaring issues that face our young people and their communities. We will be striving to maintain our presence in communities to respond to emerging and recurring needs in the areas of Youth Unemployment, Mental Health, Substance Misuse, Educational Disadvantage and Poverty among many others.

We took the opportunity in developing this plan to reflect on how far we have come to steer our way forward. Our thanks to everyone across the region who took time to contribute to this Strategic Plan. Your thoughts, insights and experience keep us on track.

Strategic Plan Context

Youth Work Ireland Midlands follows a rolling planning strategy model, allowing us to be flexible and responsive to the dynamic environment in which we operate, and will incorporate a review and renew process through our Quality Management Systems.

The 2015 – 2018 Strategy provided an update on the revision and development of our strategic goals, as well as an opportunity to report on progress made against the delivery of our strategic goals and targets. A fundamental periodic review was conducted in 2019 and a new Strategic Plan is developed for the period 2020 – 2024

Our Mission

“Working with young people, for young people in Offaly, Roscommon and Westmeath”

Our mission statement outlines in a succinct way the values that motivate staff and volunteers of Youth Work Ireland Midlands to work with and for young people in our region. We aim to work towards this mission by using quality youth work methodologies to provide services to young people in our communities through universal & targeted youth work practice. Partnership and relationships are our strengths which enable us to be flexible and engaged to continue to meet the needs of young people.

Our Vision

The Vision of Youth Work Ireland Midlands encourages young people to reach their full potential, where they are empowered to take responsibility for their own actions and becoming positive, active members of their communities.

Our Values

“A return to core values does not have to limit our service delivery but rather anchor us in what we do, allowing us to stand in strength”



Our values are embedded in our priorities, all of which are realised through Relationships, Quality Youth Work Practice and People.

Our Practice

The policies within Youth Work Ireland Midlands reflect the core values of Youth Work.

Our Spaces & Environment

Youth Work Ireland Midlands values safe spaces which create a welcoming, warm, youth friendly environment for all involved. We endeavour to create suitable spaces for our young people where they have ownership and are nurtured to learn and grow supported by trusted adults.

Our Young People

We aim to empower young people from diverse backgrounds to reach their potential through the development of positive and trusting relationships. Relationship building is a core tenet of our work to enable young people to have a voice and take ownership of their futures

Our Youth Workers – paid & unpaid

Our Youth Workers are positive role models for young people. To enable our youth worker team to build effective relationships, they actively listen to the needs of young people and are ready to respond. They are flexible in approach and determined to achieve the best outcomes for young people.



STRATEGIC PLAN

2020 - 2024

Our Priorities

We have published our Strategic Plan for the five years 2020 to 2024 setting out our priorities as follows:

Youth Work Practice: We will continue to ensure our work is young person-centred, recognising the rights of young people and holding as central their active and voluntary participation. We ensure that the integrated service of Youth Work Ireland Midlands is accessible to all young people.

Objectives

- To actively encourage young people to design and implement programmes relevant to themselves, supporting them to avail of opportunities and programmes which enhance self-development and to empower them to become authors of their own lives with the support of staff and volunteers.
- To review and update the Youth Work Practice Handbook to include new and innovative youth work practices
- To ensure young people are not socially isolated because of their geographic location.
- To deliver tailor made programmes to the needs of young people identified through needs analysis with young people and stakeholders
- To provide young people with opportunities to participate in youth work activities locally, nationally and internationally.
- To ensure that there are dedicated youth friendly spaces which are safe, welcoming and designed by young people
- To keep the focus on quality youth work practice as part of our professional remit.

We will do this by ensuring we are suitably skilled and up to date with current trends, local issues and needs of our young people, observing the service requirements of our funders and organisations policy.

Actions

- Review and update the Youth Work Practice Handbook to include new practices in Youth Work Delivery during 2021 for ratification by the Board by Q4.
- Offer the opportunity for young people, volunteers and staff to participate in at least 5 international activities during the lifetime of the plan, including, for example, training, ESC, youth exchange, job shadowing, digital opportunities.
- Provide opportunities for young people to participate in local, regional and national events and competitions e.g. annual Christmas / Easter / Halloween Competitions, Youth Wave, Dublin Pride Festival, Consensus Conference, Celebration of Youth Work event, Youth Forum Events & Competitions, IYMA's.
- Ensure the organisation is responsive and engaged with new opportunities and initiatives to improve programme offer including, for example, the establishment of 4 new Volunteer Led Youth Clubs, 7 new STEAM projects, 2 new Sports projects, Irish Youth Music Awards (annually) 2 new International opportunities.
- Ensure that Reflective Practice is embedded into the organisation. Each project / geographical area participates in a minimum of 2 Reflective Practice sessions per year.
- To continue to secure funding so that young people have access to all the resources that they need to participate in Youth Work activity e.g. transport, accessibility.
- Provide opportunities for staff and volunteers to upskill with a focus on continuous professional development in support of best practice, including annual Volunteer refresher training, twice annual in-house staff training, ongoing upskilling opportunities provided to staff and volunteers through NYCI, Youth Work Ireland, Techspace Digital Skills, Leargas workshops, LGBTI+ training, etc.
- Ensure the training calendar for Community Employment participants reflects the needs of the organisation in youth work practice and the employment and labour market trends to ensure progression opportunities.
- Review and update the organisations Training Policy during 2021 for ratification by the Board in Q4.

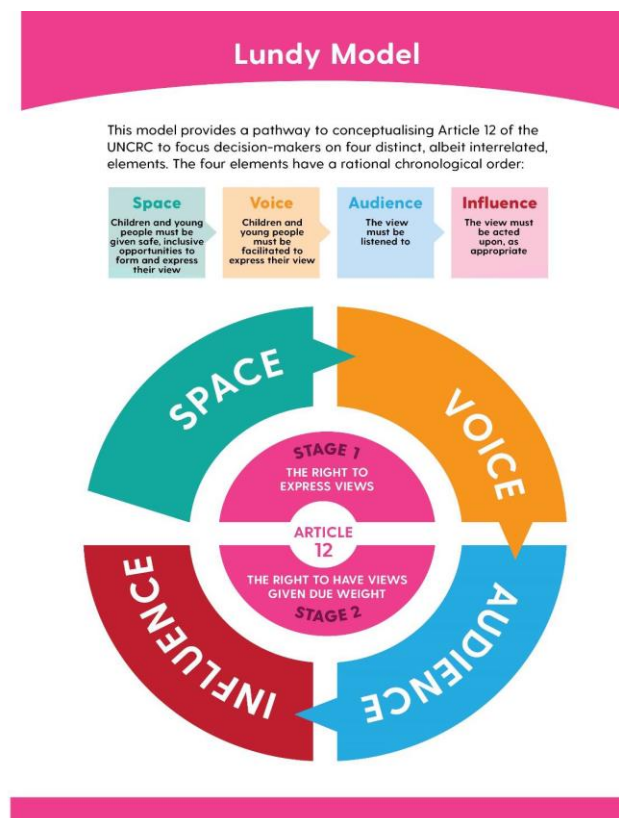
- To compete for new projects when and if they arise across the region in support of quality provision to young people outside our current geographical areas.
- To actively source additional annual funding to ensure young people have the resources they need to ensure participation e.g. dormant accounts, LGBTI+ Youth Strategy, CYPSC Seed Funding, DCYA capital grants, HSE Health Promotion grants, Healthy Ireland grants.

Youth Participation: Youth Work Ireland Midlands defines Youth Participation as a partnership between young people and adults which takes place in a safe and inclusive space, recognising and nurturing the strengths, interests and abilities of young people through the provision of real opportunities for young people to become involved in decisions that affect them.

We utilise and recognise a number of Policies and participation models of best practice including

- The Lundy Model (pictured)
- The National Implementation Framework for Child and Youth Participation,
- The National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making (2015 - 2020),
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

‘children and young people have the right to a voice in decisions about their individual and collective everyday lives.’



Objective

- To continue to develop democratic and inclusive structures which enable young people to participate within the organisation while encouraging involvement in the movement towards social change.
- To continue to support and build the Regional Youth Forum with a target to enable young people to be represented on the Board of Trustees in Youth Work Ireland Midlands
- To enable the voices of young people to be heard at local, regional and national level
- To secure financial resources to ensure youth participation within Youth Work Ireland Midlands
- To continue to prioritise youth participation in the decision-making processes in our practice, by increasing the voice and governance role of young people.

We will do this by ensuring our service is always youth led and recognises the rights of young people to influence decisions that impact them at all levels of the organisation.

Actions:

- Provide a minimum of 2 Youth Workers to support the Youth Forum to meet a minimum of 4 times per year to plan, develop, deliver and evaluate an annual workplan.
- Expand the Youth Forum membership to ensure all strands of the organisation are represented by Q2 2021.
- Provide financial support to the Youth Forum on an annual basis to develop and deliver 2 annual regional Youth Events based on an agreed workplan.
- Over the life of the Strategic Plan, to support at least two young people over 18 years and under 25 years to become Trustees of the organisation, including the provision of leadership, communication, and governance training.
- To support young people actively engaged with the Regional Youth Forum to seek to be part of the National Youth Advisory Group to help influence decision making in Youth Work Ireland.
- Utilising existing consultation methodologies and young people's planning and evaluation, ensure young people across all strands of the

organisation continue to be consulted on strategic priorities, policy development, and programme delivery.

- A panel of young people from across the region will be identified for inclusion on a recruitment interview panel by end of Q4 2020, all members of the panel will receive training to fulfil the role of interviewer with young people represented on all interview panels from Q2 2021.
- Young people will participate in the annual Youth Work Ireland Consensus process and attend the Consensus Conference.

Health Promotion & Wellbeing: We will ensure and promote the safety, health, and well-being of young people, volunteers and staff through best practice and a high standard of quality in all aspects of service delivery in Youth Work Ireland Midlands.

Objectives

- To continue to implement a Health Promotion Strategy to ensure young people are active and healthy in all areas of Health and Wellbeing.
- Young people have an awareness of what it means to be physically healthy.
- Young people are equipped with knowledge pertaining to sustaining positive mental health.
- Young people are engaged in positive physical & mental health supporting activity.
- Young people are informed about the importance of positive sexual health, relationships, and consent.
- Young people are informed about the negative implications of substance misuse and available supports.
- To provide space for volunteers and staff to reflect on their practice, provide space for shared learning, training and support.

We will do this by continuing the highest standards of Health Promotion through engagement of young people, volunteers and staff, including planning, development, and implementation of programmes specific to their needs.

Actions:

- Continue to develop the Health Promotion Library of resources within the organisation incorporating new best practice resources e.g. Hub na nOg,

implement the new National Implementation Framework for Child and Youth Participation, the updated Lundy Model.

- Participate in re-assessment for the NYCI Gold Health Quality Mark within the required 3 year cycle (2022).
- Provide opportunities for young people to participate in local, regional and national, activities and programmes which promote positive physical and mental health e.g. Here4U, Be Well, Gaisce, GAA, FAI & IRFU programmes, Summer Programmes, Challenge programme, Pride, Youth Wave, on an ongoing basis.

Governance & Youth Work Environment: We will be an organisation of excellence in governance which promotes, builds, and maintains quality youth work practice.

Objectives

- To be open and responsive to change, ready for development, keeping sight of the Youth Work Sector and ensuring full compliance with all legislative requirements inclusive of CRO, CRA, Revenue & Funders.
- To continue to deliver a high level of quality standards in all areas of youth work practice and governance.
- To continue to be an organisation that models Best Practice
- Promote the development of Strategic Alliances and Networks
- Engagement with QQI, NQSF, YHQM processes.

We will ensure that young people are at the centre of everything we do in our decisions, planning, delivery, and practice. The continuous development of our Board of Trustees, staff and volunteers will continue and adapt as the needs of our young people and communities develop.

We will secure facilities, spaces, funding, and resources in a compliant and transparent fashion to ensure that we are adhering to best practice in governance. We will ensure our Board of Trustees have the information, skills and competencies to meet their legal responsibilities.

Actions:

- The Board of Trustees will meet at least 8 times per year including face to face and virtual meetings.

- The Finance & General Purposes Sub-group will meet 8 times per year in advance of the Board meeting. The Terms of Reference for the Finance & General Purposes Subgroup will be reviewed and updated for ratification by the Board in Q2 2021.
- Additional subgroup structures will be set up as required with Terms of Reference.
- The Board of Trustees will participate in one development / training event per year.
- All required governance and compliance deadlines will be met on an annual basis.
- The Board and the organisation will continue to participate in Quality Standards Processes including but not limited to the National Quality Standards Framework (NQS), the Volunteer Led Youth Clubs NQS, the Youth Health Quality Mark, QQI Quality Assurance – all 3 year cycles, CRA Code of Governance compliance in 2020 with annual reporting from 2021 onwards.

Informal & Non-formal Education: We aim to further develop and streamline responses to the needs of the development and education of all people in our organisation

Objective

- To provide a sustainable quality education model which can meet the learning needs of our young people, adult learners, and communities in an inclusive way
- Secure partnerships with allied organisations to enhance opportunities for young people, volunteers, and staff
- Creation of a suite of accredited and non-accredited courses relevant to the progressive development of our learners through our Education & Training Service.
- Reengagement of QQI Quality Assurance Standards
- Development of bespoke training programmes for the Youth Work sector
- Establish progression pathways with clear goals and objectives for young people, staff, and other learners' development across all projects in Youth Work Ireland Midlands.

We will do this by ensuring we maintain the highest standard in quality assurance. We will be responsive to emerging trends with the development of bespoke training responses.

Actions:

- Deliver QQI accredited and non-accredited training to 200 young people and 250 adult learners across the region during the life of the Strategic Plan.
- Produce a Quality Assurance Manual to document our policies and procedures to ensure full engagement with the Quality Assurance process to retain our QQI Quality Assurance Standard, reengagement application to be submitted to QQI by end of 2020 with a timetable of engagement and panel visitation in Q1 2021.
- To register and achieve ITEC accreditation as a Training Centre providing Beauty and Nail Technology Programmes, Q4 2021.
- All QQI programmes will be revalidated within a five year cycle.
- Identify and target potential funding opportunities to ensure the sustainability of our Education & Training Service.
- Continue to develop contacts and working relationships with external education and training providers to ensure smooth transition pathways for our learners to further education & training including ETB's, Institutes of Technology, Universities, Community Providers.
- To monitor local employment trends and labour market demands and respond with relevant training & upskill opportunities for young people and adult learners.
- Continue to develop and deliver, on an ongoing and needs basis, bespoke developmental programmes (accredited and non-accredited) in areas of health & wellbeing including but not limited to, youth work, physical health, sexual health, sexual identity, relationships & consent, substance misuse, youth leadership, utilising evidence informed and evidence based methodologies.

Partnership & Networking - Youth Work Ireland Midlands works alongside other statutory and voluntary agencies to provide the highest standard of provision to young people through an integrated service. Partnerships provide an opportunity for sharing resources, referral pathways, support, and expertise, promoting a high quality of service provision and minimising duplication.

Actions:

- To provide clear referral pathways for young people to external supports, training and services. Referral template for external referrals to be developed as part of the organisational suite of documents by Q2 2021.
- Continue to develop contacts and working relationships with external education and training providers to ensure smooth transition pathways for our learners to further education & training including ETB's, Institutes of Technology, Universities, Community Providers.
- To continue to engage with Development Officers from national organisations in support of provision for young people e.g. GAA, FAI & IRFU, Gaisce, Techspace, SpunOut, BeLonGTo.
- To continue to support external agencies working in the interests of young people engaged in our integrated youth service e.g. School Completion, EWO's, Meitheal, FRC's, An Garda Siochana, Schools, ETB's, etc. by participating on working groups & committees, making 4 additional staff available to be trained as Meitheal practitioners, during the lifetime of the Plan.

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