

# Annual Report



Youth Work Ireland  
Midlands

# 2019

Welcome to our 2019 Annual Report.

Another year has come and gone, and it has been a pleasure to serve you as Chairperson for a second term. While normally our AGM takes the form of a celebratory gathering of clubs and projects showcasing our success stories from the previous 12 months, this virtual AGM is very different and certainly a first for Youth Work Ireland Midlands.

I want to begin by thanking the Board of Directors, the Management Team, and staff of the organisation for your continued hard work and commitment over the past year. The seemingly ever changing environment that we work in makes our jobs even more difficult and complex. I particularly want to acknowledge the patience and perseverance of our staff team who seem to thrive when presented with new challenges. While continual change within the sector is inevitable, the Board and Management Team will continue to ensure that you each have the tools and supports you need to perform your duties to the highest standard.

I would also like to express my gratitude towards the many volunteers in our organisation. Volunteerism is at the core of what we do, in fact our volunteer led youth clubs are the foundation on which this organisation was built. So from our Board of Directors who share their knowledge, expertise and experience to ensure strong corporate governance, to our volunteer club leaders who enhance the lives of young people in their local communities thank you for giving so generously of your time.

I wish also to thank our funders without whom much of our work would not be possible. I would like to thank The Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Irish Youth Justice Service (DJE), Longford Westmeath ETB, and Laois Offaly ETB. I would also like to express my gratitude to Youth Work Ireland for their unwavering support and guidance throughout the year.

As I reflect on 2019, I realise the huge breadth of work the organisation is involved in and the many positive developments that have been made. One highlight from the year was the hugely successful Road Safety Event organised by Westmeath Comhairle na nÓg. Over 470 young people, 60 adults and 17 services attended the event and enjoyed a day of learning about road safety. Well done to the young people involved in organising the event and to Edweena Farrell and Annette Barr-Jordan for their work behind the scenes. Another major achievement was the National Lottery Youth Award scooped by Youth Work Ireland Midland's YoYo Youth Café. The award was presented to the Youth Café at the gala National Lottery Good Causes Awards Ceremony for the tremendous work the project does through the Youth Café and Music Jam project. Congratulations to the project team and the young people on this prestigious award.

The ways in which we engage with young people has diversified over the past few years, and we are becoming increasingly more dependent on technology in youth work. Youth Work Ireland Midlands has been ahead of this trend. Led by our Service Manager, Tracey Moore, the TechSpace programme was rolled out across the organisation. Following the successful integration of STEAM education among our staff and young people Tracey claimed the ESB

TechSpace Educator of the Year 2019 accolade at the ESB Creative Tech Fest event. We are immensely proud of Tracey and delighted to have her on our Management Team.

Further achievements of Youth Work Ireland Midlands feature throughout this report and it is through our achievements that we highlight our belief in the young people of the Midlands and our commitment to delivering quality youth led programmes and activities across the region.

I have no doubt that Youth Work Ireland Midlands will continue to prosper in the year ahead as we continue respond to the emerging needs of the young people we support.



Padraig McGrath  
Chairperson

## Athlone Youth Information Service

2019 was a great year for Youth Information. We worked with 3,240 young people and adults (parents and people working with young people) across the County of Westmeath. We also worked with over 25 services who work directly with young people, in many different ways. More schools and clubs than ever participated in youth led, needs based programmes, again with the Internet Awareness Programme “Mind UR Selfie” topping the polls in demand. Mind UR Selfie, is an Internet Awareness programme that is ever changing, and is continually updating and moving with the internet trends set by young people and influencers. It is delivered in an interactive way that educates young people on the risks and rewards of their internet behaviour and activities. 2019 was the first time that we delivered the programme (with great success) to under 10’s as their internet activity is increased to a similar pace of teenagers. It was great learning, great fun and is creating high demand.



10 of these programmes were delivered in a new partnership with An Garda Síochána. A great step forward for 2019, for staff, was the year where great relationships with other services, schools and clubs were formed, so much so, that 2020 programmes are booking out fast, from Mind UR Selfie to S.O.S (Stepping over to Secondary).



A highlight of working in partnership would come in the form of a Road Safety Event. On May 10<sup>th</sup> 2019, this was a huge collaboration with Youth Information, Westmeath Comhairle na nÓg, Westmeath County Council, An Garda Síochána as well as 20 other services, who came together and hosted a Road Safety event. Over 470 young people and adults attended an interactive, educational day to highlight, educate and increase visibility in the area of making road use, for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers, safe for all.

It was a huge success and plans are already in motion to recreate this event in 2020.

All in all, the positivity of 2019 is heightening our ambitions for 2020. We look forward to working with many more young people in 2020 and waiting to see what happens within the service.

### **Westmeath Comhairle na nÓg**

2019 was a fantastic year for Westmeath Comhairle na nÓg. The activity levels were at an all-time high, and we were working with numerous services and organisations.

The highlight of our year was most definitely our highly successful Road Safety Event and our day in Dáil Eireann to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Dáil.

Road Safety Event: Friday Morning, 10<sup>th</sup> May 2019, Athlone Town Football Stadium became a hive of activity, Gardaí, Ambulance, Fire trucks, sirens, noise, but for all the right reasons.

30 young people from all over Westmeath are part of a youth council, Westmeath Comhairle na nÓg, and as a direct result from consultations with 300 young people attending their AGM in October 2018, from all corners of the county, identified and prioritised Road safety as an issue they wanted to improve for everyone in their area.

So the result of 5 months of long planning became a fantastic event on a sunny Friday, when over 470 young people, 60 adults and 17 services enjoyed a day of learning, engaging, and having fun, all with the aim to promote road safety.

The morning started in the sun, and first port of call for the participants was a welcome from Westmeath County Council Comhairle na nÓg manager Annette Barr Jordan who invited the young people to listen to the valued speakers. Comhairle's very own Ava Kelly (Our Ladys's Bower) from Athlone was the MC for the day, introduced her colleague Kasey Mc Cormack (Athlone), who spoke on behalf of Westmeath Comhairle na nÓg about how the event came about. Eoin Sheehan, surgeon in Midlands Regional Hospital Tullamore to address the crowd. He spoke so well, in the area of what trauma's he and his team deal with as a results of road traffic collisions.

Peter Jones, State Solicitor, had everyone's attention as he enlightened us all about driving/road offences and the law.





Leo Lieghio then spoke about the impact of losing his beautiful daughter Marsia due to a drunk drinker in 2005.

Edweena Farrell, Youth Work Ireland Midlands, and Annette Barr Jordan brought this part of the event to a close with a prize giving ceremony, Matthew Fallon (Marist College Athlone) was the happy winner of 12 Driving Lessons, with 4 other prizes of 'One 4 All' vouchers.



Participants were encouraged to take part in all the activities and talk to the services providers who took part on the day.

The evaluations were all positive, young people stated that they really enjoyed their day, and most importantly, learned a lot about road safety. They left happy and content, with lots to reflect on as they made their journey home.

**Our message from 2019 into 2020 is as follows for road users:**

**Stay alert, stay safe and stay alive.**

**Dáil Eireann** – In November 2019, 5 members of Westmeath Comhairle na nÓg attended their Dáil na nÓg, and to their pleasure and delight, it was held in Dáil Eireann. This was extra



special for our history buffs in the group. It was a very special occasion for them to be seated in the Dáil, have their voice heard and the voices of young people across Westmeath heard.

2020 has a lot to live up to, and the theme they will carry into their work plan is the environment.

## Mullingar Youth Project

Mullingar Youth Project has celebrated another busy year with lots of new programmes and activities. Mullingar Youth Project worked directly with 400+ young people across the greater Mullingar areas of Grange, Dalton Park, Rathin, Ennell Court and Michaels Park during 2019 and provide new challenges to each young person participating, while making it an enjoyable experience for all.

### Highlights

In 2019, a major achievement for MYP was securing a Youth Employability Initiative in partnership with Mullingar EYE Garda Youth Diversion Programme & Mullingar School Completion. The programme Building My Future, was funded by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, for NEETS young people aged 16 to 25 years providing them with employment prospects and meaningful training and employment opportunities.



This project ran for a 32-week period and 28 young people completed the programme engaging in five learning pillars – Wellness, Horticulture, Practical Skills, Signposting and Digital Learning. The programme give the participants the opportunity to develop soft skills, practical skills and further training and

employment opportunities.

The programme was widely successful on all pillars and has led to the development of a new social enterprise and employability programme in Mullingar Youth Project called Building Skills which is attracting and progressing the most distant young people using an interagency, holistic youth health approach.

Summer 2019 seen 192 young people across our target areas engage in an array of activities, with our annual Traveller pride event attracting many generations to our centre in Grange where the Navan Traveller movement joined us with traditional wagons, tents, tinsmiths, story tellers and the young people along sided the Traveller workers launched the first of its kind can't Traveller language book for young people.





Art is always a favourite among our young people and this year was no exception with the support of our volunteer artist Jason, our Pretty chicks group hosted their own Art Exhibition in the atrium of Westmeath County council, The exhibition culminated with a gala open evening that seen a massive turn out of agencies, parents and even our local “Live In Mullingar” veteran Ray Dolan acted as commentator and kept everyone entertained and ensured our young artists got due credit by assisting them great their first live podcast on the night.

Our Danger Divas, senior girls group organised a “Give Back” programme during December, they spent three days collecting food in our local Tesco which they gave to our local community policing unit to be giving to older people in need over Christmas time.



## ALF Project

2019 was a busy year for the young people and youth workers of the ALF Project. The work of the year included Youth groups, Individual Work, Educational Programmes, Us2U Programme and Detached Youth Work

The highlight of the year was the move into new premises in Inis Oir, Athlone. Youth Participation was to the fore as young people had the opportunity to be involved in the design and decoration of the Youth Space. Their excellent work has led to a beautiful well-resourced Youth Space which is used by many youth groups in Athlone.

**The Get Back Programme** continued during the year with a number of new modules introduced. 2019. Young people completed QQI Level 4 in Maths, Communications, Information Technology, Team Working, Personal Effectiveness and Health Related Fitness.





Other achievements by young people in 2019, were the **Gaisce Bronze Award and Youth Leadership Training**.

STEM Programmes and Activities were very popular with young people. Young people had the opportunity to make speakers, robots, cars and aeroplanes. Support towards the equipment needed for this programme was received from NYCI and Westmeath Co. Council. Other innovative programmes that young people took part in were a Bike Programme where young people repaired and renovated old bicycles and a Photography Programme.

Summer Programme, as always, was a very busy time for the young people. Many of the ALF Project Participants took part in the Challenge Programme which was facilitated in partnership

with AYCP. Activities on the Challenge Programme in 2019 were teambuilding and obstacle challenge, a Slieve Bloom Hike, Raft Building, Kayaking, Survival Skills and Go Karting. Other activities included Pitch and Putt, Bay Sports and Boat Fishing.

Trips as usual were a highlight for the young people. In 2019, the particular favourite trips planned, organised and participated in by young people included a day trip to the Aran Islands, Farmaphobia, Zip-It and Quad-biking.

Young people were represented at the Youth Wave organised by Youth Work Ireland which took place at Athlone IT and they took part in Youth Work Ireland Week activities where they highlighted the positive outcomes that they achieved from Youth Work.



Work with the Gardai ensured that there continued to be positive relationships between young people and the Gardai. A highlight of this work was the Glow In the Dark indoor football event which was organised by the Community Gardai and the FAI.



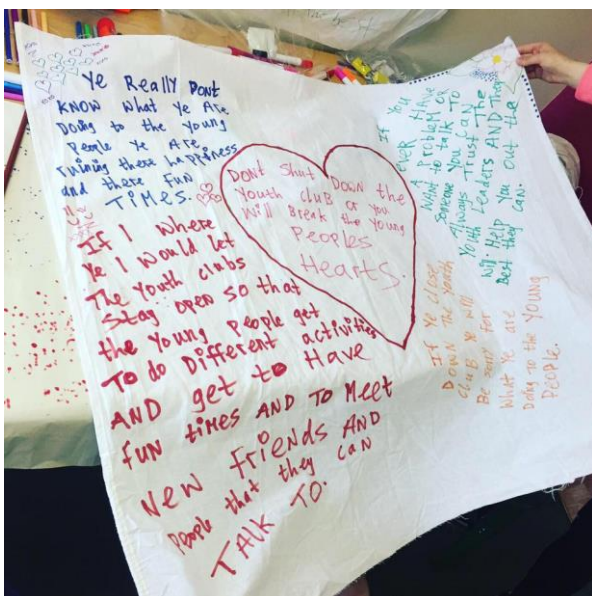
## Roscommon Youth Project

The project's base in D'Gaff Castlrea was the central county hub for this great project, which supported groups and clubs in Roscommon town, Ballaghaderreen, Frenchpark, Dysart, Monksland, and Ballygar / Ballyforan. From Beach Party Discos to Community Concerts in Ballygar, Actionbound (Outdoor) Treasure Hunts and Sport / Spraoi activities in Castlrea, working with Syrian, Traveller and other minority groups across the county, every day was packed with fun, laughter and learning.

Camping Trips in Lough Key, Late night orienteering, Dodgeball and Discos, Castlrea had their Drop Ins, LGBTI Group, attended the IYMAS with their Music Jam group also the NYCI Youth Work Showcase event in the Mansion House was attended by young people from the project.



Young people from across County Roscommon and Ballygar protested a decision by GRETB to retender the Youth Service for County Roscommon / Ballygar, outside the GRETB buildings in Athenry, a delegation from the ETB including the Chief Executive and some Board members spoke to the young people involved. The disruption of their service was highlighted including the lack of consultation with them as the group most impacted by the decision.

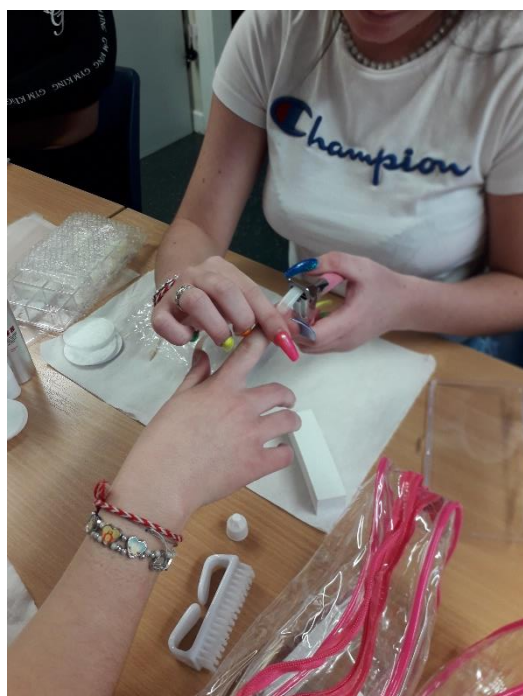


## FUSION Project

Education still proved important among our young people with 3 completing full QQI Level 3 and progressing on towards further training with the CTC.

The young people enjoyed the TAG Teenagers and Gardai. This programme proved invaluable among the young people as it built positive relationships with new young Gardai assigned to Tullamore. The Gardai arranged it all and for 6 weeks they had some activity planned from the Armed Response Unit to a fitness session in the local school gym, and the experience of going to the Garda station for something positive. Of course the food in Supermacs was an added bonus but it built great relationships for the summer programme. 8 youths started TAG and 5 completed this was a huge success as we felt maybe they all would drop out.

At the end of the programme there was a trip to Portlaoise Prison where the young people spent approx. two hours going through the prison and learning what the true effects of crime really is.



They got to experience what it's like from the time they go through the gates to the time they leave, this for some was a very scary experience but also a true eye opener as they learned what prison is really like.

The young people also participated in the Laois / Offaly CYPSC consultation piece.

For the girls it was decided to run a nail and beauty summer programme

The boy's summer programme ran very well and they attended daily and enjoyed the fun and learned to cook for themselves as food was cooked every day.

Our camping programme was running very well and the boys were really into it. They were sourcing sleeping bags, BBQ grills, tents and other items needed and were looking forward to sleeping away in Lough Ennel. Unfortunately the overnight didn't happen....there is always next year!

We also engaged with the young Traveller girls and boys by attending Traveller pride with them in Charleville castle grounds. This was a learning experience for us all as we learned some of the Traveller way And Culture.





The young people also participated in the My World Mental Health survey with UCD and one of the researchers visited the project to complete the survey with the young people. This gave the young people the voice to participate.



For our photography programme the young people visited areas of Tullamore town, Charleville Castle Grounds and Lough Boora. While they enjoyed the trips out and about behaviour and concentration proved an issue, but with persistence we got there. The young people took some lovely photos and the best were compiled into a calendar for them to admire their work. We were very fortunate to have had the assistance of the

Lions Club and the court donations to complete this.

A new Community Garda who has a keen interest in the young people visits regularly and prior to Christmas sat with them and they made rocking chairs out of clothes pegs we then of course finished the year off with Supermacs.

Young people returned with a buzz in January and were working great and planning great trips and involved with Sail Training Ireland until Covid 19 hit. Since then we have been working more online and through phone calls to check in with the young people to see how they are getting on weekly.

### **Staff Training**

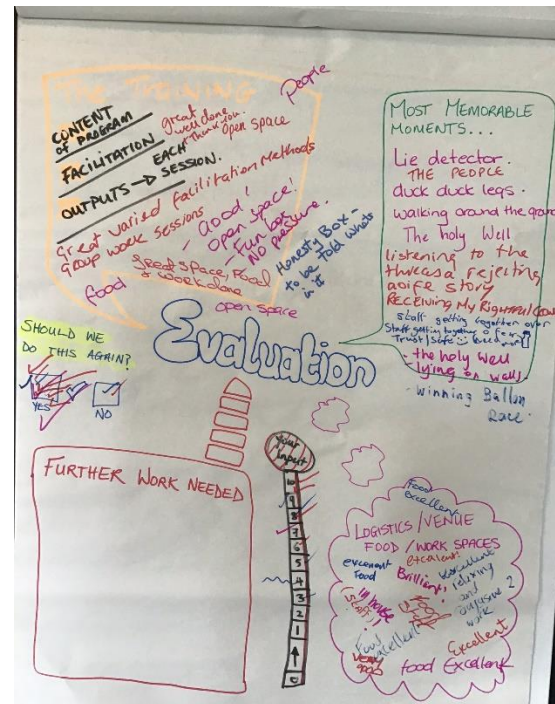


Residential Training for Core Staff – took place in Esker Monastery, Athenry in May 2019. This 2 day event was facilitated by CEO / SM to finalise content for the Strategic Plan, teambuilding and reflection.

The programme took place in a quiet wooded area, with accommodation in a Monastery which houses the Redemptorist Order. We were looked after with care and kindness and given full access to the grounds and facilities for our 2-day workshops.



Our workshops explored many elements of the organisations functions, history, structure, future plans and operations. We took space to reflect on our work, our capacity and our goals for the coming years. It was also a fantastic opportunity for staff to reconnect, work together and take some time away from the busy project spaces to recharge for the summer programmes.



## 2019 ESB Techspace Educator of the Year



Our continued endeavours into the area of STEM and STEAM in Youth Work was recognised in 2019 with our very own Tracey Moore honoured with the title of **2019 ESB Techspace Educator of the Year** in recognition of her dedication to helping young people and Youth Workers to embrace Digital Creativity and STEAM.

## **Celebration of Youth Work Event 2019**

### **Youth Health Programme Quality Award**

During 2019 the Youth Service went through a re-assessment process under the NYCI Health Quality Mark for the Youth Sector culminating in the presentation of the Award at our Celebration of Youth Work event in May. The process for achieving the Award was facilitated by a Staff Quality Working Group and supported by the Board.



### **Happy Retirement Joe**

At our Celebration of Youth Work Event the Youth Service said a fond farewell to Youth Worker Joe Smyth who retired from his role as Youth Worker with the Tullamore Youth Project, Joe had been a tireless advocate for young people and youth work and we wished him all the very best in his retirement. And, we had Cake.



### **Garda Youth Awards**

We also acknowledged the young people across the region who received nominations in the Garda Youth Awards across Westmeath, Roscommon and Offaly.





## Mullingar EYE Project & YoYo Youth Café

2019 ended with a huge acknowledgement for the work for Youth Work Ireland Midlands with Mullingar's YoYo Youth Café winning first the Regional and then the **National Good Causes**



**Youth Award.** The cafe was nominated for the National Lottery award because of its voluntary led, diverse provision to young people throughout Mullingar which includes activities and youth employment programmes developed for it's Training Kitchen, Music Rehearsal and Performing Rooms, Recording Studio, Gym and Tech Production Suite.



Mullingar EYE hosted the **Youth Empowered Skills Day** - A Coca Cola initiative - which was enjoyed by young people from all of Youth Work Ireland Midlands Projects. The skills day encouraged youth entrepreneurial skills and employ ability techniques by business mentors from Coca Cola, Westmeath Community Development, Lidl, Youth Work Ireland Midlands and Business Start Up Experts. The Youth Empowered Skills Day was delivered by EYE & Mullingar Youth Project Youth Workers who were trained by Youth Action NI in a Youth Work Ireland supported cross border initiative.





Young people from EYE project getting ready to perform at our Summer Event. **Music Jam** is run by EYE and YoYo Youth Café in association with Offaly/Westmeath Music Generation. This whole family intervention provides music tuition to over 90 young people per week.

This photograph shows some of the 30 brilliant young people that joined our song writing workshop. Everyone thought up a line that meant something to them. From there 7 new bands were formed and 7 amazing songs were written - It was a magical night with creativity and enthusiasm zipping around the Great Hall of EYE & YoYo Youth Café.



### Roscommon Comhairle na nÓg (RCNN)

20 young people from all over County Roscommon participated in Comhairle na nÓg Junior Youth Leadership Training which took place on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2019 in Roscommon Town. The training content included what Comhairle involves, leadership skills, listening skills, teamwork, programme planning, committee skills and Gaisce introduction. Leas Cathaoirleach of Roscommon County Council, Councillor Kathleen Shanagher co-facilitated committee skills training and presented 'Certificates of Participation' to members who had finished their two-year term.

### GAISCE

Roscommon is one of eight Comhairlí na nÓg in Ireland to participate in a pilot project with Gaisce – The President's Award, offering an opportunity for young people to gain their Bronze Gaisce Award through their work in Comhairle na nÓg. Five members achieved their Bronze Gaisce Award through RCNN. Nine members participated in a residential trip in Castlerea which included a 23km hike along the Suck Valley Way from Glinsk to Castlerea via Ballymoe on 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> August. The hike was planned with Roscommon Leader Partnership Rural Development Officer Eilish Canty, who also accompanied the group for the hike. The awards were presented at a ceremony on 14<sup>th</sup> December in Hannon's Hotel.





## Tea with Teens 2019

Five young people formed a subcommittee with representatives from Roscommon Older Peoples Council, Roscommon LEADER Partnership and RosFM to plan RCNN's third annual Tea with Teens intergenerational event on 20<sup>th</sup> November in Kilbride Community Centre. This event, designed to break down barriers between young and older people, was funded by Roscommon County Council and attended by post-primary transition year students, older people's organisations and RCNN steering committee members. The event opened with a Speed Dating icebreaker followed by a Ballroom Dancing workshop with Liam Kildea. Comhairle members facilitated hip hop dancing workshop and snapchat filters. Roscommon Supporting People with Disabilities singing group 'Guess Who's Back' played live music.



## RSE Consultation

Three young people were invited to attend a consultation on how Relationships and Sexual Education is taught in schools. The consultation took place in the Department of Children and Youth Affairs Building, Baggot Street, Dublin on 13th March. Young people had the opportunity to contribute to a report advising the Minister for Education on changes that are needed so that RSE can be improved and better meet the needs of students.



## CYPSC Presentation

Four young people presented to Roscommon Children and Young Persons Services Committee in Roscommon's County Buildings on 29th March. The presentation included all RCNN's projects and activities during the previous two years and the committees' 2019 work plan followed by a questions & answers session.

## Comhairle Members Networking Event

Five members were invited to attend this event on 17th April in the Glasshouse Hotel, Sligo. Young people were asked to prepare a "show & tell" presentation, answering eight networking questions as a way to share good ideas from their Comhairle and get good ideas to bring back to their Comhairle. RCNN's delegates prepared their presentation in two formats. They created a poster with pictures of recent work and a NearPod presentation on their RCNN iPad which delegates from other Comhairlí could access with their smartphones.

## Topic 'Drugs'

At RCNN's 2018 AGM, Drugs was the topic voted by young people in attendance to be the main issue affecting young people in County Roscommon. Emmet Major from Western Region Drugs & Alcohol Task Force presented information on substance use in the region to RCNN on Saturday 23rd March. RCNN participated in a substance misuse workshop, facilitated by Managing Director of Alex's Adventure and Munster Region Humanitarian of the Year 2018, Nicole Ryan, on 4th May. This included an introduction to the new Alex's Adventure blended learning programme for the SPHE junior cycle. As a result Nicole attended RCNN's AGM in October, promoting the programme as an inspirational speaker in the morning and ran the Alex's Adventure workshop for young people and decision makers twice throughout the day. In association with Alex's Adventure, RCNN developed an eight page information booklet on substance misuse entitled 'Bury Drugs, Not Your Dreams'.



## AGM 2019



87 young people from eight secondary schools in Roscommon attended this AGM in Castlerea Enterprise Hub on 15th October. Attendees participated in workshops from ShoutOut on LGBTI+ Equality, Alex's Adventure on substance misuse, fitness by The Hub gym instructor and Music Generation facilitated a drumming workshop. Chef and kitchen staff training facility An Chistin provided lunch and refreshments throughout the day.

## Dáil na nÓg

Four young people represented Roscommon at this event Saturday 23rd November in Leinster House. Delegates of Dáil na nÓg 2019 participated in Climate Change workshops and voted car emissions to be the main issue arising from Climate Change affecting young people nationally which will be the work topic for the incoming National Executive 2020-21

## Citizenship & Democracy Programme

1 RCNN member participated in a four day educational trip to the European Parliament in Strasbourg to experience what it's like to be an MEP. Students debate, negotiate, amend, vote and adopt resolutions on real European issues.

## **DCYA Youth Forum**

1 RCNN member accepted onto the DCYA Youth Forum. The Forum gives opportunities to input on many key actions within the implementation of the new LGBTI+ strategy up to end of 2020, and is a brilliant opportunity for young people to have their say in making sure that those actions are made a reality.

## **Acorn Midlands Education & Training Service (AMETS) Smaoinigh Mor (QQI)**



**AMPLIFY – Audio Media Production Leading Initiative For Youth**

In 2019 we secured funding from OLDC and rolled out 4 day workshops for local schools and Youth Reach programmes. Very successful and highly commended by the students and our funders. Each group

mastered, edited and produced their own podcast used then by their school or project to advertise events and programmes.

## **Beauty Therapy**

Beauty Therapy launches again with young women engaging in the major award at QQI level 5 over a 2 year part time basis. 50% of current learners have found employment in local beauty salons and SPA's. The K club and The Kilashee House Hotel have employed 3 students to date.





## **Little Oaks Café Launches**



This one year hospitality programme launched in 2019 with the aim of upskilling young people and adult learners in the hospitality sector. Young people got the opportunity to avail of experiential learning while also working towards a QQI level 5 Major Award in Hospitality Operations. We were delighted to welcome Judge Keenan Johnson to the launch, Judge Johnson is an advocate for projects working with young people at greater risk of involvement in the criminal justice system.

10 learners engaged with the programme – 7 young people and 3 adults.

## **Youth Work Learners Graduate with a Major Award at QQI level 5.**

AMETS embarked on the delivery of a major award in Youth Work in 2017. In November 2019, 13 learners graduated with a full award in Youth Work. Most of the group are working in The ACORN Project and will now use their award to access further education or employment. We are so proud of them all and wish them all the best in the future.





## ACORN Project

All groups are going strong and growing in numbers, as is our relationship with the community. We have a Girls Club, Boys Club, Niteline, and Homework Club. The young Girls Club came together for an 8-week wellness course. This included yoga and several talks on subjects such as Sexual Health and Hygiene and natural skincare and suitable makeup for teens. This culminated in a trip to the cinema for the girls.

This year we did 'The Greatest Showman' for the St Patricks Day Parade, making all our own costumes and props. We were subsequently approached by the Festival Committee who asked us to take the lead in their opening ceremony. This was very exciting for the young people, getting to perform again.



Our Annual BBQ was very subdued this year as a young member of the local community passed away. We did meet as a group and had our BBQ at Teach na nOg. The young people were very respectful of the community. A lot of learning took place during this period.

After the success of the festival and the young people's enthusiasm for singing, and following discussions with them on what they would be interested in doing, we started a group we called 'Sing for Fun'. All our groups came together and sang together just for the enjoyment of it. Great numbers turned out and it was a great success and indeed a lot of fun. It unveiled some notable talent within our numbers. We were also successful in applying for some funding for equipment to use in this group.

Movie night for Halloween - we all dressed up in our onesies and walked up the town to the youth cafe. Thanks to Anna we watched Hocus Pocus and had some food. We did get a few funny looks on route but hey, it was Halloween!



Our Candlelight Ceremony - always a highlight of the year our candlelight ceremony welcomes in the Christmas season to our community. We light 300 candles, to represent each household.

Respond/Teach na nOg have accessed some money to upgrade the energy efficiency of the building. This will happen in 2020 all going well. We are very grateful and lucky to have this

building right in the heart of the community and look forward to continued good relations with them.

### Work to Learn

The Work To Learn Programme is a [Garda Youth Diversion Project](#) (GYDP) based work experience initiative for young people. The ACORN Project in Edenderry have been successfully delivering the programme for the last three years and have had great support from local employers. The programme is open to young people between the ages of 15 – 18 years who are attending the GYDP on a regular and consistent basis and provides the participant with paid work experience in a range of local employment situations from the St. Vincent De Paul Charity Shop, a Butchers, a Supermarket, a Café, a local allotment etc.

The programme is supported by the Department of Justice & Equality and Youth Work Ireland. The programme employs a local project worker who is a support to the participants but also to the local employer. In 2019 four young people benefited from the programme.

### Youth Action Group

Edenderry **Youth Action Group** were nominated in the Regional Garda Youth Awards and then went on to win the group category in the Laois/Offaly division.



**Edenderry Youth Cafe** had a very good year with clubs continuously getting bigger and more activities and programmes taking place. Open 7 days a week with programmes and Birthday Parties at the weekends.

Family Fun Day in July 2019 - our biggest to date with over 200 young people and their parents attending for a full day of games, activities and overall fun! Breakfast with Santa and Mrs. Claus was the best way to wrap up 2019.

### Athlone Youth & Community Project

2019 was a year full of new experiences, new young people, a diverse range of activities and programmes and lots of learning and fun in Athlone Youth and Community Project. Young people from Battery Heights, Brawny, Ashdale/Woodlands Grove, Willow Park and Blackberry Lane continued to participate in weekly youth groups, drop In groups, skills development programmes, personal development, sports, recreational activities, trips, residential and issue based programmes. One of the main highlights was the introduction of a new LGBTI+ youth group. Since this group's foundation it has continued to



grow and develop and through the commitment, drive and creativity of the young people and youth workers involved it has become an accessible, welcoming space that meets the wants of the young people and it is driven by those that participate in it.



Like almost every year one of the main highlights of 2019 was the activity filled Summer programme. In 2019 both the Gaisce Programme and The Challenge programme promoted the positive physical health and well-being of young people. A group of young people from Battery Heights headed off on a two

night residential trip to Sligo and Donegal to take part in their Gaisce adventure journey in order to allow them to achieve bronze and silver Gaisce awards. The young people took part in a hike on Benbulbin mountain, surfing in Bundoran and a trek on The Causey Way along the cliff tops overlooking the sea. It was a super trip that young people participate in a Bootcamp Challenge in Cuckoo Hill, a hike in The Slieve Bloom Mountains, raft building and survival skills, a range of physical and mental challenge games and a Go Karting Trip.



Throughout 2019 young people have demonstrated creativity in a range of Creative Arts programmes. The young people from Woodlands Grove, Brawny and Blackberry Lane married their creativity with entrepreneurship and make beautiful Christmas crafts using a range of materials that they then sold to raise money for their youth group. Learning and skills development continued through the delivery of The Get Back Programme , HACCP Training, The Brawny Garden redevelopment Project, a Woodwork programme and A Dance Programme that was ran in conjunction with Athlone Family Resource Centre.

Whilst we are welcoming new young people to the Project, many of the young people that we have worked with for many, many years are moving on in their lives. Young people are starting to work or go on to further education and training. Youth Workers at AYCP would like to take this opportunity to congratulate them in their achievements and wish them the very best for their futures. Of course we will continue to work with many of you in 2020 but for those that we don't see as often, just to say we are always available and you know where we are and how to contact us should you need to.





### **Tullamore Youth Project (TYP)**

Tullamore Youth Project provides a targeted youth service to young people residing in the areas of Eiscir Riada, Puttaghan, Tara Crescent, Kilbrook and Arden View. Throughout 2019, the project has observed a large increase in youth participants in all of the above highlighted areas. The project engages young people in targeted youth work from Monday to Friday in a variety of youth led programmes and activities.



Throughout 2019, TYP created and sustained many valuable links with organisations in Tullamore to complete joint youth led programmes with the young people. In conjunction with An Gardaí Siochana and FAI Offaly for the months of February, July and October 2019, TYP organised 'Tullamore Town League'. This initiative is open to young people aged 10-17yrs from all over Tullamore and spanned across five

weeks, concluding with a finals night. This programme proved to be a successful initiative for the young people and the project with approx. 100 young people registered to take part in each league. The league promoted physical health of participants and positive integration of young people into the wider community, while building positive community Gardaí relations. Senior youth participants engaged in a soccer match against members from An Gardaí Siochana which provided opportunities, as a reward for positive behaviour and engagement attended two Ireland soccer games at the Aviva stadium with staff members from TYP.





Junior youth participants at TYP completed a six week Christmas craft making programme concluding with young people and project staff attending Kilbeggan Christmas markets to sell their finished products. This programme generated funds for the project while instilling a sense of pride and entrepreneurship among the young people who completed the programme. This programme showcased the positive engagement and skill set of the young people and the youth project to the wider community and families of participants.

Senior youth participants at Eiscir Riada and Puttaghaun projects completed basic First Aid training receiving certs and commenced participation in an ongoing driver theory programme with several young people going forward to pass their provisional driving test. Young people from TYP attended trips to Paint Balling, Funstasia, Tayto Park, Mullingar Ice Rink, Farmaphobia, Bay sports and Lilliput alongside three senior trips to Ireland Soccer matches at the Aviva Stadium for summer programmes and reward trips.



In 2019, TYP established a LGBTIQ+ group with active participation weekly. A mental health working group comprised of senior youth participants aged 16-24 years was established in 2019. This group, in conjunction with the HSE is in the process of designing a mental health information page online aimed at young people from Offaly. Regular programmes of engagement continued throughout 2019 inclusive of, career directions, personal development, cultural awareness, digital youth work and physical activity and sports.



## Community Employment

Community Employment has continued to support the Community Youth Projects and Garda Youth Diversion projects across the region. Our CE teams have achieved QQI Awards in Youth Work. We continue to support 35 participants across 6 projects in County Westmeath, Roscommon and Offaly.



Our participants have secured employment in Social Care and Youth work posts with the qualifications and experience gained while working in our Youth Projects. 2019 brought great promise to Digital development, with some participants engaging in online and center-based training in STEM and Digital Skills locally and internationally under the Techspace and Erasmus+ programmes.

Most Youth Projects are now benefiting from the enhanced skillset of staff who have specialised in these areas. As the organisation develops, so too does access to training for our participants who now attain industry standards and accredited programmes through online, class based, distance and blended learning methods.



**International Programmes** took us across the continent again in 2019. With the achievement of securing a Quality Label for European Solidarity Corps, we supported 3 volunteers on placements in Spain and Cyprus and became a local hub for Léargas workshops on Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Briefings.



We hosted 2 students from Canada for 10 weeks, who contributed to a new Community Ambassador Programme which became a vital element in the development of young people's intercultural competence. More young people now have access to opportunities



and information to avail of learning in activities across Europe and beyond in Youth Exchanges, Training and Volunteering Placements.

From Snow to Sun - A group from Mullingar EYE went to Italy in July 2019, Athlone Youth Project hosted a group from the UK and Italy in Ireland in January following a visit to Italy with the theme of Young Women and Media influences.

2020 and beyond will bring opportunities for the organisation to further enhance it's European element by hosting young people from across Europe in our local projects.



### Here4U

Hear4U is a one to one listening service offered to young people. The service is confidential and offered to any young person that may be going through a tough time and has issues affecting their everyday lives. It is a safe non-judgmental place to talk openly to explore issues with the aim to gain coping tools/skills. It also supports the young person to identify and avail of services that may be of benefit to them.

Supporting the young person to identify outside supports can empower them to access such supports at a time of need.



Operating from Regional Office, the Here4U service is community based and also supports young people in 4 Secondary Schools in Offaly and Westmeath, a total of 19 young people participated in the Here4U service in 2019.

**The Regional Youth Forum** was established to ensure that young people have the opportunity to have their voices heard and to be involved in decisions that affect them in the organisation.

In 2019 young people from Athlone, Mullingar, Tullamore and Co. Roscommon were represented on the Youth Forum. The main work of the Youth Forum in 2019 was to carry out a survey of all of the members of Youth Work Ireland Midlands to assess the satisfaction of young people with the service provided by Youth Work Ireland Midlands and to identify how the organisation could improve their service to young people.



Young people from across the region were surveyed to identify how happy they were with their Youth groups, Youth Workers, Youth Centres and the favourite activities in their youth groups. They were also asked how Youth Work Ireland Midlands could be a better service for young people.

The survey produced very positive results with the majority of young people being very happy with their Youth Groups, Youth Workers, Activities and Youth Centres. The favourite activities in Youth Groups, of those that took part in the survey, were Art, Cookery and Pool.

Some of the ways in which young people identified that youth groups and that Youth Work Ireland Midlands could be a better service for young people. These included

- More equipment
- More attractive Youth Centres
- More funding
- Listen more to young people
- Be more widespread
- More activities
- Special clubs for people with special needs

These suggestions will help to inform the work plan of the Youth Forum for 2020.

### **Student Council & Peer Mentor Programmes**

The Peer Mentor and Student Council Programmes are completed in partnership with Rural Youth Clubs and Youth Information. Each year several schools participate in the programme which was developed to complement the long running SOS Transition Programme (Stepping over to Secondary). The main outcome of this programme is that young people entering Secondary School for the first time will have an older mentor to support and guide them. 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Year Students apply to become Mentors and Student Council Reps, an interview process selects the strongest candidates and a Leadership Skills & Effective Communication Training programme follows. 30 young people across 4 Secondary Schools in the regional received training to participate in Student Councils and to become Peer Mentors.

### **Volunteer Led Youth Clubs**

During 2019 we continued to support a network of 20 affiliated Youth Clubs in Westmeath, Offaly & Roscommon. Working with 212 Adult Volunteers impacting over 1500 young people in rural communities the service offer included training in Child Safeguarding, Induction, The Be Well workshops and a range of other youth work practice related supports and training. 3 Youth Clubs set up Junior Youth Committees and 2 young people represent the Youth Club Network on the **Regional Youth Forum**

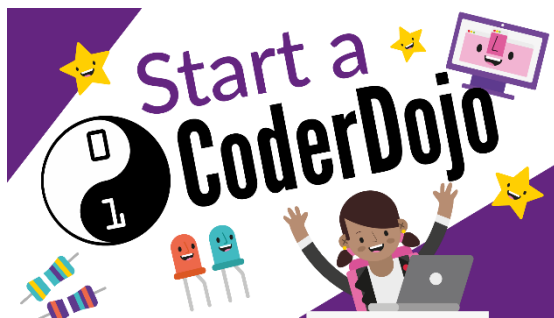


## South and West Offaly Drug and Alcohol (SWODA) Network

Eileen McArdle (Kelly), Rural Youth Clubs & Volunteer Support Co-ordinator, was elected as Chair of the newly formed South and West Offaly Drug and Alcohol (SWODA) Network which was officially launched by Mr Justin Campbell, former Galway hurler and highly experienced Addiction Counsellor and Life Coach. The network supports and strengthens a community based response to drug and alcohol issues. The Network creates awareness about Drug and Alcohol issues and drug and alcohol services available in the area.



## Community Coders & Coder Dojo



2019 saw a continued growth in Coding and Coder Dojo Groups in Co. Westmeath, with trained staff and volunteers for Athlone and Mullingar.

**Athlone Youth Darts Club** took part in the Youth All Ireland Darts in Ennis, Co. Clare back in March 2019, with a very young team of 6 players, 5 of whom were in their first competition. They bet teams from Mayo and Laois but got pipped in the end and were unlucky not to qualify to the last 8 in the group. However, supported by their mentors and leaders, the young people went





straight through to the quarter finals, then on to the semis, unfazed by a good Donegal, played out of their skins by all accounts, without reaching the finals. The Club paid great tribute to the young dart players from all teams, the parents and supporters and kept a great presence on Facebook of all their activities and celebrations. The club can be found on [Facebook](#) at @athlonedarts.

**Emerald Lakes Dancers** performed their World Championship performance for us at our AGM & Celebration of Youth Work Event.



# Youth Work Ireland Midlands

## A Snapshot

**83** Staff delivering youth work programmes and services to young people and communities across Counties Westmeath, Roscommon & Offaly

**32** Core Staff, **6** Tutors and **45** Community Employment Participants.

**212** Adult Volunteers including an **11** member Board of Trustees supported by a Management Team:

- CEO – [glacey@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:glacey@youthworkmidlands.org)
- Service Manager (Community Employment) – [tmoore@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:tmoore@youthworkmidlands.org)
- Finance Manager – [accounts@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:accounts@youthworkmidlands.org)

**5625** Young People participated across:

- **20** Volunteer Led Youth Clubs – [ekelly@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:ekelly@youthworkmidlands.org)
- **4** Targeted Youth Funded Schemes
  - Athlone – [jnaughton@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:jnaughton@youthworkmidlands.org)
  - Tullamore – [asheeran@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:asheeran@youthworkmidlands.org)
  - Mullingar – [cmcentee@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:cmcentee@youthworkmidlands.org)
  - Roscommon/Ballygar – [glacey@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:glacey@youthworkmidlands.org)
- **4** Garda Youth Diversion Projects
  - Athlone – [efallon@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:efallon@youthworkmidlands.org)
  - Tullamore – [abuggy@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:abuggy@youthworkmidlands.org)
  - Mullingar – [joconnor@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:joconnor@youthworkmidlands.org)
  - Edenderry – [kfarrell@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:kfarrell@youthworkmidlands.org)
- **3** Youth Cafes
  - Tullamore – [ekelly@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:ekelly@youthworkmidlands.org)
  - Mullingar – [joconnor@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:joconnor@youthworkmidlands.org)
  - Edenderry – [aoneill@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:aoneill@youthworkmidlands.org)
- **1** Youth Information Service – [efarrell@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:efarrell@youthworkmidlands.org)
- **5** International Programmes – [tmoore@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:tmoore@youthworkmidlands.org)
- **3** Comhairle na nOgs
  - Westmeath – [efarrell@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:efarrell@youthworkmidlands.org)
  - Offaly- [abuggy@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:abuggy@youthworkmidlands.org)

- Roscommon – [kcostello@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:kcostello@youthworkmidlands.org)
- **2 Education & Training Projects** – [mkearney@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:mkearney@youthworkmidlands.org)
- **Traveller Mens' Project** – [cmcentee@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:cmcentee@youthworkmidlands.org)
- **Young Men's Health Project** – [cmcentee@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:cmcentee@youthworkmidlands.org)
- **Youth Employability Projects**
  - Mullingar – [joconnor@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:joconnor@youthworkmidlands.org); [cmcentee@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:cmcentee@youthworkmidlands.org);
  - Edenderry – [pfarrell@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:pfarrell@youthworkmidlands.org)
- **LGBTI+ Youth Group(s)**
  - Athlone – [clynch@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:clynch@youthworkmidlands.org)
  - Tullamore – [asheeran@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:asheeran@youthworkmidlands.org)
  - Edenderry – [aoneill@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:aoneill@youthworkmidlands.org)
  - Mullingar – [cmcentee@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:cmcentee@youthworkmidlands.org)
- **Once-off Events** – [info@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:info@youthworkmidlands.org)

## 1 Wedding.

## 1 Retirement.

Youth Workers who left the Service during the year: Keith, Nicola, Eileen, Janine, Roisin & Sarah from the Roscommon Project, David and Liz from Mullingar and Kevin from our Edenderry Project. We wish them the very best in their future endeavours.

## Volunteer Led Youth Clubs Network

for further information contact Eileen at [ekelly@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:ekelly@youthworkmidlands.org)

Athlone Youth Darts Academy	Ballymore Youth Club	Coder Dungeon Clonmellon
Coder Dojo Mullingar	Clara Youth Club	Edenderry Youth Café & Youth Club
Jordan Juniors Castlejordan	Kinnegad Youth Club	Link Club, Mullingar
Mullingar Charity Varsity Group	Mullingar Voluntary Youth Academy	Emerald Lakes
St. Ciaran's Youth Club	St. Mary's Youth Centre and P2B Youth Café	YoYo Youth Café & Youth Club
Moore Youth Club	Ballymore Community Coders	Athlone Community Coders
Script Club	Ballaghaderreen Youth Club	



## Partnerships & Collaborations

Interagency collaboration, networking and partnership is key to ensuring positive outcomes for young people and families. We acknowledge our key partners with thanks:

An Garda Siochana	Midland Regional Drug & Alcohol Taskforce	Children & Young Peoples Services Committees x 3.
HSE	Court Services	Tullamore Lyons Club
Offaly Local Development	Westmeath Community Development	LW ETB Youth Work Committee
LO ETB Youth Work Committee	Youth Work Ireland	Westmeath County Council
Offaly County Council	Roscommon County Council	Involve Traveller Youth Service
Leargas	National Youth Council of Ireland	Techspace
School Completion Programme	Family Resource Centre Network	Tusla
Probation Services	Education Welfare	Schools
Healthy Ireland	Foroige	Extern
Merchants Quay	Athlone Community Services Council	Rehab / Fresh Start
Quality Qualifications Ireland (QQI)	Dormant Accounts	Pobal
National Lottery	Music Generation	Food Cloud
Respond Housing Association	Local Businesses	Athlone Institute of Technology
Road Safety Authority	Defence Forces	FAI
IRFU	GAA	Residents Associations
Drugs Awareness Groups	Camara Education	Coder Dojo
Local Project Committees	The Wheel	Athlone Community Taskforce
Public Participation Network(s) (PPN)	Youth Action Northern Ireland	Irish Youth Foundation
St. Vincent De Paul	Credit Unions	Arts Council



**EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND**



**An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt  
agus Comhionannais**  
Department of Justice  
and Equality



**Youth Work Ireland**  
**Midlands**

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(090) 6477075 [www.youthworkmidlands.org](http://www.youthworkmidlands.org)**