



Youth Wiki national description

Youth policies in Ireland

2019

The Youth Wiki is Europe's online encyclopaedia in the area of national youth policies. The platform is a comprehensive database of national structures, policies and actions supporting young people. For the updated version of this national description, please visit <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/youthwiki>

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Ireland

Youth policy in Ireland

The [National Children's Strategy](#) (2000) was the first national youth policy in Ireland. The National Children's Strategy had a strong focus on the rights of children and young people to be heard in matters that affect their lives.

The [National Youth Strategy](#) (2015-2020) is the current key policy document on youth policy in Ireland. The National Youth Strategy targets children and young people aged 10-24 years whereas the National Children's Strategy targeted children under 0-18 years of age. The National Youth Strategy also differs from the National Children's Strategy as it takes a cross-government, cross-sectoral, whole-of-society approach to youth policy.

The National Youth Strategy has its basis in [Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children & Young People 2014-2020](#), which is Ireland's first National Policy Framework for children and young people aged 0-24 years.

The [National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision Making](#) (2015-2020) builds on the National Children's Strategy's infrastructure for children and young people's participation.

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs published the first [LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy](#) in the world in 2018.

1. YOUTH POLICY GOVERNANCE

This chapter provides an overview of youth policy in Ireland. Youth policy governance takes place at a national level in Ireland. The [Department of Children and Youth Affairs](#) are the main government department responsible for youth policy in Ireland.

The main youth policy in Ireland is the [National Youth Strategy](#). The aim of the National Youth Strategy is to enable all young people to realise their maximum potential, by respecting their rights and hearing their voices, while protecting and supporting them as they transition from childhood to adulthood.

The National Youth Strategy takes a cross-government, cross-sectoral, whole-of-society approach to youth policy. The National Youth Strategy has its basis in [Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children & Young People 2014-2020](#), which is Ireland's first National Policy Framework for children and young people aged 0-24 years.

The National Youth Strategy aims to enable all young people to realise their maximum potential with regard to the five national outcomes outlined in Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The national policy framework for children and young people (2014-2020):

The five national outcomes of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures are:

- Outcome 1: Active and healthy, physical and mental wellbeing
- Outcome 2: Achieving full potential in learning and development
- Outcome 3: Safe and protected from harm
- Outcome 4: Economic security and opportunity
- Outcome 5: Connected, respected and contributing to their world

The National Youth Strategy is a universal strategy for all young people in Ireland. However, it also provides for the needs of young people experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, the poorest outcomes. Therefore, marginalised/disadvantaged young people are identified as a target group within the National Youth Strategy.

Marginalised/disadvantaged young people identified in the strategy include:

- Young people marginalised by location or geography or socioeconomic reasons.
- Young Travellers, Roma, young people from ethnic or religious minorities;
- Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers;
- Young people with disabilities or mental health issues;
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) young people;
- Young carers;
- Young people in conflict with the law;
- Young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs);
- Young parents;
- Young people in care;
- Young people in direct provision; and
- Lone parents under the age of 25 years.

1.1 Target population of youth policy

The target group of youth policy in Ireland is 0-25 years.

- [Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures](#) (2014-2020) defines a young person as any person under 25 years of age.
- The [National Youth Strategy](#) (2015 - 2020) targets young people aged 10-24 years.
- The [Youth Work Act](#) (2001) defines a young person as a person under the age of 25 years.

1.2 National youth law

Existence of a National Youth Law

There is no specific national youth law in Ireland. The primary legislation regulating child care policy in Ireland is the Child Care Act 1991. The [Child Care Act](#) was introduced in 1991 and the main part of the Act was implemented in 1995.

Ireland signed up to the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (UNCRC) in 1992. The UNCRC is an international agreement that lists the rights of all children and young people under the age of 18.

Scope and contents

The Child Care Act (1991) covers the following areas:

- Promotion of the welfare of children, including section 3 which governs the functions of [Tusla](#), The Child and Family Agency;
- Protection of children in emergencies, including section 12 which governs the powers of the police ([An Garda Síochána](#)) to take a child to safety;
- Care proceedings, including the different types of care orders which can be made by a court;
- Children in need of special care or protection;
- Private foster care;
- Jurisdiction and procedure, including provisions for the appointment of a guardian ad litem for a child;
- Children in the care of the Child and Family Agency;
- Supervision of preschool services and;
- Children's residential centres.

Revisions/updates

The Child Care Act (1991) is currently under review by the [Department of Children and Youth Affairs](#) (DCYA). The review is linked to a commitment in Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People to 'review and reform, as necessary, the Child Care Act, 1991.'

The purpose of the review is to:

- Identify what is working well within legislation including its impact on policy and practice;
- Address any identified gaps, operational improvements and new areas for new development;
- Capture current legislative, policy and practice developments;
- Building on those steps, revise the original Act.

An Open Policy Debate on the review of the Child Care Act was held by the DCYA in 2017. A [background note](#) on the Open Policy Debate was developed by the DCYA. A [report on the findings of the Open Policy Debate](#) was published by DCYA.

A written consultation process on the review of the Child Care Act 1991 was commenced by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in December 2017 and ended in February 2018.

1.3 National youth strategy

Existence of a national youth strategy

The current policy document on youth policy in Ireland is the [National Youth Strategy](#). The strategy was introduced in 2015 and covers the years 2015-2020.

Scope and contents

The main elements of the National Youth Strategy are:

- The basis and purpose of the strategy
- The socio-economic context of young people in Ireland
- Youth as a period of development
- The youth policy environment
- The National Youth Strategy Consultation
- The aim, objectives and priority actions of the strategy
- The implementation framework of the strategy
- Enabling actions across the five national outcomes areas for children and young people

The aim of the National Youth Strategy is to enable all young people to realise their maximum potential, by respecting their rights and hearing their voices, while protecting and supporting them as they transition from childhood to adulthood.

The National Youth Strategy also aims to enable all young people to realise their maximum potential with regard to the five national outcomes outlined in [Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The national policy framework for children and young people](#) (2014-2020):

The five national outcomes of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures are:

- Outcome 1: Active and healthy, physical and mental wellbeing
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The National Youth Strategy is a universal strategy for all young people in Ireland. However, it also provides for the needs of young people experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, the poorest outcomes.

Therefore, marginalised/disadvantaged young people are identified as a target group within the National Youth Strategy.

Marginalised/disadvantaged young people include, but are not limited to:

- Young people marginalised by location or geography or socioeconomic reasons.
- Young Travellers, Roma, young people from ethnic or religious minorities;
- Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers;

- Young people with disabilities or mental health issues;
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) young people;
- Young carers;
- Young people in conflict with the law;
- Young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs);
- Young parents;
- Young people in care;
- Young people in direct provision; and
- Lone parents under the age of 25 years.

The National Youth Strategy was informed by an extensive consultation process between December 2014 and March 2015 involving over 4,600 people, of whom almost 4,000 were young people under the age of 25.

The main consultation method was online surveys. One survey was aimed at young people and another survey was aimed at those working with young people.

The results of the online surveys helped develop specific questions used in three consultation events:

- One event was aimed at young people aged under 18 years
- Two other events were aimed at other stakeholders, which included those working directly with young people and young people aged 18 years and over

The results of the consultation events and survey helped to inform key priority areas in relation to the development of the National Youth Strategy.

A review of the National Youth Strategy was conducted in terms of progress, development and implementation as part of a Mid-term review of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures.

The Implementation Team in the Department of Children and Youth Affairs held a focus group with young people from the EU Structured Dialogue (known as 'Young Voices' in Ireland) as part of the review.

Responsible authority for the implementation of the youth strategy

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) is the government ministry responsible for the implementation of the National Youth Strategy at a national level and for ensuring that national policy is connected to local implementation.

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs established a National Youth Strategy Lead Team to coordinate, progress and monitor implementation of the Strategy. Two sub-groups of the National Youth Strategy Lead Team were also established:

- One to engage with the Advisory Council;
- One to oversee the implementation of the Value for Money Policy Review of Youth Programmes.

The Youth Affairs Unit (YAU) within the Department of Children and Youth Affairs is responsible for the development of youth policies and strategies.

The role of the Youth Affairs Unit is to support the alignment of youth policies and services with other Departmental policies and services and the broader policy and services field.

The National Youth Strategy has its basis in Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children & Young People 2014-2020, which is Ireland's first National Policy Framework for children and young people aged 0-24 years.

Revisions/updates

The National Youth Strategy was preceded by the National Children's Strategy: Our Children- Their Lives (2000-2010). This was the first National Children's Strategy in Ireland.

The National Children's Strategy targeted children under 0-18 years of age, whereas the National Youth Strategy targets children and young people aged 10-24 years.

The National Youth Strategy also differs from the National Children's Strategy as it takes a cross-government, cross-sectoral, whole-of-society approach to youth policy.

1.4 Youth policy decision-making

Structure of decision-making

Youth policy-making takes place at central government level in Ireland. The [Department of Children and Youth Affairs](#) (DCYA) is the top-level authority responsible for youth policy. It is a dedicated government department responsible for children and youth affairs.

The DCYA brings together a number of key areas of policy and provision for children, young people and families.

Its role is to drive forward a range of commitments outlined in the 2011 Programme for Government, as well as leading an ambitious reform agenda for children and family services.

Included within the Department's remit are the following organisations:

- [Tusla](#), The Child and Family Agency
- The [Adoption Authority of Ireland](#)
- [Oberstown Children Detention Campus](#)
- The [Ombudsman for Children Office](#)

Other actors formally involved in youth policy making include government departments whose remit includes young people, for example:

- [Department of Education and Skills](#)
- [Department of Health](#)
- [Department of Justice and Equality](#)
- [Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection](#)
- [Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht](#)
- [Department of Rural and Community Development](#)

Main themes

The main policy themes addressed in the [National Youth Strategy](#) relate to the five national outcomes outlined in [Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The national policy framework for children and young people](#):

- Outcome 1: Active and healthy, physical and mental wellbeing
- Outcome 2: Achieving full potential in learning and development
- Outcome 3: Safe and protected from harm
- Outcome 4: Economic security and opportunity
- Outcome 5: Connected, respected and contributing to their world

Chapter 2 of the National Youth Strategy provides an understanding of the situation of young people in Ireland. This includes presenting youth policy and research related to the five outcome areas under the headings of:

- The socio-economic context
- Youth as a period of development
- The youth policy environment

A number of objectives are outlined in the National Youth Strategy under the five outcome areas.

Outcome 1: Active and healthy, physical and mental wellbeing

- **Objective 1:** Young people enjoy a healthy lifestyle, in particular with regard to their physical, mental and sexual health and well-being.
- **Objective 2:** Young people benefit from involvement in recreational and cultural opportunities including youth work, arts, and sports.

Outcome 2: Achieving full potential in learning and development

- **Objective 3:** Young people's core skills, competencies and attributes are enhanced and promoted through accessible, responsive, formal and non-formal education and learning opportunities.
- **Objective 4:** Young people benefit from strengthened transition supports at all levels as they move through the education system.

Outcome 3: Safe and protected from harm

- **Objective 5:** Young people, and in particular vulnerable and marginalised young people, are supported to feel safe at home, in school, in their communities and online, and are empowered to speak out when feeling unsafe or vulnerable.
- **Objective 6:** Young people have safe places and spaces where they can socialise and develop.

Outcome 4: Economic security and opportunity

- **Objective 7:** Young people are better able to participate in the labour market through enhanced employability skills that complement formal learning and training qualifications and entrepreneurship opportunities.
- **Objective 8:** Young people are a particular focus in policies that address social inclusion and poverty.

Outcome 5: Connected, respected and contributing to their world

- **Objective 9:** Young people are included in society, are environmentally aware, their equality and rights are upheld, their diversity celebrated, and they are empowered to be active global citizens.
- **Objective 10:** Young people's autonomy is supported, their active citizenship fostered, and their voice strengthened through political, social and civic engagement.

The national agency for youth

The [National Youth Council of Ireland](#) (NYCI) is the representative body for voluntary youth organisations in Ireland. The role of the NYCI is to use their collective experience to act on issues that impact on young people. NYCI's role is recognised in legislation through the [Youth Work Act 2001](#).

The role of the NYCI includes:

- Representing the shared interests of voluntary youth organisations
- Building solidarity among its members

- Advocating on issues that impact on the lives of young people.
- Promoting the development of evidence informed high quality specialist youth work practice
- Capacity building and professional development

The NYCI design and manage a number of programmes including:

- Child Protection Programme.
- Development Education Programme
- Youth Arts Programme.
- Youth Health Programme.
- Intercultural and Equality Programme.
- International Programme.
- Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Maths (STEAM) and Digital Youth Work Programme

NYCI also provide training to youth organisation on these programmes.

NYCI is funded by the Youth Affairs Unit in the Department of Children and Youth Affairs under the Youth Service Grant Scheme.

- Youth Service Grant Scheme funding is made available on an annual basis to 30 national and major regional voluntary organisations.
- NYCI was awarded €608,888 under the DCYA Youth Service Grant Scheme. In 2019, the DCYA provided an additional 2.5% in funding to the Youth Service Grant Scheme, bringing the total allocation to over €11m.
- In 2019, the DCYA commenced a review of the Youth Service Grant Scheme. This review is intended to modernise the scheme to enhance accountability, transparency and outcome measurement. It is also seeking to ensure the scheme responds to the ever-evolving needs of young people.

Policy monitoring and evaluation

The National Youth Strategy was evaluated in 2017 by the DCYA to assess progress, examine the process and review the continuing relevance of its objectives and priorities. This evaluation was conducted as part of the [mid-term review of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures](#).

1.5 Cross-sectoral approach with other ministries

Mechanisms and actors

Youth policy is developed and implemented according to a cross-sectoral approach. [Better Outcomes Brighter Futures](#), the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People and the [National Youth Strategy](#) take a cross-government, cross-sectoral, whole-of-society approach to youth policy.

As part of a cross-sectoral approach to Better Outcomes Brighter Futures, a high-level Children and Young People's Policy Consortium was established.

This Consortium reports directly to the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy, comprising senior officials from Government departments and agencies and representatives from advisory and local operational fora. The Policy Consortium is chaired by the Secretary General of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, with a Deputy Chair from the Department of The Taoiseach (Prime Minister)

The development of the National Youth Strategy was overseen by a cross-sectoral National Youth Strategy Task Group brought together by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

This Task Group's work is supported by an Advisory Group convened by the National Youth Council of Ireland and comprising some 18 voluntary youth organisations.

There was a 13% increase in funding for the local youth club grants scheme in 2018, bringing the overall funding allocation to €1.79 million. The additional funding will result in a greater volume of volunteer-led youth activities over the course of 2018.

In addition, last year it announced the local youth club equipment scheme, under which €6.35 million was made available to volunteer-led clubs and groups that worked with young people in communities throughout the country. The scheme enabled these volunteer-led clubs to purchase equipment for sports, arts, adventure and other much needed items.

1.6 Evidence-based youth policy

Political commitment to evidence-based youth policy

The Irish government has a political commitment to evidence based youth policy.

- [Better outcomes, Brighter Futures](#): The national policy framework for children and young people (2014 -2020) states, 'to be effective, policies and services must be supported by evidence and focused on the achievement of agreed outcomes.'
- Similarly, the [National Youth Strategy](#) is evidence informed and outcomes focused.
- The Strategy takes an evidence-informed approach stating, 'implementation is guided by the learning from, and research into, policies, strategies and approaches, and on best practice in service delivery.' (National Youth Strategy, 2015: 39).

The DCYA has an [Evidence into Policy Programme](#) (EiPP). The aim of this programme is to support and meet Departmental research and evidence needs with respect to core Departmental and Government policy priorities. This is done, through a variety of research streams (building the evidence chain) and knowledge-transfer activities (promoting the uptake and use of evidence to drive policy change), that combine to support evidence-informed policymaking.

Cooperation between policy-making and research

Cooperation between policy-making and researchers is irregular.

- The Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) has a research panel to which researchers, both academic and independent researchers, can apply to be part of.
- The DCYA sends request for tenders (RFTs) for research projects to approved members of the DCYA Research Panel who can then apply to conduct the research.
- The DCYA also conducts training with members of their Research Panel.
- In the past, the DCYA has funded research Masters and PhDs in the area of child and youth issues.

In the case of longer-term research studies, the DCYA has ongoing cooperation with research institutes.

- For example, there is ongoing cooperation between the DCYA and the research institutes contracted to conduct a Longitudinal Study of Children in Ireland called [Growing Up In Ireland](#).
- These research institutes are the [Economic and Social Research Institute](#) (ESRI) and [Trinity College Dublin](#).

- The study, which began in 2006, is managed by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in association with the [Central Statistics Office](#) (CSO).
- The ESRI and Trinity College Dublin regularly compile research reports and briefings based on the study's findings in cooperation with the DCYA.
- There is an annual Growing Up In Ireland Conference which is supported by the DCYA.

The DCYA has a number of funded research programmes including:

- The National Children's Research Programme (which funds the Growing Up in Ireland Study)
- The DCYA Research Scholarship Programme
- 2010-12 DCYA/IRC Co-Funded Research Development Initiative
- DCYA/IRC Scholarship Scheme

The key policy themes informed by research include:

- Understanding of children and young people's lives
- Youth justice issues
- Traveller and Roma attendance, participation and engagement with the education system
- Youth participation in decision-making
- LGBTI+ issues

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs is currently conducting an evidence-based evaluation of Better Outcomes Brighter Futures

National statistics and available data sources

Statistics on youth in Ireland are collected by a number of actors.

CSO

The [Central Statistics Office](#) (CSO) collects data in the Census of Population every five years on areas such as education, health, ethnicity etc.

Tusla

[Tusla](#), the Child and Family Agency collects data on children in the care of the state. [Tusla Performance and Activity Reports](#) are published every quarter.

The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government

The [Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government](#) collects statistics on the number of young people aged 18-25 years who are homeless in Ireland every month.

Oberstown Children Detention Campus

[Oberstown](#) publishes statistics on young people in detention there. Statistics include a profile of key characteristics of young people, e.g. age, gender, care history, health issues, mental health issues, behavioural issues, substance misuse issues, engagement in education, learning difficulties etc. The research is aimed at providing a better understanding of the challenges faced by young people in conflict with the law, and to inform services and interventions to assist such young people.

Irish Prison Service

The Irish Prison Service publishes [statistics](#) on young people aged 17 – 25 in prisons in Ireland. The data is published on a yearly basis.

State of the Nation's Children

A National Set of Child Well-being Indicators and biennial publication of the DCYA [State of the Nation's Children Reports](#).

Growing up in Ireland

[Growing up in Ireland](#), the National Longitudinal Study of Children in Ireland tracks the development of two nationally representative cohorts of children: a Child Cohort (recruited when the children were 9 years of age) and an Infant Cohort (recruited when the children were 9 months of age).

The Growing Up in Ireland (GUI) study is funded by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, in association with the Department of Social Protection and the Central Statistics Office (CSO). The study is being carried out by a consortium of researchers led by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and Trinity College, Dublin (TCD). www.growingup.ie

Ombudsman for Children Office

The [Ombudsman for Children Office](#) conducts research on topical issues such as education, healthcare and youth homelessness.

DCYA

The Youth Participation Unit in the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) and Hub na nÓg regularly conducts consultations with children and young people on issues that affect their lives.

Consultations conducted with young people include:

- So, How Was School Today?
- After school care
- Cyber crime
- Direct provision system
- Ireland 2016 National Commemorative Programme
- Development of the National Obesity Strategy
- Universal Periodic Review

Budgetary allocations supporting research in the youth field

The budgetary allocations supporting research in the youth field are provided by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

1.7 Funding youth policy

How youth policy is funded

Youth policy is funded through the [Department of Children and Youth Affairs](#) (DCYA). The Youth Justice, Adoption, Youth and Participation Division is responsible for the effective administration of youth service funding, along with the reform of youth funding programmes.

What is funded?

The youth policy priority areas receiving funding are:

- Child protection and welfare
- Alternative care
- Youth affairs

- Youth justice
- Participation
- Play and recreation
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex (LGBTI+)

Financial accountability

Strategic Objective 5 of the [DCYA Statement of Strategy 2016-2019](#) states that 'high standards of compliance on governance and accountability are supported and enforced. One of the priority activities of Objective 5 is to 'ensure that best practice governance, risk management and accountability arrangements are in place in respect of the Department, its agencies, intermediaries and other service delivery providers.'

One of the outputs of Strategic Objective 5 of the DCYA Statement of Strategy 2016-2019, is that the 'National Youth Strategy and the Value for Money Review implemented to ensure an enhanced coherence and continuity between youth policy, provision, practice and funding.'

The [Public Spending Code](#) sets out rules and procedures that ensure high standards are upheld across the Irish public service in relation to public funds.

Use of EU Funds

The [European Social Fund](#) along with the Irish Government co-funds the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020. Ireland also receives a special allocation of €68 million from the Youth Employment Initiative.

The Youth Employment Initiative aims to tackle youth unemployment and implement the Youth Guarantee by providing jobs, education and training opportunities for individuals under 25 who are not in Employment, Education or Training.

The key areas chosen for investment under the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020 focus on:

- helping people get back into education, training or work;
- helping those at risk of being excluded socially or from the job market; and
- encouraging youth employment and improving access to education.

The Programme will provide **€1.157 billion** in funding to over 20 national measures.

The [European Social Fund \(ESF\) in Ireland](#) funds a number of youth schemes under four priority areas:

- Priority 1: Sustainable and Quality Employment
- Priority 2: Social Inclusion and Equal Opportunities
- Priority 3: Education, Training and Life-Long Learning
- Priority 4: Youth Employment Initiative

Key youth programmes funded under Priority 2: Social Inclusion and Equal Opportunities include:

- [Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme](#)
- [Youthreach](#)
- [Garda Youth Diversion Projects \(GYDPs\)](#)
- [Young Persons Probation \(YPP\) Projects](#)
- [Disability Project](#)

Key youth programmes funded under Priority 4: Youth Employment Initiative:

- • [Back to Work Enterprise Allowance \(BTWEA\) Scheme](#)
- • [JobsPlus Incentive Scheme](#)
- • [Youthreach](#)
- • [Defence Forces Employment Support Scheme](#)
- • [Momentum](#)
- • [Community Training Centres](#)
- • [Youth Employment Support Scheme](#)

1.8 Cross-border cooperation

Cooperation with European countries

The [Peace IV Programme](#) (2014-2020) is a European Union initiative designed to support peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland.

The key objectives of the programme are to:

- **Share Education:** to provide direct, sustained, curriculum-based contact between pupils and teachers from all backgrounds, through collaboration between schools from different sectors in order to promote good relations and enhance children's skills and attitudes to contribute to a cohesive society.
- **Children and Young People:** to enhance the capacity of children and young people to form positive and effective relationships with others of a different background and make a positive contribution to building a cohesive society.
- **Shared Spaces and Services:** to create a more cohesive society through an increased provision of shared spaces and services.
- **Building Positive Relations:** to promote positive relations characterised by respect, where cultural diversity is celebrated and people can live, learn and socialise together, free from prejudice, hate and intolerance.

One of the targets of the programme are young people aged between 14-24 years who are disadvantaged, excluded or marginalised, have deep social and emotional needs and are at risk of becoming involved in anti-social behaviour, violence or dissident activity.

International cooperation

The [National Youth Council of Ireland](#) (NYCI) is a member of the European Youth Forum and works as part of this platform to influence the decisions of the European Union and the United Nations.

NYCI's [International Programme](#) supports young people's involvement in international activities, youth work and youth policy. The programme aims to:

- facilitate and promote the involvement of youth organisations and young people in international activities;
- encourage youth organisations to include an international dimension to their youth work, through creating opportunities for sharing of best practice in youth work and facilitating international collaboration;
- advocates and lobbies on International and in particular European youth policy to ensure young people have an opportunity to add their voice to decisions that affect young people, their youth organisations and their future.

The [UN Youth Delegate Programme](#) supports the representation of young people from Ireland at the United Nations. The programme is sponsored by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in partnership with NYCI.

Each year, two UN Youth Delegates are chosen to form part of Ireland's official delegation to the United Nations General Assembly. The aim of the initiative is to provide a platform for young people from Ireland to be represented at the United Nations, and to facilitate greater engagement with Irish youth on national and foreign policy issues.

[Léargas](#) manage international and national exchange programmes in education, youth and community work, and vocational education and training. These exchanges connect people in different communities and countries, and bring an international dimension to the work of organisations across Ireland. Léargas are the National Agency for Erasmus+ in Adult Education, School Education, Vocational Education and Training, and Youth.

1.9 Current debates and reforms

Forthcoming policy developments

A '[Value for Money and Policy Review](#)' of the Youth Programmes that target disadvantaged young people was published by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in 2014. The review involved an in-depth scrutiny of three major funding programmes that target young people that are disadvantaged and that are administered by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

The review makes recommendations for the future operation and development of the youth schemes. It recommends that one targeted scheme should replace the existing three schemes and that this new scheme should be based on evidence of what works and clear objectives to be achieved for young people.

The new [Targeted Youth Funding Scheme](#) called 'UBU - Your Place Your Space' was launched in December 2019. UBU - Your Place, Your Space brings together four already existing, overlapping schemes with a value of over €38.5 million.

Ongoing debates

Young people living in Direct Provision

There is an ongoing debate around young people living in Direct Provision in Ireland. Direct provision is a means of meeting the basic needs of food and shelter for asylum seekers directly while their claims for refugee status are being processed in Ireland. The main issues debated are the negative impact of Direct Provision on young people, e.g. safety, impact on mental health, lack of space, food, education, the long waiting times to be processed.

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs conducted consultations with young people living in Direct Provision centres in 2017. The consultations [report](#) heard what children and young people living in Direct Provision like, dislike and what they would like to change or improve about the places in which they live.

The main actors involved in the debate are the Irish Government, the [Department of Justice and Equality](#), The [Reception and Integration Agency](#) (RIA), the [Department of Children and Youth Affairs](#), the [Ombudsman for Children](#), NGOs and the media.

The Ombudsman for Children, the office that investigates complaints made by children and young people or on their behalf in Direct Provision, states the main issues complained about include financial supports, accommodation, communication, complaint management and management of transfers to different centres or larger accommodation.

Young people experiencing homelessness

There is a debate on the number of young people experiencing homelessness and living in emergency accommodation as a result of the current 'housing crisis' in Ireland. This includes young people under 18 years of age living with their parents in emergency accommodation and young people aged 18-24 years living in homeless accommodation. The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government [Homelessness Report for](#)

[October 2019](#) show that 909 young people aged 18-24 years are homeless in Ireland. The main topics debated are the negative impact of homelessness on young people, e.g. lack of space, mental health, education and lack of social housing.

The main actors involved in the debate are the Irish Government, the Department of the Environment, Housing and Local Government, the Ombudsman for Children, homeless charities and the media.

The Ombudsman for Children published a [report](#) on consultations with children and young people under 18 years of age living in homeless accommodation in 2019, outlining their views and experiences of living in Family Hubs.

Young people LGBTI+

There is a debate around the issues affecting LGBTI+ young people in Ireland. The [2019 School Climate Survey](#) conducted by BeLonG To Youth Services identified a number of issues affecting LGBTI+ young people. These included anti-LGBTI+ bullying, homophobic remarks, discrimination, harassment and assault. Impacts on LGBTI+ young people included absenteeism, lack of sense of belonging, isolation and stigmatisation.

Solutions proposed to address these issues included, 'Safe and supportive schools with inclusive staff, representation of LGBTI+ identities in the curriculum and explicit anti-bullying policies results in reduced levels of anti- LGBTI+ bullying and a student body with a higher sense of belonging and better educational outcomes.'

Young people on reduced timetables

The issue of young people being placed on reduced timetables by schools is an ongoing debate. The term "reduced timetable" is used to describe:

- a reduced day in school where, by arrangement with the school authorities, a student arrives to school after the usual starting time or leaves before the end of the school day, and/or,
- a reduced week where a student may not attend the full five days each week.

The main topics debated are the impact of reduced timetables on young people with disabilities and from the Traveller community and reduced timetables being used as a methods of dealing with challenging behaviour.

The main actors involved in the debate are the Department of Education, schools, charities such as Barnardos, Inclusion Ireland and the Ombudsman for Children.

The Ombudsman for Children addressed the Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills on the issue of reduced timetables in June 2019 with this [statement](#).

Draft guidelines on the use of reduced timetable/reduced day in schools were developed by the Department of Education and Skills, Department of Children and Youth Affairs and Tusla Educational Welfare Service in September 2019.

Barnardos children's charity published a [submission](#) on these draft guidelines in October 2019.

Inclusion Ireland, the National Association for People with an Intellectual Disability, also produced a [submission](#) on reduced timetables.

2. VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES

The [Department of Rural and Community Development](#) is the main government department responsible for volunteering in Ireland. There is currently no national youth volunteering strategy in Ireland. However, the Department of Rural and Community Development is currently in the process of developing a National Volunteering Strategy for the general population. The National Volunteering Strategy is due to be published in 2020.

The definition of volunteering is set out in [The White Paper Supporting Voluntary Activity](#) (2000):

'Volunteering is the commitment of time and energy, for the benefit of society, local communities, and individuals outside the immediate family, the environment or other causes. Voluntary activities are undertaken of a person's own free will, without payment.'

[Volunteer Ireland](#) is the national volunteer development organisation and a support body for all local Volunteer Centres and Volunteering Information Services in Ireland.

The key roles of Volunteer Ireland are:

- To promote and recognise volunteering in Ireland through campaigns
- To manage [I-VOL](#), the national database of Irish volunteering opportunities and listings.
- To support national volunteer involving organisations
- To support companies interested in volunteering
- To offer volunteer management services for large-scale public events and festivals
- To offer Student Abroad Service Learning Programmes for third level students.
- To develop and support best practice in volunteering and Volunteer Centres

2.1 General context

Historical developments

Historical developments of volunteering in Ireland are set out in the [National Report for Ireland](#) as part of the Study of Volunteering in the European Union. There has been a long tradition of voluntary activity and charitable service in Ireland that has been shaped by religious, political and economic developments. Volunteering in Ireland has also formed a substantial element of national economic and social life.

The historical dominance of the Catholic Church supplying essential social welfare services in Ireland continued up to the 1960s. Volunteerism in 19th century Ireland was also apparent in the Gaelic cultural revival before independence from Great Britain. These Gaelic revivalist organisations made a distinct contribution to refining an Irish identity through organisations like Conradh na Gaeilge (formally known as the Gaelic League) and Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) which still thrives today.

According to Volunteer Ireland, volunteers are currently involved in all aspects of Irish society supporting areas such as health, education, culture, social services, the environment and the arts. Across Ireland, about 1 million people volunteer each year.

According to Eurofound's (2014) study on the [social situation of young people in Europe](#), young people in Ireland are more active socially and are more engaged in volunteering activities compared with their EU counterparts. The study found that almost 40% of young people in Ireland are involved in a club or society.

Main concepts

The definition of volunteering was first set out in The [White Paper Supporting Voluntary Activity \(2000\)](#):

'Volunteering is the commitment of time and energy, for the benefit of society, local communities, and individuals outside the immediate family, the environment or other causes. Voluntary activities are undertaken of a person's own free will, without payment.'

The [Central Statistics Office](#) defines formal volunteering as unpaid non-compulsory work or time given without pay to activities performed through organisations. Informal volunteering is defined as unpaid non-compulsory work or time given without pay to activities performed directly for others outside your own household.

According to [Volunteer Ireland](#), volunteering is different from internships in terms of motivation, the nature of role and timeframes. In terms of motivation, volunteering tends to be altruistic and internships tend to be linked to professional development.

The nature of roles also tends to differ between volunteering and internships. While volunteering covers a wide range of roles and skills, internships are generally skilled roles with a view to professional development.

Finally, volunteering and internships differ in relation to timeframes. Volunteering tends to have flexible timeframes whereas internships tend to have more rigid timeframes.

2.2 Administration and governance of youth volunteering

Governance

The [Department of Rural and Community Development](#) is the main government department responsible for volunteering. The Department of Rural and Community Development is responsible for Voluntary Organisation Funding. This includes the Scheme to Support National Organisations (SSNO). SSNO provides funding to voluntary organisations in Ireland. Organisations that want to apply must focus on providing supports and improving the lives of disadvantaged people.

[Volunteer Ireland](#) is the national volunteer development organisation and a support body for all local Volunteer Centres and Volunteering Information Services in Ireland.

The key roles of Volunteer Ireland are:

- To promote and recognise volunteering in Ireland through campaigns
- To manage [I-VOL](#), the national database of Irish volunteering opportunities and listings.
- To support national volunteer involving organisations
- To support companies interested in volunteering
- To offer volunteer management services for large-scale public events and festivals
- To offer Student Abroad Service Learning Programmes for third level students.
- To develop and support best practice in volunteering and Volunteer Centres

The [Public Participation Network](#) is a network that allows local authorities to connect with community groups around the country. The Public Participation Network is the 'go to' for all local authorities who wish to benefit from community and voluntary expertise in their area.

[Boardmatch](#) Ireland is the national corporate governance charity in Ireland. It was set up to improve governance in the not-for-profit sector by strengthening boards and management committees, providing services and support to not-for-profit organisations and charities to help them improve and strengthen their board composition.

It allows candidates to volunteer their time, energy and skills to the non-profit (community and voluntary sector) at a board level. The free Boardmatch service matches a candidate's skills and expertise with the needs of a non-profit organisation.

Cross-sectoral cooperation

There are currently no existing mechanisms of cross-sectoral cooperation between government departments and agencies involved in defining policies and measures on youth volunteering as there is no national youth strategy on volunteering in existence.

2.3 National strategy on youth volunteering

Existence of a national strategy

There is currently no national strategy for youth volunteering in Ireland. There is also no national strategy for the general population.

The key policy documents in the area of volunteering are:

- 2000: [Government White Paper - Supporting Voluntary Activity](#)
- 2002: [Tipping the Balance](#)
- 2005: [Joint Oireachtas Report on 'Volunteers and Volunteering in Ireland' 2006: Towards 2016](#)
- 2007: Active Citizenship Report
- 2009: Policy to Support Volunteer Centres

The Department of Rural and Community Development recently published a ['Call for Input'](#) on the development of a national volunteering strategy.

Promoting volunteering opportunities is one of the priority actions identified in The [National Youth Strategy](#) 2015-2020:

'Promoting developmental and volunteering opportunities for young people across the EU and internationally through programmes such as the Erasmus+ Programme, Youth on the Move Initiative, and the United Nations Youth Delegate Programme.'

This priority action is linked to Outcome 5 of the National Youth Strategy, 'Connected, respected and contributing to their world.'

Scope and contents

There is currently no national strategy for youth volunteering in Ireland. However, the Department of Rural and Community Development are currently developing a National Volunteering Strategy for the general population.

Responsible authority

The Department of Rural and Community Development will be the responsible authority for the new National Volunteering Strategy.

Revisions/ updates

There is currently no national strategy for youth volunteering in Ireland.

2.4 Youth volunteering at national level

National programme for youth volunteering

There is no national programme for youth volunteering in Ireland.

However, there are a number of national programmes that encourage youth volunteering at a national level. These include:

- Young Social Innovators
- Gaisce Award

Young Social Innovators

[Young Social Innovators](#) (YSI) programmes and initiatives target young people in second level schools, Youthreach or youth organisations. YSI programmes and initiatives support young people and their educators to develop innovative solutions to tackle social issues in their communities and the wider society. Programmes and initiatives often include volunteering.

The programme promotes education for social innovation by empowering and supporting young people to realise their potential as social innovators, giving them the skills and confidence to tackle the social issues facing them, their communities and wider society.

Young Social Innovators provide a range of services to young people, including the Junior and Senior Innovation Action Programmes.

Youth Social Innovators developed a strategy in 2017 called '[Social Innovation Thinking Differently, A Plan to Develop Ireland's Innovators and Entrepreneurs who will Build a Fairer, Inclusive and Sustainable World.](#)'

The strategy features YSI's vision, history, and impact stories from young social innovators across Ireland. It also outlines YSI goals and actions for 2017-2020, and provides commentary on Ireland's potential to be a leader in social innovation, including what steps should be taken to ensure this can happen.

Funding

Young Social Innovators is funded through a number of public and private sponsors.

The Department of Rural and Community Development funds Young Social Innovators through the Dormant Accounts Fund Disbursement Scheme for the period 2017- 2019

An Gaisce – President's Awards

[Gaisce](#), or 'great achievement' in Irish, is a self-development programme for young people between the ages of 15-25 in Ireland.

There are three levels of Gaisce awards – Bronze, Silver and Gold:

- The minimum starting age for the Bronze award is 15 years and the average length is 26 weeks.
- The minimum starting age for the Silver award is 16 years and the average length is 52 weeks.
- The minimum starting age for the and Gold award is 17 years and the average is 78 weeks.

The core values of Gaisce are empowerment, inclusion and equality, respect and excellence. There are four different challenge areas in the Award Programme. Participants must participate in each challenge area for at least one hour per week to earn an Award.

The four challenge areas are:

- Community involvement
- Personal skills
- Physical recreation
- Adventure journey

The community involvement aspect of the programme usually involves volunteering.

Young people are supported in their journey to achieving their Gaisce Award by an adult supervisor called a President's Award Leader (PAL). A PAL can be any adult (other than a family member) who is involved in supporting the personal development of young people.

To date over 300,000 young people have participated in the Gaisce programme.

Funding

Gaisce is a charitable organisation that receives funding from a number of public and private sponsors. The main public sponsor is the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

Other youth volunteering programmes

There are a number of other youth volunteering programmes operating in Ireland in various areas including:

Arts:

- [Youth Theatre Ireland](#)

Charity work:

- [St Vincent de Paul \(SVP\) Youth Development Programme](#)

Environment:

- [ECO-UNESCO](#)

Emergency services:

- [Order of Malta](#)
- [Civil Defence](#)
- [Garda \(Police\) Reserves](#)

Outdoor pursuits:

- [Irish Girl Guides](#)
- [Scouting Ireland](#)

Rural:

- [Macra na Feirme](#)

Sport:

- [Gaelic Athletic Association \(GAA\)](#)
- [Football Association of Ireland \(FAI\)](#)

Youth work programmes:

- [Foróige](#), e.g. Big Brother Big Sister Programme
- [Youth Work Ireland](#)

[Localise](#) is a youth volunteering programme. The programme engages young people aged 11 plus in local community work. Localise is a not for profit company, supported by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, and the Office of Migrant Integration within the Department of Justice and Equality. Localise run the [Volunteering For All award](#). This is a nationwide initiative that recognises and affirms volunteering and charitable work undertaken by young people from all backgrounds and circumstances. This initiative is supported by the Department of Justice and Equality through the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration.

Characteristics of youth volunteering

[Statistics](#) from the national database of volunteering opportunities, iVol, (2018) show, of the over 13,148 volunteers registered, 418 (3%) were aged 16 to 17 years and 2,428 (18%) were aged 18 to 22 years.

In 2013, the [Central Statistics Office](#) (CSO) Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) found that 16.8% of 15 - 24 year olds in Ireland volunteered.

The study found that over a quarter of adults aged 15 years and above volunteered in Ireland (28.4% of persons), with a slightly higher percentage of females (28.7%) than males (28.1%) volunteering. Those aged 15 - 24 years volunteered the least amount of hours (6.9%) of all age groups.

A [Report on Young People and Volunteering in Ireland](#) by the National Youth Council of Ireland (2011) found that the Transition Year (TY) programme in schools is the main site where young people get involved in volunteering activity. This is usually through national volunteering programmes such as An Gaisce – President's Awards or the Young Social Innovators Initiative Programme.

Support to young volunteers

There are no top-level policy measures to support young volunteers established in Ireland, to cover indirect expenses participants might incur. However, individual organisations may cover volunteer's expenses. Legal rights protecting volunteers are covered by the [Civil Law Bill 2010](#).

Quality assurance

[Volunteer Ireland](#) manages Investing in Volunteers (iV), the national quality standard for good practice in volunteer management, in the Republic of Ireland. The [standards](#) provide organisations with a framework to benchmark the quality of their volunteer programme.

This includes:

- Guiding organisations in putting the necessary steps in place to improve volunteer retention;
- Helping organisations manage volunteer programmes more easily and effectively;
- Helping organisations with their reputation so volunteers want to be involved; and
- Helping organisations deliver a quality service to their clients.

Volunteer Ireland also develops and supports best practice in volunteering and Volunteer Centres. This includes the evaluation of Volunteer Centres according to a quality standard framework.

Target groups

There is currently no national youth volunteering policy in Ireland

2.5 Cross-border mobility programmes

EU programmes

The [European Solidarity Corps](#) funds and supports young people between 18 and 30 to volunteer or work in projects that benefit communities. Young people can volunteer or work, in their own country or abroad, through the Volunteering, Traineeships, Jobs, and Solidarity Projects strands. The European Solidarity Corps an initiative of the European Union.

Other programmes

[Voluntary Service International](#) (VSI) is a peace and social justice organisation working primarily through volunteering. VSI is a registered charity funded by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the European Union under the Erasmus+ programme.

VSI work with young people aged 18+ and their youth workers to:

- promote the social inclusion of young people
- raise young people's awareness of their rights, peace and social justice, sustainable development, the environment and intercultural understanding
- foster young people's active citizenship
- promote young people's civic engagement
- develop young people's skills and competencies and enhance their employability.

VSI arrange both individual and group volunteer projects, year-round, ranging from 1 week to 12 months in Ireland, Europe and in the Global South.

Areas of work include social care, community work, human rights, anti-racism, environmental protection, animal welfare, arts and culture.

VSI provide extra support and funding for many EU-funded projects to enable young people with fewer opportunities to participate.

VSO Ireland

[Voluntary Service Overseas \(VSO\) Ireland](#) is an international development organisation that 'fights poverty and inequality through volunteers in some of the world's poorest communities.'

VSO Ireland volunteer placements are aimed at professionals, requiring a qualification and at least three years professional experience.

VSO Ireland core volunteer programmes are:

- Education
- Health
- Livelihoods

VSO Ireland has sent nearly 40,000 professional volunteers on placements to date.

Legal framework applying to foreign volunteers

Foreign volunteers are eligible to volunteer in Ireland without a visa if they are over 18 years of age and an EU/EEA citizen.

Foreign volunteers who do not meet this criteria and want to come to Ireland to volunteer for a period of longer than three months need to get a volunteer visa.

A volunteer visa allows foreign volunteers to volunteer in Ireland for a period of 12 to a maximum of 24 months. Volunteers can also choose to split their time into two periods of 12 months.

Foreign volunteers need to have preclearance to volunteer in Ireland, e.g. before they arrive in the country. They cannot apply for a visa if they already live in Ireland.

You are eligible to volunteer in Ireland if:

- You are aged 18 or older
- Have been offered volunteering work by an eligible organisation

- Can be fully supported financially for the entire duration of your stay by the organisation that is inviting you to Ireland
- Are qualified and able to do the activities expected of you
- If you can provide a police clearance certificate or equivalent not more than 3 months old
- Are cleared to work with children and vulnerable adults (if necessary for your role)
- Have medical insurance from a company authorised by the Health Insurance Authority of Ireland to cover you for the duration of your stay

2.6 Raising awareness about youth volunteering opportunities

Information providers

StudentVolunteer.ie is an online resource connecting students with volunteering opportunities in civil society organisations. Organisations include community groups, charities, schools, hospitals, public bodies and NGOs across Ireland. Studentvolunteer.ie is funded by a number of third level institution members and Campus Engage.

Campus Engage is a national network set up to promote civic engagement activities in Irish higher education. It is open to all universities and Institutes of Technology staff, students, community organisations in Ireland. The network aims to strengthen community-campus relationships through volunteering, community-based research, community-based learning and knowledge exchange.

Volunteer Ireland, the national volunteer development organisation in Ireland, manages I-VOL, the national database of Irish volunteering opportunities and listings. I-VOL is a search engine that allows potential volunteers to search by location, cause and activity. Over 8,000 organisations advertise their volunteering opportunities on I-VOL, and at any given time there are about 30,000 volunteering vacancies over about 3,000 different roles.

Local Volunteer Centres are a key information provider on volunteering. There are government funded Volunteer Centres in 22 counties in Ireland. It is expected that there will be a Volunteer Centre in every county in 2020.

Volunteer Centres match individuals and groups interested in volunteering with appropriate volunteering opportunities. They also offer advice and support to both volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations through a range of services that include information provision, consultation, training and police (Garda) vetting.

Volunteering Information Services are the same as Volunteer Centres. However, there is no walk in location in Volunteering Information Services with full time staff matching volunteers and organisations. Instead, this is done through the website of each Volunteering Information Service.

Key initiatives

Volunteer Ireland runs a National Volunteering Week campaign every year. National Volunteering Week is a week dedicated to highlighting volunteering across Ireland. It is run in partnership with the network of Volunteer Centres and Volunteering Information Services.

Volunteer Ireland Awards are run by Volunteer Ireland. The aim of the awards is to celebrate and recognise volunteers. The Volunteer Ireland Awards are open to people of all ages volunteering with Irish volunteer involving organisations. Volunteers are nominated by members of the public for the awards.

2.7 Skills recognition

Policy framework

[Tipping the Balance](#) (2002) recommended: “that a key programme area within the National Centre for Volunteering will put in place the structures and resources necessary to enable volunteer-involving organisations to nominate individuals or teams to be formally recognised by the State for their voluntary work.”

It also recommended that a volunteer training programme be set up at local and national level with links to education and training institutions.

Existing arrangements

The development of a national qualifications framework (NQF) in 2003 aimed to facilitate and enhance processes for the recognition of different types of prior learning such as volunteering.

However, a [National Report for Ireland](#) as part of a Study on Volunteering in the European Union (2010:19), stated that ‘while mechanisms are in place to enable accreditation and recognition, not all volunteering organisations follow this approach.’

The 2019 Public Consultation on the Development of a National Volunteering Strategy discussed what actions should be included in a volunteering strategy to facilitate QQI assessment of volunteers for the purposes of accrediting skills.

The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) launched [Skills Summary](#) in 2019. Skills Summary is both a process and a product.

- As a process, Skills Summary aims to support young people’s learning, with a particular focus on those who may find traditional academic learning challenging, by helping them to map the learning acquired through their participation in youth work and other non-formal settings to a set of competences.
- As a product, Skills Summary supports young people to articulate the competencies they have acquired both for themselves and potential employers.

Skills Summary [resources](#) are available on how to include Skills Summary in youth work practice.

2.8 Current debates and reforms

Forthcoming policy developments

The Department of Rural and Community Development is in the process of developing a National Volunteering Strategy. A public consultation on a draft National Volunteering Strategy is expected in December 2019/January 2020. A final strategy is expected to be published in Quarter 1 of 2020.

The Department of Rural and Community Development published a ‘[Call for Input](#)’ on the development of a national volunteering strategy in December 2018. The deadline for the Call for Input was February 2019.

The Call for Input aimed to inform and seek views from stakeholders on key topics under consideration to develop a National Strategy on Volunteering.

The purpose of the Call for Input was to:

- inform stakeholders of the proposed volunteering strategy
- seek views from stakeholders on what constitutes volunteering
- invite comments and proposals on the CFI including additional and emerging considerations which may further inform the strategy

The outcome of the Call for Input will inform the department's development of the volunteering strategy and potentially the input from a proposed National Advisory Group. Over 130 submissions were received.

A [National Advisory Group on Volunteering](#) was formed by the Department of Rural and Community Development to assist the development of the volunteering strategy. The first meeting of the National Advisory Group on Volunteering took place in May 2019 where the findings of the submissions to the Call for Input were presented.

Ongoing debates

National Volunteering Strategy

There has been an ongoing debate for many years on the need for a national volunteering strategy. The main actors in the debate are Volunteer Ireland and the Department of Rural and Community Development.

The main issues highlighted by Volunteer Ireland are:

- the changing demands from volunteers;
- the lack of understanding that volunteering is not free;
- a concern that volunteering is taken for granted;
- whether or not there should be legal protection for volunteers enshrined in law;
- demographic changes; and
- lack of resourcing.

Jobseekers and volunteering

There is also an ongoing debate on jobseekers and volunteering. Jobseekers must complete an application form (VW 1 form) to engage in voluntary work. This application form is issued by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. The completed application form is sent to the Local Intreo Centre (Social Welfare Office) or Branch Office and a Deciding Officer determines whether the person may take up the work in question without affecting entitlement to the jobseeker's payment. This application form can be perceived as a barrier to volunteering for jobseekers.

Students volunteering in Transition Year

There is a debate on difficulties for some young people volunteering as part of the Transition Year (TY) programme in schools. Some young people, for example, young people from ethnic minorities might find it difficult to secure volunteering opportunities.

3. EMPLOYMENT & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The [Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection](#) is the main authority responsible for youth employment at a national level. The [Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation](#) has responsibility for enterprise and youth enterprise policy, at local level supported by the Local Enterprise Offices (LEO).

Economic Security and Opportunity is one of the five national outcome areas for young people in [Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures](#), the overarching national policy framework for children and young people.

While Ireland has a lower than average EU youth unemployment rate, it has a higher than average long term youth unemployment rate.

A number of youth employment measures were established related to commitments in the Youth Guarantee. These include:

- Youth Employment Support Scheme (YESS)
- JobsPlus for Youth
- Tús
- Employment and Youth Activation Charter

Ireland has a developed career guidance support system across the education and training system including post-primary education, higher education and further education and training.

Guidance counselling in Ireland is practiced in a holistic and integrative way, and encompasses the areas of:

- social/personal counselling,
- vocational guidance counselling and
- educational guidance counselling.

3.1 General context

Labour market situation in the country

Ireland experienced an economic crisis in 2007/8 which resulted in a recession. The Irish economy is now judged to have recovered from the financial crisis and the subsequent recession.

In 2012, the general unemployment rate was 16% and almost 50,000 Irish people emigrated. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was down to 5.6% in September 2019, 2.39 million people are at work and forced emigration has ended ([Central Statistics Office](#)).

Young people were disproportionately affected by the economic crisis. The youth unemployment rate (unemployment rate for persons aged 15-24 years) reached an all-time high of 31.6% in February 2012. The latest youth unemployment was 14.7% in August 2019.

Youth unemployment is still above the pre-crisis rate of 8% recorded in 2007 and there are also almost 6,000 young people under 26 years of age who are long term unemployed (have been in receipt of Jobseekers Allowance payments for one year or more).

Main concepts

According to a [Nevin Economic Research Institute Report](#) (2014), there are two prominent features of the Irish labour market. These are the high proportion of people in employment

with a third level degree and the low level of labour market participation for women aged 35 and over, in particular such women without a third level education.

Irish workers are more likely to be employed as 'professionals' or in sales and service occupations than their European counterparts. Irish employment is concentrated in the service sector, in both relatively high paying export orientated services, and relatively low paying services more geared to the domestic economy.

Another feature of the Irish economy is that Ireland has become a global technology hub for many ICT companies. Many of the top global software companies, technical companies and IT services companies are based in Ireland. For example, Intel, HP, IBM, Microsoft and Apple, Google, Facebook, LinkedIn, Amazon, PayPal, eBay and Twitter are all based in Ireland.

[IDA Ireland](#) states that Ireland is the second largest exporter of computer and IT services in the world. The sector accounts for more than €50 billion of exports from Ireland per annum.

3.2 Administration and governance

Governance

The [Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection](#) is the main government department responsible for youth employment and entrepreneurship in Ireland.

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs also play a role in terms of policy making on youth employment and entrepreneurship. For example, Economic Security and Opportunity is one of the five national outcome areas for young people in Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures, overarching national policy framework for children and young people.

The [Irish Congress of Trade Unions](#) had two youth committees, one in the Republic of Ireland and one in Northern Ireland. The aim of the Youth Committees are to be a link between young people and trade unions, and play a role in advising the Executive Council of Congress on issues of concern to young workers and young unemployed people.

Other actors include the [National Youth Council of Ireland](#), the representative body for voluntary youth organisations in Ireland, which advocates on the issues of youth employment and social protection for young jobseekers.

The [Union of Students in Ireland](#) (USI), the representative body for third level students in Ireland also runs campaigns and provides information on social welfare issues and young people's rights as workers.

The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection is the main authority responsible for youth employment at a national level. The Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation has responsibility for enterprise and youth enterprise policy, at local level supported by the Local Enterprise Offices (LEO).

At a regional and local level, the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection also has a network of Intreo Centres, Local and Branch Offices, Employment Services Offices and offices administering Supplementary Welfare Allowance.

Intreo is a single point of contact for all employment and income supports. Intreo offers practical, tailored employment services and supports for jobseekers and employers.

Cross-sectoral cooperation

Economic Security and Opportunity is one of the five national outcome areas for young people in Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures, overarching national policy framework for children and young people. There is cross-sectoral cooperation between all government departments in relation to this national policy framework.

3.3 Skills forecasting

Forecasting system(s)

The [Expert Group on Future Skills Needs](#) (EGFSN), advises the Government on future skills requirements and associated labour market issues that impact on the national potential for enterprise and employment growth.

EGFSN reports combine research, analysis and horizon-scanning in relation to emerging skills requirements at thematic and sectoral levels.

When producing reports, the EGFSN:

- Engage with the [Higher Education Authority](#) (HEA), [SOLAS](#), [QQI](#), the Regional Education Fora, and education and training providers.
- Assemble Steering Groups comprised of experts from relevant enterprise sectors and the education and training sector to guide the research.
- Engage with the relevant stakeholders to produce an agreed action plan to address the skills needs identified.

Membership of the EGFSN includes:

- Government Departments;
- Enterprise Development Agencies;
- Business;
- Unions;
- Further Education and Training;
- Higher Education Authority.

The Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, in conjunction with the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit, SOLAS, provides the EGFSN with research and analysis support.

Skills development

Reports produced by the EGFSN often feed into the government action plans on future skills needs. For example, the EGFSN report, [Forecasting the Future Demand for High Level ICT Skills in Ireland, 2017-2022](#), was a key input into the development of the Government's ICT Skills Action Plan, Technology Skills 2022. The report also fed into the Plan's ambition to grow the number of highly skilled ICT graduates by 47,000 over the period to meet the additional demand for new roles coming on stream.

3.4 Career guidance and counselling

Career guidance and counselling services

Ireland has a developed career guidance support system across the education and training system including post-primary education, higher education and further education and training.

At a central government level, there are a number of Divisions within the [Department of Education and Skills](#), which have some involvement with career guidance. However, a [report](#) by Indecon in 2019 states there is no explicit structural organisational mechanism which exists to co-ordinate the different areas involved in career guidance.

Career guidance policy within the Department of Education and Skills is supported by the [National Centre for Guidance in Education](#) (NCGE). The NCGE develops guidance policies and practice in education on behalf of the Department.

The [Higher Education Authority](#) (HEA) is the statutory planning and policy development body for higher education in Ireland, including policy for career guidance within the sector. With support from the HEA, the Universities and the Institutes of Technology directly provide career guidance supports for students.

Career Guidance Policy for the Further Education and Training (FET) sector is a component of the overall [Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019](#). The framework for adult career guidance is primarily within the remit of the Adult Educational Guidance Initiative (AEGI), which is provided by the 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs).

[SOLAS](#) is responsible for funding FET Adult Guidance Services. Career guidance in Post Leaving Certificate colleges is delivered through the post primary guidance allocation model. Some participants in FET will also have had engagement on careers issues and options with DEASP's Intreo service.

Guidance counselling in Ireland is practiced in a holistic and integrative way, and encompasses the areas of:

- social/personal counselling,
- vocational guidance counselling and
- educational guidance counselling.

In Ireland, measures to support youth employment involve a mix of initial assessment, career guidance and planning, education and training or work experience, aimed at increasing the capacity of the young people to access employment.

The main users of career guidance and counselling services in Ireland are:

- secondary school students;
- third level students; and
- jobseekers.

Funding

Career guidance and counselling is funded through the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

Quality assurance

The [National Skills Strategy 2025](#) proposed a review of guidance services, tools and careers information.

3.5 Traineeships and apprenticeships

Official guidelines on traineeships and apprenticeships

In Ireland, an apprenticeship is the recognised way people are trained in a craft trade or profession. Craft apprenticeships include carpentry, plumbing, motor mechanics and electrical apprenticeships.

Craft trades and professions are designated by [SOLAS](#), the Further Education and Training Authority. Apprenticeships come within the scope of the Statutory Apprenticeship system, which is organised by SOLAS in co-operation with the Department of Education and Skills, employers and unions.

A new apprenticeship programme called [Generation Apprenticeship](#) was introduced in 2016. New apprenticeships in ICT, finance and hospitality include software development, accounting technician and commis chef.

Key features of new apprenticeships in Ireland include:

- Industry-led by consortia of industry and education partners

- Lead to an award at Levels 5 to 10 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)
- Between 2-4 years in duration
- Minimum 50% on-the-job learning
- Flexible delivery – online, blended, off-the-job learning in increments/blocks
- Apprentices are employed under a formal contract of apprenticeship
- The employer pays the apprentice for the duration of the apprenticeship

The Apprenticeship [Code of Practice](#) sets out participating employers' and apprentices' duties and responsibilities. Apprentices and employers sign up to the Code of Practice as part of the statutory apprenticeship process.

Apprenticeship is overseen by a National Apprenticeship Council. The Apprenticeship Council was set up in 2014. The establishment of the Council came from recommendations from a 2014 [Review of Apprenticeship Training in Ireland](#). The main aims of the Council are the expansion of apprenticeship into new sectors of the economy and to identifying sectors where new apprenticeships can be developed.

The further education and training authority SOLAS is the lead agency responsible for apprenticeship on behalf of Government, working in close partnership with the Higher Education Authority, Quality and Qualifications Ireland, industry and education and training providers across further and higher education. SOLAS' responsibility includes maintenance of a national register of employers approved to take on apprentices and a national register of apprentices

Promoting traineeships and apprenticeships

A special female apprentice bursary to encourage specific sectors to employ female apprentices may be paid to qualifying companies wishing to train apprentices in specific occupations.

There are also a number of pre-apprenticeship programmes and a pilot "Access to Apprenticeship" programme run by Technological University (TU) Dublin.

Apprenticeships have a dedicated [website](#) with information for participants and employers.

There is also a [Central to Skills Development in Ireland Booklet](#).

A Generation Apprentices Showcase event was held in 2019. This was a signposting and recruitment event aimed at apprentices with interactive stands hosted by employers and education providers.

The [Generation Apprenticeship Competition](#) was established in 2018. The aim of the annual competition is to highlight the importance and value of apprenticeships as a route to skills development in 21st century Ireland. In 2019, taster sessions were held as part of the programme in 11 different locations around the country. This offered the opportunity to the general public to see what an apprenticeship is like in practice and what opportunities they offer.

The Higher Options event is Ireland's largest expo for second level students who are considering their post-secondary education. In 2019, there was a dedicated 'Skills Village' which featured exhibition stands, a Skills Demonstration Area and a Skills Talk Dome which hosted dedicated panel discussions about apprenticeship and skills development topics.

Recognition of learning outcomes

Craft apprenticeships completed successfully are awarded an Advanced Certificate – craft, Level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications. Apprenticeships introduced from 2016 on lead to an award between Levels 5-10 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Funding

The national apprenticeship system is funded through the National Training Fund and from the Exchequer. The Department of Education and Skills provided an additional €20m for apprenticeships in 2019, increasing from €122 million to €142 million.

Quality assurance

The 2012 [Qualifications and Quality Assurance \(Education and Training\) Act](#) underpins apprenticeships, supporting validation and quality assurance arrangements for programmes nationally.

All apprenticeship programmes leading to awards at NFQ Levels 5-9 are validated in accordance with [Core Policies and Criteria for the Validation by QQI of Programmes of Education and Training \(2016\)](#).

Employers who wish to employ apprentices are required to complete an approval process. Employers must demonstrate that they can provide quality, relevant on-the-job apprentice training as per the requirements of the national apprenticeship programme and the statutory apprenticeship system overall.

The approval process is completed online and through a site visit to the employer's premises from an 'authorised officer' working on behalf of SOLAS, the agency with statutory responsibility for national apprenticeships.

3.6 Integration of young people in the labour market

Youth employment measures

A number of youth employment measures were established related to commitments in the Youth Guarantee. These include:

- Youth Employment Support Scheme (YESS)
- JobsPlus for Youth
- Tús
- Employment and Youth Activation Charter

The Youth Employment Support Scheme (YESS)

The [Youth Employment Support Scheme](#) (YESS) is a work experience placement programme which is specifically targeted at young jobseekers aged 18-24 years of age who are long-term unemployed or who face barriers to employment.

The YESS aims to provide jobseekers with the opportunity to learn basic work and social skills in a supportive environment while on a work placement. Over 400 young job seekers have participated in YESS to date.

JobsPlus Youth

[JobsPlus](#) is an employer incentive which encourages employers to offer employment to jobseekers on the Live Register who have been out of work by giving employers cash incentives.

Under the Youth Guarantee the qualifying period for jobseekers to avail of JobsPlus for those aged under 25 has been reduced from 12 months to 4 months. It is envisaged that this initiative will support additional jobs for under 25s with high barriers to employment.

Community Employment Schemes

[Community Employment \(CE\) schemes](#) provide part-time temporary work in their local communities, including opportunities for training and development as a stepping-stone back to employment, for people in receipt of a range of social welfare payments, including

those on a long-term jobseeker's payment. The general qualifying age for CE for those on the Live Register was reduced from 25 to 21 years in 2017.

Tús

[Tús](#) is a community work placement scheme for unemployed people who are selected to participate by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. The Youth Guarantee made provision for an increase in places for longer-term unemployed youth by reserving 1,000 Tús placements for 18-24 year olds in 2014.

Employment and Youth Activation Charter

The [Employment and Youth Activation Charter](#) was launched in 2014 as part of the Youth Guarantee commitments. Employers who sign this Charter commit that at least 50% of candidates considered for interview will be taken from the Live Register. Employers also implement a selection of measures which seek to prime those who are out of work to take up jobs.

Vocational Training and Opportunities Scheme (VTOS)

The [Vocational Training and Opportunities Scheme](#) (VTOS) provides a range of courses to meet the education and training needs of unemployed people. To be eligible for the scheme, participants must be over 21 years of age, unemployed and getting certain social welfare payments for at least six months. The scheme is aimed in particular at unemployed people who are early school-leavers.

The aim of the scheme is to give participants opportunities to improve their general level of education, gain certification, develop their skills and prepare for employment, self-employment and further education and training. VTOS is operated through local Education and Training Boards.

Youthreach

The [Youthreach programme](#) provides opportunities for early school leavers in terms of basic education, personal development, vocational training and work experience. Learners can gain Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) qualifications that are equal to the Junior and Applied Leaving Certificate. Learners can also progress to other skills training such as apprenticeship courses.

Skills for Life Employment Support Scheme

The [Skills for Life Employment Support Scheme](#) is aimed at young people aged between 18 and 24 years who want to train with the Irish Defence Forces. The scheme gives participants an opportunity to learn new skills and gain qualifications that will help them to pursue further education or to enter the workforce. The scheme runs over a ten week period.

Youth Employability Initiative

The [Youth Employability Initiative](#) is a fund of up to €1 million which aims to provide funding to voluntary youth services to support programmes that target young people to improve their employability and achieve career goals. The initiative is supported by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) and funding from the Dormant Accounts Fund which is overseen by the Department of Rural and Community Development. Funding of the initiative is delivered by local Education and Training Boards.

Flexicurity measures focusing on young people

Flexicurity is an integrated strategy for enhancing both flexibility and security in the labour market.

A 2016 [report on the Flexicurity System in Ireland](#) found that 'the flexicurity system is not operating as it should in Ireland and there seems to be very little political impetus to change the status quo.' In addition, 'in relation to the requirement of a modern social

welfare system, it is quite clear that the Irish system, in its current format, is not designed to promote the ideals of the flexicurity system.'

Reconciliation of private and working life for young people

In Ireland, there is no legislation that allows employees to apply for flexible working arrangements. Flexible working arrangements are usually at the discretion of the employer.

However, the Civil Service in Ireland does operate flexible work arrangements. These include:

- Flexible working hours
- Work sharing
- Shorter working year scheme for civil servants
- Career breaks
- Special Incentive Career Break Scheme for Civil Servants
- E-Working and teleworking

Guidance for employers on part-time work is set out in [The Code of Practice on Access to Part-Time Work](#). It sets out the opportunities, range of jobs and policies expected to improve access to part-time work.

The rights of part-time employees are covered under the [Protection of Employees \(Part-Time Work\) Act 2001](#).

Funding of schemes/initiatives

The Youth Employment Support Scheme (YESS) is co-funded by the Irish Government, the European Social Fund and the Youth Employment Initiative as part of the ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020. The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection allocated €5m to the Youth Employment Support Scheme in 2019, which it is projected will support approximately 1,000 young jobseekers.

Quality assurance

As part of the Youth Employment Support Scheme (YESS), a designated case officer liaises with the jobseeker and Host throughout the period of the placement, to monitor how well it is progressing for both parties and provide appropriate advice/support.

This includes a formal review meeting after two months, which facilitates the case officer in deciding whether to approve a request for an extension of the duration to six months.

YESS also identifies learning and development outcomes for each placement. These include both soft employability skills and hard skills acquired and/or demonstrated during the placement. The host organisation completes an assessment for the participant at the end of the placement.

3.7 Cross-border mobility in employment, entrepreneurship and vocational opportunities

Programmes and schemes for cross-border mobility

Experience Your Europe (EYE)

As part of the Youth Guarantee, European Employment Services - [EURES Ireland](#) - has been tasked to provide apprenticeship/work opportunities for the 18-24 age group, who are three months or longer on the live register.

One of the specific actions Ireland outlined to implement this recommendation is to introduce a programme for 18-24 year olds.

The EURES - Experience Your Europe (EYE) Programme offers the following options:

- **Option 1:** 12 month sponsored Internship in another European country. To gain experience and develop language skills so that a person can apply for job opportunities in Ireland on their return.
- **Option 2:** Assisting job seekers who wish to work in Europe
- **Option 3:** Apprenticeship Programme in Germany. Supports include - Intensive language training in Ireland, Induction Day - CV preparation/Interview Skills, Training allowance/Settling in allowance and Travel Expenses.

Your First EURES Job

[Your first EURES job](#) is a European Union job mobility scheme to help young people (18-35 years of age) find work and to help employers find workers in Europe.

Your first EURES job is based on support from national employment services – information, job search, recruitment, funding – for both young jobseekers and businesses interested in recruiting from outside their home country.

Your first EURES job offers jobseekers support in taking up employment in the EU, Norway or Iceland including:

- Financial support (allowances for travel to an interview, relocation to another country and recognition of qualifications)
- Language training Allowance (if required)
- Induction Programme to include: information on living and working abroad,
- CV preparation/ Interview skills

EURES is co-funded by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and the European Social Fund as part of the ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020.

EU Erasmus Programme for Young Entrepreneurs

The [Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs scheme](#) aims to enhance entrepreneurship, improve international competitiveness of European SME's and to support potential start-up's and newly established SME's in participating countries, including Ireland.

Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs helps provide aspiring European entrepreneurs with the skills necessary to start and/or successfully run a small business in Europe. New entrepreneurs gather and exchange knowledge and business ideas with an experienced entrepreneur, with whom they stay and collaborate for a period of 1 to 6 months. The stay is partly financed by the European Commission.

Legal framework

Most non-EEA nationals must have an employment permit to work in Ireland. The employment permits scheme is governed by the [Employment Permits \(Amendment\) Act 2014](#).

There are 9 types of employment permits in Ireland. These include:

- A General Employment Permit
- A Critical Skills Employment Permit
- Dependant/Partner/Spouse Employment Permit
- Reactivation Employment Permit
- Contract for Services Employment Permit

- Intra-Company Transfer Employment Permit
- Internship Employment Permit
- Sport and Cultural Employment Permit
- Exchange Agreement Employment Permit

The rights of young workers are protected by the [Protection of Young Persons \(Employment\) Act 1996](#). The aim of the Act is to protect the health of young workers and ensure that work carried out during school years does not put young people's education at risk.

The Act sets minimum age limits for employment, rest intervals and maximum working hours and prohibits the employment of anyone under 18 on late-night work. The Act also requires employers to keep specified records for workers under 18.

There are no nationality conditions attached to Irish social insurance or social assistance schemes. However, a habitual residence condition applies for certain social assistance schemes and for child benefit. Habitual residence means a person is residing in Ireland or has a proven close link to the state.

Where a person is working in Ireland since coming from an EU or EEA country, this condition does not apply for Child Benefit, One-Parent Family Payment or in certain circumstances for Supplementary Welfare Allowance.

For contributory benefits a person must satisfy the same contribution and other conditions, but the contribution conditions may be satisfied by counting both your current insurance record and that in previous EU or EEA countries.

3.8 Development of entrepreneurship competence

Policy framework

There is no specific national strategy for the development of entrepreneurship competence and of an entrepreneurial mind-set among young people.

A [National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship in Ireland](#) was published in 2014. The Statement is aimed at the general population. The Statement defines entrepreneurship as 'an individual's creative capacity to identify an opportunity and pursue it in order to produce new value or economic success.

The Statement:

- identifies Ireland's current skills profile;
- provides a strategic vision and specific objectives for Ireland's future skills requirements, and;
- sets out a road map for how the vision and objectives can be achieved.

The three main aims of the Statement are:

1. **Building the pipeline**- Increase the numbers of entrepreneurs, who will actively engage in creating high quality business startups and jobs across the country;
2. **Building entrepreneurial capability**- Develop entrepreneurial skills among the general population and nurture entrepreneurial thinking and talent, and;
3. **Building the right conditions**- Ensure survival and growth of entrepreneurial start-ups.

Formal learning

There is no specific national strategy in entrepreneurship education in general education. However, there are a number of ongoing initiatives.

The [National Skills Strategy](#) was published by the Department of Education and Skills in January 2016. The Strategy includes a commitment to develop an Entrepreneurship Education Policy Statement which will inform the development of entrepreneurship guidelines for schools.

Local Enterprise Offices run Student Entrepreneurship Initiatives in secondary schools. These include:

- The [Student Enterprise Programme](#): Each year over 22,000 secondary level students all over Ireland get to find out what it's like to run their own business by taking part in the Local Enterprise Offices Student Enterprise Programme.
- [Foróige Network for teaching entrepreneurship](#)
- The Young Entrepreneur Programme
- Transition Year students [Get up and Go mini company project](#)
- [BT Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition](#) (Primary schools can also participate in showcasing Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics projects for evaluation).
- [BT Young Scientist Business Bootcamp](#) (In association with Nova UCD). An extension of the BT Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition. A four-day innovation and skills camp welcomes a number of second-level students from across Ireland who demonstrate an ability to understand how and why a simple idea can be developed into a commercially-viable enterprise. The students are selected from over 1,200 secondary school students who competed in this year's BT Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition.

Non-formal and informal learning

Foróige run the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE) youth entrepreneurship education and development programme. Foróige NFTE operates both in-school and out-of-school programmes. The aim of the programme is to help young people in disadvantaged communities to develop core skills in business and enterprise.

Educators support in entrepreneurship education

The Student Enterprise Programme provides teacher resources to support secondary school students taking part in the Student Enterprise Programme. The resources include a teachers' manual, student workbook, sample student business reports and videos including helpful tips from successful entrepreneurs.

Free teacher resource packs are available from Local Enterprise Offices and through the student enterprise [website](#).

3.9 Start-up funding for young entrepreneurs

Access to information

[Local Enterprise Offices](#) offer advice, information and support to Startups and growing businesses.

Local Enterprise Office supports include:

- Start-your-own-business training courses;
- Market research information;
- Business planning advice and templates;
- Access to experienced business mentors;
- Feasibility grants;
- Co-investment.

[Enterprise Ireland](#) also offers a range of supports and grants to Irish businesses. Enterprise Ireland is the government organisation responsible for the development and growth of Irish enterprises in world markets.

Enterprise Ireland funding programmes are open to anyone from entrepreneurs with a business idea that have the potential for a Startup to large companies that want to expand their business activities, improve efficiency and grow sales.

Access to capital

The [Back to Work Enterprise Allowance](#) is designed to provide a monetary incentive for people who are long-term dependent on social welfare payments to make engagement in self-employment financially attractive and viable, while allowing them to retain a reducing proportion of their qualifying social welfare payment over two years (100% in year 1 and 75% in year 2).

The enterprise officers of Local Development Companies and INTREO Case Officers work closely with applicants in developing business plans and projections, and providing continuing support to individual start-ups.

3.10 Promotion of entrepreneurship culture

Special events and activities

Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur (IBYE) is a nationwide competition open to people ages 18-35 years with an innovative business idea, new start-up or established business.

The [IBYE programme](#) is run by the 31 Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) with the support of the Department of Enterprise and Innovation and Enterprise Ireland.

IBYE is run across three categories:

- Best Business Idea;
- Best Start-Up Business;
- Best Established Business.

As part of the programme, up to 450 young entrepreneurs are invited by the LEOs to attend free regional 'Entrepreneur Bootcamps' to help them develop their business and new venture ideas.

Networks and partnerships

The [Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship](#) (NFTE) is a cutting edge, world recognised, youth entrepreneurship education and development programme. It is managed and provided by Foróige in Ireland and is affiliated to NFTE International.

3.11 Current debates and reforms

Forthcoming policy developments

In January 2018, the Minister for Education and Skills announced a review of career guidance in post-primary schools, further education and training centres and higher education institutions.

The purpose of the review was to ensure there is a provision of high quality, relevant career guidance support service to all students from post –primary level up to further and higher education.

The '[Indecon Review of Career Guidance](#)' Report was published in April 2019.

The report contains 18 recommendations under four themes:

- improvement in career guidance tools and career information;
- better engagement with enterprise;
- Inclusion;
- enhanced governance structures.

The recommendations emphasise the need for evidence-based reform and the involvement of all stakeholders.

Report recommendations include:

- Establish a support organisation with a new approach to guidance services which makes best use of digital and online technology.
- Strengthen and promote a user-friendly centralised careers portal.
- Initiate supports for employers to facilitate career guidance such as visits to industry and schools, guest lectures and quality work experience.
- Provide access for special education and adult learners to the proposed enhanced central career support services, including information on labour market opportunities.
- Promoting inclusion by prioritising the allocation of resources, including guidance teachers for learners most in need of assistance.

Ongoing debates

Long-term youth unemployment

There is an ongoing debate on long-term youth unemployment. The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI), in a 2019 [pre-budget submission](#), raised concerns about the 8,915 young people who are currently long-term unemployed (for 12 months or more).

While Ireland has a lower than average EU youth unemployment rate, a 2017 [Eurofound Report](#) highlights Ireland's higher than average long term youth unemployment rate.

NYCI has called on the Irish Government to 'increase investment in the education, training and access to apprenticeships to halve long-term youth unemployment by the end of 2019.'

Equality for young job seekers

In recent years, social welfare payments to young unemployed people under 26 years of age were reduced to a lower level than adult unemployed people.

NYCI has called on the government to restore the full adult rate of €198 to young people on Jobseeker's Allowance over the next two budgets. According to NYCI, 'the imposition of lower rates on young jobseekers is contrary to the provisions of Article 40.1 of the Irish Constitution, which dictates that all citizens should be treated equally and must be addressed.'

Young people in precarious employment

The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) has raised concerns in recent years about young people in precarious employment in the labour market. This includes young people engaged in internships, temporary work, part-time jobs, zero-hours contracts and sub-contracting. A 2013 Eurofound report found that the number of young people aged 15-24 in temporary employment in Ireland increased from 11.2% in 2004 to 34.9% in 2012.

In its [policy proposal](#), NYCI calls for a "Fair Work Certificate" for employers who want to avail of public funding or grants for job creation. A Fair Work Certificate would be similar to the Tax Clearance Certificate. According to NYCI, it would ensure that public funds are only given to employers that support decent pay, and stable and good quality employment.

Youth Guarantee

In its 2019 pre-budget submission, the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) calls on the Irish Government to review current implementation of the Youth Guarantee and to set out ambitious targets for delivery of the initiative from 2016-2020.

NYCI is concerned at the overall slow pace of implementation four years into the process. They are in agreement with the report of the European Court of Auditors on the implementation of the Youth Guarantee scheme in Ireland which found that the results to date from the Youth Guarantee in Ireland 'had fallen short of expectations.'

Lack of career guidance teachers

There is an ongoing debate on the lack of career guidance teachers in secondary level schools. The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) have called on the Irish Government to develop a National Strategy for a Comprehensive Guidance Service for Young People in its [policy proposal](#).

There is also a debate on the lack of guidance counsellors for young people with special educational needs in special schools.

4. SOCIAL INCLUSION

The [Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection](#) is the main government department responsible for policy-making on social inclusion.

The [Social Inclusion Division](#) within the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection supports the Minister and Government in developing and implementing Government strategies on social inclusion.

There is no specific national strategy for the social inclusion of young people. However, the social inclusion of young people is promoted through a number of strategies including:

- [National Youth Strategy](#);
- [Better Outcomes Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People in Ireland](#);
- [LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy](#);
- [Updated National Action Plan for Social Inclusion](#);
- [National Strategy for Women and Girls](#);
- [National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy](#).

Objective 8 of the National Youth Strategy states, “young people are a particular focus in policies that address social inclusion and poverty.”

The definition of poverty and social exclusion is set out in the [National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016](#):

‘People are living in poverty if their income and resources (material, cultural and social) are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living which is regarded as acceptable by Irish society generally. As a result of inadequate income and resources people may be excluded and marginalised from participating in activities which are considered the norm for other people in society.’

The main challenges to social inclusion in Ireland currently are child poverty, homelessness and young people living in Direct Provision and Emergency Accommodation Centres.

4.1 General context

Main challenges to social inclusion

Child poverty

According to [Poverty Focus Ireland 2019](#), an annual report by Social Justice Ireland, one in five children in Ireland are living in poverty. This means that around 230,000 children in Ireland are living in families with incomes below the poverty line.

Child and youth homelessness

Child and youth homelessness is a key challenge to social inclusion in Ireland. In July 2019, [homeless statistics](#) show there were 1,741 families and over 3,000 children living in emergency accommodation in Ireland.

The number of young people aged 18 - 24 years who are homeless has more than doubled between 2014 and 2019. According to the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government [figures](#), there were 905 young people aged 18-24 years who are homeless in Ireland in July 2019. In July 2014 there were 440 young people aged 18-24 years experiencing homelessness in Ireland.

Figures do not include 'hidden homelessness' among young people. For example, young people who are 'sofa surfing', living in squats, overcrowded accommodation, precarious situations, etc.

Young people living in Direct Provision and Emergency Accommodation Centres

Young people living in [Direct Provision](#) and Emergency Accommodation Centres is another key challenge to social inclusion in Ireland. Direct provision is a means of meeting the basic needs of food and shelter for asylum seekers directly while their claims for refugee status, subsidiary protection or appeals for leave to remain are being processed in Ireland. In 2019, there were more than 2,400 children and young people currently living in Direct Provision, many for over three years. Direct Provision and Emergency Accommodation Centres tend to be isolated, residents have to share rooms, and most do not have the facilities to cook for themselves or their families.

Main concepts

A definition of poverty and social exclusion is set out in the [National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016](#):

'People are living in poverty if their income and resources (material, cultural and social) are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living which is regarded as acceptable by Irish society generally. As a result of inadequate income and resources people may be excluded and marginalised from participating in activities which are considered the norm for other people in society.'

The official Government approved poverty measure used in Ireland is consistent poverty. This measure was developed independently by the [Economic and Social Research Institute \(ESRI\)](#).

The measure identifies the proportion of people, from those with an income below a certain threshold (less than 60% of median income), who are deprived of two or more goods or services considered essential for a basic standard of living.

These goods or services include the following:

1. Two pairs of strong shoes
2. A warm waterproof overcoat
3. Buy new not second-hand clothes
4. Eat meals with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day
5. Have a roast joint or its equivalent once a week
6. Had to go without heating during the last year through lack of money
7. Keep the home adequately warm
8. Buy presents for family or friends at least once a year
9. Replace any worn out furniture
10. Have family or friends for a drink or meal once a month
11. Have a morning, afternoon or evening out in the last fortnight, for entertainment

4.2 Administration and governance

Governance

The [Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection](#) is the main government department responsible for policy-making on social inclusion.

The [Social Inclusion Division](#) within the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection supports the Minister and Government in developing and implementing

Government strategies for preventing, reducing and ultimately eliminating poverty and social exclusion and in promoting greater social inclusion and social cohesion in collaboration with other stakeholders, including, in particular, people experiencing poverty.

Cross-sectoral cooperation

The [Social Inclusion Forum](#) is part of the Government's structures to monitor and evaluate implementation of NAP inclusion and progress on the NSTPR.

The Social Inclusion Forum annual event is the principal institutional forum for wider public consultation and discussion on social inclusion issues. It provides an opportunity for engagement between officials, community and voluntary organisations, and people experiencing poverty in relation to policy.

4.3 Strategy for the social inclusion of young people

Existence of a national strategy on social inclusion

There is no specific national strategy for the social inclusion of young people. However, the social inclusion of young people is promoted through a number of strategies including:

- National Youth Strategy;
- Better Outcomes Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People in Ireland;
- LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy;
- Updated National Action Plan for Social Inclusion;
- National Strategy for Women and Girls
- National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy.

The National Youth Strategy

The [National Youth Strategy](#) was introduced in 2015 and its timeframe is from 2015 to 2020.

Scope and contents

Objective 8 of the National Youth Strategy states, "young people are a particular focus in policies that address social inclusion and poverty."

The National Youth Strategy is a universal strategy for all young people in Ireland. However, it also provides for the needs of young people experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, the poorest outcomes.

Therefore, marginalised/disadvantaged young people are identified as a target group within the National Youth Strategy. Marginalised/disadvantaged young people include but are not limited to:

- Young people marginalised by location or geography or socioeconomic reasons;
- Young Travellers, Roma, young people from ethnic or religious minorities;
- Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers;
- Young people with disabilities or mental health issues;
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) young people;
- Young carers;
- Young people in conflict with the law;
- Young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET);

- Young parents;
- Young people in care;
- Young people in direct provision; and
- Lone parents under the age of 25 years.

Responsible authority

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs is the government department responsible for The National Youth Strategy.

Revisions/updates

The National Youth Strategy was preceded by the [National Children's Strategy: Our Children- Their Lives](#) (2000 - 2010). This was the first National Children's Strategy in Ireland.

The National Children's Strategy targeted children under 0 - 18 years of age whereas the National Youth Strategy targets children and young people aged 10- 24 years. The National Youth Strategy also differs from the National Children's Strategy as it takes a cross-government, cross-sectoral, whole-of-society approach to youth policy.

A review of the National Youth Strategy was conducted in terms of progress, development and implementation as part of a [mid-term review](#) of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: National Policy Framework for Children and Young People in Ireland.

Better Outcomes Brighter Futures

[Better Outcomes Brighter Futures: National Policy Framework for Children and Young People in Ireland](#) was introduced in 2014 and its timeframe is from 2014 to 2020.

Scope and contents

One of the key guiding principles of Better Outcomes Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People in Ireland is equality.

In relation to this principle, the policy (2014: 20) states "the diversity of children's experiences, abilities, identities and cultures is acknowledged and reducing inequalities is promoted throughout Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures as a means of improving outcomes and achieving greater social inclusion."

One of the government commitments mentioned in the policy framework is to "strengthen social inclusion measures and re-invigorate efforts to improve educational outcomes among, and integration of, Travellers, Roma and migrant children and young people, and all those with special needs." (2014: 71),

Responsible authority

The [Department of Children and Youth Affairs](#) (DCYA) is the government department responsible for this policy framework.

Revisions/updates

A mid-term review of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: National Policy Framework for Children and Young People in Ireland by the Implementation Team in the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

It states that for the second phase of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures, there should be a renewed, succinct approach focusing on important priorities such as Child Poverty, Child Homelessness, Mental Health and Wellbeing, Prevention and Early Intervention and the progression of the Early Years Strategy, amongst other issues.

LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy 2018-2020

The [LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy](#) was introduced in 2018 and its timeframe is from 2018 to 2020.

Scope and contents

Strategic Goals of the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy are:

- Goal 1 - Create a safe, supportive and inclusive environment for LGBTI+ young people
- Goal 2 - Improve the physical, mental and sexual health of LGBTI+ young people
- Goal 3 - Develop the research and data environment to better understand the lives of LGBTI+ young people

The key objectives of the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy are:

- Create a more supportive and inclusive environment for LGBTI+ young people in formal education settings.
- Create safe environments for LGBTI+ young people.
- Make all youth services more inclusive of LGBTI+ young people and provide accessible LGBTI+ youth services nationally.
- Ensure equal employment opportunity and an inclusive work environment for LGBTI+ young people.
- Provide a more supportive and inclusive environment that encourages positive LGBTI+ representation and participation in culture, society and sport, and reduces LGBTI+ stigma.
- Expand and develop supports to parents and families of LGBTI+ young people.
- Provide capacity building measures among service providers to improve their understanding of, and ability to engage with, LGBTI+ young people.
- Address gaps in current legislation and policies and ensure inclusion of LGBTI+ young people in future legislation and policy development.
- Address fragmentation in funding and support networking of organisations to work collaboratively.
- Provide an inclusive physical environment for transgender and intersex young people.
- Respond effectively to the mental health needs of LGBTI+ young people.
- Strengthen sexual health services and education to respond to the needs of LGBTI+ young people, including in the area of sexual consent.
- Improve the physical and mental health of transgender young people.
- Improve the understanding of, and the response to, the physical and mental health needs of intersex young people.
- Enhance the quality of LGBTI+ data and commission research to ensure evidence-informed policy and service delivery.

Responsible authority

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs is the government department responsible for the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy.

Revisions/updates

There have been no revisions or updates to this strategy.

The Updated National Action Plan for Social Inclusion

The [Updated National Action Plan for Social Inclusion](#) was introduced in 2015 and its time frame was from 2015 to 2017.

Scope and contents

In terms of goals for young people, the Updated National Action Plan for Social Inclusion focuses on literacy and numeracy (goal 2), participation in education (goal 3), youth employment (goal 7), social housing (goal 11), primary healthcare (goal 12) and migrant integration (goal 13).

Responsible authority

The [Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection](#) is the government department responsible for this action plan.

Revisions/updates

The Irish Government first introduced a National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) entitled Sharing in Progress, 1997-2007. This Strategy subsequently led to the development of the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion in 2007 – 2016. The Irish government is currently in the process of developing a new National Action Plan for Social Inclusion.

National Strategy for Women and Girls

[The National Strategy for Women and Girls](#) was introduced in 2017 and timeframe is from 2017 to 2020.

Scope and contents

The overall goal of the Strategy is 'to change attitudes and practices preventing women's and girls' full participation in education, employment and public life, at all levels, and to improve services for women and girls, with priority given to the needs of those experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, the poorest outcomes.'

It is proposed to advance this goal through six high-level objectives:

- Objective 1: Advance socio-economic equality for women and girls
- Objective 2: Advance the physical and mental health and wellbeing of women and girls
- Objective 3: Ensure the visibility in society of women and girls, and their equal and active citizenship
- Objective 4: Advance women in leadership at all levels
- Objective 5: Combat violence against women
- Objective 6: Embed gender equality in decision-making

Responsible authority

The Department of Justice and Equality is the government department responsible for this strategy.

Revisions/updates

There have been no revisions or updates to this strategy.

National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy

The [National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy](#) was introduced in 2017 and its timeframe is from 2017 to 2021.

Scope and contents

'Children and youth' is a key theme of the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021. Other themes addressed in the strategy include cultural identity, education, employment and the Traveller economy, health, gender equality, anti-discrimination and equality, accommodation, Traveller and Roma Communities, and public services.

Objectives of the strategy related to Children and Youth include:

- Traveller and Roma children should be consulted appropriately in the development of policy, legislation, research and services.
- Appropriate, culturally sensitive, preventative and early intervention supports should be available for Traveller and Roma families, if and when required, to enable children to live in a safe and secure environment.
- Traveller and Roma children should have opportunities to participate in culturally appropriate youth programmes that meet their needs.
- Traveller and Roma children should have opportunities to participate in culturally appropriate youth programmes that meet their needs.
- There should be a special focus on Traveller and Roma children's rights.

Responsible authority

The Department of Justice and Equality is the government department responsible for this strategy.

Revisions/updates

The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (2017 – 2021) was preceded by the National Traveller and Roma Integration Strategy 2011. There was a change of emphasis from integration to inclusion between the National Traveller and Roma Integration Strategy 2011 and the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (2017 – 2021). This was decided following discussions with Traveller and Roma representatives and other relevant stakeholders

4.4 Inclusive programmes for young people

Programmes for vulnerable young people

In 2005 the Department of Education and Skills introduced [DEIS - Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools: an action plan for educational inclusion](#).

The plan brought together a number of programmes targeting educational disadvantage throughout the public schools' system under the framework of Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS)

DEIS is an integrated approach to the issue of educational inclusion which provides for a standardised system for identifying and regularly reviewing levels of disadvantage and a new integrated School Support Programme (SSP) to bring together and build upon previous schemes and programmes.

The School Support Programme includes the [Home School Community Liaison Scheme](#) (HSCL) and the School Completion Programme (SCP). The School Completion Programme aims to help students from disadvantaged areas stay in school to complete their Leaving Certificate (final year exams).

The Home-School Community Liaison Scheme aims to improve cooperation between home, schools and communities to advance the educational interests of disadvantaged children.

A number of third level institutes of education have education access programmes. For example, Trinity College Dublin (TCD) run [Trinity Access Programmes](#) (TAP) that 'support people from areas with low progression rates to higher education to reach their full educational potential.' [Dublin City University \(DCU\) Access Service](#) is a access programme that 'provides equal access to and supports progression through DCU. DCU also work in partnership with the local community to engage with local schools and communities to raise awareness of higher education opportunities.

Funding

DEIS is part of the School Excellence Fund which was allocated a budget of 2.6 million in 2019.

Quality Assurance

The process of identifying schools for participation in DEIS is managed by the [Educational Research Centre](#) (ERC) on behalf of the Department and supported by quality assurance work co-ordinated through the Department's regional offices and the Inspectorate.

4.5 Initiatives promoting social inclusion and raising awareness

Intercultural awareness

NYCI's [Equality and Intercultural Programme](#) supports youth services to embed equality, inclusion, diversity and interculturalism into youth work settings. The programme provides:

- training programmes,
- resources,
- policy development,
- advice, and
- networking opportunities.

The programmes also conducts research to support youth work organisations to engage more effectively with young people from minority ethnic backgrounds. NYCI also runs an Equality and Inclusion Support Network.

The [Young Social Innovators \(YSI\) programme](#) aims to raise social awareness among 15-18 year olds in Ireland so that they might become effective champions for social justice. YSI is supported by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. YSI projects are showcased at an annual event usually held in May.

There are a number of other youth work programmes that promote social inclusion:

- [Gaisce](#)- The President's Award is a self-development programme for young people
- [St Vincent de Paul \(SVP\) Youth Development Programme](#) is a programme designed for use in school/youth groups that focuses on social action
- [ECO-UNESCO](#) is Ireland's Environmental Education and Youth Organisation that works to conserve the environment and empower young people.

Young people's rights

Ombudsman for Children's Office

The [Ombudsman for Children's Office](#) (OCO) is a human rights institution that promotes the rights and welfare of young people under 18 years of age living in Ireland. The OCO also investigates complaints about services provided to children by public organisations. The service is free and independent.

The OCO advise the Government and others to help make sure laws and plans respect children's rights. They encourage public organisations to promote children's rights in the work that they do. They also carry research to get a better understanding of issues that are important in children and young people's lives.

The role and powers of the OCO are set out in the [Ombudsman for Children Act](#) (2002). The Ombudsman for Children is a presidential appointment and reports directly to the Oireachtas (legislature of Ireland).

Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC)

The [Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission](#) (IHREC) is Ireland's national human rights and equality institution. IHREC is an independent public body that accounts to the Oireachtas, with a mandate established under the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014. The key aim of IHREC is to protect and promote human rights and equality in Ireland and build a culture of respect for human rights, equality and intercultural understanding in the State.

Key initiatives to safeguard democracy and prevent radicalisation leading to violent extremism

There are currently no national initiatives to safeguard democracy and prevent radicalisation leading to violent extremism.

4.6 Access to quality services

Housing

According to the [National Youth Council in Ireland](#) (NYCI), many young people living in Ireland are either unable to afford to move out of home or struggle to access affordable housing. Youth homelessness is also an increasing issue as young people find it difficult to access affordable and quality housing in the private rented sector and/or the social housing sector.

Young people leaving care are at higher risk of social exclusion and homelessness. [Tusla](#) provide assistance to young people up to the age of 21 who have been in care, or up to 23 years if they are completing an education course. Aftercare plans can include arrangements for accommodation.

Social services

Young people can access social services through local Social Welfare Offices. Information on social services can be accessed through local Citizens Information Centres. The [Citizens Information website](#) also provides comprehensive information on social services.

The [Housing Assistance Payment](#) (HAP) is a form of social housing support for people who have a long-term housing need. Recipients must qualify for social housing support to be eligible for HAP.

Health care

Ireland has a government funded public healthcare system called the [Health Service Executive](#) (HSE). A person living in Ireland for at least one year is considered by the Health Service Executive (HSE) to be 'ordinarily resident' and is entitled to either full eligibility (Category 1) or limited eligibility (Category 2) for health services.

People who have not been resident in Ireland for at least one year must satisfy the HSE that it is their intention to remain for a minimum of one year in order to be eligible for health services. Dependants of such individuals must also contact the HSE to confirm their eligibility.

Category 1 - People with Medical Cards

Over 30% of people in Ireland have medical cards. Medical Cards allow people to get a wide range of health services and medicines free of charge.

Category 2 - People without Medical Cards

- People without medical cards can still access a wide range of community and hospital health services, either free of charge or at reduced cost.

Financial services

The social welfare system in Ireland is divided into three main types of payments:

- Social insurance payments
- Means-tested payments
- Universal payments

The main target groups of social welfare payments are:

- One-parent families
- Job-seekers
- People with a disability
- Carers

Quality assurance

The [Health Information and Quality Authority](#) (HIQA) is an independent authority that deals with quality assurance for people using health and social care services in Ireland.

HIQA's role is to develop standards, inspect and review health and social care services and support informed decisions on how services are delivered. HIQA's reports to the Minister for Health and the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

HIQA inspects children and young people's services including:

- Tusla's child protection and welfare services to measure their compliance with the National Standards for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2012)
- Tusla and private foster care services to measure their compliance with the National Standards for Foster Care (2003) and the regulations.
- Tusla's statutory children's residential centres to measure their compliance with the National Standards for Children's Residential Centres (2018).
- Tusla's special care units to ensure that services meet the requirements set out in the Health Act 2007, regulations and the national standards, in order to be registered to operate.
- Oberstown Children Detention Campus to measure their compliance with the Standards & Criteria for Children Detention Schools (2008)

HIQA also inspects all of the above services for the implementation of [Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children \(2017\)](#).

4.7 Youth work to foster social inclusion

Special Projects to assist Disadvantaged Youth is a scheme of grants made available by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in respect of special out-of-school projects for disadvantaged young people.

Priority is given to projects in the spheres of special youth work initiatives, young homeless people, young substance abusers and young travellers.

Grants are allocated to organisations and groups for specific projects which seek to address the needs of young people who are disadvantaged, due to a combination of all or some of the following factors:

- High youth population
- Youth unemployment
- Dependence on social welfare/unemployment assistance
- Social isolation
- Drug/substance abuse
- Homelessness (including temporary homelessness)
- Problems of juvenile crime, vandalism and truancy
- Failure or non-existence of mainline youth services
- Inadequate take-up of ordinary educational opportunities

Garda (Police) Youth Diversion Programme

The [Irish Youth Justice Service](#) (IYJS) funds youth organisations and projects to provide services to young people aged under 18 years who find themselves in conflict with the law.

The Garda (Police) Youth Diversion Programme supports a network of [Garda Youth Diversion Projects](#) (GYDPs). GYDPs are community-based multi-agency crime prevention initiatives which seek to divert young people who have become involved in crime/anti-social behaviour and to support wider preventative work within the community and with families at risk. There are currently 105 GYDPs state-wide, and a further 10 projects with a special focus (e.g. more challenging children, family support, etc.).

GYDPs aim to bring about the conditions whereby the behavioural patterns of young people towards law and order can develop and mature through positive interventions and interaction with the project.

They are primarily targeted at 12-17-year old “at risk” youths in communities where a specific need has been identified and where there is a risk of them remaining within the justice system.

In 2018, approximately €14m was allocated by the Irish Youth Justice Service to GYDPs. Garda Youth Diversion Projects are co-funded by the Irish Government and European Social Fund as part of the ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020.

Le Chéile

[Le Chéile](#) is a mentoring service for children and young people aged 12-18 years engaged in Young Persons Probation. It was set up to meet the needs of the Mentor (Family support) Order under the requirements of the Children Act 2001. Le Chéile runs a Restorative Justice project in Limerick, funded by the Limerick Regeneration Project, now under Limerick and City Council and Young Person’s Probation. Le Chéile is funded by Irish Youth Justice Services through the Probation Service, as part of Ireland’s European Structural and Investment Funds Programmes 2014-2020, which is co-funded by the Irish Government and the European Union.

4.8 Current debates and reforms

Forthcoming policy developments

The Irish government is currently in the process of developing a new National Action Plan for Social Inclusion.

A [Report of the Social Inclusion Forum 2019](#) identified a number of target groups and issues which should be addressed in the new National Action Plan for Social Inclusion

These included:

- marginalised groups
- minority groups who are not captured in the main data sources
- people with disabilities
- housing and homelessness
- precarious work and in-work poverty
- an inter-departmental approach to provide access to health services

The DCYA launched a new Targeted Youth Funding Scheme, '[UBU- Your Place Your Space](#)' in December 2019. The new funding scheme replaces the Special Projects to assist Disadvantaged Youth scheme.

Ongoing debates

Young people living in Direct Provision

There is an ongoing debate around young people living in Direct Provision in Ireland. Direct provision is a means of meeting the basic needs of food and shelter for asylum seekers directly while their claims for refugee status are being processed in Ireland.

The main issues debated are the negative impact of Direct Provision on young people, e.g. safety, impact on mental health, lack of space, food, education, the long waiting times to be processed.

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs conducted [consultations](#) with young people living in Direct Provision centres in 2017. The consultations heard what children and young people living in Direct Provision like, dislike and what they would like to change or improve about the places in which they live.

The main actors involved in the debate are the Irish Government, the Department of Justice and Equality, The Reception and Integration Agency (RIA), the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, the Ombudsman for Children, NGOs and the media.

The [Ombudsman for Children](#), the office that investigates complaints made by children and young people or on their behalf in Direct Provision, states the main issues complained about include financial supports, accommodation, communication, complaint management and management of transfers to different centres or larger accommodation.

Young people experiencing homelessness

There is a debate on the number of young people experiencing homelessness and living in emergency accommodation as a result of the current 'housing crisis' in Ireland. The main topics debated are the negative impact of homelessness on young people, e.g. lack of space, mental health, education and lack of social housing.

The main actors involved in the debate are the Irish Government, the Department of the Environment, Housing and Local Government, the Ombudsman for Children, homeless charities and the media.

The Ombudsman for Children published a [report on consultations with young people living in homeless accommodation](#) in 2019, outlining children's views and experiences of living in Family Hubs.

LGBTI+ youth homelessness has been highlighted as an issue by homeless services. According to [Focus Ireland](#), 'youth services staff have reported high numbers of LGBTIQI+ young people who are becoming homeless as a direct consequence of their sexual orientation or gender identity.' However, the extent of the problem is largely unknown as it is often hidden by young people engaging with services due to stigma or fear of violence or assault).

LGBTI+ young people

The [2019 School Climate Survey](#) conducted by BeLonG To Youth Services identified a number of issues affecting LGBTI+ young people. These included anti-LGBTI+ bullying, homophobic remarks, discrimination, harassment and assault. Impacts on LGBTI+ young people included absenteeism, lack of sense of belonging, isolation and stigmatisation.

Solutions proposed to address these issues included:

- safe and supportive schools with inclusive staff;
- representation of LGBTI+ identities in the curriculum;
- explicit anti-bullying policies to reduce levels of anti- LGBTI+ bullying; and
- a student body with a higher sense of belonging and better educational outcomes.

Young people on reduced timetables

The issue of young people being placed on reduced timetables by schools is an ongoing debate. The main topics debated are the impact of reduced timetables on young people with disabilities and from the Traveller community and reduced timetables being used as a methods of dealing with challenging behaviour.

The main actors involved in the debate are the Department of Education, schools, the Ombudsman for Children's Office, charities such as Barnardos and NGOs such as Pavee Point.

Barnardos, a children's charity, made a [submission](#) to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills on topic of the barriers to education facing vulnerable groups, which included reduced timetables.

The Ombudsman for Children identified the issue of reduced timetables to the Oireachtas Committee on Education in June 2019.

Groups advocating for young people on reduced timetables such as young Travellers and young people with learning and behavioural difficulties also presented submissions to the Committee.

These groups included the Irish Traveller Movement (ITM), Pavee Point, Irish Traveller Women's Forum, Inclusion Ireland and the autism advocacy organisation 'AsIam'.

Young carers

Young carers are children and young people under the age of 18 whose lives are in some way affected because they provide care, assistance or support to another family member.

Young adult carers are recognised as a separate group, and are aged between 19 and 25. [Family Carers Ireland](#) estimate that 12% of young people in Ireland are carers. They run information sessions and training workshops to a wide range of professionals so they can gain a better understanding about what young people do in providing care and how it affects them. They also provide information, advice, supports and advocacy to young carers.

5. PARTICIPATION

The [Department of Children and Youth Affairs](#) is the government department responsible for youth participation in Ireland.

Goal 1 of the [National Children's Strategy](#) (2000) stated that 'children will have a voice in matters which affect them and their views will be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity'.

The [National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision Making](#) (2015-2020) builds on the National Children's Strategy's infrastructure for children and young people's participation.

The National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making defines participation as:

'the process by which children and young people have active involvement and real influence in decision-making on matters affecting their lives, both directly and indirectly.'

A key priority of the strategy is that seldom-heard children and young people are enabled to take part in decision-making.

Ireland has local child and youth councils ([Comhairle na nÓg](#)) which are the recognised key national structure for participation by children and young people in local decision-making in all 31 Local Authorities around the country. Child and youth councils were established under the National Children's Strategy (2000).

Ireland also has a National Youth Parliament ([Dáil na nÓg](#)). The role of the National Youth Parliament (Dáil na nÓg) is to provide a national forum for young people to discuss and vote on issues that affect their lives.

5.1 General context

Main concepts

The [National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making](#) (DCYA, 2015: 20) defines participation as:

'the process by which children and young people have active involvement and real influence in decision-making on matters affecting their lives, both directly and indirectly.'

This definition is consistent with Article 12 of the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (UNCRC), which underlies this strategy, and Article 24 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Institutions of representative democracy

The Oireachtas

- The Republic of Ireland is a parliamentary representative democracy.
- Legislative power is vested in the Oireachtas, which consists of the President of Ireland and the two Houses of the Oireachtas: Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann.
- Executive power is exercised by the Government, which is led by the Taoiseach (Prime Minister), whose deputy is the Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister).
- The Cabinet is nominated by the Taoiseach and approved by the Dáil, then appointed by the President.

Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann

- Dáil Éireann is the principal Chamber of the Oireachtas and has 158 Members. A Member's official Irish title is "Teachta Dála" (commonly known as TD), which in English means "Deputy to the Dáil".
- By law, a General Election to Dáil Éireann must be held at least once every five years.
- The Chair of the Dáil is called the Ceann Comhairle. His/her deputy is the Leas-Cheann Comhairle.
- The Seanad is the Upper House of the Oireachtas and has 60 Senators. The Chair of the Seanad is called the Cathaoirleach. His/her deputy is the Leas-Chathaoirleach.

The President

- The President of Ireland is elected to a seven-year term of office and no person may serve more than two terms. The current President is Michael D. Higgins.
- The President, who does not have an executive or policy role, exercises his/her formal powers and functions on the advice of the Government.
- The President has the power to refer a Bill to the Supreme Court for a judgment on its constitutionality. He/she may seek advice from the Council of State and refer the Bill to the Irish Supreme Court for a ruling on whether it complies with the Constitution.

Parliamentary committees

Parliamentary committees play an important role in the business of the Oireachtas. They can receive submissions and hear evidence from interested parties or groups; discuss and draft proposals for legislative change; print and publish minutes of evidence and related documents; and require attendance of Ministers to discuss current policies and proposals for legislation.

There are four types of committees:

- Standing committee
- Joint committee
- Select committee
- Special committee (rare)

Voting is not compulsory in Ireland. Voting is cast by ballot box or by post in certain cases.

5.2 Youth participation in representative democracy

Young people as voters

- The voting age limit for representative democracy institutions at all levels, including for the European Parliament elections, in Ireland is 18 years.
- The age limit for voting in referendums is also 18 years.
- There are no immediate plans to lower the voting age limit.
- There are no special provisions for young people in the electoral law and/or rules.

However, some groups of people are entitled to a postal vote, e.g.:

- An Irish official posted abroad, or their spouse or civil partner who is abroad with them;
- A member of the Garda Síochána (police);
- A whole-time member of the Defence Forces.

The following groups of young people are also entitled to a postal vote:

- Those with a physical illness or disability
- Those studying full time at an educational institution in Ireland, which is away from their home address where they are registered
- Those unable to vote at their polling station because of their occupation, service or employment
- Those unable to vote at their polling station because they are in prison as a result of an order of a court

The overall voter turnout among young people aged 18-25 years in Ireland has increased in recent years. The 2011 CSO report on voter participation found that 62% of young people aged 18-25 years voted in the 2011 General Election compared to 50% in the 2002 General Election. The overall voter turnout in the 2019 European Elections was 49.7%.

Young people as political representatives

There is no specific legislation dealing with young people as political representatives. To run for election to the Dáil or Seanad, candidates must be over 21 years of age. Candidates must have reached the age of 35 to be eligible to run for election as President.

There is one member of the current Dáil aged 21-25 years and nine members aged 26-35 years. In total, people aged between 21 and 35 account for 6.3% of the overall membership of the current Dáil.

There are no quota of seats reserved for young people in the Dáil. There are also no functions within the representative assembly reserved for young people.

5.3 Youth representation bodies

Youth Parliament

[Dáil na nÓg](#) is the National Youth Parliament of Ireland for young people aged 12-17 years.

Structure

The National Youth Parliament (Dáil na nÓg) was established under the [National Children's Strategy](#) (2000) to provide a national forum for young people to discuss and vote on issues that affect their lives. The National Youth Parliament (Dáil na nÓg) is established at a national level. It is not mentioned in the Irish Constitution. The National Youth Parliament (Dáil na nÓg) is funded and overseen by the [Department of Children and Youth Affairs](#) (DCYA) and is hosted by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

Composition

The National Youth Parliament (Dáil na nÓg) is a biennial event, to which 200 representatives from the 31 local child and youth councils (Comhairle na nÓg) are elected as delegates. The age range of its members is 12 – 17 years. The topics discussed there are chosen by young people themselves in the 31 local child and youth councils ([Comhairle na nÓg](#)).

Recommendations from the National Youth Parliament (Dáil na nÓg) are followed-up by the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive for the following two years.

The local child and youth councils (Comhairle na nÓg) [Toolkit](#) recommends there should be approximately 20% of the delegates at the Comhairle na nÓg AGM from 'seldom-heard' backgrounds.

To achieve this aim, local child and youth councils send a general invitation to schools, youth groups and a host of other organisations that work with and/or represent young people, including organisations representing seldom-heard young people.

Role and responsibilities

The role of the National Youth Parliament (Dáil na nÓg) is to provide a national forum for young people to discuss and vote on issues that affect their lives. The main areas discussed include school, home /community, online, public services, sport /leisure.

The role of the National Executive is to take action on behalf of young people on the top recommendation voted at the previous National Youth Parliament (Dáil na nÓg). The National Executive has a term of office of two years and is facilitated and supported by the DCYA to ensure that its members get the opportunity to engage with appropriate Ministers, policy-makers, Oireachtas Committees and other decision-makers.

The Comhairle na nÓg National Executive has direct and structured engagement with the Children and Young People's Policy Consortium and advises the Department of Children and Youth Affairs on progress in relation to the implementation of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures, the national policy framework for children and young people, and its strategies.

Funding

The National Youth Parliament (Dáil na nÓg receives) public funding through the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. It is accountable to the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Irish Government.

Youth councils and/or youth advisory boards

Local child and youth councils (Comhairle na nÓg) exist in Ireland.

Structure

Local child and youth councils (Comhairle na nÓg) were established under the National Children's Strategy (2000) and are the recognised key national structure for participation by children and young people in local decision-making in all 31 Local Authorities around the country. They are not part of the Irish constitutional structure. They are supported by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs Comhairle na nÓg Development Fund, which has been managed by Pobal since January 2011 in cooperation with the DCYA.

Composition

Local child and youth councils (Comhairle na nÓg) operate in 31 Local Authorities around the country. The age range of its members is 12 – 17 years. Every local child and youth council (Comhairle na nÓg) holds an Annual General Meeting (AGM), to which children and young people are invited from schools, local youth clubs and other projects. Attendance usually ranges between 80-150 young people at each local AGM.

At AGMs, participants work on identifying local topics of importance to them. A Comhairle na nÓg Committee is elected at the AGM and is responsible for working on the topics identified during the coming year, as well as being the consultative forum that works with decision-makers.

The Comhairle na nÓg Toolkit recommends there should be approximately 20% of the delegates at the Comhairle na nÓg AGM from 'seldom-heard' backgrounds.

To achieve this aim, child and youth councils (Comhairle na nÓg) send a general invitation to schools, youth groups and a host of other organisations that work with and/or represent young people, including organisations representing seldom-heard young people.

Role and responsibilities

The main role of child and youth councils (Comhairle na nÓg) is to give young people a voice on the development of local policies and services. Local child and youth councils get young people's voices heard in two ways:

- by working on topics of importance to young people, and;
- by acting as a consultative forum for adult decision-makers in the locality.

The main areas of their activity includes:

- mental health;
- education;
- services and facilities for young people;
- how young people are treated by the adult world, and;
- homophobic bullying.

The role of the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive is to take action on behalf of young people on the top recommendation voted at the previous National Youth Parliament (Dáil na nÓg).

The National Executive has a term of office of two years and is facilitated and supported by the DCYA to ensure that its members get the opportunity to engage with appropriate Ministers, policy makers, Oireachtas Committees and other decision-makers.

The Comhairle na nÓg National Executive has direct and structured engagement with the Children and Young People's Policy Consortium and advises the Department of Children and Youth Affairs on progress in relation to the implementation of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures, the national policy framework for children and young people, and its strategies.

Funding

Local child and youth councils (Comhairle na nÓg) receives public funding through the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) Comhairle na nÓg Development Fund which provides money to local authorities to run effective Comhairle na nÓg.

Local authorities also provide funding and resources for Comhairle na nÓg, as well as other organisations at local level. Local child and youth councils (Comhairle na nÓg) are financially accountable to local authorities, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Irish Government.

Higher education student union(s)

The [Union of Students in Ireland](#) (USI) is the national representative body for the 374,000 students in third level education on the Island of Ireland.

Structure

The Union of Students in Ireland (USI) is a membership organisation with affiliated members in Students' Unions around Ireland, both North and South. USI is an unincorporated entity and is neither registered as a company nor as a charity. It is a confederal organisation, created by and funded by Students' Unions jointly through its National Council, which serves as the National Executive body of the organisation.

The supreme authority of the Union is the Congress, which is representative of each affiliated students' union, apportioned according to the size of the student body in each union.

Each union also sends one voting member to the National Council – the executive body of the organisation. The Union's structures include one incorporated entity: USIMS Ltd, a limited company which submits returns in accordance with the laws for regulation of limited companies.

Composition

The Officer Board of USI is made up of a:

- President;
- Deputy President/Vice President for Academic Affairs;
- Vice President for Campaigns;

- Vice President for Equality and Citizenship;
- Vice President for the Border, Midlands and Western Region;
- Vice President for the Dublin Region;
- Vice-President for the Irish Language;
- Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs and;
- NUS USI President.

USI is a democratic organisation. The supreme authority of the Union is the Congress, which is representative of each affiliated students' union, apportioned according to the size of the student body in each union. Each union also sends one voting member to the National Council – the executive body of the organisation. The union has a yearly mandate. Meeting of USI are held on a regular basis.

USI staff members include a:

- General Manager,
- Administrator,
- Public Relations and Communications Manager,
- National Student Housing Programme Co-ordinator,
- National Student Engagement Programme Co-ordinator,
- Energy and Sustainability Manager and Mental Health Project Manager

There are also three trustees and three Finance Committee External Members.

Role and responsibilities

The main role of USI is to represent the 374,000 students in third level education on the Island of Ireland. The aim of the USI is to work for the rights of students and a fair and equal third level education system in Ireland. USI provide information through their website www.usi.ie. They also raise awareness on various student issues through awareness campaigns on issues related to welfare, equality, education and citizenship.

- Welfare issues include information on consent, mental health, sexual health, accommodation, personal safety and workers rights; equality issues, education and citizenship. Equality issues include a 'Queer Dictionary'.
- Education issues include information on student representation, postgraduate grants, mental health funding, counselling services, social welfare, exams, student grants and the National Framework of Qualifications.
- Citizenship issues include information on EU affairs, voter registration, EU elections, Seanad (upper house of the Oireachtas, the Irish legislature) voting registration and USI JI (US) Visa guide.

The Union of Students in Ireland (USI) believe that in order to realise its potential and achieve its goals it must work with other organisations who share the same values.

They are members of a number of organisations such as:

- The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI);
- The National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCi) and the;
- National Development Education Association (IDEA).

They also have partnerships with a number of organisations including:

- The Health Services Executive (HSE);
- The Higher Education Authority and;

- spunout.ie, a youth information website. www.spunout.ie

They also have a policy aspect to their work. For example, USI write position papers on policy issues such as funding of higher education, Brexit etc. and pre-budget submissions on various student issues to the government.

The main areas of activity are:

- Student welfare;
- Equality;
- Education and;
- Citizenship.

Funding

USI, is a confederal organisation comprised of its member students' unions on the island of Ireland. It is not a company nor is it a charity. A Finance Committee, elected by the National Council of the organisation, oversees the financial management of the organisation. Annual accounts for the preceding year are presented to the Annual Congress. Quarterly financial updates are given to the National Council each thirteen weeks.

School student union(s)

The [Irish Second Level Student Union](#) (ISSU) is the top-level school student representation body in Ireland.

Structure

The Irish Second Level Student Union (ISSU) activities are based on Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child says that children and young people have the "right to express views freely in all matters affecting them." The [Education Act](#) (1998) is the legislation that makes provision for student councils to be set up at post-primary level in Ireland. Irish Second-Level Students' Union Limited is a not-for-profit, voluntary student rights' organisation.

The main organs running the school student union are:

- The National Student Executive;
- The National Council of Schools;
- The Regional Council of Schools,
- The Secretariat and;
- The Board of Directors.

Composition

There are 370 Student Councils affiliated to the ISSU.

The National Student Executive includes a:

- President;
- Honorary President;
- Secretary;
- International Officer;
- Education Officer;
- Communications Officer;
- Welfare Officer;

- Campaigns Officer;
- Irish Language Officer;
- Equality Officer and;
- Student Council Support Officer.

The National Council of Schools consists of eight students elected at the Regional Councils meetings, the ISSU President, Deputy President and the Student Council Support Officer. Each region elects a Regional Officer to represent them on the ISSU National Council of Schools. There are eight people elected to the Board of Directors in ISSU.

Role and responsibilities

The Irish Second Level Student Union (ISSU) has a dual role:

- to promote the benefits of young people becoming part of the decision-making process that affects their school lives, and
- to provide individual students with support for voicing their views and opinions.

The main objectives of the ISSU are:

- to provide training and development of second-level school Student Councils, in conjunction with relevant bodies;
- to develop policies on issues affecting Irish second-level students and bring the needs and rights of Students to the attention of the relevant authorities;
- to provide a transparent, democratic and reliable organisation; to work in collaboration with other educational institutions and bodies both in Ireland, and Europe;
- to work closely with educational curriculum policy makers and Teachers' Unions to continually develop a transparent, fair and modern education system; and
- to give Students a structured platform through which the voice of the Irish Second-level Students will be heard.

The National Student Executive coordinates the execution of ISSU policy, campaigns and activities. The National Council of Schools coordinate national policy and campaigns, and is a forum to ensure that each of the Regional Councils are updated so that they can inform their students about developments in the ISSU or education generally.

Funding

The Irish Second Level Student Union (ISSU) is a not-for-profit, voluntary student rights' organisation. ISSU is a company limited by guarantee.

5.4 Young people's participation in policy-making

Formal mechanisms of consultation

Goal 1 of the [National Children's Strategy](#) (2000) stated that 'children will have a voice in matters which affect them and their views will be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity'.

The [National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision Making](#) (2015-2020) builds on the National Children's Strategy's infrastructure for children and young people's participation.

The DCYA has a dedicated Citizen Participation Unit, which takes the lead and national role in ensuring that 'children have a voice on matters that affect their lives and their views will be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity'.

The work of this Unit is responsible for much of the progress achieved under Goal 1 of the National Children's Strategy through the development of effective structures for children's

participation in decision-making, conducting consultations and dialogues with children and young people, and the development of evidence-based policy in keeping with national and international best practice.

The DCYA funds and oversees [Comhairle na nÓg](#), Dáil na nÓg and the Children and Young People's Participation Support Team and has established an effective mechanism for collaboration with academic institutions on children's participation.

DCYA Children and Young People's Participation Support Team

The DCYA Children and Young People's Participation Support Team includes:

- staff from the DCYA Citizen Participation Unit;
- three regional Participation Officers and;
- a Children's Participation Administrator from Foróige and Youth Work Ireland, who are contracted by the DCYA.

DCYA Children and Young People's Participation Support Team works on building and developing best practice, conducting participation initiatives and supporting existing participation structures.

The regional Participation Officers have a particular role in supporting the work of Comhairle na nÓg and Dáil na nÓg through:

- providing support, advice and training for organisers of Comhairle na nÓg;
- conducting regional networking sessions for young members of Comhairle na nÓg;
- conducting regional networking and development sessions for adult organisers of Comhairle na nÓg;
- working with the DCYA in overseeing expenditure under the DCYA Comhairle na nÓg Development Fund.

DCYA Children and Young People's Participation Hub

[Hub na nÓg](#) (Youth Hub) is a national centre of excellence and coordination in the area of youth participation. The DCYA committed to the establishment of a national Hub to support implementation of the National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision Making (2015-2020).

Hub na nÓg supports Government Departments, State agencies and non-government organisations to give children and young people a voice in decision-making on issues that affect their lives, with a particular focus on those that are seldom-heard.

The key objectives of the Hub are to:

- champion and promote participation;
- create resources and training materials;
- conduct training;
- document and disseminate learning; and
- establish an online children's participation database.

The vision for the Participation Hub includes the establishment by the DCYA of strategic formal partnerships with organisations and initiatives in the statutory and non-statutory sectors to develop and document innovative best practice in children and young people's participation in decision-making.

DCYA Children and Young People's Participation Research Advisory Group

The DCYA Children and Young People's Participation Research Advisory Group was established in 2013. Its aims are:

- to explore mechanisms for the DCYA to collaborate with academics and researchers in documenting children's participation initiatives, led and carried out by the DCYA, and;
- to develop education and training on children's participation.

The group is comprised of officials from the DCYA Citizen Participation Unit and the Research Unit, together with senior academics from third-level institutions with expertise in children's rights and children and young people's participation in decision-making.

The role of the Advisory Group is:

- to support the DCYA in finding suitable academic collaborators to write up and co-author the participation initiatives of the DCYA;
- to support the DCYA in developing education and training materials;
- to collaborate with the DCYA in building a strong evidence base for children's participation in decision-making.

Actors

The key youth actors involved in consultative processes are young people from Comhairle na nÓg (child and youth councils). However, young people are generally recruited to be involved in consultations based on the theme on the consultation. For example, young people who have been adopted were recruited to participate in consultations on adoption policy conducted by the DCYA.

The DCYA Citizen's Participation Unit collaborates with other Government departments, statutory bodies and non-governmental organisations in providing opportunities for children and young people to have a voice in decisions that affect their lives, with a strong focus on ensuring participation by seldom- heard children and young people.

Information on the extent of youth participation

Information on the numbers of young people consulted as part of consultations are recorded in youth consultation reports.

Outcomes

Since July 2017, Hub na nÓg and the Participation Support Team is working with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in planning and conducting [consultations with children and young people](#) on various issues such as:

- the Oberstown Standards
- the layout of the new Children's Court
- the voice of the child in Adoption proceedings

The outcomes of these consultations resulted in young people having a direct input into policy-making.

Large-scale initiatives for dialogue or debate between public institutions and young people to increase youth participation

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs have conducted many consultations with young people on behalf of themselves and other government departments and bodies in recent years including:

- Consultations with young people into youth mental health and well-being in Ireland on behalf of the Youth Mental Health Taskforce
- Consultations with young people on the implications of Brexit on behalf of the Department of the Taoiseach (Prime Minister)
- Consultations on the inclusion of Children and Young People in the Recruitment of the Ombudsman for Children

- Consultations with Children and Young People about Human Rights in Ireland in advance of the United Nations Universal Periodic Review on behalf of the Department of Justice and Equality
- Consultations with young people concerning harmful internet communications including cyber bullying on behalf of the Law Reform Commission
- Consultations with young people on the development of the National Youth Strategy
- Consultations with Young People on Reform of the Junior Cycle on behalf of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)

5.5 National strategy to increase youth participation

Existence of a national strategy to increase young people's political and civil society participation

Ireland's national strategy on youth participation is [The National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making](#). The National Strategy was introduced in 2015 and covers the timeframe from 2015 until 2020.

Scope and contents

The National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making aims to address participation at a national, regional and local level.

The main elements of the national strategy are:

- The background and rationale for the participation of children and young people in decision-making
- The objectives of the strategy
- Definition, model and principles of children and young people's participation in decision-making
- The legal, policy and infrastructural supports to implement the strategy
- The Action Plan for the implementation of the strategy

The strategy focuses on the everyday lives of children and young people and the places and spaces in which they are entitled to have a voice in decisions that affect their lives.

Therefore, the strategy identifies the following objectives and priority areas for action:

1. Children and young people will have a voice in decisions made in their local communities.
2. Children and young people will have a voice in decision-making in early education, schools and the wider formal and non-formal education systems.
3. Children and young people will have a voice in decisions that affect their health and well-being, including on the health and social services delivered to them.
4. Children and young people will have a voice in the Courts and legal

The strategy contains a series of additional objectives, which include:

5. Promoting effective leadership to champion and promote participation of children and young people.
6. Development of education and training for professionals working with and on behalf of children and young people.
7. Mainstreaming the participation of children and young people in the development of policy, legislation and research.

A key priority of the strategy is that seldom-heard children and young people are enabled to take part in decision-making. This is considered to be particularly critical in the case of children living in the care of the State or in receipt of child protection and welfare services.

Responsible authority for the implementation of the strategy

The [Department of Children and Youth Affairs](#) (DCYA) is the government department responsible for the implementation, coordination and monitoring of the strategy.

To date, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs have published three annual reports (2016, 2017 and 2019) on the implementation of the actions in the National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making, 2015-2020.

Revisions/updates

The National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making, 2015-2020 has not undergone any revisions or updates since its introduction.

5.6 Supporting youth organisations

Legal/policy framework for the functioning and development of youth organisations

The top-level policy framework for youth organisations in Ireland is the [National Youth Strategy](#) 2015-2020.

The National Youth Strategy focuses on youth policy commitments. It is one of three strategies developed under Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures, the National Policy Framework for children and young people aged 0-24 years.

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures captures all children and youth policy commitments across Government departments and agencies in relation to five outcome areas and six key transformational goals.

The six transformative goals are:

- Support parents
- Earlier intervention and prevention
- Listen to and involve children and young people
- Ensure quality services
- Strengthen transitions
- Cross-government and interagency collaboration and coordination

The main principles central to the National Youth Strategy and its implementation are:

Young people and those who support them:

1. Young people are valued in their own right, and recognised as integral to society.
2. Young people are acknowledged as key drivers in achieving their cognitive, emotional, social, economic and cultural development.
3. Parents, families, other significant adults and communities are recognised as playing a critical role in the development and progression of young people.

Professionals and volunteers working with young people:

4. Professionals and volunteers who work with young people are respected, valued and appropriately supported in their work.
5. Those providing services for young people act in the best interests of young people, and respect and uphold young people's rights.

Policies and practices:

6. An equality perspective is integrated into all policy and practice.

Service development and delivery:

7. Government and other stakeholders work collaboratively, with vertical and horizontal communication and cooperation, to achieve more effective services and supports for young people.
8. Services for young people are open, accessible, resourced and provide additional support in response to particular needs.
9. Services for young people are quality assured, outcomes focused and informed by evidence.

Public financial support

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs provides public financial support to youth organisations. It administers a range of funding schemes and programmes to support the provision of youth services to young people throughout the country including those from disadvantaged communities.

In December 2019 the DCYA launched a new targeted youth funding scheme entitled, [UBU - Your Place Your Space](#).

UBU - Your Place, Your Space brings together four already existing, overlapping schemes with a value of over 38.5 million. The scheme aims to provide services that support young people to develop the personal and social skills required to improve their life chances. These include services covering health, education, employment and social connectedness. The scheme targets young people who are marginalised, disadvantaged, or vulnerable.

Initiatives to increase the diversity of participants

Young people aged 10-24 years who are described in the National Youth Strategy as marginalised, disadvantaged, or vulnerable will be the primary target group for services available through UBU Your Place Your Space.

Young people experiencing economic, social and cultural disadvantage includes:

- young people who live in communities with high concentrations of families/individuals who are dependent on social welfare or have low incomes;
- experience intergenerational unemployment;
- have high levels of addiction; and
- come from one parent families.

It also includes young people who come from situations of family breakdown and low educational attainment, including young people who live in communities with a deprivation score of below minus ten

Marginalised young people whose specific circumstances limit their opportunities including, but not limited to:

- young carers;
- Travellers;
- Roma;
- immigrants;
- young people with disabilities;
- young people with mental health issues;
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI+) young people.

Young people who are vulnerable or at risk of not flourishing including, but not limited to:

- young people in or leaving care;
- young people experiencing or involved in substance misuse; and
- young people with little or no formal structure in their lives, for example young people not in education, training or employment.

5.7 “Learning to participate” through formal, non-formal and informal learning

Policy framework

There is no specific national strategy which applies to social and civic competences in Ireland.

Formal learning

Citizenship education is taught in second-level schools in Ireland as a separate subject called '[Politics and Society](#).' Politics and Society was introduced as a senior cycle subject in 2016 and was examined for the first time in 2018.

The recommended teaching time for Politics and Society is one hour 20 minutes per week, i.e. a double class. Weekly class time includes engagement in participatory learning activities and undertaking project work. The facilitation of the citizenship project takes in the region of 30 hours.

The main learning objectives of Politics and Society are to develop:

- an understanding of the social systems within which people act: locally, nationally and more widely;
- an understanding of concepts which underpin contemporary systems of government and of the diverse models for making these concepts operational;
- an understanding of and a respect for human rights and responsibilities, for human dignity and for democratic modes of governance;
- an understanding of and a respect for sustainable development;
- a commitment to and a capacity for active participation in the learner's social and political worlds;
- a commitment to and a capacity for critical, discursive and independent thinking;
- a commitment to and a capacity for engagement in peaceful and democratic means of resolving conflicts;
- a sense of care for others and a respect for and a valuing of diversity in all areas of human life within the parameters of human rights principles;
- the capacity to analyse and interpret qualitative and quantitative social and political research data, and to use such data carefully in forming opinions and coming to conclusions.

Non-formal and informal learning

Participative structures within formal education

The [Education Act](#) (1998) is the legislation that makes provision for student councils to be set up at post-primary level in Ireland.

Goal 3 of [Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures, The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People](#), aims to create mechanisms to provide children and young people with

the opportunity to be heard in primary and post-primary schools and centres for education through Student Councils or other age-appropriate mechanisms.

The main role of a Student Council as set out in the Education Act is "to promote the interests of the school and the involvement of students in the affairs of the school, in cooperation with the board, parents and teachers." Student Councils set their own objectives, which vary from school to school.

According to the Department of Education guidelines (2002), student councils can actively contribute to the development of school policy in a wide range of areas such as bullying, uniform requirements, behaviour code and extra-curricular activities. It suggests student councils could form sub-committees to consider individual policy issues, to consult with students, staff and parents on those issues and to represent the Council's views on those issues to school management.

Measures to encourage student participation in the local community and wider society

There are no provisions in the national curricula or education regulations/guidelines encouraging or obliging pupils at upper secondary level to take part in activities serving the (local) community outside school.

Student participation in the local community and wider society is encouraged through participation in [Comhairle na nÓg](#). Comhairle na nÓg are local child and youth councils that operate in the 31 local authorities of the country.

- Comhairle na nÓg give children and young people the opportunity to be involved in the development of local services and policies.
- Every Comhairle na nÓg holds an Annual General Meeting in September or October, to which children and young people are invited from local schools and youth groups.
- Attendance at AGMs ranges from 80 -150 young people, depending on the size of the city or county.

Many students participate in [Gaisce](#), the President's Award in secondary schools as part of Transition Year. Gaisce is a self-development programme for young people between the ages of 15-25.

There is a Community Involvement section of the Gaisce programme that involves volunteering in their local community. This offers young people the opportunity to engage with society and gain an understanding of the importance of your role within their immediate and global community.

Partnerships between formal education providers, youth organisations and youth work providers

The youth work sector works with young people outside, yet alongside, the formal education sector. Section 3 of the Youth Work Act 2001 defines youth work as:

'a planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young persons through their voluntary participation, and which is complementary to their formal, academic or vocational education and training; and provided primarily by voluntary youth work services'.

Supporting non-formal learning initiatives focusing on social and civic competences

Foróige Youth Citizenship Programme

[Foróige Youth Citizenship Programme](#) is a youth development programme that promotes young people's civic and social skills. Foróige is the largest youth organisation in Ireland, working with over 50,000 young people aged 10-18 every year through volunteer-led Clubs and staff-led Youth Projects. The aim of the programme is to enable young people to make a positive difference in their community by taking part in a citizenship project.

The programme involves young people researching the needs of their community, organising practical action in response, evaluating the effectiveness of their work and reflecting on what they're learning along the way.

The programme has an explicit commitment to inclusion of young people who traditionally would not have entered the Citizenship Programme. For example, there has been a significant increase in entries from projects such as Garda (Police) Youth Diversion and Neighbourhood Youth Projects in recent years.

Garda Youth Diversion Projects are community based and supported youth development projects which seek to divert young people from becoming involved (or further involved) in anti-social or criminal behaviour. These projects facilitate personal development and promote civic responsibility.

Neighbourhood Youth Projects (NYPs) are community based preventative adolescent projects for young people experiencing adversity

Foróige Youth Citizenship Awards

The Aldi [Foróige Youth Citizenship Awards](#) are open to all young people aged 10 - 18 involved in citizenship projects or activities in their youth clubs or groups. This includes young people involved in Foróige youth clubs or groups, other youth clubs or groups and Comhairle na nÓg (local child and youth councils).

The Awards Showcase gives young people the opportunity to display their citizenship projects/activities and gain recognition for the work they have done to help improve their communities.

Quality assurance/quality guidelines for non-formal learning

The Foróige Youth Citizenship Programme is measured against indicators of good practice in youth civic engagement.

These indicators include:

- Organised efforts are required to promote youth civic engagement and encourage young people to see that they can make a difference (Stoneman, 2002)
- Facilitate young people to input into what citizenship means rather than telling them what 'good citizenship' is
- Programmes should be action-orientated, providing real opportunities for young people to engage in civic action (Zaff et al, 2003)
- Promote skills development and reflection (Zaff et al, 2003)
- Provide clarity regarding the degree of youth ownership, avoid 'adultism' (Millbourne, 2009)
- Promote adult-youth partnerships
- Have structured guidelines to encourage project completion (Finlay et al, 2010)
- Encourage exposure to diverse social networks
- Encourage participation of young people who traditionally may not be involved in civic activities (Finlay et al, 2010)

An [evaluation report](#) on the Foróige Youth Citizenship Programme was published in 2012:

The National Quality Standards Framework (NQSF) is the quality assurance framework for non-formal learning in Ireland. The aim of the National Quality Standards Framework (NQSF) is to ensure that youth work organisations provide quality services to young people.

Educators' support

Our Voices Our Schools

[Our Voices Our Schools](#) is a resource for schools to support listening to and involving young people in decision making about matters that affect them in school. Our Voices Our Schools is the outcome of a decision made by Comhairle na nÓg National Executive 2016 – 17 to focus specifically on equality in the school setting. It includes resources for teachers and students to help young people have their voices heard in schools. Our Voices Our Schools is supported by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

Politics and Society

Politics and Society curriculum [specification](#) is available online to teachers. There are also Politics and Society [support materials](#) for teachers,

Foróige Youth Citizenship Programme

Foróige Youth Citizenship Programme has a [Briefing Paper](#) for youth workers. Foróige Youth Citizenship Programme has a 'Citizenship Programme Manual' used to train staff and volunteers which was developed by the Foróige Best Practice Unit is not available online.

5.8 Raising political awareness among young people

Information providers / counselling structures

The Referendum Commission

[The Referendum Commission](#) is responsible for disseminating information about democratic rights and democratic values to the wider population in Ireland. The Referendum Commission is an independent body which is neutral and impartial. The aim of the Referendum Commission is to communicate factual information about referendums.

The role of the Referendum Commission is to:

- Explain to the public what the referendum proposal means
- Make sure people know a referendum is being held
- Encourage people to vote

The legislation providing for the establishment of the Referendum Commission is the Referendum Act 1998 as amended by the [Referendum Act 2001](#). The Referendum Commission has a website where information on referendums and voting can be accessed directly.

Youth Information Centres

[Youth Information Centres](#) (YICs) provide a free, confidential information service to young people and those who work with them on a wide range of subjects including:

- careers,
- education,
- employment matters,
- rights and entitlements,
- leisure,
- sport,
- travel and
- European opportunities.

Youth Information Centres also provide a variety of outreach activities bringing information to young people through:

- information points,
- publications,
- workshops,
- seminars,
- exhibitions,
- schools and youth club work,
- local radio and
- press.

Youth Information Centres are funded by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. They are administered by a variety of youth organisations and operate as an integrated part of locally based youth services. Youth Information Centres provide information on counselling and support services for young people. There are currently 26 Youth Information Centres in Ireland.

Information on young people's rights

Sources of information on young people's rights include:

- The [Ombudsman for Children Office](#)
- The [Children's Right's Alliance](#)

Youth-targeted information campaigns about democratic rights and democratic values

NYCI launched its "[New Age in Voting](#)" campaign in 2009. The campaign called for the extension of voting rights to young people aged 16 and 17 years. In 2013 NYCI provided a submission and presentation on the Constitutional Convention which voted to support the introduction of voting rights for 16 and 17 year olds.

The Government accepted this recommendation and committed to bringing forward a referendum to allow 16 and 17 year olds citizens to vote. However, in 2015 the Government reneged on this commitment.

Promoting the intercultural dialogue among young people

NYCI co-ordinated the [No Hate Speech Movement](#) in Ireland from 2014 – 2018 with the support of many national organisations, and a team of Youth Ambassadors. While the campaign has formally ceased, it continues as part of the Council of Europe's and NYCI's ongoing work around human rights and equality.

NYCI offers online information and resources to support individuals and groups maintain the work of tackling on-line hate speech. As a direct result of being involved in the No Hate Speech Movement, NYCI has joined the Irish Coalition Against Hate Crime which is campaigning to have Hate Crime legislation established in Ireland.

Promoting transparent and youth-tailored public communication

SpunOut.ie

[SpunOut.ie](#) is Ireland's youth information website created by young people, for young people. SpunOut.ie provides information to around 140,000+ active readers each month. Its vision is to help create an Ireland where young people aged between 16 and 25 are empowered with the information they need to live active, happy, and healthy lives. The website's aim is to educate and inform readers about the importance of holistic wellbeing and how good health can be maintained, both physically and mentally.

CAMHS

[Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services](#) (CAMHS) provides assessment and treatment for young people and their families who are experiencing mental health difficulties. CAMHS is available for all young people up to the age of 18 years. CAMHS is operated by the Health Service Executive (HSE), a body that provides all of Ireland's public health services in hospitals and communities across the country.

Jigsaw, the National Centre for Youth Mental Health

[Jigsaw](#), the National Centre for Youth Mental Health, operates a national network of projects that provide tailored community-based help for young people's mental health needs.

Jigsaw is a free and confidential support service for young people, their mental health and wellbeing, aged 12 – 25. They provide early intervention youth mental services are designed to be safe and compassionate spaces in and of the community. There are currently 13 Jigsaw projects operating nationally in Ireland.

5.9 E-participation

There is currently no e-participation platforms in Ireland.

5.10 Current debates and reforms

Forthcoming policy developments

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) is currently developing a National Participation Framework. The Framework will include a Planning Checklist based on the Lundy Voice Model used in the [National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making](#) (2015-2020).

[Hub na nÓg](#) is currently in the process of developing Guidance for [Children and Young People's Services Committees](#) (CYPSC) on the participation of children and young people in their work.

Ongoing debates

Extending the voting age to 16

There is an ongoing debate in Ireland on extending the voting age to 16 years. In recent years, the [National Youth Council of Ireland](#) (NYCI) have been campaigning the Irish Government to extend the right to vote to 16 and 17 year olds for local, national and European elections.

In 2013, the Constitutional Convention recommended the voting age be reduced to 16 years. The Electoral (Amendment) (Voting at 16) Bill 2016 is currently before Seanad Éireann at the Third Stage. This Bill, supported by the National Youth Council of Ireland, is to change lower the age limit for voting rights in European Parliament and local elections without recourse to a referendum. A referendum would be needed to change the Constitution to allow 16- and 17-year-olds vote in Dáil and presidential elections.

NYCI argues that lowering the voting age to 16 years will generate greater interest in politics at a younger age, promote and widen political participation among young people and bring Ireland in line with other EU countries.

Rights of expatriates to vote

There is an ongoing debate on the right of Irish expatriates to vote. A Constitutional Convention in 2013 recommended allowing expatriate Irish citizens to vote in presidential elections. As a result, the Irish government published a position paper on the issue which promised a constitutional referendum in 2019. However, the referendum was postponed.

A Bill on the right of expatriates to vote in presidential elections was introduced into the Dáil in September 2019.

Climate change

Climate change is an ongoing debate involving young people, NGOs, networks and the Irish Government. The [Schools Climate Action Network](#) is a network of students, teachers and their schools in Ireland that calls for urgent action to prevent climate breakdown and ensure a just and sustainable future. Thousands of Irish students have taken part in the Schools Strikes for Climate to date. The [theme of Dáil na nÓg](#) (Youth Parliament) 2019 was Climate Change.

GLOSSARY

An Garda Síochána

The Garda Síochána are Ireland's National Police and Security Service. They are also referred to as 'the Gardaí' or 'the Guards.'

Comhairle na nÓg

Comhairle na nÓg are child and youth councils for young people under the age of 18. They operated in the 31 local authorities of the country and give children and young people the opportunity to be involved in the development of local services and policies.

Dáil na nÓg

Dáil na nÓg is the National Youth Parliament in Ireland for young people aged 12-17 years. Its is a biennial event to which 200 representatives from the 31 local child and youth councils (Comhairle na nÓg) are elected as delegates. The topics discussed there are chosen by young people themselves in the 31 local child and youth councils (Comhairle na nÓg).

Direct Provision

Direct Provision is a means of meeting the basic needs of food and shelter for asylum seekers directly while their claims for refugee status, subsidiary protection or appeals for leave to remain are being processed in Ireland. People are accommodated in residential institutions known as Direct Provision centres across the country.

Garda Youth Diversion Programmes (GYDPs)

GYDPs are community-based multi-agency crime prevention initiatives which seek to divert young people who have become involved in crime/anti-social behaviour and to support wider preventative work within the community and with families at risk.

Hidden homelessness

Hidden homelessness refers to people who are living in squats or 'sofa surfing' with friends. The number of people in hidden homelessness are not included in official statistics.

Family Homeless Hubs

Family homeless hubs provide short-term emergency accommodation for families experiencing homelessness. They are funded by the local authorities.

Hub na nÓg

Hub na nÓg (youth hub) is a national centre of excellence and coordination in youth participation. It supports Government Departments, State agencies and non-government organisations to give children and young people a voice in decision-making on issues that affect their lives, with a particular focus on those that are seldom-heard.

Oberstown

Oberstown Children Detention Campus (Oberstown) is a national service that provides a safe and secure environment for young people remanded in custody or sentenced by the Courts for a period of detention.

Open Policy Debate

An Open Policy Debate brings together key stakeholders in an area to discuss the first steps in developing or revising policy. For example, government departments may bring together government and non-government key stakeholders in a particular area when developing or revising policy.

Reduced Timetable

The term “reduced timetable” is used to describe:

- a reduced day in school where, by arrangement with the school authorities, a student arrives to school after the usual starting time or leaves before the end of the school day, and/or,
- a reduced week where a student may not attend the full five days each week.

Taoiseach

Taoiseach is the Prime Minister and head of government in Ireland.

Tusla

Tusla, The Child and Family Agency, is the dedicated State agency responsible for improving wellbeing and outcomes for children. Under the Child and Family Act 2013 the Child and Family Agency is charged with supporting and promoting the development, welfare and protection of children, and the effective functioning of families. Services include child protection and welfare, educational welfare, psychological services, alternative care, family and locally-based community supports, early years services and domestic, sexual and gender-based violence services.

Young carers

Young carers are children and young people under the age of 18 whose lives are in some way affected because they provide care, assistance or support to another family member.

Young adult carers are recognised as a separate group, and are aged between 19 and 25.

Young Travellers

Young Travellers are young people who are members of the Traveller Community in Ireland. The Traveller Community are recognised as a distinct ethnic group in Ireland. Traveller identity and culture is based on a nomadic tradition.

Young Voices

EU Youth Dialogue is known as ‘Young Voices’ in Ireland.

Youthreach

The Youthreach programme provides opportunities for early school leavers in terms of basic education, personal development, vocational training and work experience.

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