Youth Work Policy and Delivery in Ireland: A North South Context
Youth Sector North South Working Group

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Youth Work Policy and Delivery in Ireland

A North South Context

This paper was commissioned by the North South Working Group and compiled by Youthnet. It includes contributions from Sam McCready University of Ulster and Dr Maurice Devlin National University of Ireland Maynooth.

The purpose of the paper is to:-

- Inform the Working Group in their identification of potential areas for co-operation
- Inform the Working Group in their development of an action plan for agreement by stakeholders
- Inform the youth sector on existing and emerging policy and delivery structures in both jurisdictions

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1.0 Introduction

Taking North South Cooperation in the Youth Sector Forward

In 2011 the Youth Council for Northern Ireland and Youthnet in consultation with the National Youth Council of Ireland commissioned a paper on North South Youth Work Collaboration seeking to explore the potential of advancing greater North South cooperation. The resulting paper proposed:

A two-phased Development Plan as the framework for structured strategic cooperation by key stakeholders in the youth services, North and South;

Phase 1
- Secure funding for organisation of an initial key stakeholders’ one-day conference to discuss the concept.
- Initiate formal discussions with the relevant government departments
- Convene a Forum of leading youth service organisations that share a consensus for more structured North South cooperation in the youth sector.
- Secure agreement on a limited number of Key Areas for Cooperation.
- Secure funding for the development of a 2-3 year North South Youth Work Program Business Plan.

Phase 2
- Implement North South Youth Work Program.
- Initiate a parallel Programme Evaluation process.

On the basis of the proposal, the three organisations, Youthnet, National Youth Council of Ireland, Youth Council for Northern Ireland submitted an application to YESIP to fund an initial stakeholders 1 day conference. YESIP approved the application and the conference “Creating a framework for North South Cooperation in the Youth Sector” was held on 19 April 201 in Dundalk Institute of Technology. The conference focused on the themes of Equality and Inclusion,

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1 Discussion Paper: North South Youth Work Collaboration, T Fegan 2011
Workforce Development, Quality Assurance and Measuring Impact. Conference agreed that a formal working group should be established to further develop cross border cooperation.²

A Working Group comprising of the Youth Council for NI, Education and Library Boards, Youthnet, Vocational Educational Committees and the National Youth Council of Ireland was subsequently established. At their inaugural meeting they agreed to commission this paper setting out the policy and delivery structures for youth work in both jurisdictions.

**Purpose of the paper:-**

- To inform the youth sector on existing and emerging policy and delivery structures in both jurisdictions
- To inform the working group in their identification of potential areas for co-operation
- To inform the working group in their development of an action plan for agreement by stakeholders

**The paper outlines:-**

- Key developments in working relationships and co-operation between youth sectors in both jurisdictions in Ireland recognising other linkages on a British-Irish basis
- The policy and delivery context for youth work in both jurisdictions

² “Creating a framework for North South Cooperation in the Youth Sector” Conference Report May 2011
1.1 The North South Ministerial Council and the British-Irish Council

The North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) was established under the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement (1998), to develop consultation, co-operation and action within the island of Ireland - including through implementation on an all-island and cross-border basis - on matters of mutual interest and within the competence of the Administrations, North and South.

The British-Irish Council (BIC) was also created under the 1998 Agreement and it promotes positive, practical relationships among its members.

The BIC is a forum whereby ministers of the British and Irish Governments, the devolved administrations of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and the Crown Dependencies of the Isle of Man, Jersey and Guernsey cooperate on matters of mutual interest.

Education, both formal and non-formal have been designated as areas for co-operation by both NSMC and BIC.

1.2 North South Exchange Consortium

NSEC was established in 2001 to examine opportunities for cross-border strategic cooperation between the British Council, the Youth Council for Northern Ireland and Leargas. In 2003, it was tasked by the Department of Education (NI) and the Department of Education and Science (RoI) to make recommendations for future policy on north south school and youth cooperative activities and to provide a one stop service to coordinate north south opportunities.

NSEC produced a series of research reports for the two departments and also proposals for a new single programme framework to provide more coherence and focus to north/south cooperation involving both the formal and non-formal sectors.
One of NSEC’s last tasks was to carry out research on behalf of both departments which fed into the “Comprehensive Study on North South Cooperation in Education” Part One of this report is presently under consideration by both departments.

### 1.3 Causeway

The Causeway Programme was mandated by young people at the Encounter conference in Malahide, Dublin in 1997 and set out to add new impetus to efforts to raise the level of contact between the young people of the United Kingdom and Ireland, and between those who work with them. Causeway is recognised in a bilateral agreement between the governments of the United Kingdom and Ireland.

Among Causeway’s aims are the development of better understanding and the improvement of the long-term relationship between the peoples of Ireland and the United Kingdom. The spirit that underlies the programme is one of shared ownership and response to issues. The commitment of the two governments is demonstrated by their involvement in the management of the programme. Causeway is administered by Léargas (Dublin) and the British Council (London) with the assistance of the Youth Council for Northern Ireland (Belfast). The three agencies have been actively involved in facilitating and supporting the international dimension in both the formal and non-formal education sectors and have an extensive record of North-South and international contact.

**Causeway Partner Countries**

Ireland/ England/ Scotland/ Wales/ Northern Ireland.

**Activities**

The programme supports the following activities on a North/South and East/West basis:

- Youth Exchanges
- Contact Visits
- Special Projects
1.4 North South Cooperation in Education

The Department of Education in Northern Ireland, and the Department of Education and Skills in Ireland, (representing youth sector interests on behalf of the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA)) are currently engaged in a *Comprehensive Study on North South Cooperation in Education*, which includes the youth service. The departments are aiming to conclude their review in 2011 and are committed to a three-year Action Plan based on the outcome of the study.

1.5 The Youth Sector

The youth sector, both statutory and voluntary has a long history of close working relationships between organisations and personnel on an North South, British-Irish basis.

Examples exist within both the voluntary and statutory youth sector of how effective models of co-operation have been developed and implemented.

- There are existing internal structures of youth organisations that operate on an island-wide basis, e.g. Church of Ireland Youth Department, Scouting Ireland, National Council of YMCAs. Strong working relationships and linkages between individual voluntary youth organisations, for example, YouthAction NI and Youthwork Ireland, Young Farmers Clubs of Ulster and Macra na Feirme. There are also voluntary youth organisations that have links to UK structures for example, DoE, Boys Brigade, Girlguiding, Scouts and Clubs for Young People.

- The development of greater cooperation on a British-Irish basis in the youth sector, including the Youth Work Alliance, Sector Skills Councils and the Voluntary Sector 5 Nations Group comprising Youthnet, The National Youth Council of Ireland, National Council of Voluntary
Youth Services (England), Youthlink (Scotland), and Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services.

- The development of proactive links, common educational practice and a variety of other projects and partnerships by the Education and Library Boards and Vocational Education Committees, in both formal and non-formal education areas.

- Youthnet and the National Council of Ireland jointly employed a North South Officer on a North South project (2000-2002) which led to the development of the North South Youth Work Alliance.

1.6 The North South Youth Work Alliance

In 2001 an Interim Executive Committee of a North South Youth Work Alliance was established comprising representatives from Education and Library Boards, Irish Vocational Education Association, National Youth Council of Ireland, NI Youth Forum, Youth Council for NI and Youthnet. The role of the Committee was to prepare a Development Plan and set out governance, structural and functions of the Alliance.

The Strategic purpose of the Alliance was to strengthen North South relations and mutual understanding, thus enhancing the contribution that the youth sector makes to the development of young people throughout the island. Within its draft development plan (2002-2005) three strategic areas that should be addressed were agreed

- Equality
- Youth Participation
- Policy and Practice

There was a positive response to the development plan and the potential of resourcing a joint initiative by the two Departments of Education, (North/South), however the suspension of the NI Assembly in October 2002 and its

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3 North/South Youth Work Alliance Development Plan 2002-2005
subsequent dissolution in April 2003 halted progress on the plan.

1.7 North South Education and Training Standards (NSETS) Committee for Youth Work in Ireland

In January 2006 the North South Education and Training Standards Committee for Youth Work was launched. The Committee sets standards for the professional formation of youth workers in Ireland. At present its work is focused on the professional endorsement of courses offered by Higher Education Institutions but the Committee also has a role to play in raising the standards of training at all levels.

The North South Youth Work Education and Training Standards Committee will contribute to ensuring high standards of training for youth work and will ultimately facilitate the creation of pathways for youth workers who may wish to progress by increments from basic training to professional qualification.

1.8 NI Youth Work Strategy

The importance of North South, East West relationships was recognised in the first Youth Work Strategy for NI “promote outward looking youth work by developing North South, East West and international links, and by developing awareness of global citizenship”.

1.9 EU Peace Programmes

Through the three EU Peace programmes cross-border cooperation in the non-formal sector has been significant over the last two decades. The Peace 1 programme stimulated large-scale, cross-border participation by local youth groups; Peace II encouraged more strategic cooperation and Peace III, with its emphasis on legacy and institutional cooperation,

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4 Strategy for the Delivery of Youth Work in Northern Ireland 2005-2008 Department of Education
has encouraged a small number of innovative projects, mainly between headquarter organisations. The level of cross border educational activity (formal and non-formal alike) in Peace III to date has been significantly less than in the previous programmes.

1.10 Youth Education Social Inclusion Partnership

The Youth Education Social Inclusion Partnership (YESIP) is a consortium made up of twelve of the key stakeholders in the Northern Ireland Education Service.

- Southern Education and Library Board (IFB - Lead Organisation)
- Youthnet (Sectoral Partner -Youth)
- Belfast Education and Library Board
- Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta
- Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
- Governing Body Association
- North Eastern Education and Library Board
- Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education
- Northern Ireland Youth Forum
- South Eastern Education and Library Board
- Western Education and Library Board
- Youth Council for Northern Ireland

The consortium was responsible for the development and administration of Measure 2.2 and part of Measure 2.8 of the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (Peace II and Peace II Extension). The total funding within Measure 2.2, was approximately £18.24 million targeted at both the formal and non-formal education sectors on a 60:40 basis.

YESIP is currently engaged in a Peace III project led by the Southern Education and Library Board (SELB) and delivered in collaboration with Youthnet and ten project delivery partners
from both the formal and non-formal youth sectors with funding of £3.1 million. The project has three high level expected outcomes:

- Improved levels of trust and tolerance among young people at the local level
- Improved capacity of the youth education sector to sustain its peace and reconciliation work
- Improved cross-border working arrangements
2.0 Youth Service in Northern Ireland – S H McCready, University of Ulster

The stated policy aim of the main sponsoring governmental department for the youth service, the Department of Education (DE), is:-

"To ensure the provision of opportunities for children, young people and young adults to gain for themselves knowledge, skills and experience to reach their full potential as valued individuals, to encourage the development of mutual understanding and to promote recognition of and respect for cultural diversity.”

(DE Website 2011)\(^5\)

The service itself comprises a statutory sector, of five Education and Library Boards (ELBs), the Youth Council for Northern Ireland and a significant voluntary and community sector including Youthnet, NI Youth Forum and regional voluntary headquarter organisations, uniformed groups, church-based and community-based groups. Youth work is also present in other disciplines (schools, justice, health, community relations etc). A review of Youth Service policy (DE 1999 p.1.)\(^6\), carried out between 1997 and 1999, set the age group for the Service at 4-25 years of age and defined the service as including;

"All those organisations and projects whose primary purpose is the personal and social development of children, young people and young adults.”

When trying to map the youth service in NI one does not see an emerging universal picture of youth work provision and consistent methods of delivery. Rather it is a "complex mosaic” (McCartney 1999)\(^7\) where resources and provision can vary from community to community depending on a varied demographic.

\(^{5}\) www.deni.gov.uk (Youth) 2011

\(^{6}\) Department of Education ‘A Youth Service for a New Millennium’ 1999

\(^{7}\) McCartney C ‘Unattached Youth Programme NIVT, Belfast 1999.
Youth Service Structure

- Youth Service Liaison Forum
  - Chaired by Department of Education
  - Youth Council for Northern Ireland
  - Education and Library Boards
  - Youthnet
  - NI Youth Forum
  - Education and Training Inspectorate

Department of Education

Youth Council for Northern Ireland

Education and Library Boards

Youthnet

Representative Body

Northern Ireland Youth Forum

RVIDOS – Regional Infrastructure and Thematic Infrastructure

Local Youth Councils and Forums

ELB Local Youth Councils

Registered Voluntary Groups Local provision

Statutory Controlled units Local provision

Funding /Accountability relationship
Support/member or affiliate relationship
Strategic Relationship
2.1 Existing Legislation

The main statutory provision for the service is contained in Article 37 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 (which replaced the Education and Library Boards (Northern Ireland) Order, 1972) and the Youth Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1989.

The 1986 Order (HM Government 1986 p.33.) placed a duty on each of the five Education and Library Boards to:

"...secure provision, for its area, of adequate facilities of recreational, social, physical, cultural youth service activities for services ancillary to education...”

The 1989 Order established the Youth Council for Northern Ireland (YCNI) and conferred upon the Department of Education the power to make grants

(a) towards the approved expenses of a voluntary organization in providing facilities for the youth service

(b) to persons who are or wish to be employed in connection with the youth service and who are following approved courses of training

Through this order community relations work also came within DE remit.

2.2 Existing Arrangements

2.2.1 Functions of Department of Education in relation to youth work

The Department has overall responsibility for the Youth Service delivered or supported by ELBs or the Youth Council and it ensures as far as is possible that policy is carried out with uniformity. Specific duties include:

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9 HM Government ‘Youth Services (NI) Order 1989’ HMSO 1989
10 Ibid opt cited
• Policy for the Youth Service;
• Payment of grant aid to, and monitoring the performance of the Youth Council of Northern Ireland;
• Making capital grants, (rate of 85 percent), to recognised voluntary youth organisations;
• Making awards towards the training of youth workers and
• Close liaison with the Education and Library Boards including budget approvals, etc\(^\text{11}\).

2.2.2 Functions of Youth Council Northern Ireland

The statutory functions of the Youth Council are:-

- to advise the Department, Education and Library Boards and other bodies on the development of the youth service
- to encourage cross-community activity by the youth service
- to encourage provision of facilities for the youth service and facilities which are especially beneficial to young persons
- to encourage and assist co-ordination and efficient use of the resources by the youth service
- to assist the effective provision of administrative services by the voluntary headquarter organizations

Alongside these functions the Youth Council:-

- advises on the training of part time and full time youth workers and
- encourages the development of European/International opportunities for young people and those who work with them\(^\text{12}\)

2.2.3 Functions of the Education and Library Boards in relation to youth work

The Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986\(^\text{13}\) stated, under Provision of facilities for recreational, social, physical, cultural and youth service activities:-

\(^{11}\text{Ibid opt cited}\)
\(^{12}\text{www.ycni.org}\)
37.F1—(1) Each board shall secure the provision for its area of adequate facilities for recreational, social, physical, cultural and youth service activities and for services ancillary to education and for that purpose may, with the approval of the Department, either alone or together with any other board or any other person—

(a) establish, maintain and manage any such facilities;

(b) organize any such activities;

(c) assist, by financial contributions or otherwise, any person to establish, maintain and manage any such facilities or to organise any such activities;

(d) provide, or assist by financial contribution or otherwise in the provision of, leaders for such activities; and

(e) defray or contribute towards the expenses of any persons taking part in any such activities.

This section goes on to state

2) A board shall, in carrying out its functions under paragraph (1), have regard to the facilities provided by other boards and by other persons.

This acknowledges the role and place of other providers e.g. voluntary sector and an important inclusion in the legislation.

Education and Library Board functions in relation to youth work can be summarised as:-

- provide and fund controlled youth clubs and outdoor pursuits/activity centres;
- assist with the recurrent costs of registered voluntary youth organisations;
- provide advice, support and guidance for youth groups;
- operate summer activity schemes;
- assist individual young people/groups visiting other parts of the United Kingdom, Ireland and overseas in connection with annual camps and various award schemes.
2.2.4 Functions of Youthnet

Youthnet was formed in 1991 as an independent body to represent the interests and aspirations of voluntary organisations in Northern Ireland. It has a membership in excess of 70 youth agencies and organizations covering approximately 3,500 affiliated groups and more than 155,000 young people (the term ‘young people’ refers to children, young people and young adults aged between 4 and 25 years). Youthnet is the Voluntary Youth Network for Northern Ireland and is an independent agency.

Youthnet works with and for the voluntary youth sector in Northern Ireland by representing the views of the sector to Government and policy makers and by providing a range of information and support to member organisations.

Youthnet member organisations cover a broad range of activity for young people across Northern Ireland, including front line delivery of youth work in small community groups, local youth projects and regional and national organisations for young people.

Youthnet has also been involved in the delivery of EU Peace Funds and is currently the Sectoral Partner for non–formal education in the Youth Education Social Inclusion Partnership in the distribution of Peace II funding.

The strategic aims of Youthnet are to:

- Provide an effective voice for the voluntary sector
- Support our members in effective organisational development and in the delivery of quality services to children and young people
- Work in collaboration with others to ensure maximum benefit for the voluntary youth sector in the delivery of services to children and young people
- Ensure Youthnet is fit for purpose

2.2.5 The Voluntary Youth Sector

The voluntary sector delivers in a variety of settings including local communities, churches, rural and urban interfaces and developmental work in schools.\textsuperscript{15} For example:-

- Young Leaders Training Programmes
- Personal Development Programmes
- Health Related Programmes
- Information and Guidance
- Citizenship Programmes
- Developmental Work in Schools
- One to one Support Programmes
- Community Relations, Equity and Diversity Programmes
- Outreach Youth Work Programmes
- Detached Youth Work Programmes
- Participation Programmes
- Opportunities for Learning through Play
- Programmes to support young people gain skills for employment

All of these are offered to a diverse range of young people (aged 4-25) across the North of Ireland (it is fair to say that a number of these programmes are also offered through statutory sector but not on the same scale as the voluntary sector).

2.2.6 Functions of NI Youth Forum

In response to recommendations by the Northern Ireland Youth Committee and DE, the Northern Ireland Youth Forum was created in 1979 to increase involvement of young people in the youth service.

According to their literature the NIYF is a youth-led organization that lobbies, advocates, promotes and fights for the rights of young people in NI. An aim of the organization is to build the confidence and awareness of all young people so that they can assert their rights.

\textsuperscript{15} Youthnet `A charter for the voluntary youth sector` 2011
The NIYF was officially started in 1979 but held its first meeting in 1980. Their main areas of work from their recent strategic plan are listed as:

- Campaigning
- Connecting
- Supporting
- Peace Building and
- Corporate Affairs

2.2.7 Youth Service Liaison Forum and the Youth Service Sectoral Partnership Group

Another part of the NI Youth Service’s landscape is the Youth Service Liaison Forum. This body joins the voluntary and statutory sector. The Youth Service Liaison Forum (YSLF) is made up of the following agencies:

- Department of Education (Youth Services)
- NI Youth Forum
- Youthnet
- The Youth Services of the Belfast Education and Library Board, North Eastern Education and Library Board, South Eastern Education and Library Board, Southern Education and Library Board and Western Education and Library Board
- Education and Training Inspectorate
- Youth Council of Northern Ireland.

The aim of the YSLF is "To assist the Department of Education in formulating and implementing youth service policy proposals and strengthen the effectiveness of the provision of services to young people through improved coherence between the major stakeholders".\(^{17}\)

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\(^{16}\) [www.niyf.org](http://www.niyf.org)

\(^{17}\) [www.ycni.org](http://www.ycni.org)
The Youth Council for Northern Ireland acts as secretariat to the Forum.

The Youth Service Liaison Forum has a particular place in the youth work architecture. Alongside this body, (and arising from within it), the Youth Service Sectoral Partnership Group (YSSPG) has been created. The membership of this group is the same as YSLF without the Department of Education and Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), but including a representative from the University of Ulster. Community Youth Work team.

The Youth Service Sectoral Partnership was established to:

- Work for a youth policy that gives direction to, enables and supports youth work delivery
- Gain more recognition from Government Departments for what youth work does, how it does it and why it is done that way
- Influence the key players to ensure there is a structure within which youth work can flourish
- Ensure resources follow to enable youth work to do what it does

As part of its role it has produced some publications, most notably (March 2009) a seminal paper which attempts to contribute to the formulation of youth policy for Northern Ireland. This paper attempts to articulate a vision of the social contract between Government, its agents, young people and to demonstrate the purpose and value of youth work. It articulates a policy and practice framework as a contribution to the policy and practice debate as demonstrated in the following diagram.

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18 Youth Service Sectoral Partnership Group ‘A Policy and Practice Framework for the Youth Service’ March 2009 (YCNI)
2.3 Youth Work Funding

The economic context for youth work funding shows a current spend on Youth Services in the Department of Education of approximately £28m (with over £5m capital). This is out of an education budget of £1.9billion. The £28m represents 1.47% of the overall education budget. The message from The NI Assembly is that there is constraint on public expenditure and pressure on all government departmental budgets both capital and resource for the foreseeable future. This will lead to a fiscal emphasis on what is essential from within each government department.

On 18th January 2011 the then Minister of Education (Caitriona Ruane) made a statement\(^\text{19}\) to the Northern Ireland Assembly Education Committee in which she indicated that a number of important areas would be protected, including youth services. Later

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\(^{19}\) NI Assembly Hansard 2011.
in her statement, she made reference to “the aim to protect mainstream budgets in schools, youth, pre-school and early years”. However, it is not clear what the term “mainstream budgets” includes in respect of the youth service. Since then there has been a general election and a change of personnel at Ministerial level, (same party, Sinn Fein, but new Minister, John O’ Dowd), and at the time of writing the prevailing economic context is that of a squeeze on public expenditure.

While the major part of the core funding for the Youth Service in Northern Ireland currently comes from the Department of Education, a recent research paper, prepared for the Northern Ireland Assembly (NIAR 2010), identifies funding from four additional departments.

**Figure 1 Departmental Funding for the Youth Service in Northern Ireland**

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department of Education</td>
<td>£33,000,000</td>
<td>£34,000,000</td>
<td>£35,676,000</td>
<td>£32,827,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Employment and Learning</td>
<td>£296,640</td>
<td>£331,293</td>
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<tr>
<td>DHSSPNI</td>
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<td>£6,560,846</td>
<td>£7,281,520</td>
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<tr>
<td>Department for Social Development</td>
<td>£1,808,241</td>
<td>£3,549,625</td>
<td>£2,201,697</td>
<td>£7,281,520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OFMDFM</td>
<td>£3,131,925</td>
<td>£3,097,690</td>
<td>£3,127,930</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(“N/A “denote years for which data was not supplied)

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21 Taken from G. Doran ‘An exploratory study on feasibility of commissioning youth services in NI’ Management Project for Masters in Business Administration (QUB) 2011. (unpublished)
The funding environment is further complicated by the availability of significant external funding, from sources such as European Peace Funds, Lottery UK, private trusts and the corporate sector (YCNI 2002).

To illustrate the capacity of the voluntary sector to generate income the Youthnet report ‘Investing in Voluntary Youth Sector Infrastructure’ (January 2010) outlines the amount of additional income generated by 13 Regional Voluntary Youth Organisations, (RVYO)s, against YCNI infrastructure funding for 2009/2010 financial year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YCNI Infrastructure Support Funding</th>
<th>£1,283,981</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other Income</td>
<td>£5,659,599</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A significant number of organisations involved in the Youthnet study reported that both at headquarter and local level, children and young people engaged in fundraising for other charitable causes. For example, one organisation raised almost £14,000 for the Children’s Hospice last year. The above figures represent the 13 RVYO`s in the study and does not include other fundraising from other parts of the service.

If we take government funding alone we can interpret the data in a positive way in that youth work is being recognized and valued to merit funding to help meet other departmental outcomes. Alongside this, the sector as a whole is creative and successful in their methods of attracting that funding as illustrated by the Youthnet figures for these RVYO`s alone (ratio 1:4.4 = 442% mark up).

These Youthnet figures demonstrate a level of independence within the voluntary sector that is commendable, enviable and certainly represents value for money. But with a significant drop in, for example, peace monies and across the board cuts in government departmental budgets one can assume a greater need for the sector to generate even more funding for its work.

### 2.4 The Northern Ireland Youth Work workforce

The most up to date information comes from the January 2011 report by Dr. Roger Courtney `A Profile of Youth Work Workforce Northern

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22 Youthnet `Investing in Voluntary Youth Sector Infrastructure` 2010.
Ireland. This research combined with the data analysed by the Youth Council for Northern Ireland (YCNI) from registered local clubs, groups and units, suggests that there are at least 27,703 individuals involved in delivering and supporting youth work in Northern Ireland. This is more than the number involved in either the energy and water, agriculture or forestry and fishing sectors in Northern Ireland. Of the workforce total:

- **90% (24,452)** of the youth work workforce are volunteers, 78% of which are engaged in uniformed or church-based youth work;

- **919 (3.3%)** of the youth work workforce are full-time paid staff (8% of which are clerical/admin/finance/marketing staff). 71% of full-time staff work in the voluntary sector. One-quarter of the full-time staff working in local clubs/groups/units work in the statutory sector;

- **2,332 (8.4%)** are part-time paid staff, 47 of whom (2%) are clerical/admin/marketing/research staff. 61% of part-time staff are employed in the statutory sector;

- around 15% of the total paid and voluntary workforce are recognised (10%) or accredited (5%), with significant numbers of individuals undertaking the `Introduction to Youth Work` training each year;

- the large number of volunteers in leadership positions in the uniformed youth sector undertake extensive training which is internally accredited by the relevant organisation;

- just over one quarter (25.8%) of the paid staff (776) have a JNC professional youth work qualification.

Courtney believes there is evidence that these figures significantly underestimate the number of people involved in delivering and supporting youth work in Northern Ireland, because, many clubs are not registered with an ELB so data is not collected by the boards on these clubs/groups/units. Furthermore, as Courtney states, regional organisations involved in youth work not funded by YCNI, such as the church youth departments, were not included in the research.

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23 Courtney R `A profile of youth work workforce Northern Ireland` YCNI January 2011.
24 Ibid opt cited
25 Ibid opt cited
Courtney (2011) also goes on to point out that the evidence from the statistical and geographical report of the *registered* youth service (controlled and voluntary) in Northern Ireland from the 2009 data cycle, produced by the YCNI, suggests the following about youth work activities amongst registered clubs, groups and units across Northern Ireland (which obviously excludes youth work carried out locally by non-registered clubs, groups and units, as well as work at a regional level):

* **Almost 180,000 (179,655) young people participate in the youth service in Northern Ireland,** 82% of whom are aged 4 – 15. Almost half (48%) of 4-18 year olds in Northern Ireland participate in the youth service

* **There are 1,929 youth facilities in Northern Ireland.** Over half (52%) of youth facilities are for uniformed organisations (for 35% of the total youth service membership). Church-based and community-based provision are both around 21% of youth facilities (and each around one quarter of membership)

### 2.5 Youth Work Provision

In the research above we find that youth service provision is not evenly spread across Northern Ireland. For example:

1. Controlled youth clubs/units are more likely to be based in large urban areas like Belfast and Derry and to a lesser extent the more urban parts of Antrim, Down, Coleraine, Fermanagh and Limavady

2. Community-based provision is proportionately more prevalent in Derry, Newry & Mourne, Omagh, and to a lesser extent in Belfast, Cookstown, Strabane, Dungannon, and Fermanagh

3. Church-based provision is proportionately more prevalent in Lisburn and to a lesser extent Armagh, Ballymoney, Castlereagh, Craigavon, Dungannon and Newry & Mourne
4. Uniformed provision is proportionately more prevalent in Ballymena, Banbridge, Carrickfergus, Coleraine, Moyle, Nth Down and Newtownabbey\textsuperscript{26}.

The above picture confirms McCartney’s (1999) complex mosaic which can lead to a descriptor being applied to the NI youth service as being diverse or perhaps disparate. Either way there are a significant number of people engaged in working with young people and the service has a significant reach within its given age range of 4-25 and clearly represents value for the 1.47% of the DE budget.

2.6 Youth Work Policy

In 2005 the Government produced a Strategic Framework and Desired Strategic Outcomes for the Education Sector\textsuperscript{27}, with the vision of the following:

\textit{To educate and develop young people of Northern Ireland to the highest possible standards, providing equality of access to all.}

This set the policy context for the Youth Service Liaison Forum, the statutory and voluntary sectors to develop an agreed Youth Work Strategy for Northern Ireland 2005 - 2008. This work was commissioned by the Department of Education in recognition of the need to create a clear and co-ordinated strategy for youth work in Northern Ireland. In the end what was produced by Youth Service Liaison Forum was a unique document in that it was the first Northern Ireland wide youth strategy.

One key aspect of this document was to see the Department of Education declare itself as that of a “champion” for the vision and mission set out in the strategy and to align closely with youth work as an integral part of Education. Within the \textit{Glossary of terms} in this document, Youth Work was described as being distinctively educational which involved constructive interventions with young people in non formal settings. This definition goes on to stress the importance of youth work as voluntary engagement of young people and how youth work is primarily concerned with personal and social education\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid opt cited
\textsuperscript{27} DE `Strategic Plan for Education (2006-08)` . HMSO 2005
\textsuperscript{28} DE `Strategy for the Delivery of Youth Work in Northern Ireland 2005-08. HMSO
The policy context is reflected in the Vision and Mission set out at the front of the *Strategy* document:

**Vision**

The youth service’s vision of the future is none where all young people in Northern Ireland

- are able to enjoy themselves, realise their potential as active citizens in a secure and peaceful society
- know their rights and responsibilities and have these rights protected and promoted
- are valued, understood and involved and feel safe and supported

**Mission**

The Mission of the youth service... *is to promote the development, well-being, rights, and participation of young people (aged 4-25).*

The Aims and Priorities were grouped under 4 key themes

1. Effective inclusive youth work  
2. Participation  
3. Resources and Funding  
4. Implementation

Originally this strategy was dated 2005-08 but has remained in place. The Department of Education is currently developing a new policy for youth work, entitled “Priorities for Youth” and has carried out an extensive consultation process.

In the intervening years 2 key drivers emerged that will potentially influence any new policy.

The Review of Public Administration was set up by the Northern Ireland Executive in June 2002 and concluded March 2006. The Review helped

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29 Ibid opt cited  
modernise and reform the public sector. This was to be a fundamental review of statutory administration in Northern Ireland and in 2006 the outcome of the review was a series of wide-ranging recommendations for Northern Ireland’s administration. In particular it would have significant impact on the structure of NI Youth Service and may signal, for example, a single funding policy. The review proposed the assimilation of the education and library boards, each of the other education sector management bodies (CCMS, Integrated, and Irish-Medium), the Youth Council for Northern Ireland and a range of other bodies into a single entity, entitled the Education & Skills Authority (ESA).

The development of this body has stalled due to political disagreement over a range of issues. As an interim measure in the absence of the creation of this Authority the Education & Library Boards have been encouraged to engage in a “convergence” process with other Education & Library Boards.

A second significant development after the publication of the Youth Strategy came in 2006. After extensive consultation Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) issued the government’s interdepartmental 10-year strategy for children and young people, with a series of Pledges. The strategy signalled a shift towards prevention and early intervention.

The Review of Public Administration and Strategy for Children and Young People provide the driving force for any new policy. A number of other legislative and policy developments in NI and beyond play their part in shaping the practice of youth work and potentially any future policy e.g.

- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)\(^{31}\)
- Child Protection\(^{32}\)
- A Model of Effective Practice\(^{33}\)
- Section 75\(^{34}\)
- Extended Schools\(^{35}\)
- A Shared Future\(^{36}\)
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006\(^{37}\)

\(^{31}\) www.unicef.org/crc
\(^{32}\) Reference Children Act 1989
\(^{34}\) OFMDFM ‘Equality of NI Act 1998’ (section 75) HMSO
\(^{35}\) HM Government ‘Extended Schools: Access to opportunities for all’ HMSO 2005
\(^{36}\) OFMDFM ‘A Shared Future: policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in NI’ HMSO 2005
\(^{37}\) ‘Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 HMSO’
2.7 Education Policy

2.7.1 Education Aims

- Raising standards for all
- Closing the performance gap, increasing access and equity
- Developing the education workforce
- Improving the learning environment
- Transforming education management

2.7.2 Desired Strategic Outcomes for the Education Sector

- Widespread recognition of the value and benefits of education to the individual, society and the economy.
- Motivated young people who enjoy and are engaged in learning, encouraged and supported by their parents or carers.
- All young people having access to an Education and Youth curriculum in settings that meet their individual learning needs.
- Education attainment levels for young people that are the best in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and reduced differentials between pupils from different circumstances.
- Young people with the self-esteem to be confident, happy and ambitious and contribute positively to their local community and wider society.
- Young people who are creative and have developed, to their full potential, the skills, attitudes and expectations needed to live, work, learn and play in a global society.
- Young people who have access to appropriate learning provision, and are educated, as far as possible, in accordance with their wishes and the wishes of their parents.

[38 DE Business Plan 2010-2011 www.deni.gov.uk]
• Young people educated in a safe and caring environment where they are respected and receive the support they need.

• All those involved in the education and youth sectors demonstrating respect for those from different backgrounds and circumstances and valuing diversity as enriching society.

• Education and youth services organised appropriately and funded to meet the objectives agreed by government.

• Young people in all education and youth work settings having appropriately resourced and cost effective provision to allow them to benefit from learning and achieve their full potential.

• The varying learning and development needs of young people met by highly skilled and motivated teachers, youth workers, other staff and volunteers.

• Everyone in the education and youth sector fully understanding, appropriately skilled for and committed to their role in delivering high quality co-ordinated service and creating inspired, ambitious school communities.\(^{(39)}\)

### 2.7.3 Every School a Good School (ESaGS)

ESaGS has become a significant reference point and is continually cited as a key policy document and lies at the heart of the reform agenda.

In the introduction to ESaGS is the statement that ‘the Department of Education needs to be able to reassure parents, taxpayers, our social partners in business and the trade unions, local communities and, most important, young people, that the school that serves them is a good school. And we want to be able to provide that reassurance in relation to all schools, regardless of size, sector, geography or whether it is a nursery, primary, special or post-primary school. We also want the same for every youth setting’

\(^{(39)}\) DE Strategic Plan 2006-2008
2.7.4 Education and Training Inspectorate

The Chief Inspector report 2006 - 2008 identified 3 clear actions for Youth Service:\n
- Clear definition needed about the position of the youth sector within wider education policy (as you can see above this is/has been addressed and will be confirmed when the policy is produced)

- Further development and more consistent use of quality assurance procedures to assess the quality of youth work and the outcomes for young people

- Thirdly, there should be more effective links between youth work and formal education...and greater sharing of expertise among staff.

These Education Aims outcomes and policies will have a bearing and influence on the future direction of youth work policy

2.8 Youth Policy Direction

The policy direction has roots in the proposal to establish an Education and Skills Authority (ESA) in that the youth service policy and strategy will link increasingly closer to wider education priorities. This signals the strengthening of the relationship between non formal education and formal education.

The expressed intent behind the proposed ESA is for the Department of Education to be responsible for youth service policy and strategy and the new authority would be responsible for youth service administration, incorporating the current functions of both ELBs and the Youth Council and partnership with voluntary sector.

While the single education authority has, at this point, yet to be established, youth service policy is still evolving. In 2008 DE began a pre consultation process to develop a set of policy priorities for the Youth Service – through, “Priorities for Youth”.

The pre consultation process involved:-

\[40\] ETI ‘Chief Inspector’s Report’ HMSO 2009
Pre-consultation questionnaires sent out by DE to young people, youth workers and managers in the service
- Focus groups and questionnaires through Youthnet
- Focus groups and questionnaires through NI Youth Forum
- Visits to schools and youth clubs by civil servants
- “Thinking seriously about youth work” in Youth Service month 2009.
- Workshops
- Education Inspectors reports (ETI`s)
- Education Priorities

Emerging from the pre consultation on Priorities for Youth the following themes can be identified:

1. Strengthening the position of the youth service within education recognise good practice and commitment within the sector

2. The need to set the policy context for youth work within Department of Education’s reform agenda (It will provide ESA with the policy direction for the future)

3. Opportunity to clarify and reinforce the value and role of youth work as part of the holistic education of children and young people

4. Demonstrate how the youth service contributes to the core Department of Education objectives for those young people within and outside formal education.\(^4\)

It is anticipated that 2012 will see the launch of the consultation period on the proposed youth work policy from DE (Priorities for Youth) which will set the policy framework for youth services in the future.

\(^4\) DE Presentation to Youthnet Conference December 2009
Youth Work in the Republic of Ireland –

Dr Maurice Devlin NUI Maynooth

3.1 Introduction – National Structures

Shaped by the principle of ‘subsidiarity’ and in common with most other areas of social policy and social service, the history of youth work in Ireland is predominantly one of voluntary initiative and activism, with non-governmental organisations (usually led by volunteers and often with a link to one of the main churches) taking the lead in the development and delivery of services and the State offering support. There was a relatively early statutory intervention in Dublin when the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee (CDVEC) was directed in 1942 to establish Comhairle le Leas Óige (now the City of Dublin Youth Service Board), and the Vocational Education Committees (VECs) have always been entitled under their founding legislation (1930) to establish sub-committees dealing with ‘continuation education’, which has been interpreted to include youth work. However such VEC initiatives (other than in Dublin city) were entirely discretionary until 2001 when the Youth Work Act was passed.

The Youth Work Act recognises the principle of subsidiarity when it says that youth work is ‘provided primarily by voluntary organisations’ (s.3) but it goes beyond this to place a statutory responsibility on the Minister at national level and on the VECs at local level to ensure the provision and coordination of ‘youth work programmes and services’. The Act provided for the establishment of the National Youth Work Advisory Committee (NYWAC, comprising representatives of both the voluntary and statutory sectors) and also provided that the National Youth Council of Ireland

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42 The Vocational Education Committees are statutory bodies that were originally established to provide ‘continuation and technical education’ (as opposed to the more ‘classical’ secondary education curriculum) so as to prepare young people for employment in the trades. They subsequently diversified however and the ‘vocational schools’ now offer a full range of second-level subjects. VECs are also extensively involved in adult education provision and in training for early school leavers through ‘Youthreach’ projects. VECs mostly operate at county and city (borough) level but a merger process is underway (see par. 2.6).

43 In the Youth Work Act as passed ‘the Minister’ meant the Minister for Education and Science but that was subsequently changed by statutory instrument to the Minister for Health and Children and more recently the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. The issue of Ministerial and departmental designation is returned to later in the paper.
would be the ‘prescribed national representative youth work organisation’ (which is entitled to nominate just under 50% of the seats on NYWAC). NYCI currently has 54 member organisations including all the major youth work organisations in the country (non-uniformed and uniformed, generic and specialist; see also section 3).

For several decades youth work was dealt with at national policy/administrative level by the Youth Affairs Section in the Department of Education (later Education and Science) where it was the responsibility of a Minister of State (‘Junior Minister’). In 2008, during a re-shuffle of Ministers of State (shortly after a re-shuffle of senior Ministers) and in a development entirely unanticipated within the sector, Youth Affairs was amalgamated with the Office of the Minister for Children (OMC) which had been established in 2005 as a key action within the National Children’s Strategy 2000-2010 (Department of Health and Children, 2000). The Office was renamed the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA) and youth work became part of the Children and Youth Services Development Unit. The OMCYA operated under the Department of Health and Children but with close links to the Departments of Education and Skills (in relation to the Early Years Education Policy Unit) and the Department of Justice and Law Reform (in relation to the Irish Youth Justice Service).

After the 2011 General Election an equally unanticipated development was the establishment of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) headed by a full cabinet Minister (Frances Fitzgerald TD). The new Department came into existence on 3rd June 2011. As required under the Public Service Management Act 1997, the DCYA is currently preparing its Statement of Strategy for the period 2011-2014.

The units within the DCYA correspond for the most part to those within the OMCYA. They are:

- Child Welfare & Protection Policy Unit
- Children’s Legislation Unit
- Youth Affairs Unit
- Childcare Directorate
- Children’s Research Programme
3.2 Youth Work Act 2001 and the Vocational Education Committees

The Youth Work Act 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:

(a) Complementary to their formal, academic or vocational education and training; and

(b) Provided primarily by voluntary youth work organisations.

A number of features of this definition are significant. Firstly it stresses the fundamentally educational nature of youth work (and complementarity with other forms of education). Secondly it makes it explicit that youth work rests on the voluntary participation of young people. Thirdly and as already noted above, it acknowledges that voluntary organisations are the primary providers of youth work.

When the Youth Work Act 2001 was passed the definition’s focus on the educational nature of youth work was entirely congruent with the fact that the assignment of Ministerial responsibility was to the
Minister for Education and Science. The fact that this responsibility (and therefore the related policy and administrative functions) are no longer located with the Department of Education has led some observers to suggest that special care must be taken to ensure that the educational focus and ethos of youth work is preserved.

A related (and somewhat anomalous) point is that the VECs, given responsibility under the legislation to ensure the provision and coordination of youth work at local level, no longer report to the Department of Education in relation to youth work matters but to the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

The Youth Work Act provided that VECs should establish Youth Work Committees to advise them on their youth work functions, and also Voluntary Youth Councils to serve as a forum for the voluntary sector (and nominate members to the Youth Work Committees). These parts of the legislation have never been formally implemented ('commenced') and individual VECs have taken different approaches to whether and how such structures should be set up.

Although staffing matters were not mentioned in the legislation, the VECs – through their representative body the Irish Vocational Education Association (IVEA) - negotiated with the Departments of Finance and (at the time) Education and Science to secure funding for the employment of Youth Officers to enable them to carry out their functions under the Act (with the exception of areas where the VEC already had youth work staff, notably Dublin). In most cases there is currently one Youth Officer per VEC area. However the VECs are now undergoing a process of merger whereby the current 33 committees will be reduced to 16 and the staffing implications of this have yet to be clarified.

A further provision of the Youth Work Act was the establishment of an Assessor of Youth Work with two principal functions: the assessment and monitoring of youth work programmes and services and the review of various aspects of the Minister’s and VECs’ functions. This section of the Act has also never been commenced (and it was suggested by some commentators that the two sets of functions might in fact be incompatible). However, although the statutory office was not created, a position of Assessor of Youth
Work was subsequently established (on a temporary basis in 2006 and permanently in 2010). The Assessor, Conor Rowley, made quality standards in youth work a priority on taking up the position (see section 6).

It should be noted that the new soon to be introduced Local Education and Training Boards will replace the functions of the Vocational Education Committees as well as many of the functions of the National Training Agency FAS. At present it remains unclear where youth service provision will be placed in this new structure.

### 3.3 The Voluntary Sector

As already pointed out, the voluntary sector has historically driven the development of youth work in Ireland and is recognised in the Youth Work Act as having the primary role in the direct provision of youth work services. The major organisations retain a strong volunteer ethos (with extensive involvement of volunteers both in programme provision and in governance) but there has also been a considerable increase in recent years in the employment of professionally trained youth work staff both to support voluntary effort and to work directly with young people (the latter most usually in community-based youth projects with one or other type of statutory funding). Professional awards in both parts of the island are endorsed by the North South Education and Training Standards Committee for Youth Work (see section 6) but in the Republic there are no standardised pay scales for youth workers at national level and no formal agreement about the relationship between qualifications and salaries/terms and conditions of employment.

The following are among the larger regional and national voluntary organisations.

#### 3.3.1 Catholic Youth Care (CYC)

Established in 1944 and formerly known as the Catholic Youth Council, CYC operates within the Dublin Catholic archdiocese, supporting voluntary youth clubs and running several youth information centres and also local youth work services in partnership with VECs in County Dublin and County Wicklow, as well as other youth and community-based projects.
3.3.2 Foróige
Foróige was founded in 1952 as Macra Na Tuaithe. Foróige has a national network of youth clubs (‘Foróige clubs’) and also runs a number of youth information centres and various types of ‘youth development projects’ in partnership with, and/or funded by, VECs, Local Drugs Task Forces, the Young People’s Facilities and Services Fund, the Department of Justice and Law Reform and the Health Services Executive (HSE). In 2010 the Cork regional youth work organisation Ógra Chorcaí (established 1966) announced that it was merging with Foróige.

3.3.3 Youth Work Ireland
Formerly the National Youth Federation and with a history going back to 1961, Youth Work Ireland is a federal organisation with a membership of 22 local and regional youth services (Donegal Youth Service, Waterford Regional Youth Service, Kerry Diocesan Youth Service, and so on). It also hosts at its head office the Irish Youth Work Centre (a library, resource and study centre) and other training and programming services. Its member organisations support youth club work as well as running projects similar to those run by CYC and Foróige.

3.3.4 Uniformed organisations
The Boy Scouts and Girl Guides and the Boys' and Girls' Brigades were established in Ireland before independence, initially as part of their British parent movements. After independence, Catholic versions of the scouting and guiding movements were established (1927 and 1928). In 2004, after several years of negotiation, the two separate scouting organisations formally joined together as Scouting Ireland. There are still two guide organisations, the Irish Girl Guides and the Catholic Guides of Ireland.

3.3.5 National Youth Council of Ireland
All the above-named organisations are members of the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI, founded 1967), which as already indicated is recognised under the terms of the Youth Work Act 2001 as the national representative body for the voluntary youth work sector in Ireland. It currently has 44 full and 10 affiliate members. In addition to its representative and lobbying role the NYCI hosts a number of specialist and support programmes such as the National Youth Arts Programme, the National Youth Health Programme, the

3.4 Funding

There are a number of major funding lines within the Youth Affairs Unit. These include the Special Projects for Youth, or ‘SPY’ (primarily intended to fund community-based projects with disadvantaged young people, usually through the employment of paid youth workers) and the Youth Service Grant Scheme (YSGS) for youth organisations. There is also the Young People’s Facilities and Services Fund (YPFSF) which was first introduced in 1998 and linked to the National Drugs Strategy; as well as youth-related Local Drugs Task Force (LDTF) funding which has only recently been taken over by the OMCYA/DCYA.

There is a separate line for youth information and a miscellaneous category which includes VEC youth officer costs, the Local Youth Club Grant Scheme and a number of specialist programmes. Finally, a small number of organisations which object to receiving proceeds from the National Lottery (which provides most of the SPY and YSGS funds) are funded from the exchequer under funding line ‘B.8(1)’.

The allocations for these categories in 2010 and 2011 are provided in the table below. The decrease in 2011 will be followed by further cuts in 2012. The approach to such funding cuts, and related matters, is currently the subject of consultation within NYWAC.
Funding line | 2010 | 2011  
--- | --- | ---  
Special Projects for Youth | €19,475,670 | €18,156,449  
Youth Information Centres | €2,005,476 | €1,861,885  
Youth Service Grant Scheme | €12,185,976 | €11,313,463  
Other Organisations | €4,931,433 | €4,445,382  
YPFSF (Round 1) | €7,859,061 | €7,192,474  
YPFSF (Round 2) | €18,290,000 | 16,362,000  
LTDFS | 0 | €1,432,622  
Miscellaneous | €4,931,433 | €4,445,382  
B8(1) YSGS | €140,939 | €130,904  
**Grand total** | **€69,819,988** | **€65,340,562**

As noted in the previous section, youth organisations (and particularly those larger ones which employ a significant number of paid professional staff) are also in receipt of funding from other government departments and statutory sources, including the Department of Justice (for the Garda Youth Diversion Projects) and the Health Services Executive (for ‘neighbourhood youth projects’ and other local services). These figures also do not take into account the extensive fund-raising engaged in by the organisations themselves; nor do they reflect the economic value of the time and effort expended by the thousands of volunteers involved.

### 3.5 Policy

Since the 1970s there have been numerous policy documents and initiatives relating to youth work and youth services that have been implemented only partially or not at all. In fact the framework for the delivery of services provided for in the Youth Work Act 2001 could be traced back to the National Youth Policy Committee’s *Final Report* (the ‘Costello Report’) almost twenty years earlier (NYPC, 1984); and as we have seen the 2001 Act has itself not been implemented fully, and it is highly unlikely that it will be (see Devlin, 2008 for a fuller account of the policy developments).

The most comprehensive research and consultation process conducted since the Costello Report was published took place in the early 2000s when the then Minister of State for Youth Affairs
accepted a recommendation from the National Youth Work Advisory Committee (acting on a proposal from NYCI) to prepare a development plan that would complement and supplement the structural provisions of the new legislation. The resulting *National Youth Work Development Plan 2003-2007* (Department of Education and Science, 2003) had four overarching goals with a list of actions attached to each. The goals were:

- To facilitate young people and adults to participate more fully in, and to gain optimum benefit from, youth work programmes and services.
- To enhance the contribution of youth work to social inclusion, social cohesion and citizenship in a rapidly changing national and global context.
- To put in place an expanded and enhanced infrastructure for development, support and coordination at national and local level.
- To put in place mechanisms for enhancing professionalism and ensuring quality standards in youth work.

A review of the plan conducted by a NYWAC subcommittee in 2009 found that less than half of the proposed actions had been implemented (these included, directly or indirectly, some of the significant recent developments mentioned in section 6). The most important action not implemented was the pivotal one in the Development Plan: the establishment of a National Youth Work Development Unit. However, it could be argued that with the inclusion of Youth Affairs within the OMCYA and more recently DCYA the national development function can be fulfilled in a way that was simply not possible given the staffing and resourcing of the ‘Section’ with the Department of Education as it was when the Plan was conceived. Moreover, even leaving aside the specific actions, the Development Plan was of significance in the very positive ‘vision of youth work’ it contained: it strongly asserted youth work’s educational ethos and purpose and its commitment to equality and social inclusiveness.

The policy framework for youth work and other youth services in the Republic is at present under consideration. A review got under
way within the OMCYA in 2010 of the *National Children’s Strategy* (Department of Health and Children, 2000) and it was at that time decided to implement a separate review of those areas of youth policy falling within the remit of the OMCYA, including but not limited to youth work and taking account of, but separate from, the renewed children’s strategy. The establishment of the new Department of Children and Youth Affairs in mid-2011 led to a reconsideration of this approach. It appears likely that there will still be a separate youth policy framework but integrated within an overarching strategy for the Department as a whole. There is a NYWAC Task Group on the youth policy framework as well as an international reference group and submissions from the broader youth sector will be sought in the near future.

### 3.6 Recent developments and initiatives

Below are listed a number of significant recent developments and initiatives that have emerged from the National Youth Work Development Plan, the National Youth Work Advisory Committee, the Office/Department of Children and Youth Affairs or the National Youth Council of Ireland (and in some cases more than one of these).

#### 3.6.1 North South Education and Training Standards Committee for Youth Work (NSETS)

Launched in 2006 by the relevant Ministers North and South, NSETS is representative of all the major constituencies/interests within the youth work sector and has the function of assessing higher education youth work programmes for professional endorsement (in the longer term its remit may be extended). It operates in close cooperation with counterpart bodies in England, Scotland and Wales (a mutual recognition arrangement is in place between the various ETS committees).

#### 3.6.2 Report on Specialist Organisations

In 2009 NYCI commissioned a report exploring the common characteristics of specialist organisations and their contribution to youth work in Ireland (Gunning 2009). The report suggested that there are two significant ways in which specialist organisations can be distinctive: through the particular activity or approach they
adopt or the issue that concerns them (for example drama, the environment), or through the circumstances and identities of the young people they work with (for example young Travellers, young LGBT people, young people with disabilities). The Youth Affairs Unit subsequently added ‘specialist organisation’ to the designation of organisations in the Youth Service Grant Scheme.

3.6.3 National Quality Standards Framework (NQSF)
After a piloting stage involving a sample of youth organisations/groups and VECs the NQSF was launched in 2010. It sets out the standards to be met by staff-led youth services, projects and organisations in receipt of Youth Affairs funding.

3.6.4 Induction Training for Volunteers
Starting Out: The National Induction Training Programme for Volunteers engaged in Youth Work Practice (2010). This resource provides a framework for the content and learning outcomes of training for volunteers. It was an initiative of the National Youth Council of Ireland and was guided by a steering committee that included members of the Practice Sub-committee of NYWAC. It was designed to complement the NQSF. Starting Out has been very favourably received by NYCI’s partners in the voluntary sector in the other jurisdictions in Britain and Ireland.
http://www.youth.ie/startingout

3.6.5 Standards for Youth Clubs
The OMCYA/DCYA has prepared a Charter of Standards for Local Youth Clubs which will apply to clubs in receipt of funding from the Local Youth Clubs Grant Scheme (or the City of Dublin Youth Service Board or City of Waterford VEC).

3.6.6 Children First Guidelines
The revised and updated national child protection guidelines Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children were published in July 2011. The Government is planning to legislate to put the guidance on a statutory basis.
3.6.7 Intercultural Strategy

Arising from actions and recommendations in the National Action Plan against Racism (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 2005) and the National Youth Work Development Plan (Department of Education and Science, 2003), NYCI took the initiative in the preparation of an Intercultural Strategy for Youth Work. Although approved and supported by NYWAC and presented to the Minister in 2008, the strategy has not been implemented. The report on NYCI’s consultations (Mauro-Bracken 2008) is available at [http://www.intercultural.ie/node/23](http://www.intercultural.ie/node/23)

3.7 Issues and questions

A key question arising is the link between youth work and other work with young people, as well as the link between work with ‘young people’ on the one hand and with ‘children’ on the other. The creation of the new Department and the preparation of a youth policy framework (not just a youth work policy framework) alongside the review of the National Children’s Strategy means that these questions will have to be grappled with sooner rather than later. An important structural and administrative consideration is the relationship between youth work at local level and the children’s services committees that are being established around the country. Any future amendment of the Youth Work Act (which as we have seen is unlikely to be implemented further in its current form) will have to take these issues into account.

The youth work sector has been positive and proactive (unusually so in comparison to other sectors) in relation to quality standards and quality improvement, as the previous section makes clear. The challenge remains of how best to develop a framework for assessing outcomes that is robust enough to meet the demands of the current policy and financial climate while remaining true to the ethos and identity of youth work (Devlin and Gunning, 2009). This can not be seen in isolation from the changes in the budgetary environment and funding systems that are already underway.

The financial situation throws the debate about targeting versus universal provision into sharp relief but it is one that needs to be addressed in any case. Also worthy of further consideration is how
this debate relates to and overlaps with questions about how best to promote *equality* within and through youth work.

The youth policy framework will hopefully provide the first meaningful opportunity in the Republic to address *workforce* issues for the entire sector in the round. Some of the initiatives identified in section 6 can provide a basis for a more integrated approach.

Workforce is an area where there is also obvious room for further partnership on a *North-South* basis as has happened very fruitfully in the case of NSETS and other inter-organisational (and in some cases intra-organisational) developments. In doing so it would perhaps also be useful to consider the recent significant developments at European level and specifically within the EU (the Commission’s Strategy *Investing and Empowering* and the *Council Resolution on a Renewed Framework for Cooperation in the Youth Field*, both 2009; the *Council Resolution on Youth Work*, 2010; for summaries see Devlin, 2010). These might provide an opportunity for additional leverage in relation to initiatives with a cross-border dimension.
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