

RESTART RESTORE RENEW

NYCI PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION 2022

A 'New Deal' to support young people and youth work in the pandemic recovery period restoring hope and opportunity, based on a new, equitable and sustainable economic, social and environmental model



**YOUTH
WORK
CHANGES
LIVES**

CONTENTS

Summary of Costed Recommendations	1
Background	2
Recommendations	6
1. Youth Work Services	6
2. Youth Unemployment	20
3. Social Protection for Young Jobseekers	26
4. Youth Homelessness	32
Conclusion	35

National Youth Council of Ireland

The National Youth Council of Ireland is the representative body for voluntary youth organisations in Ireland. We use our collective experience to act on issues that impact on young people.

www.youth.ie

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SUMMARY OF

COSTED RECOMMENDATIONS

In this submission, NYCI recommends to Government the following priorities for investment in Budget 2022.

1. INVEST IN VOLUNTARY YOUTH ORGANISATIONS & YOUTH WORK SERVICES

Invest an additional

€10m



in youth work services to restart, restore and renew youth work services for young people isolated and impacted over the last eighteen months as we move from pandemic response to pandemic recovery.

2. ADDRESS THE HIGH LEVELS OF YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT



Provide a stimulus package of

€200m

to deliver additional education, training and apprenticeship opportunities and other employment measures and support the youth work sector to enhance the employability of young people furthest from the labour market.



3. EQUALITY FOR YOUNG JOBSEEKERS

Allocate

€64.8m

to restore the full rate of Jobseeker's Allowance to young people under 25 years, by increasing the rate from

€112.70 to €203
per week.



4. TACKLE YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

Invest

€3m

to resource and implement the National Youth Homelessness Strategy.



BACKGROUND

NEW DEAL FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) is the representative body for 55 voluntary youth organisations in Ireland. Our member organisations work with and for up to 380,000 young people aged 10 to 24 years in every community in Ireland, with the support of 40,000 volunteers and 1,400 paid staff. NYCI functions to represent the interests of young people and youth organisations. NYCI's role is recognised in legislation (Youth Work Act, 2001) and is represented on the National Economic and Social Council. The work of NYCI is based on principles of equality, social justice and equal participation for all. In achieving these aims, the NYCI seeks the emergence of a society in which young people are valued citizens who can make a meaningful contribution to their community.

INTRODUCTION

PROVIDE HOPE AND OPPORTUNITY TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF IRELAND.



We welcome the proposal by the Taoiseach in recent months for a “New Deal for Young People”, this needs to be followed by action in Budget 2022. This acknowledges that young people have suffered and endured severe disruption to their education, employment, family and social life, as well as the impact on their well-being, future careers, and life plans as a result of the pandemic. It is clear from many national and international reports that young people, and particularly the most disadvantaged and vulnerable young people have been affected disproportionately. The consequences and scarring of the lives and prospects of young people arising from the pandemic will be damaging for many, unless supports and services are in place.

As a result, it is imperative that the Government not only avoids a cliff edge in pandemic supports and long-term damage, but also provides hope and opportunity for the young people of Ireland. As we emerge from this crisis, there is an opportunity for Government to live up to their commitment to put “recovery and renewal” at the heart of their programme. This can be achieved by supporting young people, who we believe can be the drivers of that agenda with the right supports and investment in Budget 2022.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT OF CORONAVIRUS ON YOUNG PEOPLE

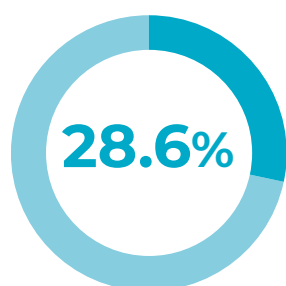
SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER THAN AVERAGE LEVELS OF ANXIETY

A recent Red C poll¹ of 1025 adults commissioned by NYCI in April 2021 revealed that over the last year the pandemic has taken its toll on the mental health of young people. Those aged between 18 and 24 years reported significantly higher than average levels of anxiety, loneliness and uncertainty about the future, compared to the rest of the adult population surveyed. **The research found that 59% of those aged 18-24 years had experienced increased anxiety, 61% reported increased loneliness and 59% felt greater uncertainty about their future.** This mirrored the findings of the “How’s Your Head? Young Voices During COVID-19”, a survey² of young people aged 15-24 years undertaken by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and Spunout in mid-2020.

1. Online research was conducted with n+1025 RPI adults aged 18+. Respondents were recruited using RED C LIVE, RED C’s online panel of over 40,000 members. Fieldwork for this research took place between 16th and 22nd April 2021.
2. “How’s Your Head? Young Voices During COVID-19, Report of a National Consultation with Young People on Mental Health and Well-Being, DCEDIY/Spunout, October 2020



THE COVID-ADJUSTED YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IS



This survey found that the COVID-19 crisis had negative effects on young people's health and wellbeing, especially amongst some marginalised groups. The most common negative effects related to the mental health of respondents, including overthinking, concern, worry, anxiety, depression and a sense of utter hopelessness. The pandemic also impacted on the education of young people, with young people missing going to school/college, both for their education and also in terms of having daily connections with peers and teachers. Online learning was deemed a poor substitute, especially for those with hardware and internet access issues. Furthermore, a Growing Up in Ireland report³ found that in particular the pandemic affected children and young adults from low-income families in terms of digital poverty with a lack of access to equipment, a stable internet connection, as well as a quiet place to study.

Well over a year since the onset of the pandemic, the impact has been devastating for young people in the labour force. An OECD report stated that 'COVID-19 has the potential for long-term effects on youth unemployment, based on previous large economic shocks'⁴. **The Covid-adjusted youth unemployment rate in Ireland currently stands at 28.6%**⁵. Of those under 25, 27,984⁶ are in receipt of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (August 24th) and a further 19,993⁷ (June 2021) are on the Live Register. At the onset of the crisis, the Department of Social Protection (DSP) Working Paper⁸ stated that "those who have lost their job due to the COVID-19 pandemic, or who have been temporarily laid-off, are more likely to be young, low-skilled, female and part-time than the population average". The data from DSP on August 24th 2021 indicates that 19% of those on the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP) are under 25 years, despite the fact that young people under 25 only represent 11% of the labour force⁹.

3. Growing Up in Ireland, Key Findings: Special Covid 19 Survey
4. Covid-19: Protecting People and Societies
5. Monthly Unemployment Report, CSO, July
6. Update on payments awarded for COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment and Enhanced Illness Benefit, August 24th 2021, Department of Social Protection.
7. Live Register, June 2021, CSO
8. "The Initial Impacts of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Ireland's Labour Market", Irish Government Economic & Evaluation Service, Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, May 2020
9. Update on payments awarded for COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment and Enhanced Illness Benefit, June 2nd, 2021, Department of Social Protection

YOUNG PEOPLE PLAYING THEIR PART

The vast majority of young people have played their part in saving lives and in making short-term sacrifices for the longer-term health of our society by working on the front-line and by adhering to the government's public health guidelines. Even before the current crisis, many young people wanted a different future. Now as we move towards the post-pandemic period, there is an opportunity for a new beginning, which prioritises economic and social justice and environmental sustainability. In the last eighteen months we have seen the value of people working together, of community and solidarity and of the vital role of public services provided by the state and through non-governmental organisations. The youth work sector has contributed significantly during the crisis, using technology to support and continue to engage with young people, including many vulnerable young people and will continue to do so in the coming months and years. The young people of Ireland have responded to the health emergency and now it is up to the Government to recognise that contribution by supporting them by providing a pathway to a better future in the post-pandemic period.

DEMOGRAPHIC BONUS NOT DEFICIT

**OVER 1
MILLION
YOUNG PEOPLE
(AGED 18-24) BY
2025
(1,005,938).**



As we slowly emerge from the pandemic Ireland has advantages to capitalise on. While many other countries are grappling with a declining youth population, Ireland has a growing youth population. The results of Census 2016¹⁰ confirmed that Ireland has one of the youngest populations in Europe with one-third aged less than 25 years. Another CSO¹¹ report found that Ireland had the highest number of young people in the 0-14 age cohort in the EU. **The 2016 census results indicate that the number of young people aged 10-24 will increase by 4.6% (Table 1) between 2020 and 2025 and by 2025 will reach over one million young people (1,005,938).**¹²

Given we have a demographic bonus rather than a deficit, this provides us with a unique opportunity to invest in young people. If the Government makes the right decisions, Ireland has a bright future in spite of the current and ongoing challenges created by COVID-19. While it is true that Ireland, in line with most countries in the Western World, has a growing older population, these figures confirm that Ireland is also unique in that it has a large and growing youth population.

TABLE 1:

YEAR	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	% + or -
10-24 POP	961789	977853	991116	997898	1002898	1005938	+4.6%

10. Census 2016, Central Statistics Office

11. Measuring Ireland's Progress

12. E3003, Population 2011-2016 by Single Year of Age, Sex, County and City, CSO

RESTART, RESTORE, RENEW



While the Covid pandemic has had a devastating impact on our country and will take time for our people, society and economy to recover, we can rebound and grasp the opportunity to deliver economic equality, social justice and environmental sustainability. While we hope that the worst is behind us and we will have to live with both the virus and the consequences and scarring caused by it for many years. NYCI is calling on Government to implement a number of recommendations and policies in Budget 2022, to meet the needs of young people post-pandemic and support them to achieve their full potential and ensure Ireland's long-term prosperity.

This Pre-Budget Submission is entitled *“Restart, Restore, Renew”* because we are calling on Government to invest in policies and measures in Budget 2022 to achieve a number of objectives. First, we are calling on Government to invest in measures to facilitate youth work organisations to restart their supports and services to young people. Secondly, we want actions to restore hope and confidence for our young people, particularly those who are unemployed or homeless, and lastly, we want Government to renew the social contract and deliver economic and social fairness and justice for this generation.

WE ARE CALLING ON GOVERNMENT TO:

1. INVEST

TO FACILITATE
YOUTH WORK
ORGANISATIONS
TO RESTART
**SUPPORTS AND
SERVICES**
FOR YOUNG
PEOPLE

2. RESTORE

**HOPE AND
CONFIDENCE**
FOR OUR
YOUNG PEOPLE
PARTICULARLY
THOSE WHO ARE
**UNEMPLOYED
OR HOMELESS**

3. RENEW

**THE SOCIAL
CONTRACT
AND DELIVER
ECONOMIC
AND SOCIAL
FAIRNESS, AND
JUSTICE**



YOUTH WORK SERVICES



01

RECOMMENDATION:

In Budget 2022 invest an additional €10m in Youth Work Services so that they can restart, restore and renew their supports and services for young people isolated and impacted in the last eighteen months as we move from pandemic response to pandemic recovery.

RATIONALE:

**INVEST
AN ADDITIONAL
€10m
TO SUPPORT
YOUNG PEOPLE
ISOLATED
AND
IMPACTED
IN THE LAST
18 MONTHS**



Young people have suffered and endured severe disruption to their education, employment, family and social life, as well as the impact on their well-being, future careers and life plans as a result of the pandemic. It is clear from national and international reports that young people, and particularly the most disadvantaged and vulnerable young people have been affected disproportionately. The consequences and scarring of the lives and prospects of young people arising from the pandemic will be damaging for many. Youth work services have a crucial role to play in supporting young people as we move from pandemic response to pandemic recovery.

Before the pandemic in March 2020, youth work services engaged with up to 382,000 young people in every community in Ireland, particularly those who are socially and economically disadvantaged. As outlined below, despite the best efforts of youth work organisations, it was not possible to maintain contact and engagement with significant numbers of young people and to retain the services of volunteers due to public health restrictions. As we move from pandemic response to pandemic recovery, the youth work sector has the potential, if provided with the requisite investment in Budget 2022, to play a key role in delivering on the *“New Deal for Young People”*¹³ which the Taoiseach has committed to. The youth work sector can support young people to catch up and get back on track, as our society reopens and recovers in the coming months and years. As noted by the OECD¹⁴ the COVID-19 crisis has proven that youth workers and youth organisations can be partners in providing support to people’s well-being, especially for vulnerable groups and for people that are unlikely to be aware of relevant government services and support.

If significant support and investment in the youth work sector is not provided, we are concerned that youth organisations who have lost significant income and suffered financially will not have the resources to reach out and engage with youth people and volunteers in the coming months. That could create a vicious cycle, where they do not have the resources to recruit young people, volunteers, access suitable spaces etc., which in turn will further undermine their capacity to earn their own income and fundraise. Ultimately this could undermine the sustainability of organisations, the delivery of youth work in Ireland and this would further impact negatively on young people. If we allow the voluntary youth sector infrastructure to wither now, it will not be possible to revive it later and it will cost the State more to respond to the unmet needs of young people in due course.

13. Dáil Éireann, Taoiseach Questions, Houses of the Oireachtas, April 21st 2021

14. Youth and COVID-19, Response, Recovery and Resilience, OECD, June 2020

BACKGROUND

NYCI welcomed the commitment in the 2020 Programme for Government with regard to youth work, which states that over the lifetime of the administration it will:

“Continue to invest in community and voluntary family support services and youth work, recognising their value in preventing harm and in responding to the needs of vulnerable families”¹⁵

NYCI warmly welcomed the €5m investment in youth work in Budget 2021¹⁶. This was a significant recognition of the role which the youth work sector can play and begins the process of undoing years of cuts and underinvestment. This support was also welcome in stabilising services and organisations, at a time of huge strain and stress caused by the pandemic. It is crucial that this investment continues in Budget 2022 as we move from pandemic response to recovery.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON YOUTH SECTOR

In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic set in train a series of rapid and extraordinary social conditions in Ireland which had a profound impact on Irish society in respect of remote working and social distancing. Prior to the pandemic, almost all youth work delivered by the 1,400 full time youth workers and 40,000 volunteers with up to 380,000 young people was provided in person and face to face. Over a few days, in response to the pandemic and public health restrictions, youth work organisations and youth workers re-engineered their work and services insofar as possible to meet the needs of young people accessing their services.

In May 2020, NYCI commissioned research¹⁷ to capture both the innovative and creative approaches to engaging with young people during this period and the limitations such methodologies presented. This study provided an independent review of the youth work sector response to COVID-19 in the immediate period of the pandemic during the first six months of the pandemic and provided a snapshot from March to August 2020 of how the youth work sector was reacting to the effects of a global pandemic. The research demonstrated the pivotal role of the youth work sector in supporting young people and in mitigating the negative impact of COVID-19 on their lives. It also emphasised the importance of face-to-face youth work for young people and highlighted that those most at risk were the most disconnected during the pandemic.

15. Programme for Government, 2020, P81

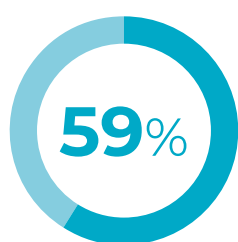
16. NYCI Response to Budget 2021

17. Covid-19 and Youth Work, A Review of the Youth Work Response to the COVID Pandemic, NYCI, September 2020

INNOVATION BY THE YOUTH SECTOR DURING THE PANDEMIC

The 2020 research demonstrated how the youth sector used online group engagement to support young people. This included interactive activities, online events and virtual activities, new groups and arts-based activities. Others provided youth information, local community engagement and innovative use of digitally-based youth work. There was also engagement with young people via telephone and text. Engagement via social media kept young people updated with links to health advice, sharing ideas and updates on events. Some engagement continued in person while observing social distancing. Some organisations delivered care/activity packages. The report found that 36% of respondents provided food boxes, 20% provided access to digital equipment and 31% referred young people to other agencies. As noted by one young person in the report, youth organisations recognized that young people were feeling lonely during this time and not able to meet up with friends so they acted quickly to move their events online so that students and young people could interact with them and not feel disconnected from the environment. All these responses reflect the extent to which interaction with youth organisations served as a lifeline for some young people.

LIMITATIONS ON YOUTH SERVICES CAUSED BY THE PANDEMIC



OF THE SERVICES
EXPERIENCED A
REDUCTION
IN THE NUMBER
OF YOUNG
PEOPLE WITH
WHOM THEY
ENGAGED

Despite the best efforts of the youth workers and youth organisations, the research highlighted the detrimental impact of the restrictions and use of online engagement on youth work services and on young people who relied on these services. The most common limitations found, were that 68% of respondents noted that young people were reluctant to engage online and 67% found it difficult to engage with the most disadvantaged young people. In addition, due to digital poverty, many young people had no or limited access to devices or an adequate internet connection. While the benefits of online engagement and digital youth work will be brought forward post-pandemic, youth work is fundamentally about the relationships between the youth worker and youth people and within the group as a whole, and therefore there is no substitute for in person and face to face youth work. The 2020 study found that 59% of the services surveyed had experienced a reduction in the number of young people with whom they engaged, with figures falling from 59,822 to 18,391, which equates to a 70% drop, while 14% were unable to provide a service during lockdown, impacting on approximately 6,900 young people.

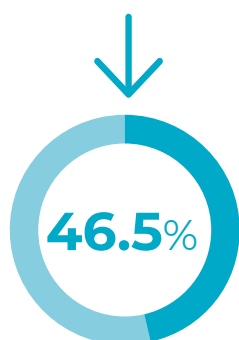
On the basis of the figures from this report, it was only possible for youth organisations in the first lockdown to maintain engagement with 27% of young people who have previously been engaged by their supports and services. So effectively, it was not possible for youth organisations to engage with almost three-quarters of young people who they had previously supported.

RESEARCH ON IMPACT OF PANDEMIC ON YOUTH SERVICES IN 2021

In May 2021, NYCI commissioned further research to examine the impact of the pandemic on youth services over the last year. As the research is ongoing the final report is not available at this time, however we have access to preliminary and headline data. These initial findings (based on responses from 54 managers) indicate that the impact of the pandemic on the participation of young people in youth work, and the number of volunteers and clubs/groups active remain quite significant.

YOUNG PEOPLE ENGAGED IN YOUTH WORK

THE NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE ENGAGED IN YOUTH WORK HAS DECLINED



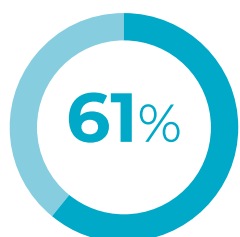
As detailed in the table below, 69% of respondents (54 youth work managers) indicate that their organisation had experienced a fall in the number of young people participating, with 11% indicating numbers of young people had increased and 7% stating that numbers had remained stable. **In absolute numbers, the numbers of young people engaged has declined from 164,616 in the year to February 2020 to 88,114 in the year to February 2021 or by 46.5%. This highlights the need for additional support for the youth sector to re-engage with thousands of young people in the pandemic recovery period.**

FROM 164,616 2020 → TO 88,114 2021

TABLE 2:
Number of young people engaged in 2019/20 and 2020/21

YOUNG PEOPLE ENGAGEMENT	% of Organisations (n=54)	Total number of young people Mar 19 – Feb 20	Total number of young people Mar 20 – Feb 21	Difference
STAYED THE SAME	7%	3,425	3,425	–
INCREASED	11%	1,911	5,566	+3,655
DECREASED	69%	159,280	79,123	-80,157
FIGURES UNAVAILABLE	13%	–	–	–
TOTALS	100%	164,616	88,114	-76,502

VOLUNTEER LEVELS IN YOUTH WORK



OF
ORGANISATIONS
SAW A
DECREASE
IN VOLUNTEER
INVOLVEMENT
DURING THE
FIRST YEAR OF
THE PANDEMIC

The survey of managers also examined the number of volunteers active in youth work from March 2020 to February 2021 compared to March 2019 to February 2020. Only 6% of organisations kept the same level of volunteers for both years. 15% increased the number of volunteers involved denoting a total increase of 108 volunteers. However, 61% of organisations saw a decrease in volunteer involvement during the first year of the pandemic with a significant reduction from 12,339 volunteers in 2019/20 to 3,951 in 2020/21, representing a 57% drop in volunteer involvement. Given the crucial role volunteers play in delivering youth work services, this large drop is of concern. Therefore, as we move into the pandemic recovery phase, it is vital that investment is provided to support organisations to retain, regain and retrain volunteers.

12,339 **→** **3,951**
FOR 2019/20 OF 2020/21

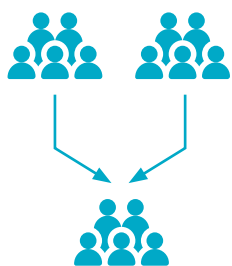
TABLE 3:

Volunteer levels in 2019/20 to 2020/21

VOLUNTEER LEVELS	% of Organisations (n=54)	Total number of volunteers Mar 19 – Feb 20	Total number of volunteers Mar 20 – Feb 21	Difference
STAYED THE SAME	6%	405	405	–
INCREASED	15%	832	940	+108
DECREASED	61%	11,102	3,951	-7,151
UNSURE	4%	–	–	–
N/A	11%	–	–	–
UNANSWERED	3%	–	–	–
TOTALS	100%	12,339	5,296	7,043

NUMBER OF ACTIVE GROUPS/CLUBS/UNITS

**DECLINE OF
50%
OF CLUBS/
GROUPS/
UNITS NOT
FUNCTIONING
AT PRESENT**



The respondents in the survey were also asked to indicate the number of groups/clubs/units they facilitated during the year March 2019 to February 2020 and for March 2020 to February 2021. Among the respondents, 30% maintained the same levels of groups/clubs/units for both years, with 9% indicating they had an increase from 103 groups/clubs/units growing to 128 during the first year of the pandemic. However, there was a significant decrease for 24 organisations with a 62% reduction (1,006) from 1,632 in 2019/20 to 626 in 2020/21.

This translates into an overall decline of 50% in the number of clubs/groups/units functioning at present due the impact of the pandemic.

TABLE 4:

Number of groups/clubs/units facilitated in 2019/20 and 2020/21

LEVELS OF GROUPS/CLUBS/UNITS	% of Organisations (n=54)	Total number of groups/clubs/units Mar 19 – Feb 20	Total number of groups/clubs/units Mar 20 – Feb 21	Difference
STAYED THE SAME	30%	203	203	–
INCREASED	9%	103	128	+25
DECREASED	44%	1632	626	-1,006
FIGURES UNAVAILABLE	7%	–	–	–
N/A	4%	–	–	–
TOTALS	–	1,938	957	-981

FINANCIAL IMPACT OF PANDEMIC

ALMOST
HALF
INDICATED THAT
THE PANDEMIC
WAS HAVING A
SEVERE
IMPACT ON
ORGANISATIONAL
INCOME



NYCI conducted a survey of its members in January 2021 to ascertain the financial impact of the pandemic on their financial situation, in particular the impact on fundraising and membership fees. Thirty organisations completed the survey with 89% of respondents in receipt of the Youth Services Grant Scheme and the balance in receipt of funding from the UBU and Local Youth Club Grant schemes. **Almost half or 47% indicated that the pandemic was having either a very severe impact (27%) or a quite severe impact (20%) on organisational income.**

Furthermore, 93% indicated that the pandemic will have an impact on the organisations fundraising and earned income in 2021, with a third indicating it will have a very severe impact and 27% stating it will have a quite severe impact. In relation to whether they were concerned if they had sufficient funds to provide services in 2021, 93% indicated that they were concerned, with a third stating they were very concerned and 23% stating that they were quite concerned. The survey also found that 70% had experienced an increase in demand for services since the onset of the pandemic.

We acknowledge the support provided by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth in providing assurance to the youth sector with regard to statutory funding early in the crisis, however, over the last eighteen months, the capacity of organisations to earn own income and undertake fundraising has been severely hampered. While it may be possible for some organisations to sustain and survive this loss of income in the short-term, as the pandemic endures, organisations are using reserves and this could undermine the financial viability of organisations at a time when they should be supported to invest in measures to re-engage with young people and volunteers and to restart, restore and renew their services. Already one NYCI membership organisation has had to put its staff on a three-day week, which will hamper its capacity to support young people in the pandemic recovery phase.

CASE STUDIES:

NYCI has also secured information from a small number of our member organisations to illustrate the direct impact of the pandemic on their organisation with regard to engagement with young people, involvement of volunteers and the financial impact. This data reinforces the hit the youth sector has taken.

CASE STUDY 1

- In 2019, there were 299 voluntary youth clubs with 15,792 young people participating, with an average of 53 young people per club.
- At present there are just 57 clubs active with 3,021 (down 81%) young people active.
- At least 12,771 young people who at present are not able to access youth work.
- There were 3,192 leaders across the 299 clubs, the vast majority who could not volunteer.
- Two-thirds of voluntary youth clubs previously ran fundraising events to support their activities, this fundraising activity has not been possible for the last 18 months.
- Three-quarters of voluntary youth clubs previously active are now looking for additional training and support.

CASE STUDY 2

- 30% of the organisation's members remained active online but a significant number chose not to pursue online engagements.
- Confirmation that 18 units/groups have closed.
- Volunteer leaders have largely been inactive throughout Covid-19 due to public health concerns and restrictions.
- Income reduced this year by €300,000 due to the organisation not making membership fees compulsory however, costs have not reduced so they are currently looking at a deficit prediction for the year. This is being reviewed on an ongoing basis, staff have agreed to take unpaid leave as well as other significant steps to reducing the deficit.

CASE STUDY 3

- Membership to date in 2021 is down 42% on this time last year.
- Income from membership in 2019 was €103,281, in 2020 was €30,948, and in 2021 to date is €30,143, so membership (earned income) down 70% in both 2020/2021 on 2019.
- YSGS accounted for 83% of this organization's income in 2020 vs 59% in 2019.
- Projected income for 2021 is €323,127 and audited spend in 2020 was €343,943.

SEVERE IMPACT ON VOLUNTEER-LED YOUTH SERVICES

NYCI IS
PARTICULARLY
CONCERNED
ABOUT THE
IMPACT
ON VOLUNTEER
-LED YOUTH
GROUPS



NYCI is particularly concerned about the impact on volunteer led youth clubs, groups and units, which are the backbone of our universal youth services. Volunteer-led youth clubs are the lifeblood for many young people in communities where there is little or no provision to allow young people to come together outside of school. The local youth club is where young people go to have free, unstructured, safe spaces to be with their friends with the support of adult volunteers. The COVID-19 pandemic has financially impacted on their ability to reopen when restrictions ease and we are very concerned about their ability to re-engage volunteers and reach young people.

The vast majority of the 40,000 volunteers who were active in delivering youth services before the pandemic were stood down in March 2020 and it has not been possible for them to be involved in delivering services since, due to the public health restrictions. The sector will not be able to re-engage with large numbers of young people and run universal activities unless we can regain previous volunteers and recruit new ones.

We are hopeful with the roll out of the vaccination programme that many volunteers will return and that new volunteers will be recruited. However, the feedback from many of our member organisations is that the resources required to support volunteers now and in future will be much higher for a number of reasons, such as;

- volunteers will require more training and support to deliver youth work safely in a socially distanced world.
- volunteers, even when trained are anxious and will require more “handholding” by paid staff to run clubs and groups given the concerns about operating safely and undertaking continual risk management.
- volunteers will require ongoing training to keep up to date with ongoing and changing public health regulations and the increase in compliance and paperwork.
- organisations plan to recruit volunteer covid officers at regional level, but these volunteers will require additional training and support.
- volunteers and voluntary youth clubs will require additional financial support to secure larger spaces and facilities to allow for social distancing, with consequent additional insurance costs.
- volunteers will require training to integrate both the face-to-face and online youth work provision.

ADDITIONALITY PROVIDED BY INCREASED INVESTMENT



SUPPORTS AND SERVICES, TO REACH THE **MAXIMUM** NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE

With the continued roll-out of the vaccination programme, the youth sector welcomes the re-opening of our society. The youth work sector has a key role to play in supporting young people to recover the lost ground since March 2020. Before the pandemic, youth work services in Ireland were significant in scope and scale by international standards. The track record, credibility and reach of the youth sector is also demonstrated by the fact that we had the highest level of involvement in youth services in the EU, with 26% of young people active in a youth club/organisation.¹⁸

The youth work sector wants to recover the lost ground and wants to “restart, restore and renew” its supports and services, so as to reach the maximum number of young people. We believe with adequate resources we can engage with increased numbers of young people and volunteers, who will be looking for human interaction, in person activities, to meet old friends and new people, to learn and develop after almost two years online. With increased investment, the youth sector can support staff and volunteers to re-engage with young people over the next year.

Our member organisations over the coming 12 to 18 months have plans to undertake a range of activities to engage with young people who were previously involved and new young people not active in youth work previously. Some of the proposed activities by youth organisations which would support this work are as follows;

- Recruit additional outreach staff (boots on the ground) to manage and coordinate with local volunteers the retention of existing volunteer led clubs/groups and units and establishment of new clubs, groups and units
- Restart funding for volunteer led youth clubs/groups/units to meet the additional costs associated with youth work
- Retention and recruitment drive of young people, publicity campaigns both on social media and in traditional formats aimed at re-engaging/engaging for first time with young people
- Developing club friendly Covid-19 supports and trainings
- Development of new fun/socialisation programmes for young people
- Development of apps to support track and trace
- Major recruitment drive for new volunteers
- Induction and training for new volunteers
- Support and training for existing volunteers
- Leaders training for new volunteers
- Comprehensive health and safety risk assessments/audit and implementation of recommendations
- Funding to cover increased costs associated with accessing larger spaces, travel costs etc., to meet social distancing requirements

18. European Commission 2011, “Youth on the Move” - Analytical Report of Flash Eurobarometer Number 319a

RISK FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND YOUTH SECTOR WITHOUT INVESTMENT

YOUTH ORGANISATIONS WILL NOT HAVE THE RESOURCES TO REACH OUT AND ENGAGE WITH YOUTH PEOPLE



With adequate financial support, the decline in the number of young people engaging in voluntary youth work, the decline in the number of active clubs/groups and decline in the number of volunteers as a result of the pandemic can all be reversed. **Without additional investment however, NYCI is concerned that youth organisations who have lost significant income and suffered financially will not have the resources to reach out and engage with youth people and volunteers in the coming months.** That could create a vicious cycle, where they do not have the resources to recruit young people, volunteers, access suitable spaces etc., which in turn will further undermine their capacity to earn own income and fundraise and ultimately undermine the sustainability of the organisations and the delivery of youth work in Ireland. That could fundamentally alter the nature of youth work in Ireland, from which it may never recover. With additional investment that outcome can be avoided.

DEALING WITH IMPACT OF CUTS AND UNDERINVESTMENT

We acknowledge that youth work funding has increased in the last number of years however, it is important to state that the sector endured very steep cuts in the 2008-2014 period. In that seven-year period, investment in youth work services from the then Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) decreased by 31.8%, from €73.1m in 2008 to €49.8m in 2014. Since then, the investment from DCYA has increased. In 2021 it stands at €66.8m, however, this means that financial support for youth work is still €6.3m below that of thirteen years ago, which does not account for inflation in that period, the increased number of young people in our population and the fact that the sector is now dealing with the consequences of a pandemic. Even before the pandemic, many voluntary youth organisations were already under pressure, as they stretched already diminished budgets to meet ever growing governance and compliance requirements such as Children First, vetting, charities regulation, the companies act, lobbying regulation, GDPR, etc. while also responding to the changing and growing needs of young people in their programmes and activities.

An analysis of the per capita funding provided to the voluntary youth sector to engage with young people makes for stark reading. In 2008, the investment in youth work services was €76 per young person per annum. By 2014, this had collapsed to €58 per young person. As outlined earlier, while there has been an increase in funding, the youth population is also growing significantly; therefore, the actual investment in 2021¹⁹ comes to just €68 per young person per year or just €1.30 per young person per week. The results of Census 2016 indicate that there will be 991,116 young people aged between 10-24 years in 2022. We propose that investment in youth work services should be increased to €77.50 per young person by 2022, which amounts to €76.8m. In order to achieve this, Government must invest an additional funding allocation of €10m in current expenditure in the upcoming budget.

19. Census 2016, CSO, (977,853 young people and a budget of €66.8m)

INVESTMENT IN EXISTING SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

**CONSOLIDATION
OF EXISTING
YOUTH WORK
SERVICES
SHOULD BE
PRIORITISED
OVER THE
DEVELOPMENT
OF NEW
SERVICES IN
2022**



In light of the challenging environment created by the pandemic and the pressures on organisations to restart, restore and renew their services and meet the needs of young people impacted by the pandemic in a socially distanced way, we propose that the bulk of any additional funding is allocated to existing services. **While we appreciate that there is always a need and demand for new services, we propose that consolidation of existing youth work services should be prioritised over the development of new services in 2022.**

ALLOCATION OF INVESTMENT

It would be important that any additional funding is allocated across the spectrum to support the different strands of youth work, such as universal youth work, targeted youth work and youth information. We believe that frontline services supported by schemes such as the YSGS, LYCGS, UBU should be prioritised in 2022. Therefore, NYCI proposes a slightly higher percentage allocation of additional funding to those schemes, although all areas should receive additional investment in 2022 as outlined on the following page in Table 5. NYCI would welcome the opportunity to engage further with the Department on these proposals and allocations.

TABLE 5:

Recommended Allocations of 2022 Funding for Youth Work

NAME OF SCHEME	2021 ²⁰ Funding	Funding Increase	2022 Funding
YOUTH SERVICE GRANT SCHEME (YSGS)	€ 12.3m	€ 3m	€15.3m
LOCAL YOUTH CLUB GRANT SCHEME (LYCGS)	€ 2.3m	€ 0.7m	€ 3m
UBU YOUR PLACE YOUR SPACE ²¹ EXISTING SERVICES	€ 39.7m	€ 4.9m	€ 46.6m (incl 2021 new funds)
UBU YOUR PLACE, YOUR SPACE NEW SERVICES (2021)	€ 2m	€ 0	€ 0
YOUTH INFORMATION CENTRES	€ 1.6m	€ 0.4m	€ 2m
ETB YOUTH SERVICES GRANT/ TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE	€ 4.7m	€ 0.5m	€ 5.2m
OTHER NATIONAL YOUTH INITIATIVES (INCL. LÉARGAS, GAISCE AND SMALLER YOUTH RELATED PROJECTS)	€ 4.2m	€ 0.5m	€ 4.7m
TOTALS	€ 66.8m	€ 10m	€ 76.8m

RECOMMENDATION

Invest an additional €10m in Youth Work Services so that they can restart, restore and renew their supports and services for young people isolated and impacted in the last 18 months as we move from pandemic response to pandemic recovery.

RESPONSIBILITY

Department of Children, Disability, Equality and Integration and Youth

20. Dáil Éireann, Parliamentary Questions 177, June 2nd 2021

21. The Targeted Youth Funding Scheme is the amalgamation of 4 previous schemes, i.e.; Special Projects for Youth, Young People's Facilities and Services Fund Round 1 & 2 and the Local Drugs Task Force Projects Scheme) into a single scheme

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT



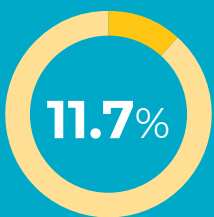
02

RECOMMENDATION:

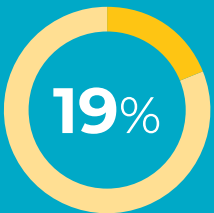
Provide a stimulus package of €200m to deliver additional education, training and apprenticeship opportunities and other employment measures and to support the youth work sector to enhance the employability of young people furthest from the labour market.

RATIONALE:

UNDER 25 YEAR
OLDS COMPRISE



OF THE LABOUR
FORCE, BUT
ARE **OVER-
REPRESENTED**
IN THOSE IN
**RECEIPT OF THE
PUP, WITH**



UNDER
25 YEARS

Young workers are always disproportionately badly affected by recessions and shocks to the economy, as demonstrated by the last recession when youth unemployment reached over 31% in 2012, even when the safety value of emigration was available. All the evidence to date indicates that the impact of the measures necessary to protect public health have been devastating for young people in the labour force. Data from the CSO indicate a COVID-19 adjusted rate (upper) of youth unemployment of 28.6%²² in July 2021. The DEASP Working Paper²³ also states that “those who have lost their job due to the COVID-19 pandemic, or who have been temporarily laid-off, are more likely to be young, low-skilled, female and part-time than the population average”. An OECD report²⁴ stated that “COVID-19 has the potential for long-term effects on youth unemployment, based on previous large economic shocks”. The findings of a further CSO report²⁵ on COVID-19, found that 15–24-year-olds experienced the highest rates of loss of employment and temporary layoff, with 46% of 15–24-year-olds temporarily laid off and over a fifth (22%) experiencing loss of employment.

At its peak in early May 2020 data from the CSO indicated that 122,500²⁶ young people under the age of 25 were on the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP). By September 2020, the number of young people on the PUP declined by two-thirds to 42,808²⁷ as the economy reopened. In early February 2021, as the country was under another lockdown the numbers of young people on the PUP climbed again to a high point of 113,894²⁸. Since then, as restrictions have been lifted the numbers have declined again in August 2021 to 27,984²⁹. It is important to note however, that even with the declining numbers on the PUP, young people under 25 years, while only comprising 11.7%³⁰ of the labour force, are overrepresented in those in receipt of the PUP, with 19%³¹ under 25 years.

22. Monthly Unemployment Report, CSO, July

23. “The Initial Impacts of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Ireland's Labour Market”, Irish Government Economic & Evaluation Service, Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, May 2020

24. Covid-19: Protecting People and Societies, OECD, June 2020

25. Employment and Life Effects of Covid-19, CSO, June 2020

26. Covid-19 Statistics, Department of Social Protection, May 2020

27. Covid-19 Statistics, Department of Social Protection, September 2020

28. Covid-19 Statistics, Department of Social Protection, February 2021

29. Update on payments awarded for COVID-19 PUP August 24th 2021, Department of Social Protection.

30. CSO, Labour Force Survey, Q1 2020

31. Update on payments awarded for COVID-19 PUP August 24th 2021, Department of Social Protection.

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT – OTHER TRENDS

IN 2020,
IRELAND'S NEET
RATE AMONG
15-24 YEAR OLDS
WAS **12%**,
ABOVE THE EU
AVERAGE OF
11.1%



Even before the onset of the pandemic and welcome job growth in the Irish economy, youth unemployment in December 2019 stood at 12.6%.³² The rate of youth unemployment (15-24 years) was also more than three times that of those aged 25-74 years which stood at 3.7%.

In addition to the young people on the PUP, there are, as of July 2021, another 20,715³³ young people signing on the live register. A further 21,579³⁴ young people on are the Disability Allowance of which 18,041 have been on the payment for 12 months or more, with 5,777³⁵ young people under 25 years on the One Parent Family Payment. In total that brings the total number of young people under 25 years in need to employment supports as of July 2021 at 76,055. **Another area of concern is the continued high number of young people 'not in education, employment and training' (NEET). In 2020, Ireland's NEET rate among 15-24-year-olds was 12%, above the EU average of 11.1%.³⁶** It is vital that the Government supports the young workers made unemployed due to the pandemic, but also does not forget the young people who were unemployed prior to the current crisis.

TABLE 6:
Snapshot of Youth Unemployment Data

YOUTH (U25) UNEMPLOYMENT RATE DECEMBER 2019 (PRE-COVID)	12.6%
YOUTH (U25) UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (COVID UPPER RANGE) JUNE 2021	28.6% (+16%)
NUMBER (U25) ON PANDEMIC UNEMPLOYMENT PAYMENT (PUP) FEBRUARY 2021 (HIGHEST POINT IN 2021 TO DATE)	113,894
NUMBER (U25) ON PANDEMIC UNEMPLOYMENT PAYMENT (PUP) 24TH AUGUST 2021	27,984 (-75%)
PERCENTAGE OF U25 IN LABOUR FORCE QUARTER 1 2020	11.7%
PERCENTAGE OF U25 ON PANDEMIC UNEMPLOYMENT PAYMENT AUGUST 2021	19%
NUMBER OF U25 SIGNING ON LIVE REGISTER JULY 2021	20,715
NUMBER OF U25 ON DISABILITY ALLOWANCE JUNE 2021	21,579
NUMBER OF U25 ON ONE PARENT FAMILY PAYMENT JUNE 2021	5,777
NOT IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING (NEET) RATE (15-24) (2020)	12%

32. CSO, Monthly Unemployment Report, December 2019

33. CSO, Live Register Figures, July 2021

34. Dáil Éireann, Parliamentary Question 167, June 2nd 2021

35. Dáil Éireann, Parliamentary Question 168, June 2nd 2021

36. Dáil Éireann, Parliamentary Questions 52, June 2nd 2021

ACTION REQUIRED NOW

WE CANNOT AFFORD TO MAKE THE MISTAKES OF THE PAST, WHERE YOUNG PEOPLE WERE LEFT TO LINGER ON THE DOLE QUEUES



The corrosive impact of unemployment on young people is well known. Without the appropriate state response of a tailored suite of options to take account of the varied skills and training needs required, and adequate income support, it has the potential to demoralise and diminish young people's aspirations. Bell and Blanchflower³⁷ describe it as having a scarring effect which causes permanent scars rather than temporary blemishes. Those who experience unemployment when young are more likely to experience unemployment again in their lifetime and to experience a wage penalty. It has a negative impact on a person's mental and physical well-being.

NYCI and its member organisations have been working to support young people to access the labour market for many years. We are very concerned at the impact of this crisis on jobseekers, particularly for those furthest from the labour market. The stark statistics outlined above require an immediate policy response. Young jobseekers are facing a grim social and economic outlook, reminiscent of the last recession. This time around youth emigration, in the short to medium term, is unlikely to provide an escape route for those unable to secure employment or trapped in precarious employment situations. **As a society and an economy, we cannot afford to make the mistakes of the past, where young people were left to linger on the dole queues for years on end and the Governmental response was slow and inadequate.**

EU RESILIENCE AND RECOVERY FACILITY

A welcome development in this regard is the EU Resilience and Recovery Facility, which includes a dedicated pillar entitled 'Next Generation' and access to funding for member states. This focus on young people in that document is very promising. In accordance with the guidance from the EU Commission, we call on the Irish Government to outline how it *"will promote policies for the next generation, in particular on early childhood education and care, education and skills, including digital skills, upskilling and reskilling, employment and inter-generational fairness"*³⁸.

We believe the establishment of a Taskforce on Youth Employment with a mandate to develop policies and measures and with significant resources to address youth unemployment would fulfil this EU Commission requirement.

37. Bell, David N. F.; Blanchflower, David G. (2011) : Youth unemployment in Europe and the United States, IZA Discussion Papers, No. 5673, Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA), Bonn

38. EU Commission Staff Working Document, Guidance to Member States, SWD (2021) 12 final, p7

ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN AND PATHWAYS TO WORK

We acknowledge the publication of the Government's Economic Recovery Plan³⁹ and Pathways to Work⁴⁰ on June and July 2021 respectively, and welcome that Government policy recognises the disproportionate effect of the pandemic on young people. It further notes that a particularly important area of focus will be on youth unemployment and working intensively with young people at greater risk of long-term unemployment. We note the commitment to reduce youth unemployment to 12.5% by 2023. We welcome the allocation of an additional 150 Case Officers (Job Coaches) during 2021 to provide greater resources for engagement with young jobseekers, the widening of support measures to target young jobseekers aged 25-29 years in line with the Reinforced European Youth Guarantee and the expanded Jobs Plus scheme. We note the development of a new Work Placement Experience Programme, with a target of up to 10,000 participants by the end-2022 and the development of a new Youth Employment Charter. We look forward to learning more about the contents and benefits of these initiatives for young jobseekers. We note that these measures are complemented by the 50,000 additional places in Further and Higher Education, which were announced in 2020. While these announcements and measures are welcome, we believe given the scale and scope of the problem, that they fall far short of what is required. That is why we are calling for much more to be done.

ROLE OF YOUTH WORK AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S EMPLOYABILITY

Youth work and youth workers have the capacity to engage with marginalized and excluded young people, many are already doing so with limited resources and in circumstances where they are addressing other needs. They don't wait for young people to come to youth centres or facilities. Many have and already engage in outreach work to meet the young people on their own turf. They also have considerable experience of providing the much needed one to one support for this group of young people. If the resources were available and the objectives and outcomes were clear and achievable, youth organisations could develop and deliver programmes to support young jobseekers who are either not engaging with or feel alienated from the existing education, training and public employment system.

With adequate investment over a 3–5-year period, youth organisations can develop and deliver focused initiatives to address the needs of young people who are unemployed. These initiatives would be developed in line with national criteria and with outcomes in mind, but would be designed to meet the needs of the young people involved and respond to local circumstances. Some principles underpinning support for local schemes would be;

- Focus on promoting and enhancing employability of young people furthest from the labour market
- Operating in areas with significant number of young jobseekers and NEETs based on clear evidence and data
- Based on assessment of needs of local young jobseekers
- Evidence of engagement and partnership with key local stakeholders
- Well-designed programmes shaped to meet needs of unemployed young people
- Active participation of young people in design and delivery
- Staff expertise and experience and multi-disciplinary teams
- Engagement with parents and communities
- Engagement with local employers
- Credible and achievable outcomes
- Developing possible progression paths for participants
- Building in evaluation and review of programme from beginning

39. Economic Recovery Plan, Department of the Taoiseach, June 1st 2021

40. "Pathways to Work" Strategy 2021-2025, Department of Social Protection, July 2021

TASKFORCE ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

NYCI is calling for the establishment of a Taskforce on Youth Employment to bring together key stakeholders and experts in the field to develop an evidence-based policy response and to develop a suite of measures to address this issue. NYCI met with Minister Harris in April 2021 and submitted a draft term of reference for the Taskforce. Our proposal has widespread public support, a Red C poll⁴¹ commissioned by NYCI found that 77% of those surveyed supported the establishment of a Taskforce on Youth Employment, while 82% agreed that the Irish Government should invest in a stimulus package dedicated to addressing youth unemployment. A further 74% agreed that Irish Government policy should prioritise young people when addressing social and economic issues (like unemployment) caused by the pandemic, while 86% of respondents agreed that failure to support young people/adult's post-pandemic will result in serious social and economic policy implications.

In order for the Taskforce to be effective it must have sufficient resources to undertake its work and with this in mind NYCI is calling for a stimulus package of up to €200m to be set aside in Budget 2022 to implement the recommendations of the Taskforce. This investment is necessary to support young people back into work. At present, the Pandemic Unemployment Payment for the 27,984 young people currently in receipt of it is costing €7.7m⁴² per week. NYCI believes that young people should be supported into work rather than being abandoned on welfare and that is why we are calling on the Government in Budget 2022 to commit to the establishment of a Taskforce on Youth Employment and the allocation of €200m to implement its recommendations.

On top of existing measures, a €200m package could assist up to an additional 40,000 young jobseekers by providing additional capacity and supporting young people under 25 years into education, training, apprenticeship and ultimately employment. Within this allocation an envelope of funding should be provided to support the youth work sector to develop and deliver long term programmes to support youth employability. All the evidence confirms that it is far better to support young people to engage in active labour market measures to enhance their skills and employability and keep them close to the jobs market.

RECOMMENDATION

Provide a stimulus package of €200m to deliver additional education, training and apprenticeship opportunities and other employment measures and to support the youth work sector to enhance the employability of young people furthest from the labour market.

RESPONSIBILITY

Department of Social Protection, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Department for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

41. Red C Online research conducted with n+1025 RPI adults aged 18+. Respondents were recruited using RED C LIVE, RED C's online panel of over 40,000 members. Data was weighted across gender, age, region and social class to ensure a representative sample based on the latest CSO projections. Fieldwork for this research took place between 16th and 22nd April 2021.

42. Update on payments awarded for Covid-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment and Enhanced Illness Payment, August 24th 2021

SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR YOUNG JOBSEEKERS



03

RECOMMENDATION:

Equality for young people on Jobseeker's Allowance.

RATIONALE:

NYCI welcomes the commitment in the Programme for Government to;

“Improve jobseeker supports for people aged under 24 over the lifetime of the Government”⁴³

While the aforementioned commitment is positive, almost a year into the lifetime of this Government, we have not seen any progress on addressing the lower rate of Jobseeker's Allowance which is applied to young people under 25 years. This must change in Budget 2022.

NYCI supports full equality for young people. We opposed the decision of previous Governments to reduce welfare payments to young unemployed persons under 26 years of age and we want the full rates to be restored. We have been advocating on this issue for twelve years. While we acknowledge the decision of the then Government in Budget 2020, to restore the full rate of €203 to young people aged 25, this does not redress the existing inequality that exists for those under 25. Furthermore, in Budget 2017 in line with a proposal made by NYCI since 2014, the Government restored the full adult rate to young people who were engaged in education, training and work experience. It is unacceptable that young people aged 18-24 years are on a lower rate of weekly support. We believe the imposition of lower rates on young jobseekers is contrary to the provisions of Article 40.1 of the Constitution,⁴⁴ which dictates that all citizens should be treated equally.

The most recent data indicates that 73% or 12,011 of the 16,384 young people aged 18-24 years in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance (JA) in June 2021 were on the €112.70 a week, with 18% on other rates, with only 1,319 or 8% on the full adult rate of €203 per week.⁴⁵

OF THE 16,384 PEOPLE AGED 18-24 YEARS ON JA



43. Programme for Government, 2020, P74

44. Irish Constitution

45. Dáil Éireann, Parliamentary Questions 157, 158, 159, June 2nd 2021

TABLE 7:**Data on Jobseeker's Allowance Payments to Young People Aged 18-24 Years**

YOUNG PERSONS UNDER 25 IN RECEIPT OF JOBSEEKER'S ALLOWANCE, JUNE 2021		%
RATE	RECIPIENTS	
€112.70	12,011	73%
Rate other than €112.70 or €203	3,054	18%
€203	1,319	8%
TOTALS	16,384	100%

THE RESULTS INDICATES THAT THE CURRENT LEVELS OF JOBSEEKER'S ALLOWANCE PAYMENTS CREATE ECONOMIC POVERTY, HARDSHIP AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION.



NYCI commissioned the Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice (VPSJ) to do detailed analysis of the Minimum Essential Standard of Living for young people on Jobseeker's Allowance aged 18-24 years in 2018. The VPSJ's Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL) budget standards details the minimum income needed to live and take part in the social and economic life in Ireland.

The research places an emphasis on 'needs, not wants', and produces comprehensive, transparent, itemised lists (of over 2,000 items, goods and services) detailing what is required to meet minimum needs and enable an acceptable minimum standard of living. From this, budgets specifying the actual average weekly cost of a minimum acceptable standard (the Minimum Essential Standard of Living) are compiled, producing MESL budgets for 90% of households across urban and rural Ireland.

This understanding of an acceptable minimum standard of living, embodies the concepts which underpin the human right to an adequate standard of living, and reflect the Irish Government definition of poverty which emphasises the ability to have a *"standard of living which is regarded as acceptable by Irish society generally"* and to participate in normal activities. The results from the MESL of young people aged 18-24 years indicates that the current levels of Jobseeker's Allowance payments create economic poverty, hardship and social exclusion.

TABLE 8:
Living Alone – Average Market Rent

EXPENSES	18-24 YEARS URBAN	18-24 YEARS RURAL
MESL Core	€213.38	€253.63
Housing Costs	€252.65	€89.32
Total MESL	€466.03	€342.95
INCOME	18-24 YEARS URBAN	18-24 YEARS RURAL
Jobseeker's Allowance	€112.70	€112.70
Income adequacy	-€353.33	-€230.25
JA as % of adequacy	24%	33%

TABLE 9:
Living Alone – With Housing Assistance Payment

EXPENSES	18-24 YEARS URBAN	18-24 YEARS RURAL
MESL Core	€213.38	€253.63
Housing Costs	€93.28	€17
Total MESL	€306.66	€270.63
INCOME	18-24 YEARS URBAN	18-24 YEARS RURAL
Jobseeker's Allowance	€112.70	€112.70
Income adequacy	-€193.96	-€157.93
JA as % of adequacy	37%	42%

TABLE 10:
Living in Parental Home

EXPENSES	18-24 YEARS URBAN	18-24 YEARS RURAL
MESL Core	€149.05	€137.24
Housing Costs	—	—
Total MESL	€149.05	€137.24
INCOME	18-24 YEARS URBAN	18-24 YEARS RURAL
Jobseeker's Allowance	€112.70	€112.70
Income adequacy	-€36.35	-€24.54
JA as % of adequacy	76%	82%

PAYMENTS
ARE **WHOLLY
INADEQUATE**
AND ARE A
FRACTION
OF WHAT IS
REQUIRED TO
**LIVE WITH
DIGNITY**



The analysis by VPSJ demonstrates that for all those aged 18-24 years on the lower rates of Jobseeker's Allowance, the current payments are wholly inadequate. For the vast majority of recipients, the current payments are a fraction of what is required to live with dignity.

NYCI is calling on the Government to reverse these cuts in Budget 2022 by eliminating the age-related difference in payment by increasing the Jobseeker's Allowance rate for 18-24-year-olds by €90.30 per week from €112.70 to €203.

According to information provided by the Department of Social Protection, this measure would cost €64.8m based on current numbers in a full calendar year⁴⁶.

46. Dáil Éireann, Parliamentary Questions 427, 2021

RECOMMENDATION

Allocate €64.8m to restore the full rate of Jobseeker's Allowance to young people under 25 years, by increasing the rate from €112.70 to €203 per week.

RESPONSIBILITY

Department of Social Protection.

YOUTH HOMELESSNESS



04

RECOMMENDATION:

Tackling Youth Homelessness

RATIONALE:

**MUCH MORE
NEEDS TO BE
DONE TO ENSURE
THAT THE
780 YOUNG
ADULTS WHO
ARE WITHOUT A
SECURE HOME
HAVE ONE**



NYCI welcomes the commitment in the Programme for Government to;

“Develop a National Youth Homelessness Strategy”⁴⁷

In May 2021, 7,991⁴⁸ people were recorded as homeless, which included 5,843 adults and 2,148 children under 18 years. The number of young people aged 18-24 recorded as homeless in May 2021 was 780, representing a 10% increase on the numbers of young people recorded as homeless in May 2020⁴⁹.

This consistent high level and increase in the numbers of young people who are homeless is of concern, and indicates that much more needs to be done to ensure that the 780 young adults who are without a secure home have one. The commitment in the Programme for Government to develop a National Youth Homelessness Strategy is welcome and we note that Government has had initial discussions on the strategy in the High-Level Homelessness Taskforce however, we are calling for more action to develop and implement the strategy. We need a plan of action, backed up with investment, because without resources it is likely to fail and that is why we are calling for ringfenced funding to be provided for implementation in Budget 2022.

There are many reasons a young person can experience homelessness, issues such as reduced social welfare supports, young people being a lower priority on housing waiting lists, unsuitable emergency accommodation and inadequate support services, especially for those leaving care are major contributory factors. Many young people have difficulty accessing affordable and quality housing in the private rental market and/or social housing sector. The current levels of youth unemployment and cuts in social welfare for young people in successive budgets has made it increasingly difficult for many to be able to afford to leave home and live independently. Furthermore, these cuts and lack of supply have made it very challenging for young people leaving care to access housing.

47. Programme for Government, 2020, P55

48. The Department of Housing, Planning, Community & Local Government Homelessness Report, May 2021

49. The Department of Housing, Planning, Community & Local Government Homelessness Report, May 2020

**RINGFENCE
€3M IN
BUDGET 2022
TO RESOURCE
AND IMPLEMENT
THE NATIONAL
YOUTH
HOMELESSNESS
STRATEGY**



As previously referenced, the cuts in welfare payments have particularly impacted on young people at risk of homelessness. As noted by a DCYA report across each of the poverty lines, young adults aged between 18 and 24 have a higher at-risk-of-poverty rate than that of the overall population.⁵⁰ The cuts have yet to be reversed despite improvements in the national finances in recent years. It is welcome that Government have previously protected young people leaving care aged 18-24 years from the reduced welfare rates, where they have been in care any time in the previous 12 months before the age of 18.

We also welcomed the decision of the Government in Budget 2020 to restore the full rate of Jobseeker's Allowance payment of €203 per week for those aged under 25 years of age who are living independently and in receipt of State housing supports including rent supplement and the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP). We note from previous information provided by the Department of Social Protection, that it was not possible to identify how many young people have benefited from this policy change. Therefore, it would appear that while welcome this measure is still limited and does not fully address the needs of all young people who are homeless.

NYCI is calling on Government to ringfence €3m in Budget 2022 to resource and implement the National Youth Homelessness Strategy. There are numerous reasons why young people end up homeless and therefore we need a package of measures to end youth homelessness. This investment is worthwhile because a situation where a young person become entrenched in homelessness is not only detrimental for the young person involved, it is also costly for the state. Supporting young people in homeless accommodation is very expensive. A Mazars report⁵¹ estimated that the average cost of supporting a person experiencing homelessness in 2014 was €19,179 per annum. A €3m investment in 2022, would be a start to supporting some of our most vulnerable young people into secure homes and housing.

RECOMMENDATION

Allocate €3m in Budget 2022 to resource and implement the National Youth Homelessness Strategy.

RESPONSIBILITY

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

50. Income, Poverty and Deprivation among Children, DCYA, July 2020

51. Independent Review of Homeless Services, Mazars for the Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government, December 2015

CONCLUSION

SUPPORT YOUNG
PEOPLE NOW
AND INTO THE
FUTURE TO
ACHIEVE THEIR
FULL POTENTIAL



The last eighteen months have been very difficult for our people and country and it will take time for our society and economy to recover, but we can rebound and grasp the opportunity to deliver economic equality, social justice and environmental sustainability. In particular the pandemic has been very difficult for young people. We acknowledge that Budget 2022 will be challenging for Government, but it also offers a great opportunity to restart, restore and renew our society and economy. It is vital that the new Government follows through on its commitment to put **“recovery and renewal”** at the heart of their budget and truly delivers a **“new deal for young people”** and a programme with clear policies, measures and investment in young people and the youth sector, who with support, can be the drivers of that agenda.

This submission is entitled **“Restart, Restore, Renew”** because we are calling on Government to invest in policies and measures in Budget 2022 to achieve a number of objectives. First, we are calling on Government to invest in measures to facilitate youth organisations to restore their supports and services to as many young people as possible as we move from pandemic response to pandemic recovery. Secondly, we want actions to restore hope and confidence for our young people, especially those who are unemployed and homeless and thirdly we want Government to renew the social contract and deliver economic and social fairness and justice for this generation.

This submission is a clarion call on Government to invest in policies and proposals in Budget 2022, which support young people now and into the future to achieve their full potential as we emerge from this current challenging period for our country.

WE ARE CALLING ON GOVERNMENT TO:

1. INVEST

TO FACILITATE
YOUTH WORK
ORGANISATIONS
TO RESTART
**SUPPORTS
AND SERVICES**
FOR YOUNG
PEOPLE

2. RESTORE

**HOPE AND
CONFIDENCE**
FOR OUR
YOUNG PEOPLE
PARTICULARLY
THOSE WHO ARE
**UNEMPLOYED
OR HOMELESS**

3. RENEW

**THE SOCIAL
CONTRACT
AND DELIVER
ECONOMIC
AND SOCIAL
FAIRNESS, AND
JUSTICE**



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