

# PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION 2025



# National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI)

The National Youth Council of Ireland is the representative body for voluntary youth organisations in Ireland. Our member organisations work with, and for, up to 380,000 young people 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 and its role as the National Representative Youth Work Organisation is recognised in legislation (Youth Work Act, 2001). 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 and supported to achieve their full potential.

**youth.ie**

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# Introduction





Much has changed since Budget 2024 for young people. There is increasing concern in relation to young people's exposure and vulnerability to divisive narratives. Analysis of online platforms show that far-right narratives are growing<sup>1</sup>, and there is anxiety about the impact that far-right influencers online can have on young people.<sup>2</sup> Youth work organisations are reporting to NYCI that they are increasingly in a space where dangerous and divisive narratives must be challenged by youth workers, and simultaneously where young people from minority groups are seeking safety and support. In some communities, youth work organisations are promoting social cohesion in increasingly difficult circumstances.

This rise of divisive narratives falls within a context of a housing crisis and soaring costs, which many young people are suffering acutely. NYCI's recently published 'State of Our Young Nation' report with IPSOS B&A found that half of 18–29-year-olds reported low mental health. 44% feel financially worse off than last year, and shockingly, 1 in 5 reported skipping a meal due to cost. This research clearly demonstrates the outlook of a generation that feels traditional milestones such as owning a house, or starting a family are out of reach.

**“Youth work is important because it is the only sector that makes a massive impact on several disadvantaged backgrounds. Such as disabled people, people with mental health issues, LGBTI+ people, people with addiction issues, people suffering abuse, people in poverty etc. Youth work is a significant help to all these people through its various services, such as youth worker support, peer support, youth club activities, counselling etc.”**

young person, 18, Co. Cork

Youth work has held space for young people and supported them through all these challenges since the last budget, and for the many decades before it. This support ranges from youth workers advocating on behalf of young people with state services, to providing food for those young people who need it.

**“We see particular challenges relating to poverty, mental health, issues engaging with education, and access to support services (including health). Additionally, the lack of access to safe spaces and developmental opportunities in the community, as well as challenges in relation to integration, discrimination, and bullying.”**

NYCI member organisation April 2024

The rise of dangerous hate-fuelled narratives, and the increasing economic struggle for young people are not occurring in isolation. The perception that vulnerable new arrivals are to blame for a dearth of affordable accommodation can create tensions with host communities as well as act as a barrier to integration<sup>3</sup>. NYCI believes that Budget 2025 must make serious investment in both youth work, and actions that support young people, to address the real and significant challenges facing young people, and to promote social cohesion within communities.

**“[Youth Work] is important because it helps integration, especially young people coming into the country.”**

young person, 20, Dublin

1 – Institute for Strategic Dialogue. (2023). *Uisce Faoi Thalamh*.

2 – Rothut, S., Schulze, H., Hohner, J., & Rieger, D. (2023). 'Ambassadors of ideology: A conceptualization and computational investigation of far-right influencers, their networking structures, and communication practices.' Retrieved from SagePub: <https://www.sagepub.com>

3 – Migration Policy Institute. (2024). 'Global affordable housing shortages can harm migrant reception and integration'. Retrieved from <https://www.migrationpolicy.org>

# Summary of NYCI proposals for Budget 2025:

**Increase  
investment in  
the youth work  
sector by**

**15m:**

Increase current expenditure by

**€9.6m**

focusing on increasing  
investment in both targeted and  
universal funding streams by

**13.5%**

each on 2024 levels  
(breakdown opposite)

**Reinstate Capital funding to**

**€5.4m**

### Current funding increase objectives:

## 1. Supporting those furthest behind by boosting funding for UBU

NYCI proposes that funding for UBU: Your Place Your Space should be increased by 13.5% on 2024 levels, to support those young people most at risk from deprivation. (Cost ~ €6,500,000)

Additional funding for targeted youth work will have a significant positive impact on many young people who are struggling and would ensure that young people reliant on this support would not have their services disrupted.

## 2. Supporting the Vision for Youth Work by investing in expanding access to best practice youth work for all young people

NYCI proposes that funding for Universal Youth Work should be increased by 13.5% on 2024 levels, to support progress towards a vision where all young people have access to high quality Youth Work. (Cost ~ €1,900,000)

The sectoral *Vision for Youth Work* outlines clearly the objective that: “all young people have available to them within their localities and communities, in safe, accessible and inviting spaces and places, a range of youth work opportunities and experiences, provided on a universal basis” and increased investment is required to deliver this.

## 3. Ensure continuation of Youth Information Services

**Investment in Youth Information Services** must be secured in Budget 2025, to ensure continued and expanded pivotal support to young people in accessing trusted information within a context of the threat of mis and disinformation.

### Capital funding investment:

#### Ensuring youth spaces and places

Levels of capital funding for youth work in Ireland have been unreliable and volatile over the last 5 years. It was a great disappointment to the sector that Budget 2024 allocated no capital funding to the youth sector, a significant cut from the €2.7m the year previous.

NYCI is proposing that Budget 2025 sees a rectification of this lack of funding, by providing €5.4m for capital funding for youth work and commits to a reinstatement of pre-Covid levels of capital funding going forward.

## Issues at the door of youth work: Fund actions to support young people

- Fund actions to address **youth homelessness**
- Assist young people with rising costs by **removing sub-minimum pay rates, equalising Jobseekers Allowance for u25's**
- and reducing **third-level student contribution and apprenticeship charges.**

# Youth Work Funding





## Recommendation:

### **Increase investment in the youth work sector by €15million in Budget 2025, broken down as follows:**

- Increase current expenditure by €9.6m, focusing on increasing investment in both targeted and universal funding streams by 13.5% each on 2024 levels;
- Reinstate capital funding to pre-COVID levels of €5.4m.



## Rationale:

### **Investing in the power of youth work to support young people achieve their full potential.**

In Budget 2025, to support young people to achieve their full potential and address the multiple issues facing young people and the youth work sector, NYCI is calling for an increased investment in the youth work sector of €15 million.

This investment will:

- Benefit young people, both those who require Targeted Youth Work, and those who stand to gain from involvement in Universal Youth Work services;
- Support the youth work sector to respond to the rising risk of divisive narratives and promote social cohesion.
- Ensure Youth Information Services can continue to provide reliable information, within a context of growing mis- and disinformation.
- Equip the youth work sector to deliver on key Government policies including the forthcoming National Strategy for Youth Work Services.
- Address the critical issues facing the youth work sector; including addressing recruitment and retention, promoting volunteering, and assist services deal with rising costs and increased demand.
- Deliver much needed improvements to youth work places and spaces through capital funding provision.

## Young people and the value of youth work

**Youth Work is important because it gives us the chance to grow. We learn in school what we're taught but in youth work you become more of a person, youth work lets you explore and discover the things you need to know. It's important because it gets you out of your box and gives you the chance to do things you would never experience."**

young person, 18, Dublin

The opportunities for personal and social development<sup>4</sup>, a better sense of community and social integration, practical skills, and positive behaviour<sup>5</sup> are some of the positive outcomes of youth work. Recent polling by Red C on behalf of NYCI found 9 in 10 young people aged 18–29 who are aware of youth services within their area provide believe that they conduct important work. This polling also found that there is high familiarity and participation rates within youth work organisations amongst 18–29-year-olds, with over half of 18–29-year-olds having participated in some youth group/organisation.

Over  
**50%** of  
18 – 29  
year olds

**have  
participated in  
youth work**

A powerful testament to the power of youth work for young people is the high number of 18–29-year-olds who would be willing to volunteer within the sector. NYCI's Red C polling found that half of this age cohort would be likely to volunteer with a youth organisation. Youth work clearly matters to young people, and those at the latter end of their involvement are in a prime position to 'give back'; which comes with its own benefits like better life satisfaction and more confidence as they progress to adulthood.<sup>6</sup>

## Policy context

It is an exciting time for Youth Work across Europe. The Bonn Process, a joint effort to translate the European Youth Work Agenda into action and bring it to life, is underway in Ireland. Designed to strengthen and further develop youth work throughout Europe, the Bonn Process wants to bring the commitment of the different stakeholders of the youth work community into line.

Nationally, the publication of 'Young Ireland: the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2023–2028' at the end of 2023 demonstrates the Government's commitment to children and young people. This policy framework sets the context for a new National Strategy for Youth Work. It is very welcome that the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth has prioritised extensive collaboration with the sector on this policy document over the last year, and NYCI and its members look forward to continuing in this spirit of collaboration once the final document is published. The Minister, Department, and the youth work sector have a shared focus on ensuring the delivery of high-quality, inclusive, and accessible youth work services and opportunities that support young people from all backgrounds to fully realise their potential and positively shape their own and our shared future.<sup>7</sup>

4 – Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. (2023). Young people's perspectives on youth services: Desk review of consultations with young people.

5 – Devlin, M. (2009). The benefits of youth work: Young people's and youth workers' perspectives.

6 – Economic and Social Research Institute. (2023). Civic and political engagement among young adults in Ireland. Retrieved from <https://www.esri.ie>

7 – Parliamentary Question 17501/24

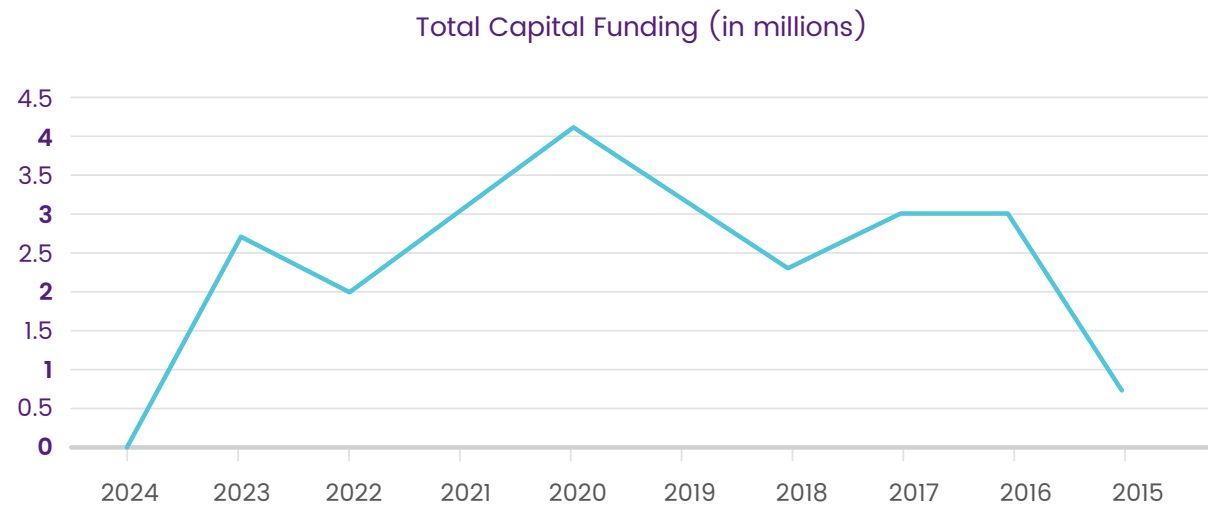
A sector that is struggling

While the policy context is ambitious for the youth work sector, it is a sector that is struggling and which cannot continue to do more with less. A recent survey of NYCI’s membership found that just under 90% of services have at least some concerns about whether they will have **sufficient funds** to provide services over the next 12 months. Most have seen an increased demand for their services, which is not surprising given the 2022 census showed there were 1,018,973 **10–24-year-olds** in the Republic of Ireland: an increase of 13.7% on the 2016 figure. However, 75% of NYCI members’ survey respondents stated that they do not feel equipped to respond to this increase.

While Budget 2024 saw an increase of €5m in current funding, the drop in capital funding and investment in the new Youth Employability Scheme meant that the total increase in the budget for youth work organisations had only seen a 2.83% rise in real terms. This has left the sector without adequate resourcing to maintain existing services, much less expanding to meet demand. This must be rectified in Budget 2025 and beyond, starting with significant increased investment of €15m in youth work services in the next budget.

90%

concerned about **having sufficient funds** to provide services over the **next 12 months**



## The vital role of youth workers

Youth work cannot happen without youth workers. The challenges in retaining staff, at a time when many organisations need additional posts, and are doing 'more with less', along with external factors relating to accommodation and the cost-of-living are placing even more pressure on a highly skilled and in-demand workforce. Recognition of the valuable skillset of youth workers is resulting in the loss of qualified workers to other sectors with more attractive terms and conditions.

Recruitment and retention continue to be a significant challenge for the sector, with 75% of NYCI's members who responded to a recent survey saying that they had difficulty filling a vacant post, and 75% have had a **vacant post** for over a month within the last year.

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**“They (youth workers) kind of made it feel safe in a way and there was a lot of people from different backgrounds so I felt like somewhere I could kind of belong in a way that isn't the same.”**

young person, 16, Carlow

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The recruitment and retention issues within the sector were prominent during the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth's hearing on youth work in 2023. The subsequent report from the Committee included a clear recommendation for an assessment of workforce planning review to be carried out, to examine in detail the reasons behind issues with recruitment and retention within the sector.<sup>8</sup> It is welcome that the Minister has committed to this workforce development plan, to support the recruitment and retention of staff and volunteers in the sector.<sup>9</sup> However, in the

interim between such a development plan being published and implemented, increased investment in Budget 2025 is crucial to supporting youth work organisations to keep the staffing levels that they have and to maintain existing levels of service provision.

## Strategic investment where it is needed in Budget 2025

NYCI proposes that an increase in current funding for youth work should be distributed strategically, focusing on those young people most at risk, provision of Universal Youth Services and Youth Information services.

Funding for targeted youth work through 'UBU: Your Place Your Space' should be increased by 13.5% on 2024 levels, to support those young people most at risk from deprivation. In a recent survey of our members, 80% of youth work organisations who responded reported they had seen an increase in deprivation among the young people that they work with in the community. As outlined above, NYCI's 'State of Our Young Nation' found serious areas of concern, particularly around young people skipping meals and struggling with rising costs. Additional funding for targeted youth work will have a significant positive impact on many young people who are struggling and would ensure that the youth work services who support them can continue to do so.

# 80%

of youth work organisations saw an **increase in deprivation** among the young people they work

8 - Joint Committee on Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. (2023, July). The future of youth work

9 - Parliamentary Question 10826/24

10 - McGregor, C. (2015). Universal youth work: A critical review of the literature. University of Edinburgh. Retrieved from <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/media/1112/youth-work-literature-review-final-may-2015.pdf>

11 - Brady, B., Silke, C., & Shaw, A. (2022). A rapid review of the benefits and outcomes of universal youth work. Galway: UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, University of Galway.

Universal Youth Work provides services and support to all young people in a particular community, regardless of their individual needs or circumstances, and its purpose is not aimed at addressing specific issues or problems, as defined by policy makers.<sup>10</sup> There is overwhelming evidence that demonstrates the benefits and value of Universal Youth Work, across a range of areas from wellbeing to employment, skills development, social cohesion and provision of safe spaces, among many others.<sup>11</sup> In Budget 2025, a focus should be put on increasing funding for Universal Youth Work by 13.5% to ensure continued access to Universal Youth Services, and to continue the movement towards every young person having access to high quality youth work opportunities.

Finally, Youth Information Centres and Services provide young people with information that is free from bias, verified and reliable. The role of Youth Information Services is increasingly important within the context of growing mis- and disinformation online<sup>12</sup>. Disinformation can diminish many elements of good quality of democracy,<sup>13</sup> exacerbates polarisation, and distort public policy debates.<sup>14</sup> While the response to these threats will require a collective action across government and civil society, Youth information Services can play a vital protective role in supporting young people to access trusted and reliable information and supports, and this should be recognised by funding support in Budget 2025.

## No youth work without places and spaces: the need for capital funding in Budget 2025

In a recent survey of NYCI members organisations, 90% of respondents had some need for capital funding. Needs identified ranged from IT infrastructure to structural work on buildings such as leaking roofs or insulation costs.

The Joint Oireachtas Committee Report on the Future of Youth Work recognises the necessity in funding for spaces and places for youth work. The report recommends that the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) work with both the Department of Housing Heritage and Local Government, and the Department of Rural and Community Development to provide youth work spaces and capital funding. NYCI agrees with this strategic approach, however in the interim the sector cannot be left waiting, and until a strategy is in place, capital funding must be provided, to assist the sector to recover from the lack of capital funding in Budget 2024.

12 – Institute for Strategic Dialogue. (2023). Uisce Faoi Thalamh: An investigation into the online mis- and disinformation ecosystem in Ireland.

13 – Colomina, C., Sánchez Margalef, H., & Youngs, R. (2021). The impact of disinformation on democratic processes and human rights in the world. European Parliament. Retrieved from <https://www.europa.eu>

14 – OECD. (2024). *Facts not fakes: Tackling disinformation, strengthening information integrity*. Paris: OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/d909ff7a-en>

## Wider public support for the importance of youth work

It is not just young people, DCEDIY and the youth work sector that are supportive of youth work; the great majority of Irish adults believe youth work is important, and that there should be greater and more equal access to youth services and facilities in Ireland. Recent polling by Red C on behalf of NYCI found that 70% of adults are aware

of a youth work organisation in their area, and over 9 in 10 with this awareness think that these youth work organisations provide important non formal education to young people. 88% of people agree that the government needs to increase investment in youth work in communities, and 87% agree that greater funding of youth services is likely to help prevent social challenges, such as anti-social behaviour and crime, in communities.<sup>15</sup>

87%

agree that greater funding of youth services is likely to

help prevent anti-social behaviour and crime

## Investment:

€15 Million.

## Responsibility:

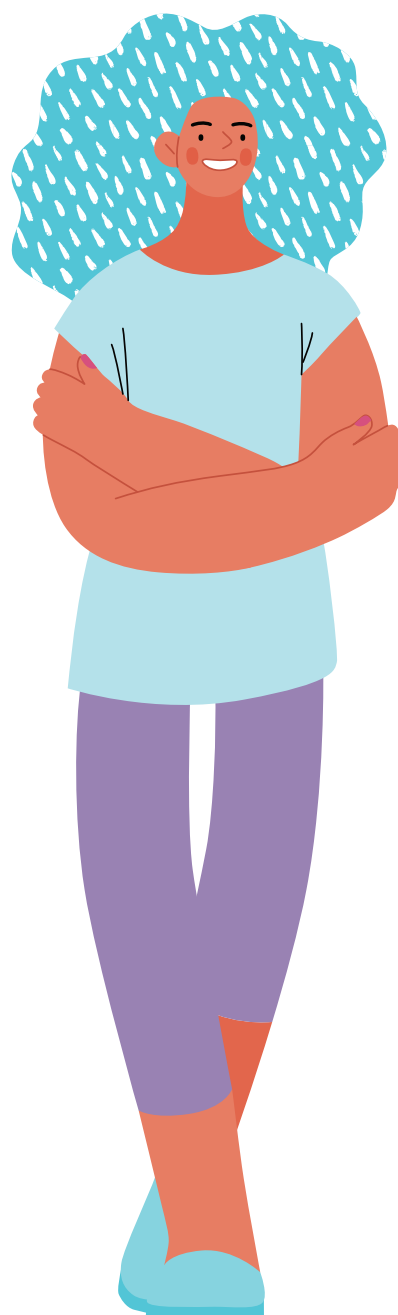
Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

<sup>15</sup> – NYCI. (2023, December). Youth work organisations research. Red C Polling.





# Issues at the door of youth work



Youth workers are at the front line with young people as they attempt to navigate accessing services, life challenges and tough times. When there are not adequate services and supports for young people, youth workers are the ones holding space and walking with these young people through vulnerable times, until they can get the support they need.

Youth work's commitment to supporting young people means that although this work is not the primary purpose of youth work, services are not turning their back on young people in their time of need. However, this is a finite resource, and NYCI is hearing from its members that action is needed by government in Budget 2025 to tackle the issues young people are facing. Of primary concern is the health, wellbeing and care of young people, but also to alleviate the pressures on youth work services to allow them to fully commit to providing high quality non-formal educational and personal development opportunities to young people.

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**“Greater levels of need presenting among young people, families and communities – increased referrals and greater demand on services, more acute support needs. – Rising cost of living affecting families’ ability to afford everyday basics – our staff are often called on for support with food costs, school supplies, clothing and household items.”**

Youth Work service, 2024

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# Youth homelessness

## Providing a Home: Fund actions to address youth homelessness.

NYCI believes critical investment is needed to support young people's well-being and meet their most basic housing needs.

## Recommendation:

In Budget 2025, NYCI is calling for significant investment to support the delivery of the National Youth Homelessness Strategy.

Sustainable  
Development  
Goal 11,  
Target 11.1

ensure access for all  
to adequate, safe and  
affordable housing



## Rationale:

The government published the 'Youth Homelessness Strategy' in November 2022, with the aims of preventing youth homelessness; improve the experiences of young people accessing emergency accommodation; and assist young people in exiting homelessness.<sup>16</sup> Latest figures from March 2024 show that 1,660 young people aged 18–24 were accessing local authority managed emergency accommodation<sup>17</sup>, an increase of over 20% since the strategy was published<sup>18</sup>.

While significant, the numbers in the monthly government homeless reports only capture a proportion of the issue. These reports only include young people accessing local authority run emergency accommodation, but do not capture other homeless young people, for example those living in extremely unsuitable or overcrowded housing, those who are couch surfing, or those living in Direct Provision. It is also important to recognise that the figure for 'children' within the monthly report may include younger teenagers experiencing homelessness through family homelessness.

The high levels of youth homelessness are of grave concern to NYCI and its members. Children experiencing homelessness are a widespread group who encounter high rates of psychosocial adversity and face risk for poor health and developmental problems<sup>19</sup>. Youth homelessness has been found to have disruptive effects on education, transition to employment, and establishing a stable and nurturing social network<sup>20</sup>. Studies have found that homelessness during youth is associated with poorer health outcomes<sup>21</sup>, and that experiencing homelessness in childhood or youth has been found to be negatively associated with experiencing housing

stability as an adult in Housing First.<sup>22</sup> These impacts have real and significant policy implications and costs to both the individual and wider society.

An interim report on the implementation of the Youth Homelessness Strategy is due in May of 2024. While some progress has been made on targets, evidence of rising numbers of homeless youth clearly demonstrate that more must be done. NYCI is proposing that the Youth Homelessness Strategy receives dedicated funding for implementation in Budget 2025, to begin to tackle these rising numbers.

## Investment:

Funding estimate unavailable, awaiting publication of interim report.<sup>23</sup>

## Responsibility:

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

16 – Parliamentary Question 11678/24

17 – Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. (2024, March). Monthly homelessness report.

18 – Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. (2022, November). Monthly homelessness report.

19 – Cutuli JJ, Ahumada SM, Herbers JE, Lafavor TL, Masten AS, Oberg CN. Adversity and children experiencing family homelessness: Implications for health. *J Child Poverty*. 2017;23(1):41-55. doi: 10.1080/10796126.2016.1198753. Epub 2016 Jul 3. PMID: 30294200; PMCID: PMC6171526.

20 – Heerde, J. A., & Patton, G. C. (2020, June). The vulnerability of young homeless people.

21 – Stablein, T., & Appleton, A. A. (2013). A longitudinal examination of adolescent and young adult homeless experience, life course transitions, and health. *Emerging Adulthood*, 1(4), 305–313

22 – Parpouchi, M., et al. (2021). The association between experiencing homelessness in childhood or youth and adult housing stability in Housing First. *BMC Psychiatry*, 21:138. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-021-03142-0>

23 – Parliamentary Question 11678/24.

# Cost of living: Sub-Minimum pay Rates and Jobseekers Allowance for u25's

## Supporting young people with rising costs

Rising costs are on the minds of young people, with 62% of 18–29-year-olds rating 'rising cost of living' as a top concern.<sup>24</sup> Income levels, both for young workers and those young people not in education or employment, and the costs of accessing Further and Higher Education, are all cost-of-living issues that NYCI is hearing from young people.

## Recommendation:

End sub-minimum rates of pay based on age (no cost to the exchequer).

Equalise the rate of Job-Seekers Allowance for under 25's and over 25's (estimated cost €73 million<sup>25</sup>).

Sustainable  
Development  
Goal 8,  
Target 8.5

equal pay for  
work of equal  
value

8 DECENT WORK AND  
ECONOMIC GROWTH





# Rationale:

The 2030 agenda, which Ireland is committed to, works off a principle of ‘addressing the needs of those furthest behind’<sup>26</sup>. From the perspective of NYCI and its members, when it comes to income adequacy there are two cohorts of young people that are particularly at risk of being left behind: those on sub-minimum youth rates of the minimum wage, and those young people dependent on the lower rate of Jobseekers Allowance.

Currently, under the National Minimum Wage Act 2000, employers can pay people aged under 20 lower rates of the National Minimum Wage, termed ‘sub-minima rates’.

As of January 2024, the youth sub-minima rates were:

Age	Minimum hourly rate of pay	% of Minimum wage
20 and over	€12.70	100%
19	€11.43	90%
18	€10.16	80%
Under 18	€8.89	70%

This means that based on a 35- hour working week, an 18-year-old performing the same role as a 20-year-old, will earn over €4,600 less over the course of a year.

An 18-year-old performing the same role as a 20-year-old, will earn

over  
€4,600  
less  
over the course of a year

24 - NYCI. (2024). State of our young nation.  
25 - Parliamentary Question 22573/24  
26 - United Nations Development Programme. (n.d.). Leaving no one behind. Retrieved from [https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/publications/Brochure\\_LNOB\\_web.pdf](https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/publications/Brochure_LNOB_web.pdf)

**Sub-minimum youth** rates in Ireland have received criticism for being too low to ensure a decent standard of living for young people.<sup>27</sup> NYCI believes that sub-minima rates are discriminatory, leave young workers open to exploitation and, crucially, put many young people providing for themselves and their families in financial difficulty at a time of high costs.

NYCI understands concerns around changes to wages, however Government and employers should not fear the introduction of more equal pay for young people:

- The overall incidence of youth-rate sub-minimum employment is very low in Ireland. Just 0.7 per cent, or one in 140 employees, are on a sub-minimum youth rate. This is equivalent to approximately 15,000 individuals.<sup>28</sup> Abolishing sub-minimum rates would therefore not be a change for the majority of employers but would make a significant difference to a minority of young people.
- While some suggest that sub-minima rates restrict early school leaving, the ESRI-Low Pay Commission's 2016 report showed little evidence of effect minimum wage policies on young peoples' employment or continued education decisions.<sup>29</sup>
- One of the arguments used to justify subminimum rates is that they may act as an incentive for employers to hire young, inexperienced workers and thus enable them to gain access to the labour market. There is limited available evidence to support this claim, particularly in the context of a "tight" labour market, with employment rates growing and Ireland reaching near full employment levels and relatively low levels of young people on SMR.

Although primarily a legislative issue, NYCI believes that Government should move to abolish sub-minima rates of pay based on age, as a part of a package of measures to support young people with cost of living in Budget 2025.

### **Lower rates of Jobseekers' Allowance**

were initially introduced in 2009 for 18- and 19-year-olds and were extended for older young people in subsequent budgets. This means that in 2024 young people aged under 25 receive a rate of job seekers allowance over €90 lower than their peers aged 25 and over. 70% of under 25's in receipt of Jobseekers allowance in May 2024 were on this reduced rate<sup>30</sup>.

Young people who are furthest from the labour market often have one or more significant barrier to employment<sup>31</sup> and this can include, but isn't limited to, disability, gender, mental health, low levels of education, homelessness, marginalisation<sup>32</sup> and coming from a low-income household<sup>33</sup>. More personalised supports are required to help disadvantaged young people with significant barriers to entering work or education, and positive examples of this exist in the youth sector<sup>34</sup>. In the longer term, additional supports are required to first tackle barriers which prevent young people from entering employment, education or work experience<sup>35</sup>.

In the immediate term, NYCI is concerned that lower rates of Job Seekers Allowance are not acting as an incentive to work, are a punitive measure which mean young people are not receiving an adequate income to survive with rising costs. Equalisation of Jobseekers Allowance in Budget 2025 would be a positive measure to support some of those young people furthest behind with significant cost of living challenges.

27 - Economic and Social Research Institute. (n.d.). New ESRI research examining sub-minimum wage employment in Ireland finds that, while all young workers aged 15-19 could legally be paid a sub-minimum wage rate, the majority receive higher pay. Retrieved from <https://www.esri.ie>

28 - Economic and Social Research Institute. (2023). Sub-minimum wages in Ireland. Retrieved from <https://www.esri.ie>

29 - Low Pay Commission. (2016). Report on the sub-minima rates of the national minimum wage. Retrieved from <https://assets.gov.ie/244509/3e268854-d605-4836-975b-6e403290b7e4.pdf>

30 - Parliamentary Question 22574/24, 22575/24, 22576/24

## **Investment:**

Funding estimate unavailable, awaiting publication of interim report.

## **Responsibility:**

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.



31 – All-Party Parliamentary Group for Youth Employment. (2018). Those furthest from the labour market: An inquiry into best practice that helps young people furthest from the labour market into employment.

32 – St Stephens Green Trust. (n.d.). Travellers in the mainstream labour market. Retrieved from <https://www.ssgt.ie>

33– “NEETs in Europe and the Impact of the Pandemic” Head of Social Policies Unit – Eurofound

34 – Youth Employment Initiative, Tipperary Town– Youth Work Ireland

35 – All-Party Parliamentary Group for Youth Employment. (2018). Those furthest from the labour market: An inquiry into best practice that helps young people furthest from the labour market into employment.

# Cost of living: Third-level student contribution and apprenticeship charges

## Recommendation:

Further reduction of third-level student contribution charge and abolition of charges for apprenticeships.

Sustainable  
Development  
Goal 4,  
Target 4.1

Ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university'



## Rationale:

Ireland's Further and Higher Education system is something that young people value about Ireland<sup>36</sup>. However, research by the Higher Education Authority in 2022 found that 1 in 3 of the student population say they are facing serious or very serious financial issues, up from 1 in 4 in its previous report.<sup>37</sup>

This is unsurprising, given the Cost-of-Living guide that many colleges produce yearly. These guides, which estimate the cost of 9 months of education fees show substantial costs, including for textbooks/materials, utilities, travel, and rent.<sup>38</sup>

In the academic year 2022/2023, the student contribution fee was reduced. This reduction continued, albeit as a 'once off' reduction for the academic year 2023/2024. This reduction, coupled with increased support through student grant schemes, was very welcome and should be acknowledged as a step in the right direction to relieve financial pressures on students and their families. However, a lack of commitment to continue

these reductions, and the remaining high contribution costs for many, has meant that the financial strain has continued for many young people.

Apprenticeships, where people are trained in much needed and in demand craft trades or professions, also require a contribution fee. NYCI believe that this is a barrier to participation for some. The once-off reduction of 33% in the contribution fee for apprentices in higher education in the 2023/2024 academic year was welcome, but further progress needs to reduce the financial burden on apprentices and encourage participation by abolishing the apprenticeship charges in Budget 2025.

NYCI is calling for a reduction of student contribution charge to €1,000 in 2024/2025 academic year, with a commitment to abolishing student contribution fees in the year thereafter. NYCI is also calling for the removal of student contribution fees for apprenticeships in Budget 2025.

## Investment:

€197.8m<sup>39</sup>

## Responsibility:

Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

36- NYCI. (2024). State of our young nation. IPSOS B&A.

37- Eurostat. (2022). Survey VII report on the social and living conditions of higher education students in Ireland. Retrieved from <https://www.heai.ie>

38- TU Dublin. (2023/24). Cost of living guide. Retrieved from <https://www.tudublin.ie>

39 - Parliamentary Question 22577/24, 22578/24.

# National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI)

The National Youth Council of Ireland is the representative body for voluntary youth organisations in Ireland. Our member organisations work with, and for, up to 380,000 young people 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 and its role as the National Representative Youth Work Organisation is recognised in legislation (Youth Work Act, 2001). 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 and supported to achieve their full potential.

**youth.ie**





# PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION 2025



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