

YOUTH SERVICES GRANT SCHEME REFORM:

**FINDINGS OF CONSULTATION WITH
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
REGARDING THEIR EXPERIENCE
OF UNIVERSAL YOUTH SERVICES**

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Abbreviations

DCEDIY	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
NPO	National Participation Office
YAG	Youth Advisory Group
YSGS	Youth Services Grant Scheme

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Executive Summary

Background

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) is currently reviewing the Youth Services Grant Scheme (YSGS) in preparation for a planned reform of this scheme. The YSGS provides funding to national youth organisations in Ireland delivering services that are designed to enhance the social and personal development of young people. The reform of the YSGS is a priority for DCEDIY, and feedback is currently being sought from a range of stakeholders, including children and young people, in order to help ensure meaningful reform of the scheme.

The consultation

At the request of DCEDIY, the National Participation Office (NPO), in conjunction with DCEDIY, undertook a series of online consultations with children and young people to explore their views and experience of universal youth services in Ireland. In the first instance, the NPO established a Youth Advisory Group (YAG), comprising eight young people aged 12–18 years from the Comhairle na nÓg network. This YAG met twice in September 2021 to co-design and pilot an interactive online methodology for the consultations. Twenty-five young people from across Ireland were subsequently recruited via Comhairle na nÓg and universal youth services to participate in one of three online consultations which were held in November 2021. The consultations were designed to explore the universal aspect of services provided by national youth organisations funded under the YSGS, and to avoid the more deficit-reduction focus of targeted youth work.

The consultations explored four main questions and some supplementary questions:

1. What is working well in universal youth services?
 - a) What is good about universal youth services?
 - b) Are universal youth services providing the right type of services/programmes?
2. Are there barriers to accessing these services?
3. What are the gaps in current provision?
 - a) What would make universal youth services more attractive
 - b) What could they include?
4. Are there any changes that young people would like to see in universal youth services?

DCEDIY commissioned two report writers to record the discussions at each of the three online consultations and prepare a report. In consultation with the NPO, it is intended that a youth-friendly version of this report will be commissioned – which will then form the basis of further engagement with the YAG – in order to highlight how the input from these consultations will affect the reform of the YSGS.

Overview of findings

Most of the young people consulted were clearly appreciative of current youth services. Many shared positive comments, describing their experience of membership of various groups and how this enhanced their personal and social development. Based on their lived experiences, participants also offered insights

into some of the challenges facing current services and the barriers encountered by young people, as well as highlighting some perceived gaps in the current service provision. Finally, participants made a number of recommendations (see Table 1) in relation to the future of youth services in Ireland.

Table 1: Overview of key findings and recommendations arising from consultations with young people about universal youth services

Issues explored in relation to universal youth services	Themes raised by the young people
Positive aspects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility and availability • Opportunities for personal development • Social development • Social interaction and youth culture
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of trained youth leaders and volunteers • Perceived problems with the Garda Vetting system • Need for additional/specialised training for staff and volunteers • Some services could do with fresh content/new programmes • Lack of young people involved in decision making processes in youth services • No social media presence • Some venues not fit for purpose, including lack of a means of access for young people with a disability
Specific barriers for young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of information about what was available • Public/peer perception of the services • Difficulties in accessing transport to attend youth services, particularly in rural areas • Bullying or intimidation in youth services • Costs, including cost of travel to attend services, and cost of trips • Time commitment, including competing demands on time, e.g. school and friends • Cut-off maximum age limit with some groups



Issues explored in relation to universal youth services	Themes raised by the young people
<p>Gaps</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gaps in programmes of interest to young people • Gaps in capacity for online delivery • Gaps in capacity to address social exclusion (or promote inclusion) • Gaps in mental health awareness programmes
<p>Recommendations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness of universal youth services through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - advertising and publicity, - effective use of social media, and - development of a website/online directory of services. • Provide technical support and resources to address ongoing structural issues in youth services. • Involve young people in decision-making at various levels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Give young people a seat on boards or steering groups (make this a requirement of providing funding). - Involve young people in programme development. - Involve young people in social media in order to promote the available services.

How the findings and recommendations from this consultation will be used

This report will be considered by the YSGS Reform Project Team and will inform a policy paper (that is being drawn up to outline options for the reform of the YSGS) and the relevant reform project objectives and deliverables. This report and its recommendations will be of interest to young people and youth service organisations.

It was agreed (by the YAG and DCEDIY) as part of the negotiated methodology for these consultations that the YSGS Reform Project Team would work with the YAG to identify which recommendations are potentially within the scope of the reform project. The full report will be made available to national youth organisations, and any recommendations categorised as being outside the remit of the reform project will be flagged to these organisations.

Section 1: Introduction

1.1 Brief overview of the Youth Services Grant Scheme

The Youth Services Grant Scheme (YSGS) was established in the 1980s in the Department of Education, where policy responsibility for youth work services then resided. The establishment of the YSGS followed the publication of the [Costello Report](#) in 1984; one of the report's recommendations was to categorise youth services into either targeted or mainstream (universal) services.

The YSGS was established in order to allocate funding to national youth organisations providing services that are designed to enhance the social and personal development of children and young people. (Reform of various targeted youth work schemes was carried out by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) and resulted in the launch in 2019 of a single,

streamlined targeted scheme titled UBU: Your Place Your Space.)

In 2021, €12.2 million was allocated for expenditure through the YSGS. This funded 30 national youth organisations, including, for example, Foróige, the National Youth Council of Ireland, Youth Work Ireland, and Scouting Ireland (see Appendix 1 for a full list of YSGS-funded organisations). Individual annual grants range from approximately €3 million to less than €50,000. Pobal administers the scheme on behalf of DCEDIY.

The reform of the YSGS has been planned for a number of years, in line with DCEDIY's objective to strengthen its governance of all Exchequer funding, and also in line with an audit which DCEDIY commissioned from Mazars, and which was published in 2017.

1.2 Rationale for reform of the YSGS

DCEDIY decided to review and reform the YSGS based on a number of issues, including the need to:

- Modernise and strengthen the governance of the YSGS in line with best practice and current guidelines;
- Ensure that the scheme is equipped to respond to the evolving needs of children and young people;
- Create a transparent entry and exit mechanism for the YSGS; and
- Fully incorporate the recommendations from internal audits (a number of which have already been implemented).

1.3 Consultation questions

The YSGS Reform Project Team had four main questions and some supplementary questions that they wished to explore with the consultation participants:

1. What is working well in universal youth services?
 - a. What is good about universal youth services?
 - b. Are universal youth services providing the right type of services/programmes?
2. Are there barriers to accessing these services?
3. What are the gaps in current provision?
 - a. What would make universal youth services more attractive to young people?
 - b. What could they include?
4. Are there any changes that young people would like to see in universal youth services?

Section 2: Methodology

Better Outcomes Brighter Futures: The national policy framework for children & young people 2014-2020 highlights the importance of “a culture that listens to and involves young people”, which includes proactively seeking out the views of children and young people so that they can “influence decisions about their own lives and wellbeing, service delivery and policy priorities”.¹

The National Participation Office (NPO), in conjunction with DCEDIY, designed the consultations to explore children’s and young people’s experiences of universal youth services in Ireland, and to hear

their views on how current provision might be improved. The consultation approach taken reflects the Lundy model of child participation² and the recent guidance outlined in the *Participation Framework: National Framework for Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-making*.³ Central to the Lundy Model and the Participation Framework is the involvement of children and young people from the beginning of the process. A key consideration in the youth consultation process for the reform of the YSGS was to involve young people themselves in the co-design and piloting of the consultations.

2.1 Design of the consultations

A Youth Advisory Group (YAG) was established to guide the consultation methodology. Eight young people (comprising six females and two males aged 12–18 years) were recruited from Comhairle na nÓg members and they met via Zoom in September 2021. The YAG was briefed on the

background to the consultations, and an online interactive approach was shared by the Participation Team. After receiving feedback from the YAG, the facilitators modified the methodology, and a second workshop was then held with the YAG to retest the final version of the consultation approach.

¹ Department of Children and Youth Affairs, *Better Outcomes Brighter Futures: The national policy framework for children & young people 2014-2020*, Stationery Office, 2014, <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/775847-better-outcomes-brighter-futures/>

² The Lundy model of child participation, https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/lundy_model_of_participation.pdf

³ Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, *Participation Framework: National Framework for Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-making*, 2021, <https://hubnanog.ie/participation-framework/>

2.2 Who was consulted?

Young people were recruited to the online consultations through two channels. DCEDIY issued a callout for young people aged 12–18 years and 18–24 years who were involved in YSGS-funded organisations. A simultaneous callout for 12–18-year-olds was issued by the Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator. Both callouts included information on the purpose of the consultations and details of when and how the consultations would take place (see Appendix 2 for a copy of the recruitment letter).

In total, 25 participants, coming from 13 counties around Ireland, attended the 3 consultation events (see Table 2).

- Group 1: nine participants, comprising eight females and one male aged 12–18 years
- Group 2: 10 participants, comprising 9 females and 1 male aged 12–18 years
- Group 3: six participants, comprising four females and two males aged 12–18 years

Table 2: Representation of counties across Ireland in the consultations

Group 1 (Wednesday evening) 9 participants	Group 2 (Saturday morning) 10 participants	Group 3 (Saturday afternoon) 6 participants
Cork (2 participants) Dublin (2 participants) Galway (2 participants) Mayo (2 participants) Roscommon (1 participant)	Antrim (1 participant) Carlow (1 participant) Dublin (4 participants) Kildare (1 participant) Laois (1 participant) Leitrim (1 participant) Mayo (1 participant)	Carlow (1 participant) Galway (1 participant) Kerry (1 participant) Kildare (1 participant) Sligo (1 participant) Westmeath (1 participant)

2.3 Format of the consultation sessions

Three consultation sessions were convened in early November 2021. Two of the consultations were convened for young people aged 12–18 years, and one for older participants aged 18–24 years. The sessions were facilitated by two Participation Officers. A member of the DCEDIY Project Team attended all of the sessions, providing an introduction about the purpose of the consultations. Each session was attended by one of the independent report writers (see Appendix 3 for outline of the online consultation incorporating Part A and Part B.)

Each of the online sessions followed the same format and lasted approximately 2.5 hours. The lead facilitator welcomed everyone to the event and outlined safeguarding and ground rules before the consultation commenced. Attention was drawn to Foróige’s safeguarding link, which was uploaded to the Zoom chat box. A member of the DCEDIY Project Team gave a brief presentation on the background to the consultation, why they were keen to hear the views of children and young people, and how these views will inform decision-making. The presentation

also highlighted the importance of the consultation, noting that this is the first reform in 40 years and that it may be some time before the YSGS is reformed again.

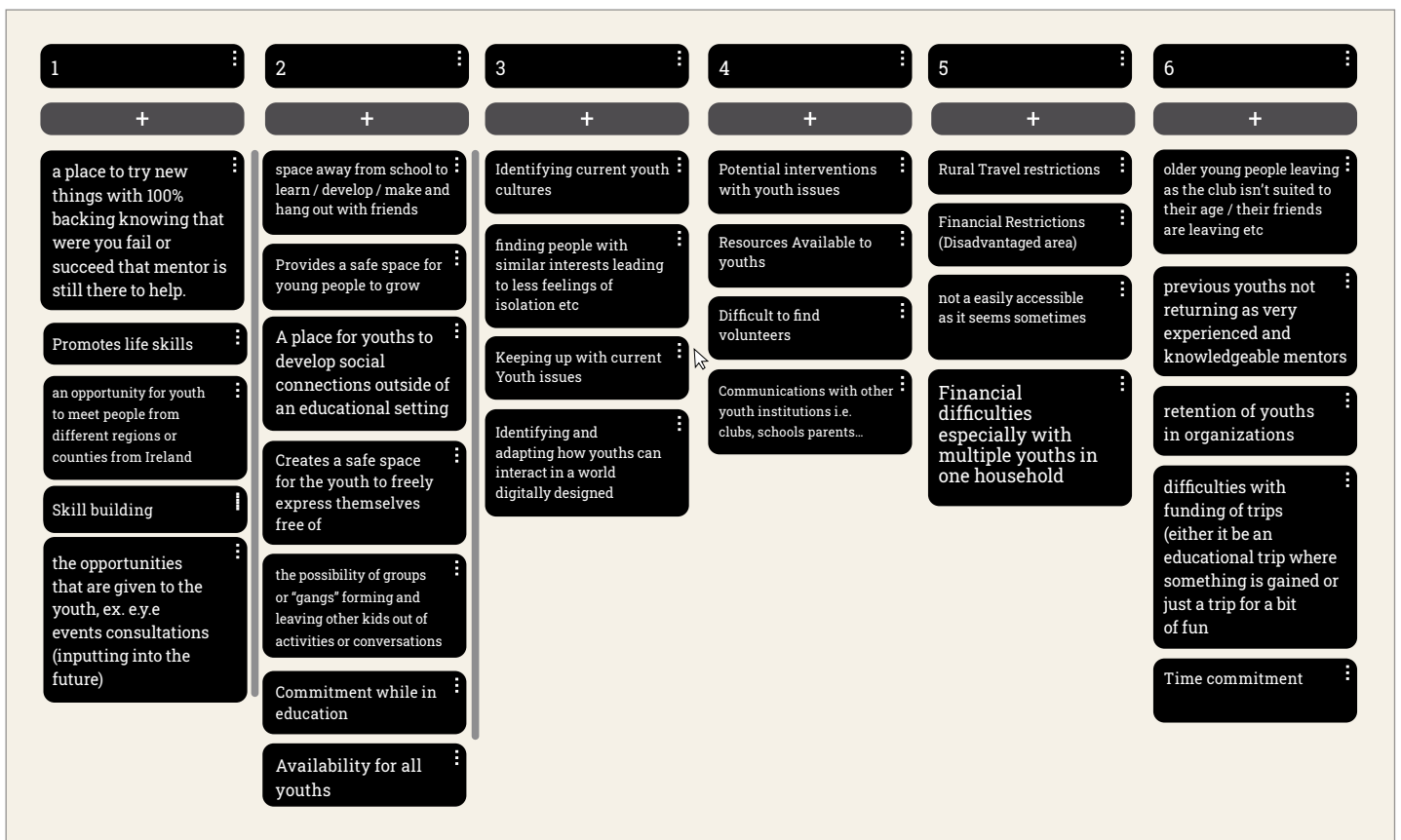
Participants were then invited to introduce themselves by sharing their name, where they were from, and their preferred pronoun. The consultation then proceeded through a range of activities which were undertaken in two distinct parts, as outlined in Appendix 3.

Part A of the consultation explored participants’ understanding of universal youth services before seeking their views on what was good about current youth services. This part of the session also sought participants’ views on possible barriers to engaging with services, the challenges experienced by the services, and possible gaps in service provision. In this first part of the consultation, participants were invited to use a pen and paper to write down their answers to these questions and to send a photograph of their written answers to the facilitator in order to provide a record for the report writers (see Appendix 4).

In Part B of the consultation, each of the participants was invited to share their top three points about what was good about universal youth services. Participants uploaded this information to Padlet. When this task was completed, participants

were then asked to upload what they perceived to be the top three challenges, barriers or gaps in relation to universal youth services (see Figure 1 for an example of one of the completed Padlet screens).

Figure 1: Example of Padlet screen with young people's top three positives and top three challenges about universal youth services in Ireland



When participants had finished uploading their responses to the questions to the Padlet screen, the facilitator commenced the process of grouping the responses.

Participants discussed the initial groupings, adding some further detail to the responses. The facilitator then worked with the participants to label the emergent themes.

2.4 Evaluation of the consultations

At the end of each consultation session, participants were invited to share their views on whether they: (a) felt comfortable giving their opinions; (b) felt they got the chance to give their opinion; (c) knew who wanted their opinion and why; (d) thought that their opinion would be taken seriously; (e) were able to access the online platforms;

and (f) found the online platforms easy to use. Participants were also invited to say what the best thing about the consultation was, and if there was anything that they would change about the consultation. Nineteen of the 25 participants completed the evaluation, which can be found in Appendix 5.

“

The opportunities that are given to the youth, e.g. events, consultations, allow us to contribute to the future

”

Section 3: Findings

The feedback from different activities in the consultation was merged in order to capture young people's views on:

- what is good about universal youth services,
- the challenges and barriers to service provision and uptake, and
- the gaps in universal youth services.

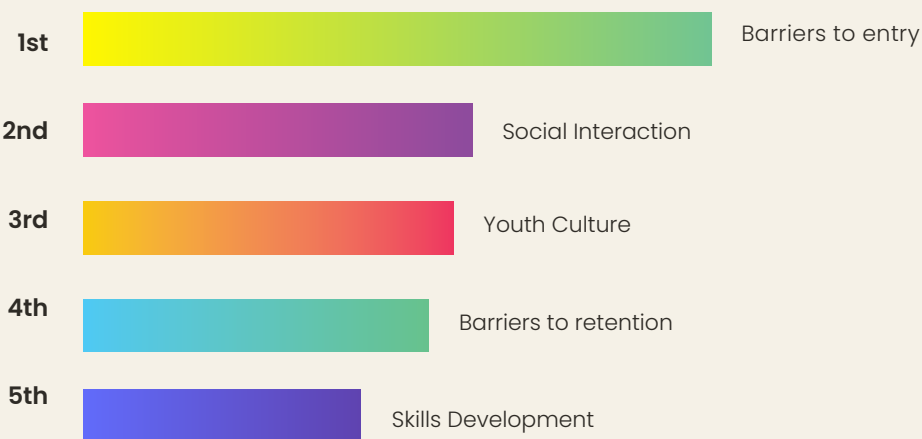
3.1 Top themes from each consultation group

Following the categorisation and labelling exercise on Padlet, the facilitator listed all of the themes raised by participants on a Mentimeter poll in order to identify

the top three themes from each consultation group. See Figure 2 for an example of one of the completed Mentimeter polls.

Figure 2: Example of use of a Mentimeter poll to identify priority themes in the consultations

Please rank the themes in order of importance? We will focus on the top 3 for more in depth discussion following the results



As can be seen in Figure 3, there were several overlaps in the top

three themes put forward by each group.

Figure 3: Top three themes identified by each group in relation to universal youth services



3.2 Good aspects of universal youth services

Five of the nine individual themes identified by participants highlighted positive aspects of universal youth services: (1) Accessibility and availability; (2) Personal development; (3) Social development; (4) Social interaction; and (5) Youth culture.

One young person summarised what they thought was good about universal youth services:

“They provide an environment for young people to learn, grow and make friends.”

3.2.1 Accessibility and availability (in person and online)

This theme could also be described as ‘Inclusive environment’, as many of the participants described the services that they attended as being welcoming and inclusive of everyone:

“They are very inclusive spaces; everyone’s welcome.”

“Everyone is equal within the service.”

“It’s diverse; offers a variety of services, not just one.”

“People have the ability to just show up and join.”

Participants in each of the groups also referred to youth services as being a “safe space” for young people with “a relaxed atmosphere” that enabled young people to feel comfortable.

In addition to describing previous experiences of in-person meet-ups at youth service venues and events, many participants also commented on the accessibility enabled by online delivery in the past 18 months during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the opportunities that such delivery could provide in the future.

Some of the older participants found that the opportunity to participate online meant that they would continue their engagement with youth services (as youth leaders) when attending college:

“There was greater engagement for those who went to college, as they can Zoom back in. So the hybrid works well.”

“This online approach allows us to stay connected with the community. In my first move to college, I lost the connection to my home club. But now it is lovely to be able to Zoom back in.”

“I started with [name of organisation] in March and it was brilliant. The idea of online was really handy and inclusive as there were no extra burdens on

travel and time.... Now that the restrictions have been lifted, I find it less daunting to go to the in-person meetings.”

Some of the participants could see both the advantages and disadvantages of online engagement:

“Online works well when everyone knows each other. But if you aren’t involved in the group, it can be hard to join in.”

“I find it hard to do things online with kids in our group.”

3.2.2 Personal development

Personal development was identified by several young people as a key benefit of participating in youth services, and they shared their own experience of various groups (e.g. Scouts, Guides, youth groups, etc.). This discussion contained specific mention of the following:

- (a) Leadership and interpersonal skills
- (b) Life skills and new passions
- (c) Opportunities to give opinions
- (d) Skills sharing and progression

Leadership and interpersonal skills

A few participants discussed leadership courses they had completed through youth groups, and one young person described the benefits of such opportunities as **“amazing”**:

—
“The business leadership course has developed me personally.”
—

—
“I’m on the local town council and I did a leadership course online.”
—

—
“I think it’s important for all different youth services to have the same opportunities – like leadership skills.”
—

Developing interpersonal skills, such as communication and public speaking, and general confidence building were all mentioned as positive outcomes from being involved in a youth group.

“[They provide] a space for young people to grow.”

“You can learn how to react in certain situations.”

Improves confidence in young people.

Life skills and new passions

The opportunity to learn new skills, such as life skills and practical skills (including crafts), in youth service groups was valued by participants and was something they would like to see more of:

It gives young people an opportunity to learn new skills and make connections.

“A place to try new things with 100% backing, knowing that were you to fail or succeed the mentor is still there to help.”

Participants described their own personal journeys and how they had improved their self-confidence as a result of their involvement in youth groups:

“[Name of organisation] has really developed me as a person. At 12 or 13 I wouldn't have talked to people. I joined [name of organisation], and now literally I will talk all day and all night.”

Learning new skills and finding new passions.

Participants noted that attending youth services could also help some young people with their education, as it could help spark an interest in a particular topic or a college course. Membership of a youth service was also seen as beneficial for inclusion on a curriculum vitae (CV) and on third-level application forms.

Sharing opinions and advice

Participants acknowledged that youth services provided a platform for them to share their opinions on issues that were important, and that such services provided opportunities to participate in consultations that could affect their future:

“They allow young people to give their opinions.”

“We have a thinking session on what project we should do and if it is feasible – we have a say.”

“The opportunities that are given to the youth, e.g. events, consultations, allow us to contribute to the future.”

There was some discussion about the possibility of setting up a steering group that could advise youth services. This concept was welcomed by the whole group; however, it came with a caveat:

[It is] infuriating when you are talked down to, acting as if we know nothing; when you choose your steering committee, make sure they do not talk down to us. [Ensure such groups provide opportunity for] meaningful work. Make sure it is not tokenistic. We are not there to tick a box.

Skills sharing and progression and advice

There was some discussion about networking and learning opportunities in youth groups that reached out to other groups:

“In my Guides, we invite different clubs to come and show us what they do – maybe martial arts or camping – to try out different things.”

Some participants also highlighted opportunities to progress within certain organisations, such as Scouts or Guides:

“In Guides, it is divided into levels. I am in senior branch – you are helpers to the leaders. [Next are] pre-enrolled Guides, then those working on their “Innovator” and “Voyager” badges. We are allowed to take charge and take responsibility.”

3.2.3 Social development

Youth services were generally regarded as places where young people could meet and build relationships with others:

“You can grow and progress as a person by being around people in your own age group. Hearing their thoughts and opinions on certain topics allows young people to feel comfortable.”

However, a few participants commented that they did not really know other people in their youth services, indicating that more could be done in relation to this issue:

“It can be difficult for young people who are shy to make friends and find enjoyment in the activities because they are by themselves.”

Some participants suggested that youth leaders should try to “mix people up” and have a buddy system for people who are new or shy, and that they should also make use of tools like WhatsApp to encourage people to get involved:

“What works for me, [when I’m interacting with] people I don’t know [on] calls like this, where you are forcing people into pairs or smaller groups – separate them away from all their friends – give them a long time – give them a topic to talk about, like a “walking debate”.”

“What helped in the groups I am in is [the] WhatsApp Group – some people really shy at meetings might have more courage on social media. The next meeting was fantastic because we had all got to talk on WhatsApp.”

3.2.4 Social interaction

Most of the participants observed that youth services offer an opportunity to connect with others, either in the group itself, through interaction with other groups, or through interaction with the wider community, including volunteers, schools and parents:

—

“Finding people with similar interests, leading to less feelings of isolation, etc.”

—

—

“Creates a safe space for the youth to freely

express themselves free of judgement.”

—

—

“You meet new people through your group, but also through events.”

—

—

“Communication with other youth institutions, i.e. clubs, schools, parents, etc.”

—

3.2.5 Youth culture

Youth services were viewed by participants as offering young people an opportunity to explore and develop themselves outside of a formal education setting and in a unique, youth-oriented setting:

—

“A place for youths to develop social connections outside of an educational setting.”

—

—

“Keeping up with current youth issues.”

—

—

“Identifying and adapting how youths can interact in a world [that is] digitally designed.”

—

—

“Potential interventions with regard to youth issues.”

—

3.3 Challenges and barriers in relation to universal youth services

Of the nine key themes that participants selected to highlight in these consultations, five were about the challenges or barriers that exist in current universal youth services. Due to overlap, these have been grouped into three overarching themes:

1. Lack of awareness of universal youth services (raised by two groups)
2. Barriers to entry (and retention), incorporating some negative points made in relation to the 'Accessibility and availability' theme
3. Technical support

3.3.1 Lack of awareness of universal youth services

There was a general consensus among participants that most young people in Ireland are probably not aware of the range of youth services and youth groups available to them. Participants said a lack of knowledge about such services and groups prevents young people from availing of them:

“I hadn't heard about them – you hear about 'plant a tree', you don't hear about universal youth services – my friends would have no idea about any of this. I hadn't really heard about it. If more people knew about it, I think it would be great.”

Participants commented on their own lack of awareness of youth services, and how they came to

discover the groups they currently belong to. Both they and their friends joined groups based on a word-of-mouth recommendation:

“Not a lot of young people know about the groups. In my group, everyone who has joined found out from another friend...others don't know about these opportunities.”

Participants concluded from their personal experiences of universal youth services that more outreach and advertising was needed in order to inform young people and communities about the existence of universal youth services. They noted that lack of communication about

youth services was a key reason why young people were not aware of these services:

—
“There isn’t an Instagram account to be seen.”
—

—
“More awareness could be raised through newsletters and school journals.”
—

3.3.2 Barriers to entry (and retention)

Participants identified a number of barriers related to joining or staying with youth services. These included: (1) experiencing bullying and intimidation; (2) needing to travel long distances to attend; (3)

venue capacity; (4) costs; (5) time commitment; (6) reaching the maximum membership age; and (7) public and peer perception of universal youth services.

Bullying

A number of participants noted that youth services enabled young people to make friends outside of their school environment. However, some participants felt that this was not always the case, and that for some young people who are at the receiving end of bullying in school, mainstream youth services are not always welcoming places when these young people attend such

services, with one young person describing bullying as a hidden barrier to participating in youth services.

In a similar vein, the perception of cliques or gangs in a youth service can be a deterrent to using the service, as they can make others feel left out of activities or conversations.

Travel and transport issues

For a number of participants, having to travel long distances to youth services posed a barrier. Participants cited their own personal experiences of the challenges they had faced when engaging with youth services. Those living in rural areas, with limited transport and limited services in their locality, cited these challenges as significant barriers to accessing youth services:

—
“The group you want to be part of may not be close to your area.”

—
“Location is a big thing. I live in the back end of nowhere.”

—
One participant representing uniformed youth services identified travel as one of the main barriers facing their service:

—
“The biggest barrier is travel. As a small group, we have had to think about this. We need to consider how best to address this, e.g. rent a bus or ask parents.”

A youth leader had similar experiences:

—
“If we are going on a hike, we have to try and fundraise to get people to the hike.”

—
In the absence of available and accessible public transport, many young people relied on lifts in order to get to the venues. Transport issues for those with additional needs were also highlighted.

One group considered how best to address travel barriers, and made the following suggestions:

- National action: Have transport providers provide more services
- Have funding to support access to services
- Provide carpooling or provide a shuttle to services for young people living in rural areas.

—
“In really remote areas, travel to services should be subsidised to ensure no one is excluded.”

Venue capacity

Participants provided examples of some youth service venues that do not always have capacity for the level of interest expressed, which resulted in some young people not being able to avail of services:

“My group has almost 50 people registered, but the club can only hold about 30 people, so it’s not accessible to everyone who wants to join.”

Cost

The cost of participating in a youth service can be expensive for those with financial constraints, or for those living in households where more than one person is a member of a youth service:

“In my area, there are only two buses daily. My mum is working and we only have one car. We don’t have any money for petrol to travel 30 minutes to the next town, where the activities are.”

“Difficulties with funding of trips [whether] it be an educational trip where something is gained or just a trip for a bit of fun.”

Time commitments

Due to other commitments, such as education, some participants felt they were no longer able to fully commit to youth services as they had previously. One young person commented that this was why engaging with youth services was “not as easily accessible as it seems sometimes”. Others echoed this sentiment:

[Difficulties owing to busy schedules

Not able to fit them [youth service participation] in around schoolwork, work, home life, etc.

Some participants also noted that some of the events took place at times that did not suit young people:

—

“I know so many who dropped out of sport and Guides. Twenty in dance class – it was on at 5.30 on

Saturday, when we want to go out with our friends. People do not understand that young people want to spend time together, hanging outside shops doing things.”

—

Reaching the maximum membership age

When a young person reaches a stipulated age in some of the services, they are expected to leave. This issue was a cause for concern among several participants, who described the negative impact this could have, particularly for young people living in rural areas with limited alternatives:

—

“Once you age out, there’s nowhere else to go...cut-off point...there should be signposting for further opportunities.”

—

—

“The minute I turned 13 I was told I was too old to do that now. It was just “Bye”.”

—

—

“When you come out of whatever youth club you are in, that’s it. You can’t continue to be 24 for the rest of your life, but you should not just be dropped.”

—

Public and peer perception of universal youth services

Some participants identified the issue of possible stigma towards people using youth services – specifically negativity from parents/friends – where membership of a youth group might not be seen as “cool”, and this could affect a young person who

may lack the courage to join:

Older young people see it as a ‘kids’ thing and don’t stay, or their friends leave and so do they.

Talk to the young people who are not involved and ask them why?

3.3.3 Technical support

Using the term ‘technical support’, participants outlined some of the challenges facing services. These included: (1) lack of trained youth

leaders; (2) lack of volunteers; (3) Garda Vetting; (4) buildings and spaces; (5) funding; and (6) internal communication issues.

Lack of trained youth leaders

The lack of trained youth leaders available to facilitate youth groups was a key concern highlighted by participants. Several participants explained how services in their areas were affected by the lack of youth leaders:

—
—
“A big problem is the lack of leaders...we were trying to co-opt parents.”

—
—
“If you go somewhere, you need a certain level of leaders, [so] we can’t bring Guides anywhere, as we need so many leaders.”

—
For some young people, the lack of trained youth leaders meant the end of their participation in an activity. For others, it meant travelling to the nearest city in order to join a youth group there:

—
“There was a judo club there, but they couldn’t get anyone

to run it, and the Scouts is looking iffy as two (leaders) have stepped down.”

—
—
“If I want to go to the youth club, currently we don’t have a youth leader to run it. So we haven’t had youth council this year, so I have to go to the Galway one.”

—
The importance of having youth leaders with appropriate skills, training, and motivation was also raised:

—
“Some people are not built for it. Training for people who work with kids is important. Some coaches have expertise but may have no experience of working with kids. When the leader is not able, kids think, “I am not coming back to this – ever”.

Leaders not being able to control misbehaving or disruptive children.

Adults being trained and knowing what to do on an evening when you don't have anything planned, so you're not sitting there without anything to do.

Lack of volunteers

Many clubs and organisations depend on volunteers in order to run smoothly. Some participants outlined how their youth services have been affected by a shortage of volunteers; others described how activities in their clubs were limited or cancelled due to the lack of volunteers:

There was a broad perception that young people who attended services previously are generally not returning despite being potentially very experienced and knowledgeable mentors.

[It is] difficult to find volunteers.

Garda Vetting

The Garda Vetting process was one of the possible barriers associated with the decline in the number of adult volunteers or youth leaders. Participants suggested streamlining the vetting process so that an adult who has Garda Vetting for one youth organisation or sports organisation could use that clearance to work with other such organisations. The need for Garda Vetting, they said,

means that activities sometimes have to be cancelled if there is a shortfall in the number of available adults with Garda Vetting clearance:

We needed a parent for a match. We couldn't get anyone as no one was vetted.

Buildings and spaces

Youth services are generally delivered in a public or shared building or space. Few youth services have purpose-built spaces. The consequence of this, according to participants, is that sometimes a suitable building is not available (particularly in rural areas):

—
—
“I did Guides. The hall had to close down, so we had to go to another one, but it is smaller. The leaders want the bigger one as they can’t do things in the smaller hall.”

—
—
“I’m from the middle of nowhere. Our hall is used

for the ceilí band, for Irish dancing, for everything. Sometimes we have to cancel our club if we can’t get the stage up. We have to ask them if we can have the stage up.”

—
—
“Some services could be made more accessible for people who have disabilities, e.g. in wheelchairs.”

—
One of the participants from uniformed youth services also noted that securing places to meet is a major barrier facing their service.

Funding

The cost of running youth services in local communities and the lack of funding needed to do so were cited as challenging resource issues.

Internal communication

While there was general agreement on how well many of the youth services were delivered, some participants felt that, based on their own experiences, communication

and organisation between group youth leaders could be improved, in order to make sessions run more smoothly.

3.4 Gaps in current service provision

Participants identified a number of gaps in current service provision, including gaps in programmes of interest to young people, gaps in

capacity for online delivery, gaps in capacity to address social exclusion, and gaps in mental health awareness programmes.

3.4.1 Gaps in programmes of interest to young people

Participants said that youth leaders should ask children and young people what activities they would like to do, and promote a greater understanding of youth culture. In addition, youth leaders should be upskilled – specifically, they should be given training in the use of the latest social media, as well as in the area of youth culture, in order to engage better with children and young people:

—
“The traditional games and activities are becoming less appealing.”

—
One youth leader expanded on this point and explained how their service is changing to respond to needs:

—
“Everything is changing. In my first year it was pottery. And last year it was coding and Raspberry Pi

(because of the Raspberry Pi activities, I was ready for college).”

—
Some participants commented that they would be interested in attending craft classes, including knitting and crochet. In addition, they said life skills such as cooking or debating should be considered as possible courses to offer, as well as offering more online opportunities and more specific services of interest to older youth:

—
“That would be cool. Have designated nights, for example, crochet night, debating night, or having a day or an evening to develop your cooking skills.”

—
“Consider more relevant issues like climate change.”

3.4.2 Gaps in capacity for online delivery

Specific training and capacity building was also identified as a gap in some organisations, and participants said there is a need to ensure that youth leaders are equipped to effectively handle online delivery.

An older group of participants discussed the importance of getting online delivery right. One of the youth leaders who described the challenges of delivering online youth services recommended capacity building for leaders on how best to effectively deliver online sessions:

—
“Online works well when everyone knows each

other. But if you aren’t involved in the group, it can be hard to join in.”
—
—

“I find it hard to do things online with kids in our group.”
—
—

“Have a place where youth leaders can share good practice and develop their skills in online delivery.”
—

3.4.3 Gaps in capacity to address social exclusion (or promote inclusion)

Participants identified a need to create more understanding or awareness of differences in order to provide positive interactions/experiences in youth services. For example:

- [There should be] more communication with parents/schools in order to identify who might be at most risk of exclusion:

- o Home school liaison officers should identify children who might be excluded and take positive action to address this.

- Youth service practitioners/volunteers should be upskilled in order to provide social development skills to encourage greater acceptance of difference,

and to understand personality types (e.g. young people with social anxiety can come across as “weird” or awkward).

- [There should be] more networking between different services in order to provide opportunities for young people to learn about particular organisations and get to know other young people; this might reduce exclusion and bullying.
- Promote the use of social contracts as a way of working

with young people:

- o Provide a safe space and encourage everyone to take part.
- Youth service leaders need to acknowledge that we are living in a changing Ireland, and acknowledge multiculturalism:

“There are a lot of second-generation Irish that need to be considered. ”

3.4.4 Gaps in mental health awareness programmes

Participants highlighted a need to provide training for staff on issues that they should look out for, but not necessarily to provide training on how to deal with specific issues. Young people attend services to have fun, not to attend therapy, so

volunteers need to signpost young people to relevant service(s). One young person noted the need for a greater understanding and sensitivity of social media and its effect on the mental health of young people.

3.5 Summary – table of findings

Positive aspects of current universal youth services identified by participants

- Accessibility and availability
- Opportunities for personal development
- Social development
- Social interaction and youth culture

Participants' perceptions of challenges facing the current services

- Lack of trained youth leaders and volunteers
- Perceived problems with the Garda Vetting system
- Need for additional/specialised training for staff and volunteers
- Some services could do with fresh content/new programmes
- Lack of young people involved in decision-making processes in youth services
- No social media presence
- Some venues not fit for purpose, including lack of a means of access for young people with a disability

Specific barriers identified by young people in relation to accessing youth services

- Lack of information about what was available
- Public/peer perception of the services
- Difficulties in accessing transport to attend youth services, particularly in rural areas
- Bullying or intimidation in youth services
- Costs, including cost of travel to attend services, and cost of trips
- Time commitment, including competing demands on time, e.g. school and friends
- Cut-off maximum age limit with some groups

Gaps in current service provision

- Gaps in programmes of interest to young people
- Gaps in capacity for online delivery
- Gaps in capacity to address social exclusion (or promote inclusion)
- Gaps in mental health awareness programmes

Section 4:

Recommendations

This section of the report provides:

- (1) An overview of the two priority recommendations raised by each consultation group
- (2) The subsequent identification of three themes in the recommendations
- (3) Detailed actions identified for each of the three overarching recommendations
- (4) A summary table of recommendations and actions

4.1 Overview of two priority recommendations made by each consultation group

In the second part of each consultation session, the facilitators used a World Café approach to explore each of the themes in further detail, and to identify two

key recommendations from each group that could help improve universal youth services. These six key recommendations are outlined in Table 4.

Table 4: Overview of priority recommendations from each group

Group	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Recommendation 1	Advertising	Directory of services	Involve young people in decision-making
Recommendation 2	Technical support	Social media	Training for staff and volunteers

4.2 Three overarching recommendations

There was some overlap in the priority recommendations made by each of the groups. Therefore, these have been collated under the following three umbrella headings:

- (1) Increase awareness of universal youth services (through social media, a website/directory of services, and advertising).
- (2) Provide technical support and resources (including training for staff and volunteers).

- (3) Involve young people in decision-making.

In discussions at the online consultations, it was noted that recommendations in relation to technical support and involving young people in decision-making were raised in a direct manner, whereas discussions about actions required in order to increase awareness of universal youth services were much more animated and generated a lot of discussion, as reflected in Section 4.3.1.

4.3 Detailed actions for each of the three overarching recommendations

4.3.1 Increase awareness of universal youth services through social media, a website/ directory of services, and advertising

Participants had a lot to say about how to raise awareness of youth services. In relation to social media, the key messages were: (1) make more effective use of it; (2) use youth-oriented platforms; (3) use fun in the messaging; and (4) convey the experience of “being” in youth services rather than just sharing information about such services. Participants also gave a rationale and suggestions for a directory/website, as well as emphasising the need for proactive advertising.

Make effective use of social media

Participants described how sponsored messages and pop-up advertisements affect them. They acknowledged that messages are often received subliminally as they scroll through social media, and that they are exposed to clever advertisements and messages that can influence them. Instead, they suggested that what would work best is using messages and advertisements that are short, snappy, colourful and show real-life situations, or that are delivered by real people.

	Example of recommendation
Make effective use of social media	<i>“It’s all about infographics, about what you do, who you are, the activities that are going on in different areas.”</i>
	<i>“I think social media in this day and age is really important. That’s how people are getting information.”</i>
	<i>“Possibly schools could put posters up. But you’re more likely to get people interested in groups if you are advertising on social media.”</i>

Make use of 'youth appeal' apps and social media

Participants said they felt that youth services were missing out on a way of talking to young people, as they were not using young people's social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. One young person talked about a Ryanair post trending on TikTok which she felt "100% sure was

written by a teenager". She linked the appeal and success of the post – which participants described as "really funny" – to the "absolute madness" of TikTok. This "absolute madness" contrasted with other social media companies which were "so professional" and therefore, for this group, less appealing, less real, and less fun.

Example of recommendation	
Make use of youth appeal apps	<i>Young people's platforms – young people are more likely to interact with posts if they see information aimed at them.</i>
	<i>Instagram: You could have one for your organisation, and you could follow others. You could reach out to others, then you could link trees, lists, promote fundraising. For example, this club got into XYZ, they got into this competition.</i>
	<i>As a generation, we use TikTok. Ryanair and Duolingo; they do things that would give most managers a heart attack. Youth culture. Ryanair has so many followers.... You need to pick. Are you going to pick the classic style or a chaotic style that will give you 1.5 million followers? For example, Ryanair – aeroplane talking...Duolingo – running after you for not doing your Spanish – 5 million likes right there.</i>

Participants felt it was important to involve young people in the development of any advertising, so that it has youth appeal and uses the mediums and designs that work for their generation. They said it was time to move on from “notice boards and handouts”.

Fun messaging

One young person highlighted how, since the COVID-19 pandemic and

lockdowns, a post showing young people having fun together in person is especially appealing.

Another positive, fun example of successful engagement with young people that participants mentioned was having someone who was able to convey messages in an engaging way. One example provided was “Teacher Tadhg” who, according to one young person, “makes learning fun”.

Example of recommendation	
Fun messaging	<i>Posts and blogs, with information and the fun stuff that's going on.</i>
	<i>Especially our age group coming out of COVID and lockdown. "Oh my God that looks so much fun" – any setting at all that's surrounded by other people (is good).</i>
	<i>Bright colours, bubbles..."Oh that looks interesting." Let me read more.</i>

Advertise the experience

Participants felt it was more important to convey the experience

of the service, and how and what it was delivering for young people, rather than merely providing information about it.

Example of recommendation	
Advertise the experience	<i>A lot of advertising is based around trying to provide information about the service. If I see something that catches my eye, I will follow it up. If I see a picture on TikTok of other people just enjoying themselves, that's much more appealing to me.</i>
	<i>Show young people saying this is what's going on.</i>
	<i>Advertising that isn't staged.</i>

Directory/website – spreading the word about youth services

Participants in two of the three groups discussed the need for a directory of services, given that so few people are aware of services in their own area or what is going on across the country. They felt that it is important for a directory to be accessible (online) and easy to use, and that it should contain details of services, programmes, courses and

events across the country. Young people felt that a comprehensive directory/website detailing all of the youth services in Ireland should also include details of online events and courses. The fact that not all young people have access to the Internet was also taken into account, and participants' suggestions included providing a list of services to schools, which could then redistribute this information, for example in school journals or newsletters.

	Example of recommendation
Directory/website	<i>Functional website designed for target market.</i>
	<i>A website with a huge list of what you can do in Ireland.</i>
	<i>Include distance and a specific service search facility.</i>

Advertising – proactive engagement

Participants observed that there was a need for a major change in awareness of youth services in schools and the wider community. It was suggested that more targeted advertising was required in order to reach young people – specifically through the use of social media and apps. Some participants proposed employing youth service advocates

or “sales reps for youth services” to visit schools and inform young people about universal youth services in an engaging way.

One participant said she was learning about “loads of organisations [she] didn’t know existed”. She thought it would be good if “organisations met up more” to share information and increase young people’s opportunities, social and learning experiences.

	Example of recommendation
Advertise/proactive engagement	<i>A designated person for every county or a young person to go around, even [to] sixth class, so people know the groups that are there.</i>
	<i>I think there needs to be more collaboration between youth organisations.</i>
	<i>Have open evenings and tasters of what they do.</i>

4.3.2 Provide technical support and resources

The main suggestions participants raised with regard to the recommendation to provide technical support and resources related to: more trained youth leaders; more volunteers; specific training for staff and volunteers; simplifying Garda Vetting; buildings and spaces; funding; improving internal communications; and considering new content and delivery options.

More trained youth leaders

Participants raised a range of concerns about the lack of trained youth leaders, and it was agreed that there was a need for **more youth leaders, particularly those with experience and skills in working with children and young people.**

Participants noted that inexperienced leaders could negatively affect a service. It was also noted that it might be a good idea for an outgoing youth leader to formally debrief an incoming youth leader in order to bring them up to speed.

More volunteers

The importance of volunteers was also highlighted. Participants lamented the lack of volunteers,

noting that it had a huge knock-on effect on the capacity of youth services to cater for the needs of children and young people. Their key recommendation was to **provide more incentives for volunteers to get involved.**

Specific training for staff and volunteers

Based on their own experiences of youth services, participants felt it would be useful if more youth services staff **were trained in issues such as bullying, including online bullying; digital skills; online delivery; youth cultures (including LGBTI+); social exclusion and signposting to relevant services (e.g. mental health, etc.)**

Simplify Garda Vetting

A number of participants gave examples of events being cancelled because the potential volunteer did not have the appropriate Garda Vetting, even though they had been vetted for other activities such as sport. Participants noted **a need for Garda Vetting that covers everything, so that other volunteers (e.g. those involved in sport) could help out in youth services.**

Buildings and spaces

While some youth services are based in suitable accommodation, a number of participants described being in venues that are not fit for purpose, where events had to be changed or cancelled because other groups were using the space. In addition, some venues do not provide a means of access for people with a disability. Participants suggested that there was a need for more imaginative approaches, including **shared use of public spaces such as community centres, halls, libraries, etc. that are also accessible for all.**

Funding

While participants did not have details of funding issues, there was a general sense that there was not enough funding provided for youth services.

Improve internal communications

Participants made a number of suggestions throughout the consultations that could be described as relating to internal communications in youth services

groups and networks. Young people who had experienced sessions that were not as well run as they could have been felt that there was a **need to improve the planning of sessions in some youth services.** There was also a discussion about opportunities for **hybrid meet-ups that would allow more people to participate in meetings** – several participants also discussed the **need for standard routines and procedures, including taking minutes of meetings and sending emails containing bullet points**, so that people could catch up even if they missed a meeting.

Consider new content and delivery options

There were lots of ideas about new content and delivery options, including **more icebreakers and team-building activities** that might help people who are shy or anxious about joining a youth service; a number of participants said there was a need for **more online delivery; more crafts** (such as knitting and crochet), **debating and cookery sessions.** Some participants felt there was a need for **more services for older youth**, as well as **more relevant content, such as climate change.**

4.3.3 Involve young people in decision-making

Group 3 made a specific recommendation (which was also alluded to in the other two groups) in relation to the involvement of young people in decision-making. Group 3 suggested that a requirement of providing funding should be that **there is a young person sitting on the board**. This was described as “coming from youth for youth”. There was some discussion in Group 2 about young people feeling that as they got older they should be more involved in decision-making. In addition, participants felt there was a need for young people to participate in a steering group focused on the recommended development of a directory/ website. This discussion evolved to consider the possibility of having a **youth steering group** in order to provide more consistent feedback, and with the benefit of providing “perspectives [that] would differ on how to reach out”. Group 1 and Group 2 both identified the need

for **young people to be involved in any advertising and social media efforts**. In order to find out why other young people do not use youth services, **it was suggested that they need to be asked, perhaps via a survey**:

—
“Have a seat for young people on the board, to influence decision-making within the programmes that are happening in their organisation.”

—
“Community councils would provide a link to the real world, and this would have a positive impact.”

4.4 Summary of priority recommendations and suggested actions

The priority recommendations, along with their suggested actions, are outlined in Table 5. Points raised earlier in the consultations relating to these recommendations have also been included in Table 5.

Table 5: Summary of priority recommendations made by children and young people about how universal youth services can be improved in Ireland

Recommendation	How?	Details of how this can be achieved
(1) Increase awareness of universal youth services	Establish social media for universal youth services	Make effective use of social media.
		Use 'youth appeal' platforms such as TikTok, and appoint young people to undertake this task.
		Use fun messaging.
		Convey actual experiences and what it's like to be part of a youth group.
	Develop a website/directory of services	Identify and advertise what services are available across the country. Include online programmes and courses.
	Advertising/proactive engagement of universal youth services	Appoint ambassadors in each county ("sales reps for the youth services") to let schools and the wider community know what is available.
		Encourage organisations to meet up in order to network and to share learning and resources.

Recommendation	How?	Details of how this can be achieved
<p>(2)</p> <p>Provide technical support/ resources</p>	Simplify Garda Vetting	Garda Vetting needs to cover everything, so that other volunteers (e.g. those involved in sport) can help out in youth services.
	Buildings and spaces	Take more imaginative approaches to securing venues, including shared use of public spaces such as community centres, halls, libraries, etc. that are also accessible for all.
	Funding	Provide more funding for youth services.
		<p>Improve planning of sessions in some youth services.</p> <p>Organise meetings to create opportunities to join online.</p> <p>Create better systems for taking meeting minutes and notes, and also create opportunities for people who missed meetings to catch up.</p>
	Consider new content and delivery options	<p>Do more icebreakers and team-building activities. Create more opportunities for online delivery.</p> <p>Provide more crafts, debating and cookery sessions.</p> <p>Offer more services for older youth.</p> <p>Include more relevant content in meetings, such as climate change.</p>

Recommendation	How?	Details of how this can be achieved
(3) Involve young people in decision-making	Young people should sit on organisations' boards	Make it a requirement of providing funding that a young person is sitting on the board.
	Young people should be involved in advertising and social media efforts	Two groups identified the need to increase awareness, and to ensure relevant and targeted publicity.
	Create a youth steering group	This could provide more consistent feedback from young people. Young people's perspectives would differ from those of adults on how to reach out.
	Conduct a youth survey	Talk to the young people who are not involved in universal youth services and ask them why.

Appendix 1: List of YSGS-funded organisations

YSGS-funded organisations		
An Óige	Foróige	National Youth Council of Ireland
BeLong To	The Girls Brigade Ireland	Youth Work Ireland
Catholic Guides of Ireland	Girls Friendly Society	No Name! Club
Church of Ireland Youth Department	Involve: National Association of Travellers' Centres	Ógras
Community Creations/ SpunOut.ie	Irish Girl Guides	Order of Malta Cadets
Localise Youth Volunteering	Irish Methodist Youth and Children's Department	Scouting Ireland
Crosscare	Junior Chamber International (JCI) Ireland	The Boys' Brigade
ECO-UNESCO	Macra na Feirme	Voluntary Service International
Experiment in International Living/EIL Intercultural Learning	National Association for Youth Drama/Youth Theatre Ireland	Young Irish Film Makers
Feachtas Óg-Ghluaiseacht Ghaeilge	National Federation of Arch Clubs	National Council of YMCAs of Ireland

Appendix 2: Recruitment letter inviting nominations of young people to the consultations

To whom it may concern,

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) are currently in the process of reviewing the Youth Service Grant Scheme (YSGS); which funds organisations providing Universal Youth Services in Ireland.

We are contacting you in relation to a forthcoming opportunity for young people aged 18 to 24 in your organisation to take part in a consultation about **Universal Youth Services** in Ireland.

We are holding these consultations on Saturday 6th November from 2.00pm to 4.30pm. Nationwide we are inviting 15 young people to be part of this consultation.

We would like to offer you the opportunity to nominate two young people from your organisation. Places will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis, with a reserve list in place for those who are not successful in the first instance.

How to nominate a young person:

We are asking you to send the name, age, phone number and email address of your selected young person to Karyn Farrell at kfarrell@youthworkireland.ie by **Friday 29th October** at midday.

The specific details and relevant consent / assent forms will be issued shortly after this point and will be sent directly to the nominated young people, with the local organiser from your youth organisation in copy.

We look forward to working with you on this important process and to receiving your nominations for the Youth Service Grant Scheme Consultations.

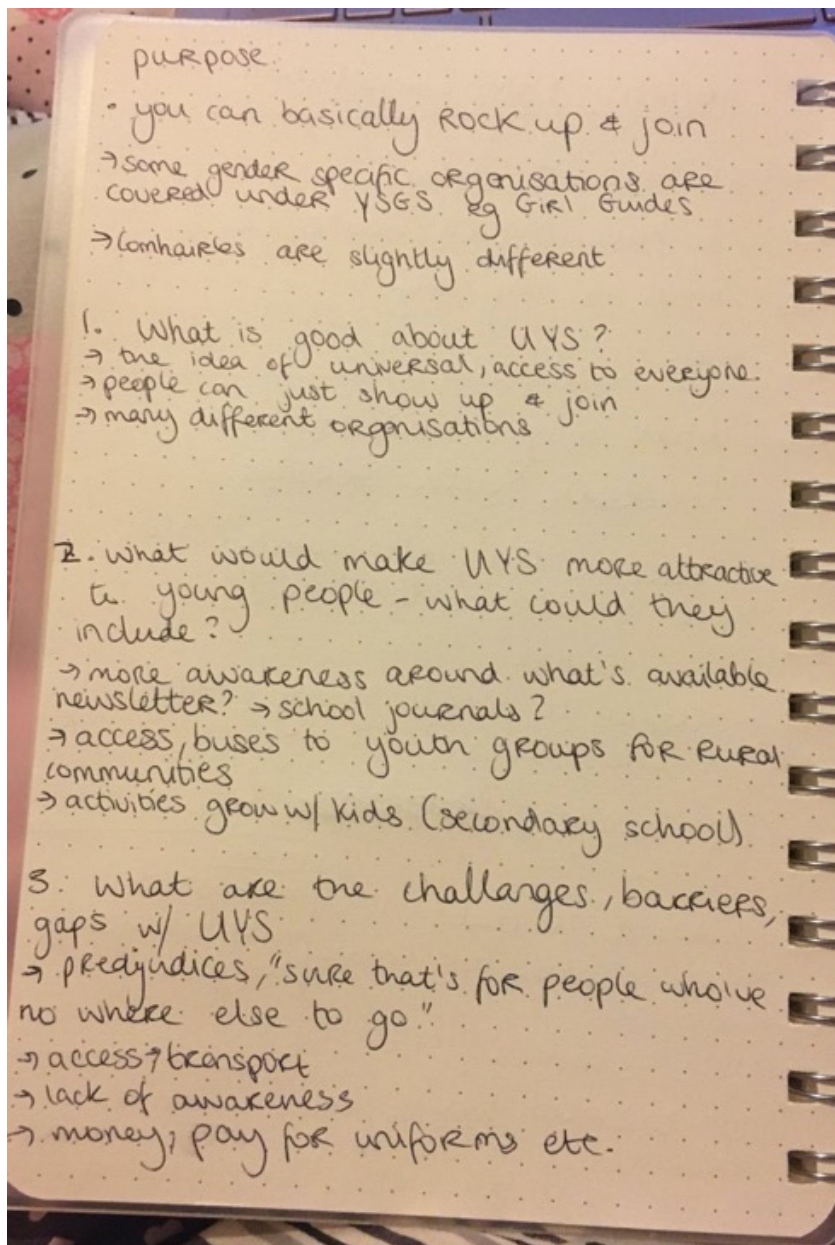
Yours sincerely,

David Behan

Appendix 3: Outline of the online consultation incorporating Part A and Part B

Part	Step	Description of activity
Part A	Step 1 of 3 Blue sky individual responses	1.1 Participants were asked: "What is your understanding of universal youth services?" They were invited to write down their understanding of this on a sheet of paper.
		1.2 A number of participants were invited to share their understanding; these examples provided opportunities for clarifications.
		1.3 Each participant was asked to respond to these four questions using pen and paper: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is working well in universal youth services? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) What is good about universal youth services? b) Are universal youth services providing the right type of services/ programmes? 2. Are there barriers to accessing these services? 3. What are the gaps in current provision? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) What would make universal youth services more attractive to young people? b) What could they include? 4. Are there any changes that young people would like to see in universal youth services?
	Step 2 of 3 Group work on Padlet	2.1 The facilitator explained that the next step would be completed on Padlet and that this would make it easier to hear and see everyone's views. Participants were invited to upload to Padlet the top three things they thought were good about universal youth services.
		2.2 Young people were then asked to upload to Padlet the top three things from their lists that they thought were challenges, barriers or gaps in relation to universal youth services.
		2.3 While the participants were uploading 'the good and the bad' to Padlet, the facilitator began to group issues together and to number these groups. The facilitator then opened a dialogue with the participants and asked them to think about an appropriate term to describe the category or theme of each group of issues. Participants were encouraged to move issues around, or to change the name of the theme if they could think of something more appropriate or specific.
Step 3 of 3 Voting on Mentimeter	When Step 2 was completed, the facilitator uploaded these categories to Mentimeter and asked participants to help prioritise the top three categories by ranking them. The Mentimeter link was shared with the participants, who were then able to cast their votes. The facilitator explained that these top three themes would be used in World Café for further discussion.	
Part B	World Café Identify three key themes and two recommendations	The facilitator explained that the purpose of this exercise was to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlight as much detail as possible about each of the three themes Identify the barriers/challenges Suggest what would help Based on the responses, what are your two key recommendations to DCEDIY on universal youth services in Ireland?

Appendix 4: Example of a response to the pen and paper exercise



Appendix 5: Participants' evaluation of Space, Voice, Audience, and Influence (completed by 19 participants)

	Detail	1 star ★	2 stars ★	3 stars ★	4 stars ★	5 stars ★
Space	<i>I felt comfortable giving my opinions (n=19)</i>	0.0% n=0	0.0% n=0	5.3% n=1	42.1% n=8	52.6% n=10
Voice	<i>I got the chance to give my opinions (n=19)</i>	0.0% n=0	5.3% n=1	10.5% n=2	15.8% n=3	68.4% n=13
Audience	<i>I know who wants to hear our opinions (n=18)</i>	0.0% n=0	5.6% n=1	0.0% n=0	33.3% n=6	61.1% n=11
Influence	<i>I think what we said today will be taken seriously (n=19)</i>	0.0% n=0	0.0% n=0	5.3% n=1	31.6% n=6	63.2% n=12

Question	Open comments
The best thing about today was:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I got to share my opinion in the Zoom session and all my opinions were anonymous on the Padlet. • Getting to voice my opinions in an environment where they were welcome and encouraged • Open environment • Finding out about new youth services • Very comfortable atmosphere • Listening to others' experiences and opinions • I really liked the environment of the meeting and I had tons of fun. • Being able to say anything and knowing that others will take it into consideration • The amount of conversations we had. They weren't cut off either. Everyone got to say what they wanted. • The icebreakers and the Padlet • The icebreakers, which were super-chilled, as well as when we were discussing the different topics. It was great to expand on the issues. • Getting the chance to give my thoughts about something I feel will help young people • Hearing everyone's opinions from different parts of Ireland • Having my input • Hearing the opinions and ideas of different people • Frank discussions • The debating at the end about the topics to be put forward, as some very useful opinions were shared • The opinion sharing
What would you change about today?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make it shorter • Not as long • The amount of services who joined. I felt as it was very monotone. • The amount of time we had on the call • It was very long and I found it hard to focus at times. • Some people in the group tend to dominate, so some may not be comfortable giving their answers for fear they may be rejected or not worded correctly. • More icebreakers to start off the meeting • Longer break. Session very long for one sitting. • Make it easier to let everyone speak, so no one gets spoken over. But otherwise it was amazing and thank you so much for letting me take part. • N/A it was fantastic, and I really enjoyed it. • Longer session possibly/multiple consultations • I feel the day was very planned out and great discussions were had. • More inclusivity – religion, ethnicity and disability • Nothing (x 5 mentions)
Were you able to access the online platforms?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes (100%; n=19)
Were the online platforms easy to use?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes (100%; n=19)

