national youth council of ireland
COMHAIRLE NÁISIÚNTA NA NÓG

ARTS MAPPING

MAPPING YOUTH ARTS PROVISION IN YOUTH WORK SETTINGS


owering youth
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The National Youth Council of Ireland

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

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NYCI Youth Arts Programme

The NYCI Youth Arts Programme is a strategic partnership of the National Youth Council of Ireland, the Arts Council and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. It is dedicated to the development and advancement of youth arts in Ireland.

www.youth.ie/arts

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Design: Brandcentral
Photography: Marc O'Sullivan (cover to page 51) and Tommy Clancy (page 52)

First published by the National Youth Council of Ireland in 2021 by

ISBN: 978-1-900210-66-9

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Registered Charity Number: CHY 6823

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An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais, Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige
Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

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Abbreviations

CPD	Continuous Professional Development.
DCYA	Department of Children and Youth Affairs.
DES	Department of Education and Skills.
DJE	Department of Justice and Equality.
ETB	Education and Training Board.
ETBYO	Education Training Board Youth Officer.
EU	European Union.
HSE	Health Service Executive.
LCYP	Local Creative Youth Partnership.
LGBTIQ*	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/Transsexual, Intersex, and Queer/Questioning.
NQSF	National Quality Standards Framework.
NYCI	National Youth Council of Ireland.
SEO	Sectoral Employment Order.
STEAM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics.
UBU	Your Place, Your Space.
UCC	University College Cork.
UK	United Kingdom.
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
VFMPR	The Value for Money and Policy Review.

Foreword

I welcome the publication of this research, which demonstrates the important benefits and impact of engagement in youth arts for young people. The analysis also highlights the many challenges that the sector faces and indicates the urgent need for a shift at policy level and significant financial investment in order to advance meaningful and sustainable youth arts provision in Ireland.

I commend Dr Eileen Hogan, Nora Furlong and Damian Drohan in UCC for the enthusiastic, professional and dynamic approach applied to this valuable research. Their expertise and understanding of the sector combined with the meaningful interaction with key stakeholders in the field that this document reflects, gives it significant value in advancing the youth arts sector.

I also wish to extend NYCI's sincere gratitude to the project's Research Advisory Committee for their expertise and guidance through the process: Marie-Claire McAleer, NYCI Head of Research and Policy and Chair of Research Advisory Committee; Anne O'Gorman, NYCI National Youth Arts Programme Manager; Sheila Deegan, Culture and Arts Officer, Limerick City and County Council; Niall Brennan, DCEDIY; Stephen Byrne, DCEDIY; Seona Ni Bhriain, Arts Council; Lisa Kavanagh, Tipperary Education and Training Board and Chair of ETBOs; Rhona Dunnett, Youth Theatre Ireland and Mags Walsh, Director of the British Council in Ireland.

As well as providing a picture of where there are gaps in provision and in research, this report also outlines concrete recommendations around the resourcing and recognition of youth arts provision which need to be implemented in order to ensure that youth arts realises its full potential and really delivers for young people. NYCI is committed to continuing to support this process of advocacy on behalf of and in collaboration with the youth work and youth arts sectors.

Mary Cunningham

CEO
National Youth Council of Ireland

Authors' Acknowledgements

It has been a pleasure and privilege for us to engage in this research and we thank the NYCI for affording us the opportunity. In the process, we have enjoyed speaking with youth arts providers across the country about their perspectives on and experiences of facilitating young people to engage in arts activities in youth work contexts across Ireland. Many thanks to all of the interviewees whose voices inform this research. We are heartened by the lively conversations we held with passionate advocates of creative youth work and youth arts practice. Thanks also to the many Education and Training Board Youth Officers across Ireland who responded to the research survey. Thanks also to representatives of the many organisations across Ireland who contributed to the arts-mapping exercise. The examples shared evidence exciting, dynamic and transformative youth arts experiences and are testament to the commitment of professional and volunteer youth workers, youth arts practitioners, and the young people with whom they engage.

Thanks to the research advisory group for their expert advice and warm support.

Finally, thanks to the NYCI for supporting us in the research journey. Particular thanks to Anne O'Gorman and Marie-Claire McAleer for their professionalism, warmth, and enthusiasm throughout the research process. It was a joy to work with you.

We hope that this research contributes to understandings of the extent and significance of youth arts provision in youth work settings in Ireland. We also hope that it can contribute positively to youth arts and youth work policy-making in the future.

Dr Eileen Hogan
Nora Furlong
Damian Drohan

SECTION 1

Executive Summary

Introduction

This research explores youth arts provision in youth work settings in Ireland. In particular, it aims to respond to the following research questions:

1. What is the nature and scope of youth arts provision throughout the country?
2. What type of artforms are most prevalent in the provision of youth arts in Ireland?
3. Where are the gaps in provision currently?
4. What is the demographic profile of the young people accessing youth arts services?
5. What challenges, if any, do youth workers, youth arts practitioners and relevant youth-focused organisations currently encounter in their work with young people?
6. How can these challenges be addressed in public policy?

This research maps current provision by showcasing examples of youth arts activities in youth work settings submitted by organisations across the country. It also explores the perspectives of key stakeholders, including youth workers, youth arts practitioners, service providers, policy makers, and representatives of organisations that contribute to youth arts provision in youth work settings in the Republic of Ireland.

Report structure

Section 2 of the report outlines the research strategy and methodology that were used to address the research questions.

Section 3 provides a review of national policies and literature that are relevant to youth arts provision in youth work settings. It firstly examines the policy context of youth arts provision in youth work settings in Ireland. Second, it explores important trends and dilemmas that are located within the broader youth work policy landscape. Finally, it considers the significance of these issues for policy-making and reflects on their implications for expanding and improving youth arts provision in youth work settings in Ireland.

Section 4 presents a demographic profile of young people accessing youth arts provision in youth work settings across Ireland.

Section 5 presents and analyses qualitative data generated through in-depth interviews with practitioners and key stakeholders and a qualitative survey of Education and Training Board Youth Officers from across the country.

Section 6 provides a summary of the key research findings and policy recommendations are informed by the research study.

Summary of research findings

- Recognition of artistic and creative practice as a core element of youth work;
- Recognition that benefits of engagement in youth arts for young people are multidimensional;
- Mixed views on the scope of youth arts provision in contemporary Ireland and perception that it is patchy, particularly in rural areas;
- Youth work offers a good infrastructure for youth arts provision and youth work skills are highly complementary to good youth arts practice;
- Lack of confidence amongst youth workers about their creative abilities;
- Lack of knowledge about youth arts provision in youth work settings across Ireland amongst practitioners;
- EU funding schemes, particularly under Erasmus+, are a highly valuable source of funding;
- Lack of joined-up, collaborative thinking, statutory commitment, and strategic action on youth arts policy and practice in Ireland;
- Inadequate, inconsistent, and piecemeal funding for youth arts provision, set within an under-resourced youth work sector;

- Lack of knowledge about youth arts policy amongst practitioners and service providers;
- Prevalence of class-oriented divisions between 'the arts' and 'youth arts';
- Tensions between targeted youth work and universal youth work; targeting is effective for reaching marginalised young people but universal provision is valuable for integrating diverse young people;
- Youth workers and youth arts practitioners' skills are not reflected in pay and progression opportunities;
- Lack of recognition of the multi-dimensional nature of the youth worker role;
- Lack of appreciation of the time, knowledge and skills required to run an organisation successfully;
- Assumptions that volunteers can carry youth work services and fill in the gaps in service when there is in reality a shortage of skilled volunteers;
- Significant training needs of youth workers, youth arts practitioners and volunteers on various policy and practice issues;
- Lack of time and resources to develop meaningful partnerships and realise the full potential for collaboration between the youth work and arts sectors;
- Perception that current funding models support competition rather than collaboration between organisations;
- Lack of appropriate facilities for youth arts activities, particularly in rural areas.

Summary of NYCI policy recommendations

Resourcing and Recognition of Youth Arts Provision

NYCI recommends:

1. **The resourcing and development of a comprehensive youth arts strategy** informed by cross governmental commitment in consultation with the youth work sector and youth arts sectors. This strategy would serve to provide a statutory framework for youth arts provision. In recognition of the unique and valuable contribution of youth arts provision in non-formal education settings and in shaping youth policy, additional resources are required to ensure the development and implementation of the strategy throughout the country.

2. **A review of the youth work funding schemes** to include the additional costs associated with materials, equipment, the hire of appropriate spaces, the purchase of specific technologies, transporting artworks, etc. Within this review, consideration should be given to ensuring youth workers have more flexibility in how they allocate funding, to ensure the provision of both universal and targeted youth arts practice.

3. **The creation of a capital investment fund** to support the development or refurbishment of appropriate buildings and spaces for youth arts practice. We recommend that this fund should also support the provision of mobile facilities, such as vans and buses, **to support** outreach work and as a method of expanding youth arts provision in rural areas.

4. As the research highlighted youth arts requires **significant financial investment** to realise its full potential, in this regard the following measures should be implemented:

    - the introduction of a new funding scheme to support the development of long-term (e.g. 5-year) youth arts projects, taking into account pay and conditions for freelance practitioners and artists,

    - the expansion and adequate resourcing of funding schemes that support partnership between youth work and arts organisations/artists, and the human resources necessary to develop fruitful and meaningful collaborations,

    - the establishment of platforms to support networking and sharing and exchange of practice between youth workers and youth arts practitioners across Ireland,

    - increased investment in showcasing youth arts provision in non-formal settings to ensure the work can be exhibited in physical and virtual platforms,

    - investment in the design and delivery of bespoke training to respond to the learning and development needs of youth arts practitioners and youth workers. This would enhance their competencies to deliver high quality youth arts provision in recognition of specialised skills required,

    - the establishment of a fund to assist youth workers to participate in this training. Such training can be delivered regionally through the ETB and local authority arts offices,

    - the appointment of an additional 16 youth arts officer posts to be located within the ETB to provide guidance and leadership to enhance youth arts delivery in youth work context.

Research & Evaluation

NYCI recommends:

1 government allocate **additional funding to facilitate collaboration** between youth arts practitioners, the youth work sector and Government Departments,

2 the **development of suitable evaluation frameworks** for youth arts,

3 future research in the area of youth arts practice and provision in Ireland to provide **an evidence base to inform youth arts policy** development and practice.

RESEARCH STRATEGY AND METHODOLOGY

SECTION 2

Strategy and Methodology

Introduction

This research was commissioned by the NYCI to map youth arts provision in youth work settings in Ireland. Previous work commissioned by NYCI Youth Arts Programme and conducted by Anna Fiona Keogh assessed the value of participation in the arts to young people (NYCI, 2009a). Keogh's research, which offered young people the opportunity to articulate what this participation means to them, is highly valuable for prioritising the voices of young people and their views have informed the rationale for undertaking this work. However, in this particular study, the focus is on the experiences of youth arts providers rather than the young people themselves. Therefore, the qualitative dimensions of the research focus on the capturing the experiences and views of practitioners and providers.

A mixed methods design was used to undertake this research, which incorporated several elements, including:

1. Geographic mapping
2. Literature and policy review
3. Quantitative data
4. Qualitative data

Geographic mapping

A geographic mapping of youth arts provision in youth work settings in Ireland enabled answers to the following questions:

- What is the nature and scope of youth arts provision throughout the country?
- What type of artforms are most prevalent in the provision of youth arts in Ireland?
- Where are the gaps in provision currently?

The arts-map (https://www.mappingyoutharts.com) was created using a free, open-source content management system for online collections and archives (Omeka) and a plug-in (Neatline) that adds a space and time dimension. These tools offer an ideal platform for showcasing artistic and creative works. Through facilitation and engagement with project leaders and participants on a national level, image and audio files were gathered, edited for quality, and placed at geo-locations around the arts-map. The arts-map was therefore populated by data submitted to the researchers directly by the organisations who provide opportunities for youth arts participation in youth work settings. Guidance on the submission of data was offered in the form of written guidelines which were hosted on a dedicated research project website. Organisations also availed of technical support from the researchers via phone or email. Some organisations also contacted the NYCI directly for advice on various aspects of the mapping exercise.

The arts-map offers a birds-eye representation of youth arts activities in youth work settings across Ireland. Users can zoom in to see more localised information to street-level detail. The map features graphic, audio and audio-visual representations of youth arts activities across the country, creating a searchable archive of youth arts provision in youth work contexts around Ireland. Submissions are organised by collection to facilitate an exploration of youth arts activities by artform, including:

- Visual arts (including drawing/painting/printmaking)
- Music/Sound performance
- Theatre/Dramatic performance
- Dance
- Film
- Creative writing (including spoken word/poetry/reading/recital)
- STEAM[1] (science through art, digital youth work, gaming, maker-spaces, etc.)

Graphics submitted by participating organisations include: photographs of artworks, photos of participation in events, festivals and parades, images from workshop activities, posters and flyers, images from public performances, etc. The audio files submitted to the map are largely recordings of performances. Audio-visual files include promotional videos, recordings of live performances, and videos made for original songs.

Literature and policy review

A comprehensive review of relevant policies and literature was undertaken. This review combined with the data analysis informed the set of recommendations that are found in the concluding section of the report. This element of the research revealed that there is a dearth of critical literature on contemporary youth work policy in Ireland and limited research on youth arts provision in youth work settings both in Ireland and internationally. The review is valuable as it provides an evaluative critique of Irish youth work policy and presents a range of ideas and

[1] STEAM is an educational approach that incorporates 'art' or 'the arts' into STEM; the acronym therefore represents science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics.

knowledge that are relevant to youth arts provision in youth work contexts. The process identified several paradoxes, tensions, dilemmas and debates that shape and are shaped by contemporary youth work policy and practice. These, in turn, inform how the nature and scope of youth arts provision in youth work settings in Ireland can be understood and how the impact of youth arts provision, in a shifting policy landscape, can be measured, interpreted, interrogated and imagined.

Quantitative data

A key question asked in the research is:

- What is the demographic profile of young people accessing youth arts services?

In order to answer this question, data was generated using an online survey by organisations across Ireland who offer opportunities for participation in youth arts activities. In total, 79 organisations responded to the online survey. The survey was disseminated through the NYCI mailing list and social media platforms. It collected information on: age of participants; gender of participants; location of service (county/city/town/area); and frequency of young people's participation. The nature of the mapping exercise meant that the focus was primarily on local organisations, as a key point of interest was to examine the geographic spread of youth arts activities in youth work settings in towns and cities across Ireland. The quantitative data were produced by many local youth organisations and a few national youth organisations. Therefore, in some cases, the numbers are very small. In other cases – where data was submitted by national youth organisations – the numbers of participants reach several thousand.

Sampling issues

With respect to the mapping exercise and the generation of quantitative data, it is worth discussing some of the complexities of these elements of the research.

No authoritative list of currently existing local youth work organisations was available to the researchers. In our research approach, we allowed respondents to self-select as representatives of organisations offering youth arts provision in youth work settings through their voluntary participation in the research. However, where we were uncertain of the nature of this provision, we followed up with the organisations via email to clarify or looked at how this provision was represented online on the organisation's websites or in their media submissions.

It is apparent that the boundaries of the youth work sector are somewhat fuzzy, particularly where youth arts provision is concerned. We know from the research data that providers negotiate different funding streams and define themselves in different ways in order to better avail of diverse types of funding. This is in many respects a survival tactic, since no one funding stream can provide for all organisational needs and different types of funding allow for different types of provision. Therefore what 'counts' as youth work arts provision in a youth work setting could be debated. Acknowledging that the youth arts provision can manifest in liminal, in-between spaces and curious about how organisations frame the characteristics of their work vis a vis youth work, we asked organisations in the submission form to respond to the question, 'Is your organisation defined as a youth work organisation?'. Of the total respondents, 56.6% answered 'Yes' to this question. In the question's explanatory notes, we stated that:

> ***This project aims to map youth arts activities in youth work settings. However, we are interested in the broad context of youth arts provision. If you select "No" or "Other", please give details in the section below about how your work is related to youth work practice'.***

In explaining their links to youth work practice, many submissions were from youth arts organisations and arts centres engaging in targeted youth arts provision though collaboration with local youth work organisations. Some organisations had a very broad arts remit, and within that, a specific stream that was youth arts/ youth work-focused and resourced through youth work funding schemes. Some were representative organisations for specific social groups (e.g. the traveller community), within which there was a targeted youth work stream staffed by professional youth workers. Others were therapeutic services (e.g. art therapy), with some activities supported through youth work funding and delivered in collaboration with youth workers and youth work organisations. A couple of organisations were private arts-oriented companies collaborating with youth work organisations. Some were community development or community arts projects employing youth workers to engage in targeted work with young people. Some submissions were from organisations representing local government services, including local authority arts offices, Education and Training Boards and local Creative Youth Partnership Schemes.

It is worth noting that many organisations submitted quantitative data about young people's participation and information about arts activities but did not follow through in sending examples to showcase on the map. Arts and youth arts organisations tended to have media files more readily to hand for submission

[2] This is not uncommon; Poyntz et al (2019) articulate similar challenges faced by researchers aiming to map non-formal arts practice in Canada and England.

to the map. It may be that these arts organisations more typically include a showcase exhibition or performance as a product of their projects, in formats that are suitable for online showcasing (video, audio-visual or graphic). On the other hand, youth work organisations tended to refer to 'the use of the arts as a tool for engagement' rather than 'youth arts' explicitly and the decision to include youth arts activities on the map may be related to how youth workers relate to the term 'youth arts'. The time pressures that youth workers reported in the data indicates that they simply do not have the opportunity to engage in all activities that they would like to participate in, particularly if that work means sacrificing time for direct work with young people. Therefore, youth workers seemed to have limited time to prepare material for submission. Being mindful of these challenges, the research team followed up with these organisations and supported them as best they could until the research deadline was reached. However, this experience indicates that if the map is to be maintained as a living archive of youth arts activities in youth work settings in Ireland – and we hope that it can be – then ongoing technical support for organisations will be essential.

We did impose some exclusion criteria with respect to what was enumerated in this report. Firstly, some organisations in Northern Ireland made submissions to the map but were excluded because this research was specific to the Republic of Ireland. Secondly, a couple of large arts institutions submitted data enumerating thousands of young participants. The definition of 'youth arts' does include young people as producers and consumers of the arts, so on one level these large numbers could be included. However, we had a little information about the depth of young people's engagement with these arts organisations. Subsequently we did get clarification via email that their engagement was limited to short, once-off gallery visits. Therefore we believed that including these figures of several thousand young participants would unduly skew the numbers and their representation of the scope of youth arts provision in youth work settings.

In summary, the geographic mapping exercise was not without its challenges, and the exploratory nature of the work reinforced how necessary and timely this research is. Despite these complexities, the arts-map is an important initiative for offering insight into the nature and scope of these activities in an aesthetically appealing, accessible way and we have created what we hope is a valuable new resource for a wide audience of policy-makers, service providers, academics, young participants, and the public.

Qualitative data

Qualitative data was generated through individual interviews (n=18) with youth arts practitioners and service providers across Ireland. Interview participants were sampled from across the country to ensure representation from all counties in Ireland. Potential interviewees were identified using purposive sampling, which was guided by a desire to involve participants with different types of roles and experiences of youth arts provision in youth work settings and to gain insight from practitioners across Ireland. Respondents inhabit a range of roles that are relevant to youth arts provision in youth work settings. The sample includes youth workers (volunteer and professional), youth arts practitioners, youth services managers, youth arts organisation representatives, one Education and Training Board Youth Officer (hereafter ETBYO), one Creative Youth Partnership Coordinator, and one Local Authority County Arts Officer.

Qualitative data was also generated by ETBYOs (n=16) across the country, who completed an online survey (see Appendix B).

Interview and survey questions were designed to elicit responses that allowed exploration of the following research questions:

- What is the nature and scope of youth arts provision throughout the country?
- Where are the gaps in provision currently?
- What challenges, if any, do youth workers, youth arts practitioners and relevant youth-focused organisations currently encounter in their work with young people?
- How can these challenges be addressed in public policy?
  (See Appendices A and B)

Interviews were transcribed verbatim. In analysing the data, these were assigned a code category and then grouped into common ideas (See Appendix D). These findings were then organised into the following analytical themes:

- Policy
- Practice
- Benefits of engagement in youth arts for young people
- Funding
- Human resources
- Training needs
- Facilities
- Collaboration
- Aspirations

Ethical considerations

This research strategy was approved by UCC's Social Research Ethics Committee before the data collection commenced. With respect to the in-depth interviews, participants were briefed by email or on the phone about the research project, its aims and objectives. An information sheet was sent to all participants in advance of the interviews and they were asked to sign an informed consent sheet. Interviews were recorded and were transcribed verbatim by a professional transcriber, who signed a confidentiality agreement. In relation to the survey of ETBYOs, NYCI was supported by the current national representative of ETBYOs in Ireland in encouraging youth officers to complete an online form. With respect to the geographic mapping, youth work and youth arts organisations were conducted through the NYCI mailing list and invited to participate in the mapping exercise. The project website offered guidance to participants on submitting media files.

Summary Research Strategy

Research Questions	
What is the nature and scope of youth arts provision throughout the country?	• Arts-mapping • Interviews • Survey of ETBYOs
What type of artforms are most prevalent in the provision of youth arts in Ireland?	• Arts-mapping
Where are the gaps in provision currently?	• Arts-mapping • Interviews • Survey of ETBYOs
What is the demographic profile of the young people accessing youth arts services?	• Quantitative data generated as part of the arts-mapping exercise
What challenges, if any, do youth workers, youth arts practitioners and relevant youth-focused organisations currently encounter in their work with young people?	• Interviews • Survey of ETBYOs
How can these challenges be addressed in public policy?	• Literature and policy review • Analysis of qualitative interview and survey data

SECTION 3

Literature and Policy Review

Introduction

This research explores youth arts provision within youth work settings. NYCI states in its 2009 Position Paper, youth arts provision can embrace contributions 'from many points across the youth and arts sector' (2009b: 4). Therefore, while the key focus of this discussion is on youth arts provision in youth work contexts, it is informed by literature and policy from wider contexts and is relevant to various stakeholders. Young people are the key focus of youth arts provision, but alongside them, youth arts provision typically involves professional artists and arts practitioners as well as youth workers who facilitate artistic and creative work with and for young people. Their work, in turn, both shapes and is shaped by the interests of stakeholders who are positioned within a wide spectrum of organisations, including the NYCI (as a social partner representing the youth work sector), the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA), the Arts Council, local government, Education and Training Boards (ETBs), city and county Arts Offices, national and local youth organisations, national and local arts organisations and institutions, the Department of Education and Skills (DES), the Department of Justice and Equality (DJE), and the Health Service Executive (HSE).

Notwithstanding some notable contributions, many of which are cited in this report, there is a paucity of academic literature in the Irish context on youth work policy. With respect to youth arts provision in youth work settings, the field of literature is even more limited, both in Ireland and internationally. This chapter aims to bring together some of that literature and to highlight key themes that are relevant to a study on the nature and scope of youth arts provision in youth work settings in Ireland. The review comprises three subsections, namely:

1. Establishing the policy context of youth arts provision in youth work settings in Ireland;
2. Understanding the broader youth work policy landscape; and
3. Key issues for examining youth arts provision in youth work settings.

Establishing the policy context of youth arts provision in youth work settings in Ireland

Within a national policy context in Ireland, the NYCI (2009b: 4) states that youth arts:

> ***can be broadly defined as young people taking part voluntarily in creative, cultural or expressive activity outside of the formal education process. It can encompass participation and appreciation, as well as engagement with arts work specifically created by, with or for young people.***

This broad understanding of youth arts positions young people as both recipients or consumers of arts and cultural activities *and* as artists or creative producers in their own right.

With respect to youth arts provision in youth work settings, the Youth Work Act, 2001 provides a statutory framework for youth work provision in Ireland. This Act defines youth work as:

> ***a planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young persons through their voluntary participation, and which is – a) complementary to their formal, academic or vocational education and training; and b) provided primarily by voluntary youth work organisations. (Government of Ireland, 2001)***

Youth arts practice in youth work settings is informed by a broader policy context, which includes several key international and national policy frameworks and strategies.

Internationally, Article 31 of the 1989 *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC), which was ratified in Ireland in 1992, articulates children's access to play, including cultural and artistic activities, as a fundamental human right:

> ***Parties recognise the rights of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts: parties shall respect and promote the rights of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.***

Furthermore, Article 27 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* states that:

> ***everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.***

At a European level, the *European Youth Strategy 2019-2027* recognises that 'providing pathways of engagement for young people in democratic life is vital for a functioning democracy and for society at large' (https://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/youth-strategy_en). There are three core areas of action under the headings of 'Engage', 'Connect' and 'Empower'. Under the 'Engage' heading, the strategy identifies supporting young people's cultural participation as an explicit aim, alongside their civic, economic, social, and political participation. The 'Connect' heading specifically mentions its intention to support the young people to develop their 'critical thinking and Creativity' and to achieve this by supporting young people to experience 'exchanges, cooperation, cultural and civic action in Europe and that these opportunities need to be accessible for all young people'. Finally, the 'Empower' heading recognises youth work as a 'catalyst for empowerment' of young people and acknowledges youth work for bringing 'unique benefits to young people in their transition to adulthood by providing a safe environment for them to gain self-confidence and learn in a non-formal way' (Léargas, 2019). The potential of youth arts in contributing to this action is significant and the Erasmus+ Youth in Action and European Solidarity Corps programmes are particularly valuable for youth organisations seeking funding.

Since the mid-1990s in Ireland, we have witnessed increasing focus on policymaking for children and young people, including engagement in the arts as a specific field of work. Recently, the national policy for children and young people, Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2014a) recognised the arts as an important contributor to young people's wellbeing and states that the government commits to enabling greater access to arts and culture for all children and young people (58). The National Youth Strategy 2015 – 2020 (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2015a) and Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2015b) were both produced as key policy strategy documents arising from Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures. More recently, the new targeted youth funding programme, UBU Your Place Your Space (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2019), identifies 'creativity and imagination' as one of seven key personal and social development anticipated outcomes of youth work projects funded under the scheme, stating that creativity and imagination are 'related to resilience and wellbeing. Creativity can have a positive impact on both self-esteem and overall achievement'. [3]

The promotion of child and youth participation based on a rights paradigm is increasingly emphasised in child and youth-centred policy in Ireland. Important rights with respect to youth arts provision includes the right to access the arts, the right to be heard, and the right to participation. The implications for youth arts provision, specifically, is that participatory and collaborative methods of engagement with young people in cultural and artistic activities are encouraged and celebrated, with the central aim of promoting children and young people's voices. Saying that, consulting meaningfully with young people about issues that impact their lives and developing ways of working with young people that strongly emphasise their active participation have long been central tenets of youth work professional practice. Thus, youth workers have much to contribute in shaping more democratic spaces for working with young people using arts-based methods.

National attention to the impact of the arts for children and young people does indicate bias towards recognition of the arts in formal education contexts. For example, the *Arts in Education Charter* (2013) was important as a joint, collaborative policy initiative of the then Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DAHG) and the Department of Education and Skills, which acknowledges in its preface that 'arts provision for children and young people school in and out of school is a challenge in our cultural landscape'. Significantly, it states that:

> ***Policy-makers and education providers, nationally and locally, should understand the wide range of practice encompassed within the generic term 'education' and ensure that investment in arts-in-education practice is not achieved at the expense of growing other complementary arts and education practices in formal, non-formal and informal settings. (2013: 6)***

However, the key priorities it identifies are very clearly oriented towards the formal education sector, from early years to senior cycle, with very little mention of non-formal or informal settings and no explicit mention of 'youth work'. This resonates with the UK experience. One research study on English arts policy and young people from 1944 - 2014 describes the common approach of seeking to expand arts and cultural participation through '[b]uilding arts into the school curriculum' as 'the default policy lever since the mid-1960s'. It criticises policy for constantly failing to pay due attention to 'the key influence of family and social factors in shaping later behaviour and attitudes towards the arts' and recommends that policymakers should do more to support arts provision in out-of-school contexts (Culture at King's, 2015: 5).

Expanding opportunities for engagement in youth arts is also included as an objective within the Irish Arts Council Strategy, *Making Great Art Work* (2016-2025). Under the theme of public engagement and the goal that 'more people will enjoy high-quality arts experiences (2016: 24), the Arts Council commits to 'plan and provide for children and young people' (Objective 8). It identifies several key actions necessary for realising this objective, including: investment in 'artists, arts organisations and key programmes dedicated to developing high quality work in arts-in-education and youth arts' and 'support[ing] the provision of excellent arts experiences for young people in the public domain'; prioritising child and youth arts provision in partnership with local government, and; mainstreaming a commitment to young people in decision-making processes and funding agreements (where appropriate) (2015: 26).

The most recent governmental policy development relating to the arts, *Creative Ireland Programme/Clár Éire Ildánach 2017-2022*, identifies 'Enabling the Creative Potential of Every Child' as one of its five key pillars (2016: 22-23). Recognising the many positive benefits of engagement in arts, culture and creativity for children and young people, the strategy states ambitiously that 'A key objective of Pillar I is that by 2022 every child in Ireland will have access to tuition and participation in art, music, drama and coding' (23). The Creative Youth Plan, published in December 2017, provides a framework for realising that ambition through promoting 'creativity' in formal and non-formal or out of school settings through collaboration with a range of partners. It envisages that this goal can be achieved through 'strategic alliances and partnerships between the formal and non-formal sectors' (11). The plan notes the distinctive contribution of youth work where it states that, beyond the formal school system, '[t]here is also a multitude of organisations in the non-formal system that reaches tens of thousands of children and young people with programmes of outstanding quality' (2017: 25). It further comments that '[these organisations] play an indispensable role in the overall ecosystem of the arts and creativity in education and learning' (ibid: 40). With respect to non-formal settings including youth work, the establishment of three new Local Creative Youth Partnerships in late 2018 as a pilot initiative in association with the Education and Training Boards is particularly noteworthy. Also, a new National Creativity Fund provides resources for child and youth projects that focus on the promotion of inclusivity, accessibility and mental health and wellbeing. In late 2019, Creative Ireland identified 'targeted youth services, working

[3] UBU Your Place, Your Space is designed in line with the recommendations of the Value for Money and Policy Review of Youth Programmes (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2014b) report and is a reform of previous targeted funding schemes. The scheme specifically targets young people aged 10-24 'who are experiencing marginalisation or are disadvantaged or vulnerable' with a mission 'to provide out-of-school supports to young people in their local communities to enable them to overcome adverse circumstances and achieve their full potential by improving their personal and social development outcomes' (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2019: 22-23).

in disadvantaged communities' as key to supporting ('harder to reach') children and young people 'to engage with arts and creative experiences outside of school'. In this commitment, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, the Education and Training Boards, and the National Youth Arts Programme are identified as the key collaborators (2019: 20).

It should be noted that there are some issues with how the term 'creativity' is being used in youth and arts policy and how the concepts of creativity and the arts are increasingly conflated. Kenny (2017: 254) for example, points out that the arts are often superseded within creativity policies by (economic) fields that are perceived to be more 'profitable', such as science, engineering and information technology. With reference to the *Arts in Education Charter*, she states that '[t]he explicit mention of coding, as well as the very narrow focus on certain art forms (where is dance, literature and film for example?), is somewhat worrying'. Rush (2019: 14) also critiques the *Creative Ireland* plan for 'leav[ing] the link between "creativity" and arts and culture unclear'. Furthermore, she argues, connecting 'creativity' to other contested terms – such as 'value', 'culture', and 'well-being' – gives a lack of clarity to the policy and leaves us with 'a series of tricky buzzwords, loosely connected, that sound good but ultimately say little about what creativity is or what it does' (ibid).

Moreover, and in tune with Kenny's observations, Rush (2019: 14) criticises how quickly the link between 'creativity' and the economy is mentioned and celebrated, where *Creative Ireland* states that: '[h]uman creativity is often described as the ultimate economic resource, essential to the prosperity of any business, city, community or country… Culture and creativity are essential features of an innovative, post-industrial economy'. As she rightfully cautions, there are obvious tensions in celebrating the economic potential of 'creativity' when employment in the creative sector is often characterised by underpaid and precarious conditions.

Understanding the broader youth work policy landscape

Davies (2010) describes policy analysis as 'a first and vital skill of practice'. An examination of the broader youth work policy landscape helps us to understand how young people are conceptualised in policy discourse, which has important implications for how youth work policy is designed and implemented and for how policy makers produce and act on understandings about young people's needs and abilities. Policy analysis helps us to unravel how different kinds of programmatic interventions come to be seen as desirable, appropriate and worthy of state funding. As Davies (2010: 7) explains, youth work policy:

> ***lays out boundaries within which practice 'on the ground' will – perhaps must – operate. These may be drawn broadly or narrowly, loosely or tightly. They may allow practitioners more or less room for manoeuvre. This space may expand or narrow according to whether the economy is doing well or badly; whether people generally, or influential groups, feel secure or threatened; whether young people are more respected than feared.***

This section presents a critical overview of youth work policy development in the Irish context, highlighting some key features and discursive trends that are important in youth work provision generally, and youth arts provision in youth work settings more specifically. This section outlines important historical and contemporary characteristics of youth work. The section below considers the implications of some of the issues raised for youth arts provision.

Various youth work policy developments from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s served to enhance the recognition of youth work as a profession in Ireland and signalled a 'golden era' for the sector (McMahon, 2018: 18). However, in the aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis, the government's programme of austerity decimated the youth work sector which suffered swingeing cuts of 31% from 2008 to 2013 (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2014b cited in ibid: 19). From 2008 onwards, youth work organisations experienced increasing demand for services at a time when their resources, both financial and human, were most stressed. As Melaugh (2015: 104-5) concludes:

> ***In many ways, there is a paradox at the heart of Irish youth work. On the one hand, it enjoys a legal definition, institutional recognition and an ambitious policy agenda. While on the other hand, the cuts in funding are disproportionate and militate against the ability of youth work practitioners to offer high quality youth work.***

Voluntary youth organisations (i.e. not-for-profit youth services) are heavily reliant on state funding, the main sources of which are the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, the Department of Justice and Equality, and the HSE (Indecon, 2012). Funding is distributed through various mechanisms which have different eligibility criteria and evaluation reporting methods (See McMahon, 2018: 167-168).

Several academics have observed a 'bifurcation' in youth work practice that divides provision into either 'targeted' or 'universal' services (Powell et al 2012; McMahon 2018; Kiely and Meade, 2018). Universal (alternatively, 'open', 'open access' or 'mainstream') services used to be central to youth work practice but are now comparatively less well funded. They are often delivered by volunteer organisations, which are associations in civil society that rely almost exclusively on volunteers, and more likely to offer more open-ended, generic activities (Powell et al, 2012: 121; Kiely and Meade, 2018: 17). Powell et al (2010: 22) include youth clubs, uniformed groups, youth cafés and youth information centres under the broad umbrella of mainstream provision. By contrast, targeted services usually prioritise the needs of 'disadvantaged' young people. They are typically delivered by voluntary agencies, which have their roots in civil society but have become increasingly professionalised in recent years and are typically staffed by professionally qualified youth workers, with some volunteer support (e.g. Youth Work Ireland and Foróige). These targeted services have been allocated increasing amounts of funding in the recent past; as Powell et al put it, voluntary agencies attract 'the lion's share of funding, even piecemeal as it tends to be' (ibid). Examples of targeted youth provision offered by Powell et al (2010: 22) include disadvantaged youth projects, Youthreach centres, Youth Diversion projects and Young People's Facilities and Services fund projects. Alongside ideologically-informed arguments around the effectiveness of targeted programmes, oftentimes the rationale for their expansion is more pragmatically framed by economic imperatives; as Wood and Hine (2009: 8) put it, '[i]n any welfare system, resources are prone to economic rationalisation, and targeting offers a politically attractive option for addressing the most pressing social problems'.

Kiely and Meade (2018: 18) argue that bifurcation in youth work has facilitated youth work's commodification by policy makers and that, having yet to recover from austerity cuts, 'the integrity of youth work as youth work is at risk of being eroded still further by policy makers' growing fetish for evidence-based practice, value for money approaches, and the delivery of prescribed outcomes'. This preoccupation with accountability, results, and demonstrating value for money in public and welfare spending was in evidence pre-austerity but gathered pace post-austerity. With respect to assessing the impact of youth work interventions, youth work has been increasingly problematised as a practice or field that is 'elusive' or 'uncertain' and therefore difficult to measure and quantify (McMahon 2018: 60-61). In the past decade, various policy documents have directed youth work practitioners towards a more evidenced-based approach which requires them to both prove and improve youth work's efficacy and cost-effectiveness. These policy documents include: the *National Quality Standards Framework for Youth Work* (NQSF)(2011); *Youth Work: A Systematic Map of the Research Literature* (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2013); and *The Value for Money and Policy Review of Youth Programmes* (VFMPR) (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2014b). The discursive shift towards evidence and outcomes in youth work is further illustrated in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Future*s (2014) and in the *National Youth Strategy 2015-2020* and more recently in the new targeted youth programme, *UBU Your Place Your Space*.

[4] Powell et al (2012: 121) also distinguish between 'voluntary agencies' and 'volunteer organisations' in explaining 'bifurcated youth work'.

Given the relatively low levels of investment in youth work, the increasing demand that is made on youth organisations to prove their worth is somewhat curious. This is explained by John Bamber from the Centre for Effective Services (an influential think tank for Government), who argued that 'it is precisely because youth work attracts so little financial support relative to other spending areas, such as education, health and welfare, that the impacts of resources must be maximized' (2013: 13 cited in Kiely and Meade, 2018: 33). As Kiely and Meade observe:

> ***In Ireland's climate of evidence gathering and performance monitoring, it appears that those who are comparatively disadvantaged in terms of resources must both do more and demonstrate more if they are to be entrusted with future public subsidy. (ibid)***

Commenting on the UK context, de St Croix argues that:

> ***the fragility of youth work gives particular power to subtler regimes of governance such as those imposed by contracts and funding agreements. This means that the dominance of pre-defined outcomes and numerical data could threaten the legitimacy – and even the long-term survival – of an entire field of practice. (2018: 416)***

Since voluntary youth work agencies are heavily reliant on state funding, they are more immediately impacted by political change and shifting agendas; as Powell et al (2012: 121) put it, they are also 'all too often subject to the whim of moral panics'. Voluntary youth agencies provide the majority of targeted youth services, which are designed specifically to meet the needs of young people who are received as being 'risky' or 'at risk' or 'harder to reach'. These policy labels for young people are highly contested and criticised for problematising young people themselves rather than the broader structural conditions that cause young people's marginalisation and discrimination. Wright (2020: 37), for example, explains that seminal youth discourses have looked at young people through a 'deficit lens', which produces an image of young people 'as inherently distinct from and inferior to adults and as problems to be fixed and administered'.
As she puts it:

> ***[s]uch individualizing discourses locate the problem within individual youth or their families or cultures while obscuring inequitable structural relations and disinvestments in social supports and institutions, particularly in working-class communities and communities of color. (ibid)***

Powell et al (2012: 121) acknowledge that targeted youth work interventions are often hugely beneficial to young people despite being designed through a deficit lens. However, as they further argue, their framing in such a manner 'leaves voluntary agency youth work with precious little room to manoeuvre outside of the "deficit model" of intervention in young people's lives' (ibid). This tension is interwoven with the politics of evidencing outcomes in youth work. The imperative to demonstrate achievement and meeting of targets is based on an assumption that there can be consensus on what youth work ought to achieve. It suggests that imposing normative judgements on what should be expected as an outcome of youth work is a value-free exercise, when it is in fact is a highly contested political and ideological debate. As Kiely and Meade (2018) articulate, 'the desire to designate what works privileges a technocratic view of practice that belies its cultural, relational, contested, and political potential'.

This discussion is productive for (1) identifying key sites of contemporary youth work practice where youth arts provision is likely to be located and (2) highlighting key tensions and dilemmas in youth work policy and practice which impact on the nature and scope of youth arts provision in youth work settings. In the next section, we consider how these various trends and tensions in policy discourse might shape and influence the nature and scope of youth arts provision in youth work settings.

Key issues for examining youth arts provision in youth work settings

Youth arts provision is inevitably shaped by underpinning ideological assumptions within youth policy. This section explores some contemporary tensions and paradoxes in youth policy and their implications for youth arts provision. The first section briefly outlines some of the challenges of mapping youth arts provision in youth work settings. The second section explores the relationship between class and cultural participation, and examines how youth policy might contribute to class-based differences in young people's opportunities for engagement in the arts. The third section considers tensions between targeted and universal youth provision and their implications for youth arts practice. The fourth section questions how outcomes of youth arts provision in youth work settings are evaluated and asks about how this might be more radically imagined. The fifth and final section reflects on opportunities for and barriers to greater collaboration between the youth and arts sectors.

Mapping youth arts provision in youth work settings

Within youth work, the arts are clearly identified as an important medium and a commonly used tool for engaging with young people. However, the documentation of arts projects that take place in youth work settings is inconsistent, as has been observed in previous research (Durrer 2011). This is in part an outcome of the aforementioned state-level bias towards arts provision in formal education. For example, the establishment of the Arts in Education Portal (http://artsineducation.ie), which was first mooted in the *Arts in Education charter*, offers a dynamic online platform for showcasing and archiving arts-in-education projects and relevant research. However, it does not include examples from informal/non-formal learning spaces, nor does it invite submissions from these sectors, despite a nod to their significance in the charter document itself. These kinds of exclusive practices reinforce the idea that informal learning is less than more formal learning, and by extension that youth work practice is less than other forms of educational and social work.

Young people's cultural participation and class distinctions

Smyth's (2016) analysis of the *Growing Up in Ireland* study is valuable for evidencing the extent of children and young people's cultural participation as well as the class basis of their participation. She observes that middle-class, highly-educated and higher income adults are more likely to engage in 'structured cultural activities' (such as going to the theatre, visiting an art gallery or attending a classical concert). In turn, parents tend to socialise their children by developing cultural tastes and introducing them to cultural activities that promote their social and academic development. Smyth also acknowledges that because most structured cultural activities for children and young people require payment, 'low income therefore emerges as a barrier to participation, over and above other social background factors such as parental education and social class' (2016: 100). Recent research commissioned by Arts Council England also found evidence of a 'class gap within the arts' and argued that more affordable pathways for engagement in the arts must be developed, alongside initiatives to educate parents and carers about these affordable opportunities and the benefits of arts engagement (ART31 Kent, 2018: 27).

Based on an analysis of Australian youth policy, de Roeper and Savelsberg (2009: 211) examine how policy intervention might support dual pathways, which imply different (and oftentimes classed) expectations of young people. They contend that different assumptions about youth effect divergent youth policies. One set of policy responses is designed for young people who are envisaged as 'future leaders', and for whom policy emphasises values of leadership and creativity. The other set of policy responses is for young people who are 'at risk', and for whom policy is remedial or punitive. This polarisation produces a forked route in youth provision – with 'high functioning' young people being directed towards arts and cultural programmes and 'risky' young people being encouraged (or pushed) into remedial, welfare and juvenile justice programmes. Marginalised young people therefore have their (perceived) basic needs met, while 'high functioning' young people gain access to richer cultural opportunities. The consequence of this class-based social reproduction is that young people who have little experience of 'high arts' 'often feel "culturally incompetent" when confronted with these art forms (ibid: 212). Interestingly, an Arts Council England Youth Consultation report (2017) identified 'stress, nerves or social anxiety' as key barriers to participation in the arts (Sound Connections, 2017). This was reiterated in research on young people's engagement in the arts by ART31 Kent (2018), which highlighted young people's reported feelings of anxiety, embarrassment and shyness as major obstacles to participation in arts programmes (2018: 26). These feelings are not limited to marginalised young people, but are nonetheless more likely in situations where opportunities for participation in the arts are out of reach due to social, cultural, economic or geographic factors.

Universal and targeted youth provision: Where does youth arts fit?

The bifurcation in youth work practice into universal and targeted forms of provision has interesting implications for youth arts. Given that more disadvantaged communities often have the least resources to provide quality opportunities for arts engagement for young people, targeted youth service provision has significant potential for expanding engagement in the arts that might otherwise be denied to young people on the basis of income or geography. Excellent youth arts practice is already happening in sites of targeted youth work provision. Furthermore, the new *UBU Your Place, Your Space* scheme

is an important development, the promise of which is to be seen in coming months and years. Targeted provision has potential for challenging feelings of cultural incompetency, anxiety, embarrassment and shyness reported by youth participants with little prior experience of engagement in the arts. Targeted youth arts provision also has the potential to tackle class-based inequalities in young people's social, cultural, and political participation in various ways, including: empowering marginalised young people to challenge dominant, pathologising discourses that produce them as inferior, problematic, or troublesome; using a strengths-based approach to foster young people's sense of autonomy; supporting young people as change agents in their local communities and beyond, and; building young people's capacity for working together to promote social justice. However, it must be acknowledged that achieving this kind of transformational change with young people demands considerable expertise, time, space, and resources (See de Roeper and Savelsberg, 2009; Wright, 2020).

Furthermore, Powell et al argue that targeted youth services undermine the principle and practice of inclusivity in youth work practice by segregating young people into specialist projects. As they put it:

> ***The work of these projects appears to be based on a paradox: while claiming to integrate marginalised young people into mainstream society they run the risk of 'ghettoising' them. Moreover, as the number of targeted interventions increases in response to government imperatives and funding there were concerns that the youth work sector as a whole may be stigmatised. (2012: 146-147)***

As Keogh notes in her report on the value of participation in youth arts, *Young People, Creative Action and Social Change* (NYCI, 2009a: 23), youth arts may be already considered a kind of targeted youth service. She points out that targeted provision has enabled the development of excellent models of practice and employment opportunities for artists working in disadvantaged communities. However, because of the predominance of youth arts provision in marginalised areas, she argues that 'in some respects, this has perpetuated the view that youth arts is the domain of youth work with disadvantaged young people, as opposed to being considered of intrinsic value to all young people'. The rolling back of universal youth services can be therefore considered problematic for reiterating the association between youth arts and disadvantage and for reinforcing class-based distinctions between young people accessing 'the arts' and 'youth arts'. Drawing on Jeffs (2011), Sim (2017: 15) observes that:

> ***the privately educated understand the value of informal, extra-curricular youth provision to the extent that they will actively pay for it. Ironically, the ruling political class (many of whom are privately educated) will have benefitted from hundreds of hours of 'youth work' and informal education through different schemes, residentials, music tuition and performing arts groups, meanwhile state-subsidised youth provision for less advantaged young people has to be constantly justified.***

Ideally, targeted forms of youth work and youth arts provision should be complemented by universal forms of provision. Powell et al (2012: 146), for example, highlight the significant value of mainstream youth work for bringing together young people with diverse experiences based on various categories of difference, including socio-economic status, ethnicity, gender and sexuality, who might not ordinarily have the opportunity to meet socially.

Evaluating outcomes of youth arts provision in youth work settings

Arts and cultural participation impact positively on young people's wellbeing in multidimensional ways. The benefits of arts participation can be expressed as 'instrumental' or 'intrinsic'. Instrumental approaches articulate benefits in terms of social, economic and health-related outcomes, including positive therapeutic and behavioural impacts, personal and social development, educational and academic advantages, diversion from anti-social or criminal activities, and community cohesion. 'Intrinsic' benefits of participation include developing artistic skills, the joy of making, the pleasures of experiencing art, and the sense of empowerment that lies in the act of creating (See NYCI, 2009a). As Sim (2015: 339) describes it, youth arts are burdened with a 'weighty set of expectations'. It should be noted that instrumentalist claims about the value of the arts with reference to non-arts related outcomes are contentious. For example, Kenny (2017: 256) identifies this as a significant tension for the new *Creative Ireland* programme, where she comments that 'there is a danger [...] that the arts may be vulnerable to "policy attachment", seen for their instrumental and economic value as opposed to their inherent worth'. Hickey-Moody (2013: 1) also problematises how arts are used as a tool for 'governing' or 'helping' young people, asserting that:

> ***The arts are not technologies for social control; they are methods through which young people become themselves and can express opinion and critique through style. They create new scapes and senses: new ways of knowing and being. Both in and out of school, arts can be used as everyday ways of belonging to a community. Public art projects can confront and change community sentiment about particular demographics of young people.***

This tensions between perceived intrinsic versus instrumentalist outcomes of engagement in the arts are interesting to explore in the context of contemporary youth work policy and practice. Given the trend towards outcomes-based interventions in Ireland, the demand on youth workers to evidence the impact of their practice means that participation in youth arts in youth work settings is increasingly instrumentalised. Engagement in youth arts, then, becomes a tool for addressing 'problems', 'child-saving' and 'youth control' (Davies, 2019), and as a method of meeting pedagogical expectations (See Sim, 2017). In the Irish context, the positioning of youth work practice as primarily concerned with education and young people's personal and social development, coupled with the gradual tempering of the voluntary principle (Devlin, 2017) indicates that the perceived value of youth arts is, or is becoming, inescapably instrumentalist [67].

There is merit, of course, in evaluating the impact of participation in youth arts. As the NYCI puts it, '[m]agical things happen in a good youth arts project' (2018: 2) and it is important that these are documented. From a more technocratic perspective, evaluation allows youth workers and youth arts practitioners to describe the value of their work to funders and managers and to map these against national policy goals (The NYCI's *Capturing Magic* resources [NYCI 2018a; NYCI 2018b] are particularly valuable tools in this respect). Evaluation can allow for good advocacy work, that supports young people's participation and their right to be heard.

However, we need to be wary of engaging in evaluation practices that support rather than confront managerialist and reductionist approaches to knowing the value of youth work and youth arts provision. The politics of evaluating how youth work and youth arts provision are measured and assessed must be acknowledged as ideologically complex and value-laden. Cooper (2017: 4-5), for example, highlights the complexities of defining outcomes in youth work, which is a relational practice that is holistic and emergent, uncertain and unpredictable. As she puts it:

> ***There is no established universal starting point from which to establish 'distance travelled', no universal finish line to identify outcomes achieved. Youth work responds to situations that are present in the everyday lives of young people in different contexts. It works in partnership with young people and this cooperative methodology means that outcomes are difficult to predict and difficult to measure.***

[5] Powell et al (2012: 121) also distinguish between 'voluntary agencies' and 'volunteer organisations' in explaining 'bifurcated youth work'.

[6] The 'voluntary principle' refers one of the core and most definitive principles of youth work practice, namely, that young people are engaging voluntarily with youth services. When young people are engaged voluntarily, then this facilitates the development of meaningful relationships between the youth worker and the young person, that are based on trust and mutual respect and developed over time (Mason, 2015). However, targeted youth services that are more oriented towards social control – such as youth justice project, diversion projects, etc. – may find that their youth members are compelled to participate by court orders or referrals, which erodes this voluntary principle.

[7] This typical character or shape of youth work in Ireland, amongst other European contexts, is in stark contrast to how youth work is imagined in Flanders, for example. Redig and Coussée (2017: 27) describe Flemish youth work as a 'free zone for youth to be young together', with its principle goal being to give 'young people chances to be young together, to construct their own projects, to have fun. An emphasis on playing and being cheerful gives youth work a dual identity: useful playfulness and playful utility' (30). While this might be perceived in instrumentalist terms, the authors explain that the concepts of informal and non-formal education are not present because of their association with the formal school system; rather youth work is a (youth-led) 'cultural, leisure activity.'. This model seems to give space for the intrinsic value of engagement in arts practice to be celebrated. However, the authors do concede that its character is overwhelmingly middle-class and tends to exclude socio-economic, ethnic or cultural diversity.

[8] Sinéad McMahon's (2018) critique of outcomes-oriented youth work policy and the impact of 'reform' on youth work practice in Ireland is particularly noteworthy.

Research by practitioners potentially enables the reclamation of 'subjugated knowledges' – that is 'historical knowledges that are "disqualified" by practices of power and governing', such as practitioner knowledges – which helps to articulate resistance to technocratic knowledges (McMahon, 2018: 31 citing Bacchi, 2009). Alternative ways of exploring, articulating, and producing youth work's value include storytelling and narrative approaches (Connaughton et al, 2019; In Defence of Youth Work, 2014; Kiely and Meade, 2018; McMahon, 2018; Whelan and Ryan, 2016) and more creative, collaborative, and participatory research approaches (Wright 2020). Given the creativity inherent to youth work and youth arts practice, youth workers and youth arts practitioners have extraordinary potential for reconfiguring youth work and youth arts policy and practice through their involvement in more radical research activities.

Collaboration between the youth sector and the arts sector

Interestingly, in one of the few existing studies on collaboration between art institutions and the youth sector, Sim (2019) observes that how programmes are designed, and how their intended outcomes are imagined and planned, are marked by class-based divisions. As she succinctly describes it, programmes seemed to promote 'aesthetic values for the middle classes, instrumental outcomes for the poor and disadvantaged' (Sim, 2019: 55). The influence of the deficit model in youth work policy is clear. Sim also found that '[s]ome arts education practitioners were particularly wary of the paternalistic language deployed in engagement work with targeted groups of young people, and the potentially stigmatising effects of imposing policy labels such as "hard to reach" or "at risk", which seemed to ignore the cultural agency of young people and reinforce their marginalisation' (ibid). Furthermore, Sim (2019: 89) cites UK-based arts practitioners who criticise the use of arts-based activity as a tactic to divert young people from risky or challenging behaviours for 'neutralis[ing] the disruptive, rebellious potential' of young people's arts practices. Sim (2019: 54-55) notes that critics of instrumentalist approaches argued that 'ambitions to deliver social change through the arts were not only highly questionable, but they also had the potential to compromise and supersede artistic ambitions, and therefore result in poor practice – both social and creative'. Therefore, in exploring opportunities for collaboration and partnership between the youth work sector and the arts sector, policymakers and practitioners need to be sensitive to politics of practice, to be cognisant of different value systems, and to recognise tensions in the agendas of the respective fields of practice.

In the UK context, Sim (2017: 55) observed evidence of this in her analysis of collaborative practices between the professional fields of 'the arts' and youth work. In her research with the Tate Gallery in London, she found that 'the visual arts community was frequently positioned as a site of privilege, and the youth sector as a site of disadvantage'. Howard et al (2019: 271) also note that ' differences in cultural capital are regularly illuminated in [...] encounters between the visual arts sector (typically understood to be the domain of middle-class values) and the youth sector (increasingly populated by adults and young people who identify as working class)'. This stigmatisation of youth arts can also impact on how people perceive the field as a site of practice and career opportunity. With respect to the status of youth arts, Keogh argues that this is not always appreciated as a distinctive field with its own set of practices; rather it may be seen as a space for failed artists or as an entry point into 'real' arts worlds (NYCI, 2009a: 23). Commitments by the Arts Council to invest in youth arts, its partnership with NYCI and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in the *National Youth Arts Programme*, and initiatives such as the *Artist and Youth Work Residency Grant* scheme are hugely important for changing attitudes about the status and professional basis of youth arts.

Conclusion

In summary, the research literature indicates that the youth work sector has extraordinary potential for realising the ambition that every young person in Ireland has access to the arts, which is a key objective of various policies and recognised as a fundamental human right. However, the youth work sector's capacity to offer opportunities for engagement in youth arts – through an inclusive practice that is cognisant of socio-economic, class, geographic, and other barriers – is inhibited by current policy imperatives and funding priorities and arrangements. How youth work practice is being (re)constructed in Ireland, particularly through the post-austerity reform agenda, has implications for how free, inclusive, and creative youth work practice can be and can be imagined.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF YOUTH PARTICIPANTS

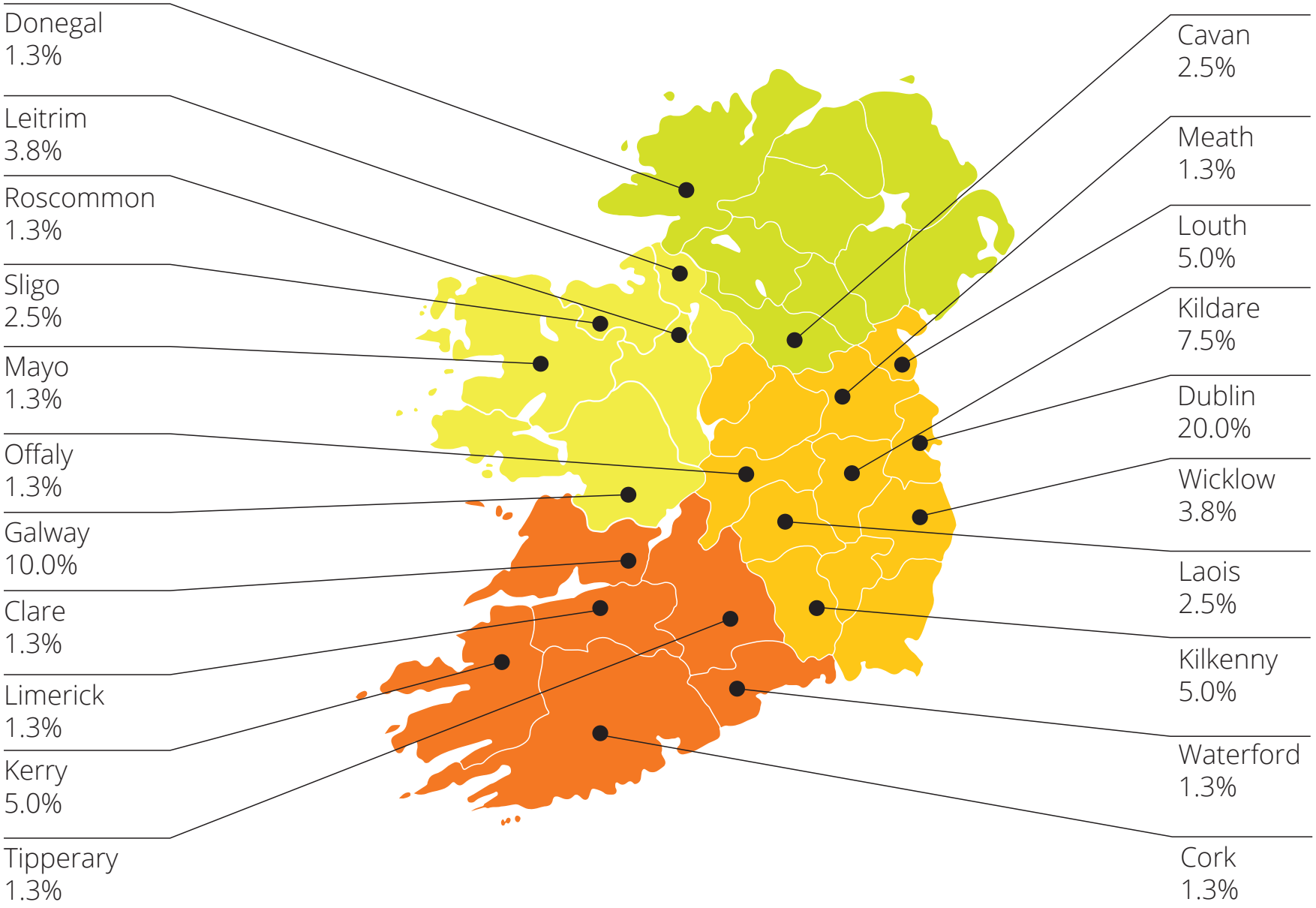
Demographic Profile of Youth Participants

Introduction

This section presents a demographic profile of youth participants in youth arts activities, based on quantitative data submitted by 81 youth organisations. Albeit a partial representation, it offers valuable insight into the location of participants and services, age range of participants, the gender identity of participants, and the frequency of young people's participation. This is based on young people's participation over a 12-month period. It also offers information on the prevalence of different artforms as measured by the number of projects engaged in over an 18-month period.

Geographic location

The map below shows the location of services as a proportion of all responses. As might be expected, many of the services that submitted data are based in the larger urban settings, but there is a good spread of representation across the country. Several counties are not represented in the quantitative data at all, including Carlow, Longford, Monaghan, Westmeath, and Wexford.


Donegal
1.3%
Leitrim
3.8%
Roscommon
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Sligo
2.5%
Mayo
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Offaly
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Galway
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Clare
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Limerick
1.3%
Kerry
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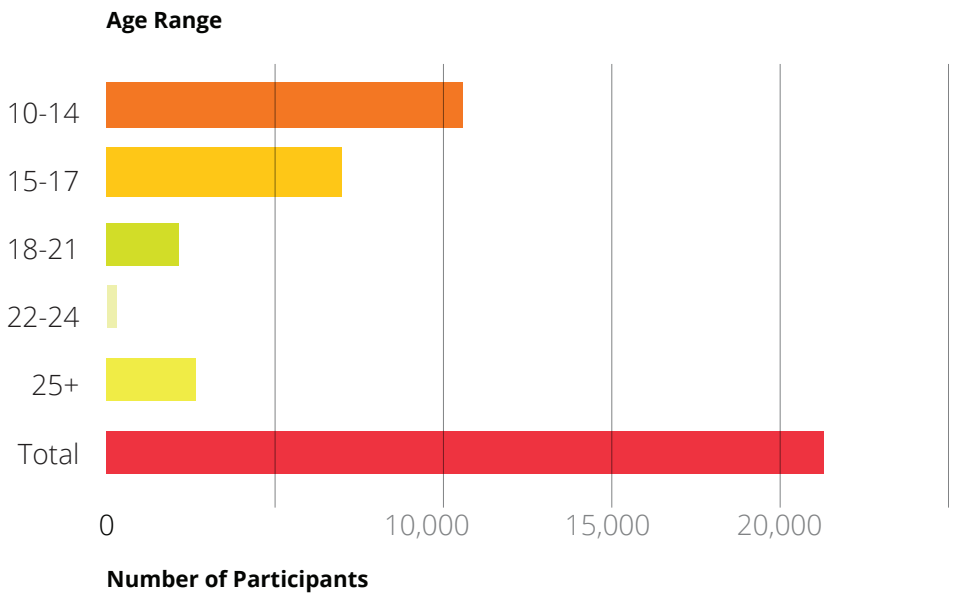
Tipperary
1.3%
Cavan
2.5%
Meath
1.3%
Louth
5.0%
Kildare
7.5%
Dublin
20.0%
Wicklow
3.8%
Laois
2.5%
Kilkenny
5.0%
Waterford
1.3%
Cork
1.3%

Age range

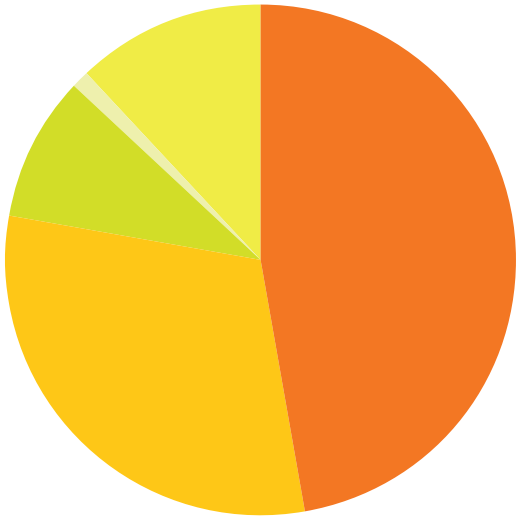
Data on the age range of participants shows that the majority of young people engaging in youth arts provision in youth work settings are under 18, with the largest number in the 10-14 age range. It should be noted that many organisations stated that they also work with under-10s. This was not included as an age range in the survey, however, because youth work official statistics are based on work with young people aged 10-21. At the other end of the scale, we did take note of participants over 21 years, to get a sense of how much people stay connected with youth arts projects and providers. The data evidence engagement in the over-21 age ranges. However, while it may seem that there are significant numbers of participants aged 25 and over, respondents commented that many of these are parents who are involved in the organisations in various capacities, rather than being participants in the same ways as the young people are.

Age Range	Number of Participants
10-14	10,620
15-17	6,914
18-21	2,049
22-24	224
25 and over	2,685
Total	22,492

Number of participants by age range



Number of participants by age as percentage



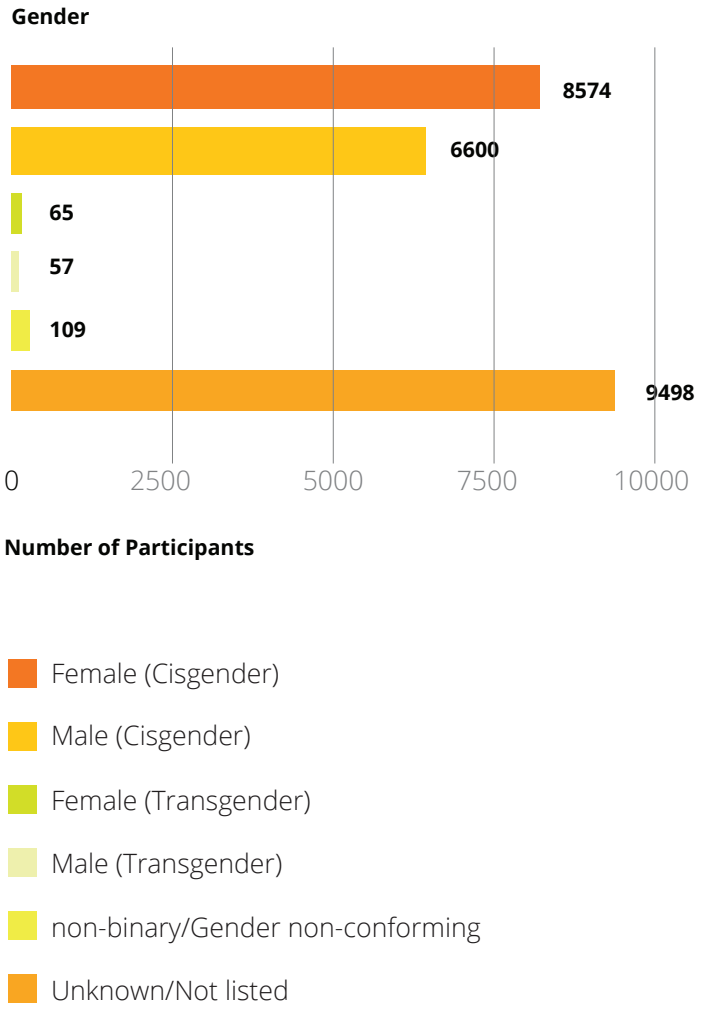
10 - 14	47.2%
15 - 17	30.7%
18 - 21	9.1%
22 - 24	1%
25 and over	11.9%

Gender identity

The gender identity profile of young participants as reported by organisations shows that female (cisgender) participation rates are higher than male (cisgender) rates. The number of female (transgender) and male (transgender) young participants and non-binary or gender non-conforming participants is notable, and may offer evidence the use of the arts as a tool for engagement as an aspect of targeted youth work provision with LGBTIQ* young people. [10] [11]

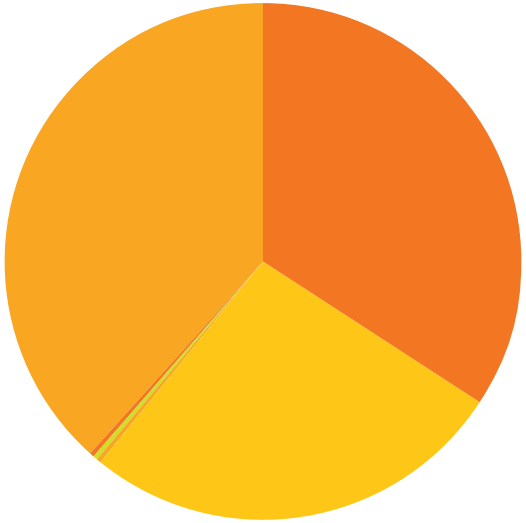
Gender	Number of Participants
Female (Cisgender)	8574
Male (Cisgender)	6600
Female (Transgender)	65
Male (Transgender)	57
Non-binary/Gender non-conforming	109
Unknown/Not listed	9498

Number of participants by gender



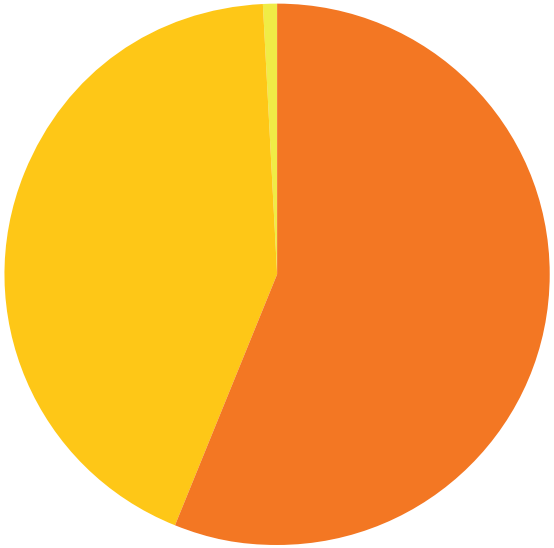
[10] LGBTIQ* is an acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/transsexual, intersex, and queer/questioning. The asterix denotes recognition of and inclusivity towards plural queer identities.
[11] The dataset also shows that many organisations do not count participation by gender, which presents a slightly distorted representation of gender breakdown. Therefore, we have also included a representation of the gender identity of young participants that excludes the category 'Unknown/Not listed'.

Number of participants by gender as a percentage



- Female (Cisgender) 34.4%
- Male (Cisgender) 26.5
- Female (Transgender) 0.3%
- Male (Transgender) 0.2%
- non-binary/Gender non-conforming 0.4%
- Unknown/Not listed 38.1%

Number of participants by gender excluding category 'Unknown' / 'Not Listed'



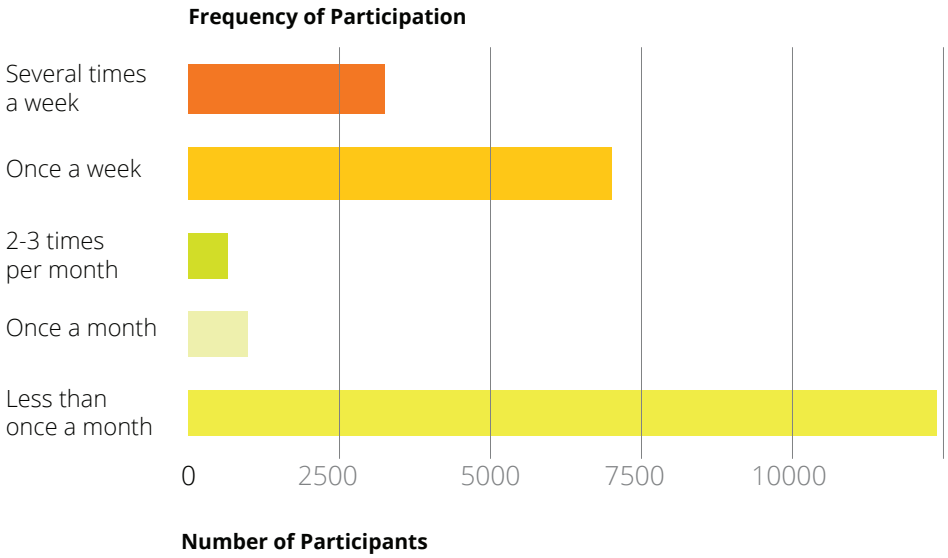
- Female (Cisgender) 55.7%
- Male (Cisgender) 42.8%
- Non-binary/Gender non-conforming 0.7%

Frequency of participation

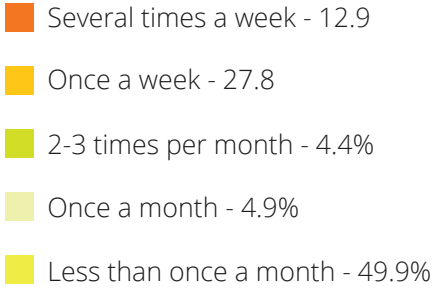
Responses on how frequently young people participate in youth arts activities show that the largest proportion participate less than once a month. Many respondents qualified their numbers by stating that projects were often once-off, hence the large numbers in this category. This is also evidenced in the interview data, in which interviewees reported that many funding schemes resource short-term projects. On the other hand, there are healthy levels of regular participation also; over 40% of participants are engaged in youth arts activities between once a week and several times a week.

Frequency of Participation	Number of Participants
Several times a week	3223
Once a week	6948
2-3 times per month	1102
Once a month	1235
Less than once a month	12454
Unknown/Not listed	9498

Frequency of participation



Frequency of participation as percentage



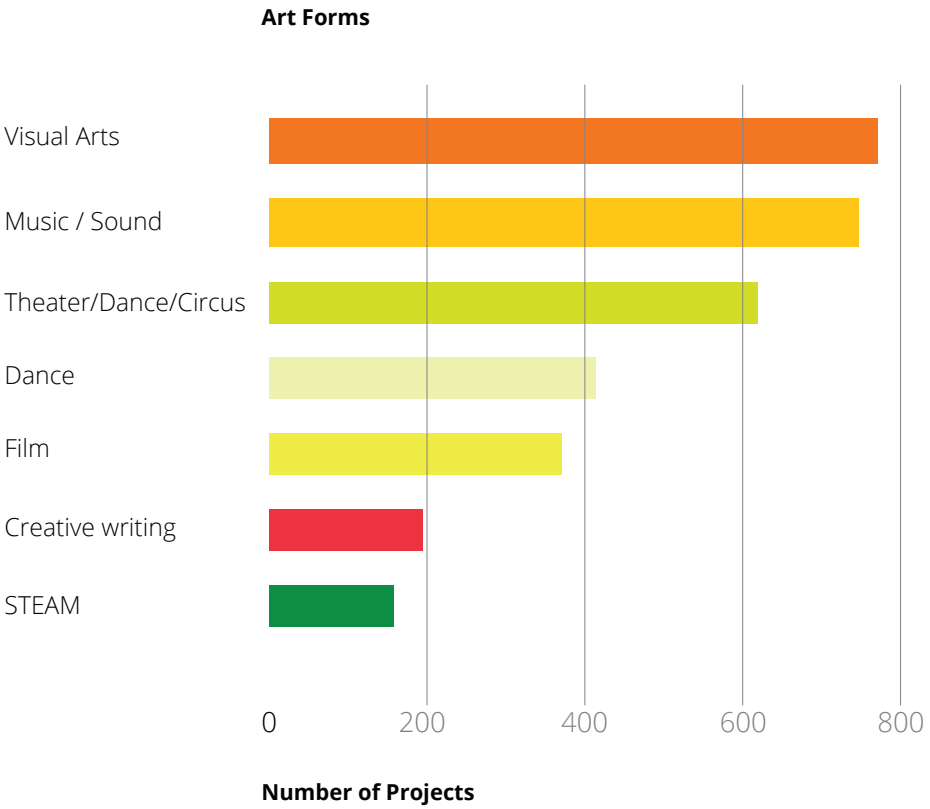
The prevalence of different artforms

Respondents were asked to enumerate how many projects based on different artforms they had delivered in the previous 18 months. The data show an interesting spread of activities, with visual arts, music/sound, and theatre dominating. Dance shows as an important category in the data, despite having little visibility on the arts-map. Similarly, STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Maths) is well-represented as a category, but has no presence on the arts-map.

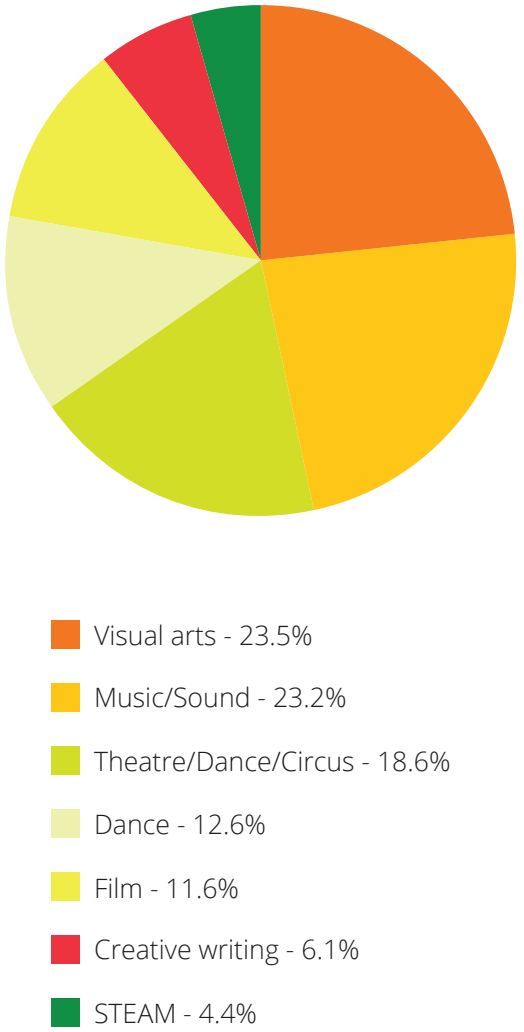
Organisations were limited to two submissions on the arts-map, in line with the capacity of the research team and within the delimits of a short research project. It may be that organisations chose to represent some artforms over others based on how aesthetically appealing the selected artefacts were as exemplars or practice; some types of activity/output are better suited for showcasing through the mapping exercise. It was valuable to also ask organisations to enumerate projects by artform in the quantitative data collection. This gives deeper insight into the nature and scope of youth arts provision in youth work settings. Should resources permit, it would be valuable to further open up submissions to the arts-map beyond two items per organisation, to allow for the diversity of youth arts activities to be fully represented.

Artforms	Number of Projects
Visual arts	771
Music/Sound	761
Theatre/Dance/Circus	611
Dance	412
Film	381
Creative writing	200
STEAM	146

Number of projects by artform



Number of projects by artform as a percentage



FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

SECTION 5

Findings and Analysis

Introduction

This section presents the key research findings generated through in-depth interviews and the qualitative survey. It is informed, then, by (1) the perspectives of youth workers, youth arts practitioners, and other key stakeholders in youth arts provision in youth work contexts in Ireland and (2) by the responses of ETBYOs. Analysis of both sets of data produced several dominant themes and these are used to structure this section of the report, namely:

- Policy
- Practice
- Benefits of engagement in youth arts for young people
- Funding
- Human resources
- Training needs
- Facilities
- Collaboration
- Aspirations
-

Policy

The NYCI is recognised as a key stakeholder and as a very important resource for networking and training opportunities. However, the desire for a comprehensive youth arts policy that is inclusive of all government departments strongly emerges in the in-depth interviews. It is felt that currently there is no imperative on national or local organisations to provide opportunities for engagement in youth arts. Participants expressed a need for broader commitment to youth arts provision based on a statutory framework, which would finally signal a government intention to move beyond rhetoric and empower organisations to implement more meaningful, sustainable and robust practices.

The provision of youth arts is informed and supported by both the arts and the youth work sectors. However, respondents argued that this support is not consistent and usually depends on how the youth arts project was established and developed initially and how things are traditionally done, rather than how they might best be planned and achieved. Local Authority Arts Offices in some areas are deemed the significant contributor to youth arts facilities. However, the impact is often individualised to specific arts officers who have a particular interest in and commitment to youth arts. This raises questions about sustainability and continuity of support if a person were to move into another role, for example.

The interviews revealed a lack of knowledge of the wider youth arts policy context and a reticence amongst research participants to speak about policy. When asked to comment on how policy supports or inhibits youth arts provision, many interviewees asked to skip these questions or said that they could not comment. Policy was constructed as being irrelevant to practice or seen as 'remote' to a practitioner's role. However, this is perhaps unsurprising given the dearth of critical literature for youth work practitioners to draw on to better understand policy changes and to articulate their experiences of the impact of policy on practice, as was noted previously in Section 3. It would be interesting to explore further how this lack of confidence in speaking to policy is connected with training and academic backgrounds of youth workers and youth officers. This discomfort with policy is troubling given the significance of the reform agenda in youth work and how this is fundamentally reshaping practice.

With respect to arts policy, the perception remains – both amongst youth workers and youth arts practitioners – of 'the arts' as elitist. This belief is reflected in the distributional impact of government social policy. Essentially, it implies that the classist underpinnings of policy design denies the working and 'lower' class access to arts and cultural opportunities. Funding is allocated as policy dictates and the rolling back of universal provision makes equal access impossible. This links clearly with many of the tensions outlined in Section 3.

When asked about how policy supports or hinders youth arts provision in Ireland, similar to the interviewees, the majority of the ETBYOs responded with comments like 'Unsure'/'Don't know'/'Can't say'. Where ETBYOs did feel able to comment, one respondent gave a very detailed response listing several relevant policies and how they inform youth arts provision, including The National Strategy on Children and Young Peoples Participation in Decision-Making 2015 -2020; the Arts Council's policy document, Making Great Art Work 2016-2025; the Arts in Education Charter 2012; the National Youth Strategy 2015-2020; Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures (Department of Children and Youth Affairs 2014) and the Creative Ireland programme. Some commented that youth arts provision can be included within youth work provision generally, for example:

> ***The National Youth Strategy and Better Outcomes Brighter Futures facilitates engaging young people in a range of educational opportunities promoting their social and personal outcomes and as such youth arts activities fit well within the cultural and recreational avenues.***

Another commented on the NYCI's particular role as a support to organisations 'in developing good quality arts practice and development of policies locally, regionally and nationally'. This respondent also stated that [t]he arts in general are well promoted as a means to engage successfully with young people yielding positive results, youth arts covers a broad spectrum of activities [and there is] funding available for particular trainings and activities with young people to support youth work organisations in facilitating youth arts.

However, another respondent argued that while '[p]olicy strongly encourages and recognises the value of youth arts provision… in many cases the policy is not supported by the resources to make the vision a reality'.

In response to the question of how policy hinders engagement with young people in youth arts activities, one respondent suggested that:

> ***a more co-ordinated, inter-related policy … could prove more beneficial. A co-ordinator [is needed] at ETB level with responsibility to co-ordinate, support and facilitate key stakeholders in the area.***

Another observed a bias towards the formal education system:
Well, I think it's bit confused because now there seems to be a push on creative schools [and] this doesn't facilitate engagement of [young people] in youth arts in [the] youth work sector.

Another participant commented that there is 'a disconnect between policy and local awareness and provision', while another felt that 'decisions tend to be made by managers'. One ETBYO commented on the outcomes-focused orientation of contemporary youth work policy, which they felt inhibits meaningful practice: 'Current policy seems to be results driven and … youth arts results can take time'. Yet another commented that there is insufficient recognition of barriers to participation and that youth arts is seen 'as an add-on piece to provision'.

Youth arts practice

In the interview data, there is a very strong and clear recognition that creative practice is a core element of the youth worker's toolkit. Youth arts provision in youth work settings is highly valued for its positive impact on young people. Based on respondents' reflections about their own and others' practice, there is great diversity in how youth arts provision is shaped and delivered in youth work contexts, and the section below outlines how the value of this provision is perceived. Despite evidence of good quality youth arts activity in youth work settings, there is a commonly-expressed lack of confidence amongst youth workers around engaging in artistic practice directly with young people. Youth arts provision will therefore more likely happen if a 'real' artist can be resourced, pending the availability of funding. Respondents recognise that meaningful practice does exist (and the arts-map is testament to this); however, quality practice is usually dependent on the motivation and competence of the individual, and provision is therefore fragmented and ad hoc.

On a related note, participants expressed a need for knowledge sharing, inspiration, and networking events. They reported limited knowledge about the extent and scope of youth arts provision nationally. In many cases people responded that they simply do not know what is happening elsewhere in the country and they do not know where they can find out about what is happening.

There were mixed views on how extensive and accessible current provision is, especially in rural areas and areas where there is not a dedicated arts space. The infrastructure that youth work provides for facilitating the participation of young people is crucial in determining a broader youth arts provision, however this infrastructure is lacking in capacity due to cuts and lack of funding to the sector.

Insufficient funding also places an unrealistic emphasis on the contribution of volunteers, who may be (or feel they are) lacking in requisite skills and knowledge of youth arts practice.

Responses from the ETBYOs indicated that they see their role in supporting youth arts provision in youth work settings in their local areas in divergent ways. Many commented that their involvement was 'minimal'; they stated that their role was more about supporting youth organisations to provide youth projects, which may or may not include the arts as a tool for engagement. While many were broadly supportive of the use of the arts in youth work, they did not see youth arts provision as a specific aspect of their job.

On the other hand, some respondents were more explicit about their commitment to expanding youth arts in their local area. For example, one unit responded that it:

> ***promotes youth arts initiatives in youth work settings by circulating information on youth arts training programmes for youth workers [and] information relating to youth arts grant schemes, being aware of artists who are interested and want to work with young people and where youth arts practitioners are interested in collaborative projects, bridg[ing] the link between arts workers and the youth work sector …***

This varying degree of commitment does resonate with the interview data, in which the ETBYOs were rarely mentioned explicitly as supporters of youth arts but, on occasion, particularly enthusiastic YOs in local areas were noted as important for shaping youth arts provision.

With respect to supporting youth arts provision in youth work settings at a national level, ETBYOs largely reported that they had no involvement or limited involvement. One respondent stated for example, that:

> ***I would feel that ETBs have, to date, concentrated on their own individual areas in terms of direct support. There has not been a unified approach at a national level to the supporting of youth arts provision by the ETB.***

One responded that they had been involved to some degree in the NYCI Youth Arts programme. Others acknowledged a level of involvement as lead partner in one of the three pilot initiatives of the Local Creative Youth Partnership (LCYP) scheme. Some stated that while they currently had no involvement, that they would be open to greater involvement. One participant, for example, commented on the special value of youth arts participation, which should impact on the role of the ETBYO, stating that:

> ***Youth arts can be very complimentary when working with young people from marginalised backgrounds. It gives a voice and a platform to those who struggle to be heard. This is a powerful tool for youth workers. Promoting this viewpoint, as a youth officer, is important in the national context.***

When asked about the strengths of youth arts provision in their local areas, ETBYOs' observations were largely celebratory. Two respondents commented on the value of involvement in pilot Local Youth Creative Partnership schemes. One stated that this scheme enabled a needs assessment on youth participation and engagement in creative activities in the local area, noting that
[this] has allowed an opportunity to engage with young people to identify creative activities that they want to engage with. It has also resulted in greater awareness based on creative opportunities generated as a result of the LCYP.

Another respondent highlighted the contribution of the local arts officer and the presence in the area of arts practitioners, who 'seem to have excellent understanding of youth work principles and how to work with young people to build their personal and social skills'. One respondent noted the importance of 'a few good champions'. This resonates with findings from the qualitative interviews, where the existence of specific committed practitioners was essential for youth arts provision in the local area. While it is positive that such skills exist, there is a potential issue with sustainability should these key people leave the area or cease involvement in youth arts provision for whatever reason.

A few ETBYOs commented on the problem of affordability as a barrier to accessing youth arts and that this might also be connected to elitist perceptions that 'the arts' are 'the preserve of some only'. As another respondent put it:

> ***For many young people the notion of 'the arts' is one that is remote from them and their experience. The arts are inaccessible and only for a privileged few that can afford them. There is a sense in which the artistic forms through which young people might express themselves - street dance, music, etc, - do not carry the standing of 'arts'.***

Another Youth Officer commented on the challenges associated with giving time to the arts process and that this can be perceived as being incompatible with outcomes-oriented youth work practice:

> ***Experience has taught me that there is some cynicism when it comes to the arts and youth workers do not explore or give quality time to a true arts process. Also, in this results driven youth work world we are now in it can sometimes be a hard sell as a process takes time and numbers can sometimes be low.***

However, ETBYOs respondents were generally very positive about the advantages of situating youth arts provision in youth work settings. Many noted the valuable infrastructure that youth work organisations can offer in terms of both physical spaces and human resources. Youth arts practice was perceived as highly complementary to the principles and ambitions of youth work practice. Youth workers were also recognised for their particular skills in forming relationships with young people, which facilitate meaningful arts practice. For example:

> ***[T]he youth work sector is very open, engaged, inclusive and welcoming to new ideas and approaches to their work and they are honest about what works and what doesn't work. There is a developed understanding of how 'the arts' is complementary to the work of youth work. Youth arts has tangible positive outputs that are easily identifiable and understood by the young people, youth workers and the wider community.***
>
> ***[Y]outh art dovetails with youth work methodologies and methods. It provides an ideal vehicle for engaging with young people outsider of the traditional formal education but also the mainstream of youth work provision.***

Youth work settings are formative and those who access them tend to hold on to what they are exposed to.Youth work seeks to engage all young people and respond to them through a person-centred practice. This allows the opportunity for them to develop their creativity, both individually and in the group, and to have control over their participation.

It's a medium that can be used for a range of work: intercultural work, group work, personal development, critical social education. It's a great leveller and also isn't too expensive, most have access to a pen and paper: creative writing/spoken word; bit of glue and newspaper for papier mâché.

Youth workers' skills and capacity for reaching out to disadvantaged young people was also recognised as an important advantage of situating youth arts in youth work settings:

[Situating youth arts in youth work settings allows us to] reach out to otherwise disengaged young people in their own community/setting, especially urban disadvantaged young people.

Equality of access, opportunities for young people who wouldn't have perceived 'talent' to engage in arts.

Access to all young people (particularly the more disadvantaged), greater exposure to the arts, opportunities to try something new, cost free, enjoyment of youth arts with peer group, youth led so young people get to choose what they would like to do and how they would like to do it.

In terms of disadvantages of situating youth arts in youth work settings, the discomfort of some youth workers with youth arts practice was also noted. Furthermore, some felt that there was a 'lack of understanding of youth arts work' and that 'the impact and value of creative programmes in youth work settings may not be fully understood or appreciated'.

ETBYOs recognised that access to 'youth arts' was not available to all young people, and the dearth of youth work provision in rural areas was noted as problematic:

[Provision is] not universal, so [situating youth arts in youth work] will not address the affordability and accessibility barriers for some young people, especially rural young people.

Others observed that the targeted nature of youth work meant that 'You are only reaching a specific cohort of young people and many do not access youthwork projects'. Another commented on a lack of capacity within universal youth work provision:

Young people engaged in staff-led youth projects are young people identified as having additional needs/challenges in their lives for which they require support. Young people not identified as having additional needs are predominantly supported through youth clubs and groups, that are predominantly volunteer-led. In my experience, volunteer-led youth clubs have limited capacity to take on youth arts projects because of the planning, accessing funding, accessing facilitators etc that is required for such projects. This means that youth arts programmes may only be available to a limited cohort of young people if youth arts provision is in a youth work setting. However, each area is different as is each youth work setting, therefore a blanket analysis cannot be applied across the country.

Benefits of engagement in youth arts for young people

The benefits of engagement were expressed in diverse ways, many of which resonate with those identified in the literature review. Respondents often referenced the health/therapeutic impacts of participation in the arts, including reference to positive mental health, wellbeing, self-esteem, self-confidence, etc. For example:

[Young people are] going outside their comfort zone, learning new skills. They're also learning to play and experiment and fail and work out why they failed and then so that's going to build resilience [and] to help them to appreciate their own unique vision and its relevance to the world.

These more individualised benefits are worth noting, and youth arts does have a positive impact in this respect. However, this interpretation, which emphasises the more personalised benefits of engagement, itself fits more easily with a deficit model of young people. Section 3 evidenced how this approach frames young people – and working class young people in particular – as being somehow 'deficient' in their personal development, which individualises their 'problems'. This may inhibit practitioners from considering the broader structural factors impacting on young people's lives (poverty, racism, sexism, homophobia, social exclusion) and for thinking about how a more radical imagining of youth arts might facilitate young people to critique and give voice to their lived experiences. Notwithstanding

this, there is some recognition of a broader understanding of the impact of young people engaging in youth arts, that considers arts as a tool for promoting and shaping positive social change. Respondents argue that participation in youth arts can inform a more empathetic and diverse youth culture that creates platforms for subcultural identity and community expression. Youth arts are perceived to facilitate the development of key competencies such as critical and divergent thinking. Some commented on various skills young people learn that enhance their employability. Moreover, many noted that youth arts participation has potential to widen the lens of the young person about occupational futures and to consider potential career paths in the arts. Youth arts were considered a tool that supports young people to interpret, understand and respond to the challenging world around them; within images, movement, stories etc., young people can find meaning in their own narrative and in how they connect with others. Youth arts participation was also valued for the potential to create platforms for a sense of belonging, community building and a celebration of local culture(s). In particular, street art forms, including rapping, DJing and spray-painting were valued for facilitating these kinds of expressions (This has also been observed by Sim [2019: 91], who described youth centres as 'a space of subcultural capital').

Despite all of the acknowledged benefits of arts participation, respondents felt that there is limited commitment to youth arts provision:

> ***You know, when you're listening to all the election stuff at the moment, you know, people aren't worried – you know, the general population [is] not worried about whether arts projects or youth arts projects are being supported or resourced. You know, they're worried about where there are homeless people and are health services going to get fixed. So you're on the bottom rung of the ladder at all times.***

> ***We need a greater understanding of how art benefits, [how] youth art benefits young people, but also in the future how it benefits Ireland [and] its place in the world. Ireland has a fantastic reputation for culture, writers, musicians, artists, filmmakers, which we don't want to lose.***

Furthermore, some respondents argued that they need to improve their capacity for articulating the benefits of engagement in youth arts:

> ***What we're not good at as youth arts practitioners and facilitators is really talking about the impacts that work has. As somebody who's been through it, I'm able to talk about it, but I don't think we're very good at telling people what we do. And I suppose that comes back to the message as well that what we do is in some way slight when in actual fact it has massive impacts on young people's development when they engage, you know?***

Finally, respondents suggested that there needs to be leadership at government level for youth arts provision to be fully realised, particularly with respect to funding commitments. Without that recognition from the top, the goal of expanding opportunities for engagement in the arts to all young people will be impossible to achieve.

Funding

It will be of no surprise that funding – or lack thereof – was a dominant theme throughout all avenues of this research. Youth organisations are still dealing with the damaging impact of austerity cutbacks. As one participant put it:

> ***[T]he youth work sector has suffered huge cuts in the past 12, 13 years as a result of austerity and [...] while there's a willingness and a recognition of the value of creativity and creative opportunities for young people, I think a narrowing of focus of targeted schemes is diminishing the capacity of organisations to fully deliver on what they would like to do and I think what they would see value in doing. [I]t limits what they can do directly as youth workers and I think it limits the opportunities to develop a pool of volunteers in communities who would be well disposed towards the notion of art and might be willing to facilitate three years of activities. Not that they would necessarily be creative facilitators themselves, but that they would I suppose develop an appreciation of what arts and creativity can offer to young people.***

Youth workers believe that the youth work sector is comparatively less well funded and recognised than the formal education system with respect to arts provision and that private arts provision dominates. This means that there is a lack of capacity to expand youth work and youth arts provision, as acknowledged in the data by various youth workers:

> ***The lack of investment is one of the main challenges. Now, I think the school curriculum has come on a lot, but that's the school curriculum. That doesn't benefit after school in a meaningful way for young people.***

> ***And most of the arts provision is still being provided by the stage school-type private commercial operators, you know – the music schools, the stage schools ...***

The big challenge we have is we have to turn people away, unfortunately. There are participants want to go every single workshop and there are new participants signing up on a waiting list. And we just don't have the space or the facilities/facilitators, the money to provide that. But I know with our workshops we could triple them in participation if we had the resources.

It is acknowledged that there are funding streams available for motivated individuals and organisations to implement youth arts activity but the current short-term funding model inhibits meaningful and sustainable practice and makes it difficult to development or maintain partnerships.

Respondents argue that the outcomes-focused funding model detracts from the intrinsic value of participating in youth arts programmes. The imperative to be 'learning something' (that is measurable) makes it difficult to maintain freedom in youth arts processes and practices.

Although there is lip service about the rights of young people to choose and participate in the design of projects and activities, there is a sense that targeted initiatives impose pre-planned activities on them. The new targeting funding scheme, UBU Your Place, Your Space, is creating fear and uncertainty about the provision of universal youth work and the specificity of targets that organisations are mandated to achieve. Furthermore, some respondents were cautious about the perception that youth arts and youth work can be a quick fix or panacea for deep-rooted social inequalities and that funding models are often based on this assumption.

European funding opportunities, such as the various Erasmus+ programmes, were highlighted as particularly valuable for offering opportunities for more open, creative youth arts practices. The opportunity they afforded young people to travel and experience different cultures was highly appreciated.

ETBYOs also highlighted funding as a particular issue associated with weaknesses of youth arts provision in their local areas. As one respondent put it, youth arts is under-resourced 'like the arts in general'. Another respondent observed poor uptake on local and national funding for creative activities. This person also problematised once-off creative programmes for not being beneficial to developing skills, abilities and interests over time. This problem of short-term funding was taken up by others. For example, another ETBYO responded that:

There is very limited additional funding to support the youth arts sector. Challenges in the arts sector is that funding is often small seed funding, which can deliver a once-off programme, but isn't sufficient to maintain and grow a dedicated youth arts sector in the county that is available and resourced to work across a wide range of children and youth engagement from youth work (volunteer led clubs and staff led youth projects) [and] Education – pre-school, primary, post-primary/Youthreach/Community Training Centres. [12]

Another ETBYO responded that

the lack of resources and staffed projects doesn't allow for a lot of engagement at a wider/regional level. A lot of the provision within a youth work setting happens ad hoc and for a time-bound piece of funding.

Human resources

This is a key issue on many levels as articulated in the in-depth interviews. Firstly, respondents argue that youth arts practitioners and youth workers are highly skilled, educated professionals but this is not reflected in pay and progression opportunities. Lip service is paid regarding people's skill-sets and the value of their service but there is an evident need for people to be paid a fair wage for this work and for more secure work conditions to be provided. Secondly, the impact of austerity is still apparent in terms of staffing shortages. Thirdly, there is perceived to be an absolute lack of recognition of the time, knowledge and skills involved in the administration and management of youth arts projects. A significant issue is the lack of funds for the administration and management of youth arts projects that support services and organisations to apply for funding, engage in evaluation and evidence outcomes, and develop policies and practices in adherence with child protection, health and safety regulations, etc. There is a risk that the newly introduced UBU funding scheme could exacerbate this problem in that this scheme funds activities, not organisations. Interviewees pointed out that it does not sufficiently recognise the multidimensionality of the youth worker role and the complexity of youth service provision, including the crucial need for financial support in resourcing administration and management of projects. As one interviewee put it,

The opportunity to develop volunteers and to allow them to kind of share their ideas – those opportunities are limited by the narrowing of the focus

[12] A CTC (Community Training Centre) provides training, educational and employment related services for young people through informal learning.

of targeted schemes and the cutback of funding to the more general mainstream youth work offering.

Fourthly, volunteerism and the goodwill of both paid staff and volunteers currently sustain youth service provision but this situation is problematic and unsustainable. Together, these human resource issues limit the capacity of youth arts projects and their potential for development in a community.

Training needs

The provision of excellent quality training in the youth arts sector was acknowledged throughout our research. However a need for training of youth workers in youth arts practice is still present. There is a lack of confidence amongst youth workers and especially amongst volunteers about their perceived creative deficits. The lack of knowledge and understanding of how policy impacts youth arts provision implies a need for training in this area for all key stakeholders. The point was made that there is an unrealistic expectation of youth workers, youth arts workers and volunteers who are very often participating in training in their own time and unpaid.

Training was perceived to be required by both youth workers and arts practitioners. As one ETBYO advised,

> ***[We need to] resource the coming together of arts practitioners from different disciplines offering a wide variety of training to include working with young people, working with young people with additional needs, understanding youth work and the role of the youth worker, promote their knowledge and understanding of youth work sector in the county. [We also need to] resource the coming together of youth workers [to] promote their knowledge and development of the youth arts, benefits of [youth arts] programmes, how the programmes contribute to the 7 Personal and Social Development Outcomes of the UBU scheme, [and] supports available for youth workers that want to grow youth arts responses in their youth projects.***

The potential of volunteer-led services was highlighted by one participant in particular, who felt that given appropriate training, volunteers could play an important role in ensuring that all young people had access to the arts.

> ***[It's] about equipping volunteers in particular to think differently. [D]espite [the] progress that's been made there's still quite a significant number of people who feel that if we just open a centre on Friday evening for an hour or two, that's grand and that's enough for us to be doing … You know, that has served […] a basic need, but –it's about challenging or encouraging people to think a bit more and be a bit more open about what they might do about how to engage with young people and find out what kind of activities they would like. So it would be about, I suppose, sharpening the training of volunteers […] and encourag[ing] organisations maybe to have creativity as a formal – not formalised – but as a major element of the training programme they would offer for their volunteers.***

One ETBYO suggested that both youth workers and arts practitioners should be better facilitated to engage in formal higher level education in youth arts (i.e. degree or postgraduate level).

It was also noted that young people are keen to pursue arts based career opportunities fostered through their participation in youth arts activities in their local youth work settings. Respondents also observed that there are limited opportunities for young people to progress into further education and training in arts based programmes. This is particularly significant for young people living in more rural parts of the country, where lack of opportunity for further training in rural areas, combined with lack of public transport infrastructure means that there is little or no opportunity for accessing courses in the arts. Furthermore, poor wages and precarious work conditions were perceived a deterrent to young people who showed promise as future youth arts practitioners; some participants observed that these young people were compelled to choose a career path with better prospects, having witnessed the pay-related and other job challenges experienced by youth workers and youth arts practitioners.

The problem of limited access to further training opportunities in youth arts provision was also noted by some ETBYOs. As one stated:

> ***There also appears to be limited funding vis a vis CPD - to grow youth workers who want to develop their creative potential so that they can bring this to bear in their work or vice versa to grow artists who want to develop their understanding of working with young people and how to do this using youth work models and approaches and to understand the purpose of developing the person's confidence, and social development.***

Facilities

It appears that there are excellent facilities in some areas. These were established pre-austerity and tend to be managed by some of the more established organisations. Respondents articulated a clear need for dedicated youth arts spaces in every small town and city in Ireland. Sometimes even when community

spaces exist, they are not always accessible due to local politics. Very often groups may have access to a space for a couple of hours a week but have no storage space for equipment, materials and art works, props etc. It is very often the arts worker who is responsible for storage and transporting these materials. Rising public liability insurance costs are another factor impacting on accessibility of space. The general lack of suitable infrastructure, particularly in rural areas is also an issue that inhibits access to youth arts opportunities. There is a frustration that sometimes suitable spaces do exist but are not accessible due to all of these factors.

Collaboration

Interestingly, the ETBYOs observed good levels of interagency collaboration and partnership between youth sectors and between youth and arts organisations, whereas this was seen to be quite underdeveloped and fragile in the interview data.

Interview respondents indicated that there is no consistency in the collaboration of stakeholders across the country. This tends to be piecemeal and ad hoc, and where partnerships exist they depended on traditional work practices and relationships developed over many years. There is no time for developing new meaningful partnerships, and again this links back to lack of resources for administration and management of projects. Some respondents argue that current funding models are encouraging competitiveness rather than collaboration.

The most significant benefit of youth arts projects happening in youth work contexts is that youth workers can support the participation of 'hard-to-reach' young people who are not likely to access arts based facilities otherwise. Furthermore, youth workers have the skills to work with young people who may present with more challenging behaviours. Thus, the key focus on relationship-building in youth work is perceived as important for facilitating youth arts engagement. Again, the personal characteristics, motivations and interest of specific people are seen as fundamental. For example, in many cases, the commitment and interests of the local authority Arts Officer is perceived as crucial in facilitating youth arts provision. Respondent claimed that

> ***there is sometimes a lack of understanding of youth arts and there can also be an element of youth organisations not wanting to collaborate with other organisations particularly arts organisations. They sometimes fail to see that this work can complement their youth work practice.***

> ***If a project buys into the process and adequate planning and realistic goal setting is put in place, wonderful things can happen. The relationship between the youth worker, artist and young person is key and needs time. Embedding such a provision into a project and allowing it to grow can add a fantastic dimension to a service.***

> ***The collaborative approach to youth arts provision with a youth work approach yields amazing results, combining two separate skill sets benefits young people and provides opportunities for learning, growth and acquisition of new skills in the chosen arts area, while promoting a range of social and personal development outcomes.***

Aspirations

Aspirations for youth arts provision is an area where consensus was generally met. Appropriate and decent facilities with universal access for all young people, with an emphasis on rural youth, is a priority. Youth workers and youth arts practitioners need decent pay and conditions with a considerable increased investment in the management and administration of projects and organisations. This would provide better support for collaboration, especially in recognising the time investment and human resource requirements.

The research highlights a desire for greater collaboration across the youth arts sector. This requires leadership to achieve this ambition. Respondents argued that cross-departmental, joined-up thinking is required to facilitate collaboration between arts institutions and youth organisations and other stakeholders and to adequately resource meaningful partnerships. A more collaborative approach at government level would assist in giving parity of esteem to both the youth work and arts sectors and would recognise the distinctive capacities and contributions of each in advancing youth arts provision across Ireland. This would also help to challenge perspectives that see 'the arts' as elitist and 'youth arts' as a space for work with 'disadvantaged' or 'at risk' young people. It would also help to raise the status of youth arts and youth arts practitioners. As several ETBYOs commented: [We need to] maximise resources and support through a more co-ordinated inter-agency approach, that will lend itself to a more sustainable model that will embed the fabrics of youth arts [...] into the future.

> ***Additional money [should be] made available to grow this space, for the benefit of young people in our county. That there is an opportunity for those at local authority and ETB level to come together, to identify opportunities for collaboration – between the two sectors that we collectively support – artists and youth workers (staff led and volunteers).***

The crucial thing would be to create an environment where full-time youth workers and artists interested in working with young people have sufficient time and space to get to know each other and to understand the nature of each other's work. Such a foundation might create an infrastructure where youth arts provision is more easily stitched into youth work practice to the ultimate benefit of young people.

[Youth arts] could be embedded in youth work to a much greater extent whereby creative arts practitioners are employed in youth services to work alongside youth workers. [There also needs to be] a stronger link between arts centres and youth work projects to dismantle the perception of places being 'not for young people' [and] locally accessible support offering a range of creative arts opportunities for young people in youth projects.

Several respondents, including interviewees and ETBYOs argued that we need youth arts representation at a regional level and dedicated regional youth arts officers. This representation could take different forms, such as:

roving arts workers to help volunteer-led clubs develop a stronger arts element in programming

or

a dedicated fund, to resource a youth arts programme e.g. one artist in residency annually, who could undertake larger pieces of work in the staff led youth project setting and undertake smaller pieces of arts based provision e.g. 4 - 8 week programmes in a sample of youth clubs around the county. The intention being to have a new arts practitioner annually - build the skillset of arts practitioners in working with young people, build the confidence of youth workers (staff and volunteers) to use the arts as a medium to work with young people - primarily it is about building relationships.

Participants stated that there is a strong need for more opportunities in the showcasing of youth arts projects and young people's creativity. Several respondents noted the need for an archive of youth arts activities:

[We need] a centralised database where you could load your activity. Like an archive. There is no archive. There isn't an online tool that just maps it. It's just a mapping process kind of, you know? Wouldn't it be wonderful to have it? Maybe it's there. Maybe it's the arts and education portal, but that's very schools-focused.

The success of the annual national youth arts showcase that NYCI previously hosted in 2010s was mentioned several times. This was valued for evidencing the impact of youth arts participation in young people's lives and for recognising the youth work sector's role in provision. It was proposed that this should be reintroduced as an annual celebration that showcases and recognises the value of youth arts. As one respondent put it:

I suppose maybe the weakness is that we don't celebrate [youth arts]. One great thing Anne O'Gorman [NYCI] did years ago… she ran the National Youth Arts kind of showcase and that was bringing together all the best of youth arts in Ireland, putting them kind of together in front of political powers that be, the Minister for Arts and the Arts Council, etc. And, you know, that coming together and building an awareness of the importance of the arts for young people.

Most respondents argued that all of these aspirations are underpinned by a need for a committed, sustainable, ring-fenced, and long-term funding mechanism for the provision of youth arts in youth work settings. One respondent suggested that a streamed funding scheme for youth arts provision in Ireland could be very effective:

where even at a first stage you could get to, we'll say, twenty thousand or thirty thousand euros funding. Even if it was sixty organisations in Ireland getting that, it would still be less than two million. Like it's nothing. Do you know what I mean? It's absolutely nothing, if you think about… So it's creating a ladder system where organisations can get organised and get funding and provide a service for the young people in their area and the young people coming in would determine the programme.


SECTION
6

Conclusion

Introduction

This research explores youth arts provision in youth work settings in Ireland and maps current provision. By adopting qualitative and quantitative research methods, the research addresses the following research questions:

1. What is the nature and scope of youth arts provision throughout the country?
2. What type of artforms are most prevalent in the provision of youth arts in Ireland?
3. Where are the gaps in provision currently?
4. What is the demographic profile of the young people accessing youth arts services?
5. What challenges, if any, do youth workers, youth arts practitioners and relevant youth-focused organisations currently encounter in their work with young people?
6. How can these challenges be addressed in public policy?

The current youth arts provision is mapped by showcasing examples of youth arts activities in youth work settings submitted by organisations across the country.

Using a combination of in-depth interviews and surveys, it also explores the perspectives of key stakeholders, including youth workers, youth arts practitioners, service providers, policy makers, and representatives of organisations that contribute to youth arts provision in youth work settings in the Republic of Ireland.

The research indicates the need for some important shifts in emphasis in youth work and arts policy and practice at national and local, to advance meaningful and sustainable youth arts provision in Ireland. Although the focus of this research is to map the provision of youth arts in youth work settings, it also highlights the value of youth arts participation and illustrates how those working in the sector conceive and interpret it. Various expressions of the value of the work are expressed by research participants, which go beyond artistic expression and include the social, economic, and health-related value of the work as well.

Analysis of the research findings indicates the need for thoughtful planning and some important shifts in emphasis in youth work and arts policy and practice at national and local levels in order to advance meaningful, sustainable youth arts provision in Ireland. The focus of this research is more particularly on youth arts provision in youth work settings and this frames and sets limits on the policy recommendations outlined below. However, the value of youth arts participation is broadly conceived and variously expressed in artistic, social, economic, and health-related terms. Therefore, the target audience for these policy recommendations is also imagined broadly. It includes stakeholders who are located within a wide range of organisations, including – in particular – the NYCI, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA), and the Arts Council, but also local government, Education and Training Boards (ETBs), local authority arts offices, national and local youth organisations, national and local arts organisations and institutions, the Department of Education and Skills (DES), the Department of Justice and Equality (DJE), and the Health Service Executive (HSE).

Summary of Research Findings

- Recognition of artistic and creative practice as a core element of youth work;
- Recognition that benefits of engagement in youth arts for young people are multidimensional;
- Mixed views on the scope of youth arts provision in contemporary Ireland and perception that it is patchy, particularly in rural areas;
- Youth work offers a good infrastructure for youth arts provision and youth work skills are highly complementary to good youth arts practice;
- Lack of confidence amongst youth workers about their creative abilities;
- Lack of knowledge about youth arts provision in youth work settings across Ireland amongst practitioners;
- EU funding schemes, particularly under Erasmus+, are a highly valuable source of funding;
- Lack of joined-up, collaborative thinking, statutory commitment, and strategic action on youth arts policy and practice in Ireland;
- Inadequate, inconsistent, and piecemeal funding for youth arts provision, set within an under-resourced youth work sector;
- Lack of knowledge about youth arts policy amongst practitioners and service providers;
- Prevalence of class-oriented divisions between 'the arts' and 'youth arts';
- Tensions between targeted youth work and universal youth work; targeting is effective for reaching marginalised young people but universal provision is valuable for integrating diverse young people;
- Youth workers and youth arts practitioners' skills are not reflected in pay and progression opportunities;
- Lack of recognition of the multi-dimensional nature of the youth worker role;
- Lack of appreciation of the time, knowledge and skills required to run an organisation successfully;
- Assumptions that volunteers can carry youth work services and fill in the gaps in service when there is in reality a shortage of skilled volunteers;
- Significant training needs of youth workers, youth arts practitioners and volunteers on various policy and practice issues;
- Lack of time and resources to develop meaningful partnerships and realise the full potential for collaboration between the youth work and arts sectors;
- Perception that current funding models support competition rather than collaboration between organisations;
- Lack of appropriate facilities for youth arts activities, particularly in rural areas.

NYCI Policy Recommendations

NYCI is committed to equality of access to youth arts for all young people regardless of their socio-economic background. We recognise the right of every young person to participate in arts, culture and creative opportunities. To ensure the realisation of this outcome, the structural and attitudinal barriers which currently inhibit youth participation in the arts and youth arts provision in the youth work sector, need to be addressed. In this regard, we recommend the following measures:

Resourcing and Recognition of Youth Arts Provision

NYCI Recommends:

1. **The resourcing and development of a comprehensive youth arts strategy** informed by cross governmental commitment in consultation with the youth work sector and youth arts sectors. This strategy would serve to provide a statutory framework for youth arts provision. In recognition of the unique and valuable contribution of youth arts provision in non-formal education settings and in shaping youth policy, additional resources are required to ensure the development and implementation of the strategy throughout the country.

2. **A review of the youth work funding schemes** to include the additional costs associated with materials, equipment, the hire of appropriate spaces, the purchase of specific technologies, transporting artworks, etc. Within this review, consideration should be given to ensuring youth workers have more flexibility in how they allocate funding, to ensure the provision of both universal and targeted youth arts practice.

3. **The creation of a capital investment fund** to support the development or refurbishment of appropriate buildings and spaces for youth arts practice. We recommend that this fund should also support the provision of mobile facilities, such as vans and buses, **to support** outreach work and as a method of expanding youth arts provision in rural areas.

4. As the research highlighted youth arts requires **significant financial investment** to realise its full potential, in this regard the following measures should be implemented:

    - the introduction of a new funding scheme to support the development of long-term (e.g. 5-year) youth arts projects, taking into account pay and conditions for freelance practitioners and artists,

    - the expansion and adequate resourcing of funding schemes that support partnership between youth work and arts organisations/artists, and the human resources necessary to develop fruitful and meaningful collaborations,

    - the establishment of platforms to support networking and sharing and exchange of practice between youth workers and youth arts practitioners across Ireland,

    - increased investment in showcasing youth arts provision in non-formal settings to ensure the work can be exhibited in physical and virtual platforms,

    - investment in the design and delivery of bespoke training to respond to the learning and development needs of youth arts practitioners and youth workers. This would enhance their competencies to deliver high quality youth arts provision in recognition of specialised skills required,

    - the establishment of a fund to assist youth workers to participate in this training. Such training can be delivered regionally through the ETB and local authority arts offices,

    - the appointment of an additional 16 youth arts officer posts to be located within the ETB to provide guidance and leadership to enhance youth arts delivery in youth work context.

Research & Evaluation

NYCI recommends:

1. government allocate **additional funding to facilitate collaboration** between youth arts practitioners, the youth work sector and Government Departments,

2. the **development of suitable evaluation frameworks** for youth arts,

3. future research in the area of youth arts practice and provision in Ireland to provide **an evidence base to inform youth arts policy** development and practice.

Appendices & References

Appendices & References

Appendix A

Interview topic guide for youth workers, youth arts practitioners, and national key informants

Purpose of interviews: To investigate participants' perspectives on the provision of opportunities for young people to engage in youth arts in youth work settings in Ireland including: the nature and scope of youth arts provision in youth work contexts in Ireland; what type of artforms are most prevalent in the provision of youth arts; where are the gaps in provision currently; what is the demographic profile of the young people accessing youth arts services; what challenges, if any, do and youth workers, youth arts practitioners and relevant youth-focused organisations currently encounter in their work with young people, and; how can these challenges be addressed in public policy?

Interview topics:

1. What is your current role and how is this role connected to the provision of youth arts in youth work contexts?

2. Briefly, how would you describe the nature and scope of youth arts provision in Ireland currently?

3. What are the main benefits for young people of engagement in youth arts activities?

4. What are the strengths of youth arts provision in your local area currently?

5. What are the weaknesses of youth arts provision in your local area currently?

6. What are the advantages of situating youth arts provision in youth work settings?

7. What are the disadvantages of situating youth arts provision in youth work settings?

8. What are the main challenges in facilitating youth arts opportunities
   a. in your local area?
   b. nationally?

9. How does current policy facilitate engagement with young people in youth arts activities?

10. How does current policy hinder engagement with young people in youth arts activities?

11. If you had an unlimited budget, what three changes would you make in how youth arts provision is supported and delivered?

12. What are your hopes for the future in facilitating young people's participation in youth arts activities?

Appendix B

Survey questions for ETBYOs

1: Which geographical area do you represent?
Please note that this information will not be cross-referenced with your other responses in the data analysis. The question simply aims to ensure geographical representation across Ireland. *(Respondents select one of the following from a dropdown menu).*

- Cavan & Monaghan Education & Training Board
- Cork Education & Training Board
- City of Dublin Education & Training Board
- Donegal Education & Training Board
- Dublin & Dun Laoghaire Education & Training Board
- Galway & Roscommon Education & Training Board
- Kerry Education & Training Board
- Kildare & Wicklow Education & Training Board
- Kilkenny & Carlow Education & Training Board
- Laois & Offaly Education & Training Board
- Limerick & Clare Education & Training Board
- Longford & Westmeath Education & Training Board
- Louth & Meath Education & Training Board
- Mayo, Sligo & Leitrim Education & Training Board
- Tipperary Education & Training Board
- Waterford & Wexford Education & Training Board

2. What is your current role and how is this role connected to the provision of youth arts in youth work contexts?

3. Briefly, how would you describe the nature and scope of youth arts provision in Ireland currently?

4. What are the main benefits for young people of engagement in youth arts activities?

5. What are the strengths of youth arts provision in your local area currently?

6. What are the weaknesses of youth arts provision in your local area currently?

7. What are the advantages of situating youth arts provision in youth work settings?

8. What are the disadvantages of situating youth arts provision in youth work settings?

9. What are the main challenges in facilitating youth arts opportunities
   a. in your local area?
   b. nationally?

10. How does current policy facilitate engagement with young people in youth arts activities?

11. How does current policy hinder engagement with young people in youth arts activities?

12. Please rank (1=Very important, 5=Not important) what changes need to be made to advance youth arts provision in youth work settings in Ireland. *(Participants are invited the rank the following items on a scale of 1-5.)*

    - More targeting funding for youth arts activities
    - Greater collaboration between youth workers and arts organisations
    - Better training in creative arts practice for youth workers
    - Better training in youth work practice for creative arts practitioners
    - Greater availability of appropriate facilities locally
    - Improved levels of human resources
    - Better pay and employment conditions for youth workers
    - More financial incentives for arts practitioners to engage in youth work settings
    - Better policy and support at a local level
    - Better policy and support at a national level
    - More targeting funding for youth arts activities
    - Greater collaboration between youth workers and arts organisations
    - Better training in creative arts practice for youth workers
    - Better training in youth work practice for creative arts practitioners
    - Greater availability of appropriate facilities locally
    - Improved levels of human resources
    - Better pay and employment conditions for youth workers
    - More financial incentives for arts practitioners to engage in youth work settings
    - Better policy and support at a local level
    - Better policy and support at a national level

13. If you had an unlimited budget, what three changes would you make in how youth arts provision is supported and delivered?

14. What are your hopes for the future in facilitating young people's participation in youth arts activities?

Appendix C

Arts-map

A National Mapping of Youth Arts Provision in Youth Work Settings:
An NYCI/UCC Research Project

This project aims to identify, map, and celebrate youth arts provision in youth work settings across Ireland. Organisations, youth workers, and youth arts practitioners can participate by contributing information about their projects using this form. Additionally, at the end of this form, you are invited to contribute one or two examples of youth art activities as media files, which will be showcased on an interactive, clickable arts map that has been designed specifically for this research project.

If you have any questions about this research, please contact Dr Eileen Hogan, School of Applied Social Studies, University College Cork at e(dot)hogan(at)ucc(dot)ie. Further details can be found on our project website at https://www.mappingyoutharts.com.

1. Name
2. Organisation name and street address

3. About the organisation (100-150 words)

4. Is your organisation defined as a youth work organisation? This project aims to map youth arts activities in youth work settings. However, we are interested in the broad context of youth arts provision. If you select "No" or "Other", please give details in the section below about how your work is related to youth work practice.

5. If you selected "No" or "Other" in the previous question, please give further details about how your work is related to youth work practice.

6. In which County/Geographical Area is your service located?

7. How many young people, by age group, participated in general activities in your organisation in the past 12 months in the following age groups?
   a. Aged 10-14
   b. Aged 15-17
   c. Aged 18-21
   d. Aged 22-24
   e. Aged 25 or over
   f. Total (all ages)

8. How many young people participated in youth arts activities in your organisation in the past 12 months in the following age groups?
   a. Aged 10-14
   b. Aged 15-17
   c. Aged 18-21
   d. Aged 22-24
   e. Aged 25 or over
   f. Total (all ages)

9. On average, how frequently did young people accessing your services participate in youth arts activities in your organisation over the past 12 months.
   a. Several times a week
   b. Once a week
   c. 2-3 times per month
   d. Once a month
   e. Less than once a month

10. How many young people participated in youth arts activities in your organisation in the past 12 months by gender?
    a. Female (Cisgender)
    b. Male (Cisgender)
    c. Female (Transgender)
    d. Male (Transgender)
    e. Non-binary, gender non-conforming
    f. Not listed

11. How many projects based on each of the following art forms did your service engage in the last 18 months?
    a. Visual arts (drawing/painting/printmaking)
    b. Music/sound performance
    c. Theatre/dramatic performance
    d. Dance
    e. Film
    f. Creative Writing (includes spoken word/poetry/reading/recital)
    g. STEAM (science through art, digital youth work, gaming, maker-spaces, etc.)

12. Can you identify other non-youth work organisations in your local area that are important in offering youth arts opportunities to young people? This information will help us to understand local contexts of youth arts provision and collaborations between youth arts and youth work organisations and practitioners. Please enter the names of any organisations in the box below.

Submission of Items to Arts Map

- Item – Name, project title, and any other descriptive information
- Creator of Item – who made the art work/piece?
- Rights/Copyright – who owns the rights/copyright? Usually this is the person who made/created the piece, unless it is a performance of someone else's work. Please ensure you have permission to use/share the work.

Item – Type of art work

- Visual arts (drawing/painting/printmaking)
- Music/sound performance
- Theatre/dramatic performance
- Dance
- Film
- Creative Writing (includes spoken word/poetry/reading/recital)
- STEAM (science through art, digital youth work, gaming, maker-spaces, etc.)

GDPR Agreement: Information on young participants

- I consent to having this website store the submitted information on young participants in youth arts activities. I understand that this data will be stored by UCC for 10 years and subsequently destroyed.
- I consent to having this website store the submitted art pieces so they can be included in the Mapping Youth Arts Research Project.
- I confirm that children/young people and their parents or guardians have given their written consent for any images/videos/audio recordings in which they feature and are identifiable to be publicly disseminated.
- I confirm that the collection of information for the purpose of this research is conducted in adherence with Child Protection Guidelines in operation in the organisation.

Appendix D

Coding

Archive
Arts as a tool for engagement
    Art and employment or income
    Arts for social change
    Challenges of reaching young people
    Constructing youth
    Critical thinking skills
    Equity, equality, fairness
    Experiential learning
    Extrinsic vs intrinsic benefits of practice
    Ideas about talent
    Impact - identity and expression
    Impact of youth arts participation
    Impact-community
    Imperative to be learning something
    Problematising the arts as a tool for engagement
    Seeing career opportunities
    Shift from 'the arts' to 'creativity'
    Skills development
    Subcultural capital - value of arts
    Therapeutic framing
    Value of the arts
Arts office
Aspirations
Challenges of communicating impact
Class
Creative Ireland
Facilities
    Insurance

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