



Supporting young people since 1971

## **KDYS Pre-budget Submission**

KDYS is asking you to put youth services at the top of your agenda as we approach Budget 2024. *The Future of Youth Work* (July 2023) produced by your parliamentary colleagues, makes 34 recommendations to ensure that all young people have equitable access to high quality youth services. I am now calling upon you to promote these recommendations as part of your budget manifesto on behalf of the young people of Kerry.

The budget also coincides with the development of a New Action Plan for Youth Services in Ireland. Consultations are currently taking place with relevant stakeholders including children and young people. This action plan will only be successful if adequate financial resources are allocated to youth work. An additional factor for success is proper recognition for the expertise of youth services such as KDYS and greater autonomy over our service design and delivery.

### **Context**

Budget 2023 did not serve youth work well. The sector received a 1.6% increase in funding, which did not come close to matching inflation and the rising cost of living. Over a number of years, this pattern of failing to adequately invest in the sector has significantly impeded youth work making it difficult to sustain our organisations, creating recruitment and retention challenges and limiting our capacity to be responsive to the evolving needs of young people.

### **KDYS**

KDYS is the leading youth work provider serving the Diocese of Kerry. In 2022, we worked with almost 5,000 young people in Kerry. KDYS also supported 380 volunteers to provide youth clubs and mentoring to young people in their local communities. Given the geographic span of the county, these local volunteer-ran supports are invaluable and are a huge asset to KDYS. However, we struggle to resource this area of work including dedicated staffing and training and development for volunteers.

KDYS runs youth centres in key locations in the county including Tralee, Killarney, Listowel, Killorglin, Listowel, Ballybunion and Castleisland. We also provide a range of supports including Youth Information, Comhairle na nOg, Integration projects for Ukrainian and International Protection applicants and targeted services to at risk young people on a county-wide basis. KDYS provides youth services in our centres, on an out-reach basis, in partnership with other organisations and we continue to explore new ways to engage with young people through digital youth work and online platforms. We also provide opportunities for European youth work and are the only youth service in Ireland to receive a Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres. The young people we work with have access to all of our services through our integrated youth work model of support.

However, currently this access is not equitable which is largely due to limited funding opportunities for universal youth work and youth spaces. Over time, this has resulted in

serious gaps in our youth service provision. At present, we particularly need investment in universal youth work and youth café spaces for areas such as Kenmare, Killorglin, Cahersiveen and Dingle.

### **What the Young People of Kerry Say**

In Kerry, KDYS regularly consults with the young people we work with. In 2022, we received an *Investing in Children Award*, which is a recognised quality mark for youth participation, for evidencing that change took place as a result of our dialogue with young people.

KDYS also facilitates consultations with young people at the request of external partners. Most recently, we provided feedback from young people to inform the Kerry CYPSC Youth Participation Plan and the KETB Youth Work Development Plan. We facilitate consultations to inform youth advocacy campaigns by national organisations including Youth Work Ireland and the National Youth Council of Ireland. Throughout recent engagements with young people, three key areas are consistently raised:

1. Safe spaces to meet and socialise with peers locally;
2. Youth work spaces and activities for **all** young people;
3. Better and more accessible youth mental health services and community-based supports.

### **KDYS Priorities for Budget 2024**

KDYS is asking you to lend your support for both national and local youth work priorities:

- Government to honour its commitment to a ‘child-centred’ budget by addressing national issues impacting on children and young people including poverty, housing and mental health services
- Youth and social care workers pay and conditions aligned with the public sector
- Multi-annual funding for youth work providers to allow for service planning and development
- Adequate provision within funding allocations to youth work organisations to develop infrastructure to ensure compliance with governance requirements
- Additional investment to fund universal youth work and volunteer-supported work
- KDYS particularly needs investment in universal youth work in key geographic areas
- Capital investment in existing KDYS youth centres so that we can continue to provide safe spaces for young people to meet
- Dedicated funding for youth facilities so that we can extend our youth café offer to young people in Kerry on a county-wide basis
- Funding for KDYS youth work interventions to support mental health and well being.

### **For further information**

If you would like further information about KDYS aspirations and concerns for youth work in Kerry, please contact Berni Smyth, CEO of KDYS at [bernismyth@kdys.ie/0832018521](mailto:bernismyth@kdys.ie/0832018521)

You can find out more about our work by visiting our website: [www.kdys.ie](http://www.kdys.ie)

KDYS Strategic Plan 2023 to 2026

[https://kdys.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/474660\\_KDYS-Strategic-Plan.pdf](https://kdys.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/474660_KDYS-Strategic-Plan.pdf)

KDYS Impact Report 2022

[https://kdys.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/480019\\_KDYS-Impact-Report-31.07.pdf](https://kdys.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/480019_KDYS-Impact-Report-31.07.pdf)

## **National Pre-Budget Campaigns KDYS Supports**

In the run-up to Budget 2024, KDYS has supported a number of national campaigns to address inequities in the voluntary and community sector which impact directly on young people and families. Please see below information about the campaigns we have supported and the issues particularly relevant to young people we would like you to bear in mind:

### **Children's Rights Alliance – End Child Poverty**

The Children's Rights Alliance has coordinated a high-profile campaign calling on the government to #EndChildPoverty. KDYS is particularly concerned about the impact of rising levels of poverty and the housing crisis on children. KDYS works with vulnerable children living in a range of congregated settings including children in state care, children in homeless accommodation, in direct provision and Ukrainian accommodation centres. We ask you to support this campaign which will lead to better economic, health, education and social outcomes for children.

[https://www.childrensrights.ie/sites/default/files/submissions\\_reports/files/Children%27s%20Rights%20Alliance%20Pre-Budget%20Submission%20Budget%202024.pdf](https://www.childrensrights.ie/sites/default/files/submissions_reports/files/Children%27s%20Rights%20Alliance%20Pre-Budget%20Submission%20Budget%202024.pdf)

### **The Wheel - Pay Parity for the Voluntary and Community Sector**

As you will be aware, we are facing a crisis in the voluntary and community sector due to the widening pay gap between this sector and public bodies. This is creating recruitment and retention issues that are having an adverse impact on the quality of services organisations like KDYS can provide to children, young people and their families. To address this, the Wheel, which is the national representative body for voluntary and community organisations has called upon the government to allocate funding for a 10 to 12 % pay rise for workers in the sector. Research undertaken by Youth Work Ireland has indicated that, due to varied value attached to youth work by government departments, the gap is as wide as 25% for some aspects of our work. To address some of these inequities within the sector, the National Youth Council of Ireland is calling on the government to invest €9.4 million into the youth work sector. This funding needs to be passed onto youth organisations. We are also requesting that existing Service Level Agreements under government departments are adjusted to allow for forthcoming pension costs. This is a welcome development but we cannot provide for it under current youth work pay structures and funding allocations under our SLA's.

<https://www.wheel.ie/sites/default/files/media/file-uploads/2023-07/Pre-Budget%20Submission%20-%20July%202023%20-%20Web%20Version.pdf>

### **National Youth Council of Ireland – Investment in the Youth Sector**

The NYCI is calling on the government to invest €9.4 million in young people and youth work. Issues including the impact of COVID-19 impacted their mental health and social connections, and now, the cost-of-living crisis means many are struggling financially. This is leading to a growing need for services provided by youth organisations. A national survey conducted by NYCI, reported that 3 out of 5 youth services are struggling to delivery vital services due to the impact of inflation.

<https://www.youth.ie/budget24-openletter/#>

## **Youth Work Ireland -Funding for Universal Youth Work and Youth Spaces**

KDYS is a member of Youth Work Ireland which is one of the largest youth work organisations in Ireland. Since returning to youth work, I am deeply concerned by the challenges youth services such as KDYS face in identifying sustainable funds to support universal youth work and dedicated youth café spaces. Over a number of years, there has been a move towards a government preference for funding targeted youth work. In my view, this is missing the point - undermining some of the most effective youth work methodologies and denying a significant cohort of young people the opportunity to engage in youth work activities in their own community. Youth Work Ireland has flagged that 'Targeted youth work is an important subset of universal youth work and not a separate category' (YWI submission to DCEDIY on the new National Action Plan for Youth Work). Youth Work Ireland is also calling for greater investment in supporting and training youth work volunteers.

<C:\Users\bernismyth\OneDrive\Youth Work Ireland\YWI PRE BUDGET 2024 SUBMISSION.odt>

## **Mental Health Reform – Community Based Youth Mental Health Supports and Services**

Mental Health Reform has highlighted the considerable value provided by community-based services such as KDYS and is asking you and your colleagues to ensure that the commitments to children made under the Mental Health Bill (2023) are delivered upon. Dr Niall Muldoon, the Ombudsman for Children, has said that 'a dedicated mental health budget for children with ring-fenced funding should form part of the health spend for Budget 2024'. This must include provision for community-based mental health and well being supports provided by youth organisations and is particularly relevant to Kerry.

<https://www.mentalhealthreform.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/2-Pager-V1.pdf>

## **References**

*The Future of Youth Work* (2023) The Houses of the Oireachtas Government Press, Dublin

[https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/33/joint\\_committee\\_on\\_children\\_equality\\_disability\\_integration\\_and\\_youth/reports/2023/2023-07-11\\_report-on-the-future-of-youth-work\\_en.pdf](https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/33/joint_committee_on_children_equality_disability_integration_and_youth/reports/2023/2023-07-11_report-on-the-future-of-youth-work_en.pdf)

*Integrated Youth Services Evidence Review: Final Report from the Evaluation of Youth Work Ireland's Integrated Youth Services Model Evidence Review* (2022)

[https://www.youthworkireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/YWI\\_full\\_report\\_final\\_intergrated\\_youth\\_services-1.pdf](https://www.youthworkireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/YWI_full_report_final_intergrated_youth_services-1.pdf)

Independent Review of the provision of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in the State by the Inspector of Mental Health Services

<https://www.mhcirl.ie/sites/default/files/2023-07/Mental%20Health%20Commission%20Independent%20Reviews%20of%20CAMHS%20services%20in%20the%20State.pdf>

