



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 2025.

### **Context**

Over a number of years, the pattern of failing to adequately invest in the youth work 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. The main youth work organisations nationally are agreed that additional investment is needed in both universal and targeted services, capital funding to upgrade existing and acquire new physical spaces for youth work and cross-departmental agreements to tackle underlying social and economic issues affecting children.

*Young Ireland: the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People (2023 – 2028)* makes a number of commitments to realise the rights of the children of Ireland which cannot be achieved without adequate investment and cross-departmental planning and coordination.

*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 again calling upon you to promote these recommendations as part of your budget manifesto in 2025 on behalf of the young people of Kerry.

This budget coincides with the imminent publication of the New Action Plan for Youth Services in Ireland. 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. In advance of Budget 2024, I contacted you saying much the same thing. Youth work did not fare well last year and while we continue to neglect this area, the needs of young people will only increase.

### **KDYS**

KDYS is the leading youth work provider serving the Diocese of Kerry. On average, we work with approximately 5,000 young people annually. KDYS also supports up to 500 volunteers to provide youth clubs and mentoring to young people in over 30 local communities across the Diocese taking in Kerry and parts of North Cork. Given the geographic span within our remit, these local volunteer-ran supports are invaluable and are a huge asset to KDYS. However, we struggle to resource this area of work and desperately need funding for additional staffing and increased training/development for volunteers. We would also like to expand the range of

activities available to young people in Kerry and to re-establish KDYS Youth Day which was a hugely successful large scale event for young people to socialise safely.

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 2023, we updated our Constitution to include youth participation as a legal obligation and we take this commitment seriously. We have established a Youth Advisory Panel to inform the decisions of the CEO and KDYS Board of Trustees. We also run various programmes to ensure that the young people we work with are informed about their rights. 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.

We also host large scale consultations 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 our engagements with young people over the past couple of years, 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 youth mental health supports.

### **KDYS Priorities for Budget 2025**

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

- Government to honour its commitment to ending child poverty by addressing national issues impacting on children and young people including cost of living/inflation, 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 areas listed above
- Urgent need for mainstream funding to continue to provide a youth centre in Killorglin
- Capital investment in existing KDYS youth centres so that we can provide safe spaces for young people to meet
- Support to complete the repair and renovation of KDYS Killarney which is a community hub and building of significant historic value to the town
- 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 community-based youth work interventions to support mental health and well being.

### **For further information**

If you would like further information about our 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)

Reach 2023

[KDYS-REACH-2023.pdf](#)

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

In the run-up to Budget 2025, 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:

### **Youth Work Ireland – Investment in Youth Work**

KDYS is a member of Youth Work Ireland (YWI) which is one of the largest youth work organisations in Ireland. Berni Smyth, CEO of KDYS became a Trustee of YWI in June 2023 and has responsibility for external relationships at Board level. In Budget 2025, Youth Work Ireland's campaign #youthworkforall is seeking investment in universal youth work, capital investment in youth spaces and pay parity for workers in the sector.

[YWI Budget 2025.pdf](#)

[YWI Pre Budget Submission 2025](#)

[Home - Youth Work Ireland](#)

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

The NYCI is calling on the government for an increase of €15 million for youth work in Budget 2025. The rationale for this increase is broken down as follows: Level up current

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

[NYCI-Pre-Budget-Submission-2025 \(1\).pdf](#)

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

KDYS is a member of the Children's Rights Alliance. The focus of the CRA for the past couple of budgets has been an end to child poverty. See link to the full CRA budget submission and press release outlining their key objectives for Budget 2025 which include housing, food poverty, education supports and the current crisis in Tusla's special care arrangements.

[Childrens-Rights-Alliance-Pre-Budget-2025-Submission-for-the-Department-of-Social-Protection.pdf \(childrensrights.ie\)](#)

[Budget 2025 is this Government's last opportunity to show they are serious about ending child poverty - Children's Rights Alliance \(childrensrights.ie\)](#)

### **The Wheel - Pay Parity, Investment in Youth Activities and Youth Participation**

The Wheel has taken a lead in lobbying and campaigning for pay parity for the sector arising out of recent WRC agreements. In Budget 2025, the Wheel is also campaigning for additional resources specifically for young people:

- Invest €15 million in community youth recreation programmes delivered by the community and voluntary sector and built infrastructure
- Invest €1 million for the development and funding of a programme for youth participation and civic engagement targeting areas of disadvantage and co-designed by community and voluntary organisations working within these areas to deliver on the Participation of Children and Young People in Decision-making Action Plan 2024-2028
- Expand the Cross-Government Network of the Child Poverty Unit to include cross-sectoral representatives.

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

Mental Health Reform is seeking a €10 million investment to resource Youth Mental Health Services to increase community-based youth mental health programmes provided by organisations such as KDYS; fully resource the HSE Child and Youth Mental Health Office and Action Plan and to implement the 49 recommendations made in the Mental Health Commission's 2023 Independent Review of CAMHS to improve the quality of services for children and young people. This is particularly relevant to Kerry where many families continue to report a loss of trust in CAMHS.

## References

*Young Ireland: the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People* (2023 – 2028) Prepared by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth  
[www.gov.ie/equality](http://www.gov.ie/equality)

[277172\\_ef862fia-4e15-465a-9fed-fd43303b60c4.pdf](#)

*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>

<https://www.charitiesregulator.ie/media/4767/scoeco.pdf>