



INFORMING THE
DEVELOPMENT

— *of the* —

**NATIONAL
YOUTH
STRATEGY
2015–2020**



An Roinn Leanáí
agus Gnóthai Óige
Department of
Children and Youth Affairs

**INFORMING THE
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YOUTH
STRATEGY
2015–2020**



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Contents

Acknowledgements	iv
Glossary of key terms	v
List of Tables and Figures	ix
1. Introduction	1
Development of the National Youth Strategy	2
Setting the context for the National Youth Strategy	2
Purpose of the National Youth Strategy	4
Contribution of the youth sector	5
2. Young People in Ireland	9
The socio-economic situation of young people	10
‘Youth’ as a period of development	14
Developmental tasks and influencing factors for young people	16
Young people’s views on their lives and situation	18
The youth policy environment	18
National Youth Strategy consultation	21
Summary of key points	30
3. Towards a National Youth Strategy	33
Aim and principles	34
Priority areas	35
Supports and enablers	39
Concluding Comments	42
References	45
Appendices	
Appendix 1: National Youth Strategy Task Group and Advisory Group	56
Appendix 2: Implementation structures for the National Policy Framework	59
Appendix 3: Youth-specific Government commitments	60
Appendix 4: Summary of young people’s views on social inclusion	66
Appendix 5: Sources informing key areas for consideration	68
Appendix 6: Suggested criteria for identifying National Youth Strategy priorities	70

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This document sets the context and informs the development of Ireland's National Youth Strategy for 10-24 year-olds to cover the period 2015–2020. It has regard to preparatory work carried out by the National Youth Work Advisory Committee in 2013/2014 and is based on discussion papers prepared for the National Youth Strategy Task Group, convened by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) to oversee the development of the National Youth Strategy, from its first meeting in July 2014 through to March 2015 (*see Appendix 1 for Terms of Reference and membership*). It completes a series of preceding papers prepared and used to inform meetings and discussions of the Task Group, in addition to feedback from its members and their respective organisations/agencies and issues raised at meetings.

An Advisory Group convened by the National Youth Council of Ireland, comprising representatives of the voluntary youth sector, has also informed the development of the National Youth Strategy. The youth organisations that participated in this Advisory Group are also listed in Appendix 1.

This document details the approach to, and findings from, the consultation process, carried out to inform the development of the National Youth Strategy over the period December 2014 to February 2015. It has been prepared by the National Youth Strategy Project Team, convened by DCYA in July 2014 and comprising officials from the Youth Affairs Unit, DCYA; experts from the Centre for Effective Services; a representative nominated by the youth sector, and a graduate intern employed by the National Youth Council of Ireland to support and assist the development of the National Youth Strategy.

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GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

The descriptions set out below clarify the meaning and scope of key terms or phrases used in this document.

Adolescence: The World Health Organization defines adolescence as 'human growth and development that occurs after childhood and before adulthood, characterised by the onset of puberty'.

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children & Young People, 2014-2020: This coordinates policy across Government in line with the five national outcomes, with the aim of improving outcomes for children and young people up to the age of 24 years while transforming the effectiveness of existing policies, services and resources.

Career guidance and counselling services: Specific services, special courses and contacts with the world of work, aimed at young people's development of career management skills.

Child: A 'child' is defined as any person under the age of 18 years, in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Children and Young People's Services Committees: These are county-level committees bringing together the main statutory, community and voluntary providers of services to children and young people aged 0-24 years. They provide a forum for joint planning and coordination to ensure that children, young people and their families receive improved and accessible services. Their role is to enhance interagency cooperation and to realise the five national outcomes for children and young people as set out in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. Formerly called Children's Services Committees, they were re-named Children and Young People's Services Committees in 2014 in order to more adequately reflect and align with recent national policy.

Cross-sectoral coordination: Coordination and integration of measures across different policy sectors. Horizontal coordination between different organisations and vertical coordination through different levels of Government are equally important.

Early school-leaving: All forms of leaving initial education and training before completing the upper secondary level.

Education and Training Boards (ETBs): Statutory authorities that have responsibility for education and training, youth work and a range of other statutory functions. Education and Training Boards (ETBs) manage and operate second-level schools, further education colleges, multi-faith community national schools and a range of adult and further education centres delivering education and training programmes. ETBs are active in local communities through the direct provision of training and education programmes delivered in training centres, colleges and other training and educational settings.

Formal education: Education provided in the system of schools, colleges, universities and other formal educational institutions that normally constitutes a continuous 'ladder' of full-time education for children and young people, generally beginning at ages 5-7 years and continuing up to 25 years of age.

Informal learning: Learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure. Informal learning is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support. It can be unintentional from the learner's perspective.

Inputs: Resources made available to a service and/or programme to help it achieve its objectives.

Key partners: Those who have key roles in supporting young people as they transition from childhood to adulthood and in achieving the strategic objectives of the National Youth Strategy.

Local Community Development Committees: These committees comprise Local Authority members and officials, State agencies and people actively working with local development, community development, and economic, cultural and environmental organisations. Their role is to implement a joined-up, cross-sectoral approach to local and community development programming. They draw on the expertise and experience of public and private actors within the relevant Local Authority area to provide effective and efficient services to citizens and communities, and particularly those most in need of those services.

Marginalised/disadvantaged young people: This term includes, but is not limited to, young people who are marginalised by location or geography; Travellers; Roma; young people from ethnic or religious minorities; migrants; refugees and asylum-seekers; young people with disabilities or with mental health issues; lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) young people; young carers; young people in conflict with the law; young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET); young parents; those in care; those in direct provision; and lone parents under the age of 25 years.

Non-formal education: An organised educational process that is complementary to mainstream systems of education and training, and does not typically lead to certification.

Non-formal learning: A targeted learning process that supports the development of a person, his or her transformation potential, creativity, talents, initiative and social responsibility, and the development of associated knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. It encompasses learning outside institutional contexts (e.g. out of school), but can also take place in such contexts. Non-formal learning in youth work is often structured, based on learning objectives, learning time and specific learning support; is intentional, and participation is voluntary. Non-formal learning is underpinned by a set of educational values and principles.

Objective: Statement of what needs to be achieved and by when.

Outcome: The changes or benefits for service users that happen as a result of a service being provided or a policy being implemented.

Outputs: The service or programmes produced or delivered, including number, type and frequency of activities, and number of participants involved.

Parents: ‘Parent’ or ‘parents’ are defined as a person or persons with parental authority or responsibility. Parenting refers to all roles undertaken by parents or others acting *in loco parentis* in order to bring up a child/children.

Quality services: A quality service is one that is effective, efficient and economical in working with young people to achieve beneficial outcomes. Such a service may conform to standards in a relevant quality framework or is seen to embody widely accepted concepts of best practice.

Risky behaviours: Behaviours that potentially expose young people to harm or to significant risk of harm, which will prevent them reaching their potential. Some risky behaviours (e.g. curious or experimental behaviour) are normal and are part of growing up. However, some behaviours can put young people or others at risk and can escalate the behaviour to a harmful stage.

School: Encompasses all educational settings for young people, including primary, post-primary, higher level and centres of education such as Youthreach Centres.

Social inclusion: A process which ensures that those at risk of social exclusion gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life, and to enjoy a standard of living and well-being that is considered to be the norm in the society in which they live. The aim is that everyone is able to participate in decision-making which affects their lives and access to their fundamental rights.

Strategic objective: A broadly defined objective that must be achieved in order to make a strategy succeed.

Structured Dialogue: Structured Dialogue is a European Commission initiative that enables young people to be involved in the shaping of policies that affect them through continuous cooperation among youth representatives and decision-makers. It involves regular consultation with young people and youth organisations at all levels in EU countries, as well as dialogue with youth policy-makers at EU conferences organised by the Member State holding the EU Presidency.

Targeted support/intervention: Describes a service, programme, event or activity that is focused on a specific individual, group or issue, and is intended to achieve particular policy goals and outcomes (e.g. being healthy, avoiding crime, finding a job). It often involves working with young people who have a high level of need and with those who are experiencing particular or multiple forms of disadvantage.

Universal programmes/provision: Describes a service, programme, event or activity that is open to any young person who wishes to participate.

Whole-of-Government approach: Public service agencies working across portfolio boundaries to achieve a shared goal and an integrated response to particular issues.

Young person: A 'young person' is defined as any person aged 10 years and under the age of 25 years, in line with the upper age threshold of the Youth Work Act, 2001 and the definition used by the United Nations.

Youth: This is a distinctive phase in the life course during which young people experience profound and rapid physical, neurological and psycho-social changes. When these occur is dependent on social, economic, cultural and other contextual factors.

Youth Guarantee: The 'Youth Guarantee' is a new EU initiative for 18-24 year-olds. Its objective is to ensure that young people receive a quality offer of employment, training, work experience or further education within four months of becoming unemployed. Ireland's *Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan* was launched in January 2014; it involved planned provision of 28,000 programme places specifically for the young unemployed. Aspects of the Plan, involving a partnership of key national and local stakeholders, including local youth services, have been piloted in Ballymun, Dublin, with funding support from the European Commission. The findings from this pilot are informing the national roll-out of the Youth Guarantee.

Youth sector: This includes, but is not limited to, youth work and other youth services provided by voluntary youth organisations.

Youth work: A diverse range of activities, topics and measures provided by a range of actors in assorted fields and settings. It is a planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young people through their voluntary participation and which (a) is complementary to their formal, academic or vocational education and training, and (b) in Ireland is provided primarily by voluntary youth work organisations.



LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1: Personal and social development outcomes in youth work	6
Table 2: Snapshot of the socio-economic situation of young people in Ireland	13
Table 3: Ranking of the five national outcomes	24
Table 4: Young people's ranking of key supports	24
Table 5: Ranking of areas of importance in young people's lives	25
Table 6: Priorities arising from the national consultation process	29
Figure 1: The six transformational goals for achieving the five national outcomes	3
Figure 2: Collective contribution to achieving the five national outcomes	8
Figure 3: Overview of youth as a developmental period	17
Figure 4: National policy context informing the National Youth Strategy	19
Figure 5: National Youth Strategy consultation process and profile of participants	23
Figure 6: Ranking of priority supports for effective implementation identified by those working with young people	30
Figure 7: National Youth Strategy logic model	43



INTRODUCTION

DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL YOUTH STRATEGY

Preparatory work for the Strategy was carried out by the National Youth Work Advisory Committee over the 2013/2014 period. The development of the National Youth Strategy has been overseen by a cross-sectoral National Youth Strategy Task Group convened by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) in July 2014. The Task Group has provided input and feedback on the development of the strategy and its aim, principles and emerging priority areas, as well as identifying a range of activities required to implement the strategy. The Task Group comprises representatives from Government departments and State agencies, the youth sector and the academic and business sectors. An Advisory Group convened by the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI), comprising representatives of the voluntary youth sector, also worked alongside the Task Group to help inform the development of the strategy (*see Appendix 1 for further details of these Groups*).

This document, *Informing the development of the National Youth Strategy for 10-24 year-olds, 2015–2020*, was prepared by the National Youth Strategy Project Team, comprising representatives from the Youth Affairs Unit, DCYA; the Centre for Effective Services; a youth sector nominee, and a graduate intern employed at the National Youth Council of Ireland to support and assist the development of the Strategy. It includes the findings from an extensive consultation process held with young people, those working with young people, and key stakeholders over the period December 2014 to February 2015. The purpose of the consultation was to help determine the strategic objectives of, and activities for, the National Youth Strategy.

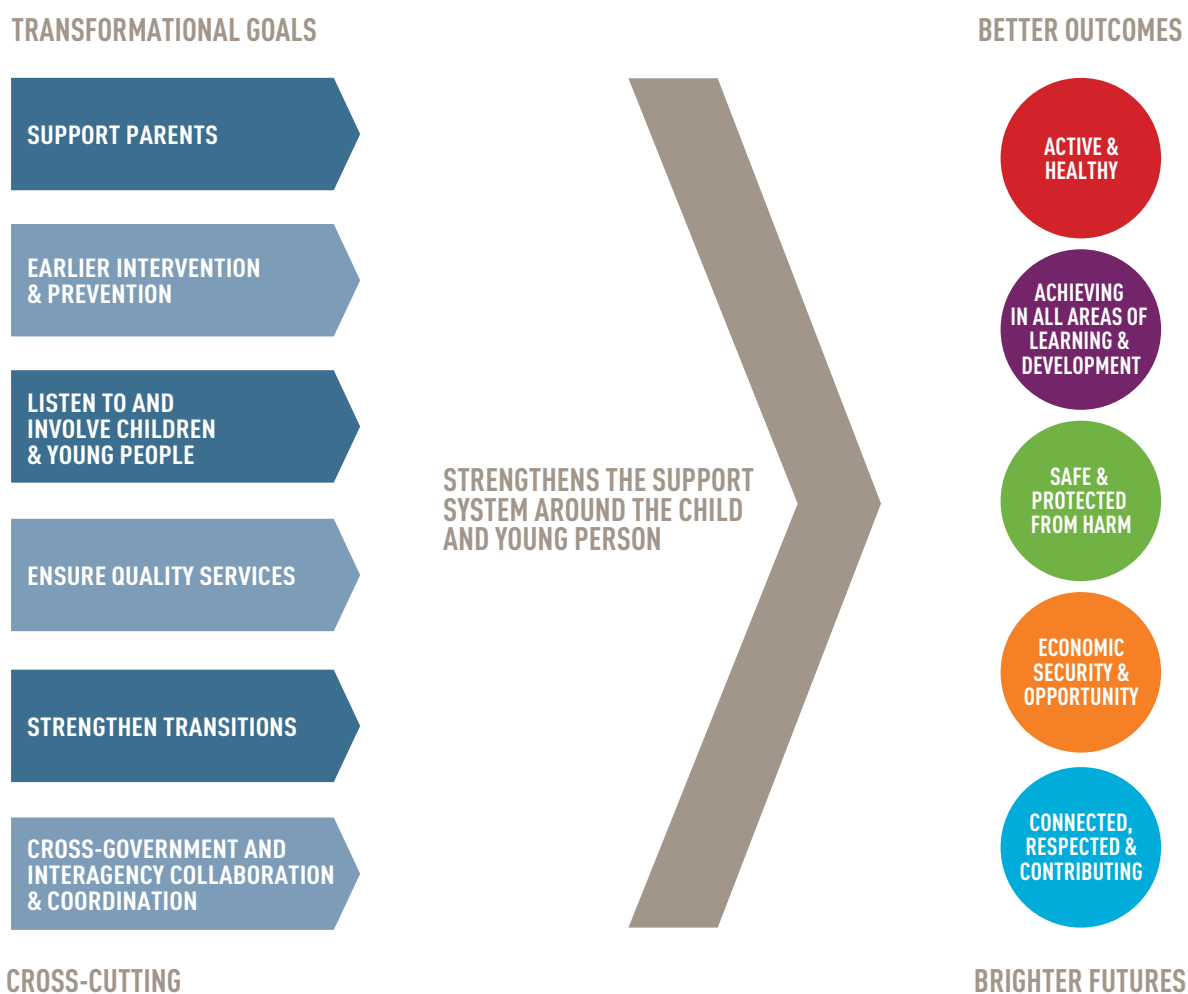
The National Youth Strategy was drafted by the Project Team having regard to the views and inputs of the various organisations/agencies represented by the National Youth Work Advisory Committee, the National Youth Strategy Task Group and NYCI Advisory Group, as well as stakeholders in the national consultation.

SETTING THE CONTEXT FOR THE NATIONAL YOUTH STRATEGY

The National Youth Strategy has its origins in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children & Young People, 2014–2020*. Published by DCYA in 2014, *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* is **Ireland's first overarching, whole-of-Government approach** to national policy for all children and young people up to the age of 24 years (DCYA, 2014a). Its vision is for **Ireland to be one of the best small countries in which to grow up and raise a family, and where the rights of all children and young people are respected, protected and fulfilled; where their voices are heard and where they are supported to realise their maximum potential.**

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures captures all children and youth policy commitments across Government departments and agencies in relation to five national outcome areas and six cross-cutting transformational goals required to achieve the outcomes, as outlined in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The six transformational goals for achieving the five national outcomes



Source: DCYA (2014a)

Implementation of the commitments outlined in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* is being coordinated by an Implementation Team led by DCYA and supported by implementation structures comprising key stakeholders, including the Children and Young People's Policy Consortium, a Sponsors Group and an Advisory Council (see Appendix 2). These structures consolidate many of the existing consultative bodies and interdepartmental processes within DCYA. Allied to this is a greater alignment of existing groupings, such as a newly reconstituted National Steering Group for Children and Young People's Services Committees, Comhairle na nÓg and Ireland's Structured Dialogue process.

PURPOSE OF THE NATIONAL YOUTH STRATEGY

The purpose of the National Youth Strategy is to provide a specific focus on children and young people aged 10-24 years in relation to the five national outcomes set out in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* and to identify key priorities that will contribute to achieving these outcomes. It is one of three strategies developed under *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* by DCYA to give further definition to the National Policy Framework: the others are the *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making* (June 2015) and the *National Early Years Strategy* (forthcoming).

Specific aims

The National Youth Strategy will focus on the **youth-specific policy commitments** outlined in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* (see Appendix 3) and bring coherence to meeting the needs, aspirations and interests of young people aged 10-24 years as they make the journey from childhood to adulthood.

The National Youth Strategy is to be a **universal strategy for all young people aged 10-24 years**, spanning the period 2015–2020. Within this universal strategy, priority is given to the needs of young people experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, the poorest outcomes.

An important aim is to **improve cross-Government working** between statutory and non-statutory organisations and agencies, in order to produce a coordinated, society-wide plan for all young people so that they can realise their maximum potential with regard to the five national outcomes. In relation to this aim, the National Youth Strategy will seek to facilitate collaborative working arrangements among those working for and with young people, so as to enable young people to grow up safe, healthy and happy; to equip them to take on new responsibilities, and to participate in all aspects of life.

The National Youth Strategy is to be **evidence informed and focused on implementation**, with priorities underpinned by realistic and achievable actions. These actions will form the basis of reporting and accountability under the implementation structures of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*.

The strategy is to provide direction to **key services and supports for young people**, specifically the youth sector, in order to inform youth work programmes and services, and to provide a framework for the youth sector's collaboration with other sectors.

The National Youth Strategy will be informed by the findings and recommendations of the *Value for Money and Policy Review of Youth Programmes* (DCYA, 2014b), particularly in relation to alignment between the outcomes of targeted youth service provision, the five national outcomes and the National Youth Strategy's priorities.

The National Youth Strategy will **add value** to *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* by:

- Highlighting ‘youth’ as a distinctive phase in the life course, involving the transition from childhood to adulthood;
- Setting out an aim and underpinning principles to provide direction for youth policy and work with young people;
- Identifying youth-specific objectives and priorities in relation to the five national outcomes in the National Policy Framework;
- Linking youth policy in Ireland with other national and EU youth/youth-related policies;
- Optimising what key partners can contribute and how they can work together to improve outcomes for young people;
- Detailing actions to realise the strategy’s aim and objectives from 2015 to 2017, and identifying contributors to progressing these actions.

In summary, the National Youth Strategy will bring focus and coherence to the actions of Government and other stakeholders, to enable all young people to realise their maximum potential with regard to the five national outcomes.

CONTRIBUTION OF THE YOUTH SECTOR

One important objective for the National Youth Strategy is to provide direction for organisations providing youth work, collectively known as the ‘youth sector’. The purpose of youth work is defined in the Youth Work Act, 2001 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 (a) complements their formal, academic or vocational education and training, and (b) is provided primarily by voluntary youth work organisations.’

The youth sector in Ireland is organisationally and thematically diverse, with a significant infrastructure comprising 30 national voluntary youth organisations, and with more than 450 local youth services and projects and 1,900 youth clubs (Indecon, 2012). These services are delivered to about 380,000 young people by around 1,400 youth work personnel and an estimated 40,000 volunteers. Education and Training Boards (ETBs) support the work of the youth sector through the coordination, administration and assessment of youth work services in their areas. The quality of youth work provision, both staff-led and volunteer-led, is assessed through DCYA National Quality Standards initiatives, such as the *National Quality Standards Framework (NQSF) for Youth Work* (DCYA, 2010).

The youth sector provides a wide range of services and programmes involving non-formal education and learning, advocacy, mentoring, specialist support, and information and advice. Activities include youth clubs; uniformed organisations/groups; recreational, artistic and cultural programmes; youth information centres; street/outreach work; support in schools and in after-school clubs; issue-based activities; and intercultural and international awareness activities and exchanges.

Throughout all of these services, the emphasis is on personal and social development. The former leads to changes in the attitudes, skills, knowledge and behaviours of participants. The latter involves interactions between young people, and between young people and the social environment. These interactions can lead to beneficial changes in circumstances, conditions, systems, services and procedures. Table 1 shows the outcomes that are most commonly associated with youth work (adapted from Devlin and Gunning, 2009; Dickson *et al*, 2012).

Table 1: Personal and social development outcomes in youth work

Outcome area	Outcomes
Relationship with others	Positive peer relationships; positive intergenerational relationships; prosocial skills; leadership skills; decision-making skills; openness to people from diverse backgrounds; improved relationships with adults.
Sense of self	Personal development; self-esteem; confidence; self-efficacy; identity; character; empowerment.
Skills	Enhanced capacity regarding public speaking, problem-solving, self-efficacy, making decisions, critical thinking. Enhanced interpersonal abilities in relation to teamwork, group work and communications. Increased abilities in arts and creativity in relation to music, dance, drama and writing. Increase in physical competence in relation to sports, games and outdoor activities.
Knowledge	More informed in relation to politics, cultural and social issues.
Behaviours	More engaged in structured and constructive activities. Increased involvement in planning and decision-making structures and processes. Enhanced positive and prosocial behaviour and diminishing negative and antisocial behaviour.
Health and well-being	Reduced alcohol and substance misuse; diversion from crime; prevention of risky behaviours; healthier choices; improved mental health.
Values and beliefs	Raised aspirations; positive diversity attitudes; new social interests.
Education, training and employment	Better academic achievement; strengthened bonds to school; increased economic self-sufficiency.
Community and society	Civic engagement; strengthened bonds to community; partnership working; increased community cohesion; improvement in local conditions and amenities; enhanced local leadership.

In pursuing its objectives, youth work is characterised by a distinctive approach (Dickson *et al*, 2012) involving:

- **Trustful and respectful relationships** with and between young people, into which they normally enter by choice and work in partnership with adults;
- **Purposeful practices** tailored to the interests and concerns, needs, rights and responsibilities of young people, giving priority to how they identify and understand these;
- **Active, experiential and collective learning** (i.e. learning by doing rather than formal education processes or predetermined curricula);
- **Opportunities** that are developmental, educational, challenging, supportive and creative, designed to extend young people's power over their own lives and within their wider society;
- **Supports** for young people to embrace key features of their individual and collective identities – in relation particularly to class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, culture and religious beliefs;
- **Supports** for young people as they deal with difficulties, threats and risks that may impact in damaging ways on them personally, on their communities and on the wider society.

As Figure 2 shows, the youth sector sits alongside and complements other publicly funded services in enabling young people to achieve the five national outcomes. Youth work has a particular focus on supporting young people to develop the core social and emotional competencies and attributes that provide the foundation for all learning and achievement. These core competencies include self-motivation, a sense of efficacy and direction, communication skills, collaborative working, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.

The importance of harnessing the goodwill, resources and expertise of relevant stakeholders in achieving the five national outcomes cannot be overstated.

Figure 2: Collective contribution to achieving the five national outcomes



Highlighted text in yellow in Figure 2 and below denotes the Government department with lead responsibility for a national outcome area.

Government department	National outcome
Department of Health	1. Active and healthy, physical and mental well-being
Department of Education and Skills	2. Achieving in all areas of learning and development
Department of Children and Youth Affairs	3. Keeping safe and protected from harm
Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovations	
Department of Social Protection	4. Economic security and opportunity
Department of Justice and Equality	
Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government	5. Connected, respected and contributing
Department of Foreign Affairs	
Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht	
Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport	



**YOUNG PEOPLE
IN IRELAND**

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE

The following brief account of the social and economic situation of young people living in Ireland today indicates that life for many is relatively positive. For others, interacting socio-economic and cultural factors hinder, slow down or disrupt their journey to economic independence and adulthood (Arnett, 2000; McCoy *et al*, 2014; Eurofound, 2014b).

Population

One-third of Ireland's population is under the age of 25 years, with 10-24 year-olds representing 18.3% of the total population of 4.59 million (CSO, 2014a). Research has shown that, generally, young people in Ireland are happy in their home and with their families, enjoy friendships, are actively engaged in sport, culture and recreation, achieve at school and in higher education, have good health and self-esteem, and many are civically engaged (DCYA, 2012a). At the same time, the recession has hit young people harder than any other social grouping, with youth unemployment rising to an all-time high of 25% (CSO, 2014b). There is also a small, but significant number of young people who are disadvantaged and at risk, and who need extra supports as they make the transition from childhood to adulthood.

Physical health

The overwhelming majority of young people in Ireland are positive about their health, with fewer than 3% of males and 6% of females perceiving their health as being 'fair', 'bad' or 'very bad' (Department of Health, 2013a). Over 70% play sport or exercise once a week (Eurofound, 2014a). However, only 12% of post-primary school children engage in recommended levels of physical activity. Obesity continues to be an issue, with 6% of 13-year-olds reported as obese and a further 20% reported as overweight in 2012 (Growing Up in Ireland, 2012). In 2011, around 44,000 young people between the ages of 15 and 24 years reported having a disability (CSO, 2011a). It has also been estimated that 20% of 16-year-olds drink alcohol each week (National Documentation Centre on Drug Use, 2012). The cost of healthcare in Ireland is the fourth highest in the EU and is seen as a barrier by 51% of young people (Eurofound, 2014a).

Mental health

Mental health issues are critical because they place young people at increased risk of further episodes during their adult years and adversely affect employment, education and training opportunities. Conclusions on the state of youth mental health in Ireland, following a rigorous analysis of data from a nationally representative Irish sample, found that one-fifth of respondents indicated that they had engaged in some form of self-harm, and one-third stated that they had experienced some level of mental health distress (Dooley and Fitzgerald, 2012). Furthermore, over two-fifths of those surveyed reported that at some point they had thought their life was not worth living. The suicide rate for young people aged 15-19 years in 2010 was the fourth highest in the European Union (EU), at 10.5% per 1,000,000 (National Office for Suicide Prevention, 2013). It is known that the majority of

young people who die by suicide have not had any contact with a mental health professional (Brodie *et al*, 2011). Young people, especially young girls, are particularly vulnerable to negative self-image and media pressure surrounding body image (DCYA, 2012a).

Education

The number of young people in Ireland completing second-level education is among the highest in the EU. In 2014, just over 90% of students stayed in school to complete their Leaving Certificate (Department of Education and Skills, 2015). At the same time, the proportion of early school-leavers in Ireland (9.7%) is well below the EU average of 14% (*ibid*, 2014a). A high level of absenteeism is also a factor for those at risk of early school-leaving and is associated with poor educational achievement (National Educational Welfare Board, 2007). In 2010, about one-fifth of pupils progressed into further training and education, with 19.8% of these attending a post-Leaving Certificate course (Department of Education and Skills, 2013a). Low educational achievement has serious implications for the life chances of large groups of young people in society, both in accessing further education and employment, and in respect of poor social outcomes in the long term. According to 2014 OECD figures, about 74,000 15-24 year-olds in Ireland (i.e. 16.7% of all young people in this age group) are not in education, employment or training; by contrast, the OECD average for this age cohort is 12.6%. Over 50% of these 74,000 young people in Ireland have no more than lower secondary education; by contrast, about 30% of young people in Ireland aged 15-24 years have higher secondary education and 20% are third-level graduates (Department of Social Protection, 2014a). In the most recent *Report Card* produced by the Children's Rights Alliance (2015), accessing appropriate supports for young people with special needs was highlighted as being important in ensuring equal opportunity to achieving full potential for young people.

Children in care

At the end of 2013, 3,721 of the 6,470 children in the care of the State were aged 10-17 years (HSE, 2013a). Although the number of young people in care tends to be low, recent history dictates that serious attention needs to be paid to issues of safety and quality of care (Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse, 2009, the 'Ryan Report'). There is also a need to address the barriers that prevent young people integrating effectively into wider society while in care and when transitioning from care situations.

Bullying

Almost one-quarter of 9-16 year-olds (23%) surveyed in Ireland in 2012 experienced some form of bullying, online or offline (the latter being the most frequent). This figure of 23% is slightly above the European average of 19%. Online bullying at 4% in Ireland is at the lower end of the spectrum, below the European average of 6%, and half that of the UK, where 8% reported being cyberbullied. Online bullying is much less common among younger 9-12 year-olds and happens mostly to teenagers. Up to one-quarter of 15-16 year-olds (24%) also say they have bullied others. Nearly half of those who have bullied others online

have themselves been victims of cyberbullying (Dublin Institute of Technology, 2013). Research indicates a high level of homophobic bullying in schools and other settings, and this, together with family rejection have been identified as leading to poor mental health outcomes in later life for young LGBT people (Bryan *et al*, 2009).

Youth crime

Although the number of young people referred to the Garda Youth Diversion Programme (just over 12,000 in 2012) is relatively low, a small percentage of this group are responsible for disproportionate levels of alcohol-related youth crime in project catchment areas (Garda Youth Diversion Office, 2012). The majority (90%) of young people aged 10-17 years have reported feeling safe in their communities (Kelly *et al*, 2012).

Youth unemployment

The dynamics of the labour market have shifted significantly over the past decade, with rising youth unemployment and long-term unemployment, lower wages, less job security, greater labour market segmentation, rising underemployment and a significant growth in atypical work patterns, including differential and unfavourable pay and conditions for new entrants (European Youth Forum, 2013). At the same time, future job creation and employment opportunities are likely to be driven in large part by new technologies and other innovations. In this context, unemployment among young people is high.

In 2014, the under 25 years age group had an unemployment rate of 23.9% (32.5% for 15-19 year-olds and 21.6% for 20-24 year-olds), down from 30.4% in 2012. This compares to an unemployment rate of 10.4% for prime age workers (ages 25-54 years). In 2014, about 38% of unemployed young people were out of work for more than one year (Department of Social Protection, 2015). It was reported that approximately 40% of young people aged 18-29 years were living with their parents (Eurofound, 2014a) and there is a significant risk that some young jobseekers may become permanently disconnected from the labour market or face poor earnings and employment prospects throughout their careers.

Poverty rates

In 2012, individuals living in households where there was one adult and one or more children under 18 years continued to have the highest consistent poverty rate, at 17.4% (CSO, 2012d). In general, young people are at greater risk of suffering deprivation than other social groups, with 14% of young people aged 15-24 years living in consistent poverty in 2013 (Department of Social Protection, 2014b). There are particular issues for the 38% of 10-24 year-olds who live in rural areas (Walsh, 2010). Poverty can undermine high expectations and prevent young people from moving smoothly into adulthood, holding a job, being economically independent, confident and capable (Paolini, 2013). There is a particular need to engage those furthest from the labour market and for support at each stage along the pathway to employment. Doing so requires stronger links between local businesses, schools and youth organisations at local level (Coppis and Plimmer, 2013).

Civic and societal engagement

Because emigration reduces potential growth and adds to future demographic problems, it is significant that in 2013 about 35% of those emigrating from Ireland were aged between 15 and 24 years, with young people in their twenties constituting over 70% of all those who emigrated from Ireland (CSO, 2013a). Of those who remain, young people are more active socially and engaged in volunteering activities compared with their EU counterparts, with almost 40% involved in a club or society (Eurofound, 2014a). Over one-third are involved in some form of political activity, which means that they are more likely to have attended a meeting of a trade union, political party or political action group; attended a protest or demonstration; signed a petition (including via e-mail or online); or contacted a politician or public official. It has been estimated that about 43% of young people aged 10-24 years are engaged in various youth work activities and programmes provided by voluntary youth organisations (Indecon, 2012).

In Ireland, the most common age at which a young person begins to self-identify as LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) is 12 years, and the most common age at which they begin the process of 'coming out' to others is 17 years. This can often be a time of profound isolation for LGBT young people (Bryan *et al*, 2009).

Summary

Table 2 presents a snapshot of the social and economic situation of young people aged between 15 and 24 years in Ireland today in relation to the five national outcomes set out in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* (DCYA, 2014a).

Table 2: Snapshot of the socio-economic situation of young people in Ireland

Outcome 1: Active and healthy, physical and mental well-being
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer than 3% of males and 6% of females aged 16-24 years perceive their health as being 'fair', 'bad' or 'very bad'. • The cost of healthcare in Ireland is the fourth highest in the EU and is seen as a barrier by 51% of young people in Ireland. • 6% of 13-year-olds are obese and a further 20% are overweight. • 20% of 16-year-olds are weekly drinkers.
Outcome 2: Achieving in all areas of learning and development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just over 90% of young people complete second-level education. • Around 50% progress into third-level education and 20% progress into further education and training. • The proportion of early school-leavers is 9.7% in Ireland, which is well below the EU average of 14%. • 11,414 young people in second-level schools were taught all subjects through the medium of Irish.

continued

Outcome 3: Keeping safe and protected from harm

- 90% of young people aged 10-17 years report feeling safe in their communities, although there is regional variation, with the figure dropping to 84.9% in Dublin.
- Of the 6,470 children in care at the end of 2013, 3,721 (58%) were aged 10-17 years.
- 12,246 young people were referred to the Garda Youth Diversion Programme in 2012.

Outcome 4: Economic security and opportunity

- In 2014, 23.9% of young people aged 15-24 years were unemployed. The trend is down, from close to 80,000 on average in 2009 to 47,000 on average in 2014.
- The unemployment rate for those aged 20-24 years with no more than lower secondary education has been over 50%, compared with about 30% for those with higher secondary education and 20% for third-level graduates.
- In 2013, 14% of young people aged 15-24 years were living in consistent poverty.

Outcome 5: Connected, respected and contributing to their world

- Over one-third of young people report being involved in some form of political activity.
- 39% of young people are involved in a club or society, and 71% play sport or exercise once a week.
- 12% of those under the age of 24 years were born in a country other than Ireland.
- Approximately 38% of 10-24 year-olds live in rural Ireland.

'YOUTH' AS A PERIOD OF DEVELOPMENT

The World Health Organization identifies 'youth' as one of the critical transitions in the lifespan and as a period characterised by tremendous growth and changes that is second only to that of infancy (WHO, 2002). When this transition period (from childhood to adulthood) occurs, however, varies strongly according to cultural, geographic and socio-economic factors. A young person may be defined variously as under 25 years (as in the Ireland Youth Work Act, 2001); aged 15-29 years (as in the 2009 European Commission's *EU Youth Strategy*); or aged 15-24 years (as in the 1981 *UN Secretary-General's Report to the General Assembly*). While age is a convenient way to define this period in the lifecycle, it is only one characteristic and relates more to universal biological changes than to changes that are more contingent on social, economic, cultural, religious and other contextual factors.

While many of the changes in young people's lives happen during the period commonly referred to as 'adolescence' (defined by the WHO (2015) as between the ages of 10 and 19 years), this period of youth is extending upwards due to societal changes such as later age of marriage and extended dependence on parents. In turn, these changes impact on how 'youth' is viewed and there is increasing acknowledgement in many societies that supports traditionally designed for young people now need to extend into early adulthood (i.e. encompassing those in the 19-24 years age group).

Young people are diverse and do not develop in the same way or at the same rate. In general, however, profound changes commonly occur during this period of transition from childhood to adulthood. The most obvious physical changes include increases in height, development of muscle mass and of secondary sexual characteristics. Recent neurological studies show that during this period, the brain still has considerable ability and capacity to develop (Blakemore and Choudhury, 2006). This means that it is possible to build on and reinforce interventions in the early years or to redress previous difficulties.

The National Youth Strategy needs to build on these **developing abilities** by promoting intellectual and emotional functioning, for example, by enhancing the capacity for speech and language (Bercow, 2008), by encouraging critical thinking, and by equipping young people to engage effectively in discussion.

As biological maturity tends to precede psycho-social maturity, there may be a disconnection between physical capabilities, sensation seeking and impulse control. This may lead to risk-taking behaviours that have short-term and sometimes longer term consequences, for example, in relation to health problems. Linked to this is an increasing desire for autonomy, independence and responsibility, which can be accompanied by the need to detach from parental authority and control (Berk, 2012). At the same time, there is a growing concern among many young people about what others, and particularly their peers, think of them. For some, this increases their vulnerability in decision-making and their behaviours, both of which can have long-lasting impacts on their future development (Gardner and Steinberg, 2005). It is important to acknowledge, however, that the majority of young people explore and experiment in ways that contribute to their development rather than undermine their health and well-being.

While having due regard to risks, the National Youth Strategy needs to promote **assets and strengths-based approaches** of working with young people that enhance the core skills of learning to learn, communication and working together with others.

Coming to a sense of personal, cultural and sexual identity is an important developmental task for young people (Erikson, 1980; Marcia, 1980; Phinney, 1996). Societal norms, responsibilities, expectations and values are all highly influential, and their impact can be seen in various areas, including family, school, community and work (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). Society is not uniform, however, and the trend is for greater diversity, which means that today many young people have to negotiate different, and sometimes conflicting, expectations and pressures. The experience of individuals, therefore, is tempered by a range of overlapping socio-economic and cultural factors, such as ethnicity, class, gender and sexual orientation. Whatever the circumstances, young people need to be aware of, and understand, their family, origins and cultural identity since this can have a profound impact on psychological development and stability (Berry *et al*, 2006).

In recognising diversity and complexity, the National Youth Strategy needs to enhance the **capacity of young people to manage and succeed** in the more complex roles and expectations placed upon them, including increased responsibility and an active role in their own development.

DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS AND INFLUENCING FACTORS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

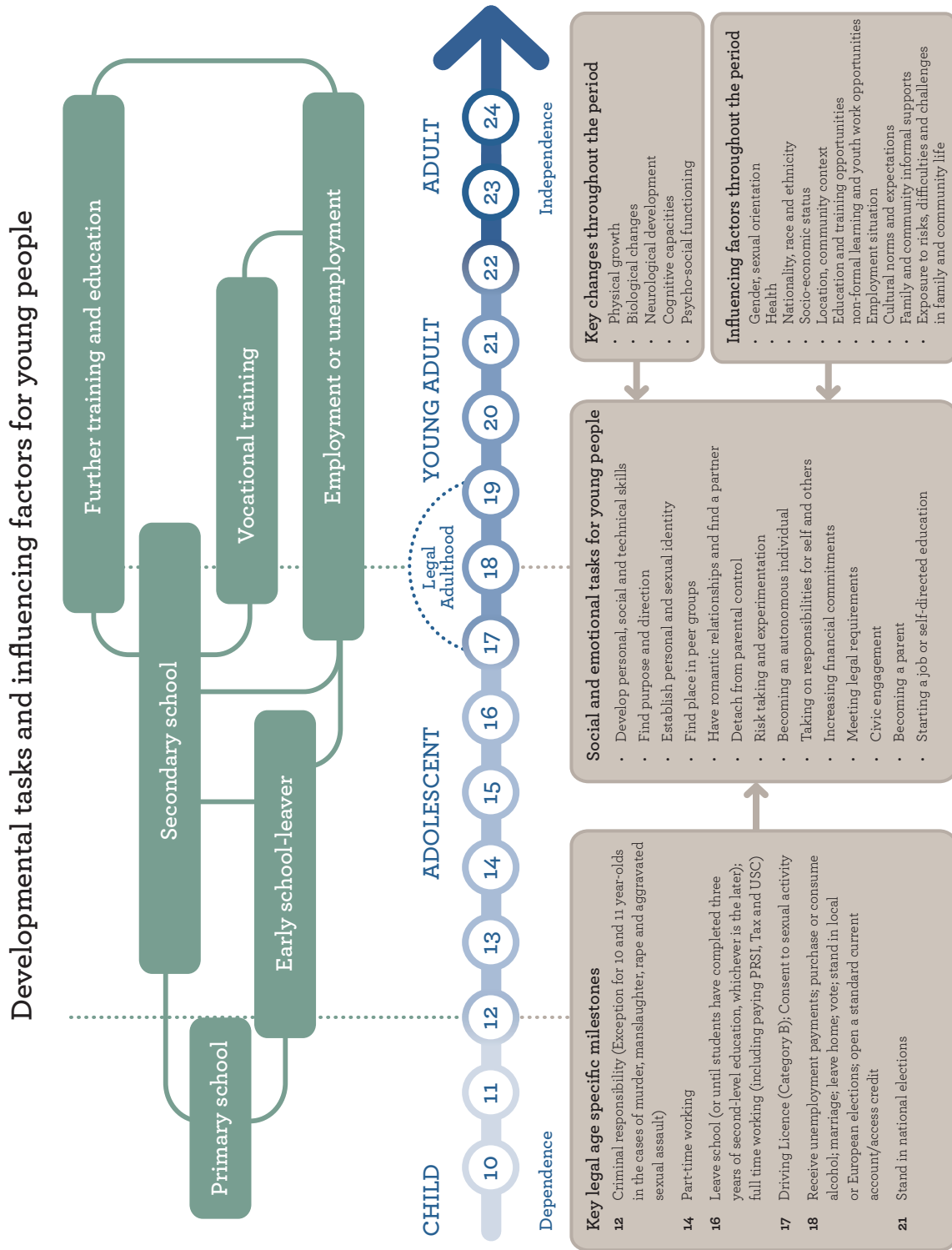
As Figure 3 shows, youth is also characterised by a movement from child policy and systems to adult systems such as health, education, work, justice and social protection (Osgood *et al*, 2010). Different factors come into play at different stages, depending on age and associated cultural and socio-economic factors. Broadly, these stages can be defined as follows:

- 10-15 years: achieving in school, while moving from primary to second-level education;
- 16-17 years: moving from second-level education into work or higher/further education;
- 18-24 years: continuing in work and education, voting and moving from living with family or in other supportive contexts to independent living.

For various reasons, a small number of young people require additional attention and tailored or targeted interventions during the transition from childhood to adulthood. They include young people who are living with disabilities or chronic illnesses; those exploited and neglected; those stigmatised and marginalised because of sexual orientation or ethnicity; adolescents living in remote areas; those who are in State care; and adolescents exposed to domestic violence or substance abuse in their family setting. When young people have positive experiences, they develop an understanding of themselves as significant and respected, and feel a sense of belonging that is essential for their own well-being and their participation in society (McNeil *et al*, 2012).

While the National Youth Strategy needs to provide additional supports for those experiencing adversity, it is important for all young people to have **opportunities to explore life, build diverse experiences and be able to access all services without discrimination.**

Figure 3: Overview of youth as a developmental period



YOUNG PEOPLE'S VIEWS ON THEIR LIVES AND SITUATION

The increasingly extended nature of youth is clearly acknowledged in the findings from recent consultation exercises. In 2011, over 66,700 children and young people took part in the consultation that informed the development of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children & Young People, 2014-2020* (DCYA, 2014a). 50% of these young people were aged 10-12 years; of this cohort, 81% were primary school students and 19% were secondary school students. Key messages from these children on the verge of adolescence were that education is highly valued but needs some improvements in the curriculum; exams and the points system for accessing third-level education need to be revised; more resources need to be allocated to sports and the arts. They also raised major concerns about the recession, the high cost of living and the negative impacts generally on children, young people and their families, and the issue of unemployment.

The EU Structured Dialogue process brings together young people, youth representatives and policy-makers across the EU to discuss and feed into youth policy development at national and European level (European Commission, 2010). Over an 18-month period (January 2013 to June 2014), some 800 young people were consulted in Ireland, thus contributing to a Europe-wide total of 46,000 young people. Topics discussed included overcoming barriers to young people's social inclusion; the role of quality youth work in enhancing social inclusion; social inclusion of young people not in employment, education or training; and employment, entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship. The recommendations from the EU Youth Conference held in March 2013 (see *Appendix 4*) have informed the development of Ireland's National Youth Strategy and can be grouped into the following thematic areas:

- Inclusive education for all young people;
- Employment leads to inclusion;
- Equal rights and opportunities to participate in civic life;
- Access to welfare and support services for young people;
- Youth work and youth organisations;
- Inform, guide and facilitate transitions.

The views of young people are crucial in informing and supplementing what is known about the period of transition and general demographic and socio-economic data. Their views provide further insights into their needs, concerns, interests, aspirations and sense of place and role in society.

The National Youth Strategy, alongside the *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making* (2015), needs to **promote young people's voices** being heard and acted upon in planning and decision-making processes at all levels.

THE YOUTH POLICY ENVIRONMENT

To date, there has been no overarching policy framework specifically for young people in Ireland. However, there have been numerous legislative and policy initiatives over the years, many of them responding to shifting socio-economic conditions, and others developed as particular policy imperatives of individual Government departments or sector-specific requirements. Figure 4 provides a chronological summary of the many Acts, plans, guidelines, frameworks, standards, reviews, reports and strategies that have pre-dated and informed Ireland's National Youth Strategy process to date.

Figure 4: National policy context informing the National Youth Strategy



■ Acts
 ■ Plans
 ■ Guidelines
 ■ Frameworks
 ■ Standards
 ■ Reviews
■ Reports
■ Strategies
■ Committees
■ Policy
■ Policy Statements

National youth policy is also informed by EU policy. Therefore, it is important to include a European dimension in this overview of relevant youth policy in Ireland since there is a productive and reciprocal relationship with respect to policy formulation between Ireland and the EU. A recent case in point has been the Irish EU Presidency, which was effective in pushing youth employment issues up the agenda at European level, thus resulting in European-wide commitments to addressing employment issues through, for example, the Youth Guarantee. As many of the challenges and issues facing young people in Ireland are shared across the EU and wider Europe, European youth policy can inform and give direction to policy development at national level. It is also beneficial to align the development of national youth policy with EU policy, so as to enhance opportunities for accessing EU funding. This also enhances opportunities for shared learning, accessing and contributing to research, and ensuring young people's participation in the shaping of the EU.

The *EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering: A renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities* (European Commission, 2009) acknowledges that young people are one of the most vulnerable groups in society, especially following the 2008 economic and financial crisis, while at the same time they are a precious resource. The cross-sectoral *European Youth Strategy* has both short- and long-term actions covering the following key policy areas:

- Education and training;
- Employment and entrepreneurship;
- Social inclusion;
- Health and well-being;
- Participation;
- Volunteering;
- Youth and the world;
- Creativity and culture.

The *EU Strategy for Youth* emphasises the importance of youth work and defines reinforced measures for a better implementation of youth policy at EU level. Within the context of the strategy, the EU Council of Ministers agreed an 18-month work plan (July 2014 to December 2015) to guide youth policy and youth-related policy work in response to current youth themes and trends. Over this period, work at European youth policy level is focusing on the following priority themes (Council of the European Union, 2014a):

- Development of youth work and non-formal and informal learning and its contribution to addressing the objectives of *Europe 2020: A Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth* (European Commission, 2010) and the effects of the recession on young people;
- Enhanced cross-sectoral policy cooperation;
- Youth empowerment, including encouragement of young people's rights, autonomy, participation and active citizenship within and outside the EU.

The European Commission's (2010) *Europe 2020* strategy is the EU's 10-year growth and jobs strategy for reviving the EU economy. It aims to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, with greater coordination of national and European policy. It identifies five headline targets to boost growth and employment. With regard to young people, the overall goals of *Europe 2020* and Member States' respective targets are to tackle youth unemployment; reduce early school-leaving, and increase participation in third-level education. These targets have a particular relevance for Ireland's National Youth Strategy and its response to those young people most at risk of exclusion. The *Europe 2020* strategy and its flagship initiatives emphasise the importance of the design and delivery of policies that equip all young people with the skills and competencies they need to play their part in a knowledge-based economy and society. It specifically acknowledges the role of youth policy in this regard.

Complementary to the EU's youth policies, the Council of Europe's (2008) *Youth Policy: Agenda 2020* is a medium-term strategic document on youth policy, with priority areas focusing on:

- Human rights and democracy;
- Living together in diverse societies;
- Social inclusion of young people.

At a global level, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) – which defines 'a child' as anyone under the age of 18 years – expresses the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in child-specific language, provides additional protections to children given their particular vulnerability, and takes into account that the fulfilment of their rights is often dependent on the actions of others, such as parents (UN, 1989).

Significantly for Ireland's National Youth Strategy, the State has an obligation to translate the rights of the UNCRC into reality. Rights apply to all children without exception. The State is obliged to protect children from discrimination (Article 2) and children have the right to express an opinion, and to have that opinion taken into account, in any matter affecting them, in accordance with their age and maturity (Article 12).

NATIONAL YOUTH STRATEGY CONSULTATION

To ensure that the development of the National Youth Strategy was informed by the views of relevant stakeholders, including young people aged 10 to 24 years, a national consultation process was held over a three-month period (December 2014 to February 2015). The aims of the consultation were to:

- Enable priorities for inclusion in the National Youth Strategy to be identified by young people, those working with young people (paid and voluntary) and other stakeholders;
- Provide opportunities for young people and those working with young people (paid and voluntary) to determine possible actions to progress the priorities identified;
- Provide stakeholders with the opportunity to reflect on the priorities, to identify any additional priorities and actions to progress the priorities, and to consider their role in implementing the actions.

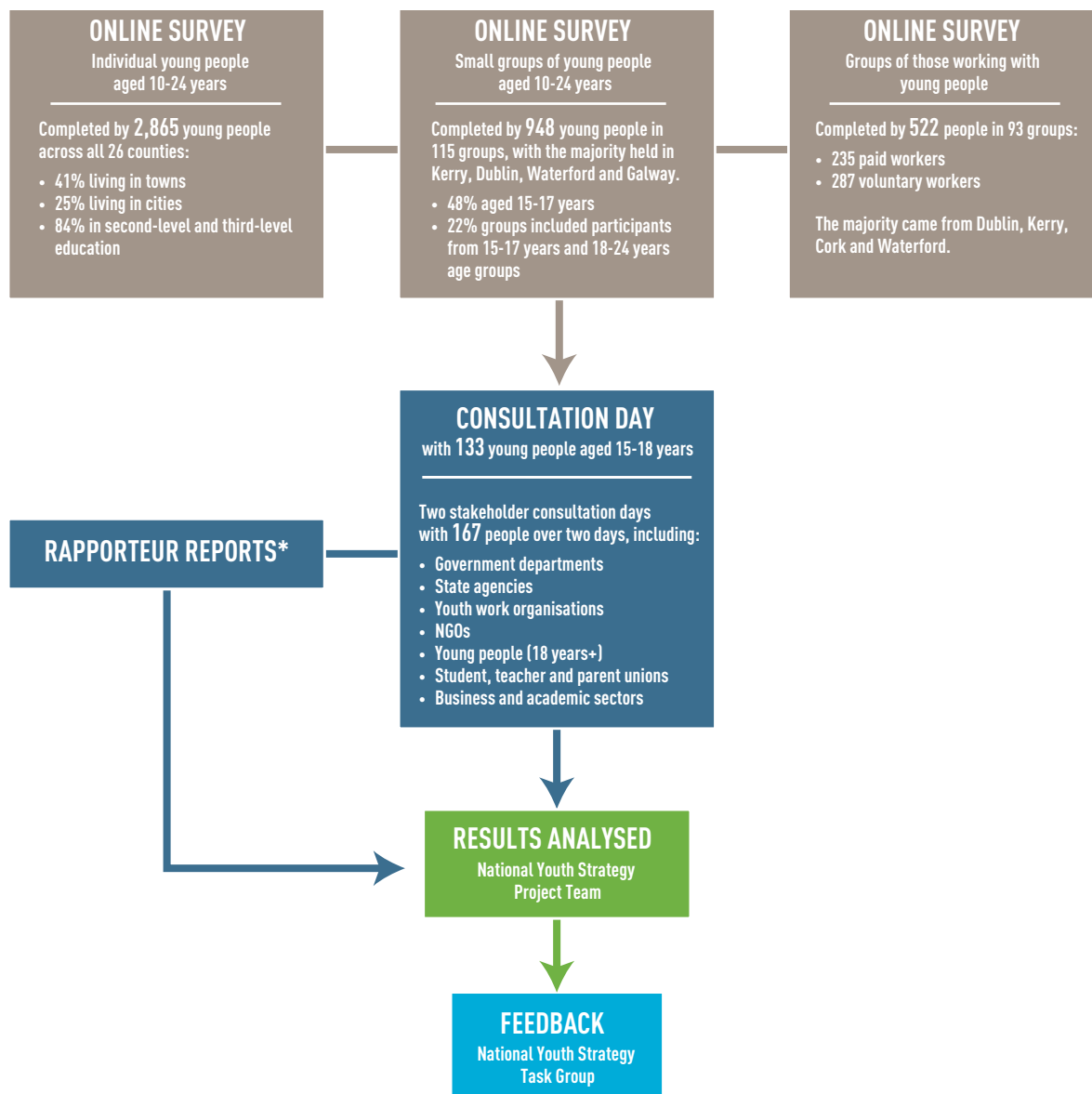
This consultation process took into account, and built on, the results of several previous consultations held with young people, which included:

- Growing Up in Ireland reports from the National Longitudinal Study of Children (launched in 2006). These reports aim to paint a full picture of children in Ireland and how they are developing in the current social, economic and cultural environment, in order to assist in policy formation and in the provision of services for children.
- *Being Young and Irish* (Bowden *et al*, 2012), which gathered over 760 young people's suggestions and ideas for Ireland's future through an online consultation and four regional workshops.
- *Life as a Child and Young Person in Ireland* (DCYA, 2012b), the report on the national consultation held to inform *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*.
- *EU Structured Dialogue – Social Inclusion Theme* (January 2013 to June 2014), which involved consultation with some 800 young people in Ireland contributing to a Europe-wide discussion on social inclusion priorities.

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures was informed by more than 1,000 written submissions and bilateral discussions with Government departments and State agencies. It was also informed by consultation with almost 67,000 children and young people, ranging in ages from four years to 23 years, with 50% aged between 10 years and 12 years.

As illustrated in Figure 5, the National Youth Strategy consultation engaged with young people, those who work with young people, and other stakeholders. In total, 4,635 people were engaged in the consultation process. Individual young people and small groups of young people (supported by a youth worker) were invited to respond to an online survey, which was developed in collaboration with Spunout.ie. Those working with young people were surveyed separately. The responses from the online surveys helped to prepare specific questions for three consultation events: one for young people and two for stakeholders, who included those working directly with young people and young people aged 18 years and over. The purpose of these events was to add depth to the online survey findings. A small number of written submissions were also received. The messages from the consultation process were analysed and distilled by the National Youth Strategy Project Team.

Figure 5: National Youth Strategy consultation process and profile of participants



* Rapporteur reports available on www.dcyi.ie

Response to the online surveys

In response to a survey question about the relative importance of the five national outcomes in young people’s lives, Table 3 shows consistency about how these were ranked by individual young people, small groups of young people, and those working with young people. While all five outcomes areas are important, the two most important areas are for young people to be ‘safe and protected from harm’ and to be ‘active and healthy, with good physical and mental well-being’.

Table 3: Ranking of the five national outcomes

	Individual young people	Groups of young people	Those working with young people
1	Safe and protected from harm	Active and healthy, physical and mental well-being	Safe and protected from harm
2	Active and healthy, physical and mental well-being	Safe and protected from harm	Active and healthy, physical and mental well-being
3	Achieving full potential in all areas of learning and development	Economic security and opportunity	Connected, respected and contributing to their world
4	Connected, respected and contributing to their world	Achieving full potential in all areas of learning and development	Achieving full potential in all areas of learning and development
5	Economic security and opportunity	Connected, respected and contributing to their world	Economic security and opportunity

Young people were asked to rank supportive factors in their lives. Table 4 shows a consistency between the responses of individuals and small groups, with both identifying ‘family’ and ‘friends’ as being the two most important. The difference with respect to the third most important supportive factor (i.e. ‘hobbies’ for individual young people and ‘youth workers/youth group volunteers/sports coaches’ for small groups of young people) may have been influenced by the presence of the youth work facilitator.

Table 4: Young people’s ranking of key supports

	Individual young people	Small groups of young people
1	Family	Family
2	Friends	Friends
3	Hobbies	Youth workers/youth group volunteers/sports coaches
4	Teachers/educators	Teachers/educators
5	Social media	Health/support workers
6	Youth workers/youth group volunteers/sports coaches	Hobbies
7	Youth clubs/projects	Financial independence
8	Sport	Youth clubs/projects
9	Financial independence	Sport
10	Health/support workers	Social media
11	Online support	Online support
12	Work colleagues	Work colleagues

From a list of 14 suggested themes, the survey asked respondents to rank the areas of most importance in young people's lives. Table 5 shows there is consistency between the responses of individual young people, those in small groups and those working with young people. One exception concerns 'Relationships and sexuality', which individual young people placed higher than did small groups of young people or those working with young people.

Table 5: Ranking of areas of importance in young people's lives

	Individual young people	Small groups of young people	Those working with young people
1	Good mental health	Good mental health	Good mental health
2	Learning and studying	Learning and studying	Learning and studying
3	Jobs	Jobs	Positive self-image
4	Positive self-image	Positive self-image	Jobs
5	Relationships and sexuality	Access to services	Access to services
6	Access to services	Included in community	Included in community
7	Dealing with bullying	Dealing with bullying	Alcohol and substance misuse prevention
8	Personal and online safety	Personal and online safety	Dealing with bullying
9	Included in community	Alcohol and substance misuse prevention	Relationships and sexuality
10	Transport	Relationships and sexuality	Personal and online safety
11	Alcohol and substance misuse prevention	Cultural diversity and integration	Cultural diversity and integration
12	Cultural diversity and integration	Participation in politics/involvement in social issues	Participation in politics/involvement in social issues
13	Participation in politics/involvement in social issues	Transport	Transport
14	Emigration	Emigration	Emigration

Stakeholder events

A total of 167 people attended the two events for stakeholders held on 27 and 29 January 2015. The stakeholders included, but were not limited to, representatives from Government departments and agencies; youth work organisations; NGOs working with and for young people; student, teacher and parent unions; ETBs; young people aged 18 years and over; and the business and academic sectors. The purpose was to provide stakeholders with the opportunity to inform the development of the National Youth Strategy. To provide a context

for the day, presentations were given on *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children & Young People, 2014-2020* and on the report *Value for Money and Policy Review of Youth Programmes* (DCYA, 2014), as well as on the intent and the development process of the National Youth Strategy and on the findings from the online surveys. The focus was on identifying key priorities and actions required to implement the National Youth Strategy and to consider the role of their own organisation, agency or department, in relation to these actions.

There was consensus among stakeholders on the importance of mental health and the need for universal and targeted approaches to be seen as equal aspects of one approach to services for young people. There were concerns about the impact of limited resources available for mental health services for young people and the gap between child and adolescent mental health services. Early intervention, a holistic approach and additional supports in the area of alcohol and drug misuse among young people is needed, while the issue of relationships and sexuality should be more prominent. A natural, healthy, clean and safe environment is a key priority.

Sports programmes were seen to be an important means of improving young people's physical and mental health and well-being. Links between sports and youth work programmes should be enhanced and the participation of females in sport should be increased. Alternative recreational activities to sport should be available to young people in communities, and existing local facilities could be used to achieve this.

There was consensus that young people have a right to access relevant services relating to learning and development. A more holistic, flexible and responsive education system needs to focus not just on academic achievement and jobs, but also on catering for groups of young people with specific needs, e.g. young people with disabilities, early school-leavers and less academic young people. There should be equal educational opportunities for young people of all academic abilities.

More supports should be offered to young people to help them make the transition between primary and second-level education, and between second-level and third-level education. Mechanisms need to be developed to capture the learning and development achieved through non-formal and informal education; this could be assisted by more and better interagency collaboration between the formal and non-formal education sectors.

A consistent message about how to be safe and protected from harm should be delivered to young people through all youth programmes. Young people who experience peer bullying and other types of bullying should be helped and supported. Consideration should be given to extending the Garda Youth Diversion Programme to young people aged 18-24 years. More generally, child and family-friendly cities and communities, and the provision of safe spaces and places for young people, should be promoted.

With regard to employment issues, the stakeholders stated that more quality jobs and internships are needed. Improving cross-agency communication and infrastructure at local level are also necessary. More specifically, there is a need to protect the level of unemployment payments to young people. Poverty among young people should be considered in a broader social inclusion context.

Stakeholders also stated that while young people have a right to be listened to and heard, they should be supported to participate in local fora, and contribute to the development of local and community development plans. Young people from all economic and social backgrounds should have an equal right and opportunity to engage in active citizenship. Some groups of young people have fewer opportunities to be connected, e.g. young people seeking asylum. Promoting and recognising young people's contribution in society is important, e.g. the Young People of the Year Awards. Young people need to be supported to 'give back' by helping other young people in more difficult circumstances.

Universal and targeted youth work programmes and services were deemed to be of equal importance across all outcome areas. Also considered important were better access to quality youth work services for young people, more resources for services, additional training and support for volunteers, so that they can support young people's initial and continuing engagement. Youth work services also need to focus on the needs of young people aged 18 years and older. Better dissemination of information to young people and youth services is required, and better connections between Local Authorities and youth services is needed if young people are to participate fully in the services available.

According to the stakeholders, successful implementation of the National Youth Strategy centres on achieving effective cross-sectoral cooperation, collaboration and coordination. The challenge is to find the right intersections and interconnections at a national and local level, and to ensure that each stakeholder/actor focuses on the overarching framework rather than 'getting blinkered' by its own agenda/purpose or strategy. Greater coordination is required between all stakeholders and Government departments, while ensuring that the voice of young people is heard and acted upon. At local level, ETBs should play a role in the National Youth Strategy, and Children and Young People's Services Committees need to be linked with Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs). Reporting on implementation should be made as efficient as possible for all. Implementation of the findings and recommendations of the recent *Value for Money and Policy Review of Youth Programmes* (2014) should focus on outcomes, rather than outputs.

Young people's events

In total, 133 young people, aged 15-18 years, from all over Ireland attended the national consultation event on 19 February 2015 at Croke Park, Dublin. The purpose of the event was to deepen understanding of the top priorities and suggestions for action identified by young people in the online surveys. Participants were asked to consider why these priority areas were important to young people, what was working well in services for young people, what else needed to be done, who should take action, and what young people could do themselves.

Mental health and well-being was seen to be important for young people because there is a stigma associated with talking about mental health; suicide and depression rates are high, and positive mental health is as important as physical health. Although education programmes and services were the most frequently mentioned examples of what is working well in this area, there needs to be an emphasis on improving counselling provision and a more consistent focus on mental health education in the school curriculum and across the school year, and in youth work settings.

Positive self-image was seen to be important because it affects confidence, expression of individuality and freedom to be oneself, social life and future prospects and employability. Support from friends and family was also considered to be significant. Education with regard to positive self-image should begin in primary school and continue through secondary school. It could be taught through Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), workshops or initiatives such as ‘positive self-image weeks’.

The issue of relationships and sexuality was seen as significant with regard to mental health. Acceptance of one’s sexuality, education, respect for oneself and others, and the need for more sexual health services were also viewed as important. Young people stated that improved sex education in schools was the most important issue to be addressed, that the SPHE and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) curriculum should be reformed and improved, and that these subjects should be compulsory in all second-level schools.

Learning and studying was thought to be important in relation to exam pressure and stress, as was the need for a holistic approach to education to include more emphasis on life skills and personal development, exam skills, improved career guidance and work experience in schools, more recognition of informal and non-formal learning, and more educational resources, including facilities, technology and scholarships.

Employment was seen to be important due to the lack of job opportunities, the lack of work experience opportunities generally, the need for economic autonomy, gender equality in employment and emigration issues. Participants also stated that young people’s working rights and conditions need to be protected in order to ensure that they are not being exploited. More protection for young people in work experience or training was recommended, in order to discourage employers from taking advantage of this group. Some young people proposed setting up a union specifically for young workers. Making workplaces more youth friendly was considered important, e.g. through employers being trained in how to deal with, and communicate with, young people in the workplace.

Access to services and recreational opportunities was seen to be important due to a lack of transport in rural areas, the need for more services for older teenagers, inadequate labelling of services, the need for inclusive services, and problems with accessibility of services, e.g. cost and disability access. Youth work services was the most frequently identified area with regard to access to services. Youth clubs and organisations, as well as youth cafés and youth theatres, were discussed by young people. They stated that there should be better transport in rural areas, free or cheaper transport (e.g. extending rail/bus/tram transport child fares to cover those aged up to 18 years) and improved disability access on public transport.

Priorities identified in national consultation process

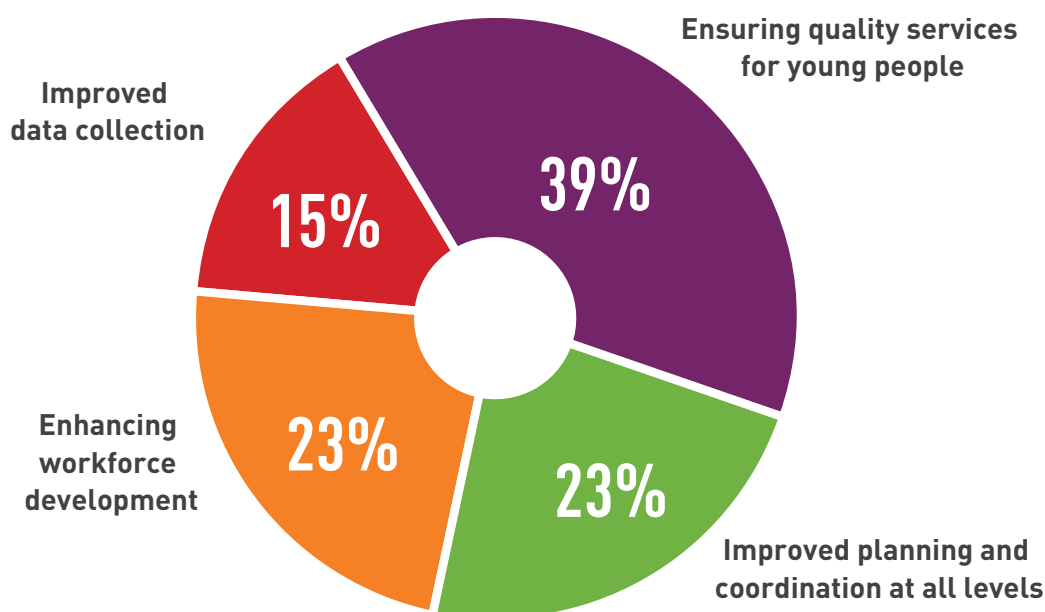
Taking the results of the consultation as a whole, the priorities that need to inform the development of the National Youth Strategy are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Priorities arising from the national consultation process

<p>OUTCOME 1: ACTIVE AND HEALTHY, PHYSICAL AND MENTAL WELL-BEING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support all young people to engage in physical activity and emphasise its connection to and impact on mental health • Improve access to and consistency in delivery of mental health services for young people, regardless of location • Support young people with regard to relationships and sexuality, and provide access to timely and appropriate information
<p>OUTCOME 2: ACHIEVING FULL POTENTIAL IN ALL AREAS OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve accessibility, flexibility and inclusiveness to educational opportunity, to enable lifelong learning and development, while maintaining a focus on the development of the whole young person • Recognise and validate young people’s achievement in non-formal and informal learning • Address issues of transition from second-level to third-level education, including career guidance
<p>OUTCOME 3: SAFE AND PROTECTED FROM HARM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep young people safe and protected at home, at school and in the community • Provide safe spaces and places for young people to socialise and develop • Support at critical transition points, such as the move from care/justice system to independent living
<p>ECONOMIC SECURITY AND OPPORTUNITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support transitions through the education system and from education to work • Place more emphasis on career guidance and information provision • Improve employment measures
<p>CONNECTED, RESPECTED AND CONTRIBUTING TO THEIR WORLD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve young people in planning and decision-making, including at local level, in order to address the democratic deficit • Promote the political engagement of young people • Ensure sustainable communities

Those working with young people were asked an additional question – to rank, from a list of four suggested areas, the priority supports that would ensure effective implementation of the National Youth Strategy. As Figure 6 shows, ‘ensuring quality services for young people’ was ranked first (39%), followed by ‘enhancing workforce development’ (23%), ‘improved planning and coordination at all levels’ (23%) and finally ‘improved data collection to support services development’ (15%).

Figure 6: Ranking of priority supports for effective implementation identified by those working with young people



SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

In addressing the current socio-economic needs and aspirations of young people aged between 10 and 24 years, Ireland’s National Youth Strategy needs to be informed by an understanding of ‘youth’ as a period of development between childhood and adulthood. The focus should be on developing the intellectual and emotional capacities of young people through assets and strengths-based ways of working. Enhancing the core skills of learning to learn, communication and working together with others can assist young people to manage and succeed in the more complex roles and expectations placed upon them today, including increased responsibility and an active role in their own development.

In building on the youth-specific policy commitments outlined in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* – and in bringing to fruition the intentions of current and emerging Irish, European and international policy – the National Youth Strategy needs to provide additional supports for those experiencing adversity, while ensuring that *all* young people will have the opportunities to explore life, build diverse experiences and be able to access all services without discrimination. Importantly, there is a need to optimise the supports available in the community, and from family, other adults and peers.

Alongside the *National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-making* (2015), the National Youth Strategy needs to promote young people’s voices being heard and acted upon in planning and decision-making processes at all levels. The priority areas identified by young people and other stakeholders in the national consultation process, and the ranking of supports for effective implementation identified by those working with young people, provide a very clear list of areas to be addressed in the National Youth Strategy. Doing so will help to direct effort to where it can have the greatest impact.

Greatest impact can be achieved during key areas of transition for young people, such as in the move from primary to secondary school, from school to work, and from care settings to independent living. Adopting and supporting a prevention and early intervention focus will help to maximise benefits for young people.

Finally, it will be necessary to ensure that all policy and related activity are based on evidence, are feasible within the resources available, and are measureable and reportable. Improved data systems will be needed, as will increased efforts to coordinate planning, interdepartmental and cross-sectoral working, as well as improving collaborative activity at local levels.

A large, stylized number '9' is the central graphic element. It is composed of two parts: a top section that is a light green semi-circle with a rounded bottom, and a bottom section that is a dark green rounded rectangle. The top section is positioned above the text, and the bottom section is positioned below it, with a small gap between them. The background is a solid green color with a pattern of thin, white, diagonal lines that create a textured effect, particularly visible in the lower half of the page.

**TOWARDS A NATIONAL
YOUTH STRATEGY**

In meeting the requirements set out in Section 2, the National Youth Strategy can provide a necessary coherence to the youth-specific commitments set out in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* (see Appendix 3). At the same time, it can also highlight the contribution that the voluntary youth sector can play in achieving the five national outcomes for young people.

AIM AND PRINCIPLES

In line with the vision set out in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, an appropriate aim for the National Youth Strategy might be articulated as follows:

The aim of the National Youth Strategy is to enable all young people to realise their maximum potential, by respecting their rights and hearing their voices, while protecting and supporting them as they transition from childhood to adulthood.

Adherence to a common set of principles across all sectors, both statutory and non-statutory, will enhance the part played by young people themselves with their families and communities in fulfilling their potential, as well as enabling the Government and its partners to adopt a more coherent and consistent approach to youth policy and practice. The following principles relate to young people and those who support them, to those who work with young people, and to all policies, practices and services.

Young people and those who support them

1. Young people are valued in their own right and recognised as integral to society.
2. Young people are key drivers in achieving their cognitive, emotional, social, economic and cultural development.
3. Parents, families, other significant adults and communities are recognised as playing a critical role in the development and progression of young people.

Professionals and volunteers working with young people

4. Professionals and volunteers who work with young people are respected, valued and appropriately supported in their work.
5. Those providing services for young people act in the best interests of young people and respect and uphold young people's rights.

Policies and practices

6. An equality perspective is integrated into all policy and practice.

Service development and delivery

7. Government and other stakeholders work collaboratively to achieve more effective services with and for young people.
8. Services for young people are open, accessible and resourced, and provide additional support in response to particular needs.
9. Services for young people are quality assured, outcomes focused and informed by evidence.

It is also imperative to optimise the use of available resources in terms of economy and cost-effectiveness. Effectiveness in this case means that current and emerging policy and practice manifestly build on the strengths of young people as well as on the positive aspects of the current situation, while also addressing those factors that undermine the successful transition of young people from childhood to adulthood.

PRIORITY AREAS

In direct response to the requirements for the strategy outlined above, a number of priority areas can be identified with regard to the five overarching national outcomes.

OUTCOME 1: ACTIVE AND HEALTHY, PHYSICAL AND MENTAL WELL-BEING

In relation to Outcome 1, the emerging priorities would be to:

- Improve the systems of support that enable all young people to make positive decisions in relation to their own mental and sexual health, and well-being
- Reduce levels of obesity
- Increase levels of participation in recreation, physical activity, arts, nature and cultural activities for young people experiencing adversity.

With regard to such issues, *Healthy Ireland – A Framework for Improved Health and Well-being 2013-2025* (Department of Health, 2013b) highlighted that timely access to non-stigmatised services is crucial, in particular access to mental health services (HSE, 2007). The forthcoming *National Sexual Health Strategy* from the Department of Health also recognises the need for young people to be supported in addressing issues that impact on sexual well-being, such as stigma, homophobia, gender, ability/disability and mental health. In relation to alcohol and drugs, activity will be informed by the *National Drugs Strategy (Interim), 2009-2016* (Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, 2009) and the *Steering Group Report on a National Substance Misuse Strategy* (Department of Health, 2012).

A Vision for Change, Ireland's strategy document for the delivery of mental health services, highlights the need for improved access to adequate services and the promotion of positive mental health for young people (Department of Health and Children, 2006). There is also a need for access to appropriate services for young people. The HSE Mental Health Division's *Operational Plan 2014* continues to implement the 'Access Protocols for 16 and 17 year-olds to Mental Health Services', working to ensure referral to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services up to the age of 17 years (HSE, 2014).

Teenspace: National Recreation Policy for Young People (OMC, 2007) emphasises the need for youth-friendly communities with access to local services, amenities and good quality public transport, as well as green spaces for recreation, sporting activity and physical exercise in cities and towns that are cycle friendly and pedestrian friendly. To meet the needs of those who have lower levels of participation in play, recreation, sport, nature, arts and culture, it is important to promote the role of the arts and cultural expression across a range of settings, including youth justice, youth organisations and youth advocacy groups.

The **youth sector** can contribute by working alongside health professionals and organisations, while providing a broad range of youth development and youth support programmes, activities, and opportunities in formal and non-formal settings. These activities serve to promote the development of creativity, imagination, self-confidence and self-efficacy in young people, as well as physical, social, cognitive and emotional strength, attributes and skills.

OUTCOME 2: ACHIEVING FULL POTENTIAL IN ALL AREAS OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

In relation to Outcome 2, the emerging priorities would be to:

- Enable all young people to develop and enhance the core skills, competencies and attributes that provide the foundation for learning and achieving, through increasing their active participation in all levels of formal education and in non-formal learning
- Reduce the numbers of early school-leavers and those dropping out of third-level education, and increase the proportion of young people who complete full-time education.

It is important for services to focus on achieving the full potential of each young person. The *National Disability Strategy Implementation Plan* recognises that different groups have distinct needs that have to be addressed in more specific ways (Department of Justice and Equality, 2013). Generally, as stated in *A Framework for Junior Cycle* (Department of Education and Skills, 2012a) and the *National Youth Work Development Plan, 2003–2007* (Department of Education and Science, 2003), there is an emphasis on the need for young people to learn prosocial behaviours that provide the foundation for learning and achievement in addition to essential ‘core’ skills, such as effective communication, collaborative working, independent thinking, problem-solving and analytical skills, and active learner engagement (Diekstra, 2008; McNeil *et al*, 2012). The development of 21st-century ICT skills will also continue to increase in importance, with a consequent need to close the digital disconnect experienced in some instances by parents, carers and educators.

There is a need to improve existing partnerships, strategies and initiatives that aim to increase the proportion of young people who complete full-time education, with particular attention paid to the key transition points between primary and secondary levels, between secondary and higher education levels, and between education and the world of work. At the same time, there is a need to take account of gender issues in influencing the relative performance of young men and women in formal education (European Youth Forum, 2013). In addition, the links between education and employment need to be improved in order to promote coherence, coordination and seamless transitions (Shanks *et al*, 2013). ETBs, under the Education and Training Boards Act, 2013, can support the coordination, service delivery and assessment of youth services at local level.

The youth sector can contribute by providing non-formal education and learning opportunities in informal and out-of-school settings, and by engaging with others to improve existing partnerships, strategies and initiatives that improve the transition from primary to secondary education, from second-level to third-level education, and from education to work.

OUTCOME 3: SAFE AND PROTECTED FROM HARM

In relation to Outcome 3, the emerging priorities would be to:

- Reduce neglect and abuse, including sexual and physical abuse for young people, through improved cross-sector child protection measures
- Enable young people to transition effectively from statutory support services (including residential care services) to live independently and to successfully integrate into society
- Address bullying through a comprehensive anti-bullying framework with the aim of promoting respect for and between young people in all aspects of their lives
- Reduce the incidence of youth crime in communities.

While it is the responsibility of everyone in society to keep all young people safe and protected from harm, including neglect, sexual exploitation and forced labour, there is also a need to enhance interagency approaches in relation to cases of child protection and welfare, establishing information and coordinating protocols (including 'Hidden Harm' protocols) between agencies serving young people and adult-focused addiction, domestic violence and mental health services. Bullying has been identified by young people as a significant problem. The Department of Education and Skills' *Action Plan on Bullying* (2013b) and *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* (2013c) will inform the forthcoming *National Framework for Anti-Bullying*, which will take a community-wide approach to tackling this issue. Suicide is a leading cause of death among adolescents. Self-harm is the most important risk factor for suicide, yet the majority of self-harm does not come to the attention of the health services (National Suicide Research Foundation, 2014).

While the majority of young people in care are in stable placements with caring foster families or in residential homes, some young people need extensive support in the transition to stable independent living (Tusla, 2012).

Crime and anti-social behaviour need to be considered from the perspective of all young people being safe, as well as in relation to those at risk of being engaged or engaged in the juvenile justice system. *Tackling Youth Crime – A Youth Justice Action Plan, 2014-2020*, published by the Irish Youth Justice Service in 2013, aims to ensure that diverting children and young people from crime and anti-social behaviour continues to be a major goal.

The **youth sector** can contribute by working with others to create youth-friendly recreational spaces that are essential in reducing crime and anti-social behaviour. It can also help young people to build self-esteem and other protective factors, including awareness of their own safety. In addition, it can play an important role in working alongside other agencies to support young people in care and those about to transition into aftercare.

OUTCOME 4: ECONOMIC SECURITY AND OPPORTUNITY

In relation to Outcome 4, the emerging priorities would be to:

- Enhance supports for all young people, so that they can develop employability skills and attributes required in the labour market
- Improve cross-sector coordination and planning at national and local levels to increase job and entrepreneurial opportunities for young people.

In this regard, the *Action Plan for Jobs* promotes measures to enhance education and training opportunities to ensure that young people are job ready and possess the appropriate skills, including entrepreneurial skills, needed to participate in the labour market (Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, 2015). In 2015, under the *Youth Guarantee Initiative*, young unemployed people will receive a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education, after which their career plan will be reviewed (Department of Social Protection, 2014a). In this way, young unemployed people will be offered opportunities to remain active in, attached to and aligned with the requirements of the labour market.

The *National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship*, launched in 2014, has also identified key objectives that must be addressed to support and enhance the field of entrepreneurship in Ireland (Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, 2014). It recognises that young people are a vast resource within Irish society and that many already possess the skills and competencies needed to succeed in entrepreneurship. It aims to enhance the numbers of young people starting up and running their own businesses.

The **youth sector** can contribute by supporting those furthest from the labour market to develop their employability skills so that ultimately they can engage in further education, employment and training. It can also work with public agencies and employers at local level to promote the training, employment and entrepreneurship of all young people.

OUTCOME 5: CONNECTED, RESPECTED AND CONTRIBUTING TO THEIR WORLD

In relation to Outcome 5, the emerging priorities would be to:

- Support young people’s participation in social and environmental activism and innovation, volunteering and social entrepreneurship
- Promote young people’s active citizenship and engagement in democratic processes, including young voter registration/participation in elections
- Support marginalised groups and individuals to engage with services and avail of civic and cultural opportunities.

To promote equality and inclusion and eliminate prejudice and discrimination faced by young people, especially young refugees, asylum-seekers and other marginalised groups, Ireland's laws, policies and practice need to comply with the principles and provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The Department of Children and Youth Affairs' *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making* (2015) supports measures to ensure that the voice of young people is taken into account in the political process and in policy-making. It proactively promotes young people's participation in the governance and leadership of civil society organisations and in planning and decision-making structures. Improving student participation, with real influence over strategic decision-making in second-level schools, is important since this has been shown to improve engagement and attainment in higher education, while also fostering important attributes such as motivation, social responsibility, cross-cultural sensitivity and emotional intelligence (Sammons *et al*, 1995; Hannam, 2001).

The forthcoming *National Guidelines on Planning for Child-friendly Communities* by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government will support the active engagement of young people in the development of child-friendly and youth-friendly communities through Local Authorities adopting appropriate policies and objectives in their County/City Development Plans. In addition, all young people should be aware of their connection to the natural world and the interdependence between people, plants, animals and the land, thus motivating them to live more sustainably.

The **youth sector** can contribute by supporting young people to develop intercultural competence and to celebrate the benefits of diversity. It can also promote and recognise young people's active citizenship and engagement in democratic processes and elections, in social and environmental activism and innovation, and in volunteering and social entrepreneurship.

SUPPORTS AND ENABLERS

Colgan *et al* (2014) in their *Primer on Implementing Whole of Government Approaches* emphasise the importance of paying careful attention to three implementation 'drivers' – the competency of the workforce; organisational factors such as decision-making structures and information systems; and leadership. **Competency** involves attention to such matters as initial qualifying and continuing training of the workforce, coaching and other means of support to develop practice knowledge. **Organisational factors** include engaging key partners and stakeholders, ensuring that national and local structures support practice development and continuous quality improvement, and enabling systems of easily accessible, relevant data to inform assessment and decision-making. **Leadership** involves bringing staff together to develop plans and reach consensus on ways forward, as well as maintaining a focus on outcomes, while also finding new solutions to practices that consistently inhibit needed change.

Competency driver for implementation

In relation to the National Youth Strategy, attention to the competency driver would ensure that **workforce development is a critical element in implementing youth policy and provision**. This might involve a workforce development plan to include volunteers and professional staff, and cover initial qualifying training as well as continuing professional development. Workforce development can usefully be informed by DCYA's forthcoming *Review of Volunteer-led Youth Work in Ireland*, which focuses on the crucial contribution of volunteers who, together with paid youth workers, deliver a diverse range of targeted projects and universal developmental and recreational programmes for young people. For example, in local youth clubs and groups, over 21,000 volunteers run 1,900 youth clubs for and with 100,000 young people, mainly under the age of 18 (Indecon, 2012).

The implementation framework for the National Youth Strategy should also consider existing supports for workforce development within the priorities identified for young people by, for example, the National Youth Council of Ireland in its *Starting Out: A National Induction Training Programme for Volunteers engaged in Youth Work Practice* (NYCI, 2010) and its *Child Protection Awareness Programme*. In addition, the work of the North-South Education and Training Standards Committee for Youth Work, which endorses professional youth work courses in higher education, should be considered.

It will also be important for the National Youth Strategy to **promote a quality assurance approach to supports and services** in order to address the range of young people's needs effectively. High-quality, front-line delivery of well-designed, structured and governed programmes is essential to improving outcomes for young people. A variety of standards already apply to youth provision, including the *National Quality Standards Framework (NQSF) for Youth Work* (DCYA, 2010) and the *Health Quality Mark* (NYCI, 2014b). These standards could be reviewed in relation to the five national outcomes, in order to optimise their effectiveness.

Organisation driver for implementation

Attention to the organisation driver means that in the context of implementation arrangements and structures put in place for *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, the National Youth Strategy needs to support **a systematic, coordinated and purposeful approach to planning and delivery**. In the context of the overall implementation plan for the National Policy Framework, the National Youth Strategy should clearly state the Government's key objectives with regard to young people, and should identify activities to ensure realisation of these objectives.

To support implementation, **efficient and user-friendly ways of collecting and analysing quantitative and qualitative data** will be required at local, regional and national levels. The National Youth Strategy and its implementation framework will need to establish appropriate arrangements for monitoring, reporting and evaluation of progress.

In this regard, *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* commits to the development of an indicator set to track progress across the five national outcomes. The development of the

indicator set is being led by DCYA and involves a two-stage process: (1) a data preparation stage, including a review of child outcome indicator sets and the development of an indicator inventory; and (2) the development of a selection process. While changes in population-level indicators are not easily attributable to a particular policy, programme or initiative, and do not always answer questions about 'why' particular results were or were not achieved, a set of key indicators will support the tracking of change over time.

The National Youth Strategy will need to **promote improved coordination and collaboration between agencies in the statutory, private and voluntary sectors**. This will help to ensure a consistent focus at local level on the identified needs of young people, thus minimising any duplication of services and optimising the efficient use of resources. In this regard, it will be important to clarify and strengthen links and coordination between the Children and Young People's Services Committees, Local Community Development Committees and ETBs in relation to youth provision. Doing so will assist local and national planning and accountability. Local plans for youth-specific outcomes delivered by youth-specific services should be informed by the priorities in the National Youth Strategy.

Leadership driver for implementation

Attention to the leadership driver means that the National Youth Strategy will need to be evaluated in terms of its implementation as well as outcomes achieved. Effective leadership will mean that:

- There is a degree of consistency across all programmes in standards and service delivery.
- Interventions in communities are focused on achieving realistic outcomes, with appropriate indicators of progress.
- Timely and accurate local data are available and useable for needs analysis and planning purposes.
- There is a coherent logic linking the desired changes and inputs, outputs and activities, indicators and outcomes.
- Monitoring systems are fit for purpose and are user-friendly.
- Monitoring serves developmental as well as accountability purposes.
- Internal and external evaluation processes dovetail to provide reliable accounts of performance, while enabling learning at local and national levels.

Key determinants of success in policy development and implementation include **a clear evidence and research base**, active consideration of the implementation challenges and a theory of change that maps the intended pathway from 'where things are' to 'where they need to be' (Colgan *et al*, 2014).

The National Youth Strategy will provide direction for the youth sector in achieving the five national outcomes. This could involve establishing a task-oriented grouping to coordinate youth work's contribution to the implementation of the strategy. Future developments with respect to targeted youth work would need to be informed by the recent report *Value for*

Money and Policy Review of Youth Programmes (DCYA, 2014b). This review focuses on three programmes, funded by DCYA, targeting disadvantaged or ‘at risk’ young people, and makes recommendations for the future operation of targeted youth programmes in general, in order to ensure quality, effective, value-for-money services that are evidence informed and secure the best outcomes for these young people.

Finally, the implementation of the National Youth Strategy might also be usefully supported by a focused cross-sectoral research, organised through discussion with, and carried out in conjunction with, policy-makers, practitioners, funders and the academic and research communities.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The National Youth Strategy should be based on a sound understanding of youth as a distinctive period of development between childhood and adulthood. It should be fully cognisant of the social and economic factors that influence this period, while coordinating and supporting progression of previous youth-related policy development in Ireland. The National Youth Strategy and its implementation framework should clearly outline the actions needed to achieve better outcomes for young people.

Crucially, the National Youth Strategy should be clear about the changes that are needed to the way in which services are planned and delivered at national and local levels. It should also emphasise collaboration, support and cooperation between Government and its key partners.

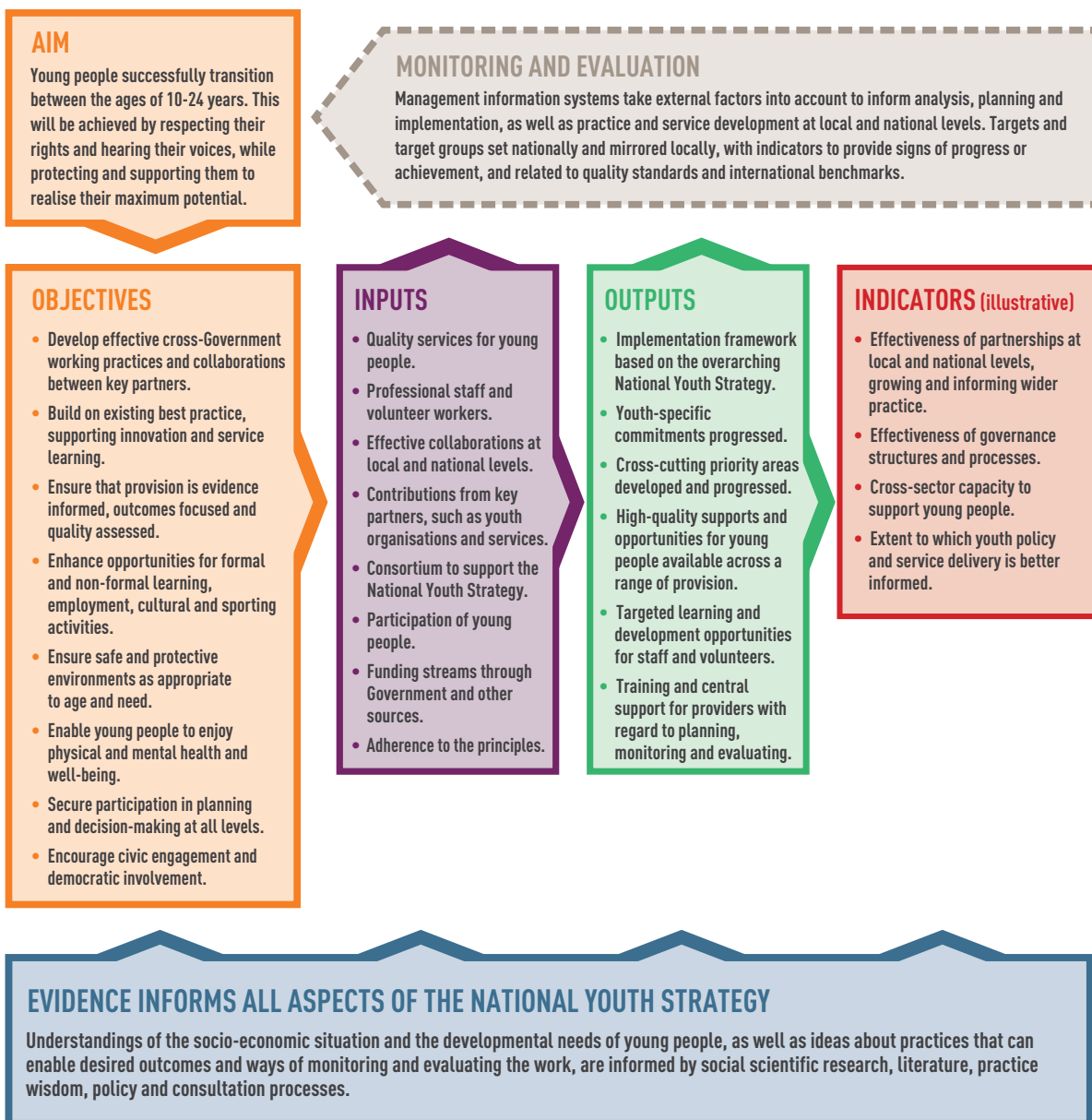
In summary, the National Youth Strategy should ensure that:

- There is a clear and shared aim, with attendant principles, objectives and actions.¹ The objectives are applied locally as best meets the identified needs of young people.
- There is a strategic engagement between national and local levels, and communication goes in both directions to enable system-wide learning.
- There is coherence between national, local and service delivery levels.
- Partners at national and local levels are actively engaged and share the same vision, and collaboration is a high priority for all partners.
- Young people are integral to policy-making and decision-making processes.

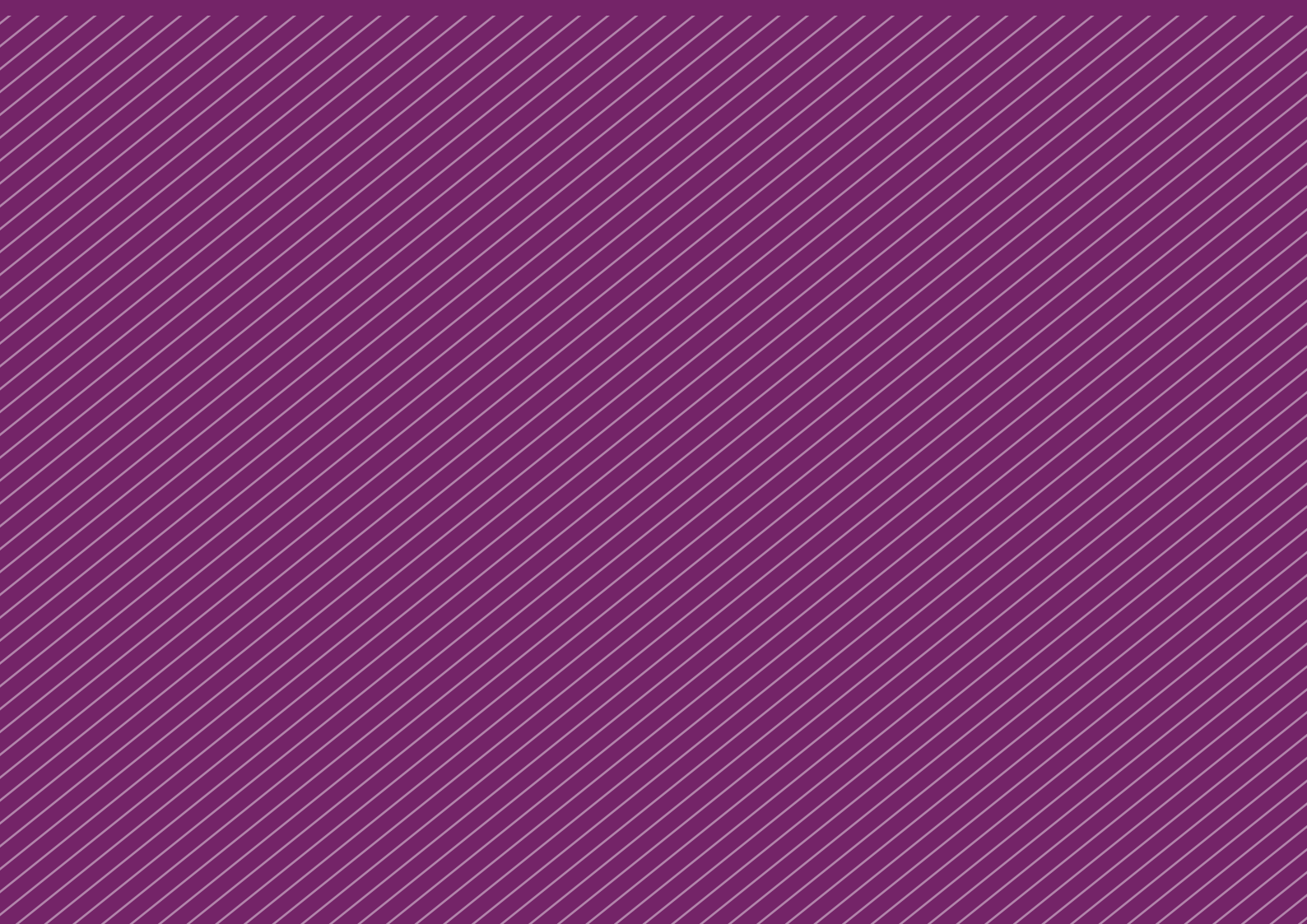
Figure 7 brings together all of the different strands involved in the National Youth Strategy in the form of an overall ‘logic model’. A graphic such as this could be used to explain the National Youth Strategy to a range of audiences, including those involved in service design and delivery, and could also prove useful for planning, monitoring and evaluation purposes at national, local and unit levels.

¹ In the context of identifying priorities, consideration to be given to the criteria suggested by the National Youth Strategy Task Group – see *Appendix 6*.

Figure 7: National Youth Strategy Logic Model



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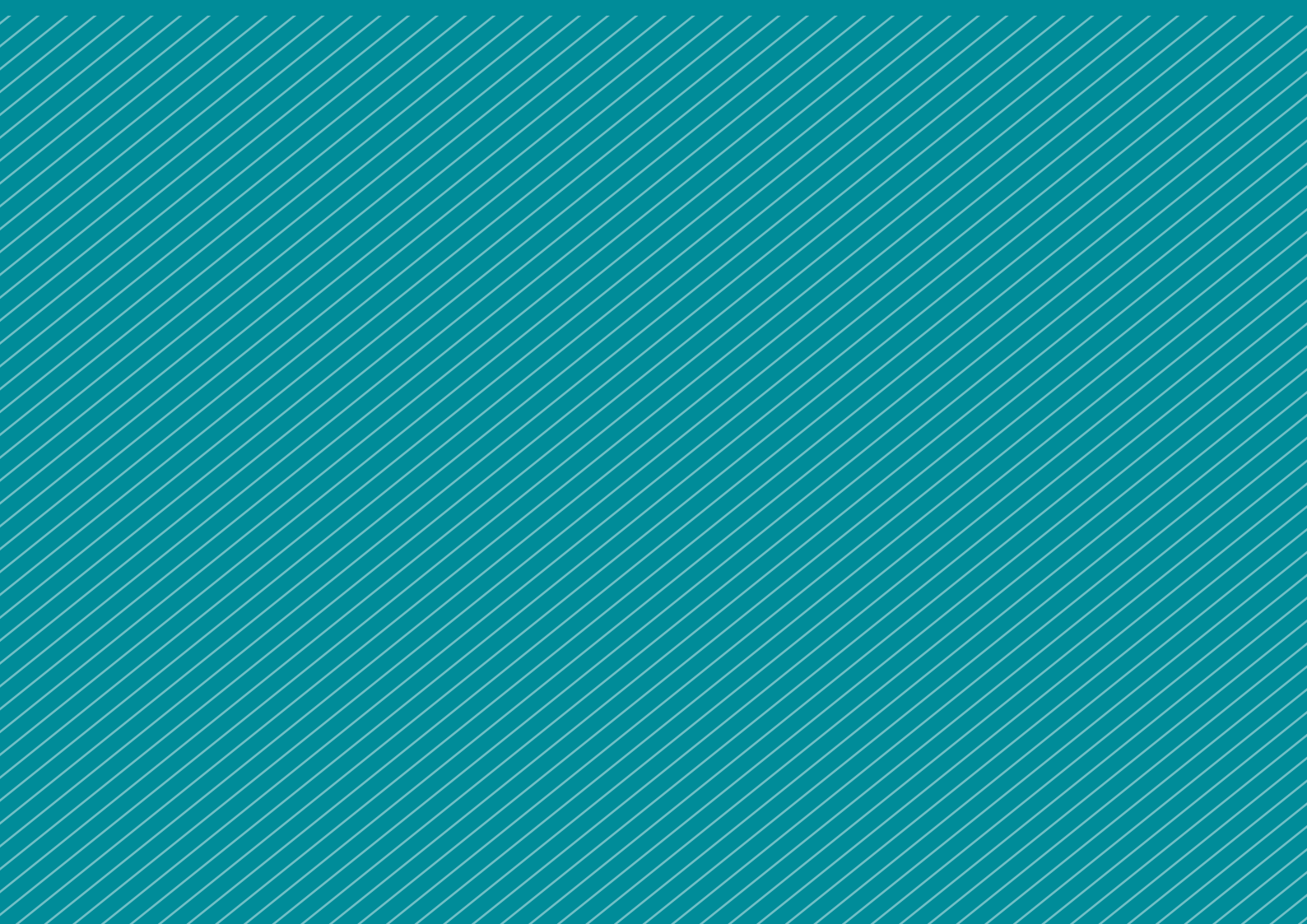
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APPENDICES



Appendix 1: National Youth Strategy Task Group and Advisory Group

National Youth Strategy Task Group

Terms of Reference

Consider youth-specific strategic policy objectives to achieve the five national outcomes and the transformational goals over the lifetime of the Strategy.

- Consider how the National Youth Strategy links with the EU Youth Strategy and how EU policy developments in support of young people can be reflected.
- Having regard to priorities identified by Lead/Sponsor Departments, identify priorities to be achieved over the life of the National Youth Strategy and detail how these priorities could be achieved, by whom and by when.
- Consider how existing resources can be used to improve the contribution of current policies, programmes and services to the national outcomes for young people.
- Support the requirement to achieve a high-performing, quality-focused youth sector, where evidence guides policy, programmes and practice, and value for money is demonstrated.
- Take account of the Government's Public Spending Code and the findings and recommendations of the *Value for Money and Policy Review of Youth Programmes*, particularly in relation to issues of governance, accountability and performance.
- Act as a conduit for wider knowledge and expertise in constituent organisations and sectors for the purposes of enhancing the National Youth Strategy and generating support for its development and implementation.

Members of the Task Group

Department/organisation	Name
National Youth Council Of Ireland	Mary Cunningham, Chair
Accenture	Ryan Shanks
Centre for Effective Services	Katie Burke
Centre for Effective Services	Dr John Bamber
Department of Children and Youth Affairs	Doreen Burke
Department of Children and Youth Affairs	Conor Rowley
Department of Education and Skills	Paul Caffrey/Tony Gaynor
Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government	Sean McLaughlin



Department/organisation	Name
Department of Health/Department of Children and Youth Affairs	Dr Sean Denyer
Department of Health	Kate O'Flaherty
Department of Health	Malachy Corcoran
Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation	Conor Stokes
Department of Justice and Equality	Ruairi Gogan
Department of Social Protection	Adele Ryan
Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI)	Jim McVeigh
National University of Ireland, Maynooth	Prof. Maurice Devlin
Tusla – Child and Family Agency	Oliver Mawe
Youth sector representative	John Cahill
Youth sector representative	Elaine Nevin
Secretariat	Breege Kiernan

National Youth Council of Ireland Advisory Group

The National Youth Council of Ireland brought together the following organisations to inform the development of the National Youth Strategy through its representation on the National Youth Strategy Task Group:

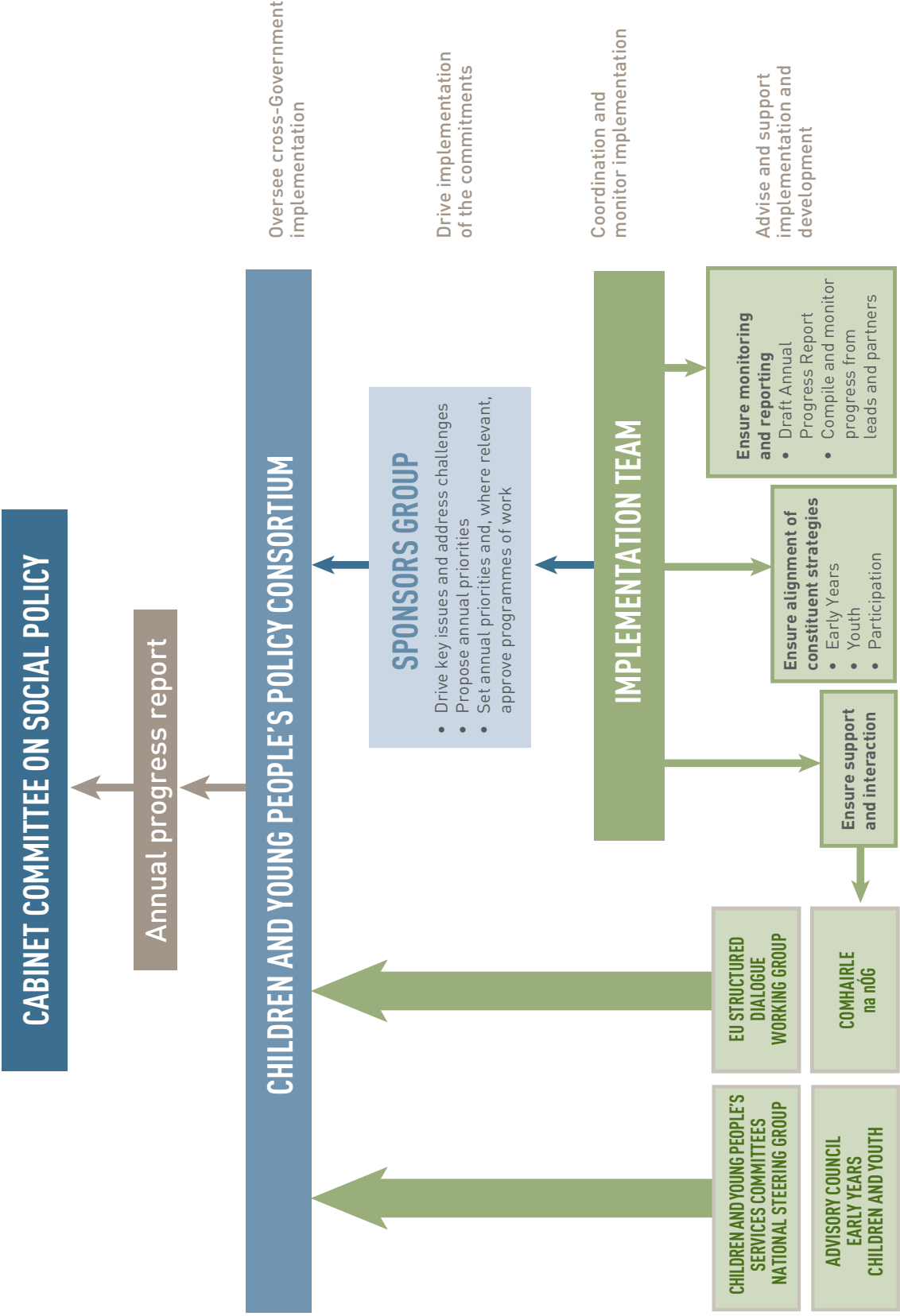
Representative	Organisation
David Barry	Irish Wheelchair Association
John Buckley	Spunout.ie
Patrick Burke	Youth Work Ireland
Michelle Carew	National Association of Youth Drama
Rachel Collier	Young Social Innovators
Edmond Connolly	Macra na Feirme
Enda Costello	Ógra Fianna Fáil
Philip Daley	Boys Brigade
James Doorley	National Youth Council of Ireland
Valerie Duffy	National Youth Council of Ireland
Gordon Hill	Crosscare
Marion Irwin-Gowan	Gaisce – The President's Award
Jemma Lee	Irish Girl Guides
Mairéad Mahon	Swan Youth Service, Dublin

continued

Representative	Organisation
Marie-Claire McAleer	National Youth Council of Ireland
Yvonne McKenna	Gaisce – The President’s Award
Maedhbh Ní Dhónaill	Ógras
Denis O’Brien	Foróige
James O’Leary	Involve
Feidhlim Ó Seasnain	ECO UNESCO
Niamh Quinn	Foróige
Olive Ring	National Youth Council of Ireland
Stephen Spillane	Young Fine Gael
Anne Walshe	National Youth Council of Ireland
Fionn Scott	National Youth Council of Ireland
Ailish O’Neill	National Youth Council of Ireland
Martina O’Brien	National Youth Council of Ireland

The youth sector representatives on the National Youth Task Group, Elaine Nevin and John Cahill, attended meetings of the Advisory Group.

Appendix 2: Implementation structures for the National Policy Framework



Appendix 3: Youth-specific Government commitments

Commitments <small>(bold tick indicates lead Government department or agency)</small>	DCYA	DES	DH	DJE	DSP	DECLG	DPER	DJEI	DCENR	DF	DTTS	DAFM	DAHG	HSE	Tusla	Local Gov	AGS	Others	All
Goal 1: Support parents																			
Goal 2: Earlier intervention and prevention																			
G2.5 Work towards a rebalancing of resources to place a greater emphasis on prevention and earlier intervention.		✓	✓	✓										✓	✓				
G2.10 Support quality youth work, both as a protective factor contributing to the young person's overall development and in reaching out to young people at risk of crime or anti-social behavior.	✓																		
G2.11 Training and upskilling of professionals across formal and non-formal educational settings, so as to be in a position to identify potential child welfare and mental health issues, and to provide preventative and early intervention support.	✓	✓	✓											✓	✓				
Goal 3: Listen to and involve children and young people																			
G3.14 Consult with children and young people on policies and issues that affect their lives.	✓																		✓
G3.15 Develop and implement a National Policy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making to strengthen efforts to ensure that children and young people are supported to express their views in all matters affecting them and to have those views given due weight, including those of 'seldom-heard' children.	✓																		✓
G3.20 Ensure that the views presented by children and young people in participatory forums and consultations are taken into account by the formal political and policy-making process, and that feedback to the young people is always provided in return.	✓																		
G3.21 Establish a Children and Young People's Participation Hub to support Government departments and agencies in the implementation of the National Policy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making.	✓																		
Goal 4: Ensure quality services																			
G4.25 Continue to improve the quality and timeliness of services for children and young people, ensuring that State-funded programmes and services are outcomes focused and can clearly demonstrate that they improve outcomes.	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓								✓	✓				
G4.29 Develop quality standards and training for all professionals working directly with children and young people, thus ensuring a highly trained, supported and professionally aligned workforce.	✓	✓	✓											✓	✓				
Goal 5: Support effective transitions																			
G5.35 Increase opportunities for young people to enter employment through the promotion of work experience opportunities at second and third level.		✓			✓														
G5.36 Strengthen the transitions between child and adolescent and adult services in the areas of physical and mental health services.			✓											✓					

Commitments (bold tick indicates lead Government department or agency)	DCYA	DES	DH	DJE	DSP	DECLG	DPER	DJEI	DCENR	DF	DITS	DAFM	DAHG	HSE	Tusla	Local Gov	AGS	Others	All
G6.37 Ensure that all young people leaving care, detention or residential disability settings are adequately prepared and supported to negotiate the system and transition to stable independent living, further education, training or employment through the development and implementation of a quality aftercare plan and the development of protocols in relation to accessing housing, education and training.	✓		✓			✓								✓	✓				
Goal 6: Cross-Government and interagency collaboration and coordination																			
6.1 People																			
G6.38 Support the development of interdisciplinary and interprofessional training programmes which encourage leadership and collaboration for professionals working with children and young people across the range of service delivery.	✓	✓	✓	✓										✓	✓				
G6.39 Develop and implement a multidisciplinary workforce development plan on a phased basis for all professionals working with children and families, including staff within Tusla – Child and Family Agency and other key professionals.	✓	✓		✓										✓	✓				
6.2 Infrastructure																			
G6.49 Establish integrated services or ‘hubs’ for children and young people at community level (examples include primary care clinics, family support/resource centres and Jigsaw youth mental health centres) and, where appropriate, bring health and therapeutic services into schools.	✓		✓											✓	✓	✓			
G6.52 Streamline planning and decision-making structures at local level, including Children’s Services Committees, to be consistent with the Government’s public sector reforms, and specifically the alignment of local Government and Local Community Development Committees.	✓					✓									✓	✓			
6.3 Evidence and data analysis																			
G6.56 Develop a comprehensive set of indicators to support the Framework and to track progress across the aims of each of the five national outcome areas.	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓													
G6.57 Disaggregate data and indicators by important demographic characteristics to allow for improved evidence-based policy-making, implementation and monitoring, and in the delivery of services.	✓						✓												✓
6.4 Funding and finance																			
G6.65 Explore the development of cross-Government estimates for expenditure on children and young people, and update these annually thereafter.	✓						✓			✓									
G6.68 Use the intelligence from Children’s Services Committees in relation to local need and priorities to inform the allocation of national and local funding streams.	✓		✓			✓								✓	✓	✓	✓		

continued

Commitments <small>(bold tick indicates lead Government department or agency)</small>	DCYA	DES	DH	DJE	DSP	DECLG	DPER	DJEI	DCENR	DF	DITS	DAFM	DAHG	HSE	Tusla	Local Gov	AGS	Others	All
Outcome 1: Active and healthy																			
1.6 Continue to support accessible and affordable youth and sport activities, which encourage young people’s overall personal and social development, including healthy behaviours, and engage young people who might be at risk of early school-leaving or engaging in criminal activity and anti-social behaviour.	✓		✓								✓			✓	✓		✓		
1.7 Address the high rate of premature and risky alcohol consumption, use of illicit drugs and the incidence of smoking among young people through a combination of legislative, regulatory and policy mechanisms.	✓	✓	✓	✓													✓		
1.11 Complete and implement a National Sexual Health Strategy as a strategic framework for the sexual health and well-being of the population, ensuring access for young people to age-appropriate information and services about relationships and sexual health.	✓	✓	✓																
1.12 Complete and implement the National Physical Activity Plan; support the full implementation of the schools’ Physical Education Programme and encourage the Active Schools Flag Initiative.		✓	✓																✓
1.13 Enable hard-to-reach groups to access services by making health services (including mental health services) available in youth-friendly, accessible and inclusive environments.	✓	✓	✓											✓			✓		
1.14 Enable greater access to sports, arts and culture for all children and young people, including through facilitating collaboration between sports, youth, arts and cultural organisations, and schools and preschools, to enrich the educational experience of all.	✓	✓									✓		✓						✓
1.15 Continue to develop play and recreation spaces for both children and young people, from playgrounds (for multiple age ranges) to youth cafés, sports and leisure centres, and where possible look to weatherproof these spaces.	✓		✓			✓													
Outcome 2: Achieving full potential in learning and development																			
2.4 Implement strategies to improve school engagement and reduce incidences of suspensions and expulsions and early school-leaving through engaging parents in schooling, strengthening transitions, promoting different styles of learning to better engage boys, and fostering inclusive school environments where all pupils flourish, irrespective of social and ethnic background or disability.	✓	✓													✓				
2.6 Continue to implement the new framework for Junior Cycle, which is structured around a set of key principles and statements of learning and which will allow students to develop key skills, such as effective communication, collaborative working, independent thinking, problem-solving and analytical skills.		✓																	

continued

Commitments <small>(bold tick indicates lead Government department or agency)</small>	DCYA	DES	DH	DJE	DSP	DECLG	DPER	DJEI	DCENR	DF	DITS	DAFM	DAHG	HSE	Tusla	Local Gov	AGS	Others	All
2.11 Support and link existing partnerships, strategies and initiatives that aim to improve the decision-making capacity of children and young people through strengthening self-esteem, resilience, responses to social and interpersonal pressure, health and media literacy (including social media literacy).	✓	✓	✓						✓					✓				✓	
2.17 Provide opportunities for early school-leavers to engage with further education and training within the framework of youth and educational welfare services, Education and Training Boards and SOLAS.	✓	✓																	
Outcome 3: Safe and protected from harm																			
3.16 Provide an integrated and comprehensive service response to children aged under 18 years presenting as out of home (as for all children in care) in keeping with the findings and recommendations of the Review of the Implementation of the Youth Homelessness Strategy.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓								✓	✓		✓		
3.20 Tackle youth crime and divert children and young people from crime and anti-social behaviour through engaging with young people in the community and other proven effective interventions, with a view to changing short- and long-term behaviour patterns of youth offending. Use a coherent range of community and criminal sanctions to reduce offending.	✓			✓													✓	✓	
3.21 Build and open a new National Children Detention Facility and end the practice of accommodating 17-year-old boys in adult prison facilities. Complete the reforms of the Children Detention Schools, monitor outcomes for children in and post-detention, and ensure a robust independent inspection, complaints and investigation system operates within the Children Detention Schools.	✓																		
3.24 Take appropriate measures to protect young people from gambling-related risks.				✓				✓	✓	✓						✓			
Outcome 4: Economic security and opportunity																			
4.11 Promote vocational education and training through the Educational Training Boards, encouraging the development of entrepreneurship skills among young people, promoting the development of in-school internship programmes and strengthening the links between local businesses, schools and youth organisations.	✓	✓															✓		
4.12 Develop and implement an action plan to support youth employment, including the EU Youth Guarantee, and having regard to the development of the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities and how it applies to those young people under 25 years of age.	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓											

continued

Commitments <small>(bold tick indicates lead Government department or agency)</small>	DCYA	DES	DH	DJE	DSP	DECLG	DPER	DJEI	DCENR	DF	DTTS	DAFM	DAHG	HSE	Tusla	Local Gov	AGS	Others	All
4.13 Draw on the strengths and reach of youth work services and local development companies in working with public agencies and employers to promote the training, employment and entrepreneurship of young people.	✓	✓			✓	✓										✓			
4.14 Support young people building businesses and livelihoods in the rural economy, such as in farming, fishing, forestry, food, hospitality and tourism.						✓		✓			✓	✓							
Outcome 5: Connected, respected and contributing to their world																			
5.2 Promote and recognise young people's active citizenship and engagement in democratic processes, participation in social and environmental activism and innovation, volunteering and social entrepreneurship, including promoting voter registration in elections by all newly eligible voters.	✓					✓		✓											
5.3 Ensure that the views presented by children and young people in participation forums and consultation are taken into account by the formal political process and policy-making, and that feedback to young people is always provided in return.	✓																		
5.4 Hold a referendum before the end of 2015 on a proposal to amend the Constitution to reduce the voting age to 16.						✓													
5.5 Develop and implement a National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development and deepen and strengthen the teaching of civics and human rights.		✓																	
5.6 Reduce discrimination and intolerance of all types experienced by marginalised groups (i.e. Travellers, Roma, migrants and asylum-seekers; children and young people with disabilities; those in care and detention; lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) young people; and those from ethnic or religious minorities).	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓									✓	✓	✓		✓	
5.7 Ensure that the ethos, policies and practices of Government institutions and State-funded services (including schools) promote equal treatment and interculturalism, and have measures to protect against and remedy all forms of discrimination.					✓														✓
5.8 Ensure that Ireland's laws, policies and practice are compliant with the principles and provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols that Ireland has ratified.	✓																	✓	✓
5.10 Clarify the law in relation to a child and young person's right to know his or her identity (e.g. where adopted or where born) through the use of Assisted Reproductive Technologies and put in place mechanisms to collect and retain information necessary to enable a child to exercise their right to identity and to facilitate regular family access for children in care.	✓				✓														

Commitments <small>(bold tick indicates lead Government department or agency)</small>	DCYA	DES	DH	DJE	DSP	DECLG	DPER	DJEI	DCENR	DF	DITS	DAFM	DAHG	HSE	Tusla	Local Gov	AGS	Others	All
5.12 Drive reform in the youth justice area through the implementation of Tackling Youth Crime – A Youth Justice Action Plan, 2014-2018, focusing on diversion and rehabilitation, including greater use of community-based interventions, promoting initiatives to deal with young people who offend, providing a safe and secure environment for detained young people and supporting their early re-integration into the community.	✓			✓															
Implementation of <i>Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures</i>																			
1. Streamline accountability structures for children and youth, creating: (a) Children and Young People’s Policy Consortium, with a sub-group (Sponsors Group) that will connect with other cross-Government accountability structures in a strategic and collaborative way (e.g. Healthy Ireland); (b) Advisory Council, with two pillars – one for Early Years and one for Children and Youth.	✓																		✓
2. Ensure that children and young people have a voice in the accountability mechanisms through linking with Dáil na nÓg structures.	✓																		
3. Ensure local county-level implementation and monitoring through the Children’s Services Committees (CSCs), which will be formally linked with the new Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) being established in each Local Authority area under an initiative of the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government.	✓															✓			
4. Establish an Implementation Team within DCYA to support the development of a strong Policy Consortium and Sponsors Group. The Implementation Team will drive accountability and the delivery of cross-Government coordination and collaboration to achieve better outcomes for children and young people. Membership of the Implementation Team will include a mix of skills and will draw on the contribution and creativity of young people.	✓																		
5. Develop and implement a communications plan for <i>Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures</i> and its supporting strategies, using existing national and local structures as channels for communication.	✓																		✓

Appendix 4: Summary of young people's views on social inclusion (2013/2014)

Thematic area	Recommendation
Inclusive education for all young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a holistic approach to education, including sustainable frameworks for collaboration between formal and non-formal education. • Provide quality, inclusive education and learning opportunities for all young people from primary to third level. • Adapt education to the needs of young people and demands of labour market. • Promote participation in decision-making, diversity and inclusion in education systems. • Non-formal education and experiential learning methods should be integrated within formal education to strengthen young people's key competencies.
Employment leads to inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people in employment should be treated equally and fairly (decent work and salary, non-precarious jobs) and provided with training and promotion opportunities. • Support and facilitate transitions from education to employment, e.g. career guidance and job coaching. • Provide quality jobs and internships for young people. • Encourage and support youth entrepreneurship and provide entrepreneurial training and support. • Promote investment guarantee programmes for young social entrepreneurs.
Equal rights and opportunities to participate in civic life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that young people have equal access to rights and are provided with opportunities to participate fully in society. • Support young people's involvement in decision-making and their representation in democratic life through education, civil society and representative institutions. • Young people should have a decisive role in shaping youth work programmes.
Access to welfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen cross-sectoral cooperation to ensure coherent welfare policies which meet the needs of young people. • Ensure social rights, including access to physical and mental healthcare, affordable housing, etc. • Provide youth-friendly information, guidance, financial support through a one-stop service.

Thematic area	Recommendation
Support services for young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth services, social services and formal education institutions should work together with young people and their families to prevent social exclusion. • Enhance support and improve information and counselling services in formal and non-formal education settings and youth information centres.
Youth work/ youth organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that young people have access to non-formal education (youth work) opportunities. • Recognise and validate non-formal learning and the competencies and complementary soft skills acquired. • Maximise youth work's contribution to the implementation of the Youth Guarantee. • Promote and develop a quality assurance framework for youth work. • Youth-led organisations and youth structures should be actively involved in the creation, deliberation and implementation of policies that impact on youth.
Inform, guide and facilitate transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform and guide young people, especially disadvantaged young people or young people not in education, training or employment, in their transitions by providing diversity training for practitioners. • Formal and non-formal education providers should build sustainable partnerships with employers (work experience, internships, apprenticeships).

Source: EU Youth Conference Conclusions, March 2013 (Ireland), September 2013 (Lithuania) and March 2014 (Greece).

Appendix 5: Sources informing key areas for consideration

Priorities identified	Policy context			Consultation		
	<i>Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: National Policy Framework for Children & Young People, 2014-2020</i>	National policies impacting on youth	European policies	National Youth Work Advisory Committee	EU Structured Dialogue	National University of Ireland Youth Policy Conference 2014
Outcome 1						
Ensure the participation of young people, including disadvantaged groups, in sport, youth work, recreation and cultural activities.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tackle inequalities in health outcomes and enable positive decision-making in relation to their own mental and sexual health, and well-being.	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Reduce levels of obesity.	✓	✓				
Outcome 2						
Enable the development of core skills and competencies through increasing their active participation in all levels of formal education, and in non-formal learning.	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Focus on early school-leavers.	✓	✓		✓		
Outcome 3						
Reduce the incidences of all types of neglect and abuse, including sexual and physical abuse, for young people through improved cross-sector child protection measures across sectors.	✓	✓				✓

	Policy context			Consultation		
Priorities identified	<i>Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: National Policy Framework for Children & Young People, 2014-2020</i>	National policies impacting on youth	European policies	National Youth Work Advisory Committee	EU Structured Dialogue	National University of Ireland Youth Policy Conference 2014
Tackle issues of bullying through developing a national plan.	✓	✓		✓		
Enable young people in State care to transition effectively from statutory services to live independently.	✓	✓				
Reduce the incidence of youth crime in communities.	✓	✓				
Outcome 4						
Enhance supports for young people so that they can develop employability skills and attributes required in the labour market.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Enable access to employment pathways, including enabling entrepreneurial skills.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Outcome 5						
Reduce discrimination suffered by minority groups of young people.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ensure participation in planning and decision-making structures at local and national levels.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Support young people's participation in social and environmental activism and innovation, volunteering and social entrepreneurship.	✓	✓	✓		✓	

Appendix 6: Suggested criteria for identifying National Youth Strategy priorities

(as discussed at the National Youth Strategy Task Group meeting, 17 July 2014)

In the context of identifying priorities, consideration should be given to the following criteria (*not listed or ranked in order of importance*):

- Priorities may contribute to more than one outcome.
- Consider priorities of the Sponsors Group.
- What is the connection of the priority to existing strategies?
- Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs – framework from which to build the priorities for the National Youth Strategy.
- Priority should address a specific/significant need identified.
- Priorities/actions agreed should have the greatest impact.
- Priorities should be critical, have most impact and be cost-effective.
- Early intervention focus of priorities.
- Key areas of transitions for young people.
- Young people should agree with the priorities.
- Structures of implementation.
- Existing evidence to support the priorities.
- Sequencing of the priorities within the strategy.
- Simplicity of priorities.
- Be able to maintain a universal/targeted balance.
- Explicitly measurable and reportable.
- Feasible, achievable and implementable within available resources.

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