

# Annual Report 2022

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Youth Work Ireland Midlands



Youth Work Ireland  
**Midlands**



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**Youth Work Ireland**  
**Midlands**

## Chairperson Foreword

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Dear members and friends of Youth Work Ireland Midlands,

I am pleased to present our Annual Report for 2022, a year marked by post-Covid recovery and progress in our core areas of work.

We acknowledge the immense commitment of our staff teams' continued engagement with young people and communities during and post Covid. Our teams have gone above and beyond to provide essential support, mentorship, and informal education opportunities to young people in unprecedented times.

However, despite the best efforts of our Club Development Team, COVID-19 has had a severe impact on the organisation's volunteer numbers and club activities, and we are still dealing with the aftershocks as we rebuild. However, we remain dedicated to our mission and look forward to the welcoming of new volunteers and clubs which are integral to the work of our organisation.

I am proud to report that our Youth Diversion Projects' expansion, which started in November 2022, has helped us reach and support many more young people. We also saw some marginal funding increases across our youth projects in 2022. Now we can look forward to future opportunities for the development of new projects in region.

I wish to recognise the contributions of departing long-serving staff to our organisation's success. I particularly would like to acknowledge Martha Murphy, who has been an exceptional Finance Manager and has kept the organisation's financial affairs in perfect order. While it's always sad to say goodbye to old friends, we warmly welcome the new faces joining our organisation, and we are excited about what they will bring to the table.

Moreover, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our newest board member, John Doolan, who brings a wealth of experience in the areas of finance and business to our organisation. We are delighted to have him on board.

Finally, I am pleased to report marginal funding increases for 2022, which will enable us to continue to provide potentially life-changing support and experiences to as many young people as possible.

I thank our staff, volunteers, funders and supporters for their unwavering commitment and devotion to our mission. We look forward to continued progress and success in the years to come.

Thank you

Padraig McGrath

## CEO Address

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Hello everyone and welcome to another Youth Work Ireland Midlands AGM. It might surprise some people to note that this is our 25<sup>th</sup> AGM since the Youth Service was formally incorporated as a limited company in 1998. The Service is of course around, led by a regional team of very ambitious volunteers since the late 1960's. The legacy of those intrepid volunteers continues to grow from strength to strength today.

2022 was, and I feel like a bit of an echo here, a very, very productive and challenging year. As we emerged more fully from the Covid restrictions the entire team rallied to ensure all our young people, families and volunteers were supported to return to full and active participation in their clubs, projects and programmes.

The Board continued to focus on the strategic priorities outlined in our Strategic Plan to ensure the Service maintained its high quality governance and compliance function. To this end we saw the co-option of two new Board members, John Doolan who Padraig introduced in his foreword; John brings a wealth of experience in finance and business management and Susan Fay, Susan a solicitor with extensive human rights and legal experience was with us briefly as not long after joining the Board she was appointed to the Bench as a District Court Judge, necessitating her stepping down from the Board. We wish Susan all the very best in her new role. I would like to acknowledge the support and dedication shown by all our Board members over the last year and I look forward to continuing to work with them going forward.

In May 2022 I had the opportunity to attend the ERYICA General Assembly in Barcelona at the invitation of ERYICA President and Youth Work Ireland CEO, Patrick Burke, a welcome return to international networking and collaboration. This re-engagement with ERYICA resulted in a significant piece of work for the Youth Information Service, but that's a story for next time.

The Youth Work team across the region continue to inspire and impress me with their resilience, commitment and never ending enthusiasm for their work with young people and communities, there is a never ending optimism and determination to do more, be more creative, more engaging, and more impactful for our young people. I thank you all for that.



We had some significant staff turnover in 2022, not something that we are used to as we have a history of impressive staff retention, we wish all our former colleagues the very best of everything for their next adventure. As you all know, my right hand woman, Martha Murphy moved on at the end of November 2022 and I thank you all for your patience and compassion when dealing with ME on all matters finance. You have been in safer hands with Kevin Costello taking on a significantly increased administrative function since Martha's departure. My thanks too to Tracey Moore as Service Manager for her stallworth support in ensuring all things HR and the Rest was competently and diligently managed.

I continue to look forward, as I usually do, regardless of challenges or frustrations, because I believe in the work we do, the mission and values we live and our collective ambition to be the best. Thank you.

**Geraldine Lacey, CEO**

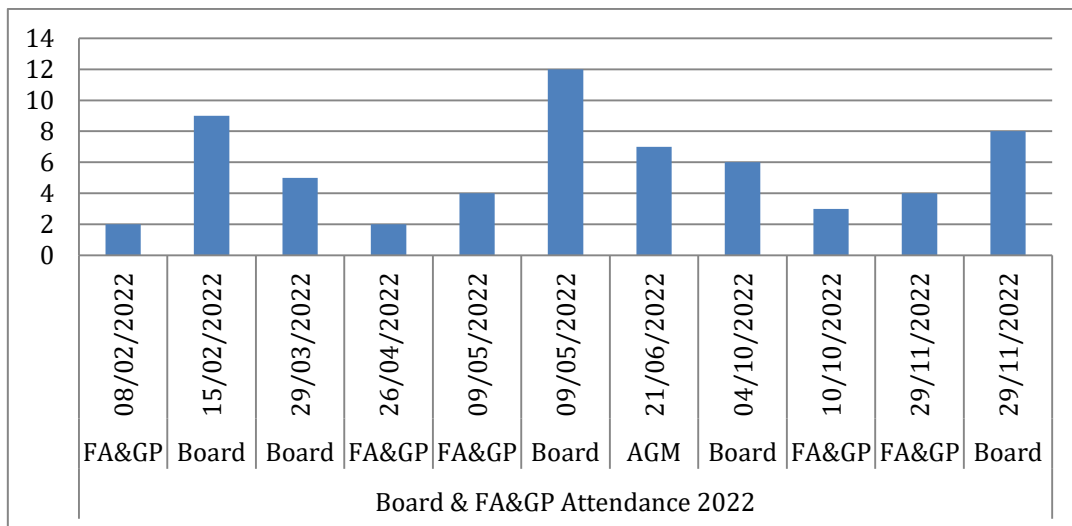
## Board of Trustees 2022

Our Board of Trustees are dedicated to overseeing the provision of quality youth work services across counties Offaly, Westmeath & Roscommon. The board of Youth Work Ireland Midlands deals with a multiplicity of issues on an ongoing basis and will continue to do so. This priority list is intended to capture the top Strategic Priorities of the Board as outlined in our new [Strategic Statement 2020-2024](#).

Chairperson	Padraig McGrath
Vice Chair	Jackie Flannery
Secretary	Marian Fitzpatrick
Treasurer	Annette Barr Jordan
Vice Treasurer	Jim Rock
Director	Gerard Keena
Director	Eugene Boland
Director	Laura Barry
Director	Louise Gorman
Director	Bernie O Neill
Director	Catherine Bracken
Director	Deirdre Feely
Director	John Doolan



At our March Board Meeting we had a hybrid meeting with board members joining online as well as a welcome visit from Patrick Burke CEO, Youth Work Ireland and Catherine Durkan, Chairperson Youth Work Ireland.



Our board continues to meet regularly and consistently with the assistance of hybrid meetings.

## 2022 Snapshot

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### Other Projects / Programmes delivered

Gaisce, Here4U, Employability Project, International Programmes, Westmeath Comhairle na nÓg, Roscommon Comhairle na nÓg, LGBTI+ Projects, Young Carers Project, Music Generation Projects, Youth Cafe's, We Can Quit Smoking Cessation Programme

### Primary Funders

- ✚ Dept. of Children, Equality, Disability, Inclusion & Youth - UBU Your Place Your Space, Youth Information & Youth Service Grant;
- ✚ Dept. of Justice: Youth Diversion Projects, Work To Learn Project, QQI Educational Project.
- ✚ Dept. of Social Protection: Community Employment Scheme & Schools Meals Programme.

### Other funders

HSE - Traveller Health Unit, HSE - Health Promotion Unit, Tusla - CYPSC Seed Funding, Healthy Ireland, Westmeath County Council, Offaly County Council, Irish Youth Foundation, Midland Regional Drug & Alcohol Taskforce, Leargas, LOETB, LWETB

## *Service Manager Reflection*

At Youth Work Ireland Midlands, we recognise that our team is our most valuable asset. Throughout 2022, we have remained firm in our commitment to creating a workplace culture that fosters our values which are named in our Strategic Plan 2020 - 2024 and therefore shows excellence, innovation, and collaboration in our practice with young people.

Over the past year, we have focused on several key areas to strengthen our HR practices and enhance the organisational culture. We have continued with regular Supervision and Staff Support and maintained strong on boarding support to new staff members. While we lost some valuable team members due to career progression - we value their service with the organisation and their feedback on exiting which helps us to continue to grow as a workplace worthy of the quality practice and culture we are proud of.

We have also prioritised employee development and learning opportunities. Through training programs, mentoring initiatives, and leadership development initiatives, we have empowered our staff, students and young people to continuously grow and expand their skill sets. By nurturing a learning culture, we aim to equip our workforce with the tools and knowledge they need to excel in their roles and drive innovation across the organisation. This was particularly evident in 2020 - 2021 in our transition through Covid and Hybrid working - and throughout 2022 our teams were strong and resilient in their work showcasing a lot of learning and new skills over the previous year.

Some of the exciting CPD and 3rd Level achievements of note include;

NUI Maynooth Post Grad Diploma in Guidance Counselling - **Maura Kearney - AMETS**,  
IICP / Tallaght – Commenced a Degree in Counselling and Psychotherapy - **Ciara Farrell AMETS**  
DCU - Masters Counselling and Psychotherapy - **Ann Sheeran. Fusion Project**  
City College - Professional Diploma in Criminology and Psychology - **Catherine McEntee, MYP**  
NUI Maynooth Cert in European Mobility Project Management - **Edweena Farrell, Youth Info**  
Trinity College - TANGENT - Post Grad Cert in Innovation & Enterprise Development - **Tracey Moore**  
TU of the Shannon - our **CEO Geraldine Lacey** was awarded a Higher Diploma in Leadership in Business

**Congratulations** and well done to all who continued to work hard to maintain the highest standards of Youth Service provision and study with the view to improving their own competence and the quality of work in our projects.

We look forward to 2023 with strong intentions to continue conversations on Wellbeing, Strong Governance and Enhanced Policy to continue our high standards. We will commit to implementing various initiatives to promote work-life balance, foster a positive work environment, and support the physical and mental well-being of our employees. We also intend to continue contribute to the development of strong and improving practice within the Youth Work Ireland Membership - with the development of a **Youth Work Ireland MYS Training Pilot** - following Innovative Practice Cluster & RD Network - Youth Work Ireland Midlands / AMETS will deliver a bespoke QQI 5 Youth Work programme to enable minimum competence standards / CPD for Member Youth Service Staff and volunteers. Support from Laois Offaly ETB and co-financing from Youth Work Ireland National Office has been committed for 2023



2022 saw a Core staff team of 31 and a supporting CE team of 28 with some additions including new Teammates who were warmly welcomed across the region;

**Ciara Farrell**, Acorn Project Edenderry

**Carrie Lynch**, Athlone Youth Project

**Riona Rooney**, Mullingar Youth Project

**Aileen Costello** and **Martina Shortall** - Tullamore Youth Project

**Adrian Kavanagh** and **Siobhan Martin** - Fusion Project, Tullamore

**Des Powell** and **Roisin Kenny** - ALF Project, Athlone

**Rosemary Scally** joining us full time in Mullingar EYE and **Wesley Foley**, Mullingar EYE

Farewells and best wishes to our colleagues who have taken up exciting new opportunities – we're grateful for your contributions over the years and expect to cross paths again soon;

**Aoife Buggy** - Fusion Project

**Joanne Naughton** - Athlone Youth Project

**David Newman** - Mullingar Youth Project

**Mary Mulvany** - Community Employment

And our longstanding colleague who was a foundation to the daily operations of Finance - **Martha Murphy** – the rock of sense and logic behind all the projects – she will be sorely missed for a long time to come from Board to Staff.

Martha was joined by colleagues and friends at our board meeting in November where we had a farewell and see you soon Cuppa.



## Community Employment

Community Employment is an employment programme which helps long-term unemployed people to re-enter the active workforce by breaking their experience of unemployment through a return to work routine.



Challenges in Recruitment for CE reflected across the region and across Ireland. However despite this we achieved 69% progression to employment supporting participants who were successful in gaining roles in a range of organisations such as Nua Health Care, REHAB learning, Brothers of Charity and even on our own team in Mullingar Youth Project.

35 minor awards and 25 Industry Standard awards were achieved in our CE Team across the region with many undertaking the Major award in Youth Work with AMETS, our Training body who are accredited by the Laois Offaly ETB.

Training Courses include – Major Award in Youth Work, NYCI Certificate in Youth Arts, Train the Trainer, HACCP, First Aid, ECDL – Expert, Youth and Counselling, Digital Youth Work, STEAM in Youth Work, Social Studies, Guarding Skills, Child Safeguarding and many other Industry related CPD elements.

We offer congratulations to 3 Youth Work Assistants who will graduate with a Major Award in Youth Work QQI 5 through Laois Offaly ETB and AMETS.

Active Youth Work Assistant and Caretaker vacancies are advertised on Jobsireland.ie



## UBU Projects

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

UBU Your Place Your Space is a funding scheme which provides local services for young people and was developed in line with recommendations from the Value for Money and Policy Review of Youth Programmes (2014) through the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA). (Department of Children Equality Disability Integration and Youth - DCEDIY)

UBU Your Place Your Space aligns with the Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures National Policy Framework, the National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making, and the LGBTI+ and National Youth Strategies.

The mission of UBU Projects is to provide out-of-school supports to young people in their local communities to enable them to overcome adverse circumstances and achieve their full potential by improving their personal and social development outcomes.

### Athlone Youth Project

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At the beginning of the year, we said goodbye to Project Coordinator Joanne Naughton who moved on to SlainteCare as the Social Prescriber. Thankfully not too far away from us, Joanne and the project team continued to work in partnership for the wellbeing of our local community. While the year started off with a fast paced moving multi - sports programme in conjunction with Westmeath sports partnership, Youth Workers Elaine Berry and Teresa Joyce supported by part time staff and the CE Team continued a busy schedule all the way to Easter including the adventure of attending an Ireland game in the Aviva stadium.

April arrived and Carrie Lynch was appointed as Project Coordinator who progressed Easter plans with great energy including supporting young



people who had an adventurous plan to climb the "Stairway to Heaven" an experience that they won't forget.



We enjoyed great community collaboration alongside the Family Resource Centre with our local groups including the Battery Belles and welcomed them to our centre on a weekly basis.



July and August seen a busy fun filled summer programme through integration of Ukraine young people in to the community and groups they took part in trips to Tayto Park Portlick water sports week fishing FAI camps picnics pool competitions family fun days The youth event and zip lining in lough key forest park.

October is spooky season in Athlone Youth project and this year was our first ever Battery Phobia followed by a Halloween Disco and a trip to the real deal farmaphobia.

December saw the end of the year, we had and our Christmas wonderland where our young people created a Christmas grotto for Santa to meet and greet the families and young people. Santa arrived with the help of the local Gardaí and a Christmas disco and dance followed. Young people also took part in Slainte Healthcare launch and performed songs and a dance.



## Mullingar Youth Project

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2022 saw another incredible year in Mullingar Youth Project, with so many busy exciting and successful activities and programmes carried out throughout the year by Catherine McEntee, Coordinator and her team. One of the earliest highlights was a visit from a group of youth workers all the way from Iceland. This was a fantastic opportunity for everyone to discuss and explore the different international methods and approaches to youth work.

Our Easter programmes proved a huge success facilitating up to 200 young people through fun and creative Easter activities. Topping off a brilliant Easter programme was a trip to Tayto Park for our young people from both Dalton Park and Grange ending Easter programmes on a high.

Throughout 2022 Mullingar Youth Project facilitated the TYESI employability programme which provided range of diverse courses including Barbering, Make-up-Artistry, Abrasive Wheels, Safe Pass training, Working at Heights, Manual Handling, MEWP training and Barista all of which brought a great sense of achievement, accreditation and opened new progression opportunities to all young people who participated.



July kicked off our summer programmes. These programmes are always a huge success and are anticipated and looked forward to by all young people. Summer camp saw many incredible activities such as fun days, BBQs, outdoor games, walks and trips away. We hosted our annual Traveller Pride event in July and the grand finale of summer programmes saw the return of our first residential since COVID 19 with a glamping trip to Leitrim.

2022 saw the Grange estate selected by Westmeath County Council to enter the Pride of place competition, young people together came alongside the residents and local group to get preparations under way for the upcoming Pride of Place judging event. This created a lot of excitement and enthusiasm across the community seeing people of all ages working together to showcase their community and services within it. The young Men's Shed helped with the making of fantastic wooden planters which were then placed in various places around the estate. The sense of pride that all the young people involved had in their community was incredible and following the attendance of the awards night Grange took home the award for best estate. No words could top that.

The month of May saw the arrival of our SlainteCare Grange community hub extension following a successful grant application process. This has been a fantastic extension to the Grange centre and has encouraged the provision of services such as probation, substance prevention and employment services to take place onsite which reduces the barriers to engagement for our young people.

Our weekend football academy commenced in April and provided positive weekend participation activities, through the success of the academy 3 underage teams were entered into the MSL league which kept our young people, parents and committed volunteers active and busy throughout the winter months.

Our LGBTIQ+ group enjoyed coming together with young people from other local youth services for a fancy dress disco at Halloween, this culminated in a Youth Work Ireland Midlands group of LGBTIQ+

young people coming together and producing an informational video on how support offered through the Youth work sector supported them through their journey.



## Tullamore Youth Project

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Aileen Costello took up post as Project Coordinator and Martina Shortall as Youth Worker in Tullamore Youth project in September 2022. Both ladies had long standing experiences as past students on placement, volunteer experience and held part time posts in the project under the guidance of the previous Coordinator – Ann Sheeran who moved to the Fusion Project.

Tullamore Youth Project provides a targeted service for young people in the areas of Eiscir Riada, Puttaghan, Tara Crescent and Arden View. During 2022 TYP was awarded with funding to support the development of an Employability Programme that supported young people 15-24.

Workshops were provided for young people in a 1:1/ small group setting such as CV Development, Driver Theory, Interview Skills, Personal Development and Career Pathways. Working in collaboration with AMETS programmes such as Woodwork, Gel nails, Introduction to Barbering, Safe Pass Training course.



*Create the Great in You* as a part of the Employability Programme and in partnership with Offaly Traveller Movement aimed to build resilience, developing interpersonal skills and enhancing wellbeing at an individual, team or organisational level. The journey begins with a conscious decision to

collaborate in a shared learning environment. Introducing participants to experiential learning in order to help them reach their fullest potential.

Pride month and LGBT+ work has really strived in the last year. TYP worked with LGBT+ groups in collaboration with FUSION YDP providing a service across Tullamore providing space for young people to express themselves and engage in a multitude of supports such as 1:1, peer development, online talks and parent's information. Midlands LGBT launched their service into Offaly in 2022 this was a huge event. TYP young people participated in Laois Pride Parade which took place in Portlaoise and facilitated YWI Laois and Midlands LGBT+ Project.

Museum of Everyone, Rewind Fast Forward Record and Into The Open collaborated with LGBT+ young people in a series of workshops that promoted health and wellbeing, exploring stigmas and racism against their community, raising awareness of such issues and identifying supports that were available to members. The voice of Young People was explored through a variety of activities from educating young people about the historic challenges and victories that the LGBT+ community had faced.



Young people's voice was also explored through a banner making workshop session where creative designs were formed to create banners which were then displayed proudly in the Offaly County Council building in Tullamore. The banners were displayed in the IMMA museum in Co Dublin during the advertisement of their compilation of their work.

Young People engaging in Young Carers group participated in an Equine Assisted Personal Development (EAPD) Programme in collaboration with Offaly Local Development Company. Through groundwork training, participants in an EAPD workshop begin learning how to communicate with horses using only their body language.



Sail Training Ireland- In partnership with Sail Training Ireland and FUSION funded by Judge Catherine Staines. 4 TYP young people took part in a voyage on a boat. Developing young people of all abilities and backgrounds to learn about sailing through "doing".

Creating an opportunity to overcome fears, push boundaries and take on responsibilities in a challenging environment. This was a great experience for the young people and had a profound impact on their outlook and life. Leading to one of the young people making a speech to many on their achievements.

Soccer Programmes in partnership with FAI Offaly and FUSION young people have been actively involved in soccer and skill development through 2022. Providing the young people with an opportunity to play sport in their locality. Local/community Garda building relationships with both Gardaí and being shown in a positive light in their community. Also introducing a girls only Glow soccer programme in ST. Mary's Youth and Community centre, creating a safe space for young people to express themselves in sport.

Traveller Pride is an annual celebration to create a greater understanding and acceptance of Traveller culture in society where Travellers are able to express who they are without fear of discrimination from settled or Traveller communities- including looking at diversity within the community. TYP Celebrated this in many different ways focusing on culture through arts, culture games such as bourse shoe throwing and storytelling.



Music Generation runs 2 weekly programmes providing young people access to music tuition whatever their background. TYP have been lucky to receive part funding to provide 2 hours of guitar for young people a beginner and intermediate lessons. Providing young people with the opportunity to build on hobbies and new skills.

An Outdoor art programme in Tara Crescent Community Centre, commenced in April 2022, in the backyard space of the centre, where the grass and ground area was decluttered and cleaned up, the walls were painted white as the base colour.

The Yoga Programme delivered young ladies and LGBT+ groups to introduce a different method of breathing, physical exercise and meditation to improve overall health and positive wellbeing.

Trips- Tayto Park, Slieve Bloom Mountains, Bay sports Go-Karting, Liliput, Funtasia, Zip Lining, Land of Lights and Galway Christmas Markets. Creating positive experiences for young people with their peers.



## Youth Diversion Projects

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Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland



Có-mhainithe ag an  
Aontas Eorpach  
Co-funded by the  
European Union



ciste na  
gcuntas díomhaoin  
the dormant  
accounts fund

The Youth Diversion Programme is provided for in the Children's Act 2001. YDPs are community-based multi-agency crime prevention initiatives, which seek to divert young people who have become involved in crime/anti-social behaviour and to support wider preventative work within the community and with families at risk. Funding for these interventions is based on evidence that diverting young offenders from the criminal justice system, and preventative work with young people at risk, is to their long-term benefit and that of society as a whole. Youth Diversion Projects are co-funded by the Irish Government and European Social Fund as part of the ESF+ Programme 2021-2027.

### ACORN Project - Edenderry

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The Acorn Project had a very exciting project in the making in 2022. With an adjustment in personnel, Ciara Farrell joined the Youth Diversion Project Team as Youth Justice Worker alongside Kevin Farrell, Project Coordinator, Breda, Philip and Maura in AMETS.

Thanks to [National Youth Council of Ireland Enhance Acoustics Eugene O'Brien](#) and the many contributors in the project and wider community - we were able to create our first Movie. Feedback from all staff and young people involved said it was an amazing opportunity and everyone involved were brilliant. Rough cut of the film was prepared for December. Final cut for March 2023.

Garda Youth Awards - Video Vibers - A group from the project Video Vibers were successful in winning the group Award at the Garda Youth Awards held in Portlaoise. This was a fantastic success based on the quality and message contained in their video 'Same Storm Different Boats' outlining their experience in Covid Lock Down



## Gym Buddies / Life and Skills.



Our programme Gym Buddies saw 8 young people undertake a gym programme allied with a healthy eating regime. This group also became very aware of the concept of personal hygiene and undertook to shower each day following on from the gym.

They also took responsibility for the washing and cleaning of their gym gear.

## November 2022 - Gel Nail Technology group receive certificates for both gel polish and gel extensions.



Tutored by Rachel Walsh and Marie Murphy. The project received funding from LOETB Community Fund / Irish Youth Foundation through the McDonalds fund. A great morning was held welcoming the youth ambassador for McDonalds - Keith Earls. Keith met all learners and spent some time talking with tutors and funders on the day.



### Teach Na Nog - Fairgreen

At Teach na nÓg you will always find Breda and her team who facilitate evening clubs were absolutely flying with all young people turning up each evening. Wings Wednesday was very popular with sticky fingers and full tummies after their Wednesday treat.



Homework club continued to get stronger with great feedback from young people and parents. We even had a waiting list to support young people from the local area. We continuously assisted young people in completion of homework and provided opportunities and an environment which allowed our young to grow in self-confidence and self-belief.

It is an inclusive space for these young people in all activities, including the Paddy's Day event. This gives them a safe space to get creative working on their floats and art for it.



The Allotments continued to be a super space to ground our Work to Learn programme facilitated by Philip Farrell - Opportunity for Core participants to participate in the work to learn program providing an opportunity to take up an employment position in a variety of businesses within the community.

## *Edenderry Youth Café 2022*

2022 was a year of celebrations for Edenderry Youth Café with us celebrating 10 years since we opened to the community and the Young People in 2012.



This was a fabulous night with past young people and staff members coming back to celebrate and reflect on the amazing work that has been carried out in the 10 years. Throughout the year our young people were able to take part in numerous programs such as LGBTI+, Junior and Senior Youth Clubs, Youth Action Group, Dance classes and music classes.

We collaborated with Music Generation Offaly Westmeath and Creative Places Edenderry for our music program and the young people involved got the opportunity to perform on the main stage at Edenderry Music Festival.



Other highlights of the year were our annual summer camp, teen sleepover, trips with young people, but mainly the young people themselves and the trust they put in us every time they come in the door.

## ALF Project - Athlone

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2022 was an exciting and busy year in the ALF Project with lots of new young people joining the project and taking part in a wide range of activities and programmes throughout the year. Highlights for young people during the year included STEAM, Creative Arts, Youth Centre Development, Fitness, Competitions, Go Karting, Ireland vs Scotland Soccer Match, Footgolf, Cycling and an I'm A Celebrity night in Battery Heights.

Youth Workers were out and about in Athlone carrying out Outreach Youth Work and the Community Response Programme. QQI Certification was ongoing with young people completing Level 4 modules.



Summer Programme was again very eventful with the resumption of the Challenge and Link Up Programmes, hikes in the Slieve Blooms, trips to Bay Sports, Water Sports for a week in Coosan Point which was funded by Westmeath Sports Partnership. Young people also took part in a Youth Work Ireland Midlands Youth Event which was organised by the Youth Forum.



The ALF Project worked with Athlone Youth Information Service to welcome young people from Ukraine to Athlone by facilitating a weekly youth group and providing the young people with the opportunity to take part in trips to Galway, Lilliput and Tayto Park.

Youth Workers received training in Restorative Practices from the Best Practice Unit and when used throughout the year it proved to be a very successful tool for youth justice work.



Great news was received in June when approval and funding was awarded for the ALF Project to expand its services into other areas of Co. Westmeath to also to now work with 8 – 11 year olds and those young people who are Hard to Reach. Project Coordinator Eithne Fallon and Youth Worker Keith Simpson welcomed Des Powell and Rosin Kenny to the team in November and look forward to working with them to ensure that young people continue to have positive outcomes as a result of taking part in the ALF Project in 2023.



### *Fusion Project - Tullamore*

FUSION YDP had changes in project staff structure in 2022. With the departure of Coordinator Aoife Buggy after 12 years with the project, Ann Sheeran took post as the new Coordinator in May 2022, bringing experience of coordinating Tullamore Youth Project since 2018 and her already established expertise and relationships with the young people and communities.

Alongside other YDPs, FUSION was fortunate to be granted funding to support the recruitment of two additional workers; Adrian Kavanagh and Siobhan Martin joined our colleague Fiona Fitzpatrick as Youth Justice Workers. These additional roles support the expansion of the YDP to provide interventions through early intervention and Family Support.



2022 was a busy year with many achievements, opportunities and challenges. Young people were engaged in several programmes and initiatives that peaked their individual interests while also paving the way for further training, educational and employment opportunities. Several educational programmes were completed in partnership with AMETS and included introduction to barbering, basic hairdressing, eyelash extensions, gel nails, woodwork, nutrition, health and fitness.

Three young people completed their junior cert through the Iscoil education programme while several other young people were supported by FUSION to sustain their educational placements. Young people were supported to source education/ training and employment through the career directions programme, which includes CV preparation, application form skills, interview preparation and driver theory. Young people received certification for their engagement in all of these programmes and were proud of their achievements.

In May 2022, a former youth participant and close friend/ family member of many of the youth participant's in FUSION YDP died by sudden and tragic circumstances. FUSION YDP provided immediate support and several programmes and interventions were put in place to support the bereaved young people and their families.



These included; referrals to services such as Jigsaw, implementation of Positive Pathways bereavement programme in conjunction with HSE and development of memorial garden space within one of the projects for the young people to reflect.



Summer programmes were jam packed with activities and trips chosen by the young people in conjunction with their needs. Highlights of the programmes/ interventions included; basic horse care, equine assisted personal development, LGBTI Pride, FAI soccer, STEAM, hiking and swimming.



Young people attended many trips during the summer months which included; two trips to Tayto Park, Zip lining, two Bay sports trips, and two go karting activities in Castlepollard karting and hiking in the Slieve Blooms.

Five young people were supported by FUSION YDP to take part in four separate sailing opportunities with **SAIL Training Ireland**. This sailing experience was funded by Judge Catherine Staines and provided young people with an opportunity to partake in a 10-day experience out at sea learning about all aspects of sailing while developing many more personal development skills along the way. This was a once in a lifetime opportunity for these young people, with different outcomes for each person.

In partnership with FAI, UBU and local Gardaí, several successful soccer programmes took place during the year. A highlight of these partnerships was the senior men's late night soccer. This programme was particularly successful due to its impact on reducing anti-social behaviour, improvement of community Gardaí relations and development of positive pro social activity for the youths. As part of the early intervention aspect of YDP's, FUSION staff supported the junior soccer programme



FAI 'GLOW' soccer programme provided female youth participants with weekly sessions of 'glow in the dark soccer' in St Marys youth centre offering participants the opportunity to play sport in a safe space.

Along with the above programmes, FUSION YDP supports young people to engage in a multitude of weekly groups in partnership with local UBU and OTM such as Young Carers, LGBTI group, Music Generation and OTM men's shed. Other trips and activities engaged in during the Halloween and Christmas midterms included; Galway Christmas markets, Elevate karting on three occasions, Castlepollard karting, Young Carers trip to Wild Lights and LGBTI trip to the Gaiety theatre to view a show.



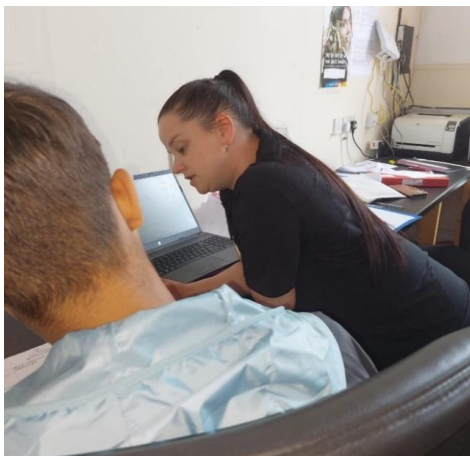
## *Mullingar EYE Project*

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2022 ended at Mullingar EYE & Yoyo Youth Café with Hellos and Goodbyes. Our much loved JLO & Youth Work Ireland Midlands Board Member, Jim Rock retired from An Garda Siochana and we prepared to wish our Brilliant Youth Justice Worker Eoin Quinn Slán Go Fóill as he began his leave of absence to discover Australia. Our Irreplaceable Financial Administrator Martha Murphy kind of said Goodbye, but we still relied on her mammoth financial wisdom for quite a while.



Joan O Connor, Project Coordinator and the young people welcomed part time tutor and youth worker Rollo Scally to her new Full Time position of Youth Justice Worker & Wes Foley as Part Time Youth Justice Worker under the boundary expanded service in Mullingar EYE along with Early Intervention and hard to reach young people additional provision. We looked forward to Ian Thomas joining our ranks in the home of Mullingar EYE & YoYo in Columb Barracks in early 2023.



This ended a year of great activity in EYE & YoYo with 12 young people receiving their Gaisce Bronze Award learning new skills, sports and participating in community engagement.



7 Young NETE people from our Yoyo POP programme gained QQI Awards with the help of our Training Award colleagues in AMETS.



25 Young People from EYE participated in an Employability Programme, supported by LWETB in a partnership programme with Mullingar Youth Project; learning new skills and gaining vocational qualifications and experience in areas including construction studies, Make up Artistry, Safe Pass, Career Planning and the Hospitality Industry.



With our long term partners Music Generation Westmeath YoYo Youth Cafe facilitated over 130 young people every week of 2022 with musical instrument tuition, song writing and recording sessions, band development and arranging performances to show case the talents of these gifted young people.



Early Summer 2022 Mullingar EYE & YoYo Youth Café were delighted to thank #IrelandforUkraine for their support of our U & EYE Grow Programme - a Ukrainian-EYE & YoYo Young People Initiative promoting friendships & understanding & addressing practical needs in their shared development of fruit & Veg gardens & other creative pursuits.



Summer Programmes included our Gaisce Adventure Journey in Lilliput & the annual fabulous hike with our Service Manager Tracey Moore. Kayaking on the canal, Bar B Q's outside Yoyo Café, Games in the garden all went to make the summer of '22 memorable.



## *AMETS - Acorn Midlands Education and Training Service*

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Dyslexia Support Workshops continued for 2022. Great to have our group of primary and second level young people back in the project to continue this great support network.

Podcasting for Teens ran during the summer months of 2022. Podcasting workshops were a great success with 8 young people achieving certification in Podcasting Essentials with our tutor Mark Hickey. The group produced 3 podcasts at the end of the programme and can now record and edit their own podcasts from home.



In July we were delighted to take part and present at the SOLAS Community Education Framework discussions. A particular well done to Sarah Connolly who talked about her experiences as a learner with the project. We are super proud of you Sarah. Well done! Your story will inspire many.

The Acorn Project Entrepreneurial Skills group came together to form Project AMP and on the 5th May the group worked together to launch the first single of John Gorman called Fly Away. John is a participant of the project and also sang centre stage at the Irish Youth Music Awards. John also attended Music Jam sessions in Mullingar's EYE Project. Entrepreneurial Skills was funded by LOETB.

November 2022 - Gel Nail Technology group receive certificates for both gel polish and gel extensions.



Tutored by Rachel Walsh and Marie Murphy. The project received funding from LOETB Community Fund / Irish Youth Foundation through the McDonald's fund. A great morning was held welcoming the youth ambassador for McDonald's - Keith Earls. Keith met all learners and spent some time talking with tutors and funders on the day.

**For information and upcoming courses, contact Maura Kearney QQI Coordinator at [mkearney@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:mkearney@youthworkmidlands.org)**

## Comhairle Na nÓg

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Comhairle na nÓg are child and youth councils in the 31 local authorities of the country, which give children and young people the opportunity to be involved in the development of local services and policies.

In light of the fact that Comhairle na nÓg is for young people under the age of 18 and who therefore have no other voting mechanism to have their voice heard, Comhairle na nÓg is designed to enable young people to have a voice on the services, policies and issues that affect them in their local area.

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) Comhairle na nÓg Development Fund provides money to local authorities to run effective Comhairle na nÓg. Local authorities also provide funding and resources for Comhairle na nÓg, as well as other organisations at local level.

### Roscommon Comhairle



#### **Comhairle Na nÓg Induction Training**

Roscommon Comhairle Na nÓg (RCNN) began 2022 with virtual Comhairle Na nÓg Induction Training. The training content included members' hopes & fears, the role of a Comhairle member, leadership skills, listening skills, teamwork, programme planning, committee skills and Gaisce introduction.

#### **Consultations and Collaborations**

RCNN members took part in the following consultations, youth advisory panels and events:

- GRETB Creative Youth Consultation regarding creative service development for children and young people in Galway & Roscommon.
- DCEDIY Children and Young People's Public Consultation Submission
- Youth Advisory Group for the 'Involving Student Voice in Anti-bullying Policy Consultation' First meeting: Workshop Methodology Consultation and reviewing of anti-bullying action plan, Consultation Preparation. Second meeting: Consultation and reviewing of anti-bullying action plan at DCEDIY, Miesian Plaza, Baggot St, Dublin
- Involving Student Voice in Anti-bullying Policy Consultation
- Participated in a ballot to determine if CNN would endorse the Irish Heart Foundation's 'Tobacco 21' campaign.
- Ulster / Connaught Comhairle na nÓg Members Regional Networking Event working on the topic of creativity.
- Presentation to Roscommon Children and Young People's Services Committee
- Youth advisory group for Night-time Economy Consultation.
- Good Morning Roscommon Show interviews on RosFM.
- Drug Use Consultation, DCEDIY - A paper was produced from this consultation and submitted to the Department of the Taoiseach for consideration as part of the discussions of the Citizens Assembly on Drug Use.
- Roscommon Longford Garda Youth Awards – won an award for 2021's community work.



Meeting with Roscommon Co. Co. Cathaoirleach, Feb 2022

**Mental Health Topic** - In 2022 RCNN worked to implement their vision of supporting young people, schools and communities for a better future through the introduction of a non-clinical listening service, in every school in County Roscommon, with at least one appointment scheduled for every student during the school year, to provide support and early intervention for young people’s mental health. The youth committee developed a recommendation presentation for decision makers demonstrating the process of how the Comhairle came to be working on Mental Health, how the topic developed and their research to support the recommendation.

**Seanad Na nÓg** - RCNN took part in Seanad Na nÓg, the Youth Advisory that planned Seanad 100. In 2022 Seanad Éireann celebrated Seanad 100, the centenary year of Seanad Éireann. Seanad 100 brought about a celebration of senators over the past 100 years who have taken a stand, and championed issues and causes which would have been outside of the mainstream social, political, or economic thought. This celebration has been given the name Minority Voices, Major Changes.

**Oireachtas Environment and Climate Action Committee** - One member of RCNN directly engaged the Oireachtas Environment and Climate Action Committee on the issues of climate action and the environment. Seanad Chamber, Leinster House, Dublin. Roscommon’s representative gave an address on the topic of Energy Consumption.



Ruth Cunningham addressing the Oireachtas Climate Action Committee

**Annual Youth Conference 2022** - 89 young people representing all 9 post-primary schools in County Roscommon attended this year's Youth Conference in Castlerea Enterprise Hub. RCNN member's planned, coordinated, scripted, and executed the entire event including transport, refreshments, registration, emceeing, presentation of past work, raffle, topic voting, event evaluation and facilitating discussions while recording young peoples' views during the 'World Café'. CNN members also liaised with school staff to coordinate and promote the Youth Conference and organise delegates from their schools.

**Dáil Na nÓg** - Five young people represented Roscommon at Dáil Na nÓg 2022 in the Convention Centre, Dublin. Delegates of Dáil na nÓg 2022 participated in workshops on the topic of Equality and voted car emissions to be the main issue arising from Equality affecting young people nationally which will be the work topic for the incoming National Executive 2020-21



### **Comhairle na nÓg Regional Networking**

**Event** - Five members attended this event to network with other Comhairlí in an informal and fun way. It also allows for a sharing of information on their topics.

### **Committees**

RCNN members sat on the following youth-led and adult committees working on issues affecting young people:

- Comhairle na nÓg National Executive **Topic -Relationships and Sexual Education in Schools**
- Youth Work Ireland Midlands - Youth Forum.
- Roscommon County Council - Joint Policing Committee
- Galway Roscommon Education Training Board Youth & Arts Committee
- Roscommon Comhairle na nÓg Steering Committee.
- Roscommon County Council's Public Participation Network

The County Roscommon Comhairle Coordinator is Kevin Costello who can be contacted at [kcostello@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:kcostello@youthworkmidlands.org) or the Committee at [roscomhairle@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:roscomhairle@youthworkmidlands.org)



## Westmeath Comhairle

It's time to take a look back at the fantastic journey of Westmeath Comhairle Na nÓg over 2022. Despite meeting only every 4-6 weeks, they have accomplished some incredible things in the realms of road safety and the environment. Buckle up and get ready for their report!



In Comhairle's mission to enhance road safety, they left no stone unturned. They organised their 2<sup>nd</sup> Road Safety Event for young people, breaking their own attendance record as over 600 young people attended from all across Westmeath. They collaborated with local authorities, and local and national organisations to ensure a fun, educational day for all who attended and continue striving to achieve their goal; reducing the number of road related incidents and accidents involving young people.

When it came to preserving the environment, Westmeath Comhairle Na nÓg were unstoppable. They initiated a partnership with the environmental department in Westmeath County Council, and other services to create an interactive booklet for young people. This book is filled with tips and hacks that educate young people on making positive decisions in relation to their environment; this will be distributed to primary schools in 2023 and will allow informative and educational discussions to take place with the students and teachers. Additionally, they distributed over 300 "bat boxes" to young people; these were created by themselves and the Men's Shed in Westmeath.



Their social media campaigns were an absolute hit! They leveraged the power of Facebook and Instagram to reach out to their peers and educate them on road safety tips and sustainable living practices.

Let's not forget the exciting events and presentations organised throughout the year. From their AGM 2022, Dáil na nÓg, team building events to presentations to the full County Council, they made sure their initiatives were fun-filled and engaging for everyone involved.



Last but not least, a big "shoutout" to their supportive partners who believed in Comhairle and provided them with the necessary resources to bring their ideas to life. As they bid farewell to an incredible year, it is hoped they are filled with pride for all that they have accomplished. Road safety awareness has increased, the environment is greener, and the Comhairle is more united than ever before. We can't wait to see what 2023 has in store for WCNN!

If you would like information about joining Westmeath Comhairle - contact Edweena Farrell at [efarrell@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:efarrell@youthworkmidlands.org) or on 09064 77075.

## Volunteer Led Clubs and Special Interest Groups

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought additional and complex challenges for young people and volunteers over the last two years, with almost every aspect of their lives disrupted at a critical stage in their development. It has had profound implications on the life chances of a generation of young people and in truth, much of the extent of the impact on them remains unknown. It has made even more urgent the need to further invest in and scale access to youth work right across our region with the development of more rural youth clubs and special interest groups. This is impossible for us to do without the support of suitable, vetted and trained volunteers.

The goal of our Volunteer Led Youth Clubs is to enable young people to involve themselves consciously and actively in their own development and in the development of society. This is facilitated by adult volunteers who are supported by professional youth workers. As our tagline states; “Working with young people – for young people in counties Offaly, Westmeath and Roscommon”. Thankfully, in 2022 we have retained 17 youth clubs supported by 153 voluntary youth leaders. This is mainly due to you - our dedicated volunteers that we have across the region. Many thanks to you all. Míle buíochas.

Despite the doom and gloom, 2022 was a very successful year for rural youth clubs and special interest groups affiliated to Youth Work Ireland Midlands. All planned events returned in person and although numbers attending were lower than numbers prior to the pandemic - that seems to be the national trend. Induction Training, Child Safeguarding training, junior leadership training, student council and mentor training in schools all returned in-person and it was wonderful to be able to see people in the flesh again and share a word with them.

**Volunteer Led Youth Clubs Network**  
for further information or if you would like to set up a club contact

Eileen at [emcardle@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:emcardle@youthworkmidlands.org) or Faustina at [fmonaghan@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:fmonaghan@youthworkmidlands.org)

<b>AIRC Midlands</b>	<b>Athlone Youth Darts Academy</b>	<b>Ballymore Youth Club</b>
<b>Clara Youth Club</b>	<b>CoderDojo Mullingar</b>	<b>Edenderry Youth Café &amp; Youth Club</b>
<b>Emerald Lakes Dance &amp; Theatrical Community Group Rochfortbridge</b>	<b>Kinnegad Youth Club</b>	<b>Link Club, Mullingar</b>
<b>Moate Performing &amp; Visual Arts Club</b>	<b>Moore Youth Club</b>	<b>Mullingar Charity Variety Group</b>
<b>St. Ciaran’s Youth Club, Clonmacnois</b>	<b>St. Mary’s Youth &amp; Community Centre &amp; P2B Youth Café, Tullamore</b>	<b>YoYo Youth Café &amp; Youth Club, Mullingar</b>
<b>Unique Youth Club, Kinnegad</b>	<b>We welcomed 2 new groups in 2022</b>	<b>Mullingar Youth Football Academy</b>

## *Aírc Midlands*



In 2022 we provided activities for children such as seasonal parties, activity programmes, football camps and music classes. We hosted parent and toddler coffee mornings. We also worked on access and inclusion issues within the community advocating for the needs of our group.

## *Athlone Youth Darts Academy, Monksland, Co. Roscommon.*

Athlone Youth Darts Academy had yet another really successful year in 2022. The club is in its seventh year in existence and is going from strength to strength.

November 2022 would have to be the highlight of our club year. Three club members David Flynn, Aaron Killane and James Morris qualified for the Junior Darts Corporation (JDC) Youth World Darts Championship in Gibraltar from the 22nd to the 25th of November 2022.



We, at Athlone Youth Darts Academy are all so proud of these boys for their hard work and commitment they put into Darts. Our club held a fundraising event to help cover the cost, which was an excellent success and there was a great attendance too.



In December 2022 our dedicated leader and “King of Darts” celebrated his birthday, Shane AKA The Champ. Ryan Barkey and Aeron Moran who got their first JDC Medals. Ryan's first grading was a green medal and Aeron got his purple. Athlone Youth Darts Academy doors are always open for new members.

### *Kinnegad Youth Club, Co. Westmeath.*

Kinnegad Youth Club (KYC) reopened on the 18th November 2022, after a long closure and are delighted to be back. This year we welcomed members from 5th and 6th class and we had 35 members. Club takes place on Friday nights from 7.30-8.30pm in St. Etchens NS Hall, Kinnegad.

We have had a great time getting to know our members and kept ourselves busy over the last year. Our club is all about having fun, trying something new or outside your normal activities and enjoying our Friday nights. We do something different every week and get some great ideas from our members with the suggestion box. Unfortunately, we still haven't managed the Disneyland suggestion but we've had some great laughs and plenty of fun regardless.

### *CoderDojo, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath.*

We normally run from September to May/June. We started our 2022 season as normal but numbers attending were way down on what we would normally have expected. This is possibly due to increased access to coding as a subject at post-primary level. One of our team, however, recently attended a volunteer meet-up in Cambridge, where findings presented indicate that the age profile of children attending Coding clubs throughout Ireland and the UK has decreased, almost without exception, since clubs have gone back to in-person sessions. So we're totally 'on-trend' as usual!



In early February the Westmeath Examiner was good enough to run an article on our behalf. It was very well received generally, which is always nice but even better, it brought in a significant boost in membership, and BETTER AGAIN, new volunteers! Our team has more than doubled in size, which means we can cover more topics, especially with the new online resources from our 'parent' groups at the CoderDojo and Raspberry Pi Foundations. So far this season we've introduced two groups of beginners to Scratch, HTML/CSS and Python, and we've been able to demo 'real-world' robots including our own ABB arm, an autonomous 'fetch and carry' 'bot from a new local Mullingar enterprise, and an autonomous/remote controlled underwater survey drone. Our more experienced coders have been working on a very interesting project involving salvaged technology – some of which you might expect to find in a kitchen rather than a computer lab or office – but we can't say too much about that secret project at the moment.

New Volunteers bring new ideas and new ways of doing things, which we've always been open to, but perhaps more importantly, they bring new energy. At the start of 2023 our original team will be down to 3 and we were into our 12<sup>th</sup> season, so it's fair to say we were probably a little jaded. It's been a great few months since the new team started to take shape - I know the 'old' team are all re-energised and the newer members all seem to be finding niches for themselves and getting stuck in.



There's also fresh energy coming to us from the CoderDojo foundation. There is a raft of new online resources for us to leverage and new training resources for volunteers.

At time of writing, we're almost at the end of the 2022/23 season and things look a lot different for us now than they did at this time last year. We still have challenges – fund-raising is an ever-present spectre and we still don't know where all the female coders are, or what more we can do to encourage them, but we're looking forward to the future with positivity.



*St. Ciaran's Youth Club, Clonmacnois, Co. Offaly.*

St. Ciaran's Youth Club commenced a very busy and successful year with two of our members winning prizes in the Midlands Youth Halloween mask competition. Continuing with the spooky theme our members were brave enough to embark on the Zombie walk in Garbally Woods in the dark of Halloween night. We all came out alive ... eventually!! Members arrived with pillows and popcorn as we gave our new projector a run in the hall on movie night. Dance mats and sweat bands were the order of the evening for Zumba night, and we cooled off the following week with a dip in the pool. Always a firm favourite with our members.

We finished before Christmas with a spectacular array of Christmas decorations and cards created in the hall and to add to our Christmas cheer we enjoyed great success in the Youth Work Ireland Midlands Christmas card competition.

2023 Summer Season plans will be reconvened in the hall for Pizza night with an impromptu talent show staged by the members. We had the ultimate "Virus Tag finale" , which ran well into the late hours on a sunny evening in our local Sports Park . Last night of the year was as always our "Ice-cream fundraiser for Down syndrome Ireland". A great night, attended by the Youth Club members, extended family and local community. A great opportunity to enjoy ice- cream, reflect on a great Youth Club year and give a little to a very worthy cause. We raised €300.

This was our busiest year, with membership of 44!! Young people were from 4 different schools, Clonmacnois, Cloghan, Ferbane and Ballinasloe. A busy, successful and fun year. See the evidence:





***Unique Youth Club Kinnegad, Co. Westmeath.***

Unique Youth Club Kinnegad was founded by Anthonia Izekor and a few of like-minded individuals after they identified an increase in young people from different nationalities aged 13+ who had no activities and facilities in Kinnegad to keep them engaged, Anthonia liaised with Youth Work Ireland Midlands and met a number of government officials who supported her idea of establishing a youth club in Kinnegad. Anthonia also spoke to a number of people from Kinnegad who welcomed the idea. In March 2022 committee was set up comprising of:

- Chairperson:** Anthonia Izekor
- Secretary:** Cullen Mbirimi
- Treasurer:** Alex Ajayi Ogunu
- PRO:** Flora Mbirimi



Eileen provided professional support in the registration of the club, giving information, emailing forms, sample posters, providing training, Garda Vetting etc. This was extremely helpful as we are a new club and all support and information is greatly appreciated. The club would not be where it is today with Eileen, Faustina and the support of Youth Work Ireland Midlands. We could not have done it without them. They also helped us to apply for our first grant under LWETB. We were successful and received €1,000. This was a great help as we could afford insurance, affiliation, participate in youth events and do activities with the teenagers.



Unique Youth Club Kinnegad attended Youth consultation on BOBF2 with minority ethnic young people on the 27th July 2022. The DCEDIY and NYCI invited minority ethnic young people to take part in a youth consultation on Better Outcomes Brighter Future 2 (BOBF2) in the Gresham Hotel, Dublin.



Unique Youth Club members and leaders were pleased to attend this event. On arrival the Kinnegad youths met and interacted with the other young people from all over Ireland. They made contributions and deliberations on a number of topics and issues that affect them and how the government can address some of these issues. Our young people said; "This event was an eye opener to them!"



After the summer break the adult supporting committee changed. Elaine was appointed as the new secretary and Flora took over the role as Treasurer. A new group of volunteers were trained and vetted and the club went from strength to strength.

### ***Moore Youth Club, Moore, Co. Roscommon***

Moore Youth Club welcomed 25 new members this season which kicked off with a host of activities including a pizza night, a card playing night, an art competition, a Halloween mask making competition. 2022 was rung out with a Christmas card competition and a shopping trip to Liffey Valley, Dublin.

The New Year's resolutions began with the hosting of a smoothie night and a discussion of healthy food choices and nutrition. Plans are underway for an activities-based post-exams event or excursion to round up the club's activities.

The club wishes to sincerely thank all parents, guardians, volunteers, Moore Community, GRET B and in particular the staff of Youth Work Ireland Midlands for their ongoing support and professionalism through the season.



## ***Ballymore Youth Club, Co. Westmeath.***

Ballymore is a small village between Athlone and Mullingar, but the surrounding area covers much more, Drumraney, Boher, Killare, Moyvore etc. It is home to many children and early teens. The Youth club is a place where they can come and hang out with their friends in a safe but relaxed environment. Unlike school, where they are constrained in what they can do, we are led by the members' interests and we have many different activities going on, on any one night.



We run on a Wednesday evening from 6.45pm to 8pm. Our age group is from 8 years and up and this year especially we held onto our teens very well. The funding that we received from the ETB in particular, has benefited us hugely in being able to buy equipment and go on trips that interest all.



We are very lucky with enthusiastic volunteers, without whom the club would not be able to run. Volunteers participated in child safeguarding and first aid this year, which they found hugely beneficial. We are very varied in our activities as you will see from the pictures. We only receive very positive reviews from both the members and the parents, long may it last.



## International Projects

We participate in 2 main European programmes - European Solidarity Corps and Erasmus+ for Youth and Youth Worker Development and European Engagement



Erasmus+ is the European Union programme for education, training, youth and sport. It provides funding and support to carry out projects that match its objectives, and that encourage European exchange, co-operation and learning.



THE POWER OF TOGETHER.

Young people aged 18 to 30 can volunteer in projects that meet community needs, or set up their own 'Solidarity' project to address an issue they are concerned about. Youth organisations can send or receive volunteers as part of the programme.

Despite our reduction in international activity and mobility - we had quite a busy year supporting young people for European Solidarity Corps and participating in a range of panels and training with Erasmus+.

Youth Work Colleagues from **Samfes - Youth Work Iceland** visited the Mullingar Youth Project, the EYE Project - where an impromptu concert happened outside the youth cafe. Young people and staff had a great time joining in the fun before they moved onto ACORN in Edenderry for another site visit.



2022 was named European Year of Youth - supporting millions of young people across Europe to participate in this great celebration and promotion.

In Youth Work Ireland Midlands, we hosted a Seminar in Columb Barracks in June - where we welcomed 4 of our past European Solidarity Volunteers to meet with and speak to a range of young people about their experience in Europe supported by Youth Work Ireland Midlands and ESC. We welcomed young people from all our projects across the region on the day. The goal was to shine a light on the importance of European youth to build a better future – greener, more inclusive and digital.



## New Project for 2022 – 2023 – Music & Drama in Youth Work – Erasmus +

Mullingar EYE, Music Generation Westmeath / Offaly and a previous partner in Spain - On&Off Teatro joined forces to gain funding under Erasmus+ for a KA2 - Small Scale Partnership project to explore Music and Drama in Youth Work. Funded by Léargas, this 18 month project includes 2 study visits between Spain and Ireland as well as a proposed co designed - co facilitated Training Course in 2023.



In October, the first Study visit took place in Logrono, Spain where we visited our partners to explore how they use Drama in their work with Down syndrome and Autism Organisations. We looked forward to hosting a return visit in February 2023 and will showcase our work by September 2023 when the project is fully realised.



## Youth Information



In 2022, for Youth Information, Our mission was simple: to provide young people with real, up-to-date information on the topics that matter to them. And boy, did we deliver! From relationship advice to career guidance, mental health to travel hacks, we covered it all and left no stone unturned.

This included informational programmes and presentations in schools and the community, and as ever, the internet awareness programme was most popular. With the ever changing world, that is the cyber world for young people, 2023 will see an overhaul and update to this ever-changing programme, and youth information will introduce a digital empowerment programme, complete with a new name.

2022, Covid was phasing out, but a new challenge sadly emerged, in March, a community of Ukrainian families arrived in Athlone to escape a war. Youth information acted immediately, and together with other services, provided instant provision for adults and young people from Ukraine to support their integration into Ireland. A relationship developed with these young people, who led to a weekly youth group emerging, and this group continues to meet weekly through Youth Information and the Alf project. It provides a safe space for young people to escape the confines of a hotel room, supports integration into their schools and communities, and has all the fun elements you would expect from a youth group.

Our national chat service goes from strength to strength; it became the ultimate go-to spot for all things youth-related. We increased our reach, and “speak” to young people in real time, tackling everything from study tips to the latest online trends. The engagement we received was fantastic. Thank you to Spunout.ie who co-ordinate this service which allows young people to contact us on their site, and thank you to all of the youth information staff who work daily from 4-8pm.

As we wrap up another year of imparting information and knowledge, we are happy we have achieved our goals, and helped young people find their passions, make informed decisions, and navigate the maze of life like pros.

Youth Information supports are available from Edweena Farrell [efarrell@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:efarrell@youthworkmidlands.org) or 09064 77075.



## Other Services

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### Here4You

Here4U is a national listening service for teenagers aged 12-19 years. Simply, Here4u is one-to-one youth work outside of a group context.

Through enhanced listening skills and employing the youth work approach, Here4u facilitators can offer young people:

**Listening** - Here4U Facilitators provide a listening ear that is non-judgmental, confidential and non-directive.

**Referral** - Here4U Facilitators are in a position to provide help to the young person by identifying and presenting options for support or services that may be of assistance.

**Guiding Support** – Discussion with young people is goal orientated and progressive. In this way the service provides more than simply sign-posting, it assists young people to take steps to avail of the services they require, or to become active agents in their own self-care.

2022 was an extremely busy year for the Here4U listening service at Youth Work Ireland Midlands. There were a total of 240 sessions delivered, with each session lasting 45 minutes to an hour. The young people much prefer face-to-face sessions and numbers were high this year as a result of the aftermath of Covid. Anxiety, state exam worries, bullying, friends – making new ones, death of a parent & a sibling, family, not attending school, anger, Covid – not being able to hang-out with friends, sibling with additional needs - caring role at home, parental addictions and parental separation were the main topics discussed at sessions. Youth Work Ireland Midlands does not receive any additional funding to roll out this very important service to young people.

In May 2022, Colaiste Chiarain, Summerhill, Athlone had a non uniform day to raise awareness and funds for the Here4u Service to continue in the school. Thank you folks, it is very much appreciated. If you would like further information about the service please contact Eileen on 0863294763 or email [emcardle@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:emcardle@youthworkmidlands.org)





In 2022, Youth Work Ireland Midlands was awarded the contract to deliver the We Can Quit Smoking Cessation Programme in Athlone on behalf of the HSE and SlainteCare.

What is 'We Can Quit'?

'We Can Quit' is a free, evidence-based, peer-led smoking cessation programme for men and women aged 18 years and over. Delivered over 7 weekly 90 min sessions by fully qualified HSE Stop Smoking Advisors in partnership with Youth Work Ireland Midlands, 'We Can Quit' also offers free nicotine replacement therapy to help you stay quit for good. It was originally developed by the Irish Cancer Society to support women living in disadvantaged communities who smoke and who want support to quit. Following the continued success and positive results of this programme, the HSE's Tobacco Free Ireland (TFI) Programme took over the coordination of We Can Quit in 2020. The We Can Quit model has since been adapted for men only groups and mixed gender groups.

During this course, participants receive support from our interactive and informative group meetings along with a comprehensive resource pack. This peer-led support makes 'We Can Quit' invaluable. In addition, you can also avail of one to one support sessions for as long as you need.

What will you do in the group?

Participate in the group discussions on health risks, financial issues and social aspects, which will reinforce your reasons for stopping. Have your Carbon Monoxide levels measured each week to show the health benefits of quitting. Participants will get information on the following topics: Nicotine Replacement Therapy (Patches, Gum, Inhaler, Lozenge etc.), and other aids available. Setting up a quit smoking plan & tips about how to deal with withdrawal symptoms. Advice on diet issues and exercise while you quit. Advice on stress management techniques, plus access to FREE Nicotine Replacement Therapy.

For further information or to book a place on the next course, contact Eileen McArdle: 087 791 7993 email [wqc@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:wqc@youthworkmidlands.org)

## Contact Information

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### Athlone

Regional Office

09064 77075

Geraldine Lacey  
Tracey Moore

CEO  
Service Manager,  
Community Employment, International Programmes

[glacey@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:glacey@youthworkmidlands.org)  
[tmoore@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:tmoore@youthworkmidlands.org)

Kevin Costello  
Edweena Farrell  
Eileen McArdle  
Eithne Fallon  
Carrie Lynch

Administration, Roscommon Comhairle  
Youth Information, Westmeath Comhairle  
Rural Clubs, We Can Quit  
ALF Project  
Athlone Youth Project

[kcostello@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:kcostello@youthworkmidlands.org)  
[efarrell@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:efarrell@youthworkmidlands.org)  
[emcardle@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:emcardle@youthworkmidlands.org)  
[efallon@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:efallon@youthworkmidlands.org)  
[clynch@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:clynch@youthworkmidlands.org)

### Mullingar

Catherine McEntee  
Joan O Connor

Mullingar Youth Project  
Mullingar EYE, YoYo Youth Café

[cmcentee@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:cmcentee@youthworkmidlands.org)  
[joconnor@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:joconnor@youthworkmidlands.org)

### Tullamore

Aileen Costello  
Ann Sheeran

Tullamore Youth Project  
FUSION Project

[acostello@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:acostello@youthworkmidlands.org)  
[asheeran@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:asheeran@youthworkmidlands.org)

### Edenderry

Kevin Farrell  
Maura Kearney

ACORN Project  
AMETS

[kfarrell@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:kfarrell@youthworkmidlands.org)  
[mkearney@youthworkmidlands.org](mailto:mkearney@youthworkmidlands.org)



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