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Research Development Initiative 2012-2013

An operational profile and exploration of the perceived benefits of the youth café model in Ireland

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United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



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- Ireland
- **CHILD AND FAMILY RESEARCH CENTRE**

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About the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre

The UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre (UCFRC) at the National University of Ireland, Galway was established in 2001 as a policy unit and expanded into a Centre, launched by President McAleese, in 2007. The UCFRC is a partnership between Tusla, Child and Family Agency and NUI Galway. In 2008, it was awarded the first UNESCO Chair for the Republic of Ireland on the theme of 'Children, Youth and Civic Engagement'. It is widely recognised as being at the forefront of research, education and training in Family Support theory and practice. It engages in research, evaluation and service design relating to practice, policy and interventions in the lives of children. All research undertaken by the UCFRC is strongly connected to applied work for children and families, and relevant to a broad range of stakeholders, including service users, policy-makers, politicians, service managers and front-line staff.

The UCFRC is strongly concerned with best practice and engaged in the evaluation and delivery of interventions that are altering child welfare services and the market for research on children in Ireland. Through its partnership with Tusla, the UCFRC is at the heart of policy, research and evaluation activities that inform the delivery system for child health and welfare, and is engaged in a range of assessments of new and internationally tested interventions and initiatives aimed at targeting social and economic disadvantage among children and families. The UCFRC has expanded in response to need in the practice world and is closely aligned with The Atlantic Philanthropies' programme of investment in sites and services to improve outcomes for children in Ireland and specifically through Tusla's mainstreaming programme for Prevention, Partnership and Family Support.

For further information, please see www.childandfamilyresearch.ie

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Introduction

Background

A youth café is generally understood as a dedicated, safe, relaxed, friendly and inclusive meeting space for young people, primarily ranging in age from 12-18 years. Youth cafés are drug- and alcohol free environments, designed for relaxation, recreation, entertainment and, where appropriate, as a site for information, advice or even direct service provision. The youth café space is generally seen as one where young people from all social and cultural backgrounds can develop quality relationships with their peers and adults (OMC, 2007; Forkan *et al*, 2010a). Since 2000, youth cafés have become an increasingly important element of both policy and front-line provision for young people in Ireland.

There has been a significant expansion of youth cafés in Ireland over the last 3-5 years in particular, with more than 190 cafés now believed to be in operation. Central to this development are the three rounds of funding provided by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in 2010, 2012 and 2013 under the Youth Capital Funding scheme, administered by Pobal.¹ This capital funding was provided for fit-out, refurbishment works or building enhancement projects for the start-up of new youth cafés. In 2013, 29 youth cafés were funded, amounting to €1.5 million, clearly illustrating the continued support for youth café provision (*see Appendix 1*). It is also important to acknowledge the multitude of other funding sources supporting the development of youth cafés, including, among others, the Health Service Executive (HSE), local County Councils, Drugs Task Forces, the Crisis Pregnancy Agency and the Vocational Education Committees/Educational Training Boards around the country.

In 2009, the then Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMYCA) commissioned a team of researchers from the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre at the National University of Ireland, Galway to conduct a study on youth cafés. This led to two publications in 2010 – *Youth Cafés in Ireland: A best practice guide* (Forkan *et al*, 2010a) and the *Youth Café Toolkit: How to set up and run a youth café in Ireland* (Forkan *et al*, 2010b). For the first time in an Irish context, the *Best practice guide* provided a theoretical and conceptual base for the youth café model. It also defined a youth café as a service that could offer support for young people in a non-stigmatising way; be based on well-established youth work principles; provide a forum for young people to develop their social networks; play an important role in offering a secure base for young people; and enable them to bolster their resilience and connect them to their communities. The *Toolkit* was created as a supporting document for the *Best practice guide*, providing guidance and advice to support the establishment and running of youth cafés.

In 2012, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA), via the Irish Research Council, commissioned follow-up research into youth cafés in Ireland on the subject of *An operational profile and exploration of the perceived benefits of the youth café model in Ireland*. This is the report of that research project.

¹ For further information, see <https://www.pobal.ie/FundingProgrammes/YouthCapitalProgrammes/Pages/default.aspx>

Research aim and objectives

The overall aim of this study is to conduct a review of the operational profile and perceived benefits of youth cafés in Ireland, with a view to informing the development of future policy and practice in relation to youth café provision. The specific objectives of the study are:

Objective 1: To provide a geographical and operational profile of youth cafés in Ireland.

Objective 2: To explore perspectives regarding the benefits of youth cafés for young people.

The remainder of this introductory chapter provides the background for the overall report:

- Section 1.3 sets out the various contexts for the development of the youth café model in Ireland.
- Section 1.4 examines the principles and theory that underpin youth cafés.
- Section 1.5 presents the research methodology adopted and the limitations of the study.
- Section 1.6 outlines the structure of the report.

Contexts for the development of youth cafés in Ireland

Social context

According to the United Nations' 'Definition of Youth' document (see <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-definition.pdf>):

'Youth is best understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence ... Youth is a more fluid category than a fixed age-group.'

The UN, for statistical purposes, defines 'youth' as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, without prejudice to other definitions by Member States.

As highlighted in this UN definition, 'youth' is a time of transition and growth, one that is marked by significant biological, psychological and social changes. Biological changes include brain development and the onset of puberty, while processes of cognitive, social, emotional and moral development also occur. Another key phase is that of identity development, whereby young people must develop a sense of self that is distinct from and yet appreciated by loved ones. As a result, the youth phase is commonly one of exploration, self-reflection and boundary-pushing (Lalor *et al*, 2007).

It is argued that the experience of youth has been affected by the changing nature of society in recent decades (Cote, 2014). Children are increasingly likely to grow up in a lone or step-parent family, the collective security traditionally provided by Church and community has declined, while technology and social media have assumed an increased importance in young people's lives. Young people in late modern society have heightened choice, are free to question established beliefs and certainties, and can enjoy a plurality of social worlds (Furlong, 2013). In the past, the transition to adulthood tended to follow quite a traditional path, structured according to gender and social class. By contrast, young people today can construct their own 'choice biographies', with freedom to actively create their identities, reflect on their options and be pro-active about their futures (Thomson, 2007; Farrugia, 2013; Furlong, 2013).

While these trends have been liberating for many, sociologists believe that young people can also be negatively affected by the uncertainty and lack of collective security that prevails in modern society (Cote, 2014; Beck, 1992). Individualisation, materialism and pressure on people to be reflexive can lead to self-doubt, anxiety and depression (Farrugia, 2013). In this regard, Eckersley (2009, p. 357) points to the influence of the media and materialism on the well-being of young people, arguing that *'the goal of marketing becomes not only to make people dissatisfied with what they have, but also*

with who they are'. Furthermore, it is argued that, despite the appearance of a 'level playing field', young people's transitions to adulthood are still heavily influenced by class, gender, ethnicity and other factors (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997; Bradford, 2012).

In Ireland, while there have been many positive developments for young people over recent decades – including increased access to and participation in education and the expansion of youth and recreational activities, to name a few – issues related to the well-being of young people are matters of public concern. Ireland has one of the highest rates of youth suicide in the European Union (PISA, 2015), while recent research demonstrated that one in three young people had elevated levels of emotional distress (Dooley and Fitzgerald, 2013). Rates of alcohol and drugs consumption by youth and physical obesity are also high by EU standards and seen to have effects on emotional well-being. Furthermore, the economic downturn in Ireland since 2008 has led to comparatively high rates of youth unemployment and emigration. There is particular concern regarding the welfare of young people who are vulnerable for familial and socio-economic reasons (End Child Poverty Coalition, 2011).

Research with young people shows that the resources available to them are critical in terms of their ability to negotiate the challenges of modern life. In particular, supportive relationships with at least 'one good adult' remain critical to the well-being and transitions of young people (Dooley and Fitzgerald, 2013; Thomson, 2007). Simmons and Blyth (1987) argue that young adolescents need safe, intellectually challenging environments to adapt to the pressures they face.

Policy and legislative context for youth cafés in Ireland

In Ireland over recent decades, there has been a significant expansion in policy provision that aims to ensure the best possible outcomes for children and young people in all aspects of their lives. There has been a marked shift in societal discourses around children and young people, and a greater recognition of their unique contributions to civic and political life. In recent years, there has been an increased emphasis on the 'whole-child perspective', hearing the voice of the child and improving outcomes for children and young people, while the recreational needs of young people have been accorded higher primacy than before. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989), formally ratified by Ireland in 1992, sets out the rights of children in the areas of survival, development, protection and participation. The Convention has had a profound impact on children's policy in Ireland, particularly in relation to the advancement of their rights and participation in society.

The landmark publication of the *National Children's Strategy: Our Children – Their Lives* by the Department of Health and Children in 2000 was evidence of the part fulfilment of the obligations of the Convention by the Irish Government. An Ombudsman for Children was appointed in 2002 and in 2005 the Office of the Minister for Children (OMC) was founded within the Department of Health and Children. These were important developments for enhancing the coordination of children's policy and the implementation of the National Children's Strategy. Other initiatives pertaining to young people's participation have expanded rapidly since then, with the emergence of Dáil na nÓg (National Youth Parliament), Comhairle na nÓg (local youth councils) and the OMCYA's Children and Young People's Forum. In 2011, the creation of a full Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA), with full Cabinet status, was a further significant step towards strengthening the children's agenda in general. Such developments are part of a greater commitment on behalf of the State to recognise the importance of people's contribution to society at all stages of the life course.

There have also been significant policies in relation to the care and protection of children in Ireland over recent decades. *Children First*, a set of national guidelines to assist people in identifying and

reporting child abuse, was first published in 1999 and updated in 2011, while the Children First Bill was passed in 2014. Focusing on youth work-specific policy and legislation, the Youth Work Act (2001)² provided a legislative basis to youth work practice in Ireland. This was subsequently followed by the *National Youth Work Development Plan 2003-2007* (Department of Education and Science, 2003), which aimed to enhance both best practice standards in youth work provision and the evidence base for youth work, thereby enhancing outcomes for children and young people.

The leisure and play activities of young people were addressed in *Teenspace: National Recreation Policy for Young People* (OMC, 2007), which acknowledged that recreational practices are important for developing feelings of autonomy and individuality among young people. *Teenspace* states that the importance of recreation must be recognised ‘so that young people experience a range of quality recreational opportunities to enrich their lives and promote physical, cultural, mental and social well-being’ (*ibid*, p. 8). Furthermore, it states (*ibid*, p. 10): ‘What young people do in their free time is a very important part of growing up ... How young people spend their free time has a major impact on their development, socialisation and future life. Leisure provides the opportunity for young people to gain control over their attention processes, acquire critical adult skills and become integrated into their communities ... The World Health Organization emphasises the importance of leisure-time activities ... it sees participation in varied forms of activity as giving young people opportunities for self-expression, feelings of autonomy and achievement ... and can foster the adoption of other healthy behaviour, including the avoidance of tobacco, alcohol, drugs and aggression.’

Significantly, *Teenspace* also outlined the need for developing ‘youth-friendly’ and ‘safe’ spaces for young people to frequent, with youth cafés explicitly mentioned in this regard. During the consultations for *Teenspace*, young people identified the establishment of youth cafés as one of the biggest recreational needs of their communities. They noted that they needed recreational spaces that are warm, safe, affordable and free from alcohol and drugs. *Teenspace* recognised the significance of *non-formal* recreational activities for young people’s social development, as opposed to more *structured* activities involving a group leader. Overall, it acknowledged that simply ‘hanging out’ can be very valuable for building confidence and enhancing peer support networks. As a result, the State committed to developing youth cafés on a phased basis across the country. Furthermore, Objective 3, Action 22 of *Teenspace*’s Implementation Action Plan states that: ‘Resources permitting and following a local needs assessment, dedicated youth cafés should be provided on a phased basis, particularly in areas where there are high concentrations of young people between the ages of 12-17. These cafés/drop-in centres should be introduced in consultation with young people’ (OMC, 2007, p. 21).

The significant changes highlighted above in child and youth policies and legislation in Ireland over the past two decades have accorded greater recognition to young people’s needs and rights, and how they express themselves and their individuality through play and recreation. The emergence of youth cafés as a form of social provision for young people in Ireland has occurred in the context of these policy developments.

² The Youth Work Act 2001 defines youth work as ‘a planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young persons, through their voluntary participation, and which is complementary to their formal, academic or vocational education and training, and provided primarily by voluntary youth work organisations’.

Conceptualising youth cafés – Principles and Theory

As initially proposed in *Youth Cafés in Ireland: A best practice guide* (Forkan et al, 2010a), youth cafés need a set of guiding principles in addition to a well-articulated theoretical base on which to ground themselves. To that end, seven such principles were identified (*ibid*, p. 27), suggesting that a youth café needs to be a place that:

- is guided by the **principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child** and in particular enables the **participation** of young people;
- offers a **safe** and **quality space** for young people;
- has a clear **purpose**;
- is **inclusive** of, **accessible** to and **flexible** with all cultures, differences and abilities;
- is a place that enables the development of good **quality relationships** between young people and their peers and young people and adults, supported by **volunteerism**;
- uses a **strengths-based** approach and is respectful of **individuality**;
- will be **sustainable** and well-resourced into the future.

These principles form the foundation for the youth café model and establish the fundamental norms, rules or ethics that represent what is desirable in every youth café. In conjunction with them, the *Best Practice Guide* also located youth cafés within a tentative theoretical framework. In doing so, it acknowledged that existing youth cafés were not without theory, but rather lacked a coherently articulated theoretical stance up to that point. Four core theories that could be conceptualised as underpinning the youth café model were outlined, namely: social support, attachment, resilience and civic engagement/participation. These four theories are revisited below and a further two are added – Positive Youth Development (PYD) and Social Capital – to the original tentative theoretical framework, with thoughts on how each area underpins the work of youth cafés.³

Social Support Theory

Pilisuk and Parks (1981), cited in McMahon and Curtin (2013, p. 2), define social support as ‘*a range of interpersonal exchanges that include not only the provision of physical assistance, emotional caring, and information, but also the subjective consequence of making individuals feel that they are the object of enduring concerns by others*’.

Research on social support shows that recipients have better mental health, fewer physical health problems and lower rates of mortality, while increased social support positively affects people’s ability to cope with stressful events that happen in life, both directly and indirectly (Cutrona, 2000; Bal et al, 2003). It is also argued that social support reduces the amount of stress that people feel because support networks act as a ‘buffer’ to stressful events that happen throughout the life course (Frey and Röthlisberger, 1996). Studies have also shown that social support can positively affect people’s self-confidence, improve social integration (Agneessens et al, 2006) and promote a sense of ‘connection’ to others (Andrews and Ben-Arieh, 1999).

The youth café model is designed as a means of offering support, ranging from practical to advisory, for young people in a non-stigmatising way and provides a forum for young people to develop their social networks and thus their social support.

³ A considerable literature review has been written on the six theoretical areas mentioned here. Since it is not feasible to include the review in this report, it will be made available as a resource on the website www.childandfamilyresearch.ie

Attachment Theory

An attachment can be conceptualised as a type of social bond or affective tie that develops between an individual and another person during the life course. Since the 1980s, researchers have placed greater emphasis on the significance of maintaining stable social attachments during adolescence and how relationships with stable adults can positively impact on youth development (Armsden and Greenberg, 1987; Allen *et al*, 1996; Scott-Brown and Wright, 2001), aiding a successful transition to adulthood. Attachment theorists advocate that if a person develops strong social bonds with their siblings, peers and stable adults throughout the life course, it will significantly enhance their coping abilities and their psycho-social development throughout adolescence and into adulthood (Dunn *et al*, 1991).

It can be argued that youth cafés have the potential to play an important role in offering a secure base from which young people can grow and develop through the development of secure attachments with their peers and adults alike.

Resilience Theory

Masten (2001, p. 228) defines resilience as *'good outcomes in spite of serious threats to adaptation or development'*, while Olsson *et al* (2003) states that resilience implies *'hardiness'* and *'invulnerability'* that are exhibited by people when facing adversity. Gilligan (2000, p. 37) defines a resilient child as *'one who bounces back having endured adversity, who continues to function reasonably well despite continued exposure to risk'*. Therefore, the concept of resilience implies that a young person has been exposed to some level of risk and adverse conditions, but that despite these circumstances, they have managed to thrive (Kinman and Grant, 2011; Zolkoski and Bullock, 2012). The literature on resilience has demonstrated how *'protective factors'* (such as supportive relationships, a sense of community and opportunities for participation) can help young people to be resilient to risks in their lives (Gilligan, 2000).

It could be argued that youth cafés have the potential to act as a *'protective factor'* for young people exposed to adversity – for example, by providing a safe and relaxing environment that allows them to get relief from or avoid risky or stressful situations in their home or community environments. Furthermore, there is potential for the relational processes associated with the youth café model to lead to the emergence of protective factors in the young person's life, such as supportive relationships, hobbies and leadership skills. These protective factors may work to minimise risk and support young people to become resilient.

Civic Engagement and Participation Theory

The civic engagement and participation of young people has been a focus of policy and academic attention over recent decades. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child emphasises the participation rights of children and subsequent policy and legislation in Ireland, such as the National Children's Strategy (2000), have been developed to ensure a more active engagement with children and young people as citizens. When young people are afforded the opportunity to participate, it draws on their expertise, enables them to exercise their rights as citizens and contributes to a more democratic society. In addition to the importance of youth engagement for democracy, participation activities are seen as a means of strengthening the development and capacity of young people by promoting personal development, substantive knowledge, self-efficacy and practical skills (Checkoway, 2011, p. 340). Furthermore, Sherrod *et al* (2002, p. 267) argue that having some form of responsibility or leadership can help young people to feel part of something bigger than themselves, helping them to feel *'at home rather than out of place'* in their communities.

The youth café model is based on the principle of youth participation and ownership, emphasising the importance of young people playing an active role in the management and operations of the café. Thus, the youth café model has the potential to contribute to the democratic inclusion of young people, facilitate personal and skills development, and enable young people to contribute to and shape the lives of their communities.

Social Capital Theory

Social capital has been defined as the ability of people ‘to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures’ (Portes, 1998, p. 6). Schaefer-McDaniel (2004) propose that social capital among young people can be understood to consist of social networks, trust and reciprocity, and a sense of belonging. Having a sense of belonging to a place such as a community has been shown to help children form their identity (Spencer and Woolley, 2000). Furthermore, when young people feel this sense of attachment and feeling of belonging, they are more likely to make friends and interact with peers, and vice versa.

It can be argued that youth cafés have the potential to help young people to feel a sense of place and to develop trusting relationships with others in their communities – all of which helps to enhance their social capital.

Positive Youth Development Theory

Positive youth development (PYD) focuses on the conditions that promote thriving during the life course, which, in turn, may have preventative effects (Lerner *et al*, 2009; Roth and Brooks-Gunn, 2003). PYD theories can be characterised as strengths-based approaches to youth development since they advocate that young people have the power to change the world around them. According to Lerner *et al* (2009), the approach consists of the five Cs – *Confidence, Character, Connection, Competence, Caring* – defined as follows:

- *Confidence* has been defined as self-efficacy or self-worth and positive feelings about oneself and one’s ability to succeed.
- *Character* denotes a sense of individuality and commitment to one’s values.
- *Connection* is a sense of safety, feelings of belonging and community.
- *Competence* is the ability to act effectively in schools and at home.
- *Caring* refers to feelings of empathy or sympathy for the plight of others.

For Lerner *et al* (2009), a sixth C – *Contribution* – can also be added to this model. This refers to the desire to give back to society or devoting one’s free time to others.

It can be argued that youth cafés – by offering formal and informal activities through which young people can connect with others, develop skills, further their personal development and confidence, and take on leadership roles – have the potential to foster the six Cs in the lives of the young people with whom they work.

Linking Principles, Theory and Findings

It can be argued that youth cafés can be conceptualised as having a set of clearly defined guiding principles that represent what is desirable in every youth café, in addition to a solid theoretical base. One of the aims of this study is to explore the perceived benefits of the youth café model from the perspectives of young people and other key stakeholders. The analysis of the qualitative data

collected from these groups was completed using an inductive approach. This gave primacy to the perspectives of respondents rather than using a pre-defined deductive analysis strictly guided by the principles and theory. However, as will be seen in Part 2 of this report, the authors construct linkages between these perspectives and the theory and principles as a means of understanding and theorising the meaning of the youth café model in the lives of young people.

Methodology

This research study was conducted over an 18-month period, starting in December 2012. Before primary research commenced, a detailed review of the literature and policy documents relating to the youth café model was undertaken. A mixed-methods study design was used, whereby the research questions were addressed through an iteration of connected qualitative and quantitative strands (Creswell and Plano-Clark, 2011). The specific methods used to address each objective are described below and summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of sources and methods of data collection

Objective	Task	No. of respondents
Objective 1: To provide a geographical and operational profile of youth cafés in Ireland.	Compile a list of youth cafés in Ireland by liaising with DCYA, Educational Training Boards (ETB) and others	<i>not applicable</i>
	National Geographical Information Systems (GIS) mapping of youth cafés	<i>not applicable</i>
	National postal survey of youth café managers	72
Objective 2: To explore perspectives regarding the benefits of youth cafés for young people.	Telephone interviews with national key informants	12
	Qualitative fieldwork with young people in 10 cafés	102
	One-to-one interviews and focus groups with staff and volunteers from 10 youth cafés	18
	Telephone interviews with stakeholders external to the cafés sampled	12

Objective 1: To provide a geographical and operational profile of youth cafés in Ireland.

At the start of the research process, no complete list of youth cafés in Ireland existed. With a view to compiling a list of all active youth cafés, the Research Team made contact with the Youth Officer in each of the VEC/ETB regions. In total, Youth Officers representing 27 VEC/ETB areas provided data on 141 youth cafés.⁴ Coupled with data received from the DCYA, the total number of youth cafés in Ireland was later estimated at 163.⁵ The list was then categorised by county and affiliation type (e.g. Foróige, Youth Work Ireland, independent, etc). Geographical Information Systems (GIS) were then used to map key youth café data according to county, population density of 12-18 year-olds and other criteria. The resulting data are presented in Part 1 of this report.

⁴ Despite a high response rate from Youth Officers, it was very difficult to ascertain comprehensive data on youth cafés in Cos. Kildare, Laois, Monaghan, Offaly and Wexford since these counties did not have a designated youth officer in post. Therefore, the number of cafés in operation may actually be greater than the estimated number of 163.

⁵ At the time of publication and as referred to earlier in this Introduction, there are approximately 190 youth cafés in operation in Ireland. Since 30 of these cafés came on stream after the data were collected for this study, 163 cafés were included in the study.

In order to gain an insight into the operational profile of these 163 youth cafés, a postal survey was designed for distribution to **managers in each youth café**. The survey was based on one conducted previously by Donnelly *et al* (2009) for the OMCYA on youth cafés. An advisory group, consisting of representatives of 4 youth cafés, helped refine the survey using feedback they had received from young people in their café as well as adding their own thoughts. The 12-page survey (*see Appendix 2*) was distributed to all youth cafés in September 2013 and sent repeatedly to cafés that did not respond between then and November 2013. The final response rate was 44%, with 72 surveys being returned. The results are presented in Part 1 of this report.

Objective 2: To explore perspectives regarding the benefits of youth cafés for young people.

Given the high number of youth cafés identified (n=163), it was not feasible to visit each café to conduct qualitative fieldwork. Preliminary qualitative fieldwork was undertaken in 4 youth cafés and the findings were used to inform the design of qualitative fieldwork in a subsequent 6 cafés based on a sampling criteria agreed with the DCYA (*see Appendix 3*). In total, therefore, a sample of 10 youth cafés were selected and the managers contacted to participate in the study – all agreed. It was explained to the managers that the Research Team needed to speak with young people involved in their respective cafés and with the staff and any volunteers involved, as well as with key local external stakeholders that link with them. Subsequently, the sample included:

- A total of 102 **young people** (55 males, 47 females) took part in interviews across the 10 cafés (*see Appendix 4 for questions*). The interviews were guided by the *My World Triangle*⁶, which adopts a ‘whole child perspective’ and focuses on the various factors and risks that affect children’s development (Scottish Government, 2012; Tusla, 2014). The results of these interviews are presented in Part 2a of this report.
- One-to-one interviews and focus groups were held with a total of 18 **staff and volunteers** in the 10 cafés (*see Appendix 5 for topic guide*).
- Telephone interviews were conducted with 12 **key local external stakeholders** linked to each café (*see Appendix 5 for topic guide*).
- Telephone interviews were also conducted with 12 **national key informants**⁷ to explore their perspectives regarding the development of youth cafés in Ireland since 2010 and their perceived benefits (*see Appendix 6 for topic guide*). These representatives had extensive experience in young people’s services in Ireland and in the area of youth policy. The results of this strand are presented in Part 2b of this report.

Young people’s participation in the research process

Enabling participation of young people is a central guiding principle for any youth café. It is also echoed in the DCYA’s *Guidance for developing research projects involving children* (2012), which suggests that a child-centred, inclusive approach to research is a key area that researchers need to be cognisant of and engage with where possible. The need for appropriate and meaningful inclusion of young people was thus a key consideration in the current study. Contractual arrangements

⁶ The *My World Triangle* was first used by the Scottish Government as part of its policy initiative *Getting it Right for Every Child* (GIRFEC). It was used as a guide to facilitate a family to identify their own needs. With the child at the centre, the three key questions are ‘How I can grow and develop?’, ‘What I need from people who look after me?’ and ‘My Wider World’. Further details can be found at <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Young-People/gettingitright/national-practice-model/my-world-triangle>

⁷ A total of 19 representatives were invited to participate: 3 declined and 2 others nominated another person from their own organisation who had also been approached for interview; 2 others could not be contacted after several attempts.

associated with the research (such as costs, time and the focus of the study) were agreed prior to its commencement and thus a full participatory study with young people was not possible. However, young people participated in the research process in the following ways:

- **Providing advice on questions and methods:** The participation of young people in the study was greatly supported by an Advisory Group established for the purposes of the study, consisting of managers from 4 youth cafés.⁸ Members of the group consulted with young people in their respective cafés for advice in relation to topics, methods and questions to be used in the study. The young people's input greatly added to the depth of the study and ensured that all key data collection tools were reviewed and piloted before use.
- **Research participants:** Focus groups were designed to include a youth-centred participatory approach and were adapted as required in response to the needs of study participants (e.g. age, disability). A total of 102 young people took part in focus groups as part of the study.
- **Dissemination:** It is also planned that young people will participate in the dissemination of findings.

Ethical considerations

At an institutional level, full ethical approval for the research project was granted by the NUI Galway Research Ethics Committee prior to the commencement of the study. In addition, all participants signed consent forms before participating and parental consent and child assent was obtained for all participating children.

Limitations of study

While a sound and robust research methodology underpins this study, a number of methodological limitations need to be acknowledged. The first point relates to the collation of data on the number of youth cafés in Ireland. The final list was developed primarily from consultation with Youth Officers in the VEC/ETBs across the country. Due to some regions not having a Youth Officer at that time, a small number of cafés may have been missed and therefore not counted or surveyed. Also, while there was a positive response rate to the survey (44%), the non-return of the survey by some cafés is a limitation. The sample has been analysed to ascertain the degree to which it is representative of all youth cafés in Ireland. The analysis indicates that the resulting sample is broadly representative of the profile of youth café service providers in Ireland (*see Appendix 9*).

The second point relates to the selection of those who participated in qualitative research from across the 10 youth cafés, including young people who use the cafés, to staff and volunteers who work there, and to the local stakeholders. As a purposive sampling approach was used, each of the 10 cafés were asked to recruit young people to participate in the study. The café management also provided a list of local stakeholders for telephone interviews. Therefore, given that only those involved in some aspect of youth café provision were selected for this study, it could be argued that this 'filtering' of participants could result in only the positives of youth cafés being expressed. As a means of exploring any potential differences in views on cafés, future research could, for example, interview those involved in cafés that have failed or interview young people who have opted not to use an active youth café in their area.

⁸ Noel Cronin, the Galway City Youth Café; John Real, Lava Java, Limerick; Caitriona Freir, the Zone Café, Blanchardstown; and Brian McManus, Chillout Café, Kilrush, Co. Clare.

Structure of report

This introduction has presented the aim and objectives of the study and detailed the context in which the youth café model is located in Ireland. The principles and theory underpinning youth cafés, as presented by Forkan *et al* (2010), were then revisited and expanded, while the research methodology employed for the study was described in detail.

The remainder of this report is divided into two parts:

- **Part 1** presents an overview of youth café provision in Ireland and examines the key characteristics of that provision.
- **Part 2** is divided into two sub-sections. **Part 2a** examines young people's perceptions of the benefits of youth cafés for them, while **Part 2b** focuses on the perceptions of national and local service providers, staff and volunteers regarding youth cafés.

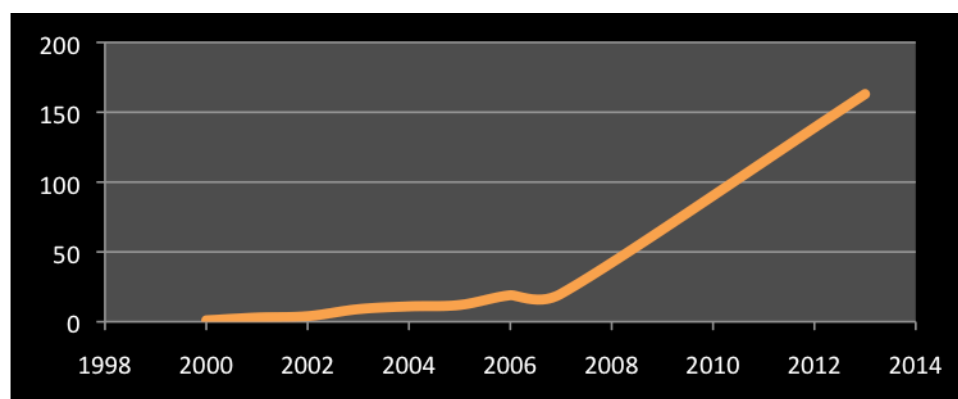
PART 1: A Geographical and Operational Profile of Youth Cafés in Ireland

This part of the report focuses on two key areas: firstly, it presents an overview of youth café provision in Ireland and, secondly, it examines the key characteristics of that provision by providing an operational profile.

1.1 Overview of youth café provision in Ireland

There has been a significant increase in the number of youth cafés operating in Ireland over the past decade. As illustrated in Figure 1, there was just one youth café recorded in Ireland in 2000 (Donnelly *et al*, 2009). The number of youth cafés had increased to 11 by 2004, to 19 by 2006 and to 20 by 2007. After that, there was consistent expansion, greatly assisted by the three rounds of capital funding provided by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in 2010, 2012 and 2013. During 2013 and 2014, 29 new premises opened.⁹ The current study estimates that there were 163 youth cafés in operation in late 2013 – eight times the number recorded in 2007.

Figure 1: Growth rate of youth cafés in Ireland (2000-2013)



As seen in Table 2, there is at least one youth café in every county in Ireland, with the highest number found in Dublin (n=21), followed by Cork (n=20) and Tipperary (n=12). Galway and Kerry have 10 youth cafés each. Monaghan has only one youth café, while 7 other counties have 2 cafés each (Westmeath, Sligo, Louth, Longford, Laois, Cavan and Carlow).

Table 2: Total number of youth cafés, by county (2013) (n=163)

Dublin	21	Clare	8	Leitrim	4	Longford	2
Cork	20	Mayo	7	Offaly	4	Louth	2
Tipperary	12	Kildare	6	Wicklow	4	Sligo	2
Galway	10	Meath	6	Kilkenny	3	Westmeath	2
Kerry	10	Waterford	6	Carlow	2	Monaghan	1
Limerick	9	Wexford	5	Cavan	2		
Roscommon	9	Donegal	4	Laois	2		

⁹ Due to timing constraints, it was not possible to include these 29 in the national survey of youth cafés.

Independent youth cafés account for just under one-third of all youth café provision (31%), while Youth Work Ireland (29.8%) and Foróige (28%) are the largest organisations supporting youth cafés in the country. A total of 6.7% of youth cafés are affiliated to local Family Resource Centres (FRCs), while 3.6% are run by Catholic Youth Care (see Figure 2 and Table 3). Figures 3 and 4 show enlarged area maps for the youth cafés in Dublin City and Cork City respectively.

Figure 2: Affiliation type for 163 youth cafés in operation in Ireland, by county (2013)

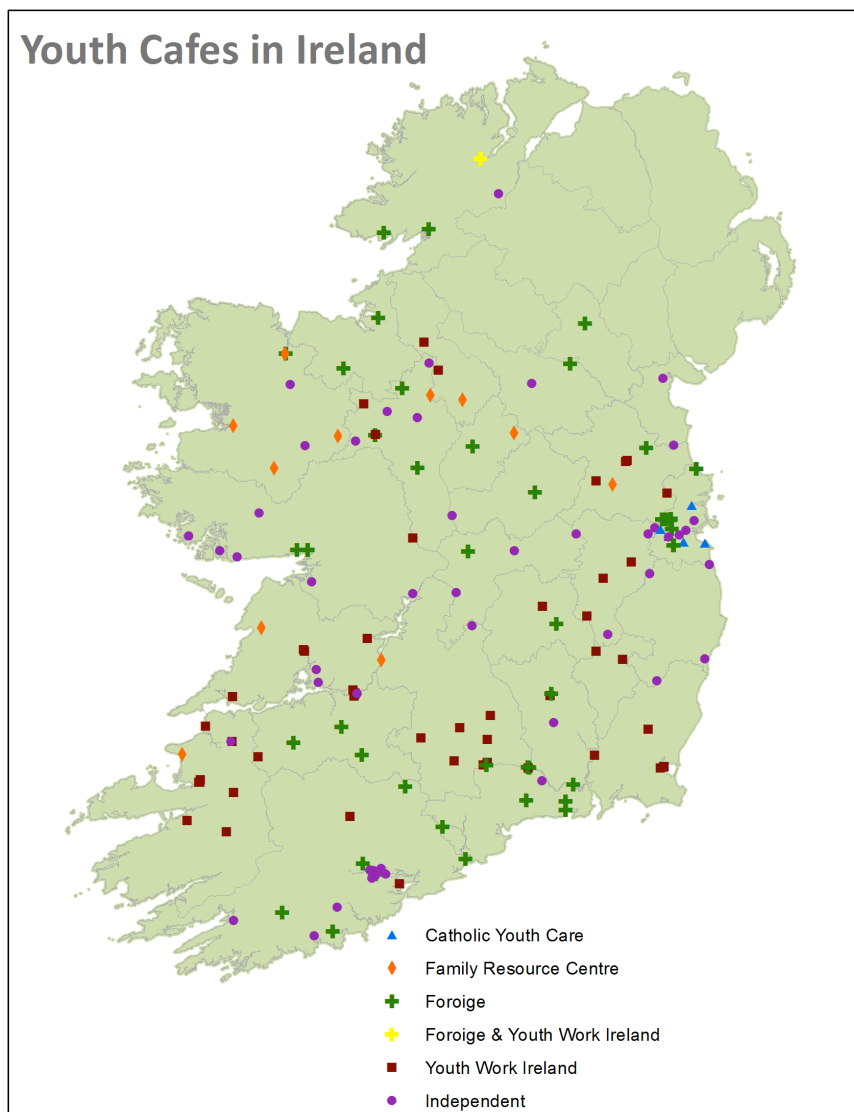
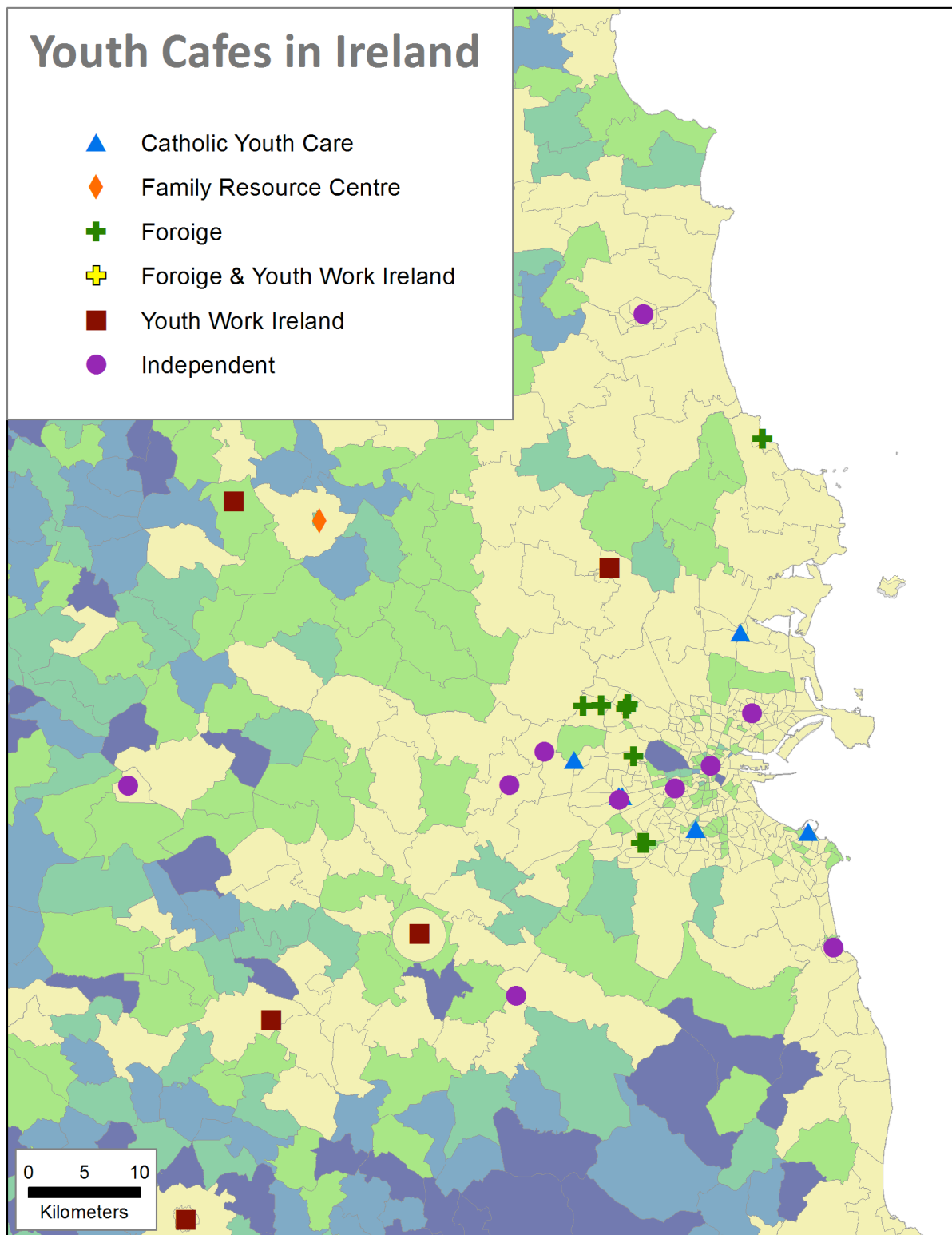


Table 3: Details of affiliation type for 163 youth cafés operating in Ireland (2013)

Organisational affiliation	No.	Overall %
Independent	51	31%
Youth Work Ireland	48	29.8%
Foróige	46	28%
Family Resource Centre	11	6.7%
Catholic Youth Care	6	3.6%
Foróige and Youth Work Ireland*	1	0.6%
Total	163	100%

* In Letterkenny, Co. Donegal, Foróige and Youth Work Ireland/Donegal Youth Service jointly manage the Loft Youth Café.

Figure 3: Affiliation type for youth cafés in operation in Dublin City (2013)



While it might be expected that youth cafés would be primarily located in areas with higher densities of young people, the analysis highlights that youth cafés are based in areas of both low and high population density. The population density for 12-18 year-olds for the 163 areas in which the youth cafés are based ranged from a low of 2 young people per km² to a high of 810 young people per km². A total of 42% of youth cafés (n=69) are located in areas with a population density ranging from 2-50 young people aged 12-18. However, the largest number of youth cafés (n=80) are found in the two largest population density categories, indicating that the majority (49%) are located in the mid to large size urban areas and cities (see Figures 5 and 6).

Figure 5 suggests that 38.65% of youth cafés are located in an area with 2-30, 12-18 year-olds. While this is true, it is important to point out that in reality, the catchment area from which cafés draw their young people is much larger than the strict boundary used to calculate population density. Specifically, the material on 'Location' discussed in Section 1.2.6 below needs to be viewed with this point in mind.

Figure 5: Categorised population density for 12-18 year-olds for the 163 areas where youth cafés operate in Ireland

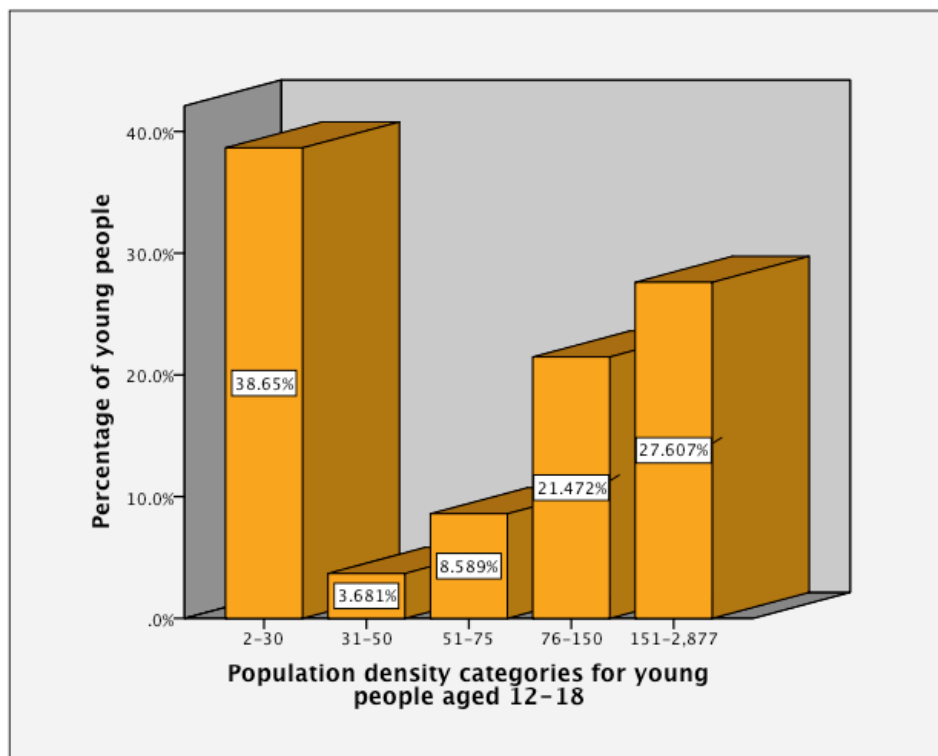
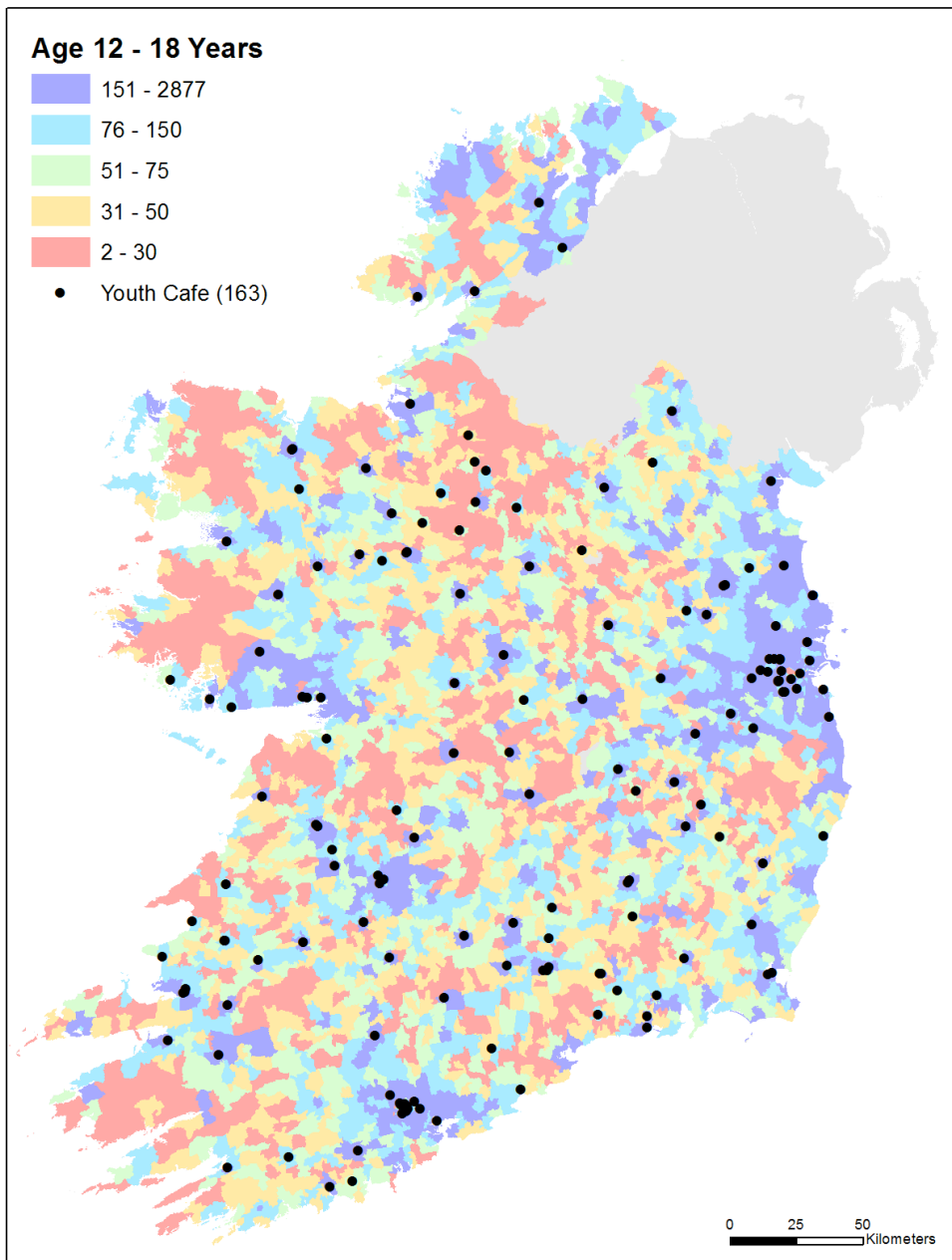


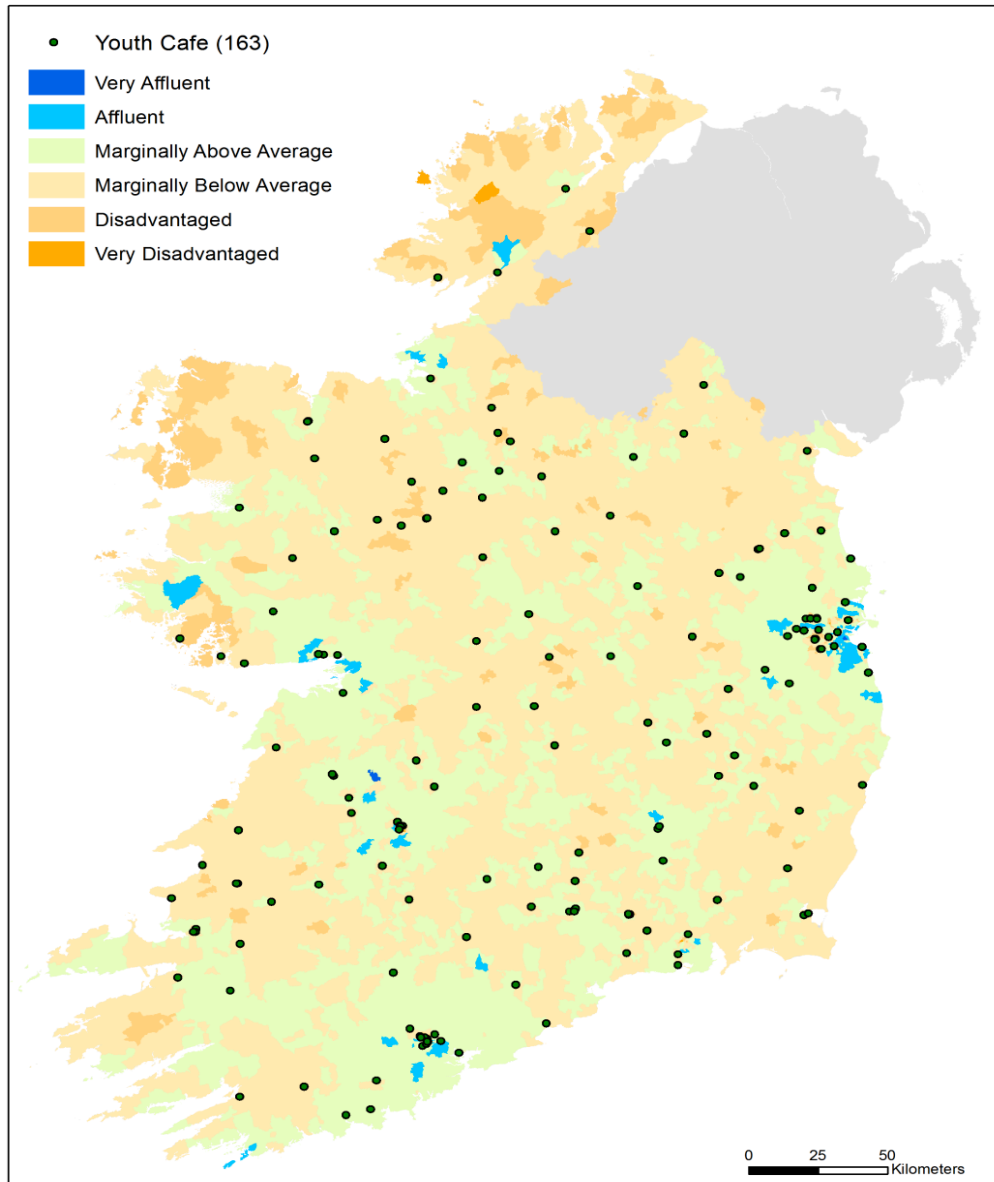
Figure 6: The population density of 12-18 year-olds in the 163 areas where youth cafés were found in Ireland



NOTE: The population density figures used in this study describe persons aged 12-18 per km² for 2011 by Electoral Division. The population density for Ireland in 2011 for all age groups was 67 persons per km², up from 62 persons per km² in 2006. The average population density in urban areas in 2011 was 1,736 persons per km² as compared to 26 persons per km² in rural areas (CSO, 2012).

While the youth café model is designed to work with ‘universal’ young people, it might be expected that youth cafés would be more commonly provided in disadvantaged areas with a higher level of social need. The analysis shows 79% of youth cafés are based in areas classified as below average levels of affluence¹⁰, while 21% are based in areas above average affluence levels (see *Figure 7 and Table 4*).

Figure 7: Levels of affluence/disadvantage for all 163 youth cafés in Ireland



¹⁰ The data for the basis of the analysis was taken from the Pobal Haase-Pratschke Deprivation Index (HP Index), which consists of deprivation indices based on the Censuses of Population, 1991-2011. The HP Index uses three dimensions of affluence/disadvantage: demographic profile, social class composition and labour market situation.

Table 4: Levels of affluence/disadvantage for all 163 youth cafés

LEVEL OF AFFLUENCE/DISADVANTAGE									
Very disadvantaged (-20 to -30)*		Disadvantaged (-10 to -20)		Marginally below average (0 to -10)		Marginally above average (0 to 10)		Affluent (10 to 20)	
No. of cafés	% of total cafés	No. of cafés	% of total cafés	No. of cafés	% of total cafés	No. of cafés	% of total cafés	No. of cafés	% of total cafés
1	0.6%	23	14%	105	64%	31	19%	3	2%

* Numbers in brackets are the relative Index Score used by the HP Index.

From a policy perspective, it is important to consider how the demand for youth café provision will change in the future, as the age structure of the population changes. A review of demographic projections (CSO, 2013)¹¹ for the youth café catchment cohort (12-18 years) highlights some key trends to be considered in future planning of youth café provision:

- Due to either natural increase (primarily births) or net migration, there will be more 0-14 year-olds in Ireland by 2026 than in 2011.
- As proportionally more children immigrate into Ireland than emigrate, there is a persistent net inflow of children, even during phases of net outward migration.
- The numbers of primary school children (aged 5-12) are projected to increase progressively by 97,000 in the period 2011-2021, before falling back in 2026.
- The numbers of secondary school children (aged 13-18) are projected to increase by between 31% to 34% between 2011 and 2026. The largest increases will be between 2021 and 2026 as the projected cohort of primary school children progress to secondary level.

It is clear from these demographic projections that the primary catchment age for youth café provision (12-18 year-olds) is going to grow considerably between now and 2026. The younger cohort of children (5-11 year-olds) will also increase in size. This latter information is of particular importance because this younger cohort represents potential users of youth cafés when they get older.

1.2 An operational profile of youth café provision

There is a continuum of youth café provision throughout Ireland. Some cafés operate on a small scale, offering a drop-in service allied to some information provision and leisure opportunities. Others operate on a medium or large scale, catering for more young people and typically offering a wide range of services, facilitated through integration with a wider youth service. Variation in relation to operational dimensions (such as opening hours, number of young people attending, staffing, activities, referrals and affiliation type) provides an indication of whether youth cafés operate on a small, medium or large scale. For example, as outlined in Table 5, small-scale youth

¹¹ In 2013, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) published *Population and Labour Force Projections, 2016-2046*. These projections are based on assumptions relating to future trends in three areas: fertility, mortality and labour force participation. The projections are based on the F1 fertility assumption, which holds that the total fertility rate will remain at the 2010 level of 2.1 children for the lifetime of the projections. Similarly, the M2 migration assumption was chosen, which suggests that net migration will return to a positive by 2018 and rise thereafter to 10,000+ by 2021. Using the F1/M2 assumptions, the CSO present population projections for 2016-2026 (see Appendix 8 of this report).

cafés generally open for up to 4 hours per week or less, cater for up to 30 young people per week and primarily have a recreational focus. In contrast, large-scale models open for 9 or more hours per week, cater for 100 or more young people and provide a broad range of services. Medium and large-scale models tend to be based in areas with greater concentrations of young people, which makes the provision of a broader range of services more viable, whereas the small-scale models are predominantly based in rural areas and small towns.

The typical characteristics associated with small, medium and large-scale youth cafés are outlined in Table 5. It should be noted that this is an illustrative model rather than an exact specification – youth cafés may adhere to the majority, but maybe not all of the typical characteristics for their scale. Analysis of survey data from 72 youth cafés that took part in the present study indicates that 28% of them are best described as small scale, 37% as medium scale and 35% as large scale. The methodology used to group the youth cafés into types is described in Appendix 7.¹²

Table 5: Youth café typology (2013)

Operational dimensions	Small-scale youth café	Medium-scale youth café	Large scale-youth café
Opening hours	1-4 hours per week	Up to 8 hours per week	9 or more hours per week
Numbers of young people attending each week	Up to 30	Up to 60	Up to 100+ young people
Affiliation type	Standalone/independent	Integrated into a larger service	Integrated into a larger service
Staffing	Volunteer-led, without paid staff	Mix of paid staff (often shared with other services in parent organisation) and volunteers	Dedicated youth café staff, shared staff and volunteers
Activities	Primarily recreational	Recreation and service provision	Recreation and service provision
Referrals	Less likely to make or receive referrals from other agencies	Makes and receives referrals from other agencies and parent organisation	Makes and receives referrals from other agencies and parent organisation
Location	Based in rural areas or small towns, with lower population densities of 12-18 year-olds	Based in medium and larger towns, with a mix of population densities	Based in 'county towns' and disadvantaged urban areas, with higher population densities of 12-18 year-olds
% of cafés in sample	28%	37%	35%

¹² In 2009, three 'types' of youth café were identified in the report *Youth Cafés in Ireland: A best practice guide* (Forkan et al, 2010a). These were:

- Type 1: A place to simply 'hang out' with friends, to chat, drink coffee or a soft drink, surf the Internet, etc.
- Type 2: As above, but with the inclusion of entertainment or leisure services chosen by the young people themselves, together with information on State and local services of relevance and interest to young people.
- Type 3: The above facilities are augmented by the provision of services targeted at young people.

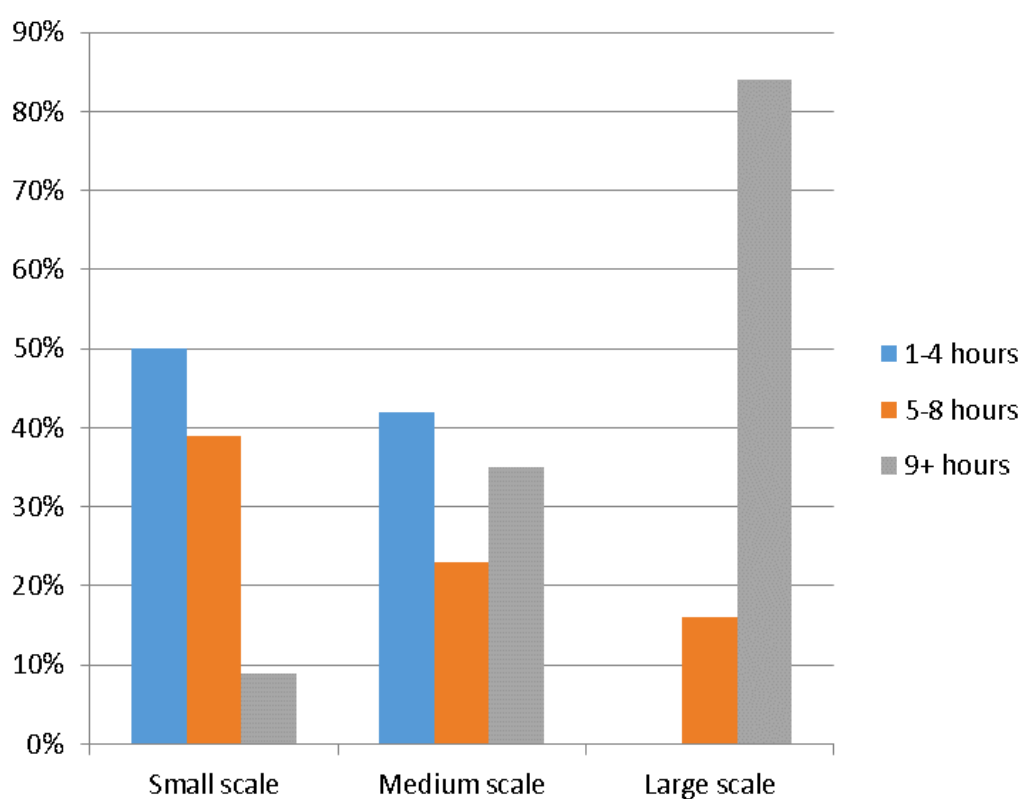
The evidence from this 2009 research is that the vast majority of youth cafés were best described as Types 2 and 3. Indeed, all cafés indicated that they provided information and entertainment/leisure services to young people, which meant that Type 1 was no longer a common model. For this reason, a broader conceptualisation of the profile of youth cafés has been developed in this present study (2012-2013), one that moves from a focus on service provision alone to encompass other operational dimensions of the youth café model.

A detailed profile of the operational dimensions of youth cafés in Ireland is now provided, with differences associated with small, medium and large-scale youth cafés highlighted where appropriate.

1.2.1 Opening details of youth cafés

- Just over one-quarter of all youth cafés surveyed (29%) were open for 1-4 hours per week. 25% were open 5-8 hours per week, while 46% were open for 9 hours or more per week during school term time (*see Appendix 11*).
- Medium and large-scale cafés are more likely to remain open for longer than small-scale cafés, with 84% of large-scale cafés open for 9 hours or more per week during term time compared to 9% of small-scale cafés (*see Figure 8*).

Figure 8: Opening details of youth cafés

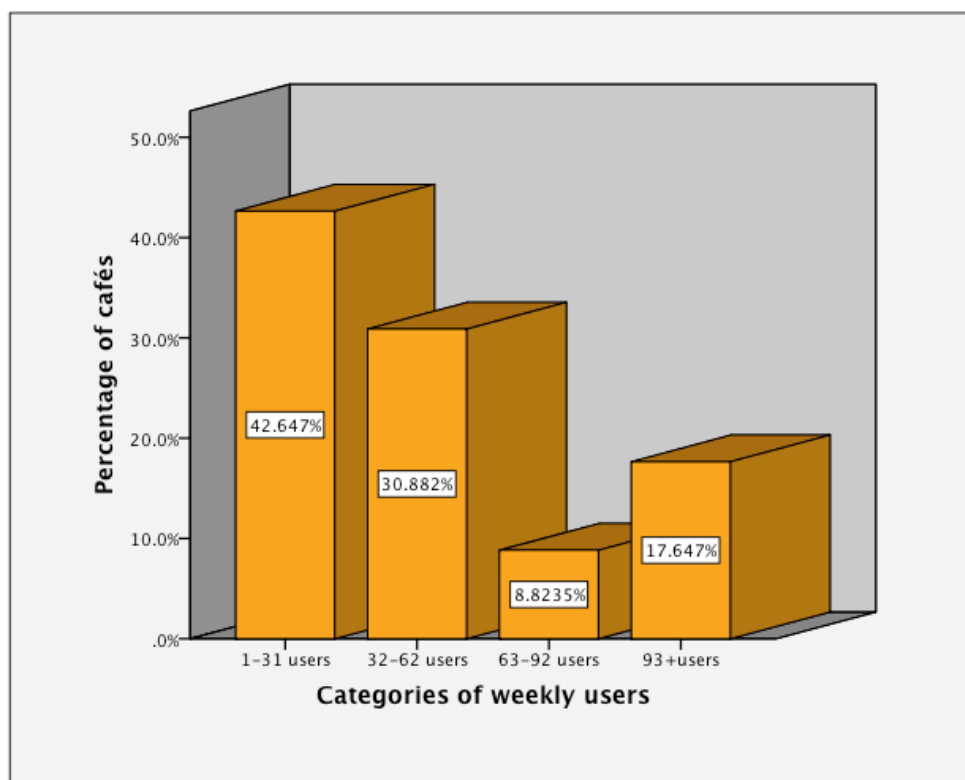


- The most common day for youth cafés to be open is Friday. They were least likely to open on Sunday, with only 3 cafés surveyed being open on that day.
- Over 90% of youth cafés were open during the two mid-terms as well as the Easter break, but the majority were closed during Christmas and the New Year periods. There were no significant variations found by youth café scale in this regard.
- 60% of youth cafés had increased their opening hours in the last year, while 20% had reduced them and 20% had stayed the same as the previous year.
- The average time in operation for youth cafés was 5.5 years.

1.2.2 Numbers of young people attending per week

- Across the overall sample, a total of 3,724 young people were reported to have used youth cafés on a weekly basis during term time in the last year, with 4,701 doing so in out-of-term time.
- As seen in Figure 9, 43% of cafés in the sample had between 1 and 31 users per week during term time, 31% had 32-62 users per week, 9% had 63-92 users per week, while 17% had 93-15 users per week.

Figure 9: Numbers of young people using youth cafés per week during term time

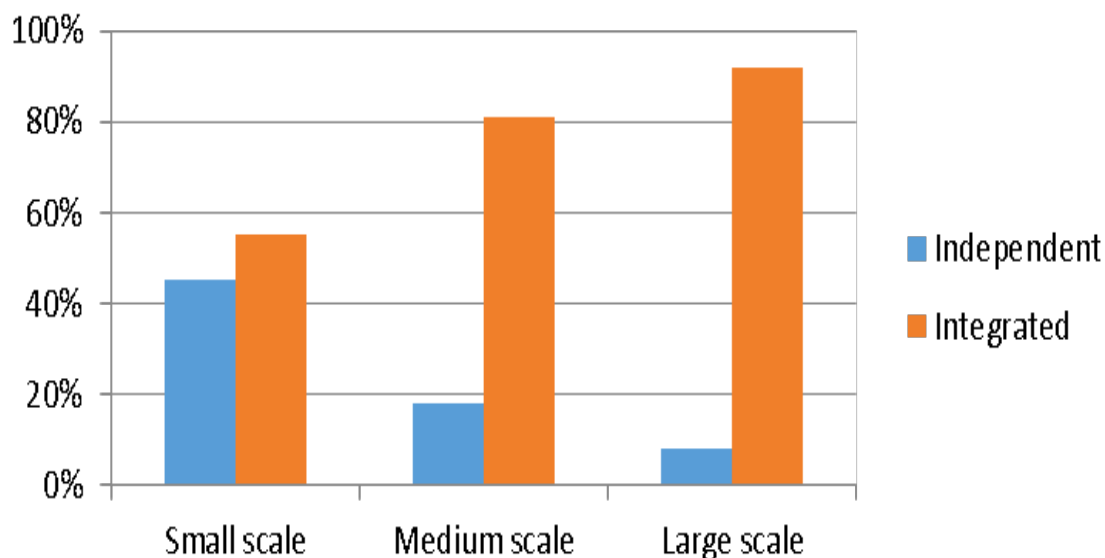


- In line with expectations, large-scale youth cafés were more likely to report a higher number of weekly users than other café types. Large-scale cafés account for 92% of cafés with 93 or more users per week. A total of 89% of cafés profiled as small-scale reported that they had 1-31 users per week during term time, compared to 8% of large-scale cafés.
- Just under half of the youth cafés surveyed (49%) stated that the number of males and females attending the café was roughly equal. However, just under one-third (32%) noted that more males than females attended their respective cafés, while 18% indicated that more females than males attended.

1.2.3 Affiliation type

- 79% of youth cafés that completed the survey were integrated (i.e. part of a 'parent organisation'), with 21% describing themselves as 'independent'. As seen in Figure 10, the medium and large-scale youth cafés were much more likely to be affiliated to a 'parent organisation' than the small-scale youth cafés. Just 8% of large-scale cafés were independent, compared to 45% of small-scale cafés.

Figure 10: Affiliation type of youth cafés



1.2.4 Activities

- A range of recreational, educational and information services are provided by youth cafés.
- The most frequently provided **recreational activities** were video games/board games (92%), showing movies (89%) and pool table/pool tournaments (85%) (see Table 6).

Table 6: Recreational activities provided by youth cafés for young people

		Responses		% of cafés indicating 'Yes'
		N	%	
Recreational activities	Sports nights	31	7.2%	43.7%
	Video games/board games	65	15.1%	91.5%
	Talent competitions	37	8.6%	52.1%
	Dancing competitions	29	6.7%	40.8%
	Pool table/pool tournaments	60	14.0%	84.5%
	Buddy systems	10	2.3%	14.1%
	Music	56	13.0%	78.9%
	Singing workshops	26	6.0%	36.6%
	Movies	63	14.7%	88.7%
	Information and Communication Technology (ICT)	53	12.3%	74.6%
Total	430	100.0%	605.6%	

- In relation to the most common **educational activities**, 80% of youth cafés offered music, 77% offered leadership activities, 72% offered support groups (e.g. personal development), with a further 69% offering information and communication technology (ICT) activities (see Table 7).

Table 7: Educational activities provide by youth cafés for young people

		Responses		% of cafés indicating 'Yes'
		N	%	
Educational activities	CV preparation	33	11.6%	51.6%
	Homework club	19	6.7%	29.7%
	Leadership	49	17.2%	76.6%
	Entrepreneurship	17	6.0%	26.6%
	Book/Library club	6	2.1%	9.4%
	Writing groups	3	1.1%	4.7%
	Debating	4	1.4%	6.2%
	Support groups (personal development)	46	16.1%	71.9%
	Bereavement counselling	13	4.6%	20.3%
	Music	51	17.9%	79.7%
Information and Communication Technology (ICT)	44	15.4%	68.8%	
Total		285	100.0%	445.3%

- Regarding the provision of **information** to young people, 92% of youth cafés provided information on drugs, 91% provided information on alcohol/binge-drinking and the same percentage on mental health. Information is disseminated in youth cafés through a youth worker (26%), a noticeboard in the café or a leaflet stand (both accounting for 24%) (see Table 8).

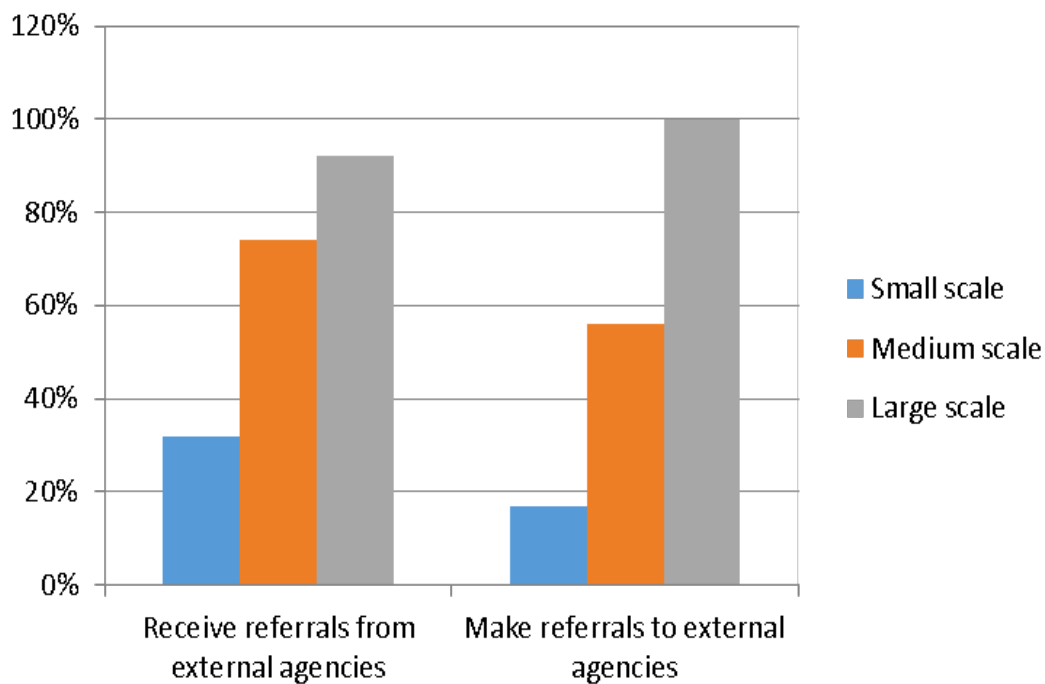
Table 8: Information provided by youth cafés to young people

		Responses		% of cafés indicating 'Yes'
		N	%	
Information provided	Part-time/full time jobs	20	4.6%	30.3%
	Employment rights	23	5.3%	34.8%
	National/Local Government departments/services	22	5.1%	33.3%
	Training/third-level courses	35	8.1%	53.0%
	Sexual health	54	12.5%	81.8%
	Sexuality	44	10.2%	66.7%
	Health eating	52	12.1%	78.8%
	Alcohol/binge-drinking	60	13.9%	90.9%
	Drugs	61	14.2%	92.4%
	Mental health	60	13.9%	90.9%
Total		431	100.0%	653.0%

1.2.5 Referrals and interagency working

- Over 69% of youth cafés have received referrals to their café from external agencies and 61% have made referrals for young people to external agencies (see Figure 11). For youth cafés associated with larger organisations, referrals within the organisation were also a notable feature. Analysis of the data by scale of café indicates that medium and large-scale cafés were much more likely to make or receive referrals than small-scale cafés. For example, just 17% of small-scale cafés said that they make referrals to external agencies, compared to 100% of large-scale cafés.

Figure 11: Details of referrals received and/or made by youth cafés to external agencies

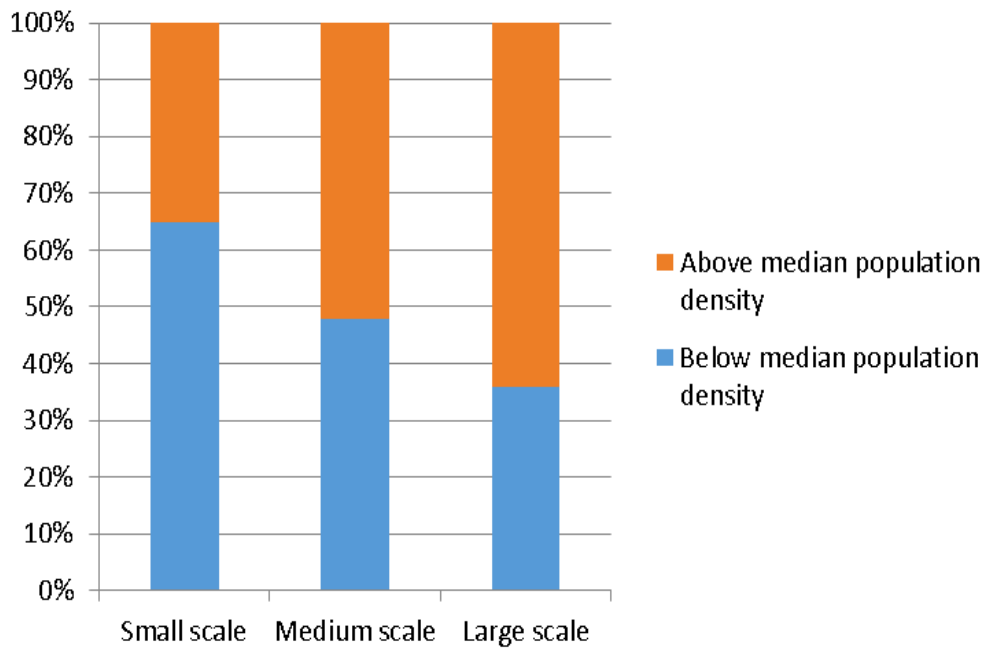


- For those youth cafés that are part of a larger organisation, a total of 84% indicated that the youth café space is used by parent organisations for other aspects of service provision at least once a week.

1.2.6 Location

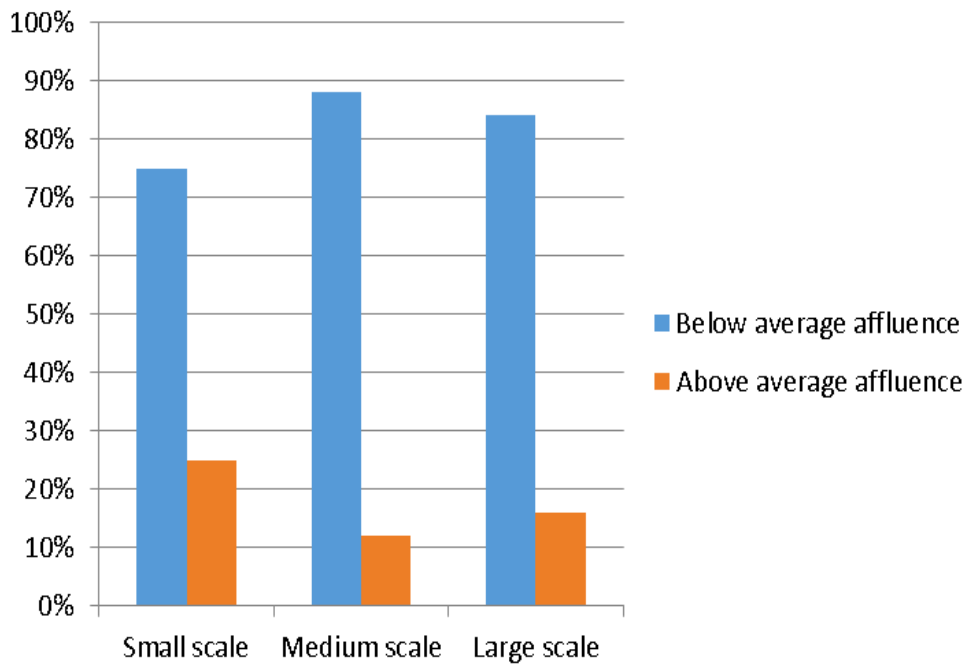
- As seen in Figure 6, youth cafés are located in areas ranging from low to high densities of young people. The median population density across the 163 youth cafés surveyed was 72 for 12-18 year-olds per km². The survey data were used to explore whether there is an association between café type and population density. As seen in Figure 12, small-scale cafés are more likely to be based in areas with population densities below the median (65%). Medium-scale cafés are almost evenly divided between areas with below (48%) and above (52%) median population density. Almost two-thirds of the larger cafés (64%) are based in Electoral Divisions with above average population density of 12-18 year-olds. While it might be expected that all large-scale cafés would be based in areas of higher population density, it should be noted that some are based in city or town centre locations that may not have a high density of young people living in the Electoral Division but offer their services to young people from the surrounding areas (see Figure 12).

Figure 12: Details of population density for 12-18 year-olds per km² for areas in which cafés are based



- Similarly, with regard to the HP Deprivation Index, the majority of youth cafés in the sample of 72 are based in areas with below average levels of affluence. Small-scale cafés are slightly more likely to be based in areas with above average levels of affluence (25%) than medium-scale cafés (12%) or large-scale cafés (16%) (see Figure 13).

Figure 13: Levels of deprivation for areas in which youth cafés are based



1.2.7 Premises

- The majority of youth cafés (65%) lease their property, with 16% having their property donated and a further 15% owning their property.
- 84% indicated that their premises are accessible for people with disabilities or reduced mobility needs, with 16% not having these facilities in place.
- When asked the extent to which young people were involved in the decoration of the youth café, a total of 98% indicated that young people were involved in this task.

1.2.8 Principles and models of practice

- 87% of youth cafés participating in the survey indicated that they have principles of practice in place, while 13% do not. Asked if they have a Mission Statement in place, 79% indicated that they did, while 21% did not. There was no notable variation in responses for different café types in relation to these questions.
- Respondents were asked to indicate the predominant models of practice used in their café. The results indicate that a ‘youth work’ model is most common, used by 91% of cafés, followed by ‘health promotion’ (29%) and ‘recreation’ (29%), while a ‘drug prevention’ model was identified by 26% of cafés. The youth work model of practice is found more frequently among the medium (92%) and large-scale cafés (96%) rather than in the small-scale cafés (76%). Small-scale cafés are more likely to use a community development, drug prevention, recreational-based model of practice than medium or large-scale cafés. This may suggest that the smaller scale youth cafés, which are more likely to be independent, may have been established by local community groups seeking to provide safe, drug-free recreational outlets for young people in their communities, whereas the medium and large-scale models have their origins in youth organisations and therefore work from a ‘youth work’ perspective.

1.2.9 Funding and expenditure

- A total of 78% of youth cafés (n=53) were in receipt of public funding from Government. The most typical sources of public funding were the DCYA/Pobal, the HSE, local County Councils, Drugs Task Force, the Crisis Pregnancy Agency and the VECs/ETBs (see Table 9).
- 71% of youth cafés (n=48) earned their income via fund-raising activities, the most popular being raffles, bag packs, flag days, sponsored walks and cycles, race nights, balloon race, stay awakes, music events, coffee mornings, cake sales, Church gate collections and discos.
- Some 18% of youth cafés (n=12) received in-kind support from various organisations and services in their area.
- The average yearly income for a youth café was €21,683 and the average yearly expenditure was €19,768.

Table 9: Details of how youth cafés are funded

Funding sources		Responses		% of cases
		N	%	
Funding	Public (Government/agencies)	53	36.6%	77.9%
	Earned (income from activities/fund-raising)	48	33.1%	70.6%
	Private (individuals or business sponsorship)	10	6.9%	14.7%
	In-kind support	12	8.3%	17.6%
	Other	9	6.2%	13.2%
	Combination of two or more of these sources	13	9.0%	19.1%
Total		145	100.0%	213.2%

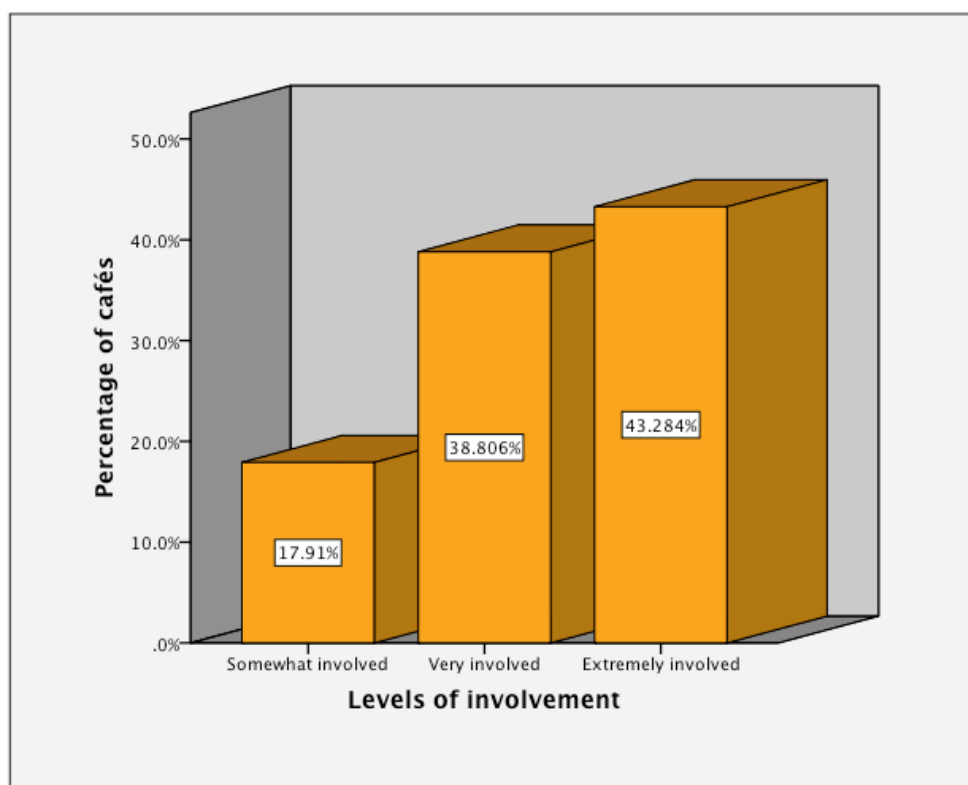
1.2.10 Staffing and volunteers

- There were 80 full-time paid staff in the 72 youth cafés surveyed. However, only 23% of those (n=18) were solely allocated to the café, with 77% being shared within other areas of their parent organisation.
- The overall sample was analysed to explore how staffing profile differs according to the scale of the youth café. All large-scale cafés have some paid staff, whereas over 70% of small-scale cafés have no paid staff. While medium-scale cafés are more likely than not to have paid staff, the staff are more likely to be shared with the parent service. Large-scale cafés are more likely to have dedicated paid staff than the other two café types.
- Youth cafés are supported by very high numbers of volunteers – in fact, volunteers account for more than four times the number of full- and part-time staff combined across the sample (*see Appendix 10*). Furthermore, **26% of volunteers were previously users of the youth café**, which highlights the role of cafés in promoting civic engagement among young people. Small-scale cafés are more likely to be fully volunteer-led than other café types.
- Although high levels of Garda-vetting were reported as being conducted for staff (97%) and volunteers (96%), the findings indicate that 8% of staff and 14% of volunteers did not have their references checked.

1.2.11 Governance and decision-making

- The results reveal that 55% of youth cafés have a Management Committee and 78% have a dedicated Youth Committee. Just under one-quarter (22%) have active sub-committees in their café, tasked with work ranging from recreational activities for members to fund-raising, promotion and sourcing funding.
- Asked how involved young people are in decision-making in the café, 82% of respondents stated that young people were ‘very/extremely involved’ in decision-making in the café (*see Figure 14*).

Figure 14: Level of involvement of young people in decision-making in the youth café



1.2.12 Implementation, monitoring and evaluation

- A total of 86% of youth cafés surveyed were aware of the *Youth Café Toolkit: How to set up and run a youth café in Ireland* (Forkan *et al*, 2010b) and had used it to varying degrees in guiding their work (see *Appendix 12*).
- Over one-quarter of cafés (27%) had undergone external evaluation, while 76% had engaged in internal evaluation. Large-scale cafés were much more likely to have undergone external evaluation (44% of group) than small-scale cafés (10% of group). For those who had, the nature of this involved engaging with the National Quality Standards Framework (NQSF) or a University or consultant-led evaluation. For those who had this type of evaluation, they reported a clearer understanding of quality provision, an improvement in their governance systems and the realisation of the need to promote the youth café in the media (see *Appendix 12*).
- A total of 15 youth cafés had undergone both internal and external evaluation, while a further 15 had done neither.
- Some 70% of youth cafés did not have a website, but 90% used social media like Twitter and Facebook (see *Appendix 13*).

1.3 Profiles of typical youth cafés

To provide a qualitative feel for the data presented, case profiles of a typical small, medium and large-scale youth café are now presented.

Café profile – Small scale

Youth Café 1 is based in a small town in Co. Leitrim. It was established in 2010 and is based in the premises of a Family Resource Centre. The mission of the café is to provide a safe environment for local young people to meet. It opens on Friday nights from 5-6.30pm for 8-12 year-olds and from 6.30-8pm for young people aged 12 years or over. Young people pay €3 to attend each session. Up to 30 young people attend the youth café each week. The café is run by four adult volunteers, one of whom works as a Community Development Officer in the town. One of the current volunteers was previously a participant in the café.

The focus of the youth café is primarily on recreation and relaxation – young people attending ‘hang out’ and chat, cook, play electronic and board games, do beauty and grooming activities and watch movies. Occasionally the café’s volunteers arrange a trip to a nearby larger town for cinema, bowling or other suitable activities. The café has good attendance from young people from the Traveller community and some of the young people attending have special needs. Referrals are received from schools, St. Vincent de Paul, Tusla and the Traveller network, while the café has referred young people to drug and alcohol programmes, Rainbows and counselling. The café aims to respond to the needs of local young people; for example, they had a counsellor from ‘STOP’ suicide to speak to members after a local girl died by suicide.

There is also a local youth club in the town, but the café leader is of the view that young people prefer the more unstructured nature of the youth café. For example, with the youth club, they have to attend for a certain number of nights or their membership lapses, whereas the youth café does not place any obligations on attendees. The café leader feels that young people have a high level of ownership of the café and are involved in setting objectives, deciding on activities, etc.

The youth café has an annual income of €1,200, raised through a combination of funding from Leitrim VEC, participant fees and local fund-raising such as raffles, coffee mornings, bag packing and quiz nights. The key challenges faced by the café are securing funding, ensuring good child protection practices and maintaining a good supply of volunteers. The café leader commented: *‘Funding is without question the biggest barrier to providing the kind of service we need and want. For example, there are many workshops that I would like to run relating to both recreational and educational issues. Unfortunately, these workshops cost money we just don’t have.’*

Café profile – Medium scale

Youth Café 2 is based in a large town in Co. Kildare. It was established in 2012 and is affiliated with a larger youth organisation. The principles of the café are to provide a safe, friendly environment for young people to call their own, managed by young people with the support of staff and volunteers. The café is run by a part-time Coordinator, employed through the Tuas Nua scheme, and five volunteers. It is open on Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 7-9pm and from 2-9pm on Fridays. The employment of the Tuas Nua worker has facilitated the café to extend its opening hours in the past year. Up to 60 young people, aged 11-20, attend the café on a weekly basis. Referrals are made to and from the youth project, counselling and an early school-leavers project.

The key activities run in the café include music, video games/board games and pool. Information is provided to young people on topics such as mental health, sexuality, sexual health, healthy eating, alcohol and drugs. Young people are very involved in decision-making at the café. While the café does not have a dedicated youth committee, 3 young people sit on the Management Committee.

The annual running costs of the café are in the region of €2,800. The café highlighted the need for a reliable funding stream to cover youth café overheads and enable them to stay open, with the Coordinator commenting: *'Precious time and resources can be better spent than fund-raising to stay open.'*

Café profile – Large scale

Youth Café 3 was established in 2010 and is based in a densely populated disadvantaged area of Dublin City. It forms part of a larger youth service and its premises are located in a multi-purpose youth centre, which offers a wide range of youth activities. The café aims to provide a safe environment where young people can meet, explore and develop. It receives referrals from the HSE, schools and the Gardaí, and makes referrals to teen counselling, Garda Youth Projects, projects offered by the youth service and other initiatives. There is one full-time staff member and two part-time members (who are shared with other parts of the youth service), two volunteers and two placement students.

The café is open for three hours each on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, amounting to a total of 9 hours per week. The opening hours have increased over the past year due to demand from young people for a longer opening period in the evenings. Approximately 110 young people come to the café during an average week in school term time. Young people aged 14 and older are the primary users of the café. The attendance fee is €2 per person per session.

Volunteers participating in a focus group for the present study felt that safety was *'a big issue'* for young people living in housing estates in the locality, with bullying and peer pressure among young people leading to inappropriate and risky behaviour described as *'very prevalent'*. The youth café is perceived to be a safe environment in which young people can socialise, but also a place where young people know they can access help and support if required. In addition to support provided directly through the youth café, young people coming to the café can be supported to access additional services provided by the 'parent' youth service or by other external organisations.

Educational activities run through the café include personal development, CV preparation, leadership training, entrepreneurship training and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Recreational activities include video and board games, music and ICT. Information is provided on a range of topics, including mental health, drugs and sexual health. Young people from the café took part in an international youth exchange in 2013.

The café receives funding from the DCYA and VEC and also engages in local fund-raising. The costs of running the café are estimated at €20,000 per annum if staffing costs are factored in. Like the other cafés profiled above, the lack of a secure funding stream was highlighted by staff and volunteers as the key challenge facing the café.

1.4 Summary

This profile of youth café provision in Ireland highlights that there has been a significant growth in the number of youth cafés in Ireland over the past decade. There is now at least one youth café in every county in Ireland. The data presented above demonstrate that there has been a reasonable use of resources, with greater concentrations of youth cafés found in areas with higher concentrations of young people and with higher levels of deprivation. Also, while there is a broad consistency in terms of how youth cafés are conceptualised, a continuum of service provision can be identified, ranging from small-scale youth café models that are primarily volunteer-led to larger scale models catering for a greater cohort of young people through a mix of paid staff and volunteers.

Findings from the youth café survey provide an insight into the operational dimensions of youth cafés in Ireland, covering opening hours and days of week, numbers of young people attending, affiliation type (part of parent organisation or independent), activities (recreational, educational, informational), referrals and interagency working, location, premises, principles and models of practice, funding and expenditure, staffing, governance and decision-making, and implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

PART 2: PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF YOUTH CAFÉS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Part 2 of this report is divided into two sub-sections. The first examines young people's perceptions of the benefits of youth cafés for them, while the second focuses on the perceptions of national and local service providers, staff and volunteers regarding their perceived benefits of youth cafes.

PART 2a: Young people's perceptions of the benefits of youth cafés in their lives

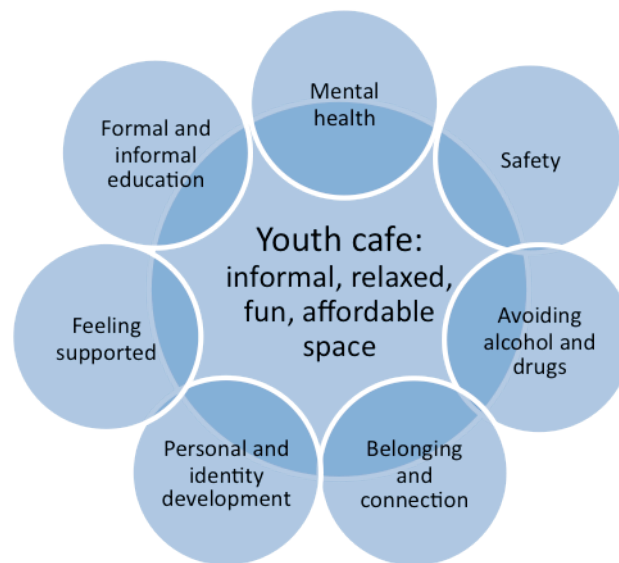
2a.1 Introduction

Data collected from focus groups conducted with a total of 102 young people in 10 youth cafés in urban and rural areas form the basis of this section. Five of the cafés in the sample are large scale, four are medium scale and one is small scale.

Focus group data were transcribed in full and analysed inductively using thematic analysis (Robson, 2011). As described in the Introduction to this report, this method gave primacy to the perspectives of respondents rather than using a pre-defined deductive analysis strictly based on the principles and theoretical areas outlined. However, in the analysis of these perspectives, linkages are drawn here with the theory and principles as a means of understanding and theorising the meaning of the youth café model in the lives of young people.

Using an inductive approach to analysis, a large set of codes were identified based on initial analysis of the focus group transcripts and these codes were grouped together to form initial themes. For example, the word 'safe' was used frequently by young people to refer to how they felt in the youth café space and thus 'safety' became one of the themes. These themes were then subjected to further analysis and grouped into higher order categories, with two broad themes evident (*see Figure 15*). The first theme related to **how young people describe the youth café** and the reasons they go there. The second theme overlapped somewhat with the first, but focused specifically on **the benefits that young people identified** as associated with going to their youth café. Under the theme of 'benefits', seven separate yet interrelated thematic areas emerged – social support; belonging and connection; personal and identity development; safety; alcohol and drugs; mental health; and formal and informal education. The qualitative findings are now presented according to these broad headings and an overall summary of the findings is presented at the end of Part 2a.

Figure 15: How young people describe youth cafés and what benefits they perceive they get from them



2a.2 Young people's perceptions of youth cafés

All of the young people taking part in this research expressed very positive attitudes towards youth cafés. When asked how they would describe a youth café, they commented that they see it as an informal space, a place to 'hang out', where they can be themselves and socialise with their peers. They tended to use words such as 'fun' to describe the youth café space, with some participants saying 'It's great fun coming here. I always have fun and laugh a lot when I'm here'. When discussing how they feel when they are in the café, many of the young people used the following adjectives to describe their experiences: 'free', 'connected', 'like I belong', 'part of a community' and 'happy'. The following quote reflects the views of the majority of young people taking part in the research:

'It's a place to hang out ... It's completely our place and we are off the streets and with our friends and we feel safe here.' [Café 7]

The young people talked about the significance of the youth café in their everyday lives, with great value placed on having a space where they feel connected to others, yet free to express their individuality. These themes were integral to how they discussed their experiences of 'hanging out' in youth cafés:

'When you come here, you can just completely relax and switch off and be yourself and it doesn't matter what that self is. You're just accepted for who you are ... It's really important that this café is here. It means so much to all of us.' [Café 9]

'You can be yourself here. You can't really be yourself at home or at school. Here, you can completely let go and it doesn't matter. You can be a boy or a girl, you can be from a rich family or a poor family or you can be good in school or not good in school. You could be gay and finding it hard to come out ... Everyone is the same here and people just accept you for who you are.' [Café 5]

When discussing the youth café and the informality of the space, young people talked about the café as 'removed' from many of the stresses that they regularly experience at school and in the home. Some talked about the pressures they experience from their parents to do well in school and the arguments they sometimes have with their parents and siblings. These young people saw the youth café as an arena where they could escape their troubles and support each other in times of crisis:

'You come here to have a good time and to help each other ... to support each other. We all know each other so well.' [Café 7]

The informality of youth cafés was regularly discussed by the young people during the focus groups. They commented that this is one of the ways they see youth cafés as differing from other spaces like youth clubs. As one young person said, 'You don't feel that you have to do all the things that are going on. Everything's so relaxed and you can pick and choose what you want to do'. This informality was also referred to as one of the main reasons why they return to the space regularly:

'It isn't structured. It's not like a youth club. You can do what you want and we can tell the youth workers what we want and they make it happen.' [Café 2]

'Things are really open and you can say what you think and you aren't under pressure to do stuff. You can come and sit down and talk if you like, but you don't have to either if you don't feel like it. No one is under pressure so I feel relaxed enough to keep coming back because of that.' [Café 6]

Another advantage of youth cafés compared to other forms of provision, as identified by young people, is that they are relatively inexpensive to attend compared to other forums such as cinemas, restaurants and discos. One young person described it as follows:

'They are cheap to go to. It costs about €2 to come here. If you are sitting outside a restaurant and you're not eating anything, they'll tell us to get lost. It's like they think you'll start causing trouble or something. So the youth café is good like that. And if we genuinely don't have the money, we know they will help us ... They give us food too, which is good.' [Café 8]

In summary, therefore, the young people participating in the research expressed very positive feelings about youth cafés. The key dimensions they identified within youth cafés were that they were informal, relaxing, safe, accessible, inexpensive and fun spaces where they can 'hang out' with their friends and be themselves. The analysis now moves on to focus on the benefits that young people identified as accruing from their attendance at the youth café.

2a.3 How young people benefit from attending the café

As shown in Figure 15, a wide range of themes emerged in relation to the benefits that young people identified from their attendance at the youth café. The findings related to each of these themes are outlined below.

2a.3.1 Feeling supported

The benefits of positive social relationships are well documented, including helping to 'buffer' or prevent stress (Frey and Röthlisberger, 1996) and to support people to cope with challenges and issues in their lives (Cohen and Willis, 1985). The role of the youth café in facilitating positive social relationships was one of the strongest themes that emerged from focus groups with young people attending youth cafés. The findings indicate that young people perceive the youth café as providing them with support to cope with challenges, be they minor or major. The youth café is generally seen as a supportive space and an arena in which support from staff/volunteers and peers can be

accessed. Many of the participants talked about the general feelings of support they experience while in the youth café space, making comments such as ‘I just feel supported here and I feel welcome’, ‘The staff and my friends really helped me when I was down’ and ‘We are all like a family here and we support each other’. Young people alluded to the friendships they forged with other young people in the youth café space and they felt that these bonds were a great source of support to them.

Studies have also shown that social support can result in a greater sense of ‘connection’ to others (Andrews and Ben-Arieh, 1999). In this study, many young people talked about the sense of connection and trust they have towards youth workers and volunteers working in the youth café. During the interviews, young people remarked that the relationships they have with the staff are integral to why they continue to socialise at the café:

‘It’s definitely one of the reasons why we come here ... He’s [staff member] good fun and he knows all of us and we trust him. I know I can tell the youth workers here things about my life that I can’t tell anyone else and this is why I keep coming here. We know we can trust the people here, the youth workers and our friends, and that’s why we keep coming back.’ [Café 10]

While many of the young people taking part in the research spoke about the support they got from the youth café in terms of their daily lives, a number of them shared specific stories about how the staff and/or volunteers helped them with more challenging personal issues. Research by Gilligan (2000) and others has shown that positive social relationships and safe places can help young people to be resilient. While not all young people attending youth cafés are facing adversity in their lives, a small number identified the social support from staff, volunteers and peers in the youth café as a key factor in helping them cope with adversity and described how that support was helping them to be resilient to the challenges they are facing in their lives. For example, one young man talked about the conflict he experienced at home with his parents and siblings and how the friends he met in the youth café and the café staff helped him to make better choices about how to deal with these arguments:

‘It has made me much calmer because it’s sometimes hard at home. I find it hard to get along with my parents and my brothers and sisters ... Coming here and talking to the youth worker and to my friends ... It calms me down and I feel better. So I walk away from arguments more and more.’ [Café 6]

In another example, a young person who was bullied in school said that he felt the support of youth workers and friends from the café enabled him to get on with his life and socialise more with others:

‘It got to the point that I couldn’t go out for about a year and a half, and I’d come home from school and go to my room and not do much else because I couldn’t talk to anyone. But coming to the café now and then really helped because people weren’t judging me and I was able to start going out again and talk to people.’ [Café 5]

The following additional quotes from young people show how they felt supported in their respective youth cafés:

‘The friends I have here have my back and I have theirs, so we are real friends.’ [Café 9]

‘Everyone is willing to talk and give advice to better other people’s experiences in the youth café.’ [Café 1]

‘The staff and other young people are always supportive and give help with exams and any problems we are having.’ [Café 1]

'We are a team. We help each other and we have each other's backs.' [Café 2]

'If I am ever feeling down about anything, the youth leaders here are understanding and will listen to what I have to say.' [Café 1]

'I get so much support here. There is always someone to talk to and can help. They ask if you are alright and they know when you are upset.' [Café 1]

'I would talk to the youth workers about stuff that you wouldn't talk to with teachers. Like, boys. Like, you just wouldn't talk to teachers about all that.' [Café 3]

'The youth worker and the leaders are always there for us if we have a problem. She will talk to us.' [Café 3]

'Our volunteer is like a mother to us all. This place is like a family.' [Café 2]

'You can talk to the leaders in the youth café about anything.' [Café 5]

'If you're upset, they'll try and help you. Like, everyone will. And if your friends can't help, there are loads of volunteers who will help ... The volunteers won't nag you or tell you what to do. They won't tell anyone or they won't judge you. They treat you like an adult ... you're on the same level. There's no condescension. They will help you, but they won't lecture you ... I'd be happier to go to a volunteer than a teacher any time.' [Café 10]

2a.3.2 Belonging and connection

As highlighted in the Introduction, a range of theories (including attachment, social capital, civic engagement and positive youth development) emphasise the importance of young people having a connection to others and to the places in which they live. The themes of 'belonging' and 'connection' emerged strongly from this research, with the majority of young people taking part referring to the sense of connection and belonging they feel in relation to their youth café. Young people spoke of the youth café as being 'like a community' and of enhancing their connection to the community in which they live. As highlighted in the quote below, some participants were of the view that young people are often not included in communities, an issue that the youth café addresses:

'There's a real sense of belonging here. We feel like we belong here and sometimes young people don't belong anywhere. We're sometimes seen as the "dirty little teenagers".' [Café 2]

The concept of influence was highlighted in Section 1.2.11 above as a key component of belonging. Through the emphasis on participation, youth cafés are designed to encourage young people to have an influence and to feel a stronger connection to and sense of ownership of the places and spaces in which they live their lives. Some of the young people who took part in this research were members of committees that were directly responsible for founding the youth café and decorating the space. Many of them talked about the role they played in painting, choosing furniture and making decisions about the everyday life of the café. Such experiences seemed to deepen young people's sense of connection to the café. One respondent described how she feels she is contributing to her community and to future generations of young people by founding a youth café and by making sensible decisions about how it is run:

'You feel like you are part of something bigger here. It's to do with the community now, but also the young people who will come here in the future.' [Café 3]

These perspectives provide support for the view of Sherrod *et al* (2002, p. 267) that taking responsibility can help young people to feel ‘*at home rather than out of place*’ in their communities.

The following additional quotes from young people further exemplify the sense of belonging and connecting felt by them in youth cafés:

‘I’m coming here for the past year and everyone feels connected to each other and like we belong to the café.’ [Café 3]

‘We feel like we belong. It gives us friendship and we feel like we belong.’ [Café 4]

‘It has given me and others a real sense of community and belonging.’ [Café 2]

‘I’ll have the memories of this place forever, even when I’m old and grey!’ [Café 2]

2a.3.3 Personal and identity development

Developing a coherent sense of identity that is distinct from those of parents or peers is a key developmental task of adolescence (Lalor *et al*, 2007). It was clear from the findings of this research that youth cafés play an important role in terms of the personal and identity development of young people. One female participant described the role of the youth café as providing the time and space for personal growth, which contrasts to what she perceived to be the role of school:

‘The main difference between here and school is that in school you have to do it *now*, whereas here it’s a lot more relaxed. You learn in your own time. You’re given a lot of time to progress and basically develop as a person. In school, you’re just expected to write stuff down and learn it.’ [Café 2]

The role of the youth café in promoting confidence emerged strongly in the data from this study. Confidence is one of the key components of positive youth development identified by Lerner *et al* (2009). Some young people spoke of having greater confidence in who they were as a person, while others said that they got to know more people in the youth café and became more confident talking to people and talking in groups:

‘It has taught me to like myself for who I am.’ [Café 1]

‘The atmosphere of the place makes you more confident to just go up and start talking to somebody and it might be their first day. It’s almost empowering because you feel that no matter who you are and what you might say, you can just relax and everything will be alright ... When I first started coming here, I didn’t know anybody. I just started hanging out and became more open to people, talked more and got to know people much better.’ [Café 10]

As well as the atmosphere of the youth café, the feedback from young people suggests that taking responsibility for managing the café and organising events is an important confidence booster for young people:

‘Creating events is important and you get a sense of achievement when it all works out. And you learn when it doesn’t.’ [Café 2]

Another theme that emerged strongly from the research was that of young people learning to take responsibility for themselves and to make more responsible choices. Some young people were of the

view that, because they are respected by staff and volunteers and treated as individuals with the capacity to make informed choices, it helps them to see themselves in that light:

‘It has taught me that I have to be responsible for my actions and face the consequences.’ [Café 1]

‘The staff talk to you and not your parents. You are responsible for yourself.’ [Café 1]

The following additional quotes from young people expand on their feelings of being helped in their personal and identify development by involvement in youth cafés:

‘I used to be a very closed-off person. I wouldn’t leave the safety of my own room. I’ve learned to be more confident and open up to people and I’ve learned to have a lot more confidence ... and respect for myself since coming here.’ [Café 10]

‘You learn how to socialise more here. In school, you’re part of a group and you generally stay in that group. Here, they make you expand.’ [Café 2]

‘I can speak at events now. I have the confidence to talk to people, get in front of people and have a say.’ [Café 2]

‘The staff here show us how to handle problems and how to use our new skills properly.’ [Café 2]

‘I think it has taught me how to look after myself as when I come here, I have to look after myself.’ [Café 1]

‘You feel like you are a role model to others when you’re here, like the younger crowd that are coming here and you have to behave well on account of that.’ [Café 2]

2a.3.4 Safety

The theme of ‘safety’ also emerged from the data and was used by respondents in a number of different ways. Firstly, young people, particularly in disadvantaged urban areas, spoke of how young people’s safety was ‘a big issue’ in their areas. They saw their youth café as helping to ‘keep them safe’ by providing a safe space where they could come to get off the streets. On the streets, they risked getting into fights and other trouble, while bullying and peer pressure often lead to inappropriate and risky behaviour. In this context, the young people particularly valued having the youth café as a safe place to socialise:

‘There are loads of fights in the area. Yeah, we feel safe here.’ [Café 9]

‘I feel safe here because the workers wouldn’t let anyone dangerous into the café.’ [Café 1]

‘Outside, you feel like you aren’t safe on the streets and everything. One night I was out with some friends and a group of guys came along and started about money and they took everything we had ... And sometimes when you’re out and everyone else is drinking, it’s hard not to join in because people call you “square” and you’re the odd one out. Here, you can talk to people and you know that people won’t think you’re stupid next time because you’re sober and so are they.’ [Café 9]

Secondly, some young people referred to the youth café as a place of respite where they could 'escape' the pressures they felt at home and/or at school:

'It's away from the drama at home and it's a safe place to come to when you feel lost.'

[Café 1]

'It's nice to have a place to call home when you have stuff going on at home and at school.'

[Café 2]

Thirdly, the concept of safety was also used to refer to how young people feel when in the youth café, due to the fact that everyone is accepted for who they are and because bullying of any form is not accepted. This is particularly important for young people who may find social interaction difficult, such as young people with disabilities.

'I feel safe coming to the youth café. I also feel accepted and like everyone here is a family.'

[Café 1]

'When I'm outside of here, I feel way more self-conscious about what I do and what I say and how I look. But the second I walk back in here, I feel a million feet tall. I don't have to worry if I say something stupid or act like an idiot because I'm accepted. There are no worries, you know.' [Café 10]

'Bullying is a huge issue. If you haven't been bullied yourself, the chances are you know someone who has been. I have friends and it destroyed their lives for a while ... Youth cafés can help people to get away from bullying. This place has a huge anti-bullying policy. They can help massively. It's very, very strict and it isn't tolerated.' [Café 10]

Fourthly, young people identified that they learned key skills and knowledge in the youth café in areas such as managing conflict and avoiding risky sexual behaviour. For example, a group of boys aged 16-19 commented that their experiences in the youth café had taught them new ways of managing conflict. They remarked that in the past, they regularly engaged in conflict with other young people in their community, but their experiences in the café has taught them that it is sometimes important to walk away from arguments:

'Coming here has taught me a lot about respect. Before this, I'd go downtown and I always knew the guy that would pick a fight with me or I'd pick a fight with him, and we'd really go for it. We'd kick and punch and curse and the whole lot. But now I walk away. I've learned a lot from the staff here about respecting people.' [Café 1]

'It keeps us out of trouble and we know what is right and wrong from coming here.' [Café 5]

'I learned that if you're going to have sex, you need to be safe and that it's dangerous to have sex with someone who has STIs [sexually transmitted infections].' [Café 9]

These findings suggest, therefore, that the youth café is seen as a safe place by young people for a number of reasons. Once again, the theme of resilience is evident as young people – some of whom spoke of feeling unsafe in their own communities or of needing respite from the stresses of home or school – described how they feel the youth café provides a safe place where they can enjoy life and cope with challenges. This is because the café is seen as a place where positive social relationships are emphasised, bullying is not allowed, young people are accepted for who they are and they are equipped with knowledge and skills to support their own safety.

The following additional quotes from young people further illustrate their feelings of safety within the youth café environment:

'It's a way of getting away from all the trouble outside. That's why I think youth cafés should go on and [young] people [being] together making friends.' [Café 9]

'The staff make me feel safe. They helped me not to get in with the wrong crowd. I listened to them.' [Café 1]

'I've learned about being safe outside. My confidence has improved and I'm not as shy.' [Café 6]

2a.3.5 Alcohol and drugs

Many of the young people participating in this research spoke about the role of alcohol in their lives and how their friends relate to alcohol in everyday life. This subject tended to be raised by participants in the older age groups, some of whom also alluded to drugs and how substance abuse affects their lives. In particular, some young people recounted narratives of family members and friends who have experienced a spiral of drug and alcohol abuse. Others opened up about their own experience of using drugs and alcohol. Some who talked about alcohol and drug use in the interviews also talked about the role of the youth café in helping them to curb their own drinking and drug-taking. For example, one female participant talked about experiences of alcohol and drugs within her own family. She maintained that the youth café helped her to control her own patterns of substance abuse because she does not feel under pressure to try alcohol and drugs when in the youth café space:

'When I started to come here, I started to feel differently about myself ... I didn't feel under pressure to be anything other than myself and I definitely smoked and drank less because I didn't feel that I had to do it, you know.' [Café 7]

A group of male participants also attributed positive changes to their smoking, drinking and drug-taking habits because of their involvement in the youth café:

'Definitely it's because of here ... It gives us something to do and if we were outside, to be honest, we'd be drinking now and getting into trouble and I know I definitely drink and smoke less because I'm here and because it isn't allowed.' [Café 9]

2a.3.6 Mental health

As highlighted in Section 2a.3.1, young people spoke about the support they receive through attending the youth café. Research has shown a strong association between social support and psychological well-being among adults and young people (Cheng *et al*, 2014). 'Mental health' emerged as a theme in the present research, with young people speaking of the youth cafés as somewhere they can relax and escape from stresses they may be experiencing in other areas of their lives. The word 'relaxing' was used very frequently among respondents to describe their feelings about the youth café, as were concepts associated with positive mental health such as 'fun', 'happy', 'belonging' and 'having a laugh'.

'It makes me happy mentally as it makes me happy being here and there is always someone here if I need to talk to someone.' [Café 1]

There was also evidence that the youth café has equipped some young people with the skills to understand and respond proactively to mental health issues in their own lives and in those of their peers. This issue was particularly prominent in the feedback from young people in Café 2, as the following quote illustrates:

'I was downtown after school one day and there was a boy crying. I recognised him from school, but he's younger. He's a First Year or a Second Year. And I asked him what was wrong and he says to me, "I'm going to commit suicide because nobody likes me and I have no friends". I did the suicide prevention course in here [youth café] and because of that, I knew how to talk to him. I knew what to say because I had seen it in here. I learned how to talk to people through coming here and I told him about the youth café and to come down here. And a week or two later he showed up. He's here now all the time (well, at least two times per week) and in the games group and after a couple of weeks he said to me, "How could I have thought of doing that? Now I have friends again" ... it's given him great confidence in who he is and what he has to offer.' [Café 2]

This quote illustrates that this young person felt empowered, as a result of the training he received in the youth café, to take a proactive role in relation to providing social support to his peers and he believes that this support made a critical difference to the young person he helped. This example illustrates the benefits of peer support that can be provided in contexts and settings that adults may not have access to (Brady *et al*, 2014) and can also be seen as evidence of caring for others, one of the components of positive youth development (Lerner *et al*, 2009).

The following additional quotes from young people offer further evidence on the important role their youth café plays in maintaining their positive mental health:

'It's a relaxed, stress-free zone where you can just relax and have some banter.' [Café 1]

'They give you mental health talks and they talk to people about mental health. There's Speak and Seek and Headstrong did a talk here before and they give you personal talks, like if you're feeling sad and depressed, and we had a training day. Like if you came here depressed, someone would talk to you. If I came here depressed, [name of staff member] would talk to me and a guy called [name] who is a volunteer here.' [Café 2]

'One of the youth workers talked to me a while back about what was good and bad to eat.' [Café 9]

'I was 15 stone a few years back ... My T-shirt is now loose. I lost all the weight because I got more confident and this place gave me confidence.' [Café 2]

2a.3.7 Formal and informal education

A number of young people stated that the youth café had supported them with their formal schooling. This took the form of helping them with study and exam preparation, supporting them to deal with the stress associated with exams and school, and talking to the school about problems they may be having:

'They really support you here. Like during my Junior Cert, I felt a lot of support ... They helped us to study and they gave us time in the café to do our homework.' [Café 9]

'I got help with a CV ... People care about you here.' [Café 9]

'Someone here helped me to have a discussion with the school.' [Café 1]

There was also evidence of the youth cafés helping young people with their informal education, such as teaching them valuable life skills like cooking, computer coding, music and personal development. References to efforts by the café to promote physical health through good nutrition and exercise were made by young people in the course of the research:

[‘You can learn how to do a load of different stuff here. You can learn coding here in Coder Dojo. You can learn to cook for going to college.’](#) [Café 2]

2a.4 Summary of findings from research with young people

Part 2a of this report has outlined the findings of qualitative research with young people regarding their experiences of attending youth cafés. The majority taking part in the research highlighted the informal, friendly nature of the youth café as attractive to them. They greatly valued it as a place to meet friends, make new friends and simply ‘hang out’. The overall atmosphere of acceptance and the support provided by café staff and volunteers came through strongly in the findings. A range of benefits associated with attending youth cafés were identified and illustrated by quotations from the young people themselves. The implications of these findings will be discussed in the final part of this report, ‘Conclusion’.

While young people from all 10 youth cafés participating in the study spoke very positively about the role of youth cafés in their lives, it should be noted that the majority of respondents were attending medium and large-scale cafés, which provide a more comprehensive range of services, longer opening hours, more days per week and more staff/volunteers than small-scale cafés. Thus, these youth cafés are likely to have a greater impact on their lives than cafés offering a more limited range of services.

The typology of small, medium and large cafés was developed after the qualitative fieldwork had been completed. In future studies, purposive sampling based on scale would be valuable to explore how the perceived benefits for young people vary according to the size of the youth café.

Part 2b: Perceptions of national policy and practice informants, local service providers, youth café staff and volunteers on benefits of youth cafés

Part 2b of this report focuses on the perceptions of national policy and practice informants, local service providers, and staff and volunteers in relation to the youth café model. Data were collected via telephone interviews with 12 key national informants¹³ as a means of contextualising the youth café model within child and youth policy. In addition, interviews were held with 12 local community and statutory service providers, and 18 staff and volunteers associated with 10 youth cafés. In total, the findings draw on the perspectives of 42 people.

The analysis of the qualitative data was completed using an inductive approach. This gave primacy to the perspectives of respondents rather than using a pre-defined deductive analysis strictly based on the principles and theoretical areas outlined in the Introduction. However, as will be seen below, in the analysis of these perspectives, linkages are drawn with the theory and principles as a means of understanding and theorising the meaning of the youth café model from the perspective of the interviewees.

The majority of national key informants commented on the scale of transformation in Irish policies for children and young people. The changes were seen as being highly positive, emphasising the importance of young people's input to society. Nine national key informants noted the high degree of 'fit' between the Irish policy context and youth cafés, evidenced by the fact that youth cafés began to emerge more formally due to *Teenspace*, the National Recreation Policy for Young People published in 2007. In addition, recent announcements by Government for youth café capital funding were seen as another step in youth policy development. Youth cafés were seen as embodying the practices and principles of good youth work, including care and support for young people. This section examines

Five themes emerged in this qualitative research on the perceived benefits of youth cafés for young people and their communities. Each is discussed below.

2b.1 The innate nature of a youth café

Across the various stakeholder groups, the view was expressed that youth cafés are conceptualised as an open, relaxed and welcoming place for young people. Cafés were seen as a space where young people could express themselves and feel a sense of ownership and personal responsibility. It was suggested that youth cafés are different to other forms of youth provision (such as a youth club or project) because of the 'space' they create for young people 'just to be', as illustrated in the following comments:

'They are seen as a young person's space and that's very important and I think that's the key thing really ... So many young people have mental health difficulties ... The teenage years are

¹³ A total of 19 representatives were invited to participate: 3 declined, 2 others nominated another person from their own organisation who had also been approached for interview, and 2 others could not be contacted after several attempts. The agencies that were invited to participate in the research are listed in Appendix 6.

fraught for a lot of people and they could have difficulties with their sexuality or relationships or sex. They need somewhere they can go to where they know that people will listen and that isn't always school. They need responsible adults in their lives and to know that other young people and adults will support them.' [National key informant, No. 9]

'There is something distinct in how they [young people] experience the youth café because of the space itself.' [National key informant, No. 4]

For staff and volunteers, there was agreement on the distinctive features of youth cafés in comparison with youth clubs and other youth, leisure or sporting alternatives. They saw youth cafés as being more flexible, giving young people more freedom to come and go as they wish, which is something they appreciate. The following key points were made:

- The unstructured nature of youth cafés means that young people can drop in as they wish, whereas other forms of provision require people to 'sign up' in advance.
- The service is delivered not in an authoritative manner but in collaboration with young people. Because young people 'are not told what to do', they assume an ownership over the café and the activities that are planned and delivered.
- The youth café's informality provides spaces where young people feel they can confide with youth workers and volunteers.
- Because young people think of the service as 'their space', a high level of trust and respect is achieved between them and the youth workers and volunteers.
- The sense of safety youth cafés provide young people.

In support of these points, one volunteer observed:

'People tend to underestimate how important youth cafés can be because it's not a strict programme where people have to come every week. You can come one week and not the next week and then come again, so it is very much that they have a sense of ownership that they can decide when to show up when they want to ... It's not like a youth club, which is a rigid structure. In my youth club ... if you don't show up for 2 of the 6 weeks, then you don't get to show up for whatever trip or party you were having at the end of the 6 weeks. So the youth café kind of gives young people more freedom, but still enables them to be there if they want to be. I think people often underestimate the importance of that for young people.' [Volunteer, No. 5]

One youth worker commented that it was the youth café's aim to achieve 'structured informality'. He felt it was important to create an informal space for local youth by providing a venue offering adult supervision, a safe environment, a programme of activities and access to integrated services. A well-structured space offered young people 'more freedom to do what they wanted to do' was how he described it.

One staff member, whose work involves one-to-one work with young people, referred to the value of the youth café as part of the overall integrated service of which it is part. She sees the role of the youth café as preventative, as highlighted in the following quote:

'It's great to have the café because it engages people on a preventative basis ... It's a safe place for young people to go. They get to hang out with their friends. They get to meet volunteers who would be good role models for them, mentors. They get to cook most evenings or bake and play pool ... They did trips to the Youth Health Service, trips to the beach, talks about drugs and alcohol. So there's a variety of work that is done, which I don't get to do in my project.' [Staff member, No. 1]

A number of staff and volunteers referred to the fact that young people come to youth cafés because they provide a safe and nurturing space in the context of the often difficult family and community environments in which they may live. They highlighted that young people can socialise at the youth café without pressure to become involved in alcohol and substance misuse, as is the case elsewhere. Indeed, many staff and volunteers from urban areas felt young people's safety was 'a big issue' and that bullying and peer pressure among young people leading to inappropriate and risky behaviour was 'very prevalent'.

'There was a huge problem with syringes around here. They were littered everywhere in the park. Some of the young people come here to get away from all that. Drink and drugs are a big problem around here ... Unemployment also.' [Volunteer, No. 6]

'I think ... people from hard family backgrounds are able to come in here and just chill and relax and meet people their own age. They have security as they know if they need to talk to somebody, the avenues are here to talk to someone. They feel they're needed and wanted here. If it's considered that they are no good at home, they know that there's a place where they are needed and wanted. They're happy to come in here. They're always in a good mood in here and they always get involved with the volunteers. They are part of something bigger.' [Volunteer, No. 10]

2b.2 Sources of social support from others

The importance of young people having adequate social support networks and good levels of resilience was highlighted, particularly when coping with matters like bereavement, illness and sexuality. All respondents commented on the importance of young people forging strong, supportive relationships with peers and 'other adults' outside of family members. In this regard, youth café staff and volunteers were seen as having critical roles in enhancing young people's social support networks, improving their sense of selfhood and individuality, and their abilities to cope:

'I would think it [youth café] has a significant impact because emotionally some (not all) families would have issues. It gives the young people a place to come to where they have good steady volunteers and role models in their lives ... They'd kind of be looking out for them ... because there is a trusting relationship that's built between the young person and the volunteers. What's in that trusting relationship is that a young person can seek extra guidance or support or help; the volunteers can help them to sort out a problem that is going on or refer them somewhere else.' [Staff member, No. 3]

Some key informants suggested that youth café staff often help avert risky behaviours by noticing changes in young people's behaviours or attitudes that may not have been previously detected by teachers, parents or siblings. It was also suggested that young people might be more willing to take advice offered by youth café staff or their friends rather than teachers or parents because they frequently have strong rapport with them:

'I think that in some cases, staff at a youth club or a youth café might be the first to notice if a young person has a problem or if there's an issue. It might be that they see a change in the young person's behaviour. The family might not even have noticed. It could be something unsaid also, but the youth worker or youth café staff might notice it as young people tend to open up more in the space than they do at school ... I know that this happens and it works.' [National key informant, No. 2]

Supporting young people with mental health or relationship problems was seen as a core task for youth cafés. Programmes provided in youth cafés involving arts, sports and crafts are seen as very beneficial for young people from lower income families who cannot afford to pay for such classes.

Engaging in these activities is considered important for enhancing young people's autonomy and decision-making, as well as their social support networks.

It was also emphasised that youth cafés are very beneficial for socially marginalised young people who do not feel supported by family and friends. Gardaí associated with a large urban youth café noted that the youth café's efforts in their area to integrate young people from different backgrounds and cultures and from different parts of the town was a significant benefit to the town. One Garda welcomed the 'respect for other groups this teaches':

'Emphasis is placed in youth cafés on attracting different types of young people. That's very positive. Youth cafés have broken out of the idea that provision should be based on geography. Youth cafés have an open access provision that's not dependent on problems in an area and that's really positive. Also there's more of a mix of young people coming to them ... They make friends in the cafés so that's all positive for supports.' [Statutory service provider, No. 5]

The benefits of the one-to-one work that happens regularly in youth cafés was acknowledged by the interviewees. One social worker highlighted instances where young people who had not been engaging or linking in with agencies had subsequently been supported through joint work between her department and staff at the café. In addition, several service providers complimented staff at the café for the determination and conscientiousness they showed in their work to support young people. For example, several commented:

'They [youth café staff] have stuck with kids through thick and thin and haven't judged and have known well enough when to stand back when they should.' [Community service provider, No. 2]

'It [a doctor's service in the café] has been of immense benefit, not just to the individuals referred to it but also to their families and their peer groups since it helps young people explore the issues in a really, really profoundly respectful way. It's where young people can get help.' [Community service provider, No. 1]

2b.3 Meeting needs via signposting and referrals

Nine key informants spoke of the importance of youth cafés as 'gateways' and 'pathways' to other services for young people with higher levels of need. For example, referrals could be made by youth café staff for young people who have mental health issues or who are in danger of engaging in risky behaviours, such as underage sex, drug-taking, alcoholism and suicide. Some youth cafés have strong links with professional organisations that deal with sensitive matters such as these and can offer young people services like professional counselling and medical advice.

Six key informants commented that youth cafés can be very beneficial environments for young people attending services for problems in the area of mental health:

'I think referrals are crucial and in many ways, they set youth cafés apart from other services because the young person is part of it and there is a greater chance that she or he will listen. For one thing, the information and advice that is being handed out is not judgemental and the young person is part of it all. They have a relationship with the youth worker or the person there so there's less chance that they will be afraid ... Referrals are so important now because of the current climate in Ireland. Young people and families don't have it easy and there's a knock-on effect often.' [National key informant, No. 9]

Moreover, several interviewees commented that they were confident in referring young people to the youth café and/or implementing joint initiatives with the café. Two commented:

'I do feel when our young people go there they are very well supported in creating very good, healthy social networks.' [Community service provider, No. 2]

'.. the building is very appropriate. What stands out is the evident collaboration – from my understanding young people are involved in the décor and so on. That brings ownership over it.' [Statutory service provider, No. 6]

According to one service provider, a significant broader impact of joint initiatives with youth cafés is that they can act as learning processes for other services. He believed counsellors, general practitioners in the Youth Doctor Programme and other professionals collaborating with the café can experience and learn from working in a youth-centred way.

2b.4 Youth participation and decision-making skills

The vast majority of key informants stated that youth cafés develop important participatory skills in young people. The decision-making and governance systems of youth cafés facilitate a significant amount of input from young people and joint decision-making with the adults who run the cafés. Enabling young people to have a voice in decisions was viewed as important for developing critical thinking skills, public speaking and youth autonomy:

'Getting involved in a café when you're young ... It would be hard not to leave a mark. We get a good mix of people so the café helps to bring people together and get people involved who may not get involved otherwise ... Participation helps them to co-manage ... Young people are very well engaged and I would have seen it for myself happening in the café. From the reports on the ground, there is evidence which says that cafés improve people's peer groups, their decision-making and their abilities to organise and manage things.'

[National key informant, No. 3]

Several examples of participation were linked by respondents to innovation, independent thinking and the development of entrepreneurial skills in youth. For example, young people in one community actively sought out suitable premises for a youth café and initiated discussions with the owner of the building about rents. In another situation, young people engaged with local bands and organised music nights and karaoke in youth cafés and assumed active roles in managing the café's financial accounts. Another volunteer described how the Youth Management Team of her youth café set up a gaming club, which has been extremely successful:

'The gaming club is a good example because that was set up by young people for people who like games ... And they actually got a €3,000 grant from O2 Think Big because the whole programme wanted to bring people together who might be socially isolated and at home playing computer games, rather than making friends and be outside. So that's why the club was set up ... It shows them that it's not all about taking – it's about giving something back and it helps to build their self-confidence because they are involved and in charge of running so many projects. Being on the Youth Management Team shows them that they can build, organise and plan, and that they are needed for something.' [Volunteer, No. 5]

However, there is variation between cafés in the degree to which youth participation is achieved. For example, a staff member in one urban café was asked to rate the degree of youth participation on a scale of 1-10. She made the following comment:

'I'd put it at 4, to be honest. There aren't any sub-committees or anything in operation and they don't always engage.' [Staff member, No. 2]

2b.5 Positive benefits for communities

The benefits of youth cafés for communities were also discussed. Seven key informants said that participating in youth cafés helps to enhance young people's feelings of connectedness to their community, which is beneficial for themselves and for their localities. The point was also made that young people are the main link between the youth café and the community:

'It has to be recognised that young people are part of the communities that they inhabit and they are the link or the visible face of the youth café in the community.' [National key informant, No. 9]

Instilling concepts such as respect, social inclusiveness and participation in young people from an early age was seen as enabling them to develop positive images of themselves and other people in their areas, thus providing them with higher personal responsibility and care towards other members of their communities. Examples were given of how young people made positive impacts on their areas because of their involvement in youth cafés. A number of young people who attended youth cafés as teenagers returned to these youth cafés recently to give tutorials and homework clubs to other young people who currently attend these cafés. The research participants used examples such as these to show that youth cafés impact markedly on young people's development and their experiences, which lead to more positive outcomes for their communities.

2b.6 Summary of perceptions of key stakeholders

Part 2b of this report has presented the perceptions of national policy and practice informants, local service providers, and staff and volunteers from the 10 youth cafés included in the study. In total, 42 people contributed their views. There was very strong support from these interviewees for the youth café model. In particular, emphasis was placed on the innate nature of a youth café to be open, welcoming, supportive, relaxed and a place that encouraged input by young people in decision-making processes. The ability of youth cafés to signpost or refer young people to appropriate support services (such as mental health or counselling) if and when the need arose was also acknowledged as a key strength of youth cafés, in addition to encouraging young people to link with their local communities.

Conclusion

The objectives of this research study were to provide a geographical and operational profile of youth cafés in Ireland, and to explore perspectives regarding the benefits of youth cafés for young people. This final part of the report summarises the key findings of the study and reaches a series of conclusions on the current operations and perceived benefits of youth cafés in Ireland.

A geographical and operational profile of youth cafés

There has been a significant growth in the number of youth cafés in operation in Ireland, with eight times as many in existence now (163) as compared to 2007. The data also reveal that there is at least one youth café in each county, with cafés being based both in areas of low and high population density of 12-18 year-olds. However, the largest concentration of youth cafés is found in the two largest population density categories of larger towns and cities. The majority of cafés are based in Electoral Districts below the national average level of affluence. Demographic projections predict that the numbers of 0-14 year-olds is likely to increase up to the year 2026, thus highlighting the importance of ongoing planning for additional provision of youth cafés in the years ahead. The findings show that youth cafés are provided by a wide variety of organisations, including independent groups (31%), Youth Work Ireland (30%), Foróige (28%), Family Resource Centres (7%) and Catholic Youth Care (4%).

Survey data returned by 72 of the 163 youth cafés were used to develop a typology to capture the similarities and differences found among the range of youth café provision. The typology shows that 28% of cafés are best described as small scale, 37% as medium scale and 35% as large scale. For the first time, a tentative classification system has been developed and applied to go beyond describing the 'average' youth café to being able to look at differences between types of youth café. Using this typology, it is possible to identify a number of important findings. For example, medium and large-scale cafés tend to be based in areas with greater concentrations of young people, which makes the provision of a broader range of services more viable, whereas the small-scale cafés are predominantly based in rural areas and small towns. Café opening hours were also found to be related to café scale and the numbers of young people using the service. Medium and larger scale cafés are more likely to remain open for longer than small-scale cafés and also report higher throughput of young people. Large-scale cafés also have the benefit and expertise of paid staff in contrast to the majority of small-scale cafés, which raises important questions about the sustainability of the latter. The role of volunteers in youth cafés also emerged as extremely significant, with more than four times the number of volunteers involved in cafés compared to either full-time or part-time paid staff.

Perceived benefits of youth cafés

Before discussing the main perceived benefits below, it is important to reiterate a point relating to the relationship between 'Principles, Theory and Findings', as made in the Introduction of this report. The authors have argued throughout that **youth cafés can be conceptualised as having a set of clearly defined guiding principles** that represent what is desirable in every youth café, in addition to a solid theoretical base. Nevertheless, to give primacy to the perspectives of respondents, an inductive analytical approach was used with the data, rather than a pre-defined deductive approach, guided by the principles and theory. As a result, in the discussion below, the authors construct

linkages between these perspectives and the theory and principles as a means of understanding and theorising the meaning of the youth café model in the lives of young people.

The majority of young people who took part in the research highlighted the informal, friendly nature of the youth café as attractive to them. They greatly valued it as a place to meet friends, make new friends and simply ‘hang out’. The overall atmosphere of acceptance and the support provided by café staff and volunteers came through strongly in the research. The findings clearly suggest that the guiding principles for youth cafés – which emphasise the youth work principles of respect, inclusion and acceptance – contribute to creating a relaxing and supportive environment for young people. The range of benefits associated with attending youth cafés, as identified by young people, are summarised in Table 10. A brief discussion of these main points is then presented.

Table 10: Benefits of youth cafés as perceived by young people

Benefits of youth cafés identified in the data	Key dimensions
Social support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support from staff and volunteers • Support from peers • The café as a supportive space
Belonging and connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth café as a community • Sense of ownership of the space • Greater links to community through café
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A place to ‘get off the (often dangerous) streets’ • Respite from pressures of home and school • Feeling of safety in the café – everyone accepted • Learn skills and knowledge in keeping safe (e.g. sexual health, conflict management)
Personal and identity development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on personal development as opposed to academic • Confidence – in themselves and in relating to others • Learning to take responsibility – treated with respect
Alcohol and drugs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Café as a space to escape peer pressure in relation to alcohol and drugs • Shows that fulfilling alternative ways of socialising are possible
Mental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Café as a relaxing, stress-free space • Brings a sense of well-being – happy, free, fun • Awareness of mental health needs of self and others and learn skills to react appropriately
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support with formal education • Support with informal education – life skills, health, sport, arts

The importance of **social relationships** facilitated through the youth café was a key finding in this study. Young people spoke of how they had broadened their social networks and developed new friendships with peers, staff and volunteers through the youth café. In line with social support, social capital and attachment theories, these positive relationships were described by young people as enhancing their quality of life, promoting positive mental health and helping them to deal with the normative and non-normative challenges they faced in their lives (Cutrona, 2000). Many young people taking part in the research gave specific examples of how the relationships developed or strengthened through the youth café supporting them to deal with issues in their lives. They spoke of the benefits they derived from these social networks (which can be conceptualised in terms of social capital), including well-being, skills, advice and information.

A recurring theme across the 10 youth cafés studied was the role of the youth café and the relationships developed there in providing a **sense of belonging or connection**. Schaefer-McDaniel (2004) understands a sense of belonging as consisting of two components – membership (sense of

feeling a part of a group or environment) and influence (*'believing that the individual matters to the group'*). Having a sense of belonging can result in a feeling of *'rootedness or centeredness'* or of attachment to the place and group (Proshansky *et al*, 1983, p. 60) and has been shown to positively influence identity development in children and young people (Spencer and Woolley, 2000). Some have argued that, in an increasingly urbanised and globalised society, opportunities for young people to develop a sense of place or belonging are reducing (Inglis and Donnelly, 2011). A study by Cheng *et al* (2014) found that young people living in economically deprived neighbourhoods showed higher levels of depression, but that feeling a sense of connection to their neighbourhood was positively associated with levels of hope and negatively associated with depression among young people. The authors recommend that social support in the home and community should be improved in order to alleviate distress and foster hope among young people.

The young people who took part in the present study described strong attachments to their youth café and spoke of their sense of belonging. The emphasis on youth ownership of the café space (i.e. having an influence) appears to have contributed to the sense of belonging young people felt. The findings of this study suggest that the youth café model can be seen as a means of enhancing the connection of young people with their communities, providing them with support and supporting them to stay safe. Linked to this point, youth cafés are perceived by young people, volunteers and other stakeholders as having a role to play in the promotion of positive mental health among young people, an issue which is currently of public concern (Dooley and Fitzgerald, 2013).

In addition to the mental health benefits associated with social support and connection, some young people in this research highlighted that the youth café had given them the skills to understand and respond proactively to mental health issues in their own lives and in those of their peers. This was clearly illustrated by one young person who said he had undertaken suicide prevention training in the youth café and later intervened to support a young man he met who was considering suicide. Thus, it is important to note that, as well as directly supporting individual young people, the youth café model can help to build capacity for peer support to be enacted between young people (Dolan and Brady, 2012).

The study findings also suggest that youth cafés play a vital role in **providing a safe place** for young people in society. This is particularly strong in the case of young people from disadvantaged areas, who spoke of a genuine appreciation for having somewhere safe to go to keep them *'off the streets'*. For young people with difficult home and/or school lives, the youth café was also seen as a refuge, a place of *'escape'*. The groundrules of all the youth cafés surveyed emphasise equality, acceptance and zero tolerance for bullying, which translates into young people of all backgrounds being welcome. It is clear from the testimonies of young people in this study that this has a significant impact on their feelings about the space. In terms of resilience theory (Gilligan, 2000), it is argued that the youth café can be seen as a protective factor in the lives of young people facing adversity. Resilience is fostered through providing a fun and relaxing space for young people to escape the pressures they experience in their communities, homes and schools, as well as offering advice, guidance, a listening ear and the ability to develop competence in personal development, leadership and other life skills.

The youth phase is one of exploration and identity formation (Lalor *et al*, 2007) and findings in this study suggest that the youth café model can positively support such processes. The youth café was seen as providing the time and space for **personal development and identity** – as one young person said, *'Gives you time to develop as a person'*. The Positive Youth Development (PYD) theory of Lerner *et al* (2009) has been highlighted as contributing to a theoretical base for the youth café model (*see Introduction*). The five Cs that form part of the PYD framework were evident in the testimonies of young people taking part in this research. In addition to the theme of **connection** (*see*

above), young people spoke of how their **confidence** had developed as a consequence of their involvement with the youth café, particularly when they took on leadership roles. There was evidence of **character** and **caring** – as in the examples of young people developing greater self-awareness, engaging in art or music projects, and reaching out to other young people. Young people also spoke of developing **competence** through participating in informal education and training, and taking on leadership roles in the youth café. The sixth C identified by Lerner *et al* – that of **contribution** – can also be seen in the desire among some young people to give back to their communities and to create a space for other young people to come and enjoy.

Youth **participation** is a key principle of the youth café model. The fact that 26% of volunteers in this study were previous users of youth cafés indicates that participation is a stimulus to youth civic engagement. Young people valued being given responsibility for decision-making in relation to their youth café and many spoke of learning to take responsibility for themselves and for others as a result. Furthermore, many examples emerged regarding innovative and highly successful initiatives developed by young people in youth cafés to meet the needs of their peers.

Lessons to be learned from the current provision of youth cafés for the development of future policy and practice

The following points address the key lessons that emerge from this research and that warrant consideration in the development of future policy and practice for youth cafés.

Funding

At a macro level, the continued capital funding of youth cafés by Government is an important statement on the rights of young people to safe and stimulating recreational spaces in their communities. The perspectives of young people and other stakeholders expressed in this study strongly endorse the policy decisions by Government emanating from *Teenspace* (DCYA, 2007), which has seen the proliferation of youth cafés in Ireland.

In addition to capital funding, there is an urgent need for ongoing financial support to meet the operational costs of youth cafés. This study has highlighted that youth café staff and volunteers face very significant challenges in terms of meeting the operational costs of their services, whether the cafés be large, medium or small scale. Furthermore, while there has been a significant growth in youth café provision primarily in areas of higher centres of youth population and areas of disadvantage, many areas are currently not served by this form of provision. In future funding schemes, it may be valuable to take an area-based strategic approach to the development of new youth cafés, targeting key areas (and possibly providing developmental support) that currently do not have these facilities.

Scale and sustainability

This study has highlighted a continuum of youth café service provision, encompassing small, medium and large-scale cafés. Qualitative data highlighted that all scales of café provide valuable services to the young people in their localities. Small-scale cafés are more likely to be independent (i.e. not affiliated to a parent organisation) and to be run primarily by volunteers. While running costs are lower, these small-scale cafés nonetheless have to meet their costs and maintain a supply of volunteers. In contrast, medium and large-scale cafés are more likely to be integrated into a parent organisation (such as Youth Work Ireland or Foróige) where staff can be shared and resources

accessed. Being able to draw on the resources of a larger organisation can help to ensure the sustainability of larger youth cafés. However, given that the youth sector as a whole has experienced considerable cutbacks in funding over recent years, there are no guarantees that the larger youth cafés will be more sustainable than the smaller ones.

Contribution of volunteers

This research has highlighted that there are four times as many volunteers as paid staff running youth cafés in Ireland, which underlines the enormous and very valuable contribution that volunteers make in ensuring that this form of service provision is available for young people. While the rewards can be great for volunteers, this research has found that they can face considerable stress in the course of their duties in terms of fund-raising, managing difficult behaviour, child protection and other issues. Volunteers associated with integrated youth cafés will have access to support from their parent organisation, but volunteers associated with independent youth cafés are less likely to have such support. Thus, it is important that the contribution of volunteers is acknowledged and that appropriate training and support is provided as required.

Evaluation

The youth café model is underpinned by very clear principles, which we reiterate here. A youth café needs to be a place that:

- is guided by the **principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child** and in particular enables the **participation** of young people;
- offers a **safe** and **quality space** for young people;
- has a clear **purpose**;
- is **inclusive** of, **accessible** to and **flexible** with all cultures, differences and abilities;
- is a place that enables the development of good **quality relationships** between young people and their peers and young people and adults, supported by **volunteerism**;
- uses a **strengths-based** approach and is respectful of **individuality**;
- will be **sustainable** and well-resourced into the future.

The achievement of quality service provision is dependent on adherence to these principles. However, there is evidence from this research of variation in relation to the application of these principles. For example, young people should be very involved in the running of their youth café, but the evidence suggests that there is variability in the application of this principle.

Evaluation processes represent an important means by which service providers can assess the quality of their provision and the success with which they implement key principles. However, again the findings of this study highlight that some youth cafés had engaged in internal or external evaluation, while others had done neither. Furthermore, because cafés have a variety of funders (including Pobal, Education and Training Boards, Crisis Pregnancy Programme), they must report to each funder using the criteria deemed important by that funder. Thus there is a risk that the core features that distinguish youth cafés from other forms of provision will not be given priority. For this reason, the introduction of a **common evaluation framework for youth cafés** in Ireland needs to be considered.

Youth cafés as a ‘public good’

This research has shown that the majority of youth cafés are based in areas with below average levels of affluence. While the youth café model would be valuable in all communities, it makes sense that limited resources are directed towards areas of disadvantage, given that young people in affluent areas are more likely to be able to afford recreational options. The young people who participated in this research highlighted the importance of having a low-cost recreational option available to them such as a youth café, since they face higher costs in attending alternatives such as the cinema. However, it can also be argued that youth cafés offer a unique ‘product’ that is unlikely to be provided for young people on a commercial basis. While the youth café as a space for play and recreation for teenagers was a very strong theme in the data, cafés also draw on the expertise of staff, volunteers and participants to run projects and activities in areas such as music, drama and art. Staff and volunteers spoke of how cultural and artistic projects of this nature are a strong tool for social inclusion. Therefore, the services on offer from youth cafés are generally much more socially responsive than would be offered in the marketplace. From this perspective, the findings support Bowden and Lanigan’s (2009) argument for youth work to be seen as a ‘*public good*’, i.e. something that cannot be provided by the market.

Research

In terms of future research, the following studies would be of value:

- A continued examination and benchmarking of the development of youth cafés in Ireland, possibly a detailed longitudinal-based study.
- An ethnographic study with a small group of young people attending a café, to investigate in more detail the impact of youth cafés in their lives.
- A qualitative exploration of the relative benefits of small, medium and large-scale youth cafés in the lives of young people.
- An investigation into the development of a common evaluation framework for youth cafés in Ireland.

Summary

To conclude, the significant growth of youth cafés in Ireland over recent years illustrates the obvious appeal this model has for young people. Although underpinned by youth work principles, the drop-in, less structured, dedicated youth-friendly space offered, with an *à la carte* approach to participation in activities and programmes, differentiates youth cafés from the traditional youth club model of engagement. It can be argued that the popularity of the youth café approach illustrates that it is ‘a model of its time’, meeting the specific needs of today’s young people in a creative, perhaps more sophisticated way than traditional youth work provision. It can also be argued that youth cafés play an important role for today’s young people in helping them to navigate the challenges they face in a highly complex society and in gaining confidence in forming a coherent sense of identity. This overall growth reflects a significant shift in the nature of youth work in Ireland. However, whether it signifies a wholly new development or a re-invention of traditional youth work provision remains to be seen.

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Appendix 1: Allocation of capital funding by DCYA for youth cafés in 2013

County	Location	Project promoter	Amount allocated (€)
Cavan	Bailieboro	Cavan County Council	60,000
	Killeshandra	Focus Family Resource Centre	50,000
Donegal	Gort a Choirce	Donegal Youth Service	50,000
	Dunfril House, Ballybofey	Donegal Youth Service	50,000
Dublin City	Berkeley Road, Dublin 7	Peter McVerry Trust Ltd.	60,000
	Sphere 17, Priorswood	Sphere 17 Regional Youth Service	50,000
Dublin County	Avonbeg Gardens, Tallaght	Dominic's Community Centre, Tallaght	50,000
	Castleknock	Castleknock Community Centre Association	50,000
Galway	Dublin Road, Tuam	Galway Regional Youth Federation	50,000
	Gort	Gort Young People's Company	50,000
Kildare	Kildare Youth Hub	County Kildare Youth Hub Ltd.	50,000
Kilkenny	Graiguenamanagh	Ossory Youth Service	50,000
	Kilkenny Street, Castlecomer	Castlecomer Youth Café Association	50,000
Laois	Vision Centre, Rathdowney	Rathdowney Parish	50,000
Limerick	Limerick Hub, Thomandgate	Learning Hub Limerick Ltd.	50,000
Louth	Dolmen Centre, Omeath	Omeath District Development Co.	50,000
	Westgate, Drogheda	Drogheda Youth Development Ltd.	50,000
Mayo	Maple Youth Centre, Ballinrobe	Ballinrobe Family Resource Centre	50,000
	Chapel Street, Castlebar	Foróige	50,000
Meath	Old School House, Slane	Foróige	50,000
Monaghan	Church Hill, Clones	Monaghan Youth Federation Ltd.	60,000
Roscommon	Frenchpark Youth Space, Castlerea	Roscommon Integrated Development Co.	60,000
Sligo	Custom House Quay	Branching Out Ltd.	50,000
	Sligo Development Centre	County Sligo Leader Partnership	50,000
Waterford	Military Road, Waterford City	Foróige	50,000
	Parish Centre, Ballybeg	Ballybeg Community Development Project Ltd.	50,000
Westmeath	Mullingar	Midlands Regional Youth Service	60,000
Wexford	Courtown	Ferns Diocesan Youth Service	50,000
Wicklow	Kilcoole	Kilcoole Community Development Association	50,000
TOTAL SPEND			€1.5 million

Appendix 2: Postal survey for Youth Café Managers



**UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre
National University of Ireland, Galway**

**Youth Café Survey
September 2013**

Please note this survey is confidential. All the information you provide below will be treated with the strictest confidence, and will remain with the research team at the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre ONLY. No identifying information will be used in any published reports or research briefs.

PART I – YOUR DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

1. Sex: 1. Male 2. Female
2. Age: _____ years old
3. What is your official job title? _____
4. In terms of your work in the youth café, are you:
- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Full-time paid staff <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. Part-time paid staff <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Volunteer <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. Other (please specify) <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
5. How long have you held this position? _____ years _____ months

PART II – INFORMATION ABOUT THE CAFE

6. Please state the name of the youth café: _____
7. What is the address of the youth café? _____
8. Is the youth café an independent entity or part of another service (e.g. part of a youth work service, a community development project, a Family Resource Centre, a sports organisation etc)?
1. Independent 2. Part of another service (please specify) _____
9. How long has this youth café been in operation? _____ years _____ months
10. Since opening, has the youth café ever (please tick each as appropriate):
- | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| a. Changed location | 1. Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Changed name | 1. Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Changed focus (e.g. to/from a health cafe) | 1. Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. No <input type="checkbox"/> |
11. Is this youth café located in a predominantly urban or rural area?
Predominantly: 1. Urban or 2. Rural
12. Does this youth café have a mission statement? 1. Yes 2. No
- If you answered 'no' to question 12, please skip to question 15a
13. Please outline the mission statement _____

14. Were young people involved in developing the mission statement? 1. Yes 2. No
- 15a. Does the youth café have principles of practice in place? 1. Yes 2. No
- If you answered 'no' to question 15a, please skip to question 16
- 15b. Could you please outline these principles? _____

16. What, if any, is the predominant model of practice?
- | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| 1. Youth work <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. Health Promotion <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. Social Care <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. Community Development <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Drug Prevention <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. Recreational based <input type="checkbox"/> | 7. No Model of practice <input type="checkbox"/> | 8. Other <input type="checkbox"/> (please specify) _____ |
17. Does this youth café have 'ground rules' or 'house rules'? 1. Yes 2. No

- If you answered 'no' to question 17, please skip to question 19*
18. Were young people involved in developing these rules? 1. Yes 2. No
19. Does the youth café receive referrals from other parts of your parent service (internal, e.g. Drugs and Alcohol programme)? 1. Yes 2. No
- If you answered 'no' to question 19, please skip to question 21*
20. If Yes, please list the top five parts of your parent service that refer to the youth café?
 a. _____ b. _____ c. _____
 d. _____ e. _____
21. Does the Youth café receive referrals from external agencies/organisations? 1. Yes 2. No
- If you answered 'no' to question 21, please skip to question 23*
22. If Yes, please list the top five external agencies/organisations that refer to the Youth café
 a. _____ b. _____ c. _____
 d. _____ e. _____
23. Does the youth café make referrals to other internal interventions within your parent service?
 1. Yes 2. No
- If you answered 'no' to question 23, please skip to 25*
24. If Yes, please list the top five internal interventions/other parts of your parent service that your youth café refers on to:
 a. _____ b. _____ c. _____
 d. _____ e. _____
25. Does the youth café make referrals to external agencies/organisations? 1. Yes 2. No
- If you answered 'no' to question 25 please skip to question 27*
26. If Yes, please list the top five agencies/organisations that refer to the youth café
 a. _____ b. _____ c. _____
 d. _____ e. _____
27. How often are you in contact specifically with schools in your area:
 1. Contact less than once a month 6. Not in contact with schools
 2. Contact about once a month
 3. Contact once a fortnight
 4. Contact once a week
 5. Contact more than once a week
28. If you are in contact with schools, could you list the top five issues you are in contact with them about?
 a. _____ b. _____ c. _____
 d. _____ e. _____
29. Do other internal parts of / interventions in your parent service use the youth café space?
 1. Yes, once a month No
 2. Yes, once a fortnight
 3. Yes, once a week
 4. Yes, more than once a week
- If you answered 'no' to question 29, please skip to question 31*

30. If yes, could you list the top five interventions/other parts of your parent service which use the space?

a. _____ b. _____ c. _____
d. _____ e. _____

31. Do external agencies/organisations use the youth café space?

1. Yes, once a month No
2. Yes, once a fortnight
3. Yes, once a week
4. Yes, more than once a week

→ If you answered 'no' to question 31, please skip to question 33

32. If yes, could you list the top five external agencies/organisations which use the space?

a. _____ b. _____ c. _____
d. _____ e. _____

33. Is the youth café involved in international youth work (e.g. Leargas, Insight through Exchange)?

1. Yes 2. No

→ If you answered 'no' to question 33, please skip to question 35

34. If yes, could you list the last activity/involvement and when

Activity _____ Date _____

PART III - INFORMATION ON YOUTH CAFÉ STAFF

35. Please state the number of staff/volunteers/other individuals currently involved in the youth café:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------|-------------------------|-------|
| 1. Full-time paid staff | _____ | 5. Part-time paid staff | _____ |
| 2. Volunteers | _____ | 6. Student placement | _____ |
| 3. Tuas Nua | _____ | 7. Jobsbridge | _____ |
| 4. Other (please specify) | _____ | | |

36. Of those who are **currently volunteers**, could you estimate how many of these are past users of the youth café? Number _____

37. Of the numbers of staff/volunteers/other individuals currently involved in the youth café, could you estimate how many are solely involved in the Youth café, and how many are split between the Youth café and other service/organisational work in your parent service?

People	Full-time Youth café (Numbers)	Youth café and other service work (Numbers)
1. Full-time paid staff		
2. Part-time paid staff		
3. Volunteers		
4. Student placement		
5. Tuas Nua		
6. Jobsbridge		
7. Other		

38. Have all of the staff / volunteers /Other individuals been:

People	Staff (✓ or x)	Volunteer (✓ or x)	Others (e.g. Jobsbridge) (✓ or x)
1. Garda vetted			
2. Formally interviewed			
3. Informally interviewed			
4. References checked			

39. Does the youth café provide ongoing training to staff/volunteers/other individuals?

1. Yes 2. No

→ If you answered 'no' to question 39, please skip to question 42

40. Could you please indicate the particular areas that staff/volunteers/other individuals have been trained in to date (tick as may as appropriate):

1. Child protection 2. Communication 3. First aid 4. Facilitation
 5. Conflict resolution 6. Equality 7. Self-care for youth workers
 8. Other (please specify) _____

41. Were the following components of the training evaluated?

1. Quality of the training 1. Yes 2. No
 2. Outcomes of the training 1. Yes 2. No

42. How many of the staff at the Youth café hold third level¹ or other relevant, professional qualifications in any of the following areas:

1. Youth work/youth studies _____ 2. Family studies _____ 3. Psychotherapy _____
 4. Childcare _____ 5. Counselling _____ 6. Social care/Social work _____
 7. Education/Training _____ 8. Mediation/Conflict resolution _____
 9. Other (please specify) _____

43. Have volunteers been recruited based on specific skill sets (e.g. drama, sport, culinary etc)?

1. Yes 2. No

→ If you answered 'no' to question 43, please skip to question 45

44. If yes, could you outline the skill sets which volunteers have in the café? _____

45. How many staff/volunteers/other individuals have the following experience?:

Years Experience	No. of Staff	No. of Volunteers	No. of Others
1. 0-3 years experience in youth work			
2. 4-6 years experience in youth work			
3. 7-10 years experience in youth work			
4. 10+ years experience in youth work			

¹ In this context, third level qualifications denote Certificates, Diplomas and Degrees (NFQ Levels 7, 8 and 9) as conferred by Institutes of Technology and Universities in Ireland and/or their equivalent in other countries

PART IV – YOUTH CAFÉ OPENING AND USE

46. Is the youth café open during:

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Christmas and New Year holidays | 1. Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Summer (June-September) holidays | 1. Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Mid-term (October & February) holidays | 1. Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Easter holidays | 1. Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. No <input type="checkbox"/> |

47. What are the youth café opening hours, both in school-term time and non-term (school holiday) time?

Days	Term-time	Non-term time
1. Monday		
2. Tuesday		
3. Wednesday		
4. Thursday		
5. Friday		
6. Saturday		
7. Sunday		

48. How many hours each day is the youth café 'open access', and in use for a specific purpose/group?

Days	Term-time		Non-term time	
	Open access	Specific Use	Open access	Specific Use
1. Monday				
2. Tuesday				
3. Wednesday				
4. Thursday				
5. Friday				
6. Saturday				
7. Sunday				

49a. Has the youth café increased or decreased its opening hours in the last 12 months?

1. Increased 2. Decreased

49b. Regarding your selection, could you outline why opening hours have /increased/decreased:

50. What is the target age group of young people who attend the youth café? _____ years of age

51a. Does the youth cafe target a particular community of interest (i.e. young people who share particular circumstances (e.g. homelessness) or interests (environmentalism, media)?

1. Yes 2. No

→ If you answered 'no' to question 51a, please skip to question 52

51b. If yes, could you specify these groups please? _____

52. On average (multiple uses by the same young person), how many young people attend the youth café each week, both during school term-time and non-term (holiday) time?

Term – time number _____ Non term – time number _____

53. Counting each young person only once (i.e. unique users), on average how many young people attend the youth café each week, both during school term-time and non-term (holiday) time?

Term –time number _____ Non term –time number _____

54. Looking at the balance of young people who attend the youth café once a week or more often, please tick which is the most representative statement:

- 1. More males attend the Youth café than females
- 2. More females attend the Youth café than males
- 3. The number of males and females attending the Youth café is roughly equal

55. On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being 'not at all' and 5 being 'very much', to what extent do you think the young people using the youth café are representative of all young people living in the area?
(please circle option)

1 2 3 4 5

PART V – INFORMATION ABOUT ACTIVITIES AVAILABLE IN THE YOUTH CAFÉ

56. Does the Youth café offer any of the following educational activities to young people;

- 1. CV preparation
- 2. Homework club
- 3. Leadership
- 4. Entrepreneurship
- 5. Book/library club
- 6. Writing groups
- 7. Reading groups
- 8. Debating
- 9. Support groups (personal development)
- 10. Bereavement counselling
- 11. Music
- 12. Information & Communication Technology
- 13. Other (please specify) _____

57. Does the youth café offer any of the following recreational activities to young people?

- 1. Sports nights
- 2. Video games/board games
- 3. Talent competitions
- 4. Dancing/dance competitions
- 5. Pool table/ Pool tournaments
- 6. Buddy systems
- 7. Music
- 8. Singing workshops
- 9. Movies
- 10. Music
- 11. Information & Communication Technology
- 12. Other (please specify) _____

58a. Does the youth café offer information to young people about any of the following;

- 1. Part-time/full-time jobs
- 2. Employment rights
- 3. National or Local Government departments/services
- 4. Training/ third level courses
- 5. Sexual health
- 6. Sexuality
- 7. Healthy eating
- 8. Alcohol/binge drinking
- 9. Drugs
- 10. Mental health
- 11. Other (please specify) _____

58b. How is this information disseminated in your youth café (tick as appropriate):

- 1. Dedicated information officer/worker
- 2. Through youth worker
- 3. Youth café notice board
- 4. Online
- 5. Leaflet stand
- 6. Other (please specify) _____

59. Have you anything else that you would like to say about the range of educational and recreational activities and informational services offered in the Youth café at present or which you would like to offer in the youth café in the future?

PART VI – MONITORING AND EVALUATION IN THE YOUTH CAFÉ

60. Are you aware of the 2010 Irish Youth Café Toolkit? 1. Yes 2. No

→ If you answered 'no' to question 60, please proceed to question 62a

61. To what extent have you implemented the following sections from the Toolkit into your Youth café work (please circle):

Areas	Very well implemented	Implemented well	Not implemented very well	Not implemented at all
1. Involved young people	4	3	2	1
2. Created a partnership between adults and young people	4	3	2	1
3. Developed activities for the Youth café	4	3	2	1
4. Clarified the role of young people, staff, and volunteers	4	3	2	1
5. Provided training for young people, staff and volunteers	4	3	2	1
6. The design of the Youth café	4	3	2	1
7. The location of the Youth café	4	3	2	1
8. Developed and clarified the management structures of the Youth café	4	3	2	1
9. Developed funding and sustainability plan for the Youth café	4	3	2	1
10. Promoted the Youth café	4	3	2	1
11. Undertook evaluation and monitoring	4	3	2	1
12. Developed policies and procedures	4	3	2	1

62a. Has the Youth café undergone an independent/external evaluation of its work?

1. Yes 2. No

→ If you answered 'no' to question 62a, please skip to question 63

62b. If you answered yes could you outline:

1. What type of evaluation was it (e.g. outcomes, process, other)?

2. How the evaluation influenced service delivery?

63. Could you outline why no independent evaluation has occurred?

64a. Has the Youth café engaged in internal evaluation? 1. Yes 2. No

→ If you answered 'no' to question 64a, please skip to question 65

64b. If yes, could you explain what type of evaluation it was (e.g. outcomes, process, other) and what type of data was gathered?

65. In relation to either any external and/ or internal evaluations that have taken place, were young people (please circle as appropriate):

Tasks	Internal	External
1. Researchers/data collectors	1. Yes/ 2. No/ 3. Not applicable	1. Yes/ 2. No/ 3. Not applicable
2. Process Advisors	1. Yes/ 2. No/ 3. Not applicable	1. Yes/ 2. No/ 3. Not applicable
3. Authors/writers	1. Yes/ 2. No/ 3. Not applicable	1. Yes/ 2. No/ 3. Not applicable
4. Interview/survey participants	1. Yes/ 2. No/ 3. Not applicable	1. Yes/ 2. No/ 3. Not applicable

66a. Has the youth café been part of the National Quality Standards Framework (NQSF) for staff-led youth work? 1. Yes 2. No

→ If you answered 'no' to question 66a, please skip to question 66c

66b. If yes, do you have a Continuous Improvement Plan in place? 1. Yes 2. No

66c. Does the youth cafe adhere to the National Quality Standards for Volunteer Youth Groups? 1. Yes 2. No

67. Is the youth café guided by a logic model? 1. Yes 2. No

68a. Does the youth café work towards defined outcomes? 1. Yes 2. No

→ If you answered 'no' to question 68a, please skip to question 69

68b. If yes, could you list the youth café's top designated outcomes?

Outcome 1 _____ Outcome 2 _____ Outcome 3 _____
Outcome 4 _____ Outcome 5 _____

PART VII- PROMOTION OF THE YOUTH CAFÉ

69. Are there specific policies in operation in the youth café which relate to its promotion? 1. Yes 2. No

70. How involved are young people in the promotion of the youth café? (please circle option)

Extremely involved	Very involved	Somewhat involved	Not involved
4	3	2	1

71. Does the youth café currently have its own website? 1. Yes 2. No

→ If you answered 'no' to question 71, please skip to question 73

72. What kinds of materials appear on the youth café's website? (tick as many as appropriate)

1. Pictures of the Youth café's interior/exterior
2. Information about educational services at Youth café
3. Information about recreational services at Youth café
4. Contact details of other organisations that deal with youth issues (for example, SpunOut, Crisis Pregnancy Ireland, Jigsaw, LGBT support groups)
5. Other (please specify) _____

73. Is the youth café promoted through any of the following media?

1. Social media sites (such as Facebook, Bebo or My Space)
2. Twitter
3. You Tube
4. Local/national radio
5. Television
6. Local/national newspapers
7. Magazine features
8. Open days
9. Endorsements by personalities
10. Notice boards
11. Shop windows
12. Word of mouth
13. Flyers
14. Other (please specify) _____

PART VIII- FUNDING AND EXPENDITURE

74. How is your youth café funded at present?

- 1. Public (government/agencies)
- 2. Earned (income from activities/fundraising)
- 3. Private (individuals or business sponsorship)
- 4. In kind support
- 5. Other (please specify)
- 6. Combination of two or more of these sources (please specify) _____

75. Please list the public and private organisations/agencies which you receive funding from?

Public: _____
Private: _____

76. If the youth café is currently being funded, at least in part by fundraising activities, can you provide some brief details on fundraising activities that have occurred over the last 12 to 24 months (for example, bric-a-brac sales, sponsored walks, sports days etc).

77. What is the approximate total annual income of the youth café? _____ euro

78. What is the approximate total annual expenditure of the youth café? _____ euro

79. Could you provide an estimate of annual staffing costs incurred by the youth café? _____ euro

80. Is appropriate insurance cover for the youth café in place? 1. Yes 2. No

→ If you answered 'no' to question 80, please skip to Question 82

81. Could you please provide details of the annual insurance costs incurred by the youth café?
_____ euro

PART IX – INFORMATION ON PREMISES

82. Is the premises:

- 1. Owned
- 2. Leased
- 3. Donated
- 4. Other (please specify) _____

83. Are the premises accessible for people who are physically disabled, or who may have reduced mobility?
1. Yes 2. No

84. How involved were young people in the design/decoration of the Youth café?

Extremely involved	Very involved	Somewhat involved	Not involved
4	3	2	1

PART X- GOVERNANCE AND DECISION-MAKING

85. Does the youth café currently have a management committee? 1. Yes 2. No

→ If you answered 'no' to question 85, please skip to question 87a.

86. If Yes, please indicate the total number of full-time staff, volunteers and young people who sit on the management committee?

- 1. Full-time paid staff _____
- 2. Part-time paid staff _____
- 3. Volunteers _____
- 4. Young people _____
- 5. Other (please specify) _____

87a. Does the youth café have a dedicated youth/young people's committee? 1. Yes 2. No

→ If you answered 'no' to question 87a, please skip to question 88

87b. If yes, please outline its role and how it relates to the management committee

88. Does the youth café currently have any sub-committees? 1. Yes 2. No

→ If you answered 'no' to question 88, please skip to question 90

89. If yes, at present, do these subcommittees play a role in making decisions on any of the following matters relating to the Youth café (please tick as appropriate);

- Funding (acquiring funding from government, agencies or private sources)
- Fundraising
- Promotion/Advertising
- Premises
- Staff levels
- Staff training
- Information for youth available in the Youth café
- Recreational activities for youth
- Educational activities for youth
- Evaluation of services/information for young people
- Evaluation of training offered to young people
- Evaluation of staff training
- Other (please specify) _____

90. How involved are young people in decision-making in the youth café? (please circle option)

Extremely involved	Very involved	Somewhat involved	Not involved
4	3	2	1

PART XI – YOUR OPINIONS ABOUT YOUTH CAFES

91. In your opinion, what are the best things about youth cafés as a way of working with young people?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

92. What are the best things about youth cafes as a space for young people to meet and associate?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

93. Are there any negative things about youth cafés?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

94. What are the biggest challenges in setting up a youth café in Ireland today?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

95. What are the biggest challenges in running a youth café in Ireland today?

.....
.....
.....

96. Would you like to make any other comments on any issue that has not been raised already?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Thanks for your time and participation in this survey!

Appendix 3: Sampling criteria used for selecting 6 youth cafés for qualitative study

Importance of criteria	Agreed criteria between DCYA and Research Team
CORE criteria	1. The standalone <i>versus</i> the embedded youth cafés
	2. The city/small town <i>versus</i> rural area
	3. Population density of young people in particular areas proportional to number of older persons in a particular area
	4. Length of time that individual cafés have been established
ASPIRATIONAL criteria (not all necessary)	5. Open access provision and more targeted provision
	6. Thematic diversity (e.g. arts-based orientation, health, gender work)
	7. Organisational diversity – spread of organisations, established (youth work, and others who while not youth work do provide an element of provision for young people) specific community-led initiatives that have mobilised and organised in response to the youth café initiative.
	8. Innovative practices

Appendix 4: Questions for young people and *My World Triangle*

SESSION OUTLINE

1. Introductions and warm-up

Re-cap the purpose of the research. Thank people for coming. Give an overview of what we will be doing. Introduce ourselves and ask everyone to introduce themselves.

2. Warm-up questions

- How long have you been coming to the youth café?
- Do you live close by?
- How many hours per week/times a week do you spend at the café?
- What else do you do in your spare time besides coming to the youth café?

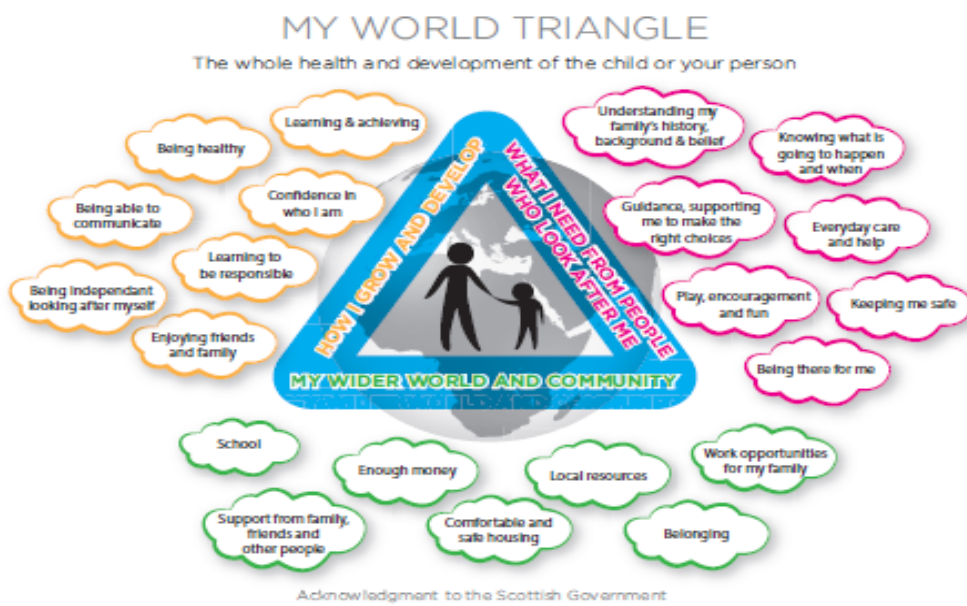
On post-its, we ask them to answer the following questions:

- I come to the youth café because ...
- For me, the best things about the youth café are ...
- For me, the things about this youth café I am not so keen on are ...

They put their post-its up on a flipchart sheet. Run through and discuss their answers.

3. Exploring the impact of the youth café on young people

The 'My World Triangle' has been developed to illustrate the types of supports that young people need in their lives to develop and thrive. Show them the triangle and explain it to them.



We are trying to understand if the youth café plays a role in the health and development of young people. We have picked out the areas from the 'My World Triangle' that we think are most relevant to the youth café, namely:

- Being healthy (in mind and/or in body)
- Learning and achieving
- Being independent and responsible, looking after myself
- Having confidence in who I am
- Getting support from others
- Guidance, supporting me to make the right choices, keeping me safe
- Play, encouragement and fun

- A sense of belonging or connection

Each of these domains is on a flipchart page on the wall. We would like you to walk around, take a look at each of the domains and reflect on the following question:

- Has the youth café played a role in helping me to achieve this? If yes, in what way?

Take a post-it and write down in what ways it helps you achieve these things. If you feel that the youth café has not helped you with this domain, just write this down.

Take 20 minutes to do the exercise.

When the young people are finished, we then read through the post-it notes and use them as a prompt for discussion. We ask people to elaborate on these.

Ask them are there any negative aspects to the youth café (maybe have a flipchart for this and do it as part of the first exercise in case they are shy to bring it up in the discussion).

4. Other questions

- How is a youth café different to, say, a local youth club or something like that?
- Does the café have committees or sub-committees? Are you part of them? Tell me about that.
- Do you feel that the adults at the café value your opinions about how the café is run?
- If you had to give advice to the Minister for Children about youth cafés, what would you say?
- Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you for your time. A summary of the findings of this research will be sent to your café.

Appendix 5: Topic guide for interviews with staff, volunteers and local external stakeholders of youth cafés

[Questions 1-6 for local external stakeholders; Questions 2-6 for staff and volunteers]

1. Tell me about your **organisation's relationship** with this youth café:
 - a. How did your organisation first link with this youth café?
 - b. Is your organisation on the management board of the youth café?
 - c. Describe any joint working between your organisation and this youth café over the last year.
 - d. Is your organisation satisfied with the overall relationship with this youth café?
 - e. How do you see the relationship between your organisation and this youth café developing in the future.
2. What do you see as the **overall aim** of the _____ [name of] youth café?
3. What do you see as the **most successful aspects** of this youth café?
4. At a **specific level**, talk to me about the impact you think the youth café has on:
 - a. The **young people** who attend.
 - b. The **broader community** in which these young people live.
 - c. Have you **any evidence** to help support your views?
5. What do you see as the **main challenges** facing the youth café?
6. Have you any **suggestions** you would like to make regarding the further development of this youth café?

Appendix 6: Topic guide for national key informants and list of invited parties

Purpose of interviews: To investigate the key informants' perspectives of the youth café initiative, including, but not exclusive to the policy and service context it operates in; its development and current standing; governance and operational issues; its impact so far; and its potential in the future.

TOPICS TO BE ADDRESSED

Information on the interviewee's organisation

- Tell me about your organisation and your role within it
- How is your organisation (*or your specific work*) linked to youth café provision?

Policy and service context for youth cafés

- What is your understanding of youth café service provision in Ireland today? For example:
- How is it different to a normal youth club?
- Are young people really involved in the running of the café and in consultation with adults?
- What do you see as the:
 - Major strengths of the youth café model at present?
 - Major challenges facing youth cafés at present? (*not the future – dealt with later on*)
- Where does the youth café model fit into existing service provision/continuum for children and young people in Ireland? (*specifically youth work-driven or broader interests*)
- Do youth cafés foster interagency working in terms of meeting the needs of the young people who attend? (*give examples, evidence*)
- Where does the youth café model best fit in terms of policy for children and young people?
- Since the call for youth cafés in the *National Recreation Policy for Young People* (2007), there has been a proliferation of cafés. How have they evolved since 2007?

Impact of youth cafés

- Do you think youth cafés are well positioned to enable significant youth development? (*give evidence to support*)
- What do you think are the main benefits for young people attending youth cafés? (*give evidence*)
- Do youth cafés have any impact on their local community (*explain, give evidence*)
- Do you see youth cafés having a role in supporting the broader family unit?
- Do youth cafés benefit the volunteers who may work there?

Governance and operational issues

- Do you think there is adequate support, training and information available for youth café managers, young people and staff on the day-to-day functioning of their café?
- Have youth cafés incorporated the advice from the 2010 *Youth Café Toolkit* into their normal work?
- What would you see as the:
 - Major successes in terms of the operational/governance of youth cafés?
 - Major challenges in terms of the operational/governance of youth cafés? (*e.g. funding*)
- What do you see as the key external factors that have impacted on the functioning of youth cafés, especially over the last 3 to 5 years?

Positioning of youth cafés for the future

- As a key policy/service actor in this field, how do envisage the future development of youth cafés:
 - Do you think the continuation of the model is warranted?
 - How might your organisation be involved in this development?

KEY INFORMANTS INVITED FOR INTERVIEW

[anonymity guaranteed for confidentiality purposes]

Name	Organisation
[name]	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
[name]	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
[name]	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
[name]	HSE, Health Promotion
[name]	HSE, Mental Health
[name]	Department of Social Protection
[name]	TUI Research Office
[name]	CEO of Foróige
[name]	Youth Work Ireland
[name]	Jigsaw
[name]	Garda Office – Children and Youth Affairs
[name]	National Youth Council of Ireland
[name]	Crisis Pregnancy Agency
[name]	Arts Council, Youth, Children and Education Office
[name]	Academic, Social Studies, NUI Maynooth
[name]	Academic, Social Studies, University College Cork
[name]	Irish Girl Guides
[name]	Irish Vocational Education Association
[name]	ETB – Youth Officers’ Association

Appendix 7: Development of a new Youth Café Typology based on scale

In developing the new youth café typology based on 'scale', a number of independent variables were chosen from the survey as potential indicators of any differences or similarities between the 72 cafés. Using the coding scheme shown in Table A7.1, it was possible to calculate a score for each café depending on the answers given to the 8 variables. The scale had a possible minimum score of 6, with a maximum of 16. Upon running the subsequent frequencies, the overall set of scores for the 72 cafés were re-coded into three categories of scale – low, medium and high.

Table A7-1: Coding scheme for development of youth café typology

Var8 Wider service		Var21 Receive external referrals		Var22 Make external referrals		Var37 Both full time and part time			Var501 Re-coded opening hours			Var53/510 Unique users				Total score (6-16)
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	None	Split	Dedicated	Low	Medium	High	1-31	32-62	63-92	93-315	
2	1	2	1	2	1	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	

Appendix 8: CSO population projections (2016 – 2026)

Source: CSO (2013) *Population and Labour Force Projections, 2016-2046*. Cork: Central Statistics Office.

Table L Population projections, 2016 - 2026

Scenario	Population of school going age				Population				Annual Average % change in total population in 5-year period	Dependency ratios		
	"Primary" 5-12		"Secondary" 13-18		Thousands		Total	Young		Old	Percentage	
	0-14	15-64	65+									
Actual												
2011	502.3	342.4	976.7	3,066.6	531.6	4,574.9		0.0	31.9	17.3	49.2	
M1F1												
2016	556.5	368.6	1,052.4	3,027.1	624.5	4,704.1		0.56	34.8	20.6	55.4	
2021	602.6	405.4	1,089.8	3,162.9	734.2	4,986.8		1.17	34.5	23.2	57.7	
2026	583.2	459.2	1,076.7	3,371.5	860.7	5,308.9		1.26	31.9	25.5	57.5	
M1F2												
2016	556.5	368.6	1,047.8	3,027.1	624.5	4,899.4		0.54	34.6	20.6	55.2	
2021	597.9	405.4	1,063.5	3,162.9	734.2	4,960.6		1.09	33.6	23.2	56.8	
2026	556.9	459.2	1,012.7	3,371.5	860.7	5,244.9		1.12	30.0	25.5	55.6	
M2F1												
2016	555.9	368.0	1,051.3	3,015.7	624.2	4,891.2		0.50	34.9	20.7	55.6	
2021	599.1	402.5	1,079.0	3,090.2	731.9	4,901.0		0.88	34.9	23.7	58.6	
2026	571.2	453.6	1,041.0	3,207.5	854.9	5,103.3		0.81	32.5	26.7	59.1	
M2F2												
2016	555.9	368.0	1,046.6	3,015.7	624.2	4,866.5		0.48	34.7	20.7	55.4	
2021	594.5	402.5	1,053.1	3,090.2	731.9	4,875.1		0.79	34.1	23.7	57.8	
2026	545.3	453.6	979.8	3,207.5	854.9	5,042.1		0.68	30.5	26.7	57.2	
M3F1												
2016	555.0	367.2	1,049.4	3,000.5	623.8	4,673.7		0.43	35.0	20.8	55.8	
2021	594.8	399.5	1,065.3	3,008.8	729.3	4,803.4		0.55	35.4	24.2	59.6	
2026	557.5	448.2	1,003.2	3,057.5	849.6	4,910.3		0.44	32.8	27.8	60.6	
M3F2												
2016	555.0	367.2	1,044.7	3,000.5	623.8	4,669.0		0.41	34.8	20.8	55.6	
2021	590.1	399.5	1,039.9	3,008.8	729.3	4,778.0		0.46	34.6	24.2	58.8	
2026	532.1	448.2	945.0	3,057.5	849.6	4,852.1		0.31	30.9	27.8	58.7	

Appendix 9: Analysis of representativeness of survey data

It is important to consider the extent to which the findings obtained from the 72 responding youth cafés is representative of all 163 youth cafés in Ireland. From the outset, there was a risk that the larger, better established youth cafés would be more likely to complete the survey than smaller cafés and so skew the results. However, on the basis of the data shown in Table A9-1, it can be argued that the data obtained from the 72 responding cafés is broadly representative of all 163 youth cafés. The points below make this case:

1. Surveys were returned from youth cafés in 22 of the 26 counties, which indicates a reasonable national spread, with 84% (n=22) of counties represented.
2. Apart from the slightly higher overall response rate by Connacht (53%), Leinster (46%), Munster (42%) and Ulster (43%) returned in similar numbers. This would indicate that no one province dominated the survey returns.
3. The data on affiliation type (as contained in Table 3, Part 1) revealed that independents (31%), Youth Work Ireland (29.8%) and Foróige (28%) were the three largest providers of youth cafés in the country. Since 26% of overall survey returns were received from independents, 31% from Youth Work Ireland and 36% from Foróige, it can be argued that the results are broadly representative of these affiliation types. However, the rate of return for Family Resource Centres is slightly lower than would be expected according to the affiliation breakdown.

Therefore, bringing together evidence noted in Points 1-3 above, it appears that the data obtained from the 72 responding youth cafés is broadly representative of all 163 youth cafés.

Table A9-1: Representativeness of survey data

(YWI = Youth Work Ireland; CYC = Catholic Youth Care; FRC = Family Resource Centre)

Province	County	Estimated no. of youth cafés	No. of surveys returned (% of sample)	Returns by affiliation type				
				YWI	Foróige	Independent	CYC	FRC
LEINSTER	Carlow	2	1	1				
	Dublin	21	12		8	1	3	
	Kildare	6	2	1		1		
	Kilkenny	3	1		1			
	Laois	2	2	1	1			
	Longford	2	1		1			
	Louth	2	2			2		
	Meath	6	1	1				
	Offaly	4	0					
	Westmeath	2	0					
	Wexford	5	0					
	Wicklow	4	3			3		
	11	54	25 (46%)					
CONNACHT	Galway	10	4		1	3		
	Leitrim	4	3	2				1
	Mayo	7	2		1			1
	Roscommon	9	7	1	3	3		
	Sligo	2	1		1			
		5	32	17 (53%)				

Province	County	Estimated no. of youth cafés	No. of surveys returned (% of sample)	Returns by affiliation type				
				YWI	Foróige	Independent	CYC	FRC
MUNSTER	Clare	8	3	2		1		
	Cork	20	6	1	1	4		
	Kerry	10	6	6				
	Limerick	9	5	3	1	1		
	Tipperary	12	4	2	2			
	Waterford	6	3		3			
	6	65	27 (42%)					
ULSTER	Cavan	2	1		1			
	Donegal	4	2	1	2			
	Monaghan	1	0					
	4	7	3 (43%)					
TOTAL		163	72	22	26	19	3	2
			Overall returns	(31%)	(36%)	(26%)	(4%)	(3%)
Actual known number of cafés by affiliation type <i>(see Table 3 in Part 1)</i>				48	46	51	6	11
Returns as % of overall affiliation type <i>(i.e. % out of the total 163)</i>				46%	54%	37%	50%	18%

Appendix 10: Supplementary survey data on youth café staff and volunteers

Staffing is a significant consideration in the day-to-day operation of a youth café. Considering this, the survey sought specific details on the breakdown of staff and volunteers involved, their status (full-time or part-time), their levels of experience and any training undertaken.

At the broadest level, the data indicate that 864 people were involved in varying degrees with the 72 youth cafés that responded to the survey, across the seven staffing types shown in Table A10-1. In total, 129 people were **paid staff**, working either full time (80) or part time (49). Of the 80 full-time paid staff, only 18 (23%) were full-time dedicated staff, with the remaining 62 (77%) being shared with other parts of their youth work service. Of the 49 part-time paid staff, only 11 (22%) worked solely in their youth café, with 38 (78%) being shared with other parts of the parent service.

A significant number of **volunteers** (561) were involved in supporting the youth café initiative – more than four times the number of full-time and part-time paid staff combined. Of the 561 volunteers, 148 (26%) were found to be previous users of the youth café in which they worked, illustrating the potential that exists for cafés to attract past members back in a volunteering capacity. The survey also found that just under one-quarter of youth cafés (24%, n=17) recruited volunteers based on specific skill sets. Of those that did recruit volunteers with specific skills, the most common skill sets sought were the arts (e.g. creative writing, fashion design, art, drama), music, cookery and sports.

Other types of staff working in youth cafés came from students on placement from various third-level courses (such as social care and youth work), accounting for 60 other ‘staff’; people from the Tuas Nua¹⁴ programme and the JobBridge¹⁵ scheme accounted for a further 17 and 16 staff respectively; and 81 staff came from ‘other’ sources.

Table A10-1: Types of staffing in youth cafés

No. of people	Types of staffing in youth cafés						
	Full-time paid staff	Part-time paid staff	Volunteers	Tuas Nua	Student placement	JobBridge	Other
Total = 864	80	49	561	17	60	16	81

Table A10-2 reveals the trends in the various **hiring procedures** used by youth cafés across the country. The data show that 97% of paid staff, 96% of volunteers and 81% of ‘others’ involved in youth cafés were Garda-vetted. While the majority of staff (92%) and ‘others’ (65%) were formally interviewed, the trend for recruiting volunteers was to use informal interviewing (84%). While the rate at which references were fully checked is high, it does warrant room for improvement since 8% of staff, 14% of volunteers and 16% of ‘others’ did not have their references checked.

Table A10-2: Procedures for hiring staff, volunteers and others in youth cafés

Hiring procedure	Paid staff % (N)	Volunteers % (N)	Others (e.g. JobBridge) % (N)
1. Garda-vetted	97% (57)	96% (67)	81% (30)
2. Formally interviewed	92% (54)	49% (33)	65% (24)
3. Informally interviewed	46% (25)	84% (57)	51% (18)
4. References checked	92% (54)	86% (60)	84% (31)

¹⁴ Tuas Nua is a programme of the National Learning Network, an organisation that provides a range of flexible training courses and support services for people who need specialist support (e.g. job seekers, unemployed, people with an illness or disability) in 50 centres around the country.

¹⁵ JobBridge is the National Internship Scheme that provides work experience placements for interns for a 6 or 9-month period for those who are unemployed.

When asked if their youth café provided ongoing **training** to paid staff, volunteers and ‘others’, 97% (n=69) said that they did (see Table A10-3). Not surprisingly, given the focus on *Children First* training in recent years, 100% of all cafés provided training in child protection. First aid (70%) and facilitation training (61%) were the next most common forms of training arranged by cafés. The least common form of training given was self-care for youth workers, accounting for 26%. In 92% of cases, the quality of all training provided was evaluated, with the specific outcomes of the training being evaluated in 89% of cases.

Table A10-3: Types of training provided in youth cafés

		Responses		% of cafés indicating ‘Yes’
		N	%	
Types of training	Child protection training (<i>Children First</i>)	70	26.6%	100.0%
	Communication training	31	11.8%	44.3%
	First aid training	49	18.6%	70.0%
	Facilitation training	43	16.3%	61.4%
	Conflict resolution training	31	11.8%	44.3%
	Equality training	21	8.0%	30.0%
	Self-care for youth workers training	18	6.8%	25.7%
Total		263	100.0%	375.7%

The survey also established a set of baseline data concerning the number of staff at each youth café who hold a third-level or other relevant professional **qualification**. As Table A10-4 shows, as a total of all qualifications held, 27% of all staff across 46 cafés have a youth work/youth studies qualification, making it the most common qualification held. ‘Other’ qualifications (16%, n=45 cafés) and social care/social work (15%, n = 42 cafés) qualifications were the next most common. A qualification in family studies was the least common, accounting for just 4% (n=4) of all qualifications across 8 cafés.

Table A10-4: Third-level or other professional qualification held by staff in youth cafés

No. of people	Types of qualification								
	Youth work/ Youth studies	Family studies	Psychotherapy	Childcare	Counselling	Social care/ Social work	Education/ Training	Mediation/ Conflict resolution	Other
As % of overall staff numbers	27%	4%	5%	9%	8%	15%	8%	9%	16%

Information was also gathered on **years of experience** of those working in youth cafés (see Table A10-5). The data show that the majority of volunteers (283) had between 0-3 years’ experience as a volunteer, with 120 having 4-6 years’ experience. As compared to the staff group, fewer volunteers had 7-10 or 10+ years of experience. It was also not surprising to find that the majority of people in the ‘other’ category had between 0-3 years’ work experience, with virtually no one having volunteered beyond this point.

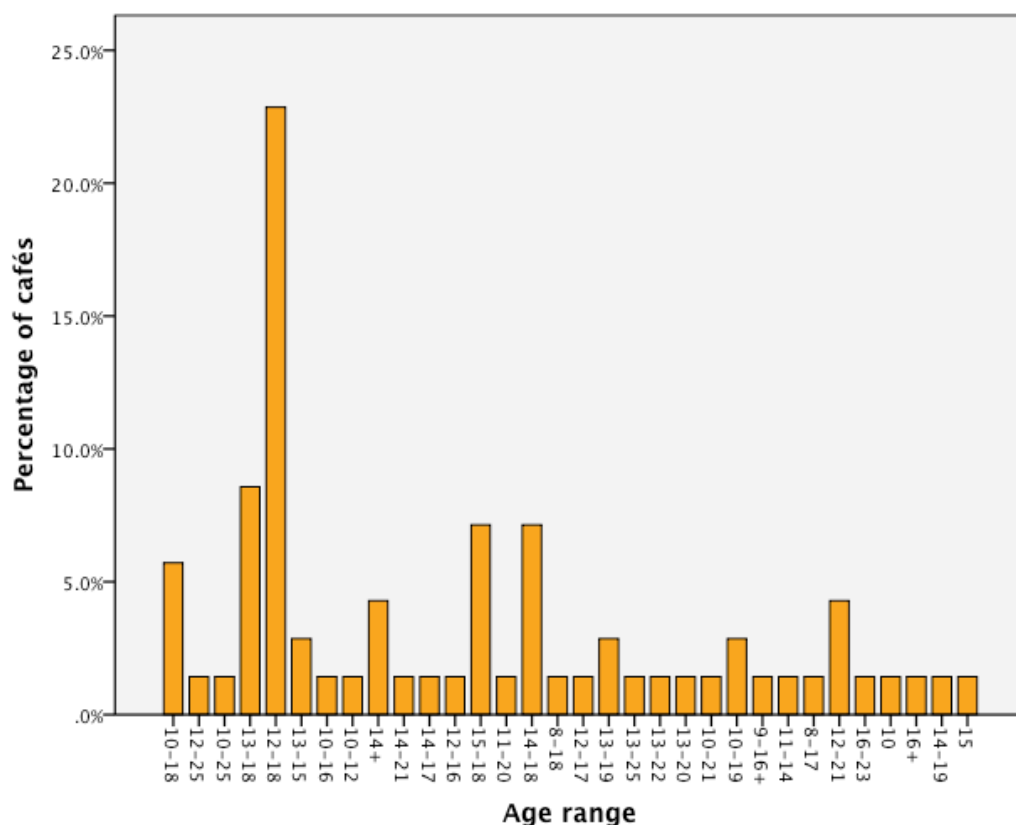
Table A10-5: Number of staff/volunteers and others who have varying years of experience in youth work

Years of experience in youth work	No. of staff	No. of volunteers	No. of others
0-3 years' experience	41	283	99
4-6 years' experience	41	120	3
7-10 years' experience	39	38	0
10+ years' experience	37	17	0
Total	158	458	102

Appendix 11: Supplementary survey data on target group and opening details of youth cafés

Figure A11-1 presents findings on the target age group for each responding youth café. The data show a wide variety in the age profiles of the young people being targeted. Despite this, the 12-18 year-old target group was the most common cohort, representing 23% (n=16) of the target age groups. The 13-18 year-old category was the next most popular, at 8.6% (n=7). The survey also found that only 25% of youth cafés targeted a particular community of interest, such as young people who share particular circumstances (e.g. homelessness) or interests (e.g. the arts). Of those cafés that did target specific groups, the most common words used were ‘disadvantaged’, ‘at-risk’ and ‘socially isolated’ young people.

Figure A11-1: Target age of young people attending the youth cafés



Information was also gathered on when the youth cafés surveyed were open during four main holiday periods in the previous 12 months (see Table A11-1). The majority of cafés were closed during the Christmas and New Year holidays (72%, n=49), with only 28% (n=19) offering a service. During the summer months (June – September), this trend is reversed, with 81% (n=56) of cafés open. An even higher percentage were open during the two mid-term school breaks (93%, n=66) and throughout the Easter holiday period (92%, n=65).

Table A11-1: Opening of youth cafés during holiday periods

Holiday period	Open		Closed	
	No.	%	No.	%
Christmas and New Year holidays	19	28	49	72
Summer (June – September) holidays	56	81	13	19
Mid-term (October and February) holidays	66	93	5	7
Easter holidays	65	92	6	8

The respondents were also asked to provide data on when the youth cafés surveyed were open during term time and during out-of-term time (see Table A11-2). Cafés were least likely to open on Sundays, with only 3 of the cafés surveyed being open on that day. The most common day to open was a Friday, this being the case for both term time (n=57) and out-of-term time (n=42) time. The mean and modal number and range of hours open are also shown, with these reflecting the patterns already discussed.

Table A11-2: Opening of youth cafés during school term and out-of-term time

Days	Term time (hours)				Out-of-term time (hours)			
	No.	Mean	Mode	Range	No.	Mean	Mode	Range
1. Monday	24	3.35	4	11	16	4.15	2	11
2. Tuesday	31	3.20	2	11	24	4.16	2	11
3. Wednesday	30	3.62	2	11	24	4.5	2	11
4. Thursday	38	3.48	2	11	31	4.08	2	11
5. Friday	57	3.62	2	11	42	4.45	2	11
6. Saturday	28	3.95	3	8	24	4.41	3	8
7. Sunday	3	3.0	2	2	3	3.0	2	2

The survey requested information about the usage of the youth cafés via ‘open access’ and ‘specific use’ during term time and out-of-term time (see Table A11-3). Findings reveal similar patterns to those in Table A11-2. During term time, the most common day for ‘open access’ was Friday, with 46 cafés providing, on average, 3.6 hours of service over a range of 10 hours. In 21 cafés, the hours of service on a Saturday were 3.9 hours, on average, during ‘open access’. Regarding ‘specific use’ during term time, cafés were open the longest (5 hours) on Monday, followed by Tuesday and Friday (4.2 hours each). During out-of-term time, Friday was the day on which the most cafés (34) provided a service, with an average of 4.1 hours and a range of 10 hours. Again, for ‘specific use’, Monday had the largest provision, with an average of 4.5 hours, followed by Tuesday (4.1 hours) and Wednesday (3.9 hours) respectively.

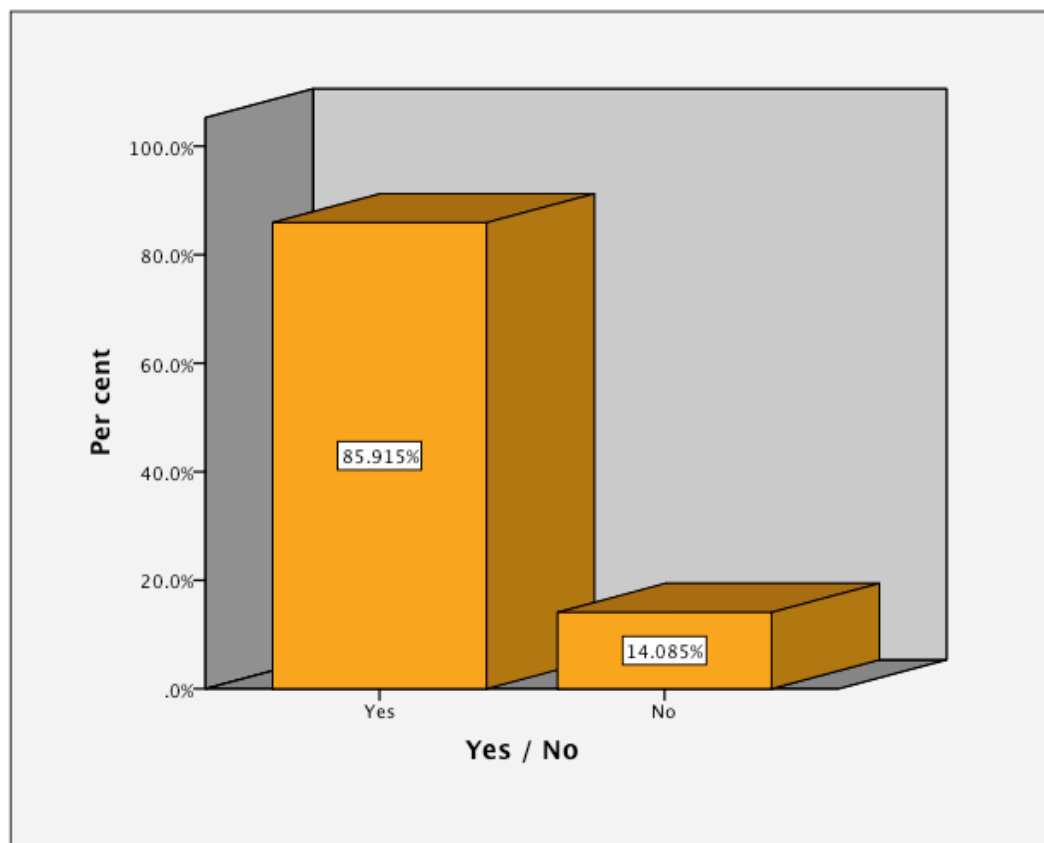
Table A11-3: Hours open per day during term time and out-of-term time for ‘open access’ and ‘specific use’

Days	Term time								Out-of-term time							
	Open access				Specific use				Open access				Specific use			
	No.	Mean	Mode	Range	No.	Mean	Mode	Range	No.	Mean	Mode	Range	No.	Mean	Mode	Range
1. Monday	19	3	1	9	24	5	4.2	11	11	3.2	3.0	5	14	4.5	5	7
2. Tuesday	22	2.9	2	9	31	4.2	3	11	15	4	3.5	8	18	4.1	4	7
3. Wednesday	21	3.4	3	9	28	4.3	3.2	11	20	4.1	3.7	8	15	3.9	4	5.5
4. Thursday	33	3.3	3	9	30	3.7	3	11	24	3.6	3	6	18	3.2	2	7
5. Friday	46	3.6	3	10	23	4.2	3	11	34	4.1	3.5	10	13	3.5	3	5
6. Saturday	21	3.9	3	5	8	3.2	3.5	3	16	3.8	3	6	3	3.3	3	1
7. Sunday	1	2	2	0	2	2.5	2.5	1	1	2	2	0	2	2	2	0

Appendix 12: Supplementary survey data regarding implementation, monitoring and evaluation in youth cafés

Information was gathered on how cafés understand and use monitoring and evaluation practices. Respondents were asked if they were aware of the *Youth Café Toolkit* (Forkan *et al*, 2010b), published by the DCYA. Figure A12-1 shows that the vast majority (86%, n=61) were aware of it.

Figure A12-1: Level of awareness of the 2010 *Youth Café Toolkit*



To investigate the way in which the *Youth Café Toolkit* has been used in practice since 2010, the survey queried respondents on 12 areas central to the toolkit (see *Table A12-1*). Findings show a general positive uptake of advice from the toolkit across a range of areas. For example, 97% (n=58) of cafés took on board the advice about involving young people in the running of the café and implemented it 'very well' or 'well'. Similarly, the vast majority of cafés have implemented 'very well' or 'well' ideas about the need to create a partnership between adults and young people (91.6%, n=55); how to develop activities for the café (91.5%, n=54); how to clarify the role of and relationship between young people, staff and volunteers (98.4%, n=58); the implementation of training for young people, staff and volunteers, (84.8%, n=50); clarification of the management structures of the café (89.6%, n=52); promotion of the café (87.7%, n=50); and policies and procedures (88.2%, n=52). The two areas where respondents were less likely to have used the *Youth Café Toolkit* were for a sustainability plan for the future of the café (66.1%, n=37) and for monitoring and evaluation systems (73.7%, n=42).

Table A12-1: Level of implementation of areas from the *Youth Café Toolkit* into youth café practice

Areas	Very well implemented	Well implemented	Not implemented very well	Not implemented at all
	% (N)	% (N)	% (N)	% (N)
1. Involved young people	65 (39)	31.7 (19)	–	3.3 (2)
2. Created a partnership between adults and young people	43.3 (26)	48.3 (29)	8.3 (5)	–
3. Developed activities for the youth café	39 (23)	52.5 (31)	6.8 (4)	1.7 (1)
4. Clarified the role of young people, staff, and volunteers	46.7 (28)	51.7 (31)	–	1.7 (1)
5. Provided training for young people, staff and volunteers	45.8 (27)	39 (23)	13.6 (8)	1.7 (1)
6. The design of the youth café	51.6 (32)	30.6 (19)	12.9 (8)	3.2 (2)
7. The location of the youth café	48.3 (28)	27.6 (16)	15.5 (9)	8.6 (5)
8. Developed and clarified the management structures of the youth café	29.3 (17)	60.3 (35)	3.4 (2)	6.9 (4)
9. Developed funding and sustainability plan for the youth café	12.5 (7)	53.6 (30)	30.4 (17)	3.6 (2)
10. Promoted the youth café	36.8 (21)	50.9 (29)	12.3 (7)	–
11. Undertook evaluation and monitoring	29.8 (17)	43.9 (25)	26.3 (15)	–
12. Developed policies and procedures	49.2 (29)	39 (23)	11.9 (7)	–

Respondents were also specifically asked about whether their youth café had undergone either internal or external evaluation. Just over one-quarter (26.9%, n=18) had undergone independent, **external evaluation**. For those who had, the nature of this involved either engaging with the National Quality Standards Framework (NQS) or a University-led evaluation. For those who had this type of evaluation, they reported a clearer understanding of quality provision, an improvement in their governance systems and the realisation of the need to promote the youth café in the media.

Regarding their experience of **internal evaluation**, 75.8% (n=50) had engaged in this form of review process. The type of internal evaluations ranged from using logic models and outcomes-focused work, monthly and yearly SWOT reports, pre- and post-evaluation tools, the Foróige evaluation framework, and reviews by staff, volunteer and young people on all aspects of the café.

The data also show two extremes of experiences with evaluation. A total of 15 cafés had undergone both internal and external evaluations, while another 15 had done neither. The latter figure represents one-fifth (20.8%) of all youth cafés surveyed and is of concern given the sizeable number of cafés involved.

Table A12-2 presents data on the extent to which young people were involved with any internal and/or external evaluation that may have been undertaken in their youth café. For internal evaluations, 91.3% of cafés (n=42) stated that young people had been interview/survey participants. This figure was similar to the number of young people involved in external evaluations (86.7%, n=13). Just under one-third (59.5%, n=25) were process advisors in internal evaluations, compared to just one-quarter (25%, n=3) for external evaluations. With internal evaluations, 46.5% (n=20) were involved in the actual data collection, compared to only 15% (n=2) for external evaluations. For both internal and external evaluations, the vast majority of young people (63.4%, n=26; and 76.9%, n=10 respectively) were not involved in any part of the write-up of the evaluation data.

Table A12-2: Extent to which young people were involved with any internal or external evaluation

Tasks	Internal evaluation		External evaluation	
	Yes % (N)	No % (N)	Yes % (N)	No % (N)
1. Researchers/data collectors	46.5 (20)	53.5 (23)	15.4 (2)	84.6 (11)
2. Process advisors	59.5 (25)	40.5 (17)	25 (3)	75 (9)
3. Authors/writers	36.6 (15)	63.4 (26)	23.1 (3)	76.9 (10)
4. Interview/survey participants	91.3 (42)	8.7 (4)	86.7 (13)	13.3 (2)

The survey also sought information on whether each youth café was part of the National Quality Standards Framework (NQS) for staff-led youth work as well as for volunteers. In terms of staff-led youth work, there was a 50/50 divide of cafés adhering to the standards and those not partaking. Of those cafés doing the NQS for staff, the majority had a continuous improvement plan in place (95%). Regarding the NQS for volunteers, 91% (n=57) of responding cafés stated that they were being guided by the new standards in this regard.

On a related point, it was also found that 82% (54) of all cafés surveyed used logic models in their planning, service implementation and evaluation work, with a similar figure (80%, n=51) stating that they had defined outcome areas towards which they worked. While the expression of these outcomes varied somewhat, the majority of cafés based theirs on the national service outcomes as defined in *The Agenda for Children's Services*.

Appendix 13: Promotion of youth cafés

Just over half of the youth cafés surveyed (56%; n=38) had specific policies in place relating to promotion. As seen in Figure A13-1, 59% (n=42) of young people were 'extremely involved' or 'very involved' in promotion activities, while 37% (n=26) were only 'somewhat' involved.

A surprising finding was that 70% (n=50) of youth cafés did not have their own website. Of those that have a website, information about activities at the café (33%; n=18) and pictures of the interior/exterior (28%; n=15) were the most common things included. Despite the majority of cafés not having a website, most cafés used social media (90%, n=64) instead (e.g. Facebook, Twitter) as a way of promoting themselves on a regular basis. Word of mouth (92%, n=65) was deemed to be equally useful, as were the local and national newspapers (73%, n=52).

Figure A13-1: Level of involvement of young people in the promotion of their youth café

