



A FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR A

YOUTH WELLNESS CENTRE

IN LAOIS

**A permanent building in Laois that provides a
one-stop-shop for all things youth**



MARCH 2022

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Foreword

In 2019, Laois Offaly CYPSC carried out a consultation with Children and Young People in Laois and Offaly. The result of this consultation is available here <https://www.cypsc.ie/laois-offaly/priorities.310.html>

1,090 children and young people took part in the participation via facilitated workshops. The information from the consultations with these children and young people was reported under the five national outcomes for Children and Young people as set out in Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020.

Across the five outcome areas, children and young people in Laois and Offaly expressed some of their priorities as follows

- Mental health services/ counselling is needed, more information on mental health wellbeing and sexual health information including LGBTI+ (outside of school)
- More Youth services/ groups/ clubs and affordable summer camps
- Activities- access to a wider range of activities & a safe places for young people
- Life skills training, study skills and afterschool programmes. More job and work experience opportunities
- Post leaving cert options- access to information on options, costs, further ed., training and apprenticeships, student grants- information about supports.
- To have information in an accessible space with key people to talk to who can help inform and support a young person re. bullying, neglect, abuse, online safety, knowledge of the consequences of crime. Information on services to support and protect oneself.

It is this extract of priorities from the consultation report 2019 that sparked the conversation with the CYPSC subgroup which has led to this feasibility study.

Given that Laois has the 4th highest proportion of 0-24 years olds in Census 2016 and that there is currently no permanent home for youth services in Laois, the CYPSC subgroup prioritised undertaking this feasibility study for a dedicated permanent space for youth activity in Laois.

In Offaly, St. Mary's Youth Centre in Tullamore is in the ownership of the community, likewise with St. Joseph's Hall in Edenderry operating as Edenderry Youth Cafe. Laois and Portlaoise with a huge youth population warrants a permanent space for youth. With such a culturally diverse community, a dedicated permanent youth space could be instrumental to fostering identity and belonging.

Anecdotally the commentary is that there are no spaces to rent in Laois for meetings and small community gatherings. Existing services are at maximum capacity with their service offering and are limited on what they can provide due to space limitations. Some services have restricted service delivery due to lack of accommodation.

Of course, the need for this permanent youth space is at a time when costs to build or renovate is at an all-time high. Cost is at the core of this study and none more so than the cost to the community of not having a dedicated permanent youth building. What needs to be considered is; is providing for our youth an investment in both their future and that of the wider community. Can we afford not to provide for them?

Niamh Dowler

Laois Offaly CYPSC Co-Ordinator

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- HSE CADS (Community Alcohol and Drug Services)
- HSE Children Mental Health and Young Adult Mental Health Services
- Laois Offaly Education and Training Board
- HSE Primary Care Psychology
- Youth Work Ireland Laois
- Foróige
- HSE Health Promotion
- HSE Resource Officer for Suicide Prevention

for their support throughout the research project.

Special thanks to facilitators who volunteered to help with the online stakeholder event as well as the focus groups.

Sincere thanks to those whom we met in person and online during the consultations for one to one conversations, Donal Brennan Director of Services Laois Co. Council, Conor Ganly Chairperson Laois Volunteer Centre, Joe Cunningham Chief Executive Officer Laois Offaly ETB, Maria Culleton Principal Social Worker Tusla, Local Private business Owner, Marian Quinn Manager of CDI Tallaght, Edwina Deegan Manager Blueskies and Archways Clondalkin, James Maher Manager of Attic Youth Project, Staff at Nano Nagle Place Cork, Castleblaney Youth Centre, and Saint Joseph's Healthcare, Hamilton Canada. These senior specialist panel and experienced child, youth and community service providers were extremely helpful in sharing their views, experiences, and advice.

Thank you to the thirty stakeholders who attended the consultation event held online in June 2021. Your interest in young people and local services were vital to setting the scene for this study.

Most importantly, thank you to the young people who took part in the consultation and shared their experiences and ideas which we tried to capture throughout this study.

Aoife Dowling,
Research Consultant

Executive Summary

Overview

- This feasibility study, funded by Laois Offaly CYPSC, consulted with 80 members of the community via an online survey, 26 young people took part in focus groups, 26 local organisations were represented at a stakeholder event, a senior specialist panel made up of 5 local community members were interviewed and 6 experienced child, youth and community service providers provided guidance.
- In recent years Laois County has witnessed unprecedented population growth placing a high demand on existing services while there is also currently no permanent youth space in the county.
- Community, youth and stakeholder engagement highlighted a strong appetite for a dedicated youth wellness centre.
- A profile of existing youth and wellness centres highlighted the importance for multi-purpose spaces, multiple funding streams and strategic centre management.
- The senior specialist panel described how the services required in the centre should respond to the needs of the community while experienced child, youth and community service providers highlighted best practices and management structures required for a viable centre.

Recommendations

- **Establishment of a dedicated youth centre:** There is a strong demand and need for a dedicated youth space in Laois. The purpose of the centre should be to provide young people with a permanent multi-purpose dedicated space with access to a range of universal and targeted services.
- **Existing site:** An existing site in a main town such as Portlaoise for the location of the youth wellness centre is the preferred option.
- **YWI Laois:** A suitable partner for the Youth Wellness Centre is required, with existing community links and established funding streams. YWI Laois is a suitable partner.
- **Funding:** Sources of capital funding are required as well as operational and programme funding.
- **Management:** The existing YWI board of directors should be consulted in relation to expanding their board and developing a management structure.
- **Strategic Development:** A detailed strategic development document is required taking the key considerations of this study into account.
- **Facilitation for multi-cultural communities:** The youth wellness centre should represent the unique multi-cultural population of Laois.

- **Outreach:** Outreach over multiple streams such as social media, school visits and community outreach will be critical for the success of the youth wellness centre.
- **Transport:** During the strategic development of the centre, strong links with local transport companies are required to ensure that all have access to the youth wellness centre.
- **Research and Evaluation:** Finally, to ensure the success and vitality of the centre ongoing research and evaluation are required. Research and analysis on how the surrounding community is growing and developing are vital, as this will impact the needs of young people in the community.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Overview

In 2019 the Laois Offaly Children's and Young People's Services Committee¹ (LO CYPSC) carried out a consultation to create an opportunity for children and young people of Laois and Offaly to be involved in the influence and design of both policy and services. Findings from the consultation concluded that there was a need for a dedicated centrally located youth space in Laois.

Within the coming years, Youth Work Ireland Laois (YWI Laois)² are aiming to develop a youth focused building which will provide a safe space for young members of the community to access recreational activities. It is hope that the space will offer both physical and mental wellbeing activities for young people.

Utilising this information, the CYPSC commissioned this study to investigate the feasibility of the establishment of a new dedicated youth wellness facility for young people in Laois as well as the suitability of YWI Laois as the principal partner in its development.

The overall aim of the youth centre would be to provide a multi-purpose wellness facility and access to multiple youth services in one location. This would include:

- Provision of individual and group holistic and creative activities with local young people
- Access to a range of targeted educational, addiction support and mental health services
- A range of volunteering opportunities
- Training in practical life skills

This feasibility study examines both the need and support for a youth wellness centre in Laois, as well as the suitability of YWI Laois to be engaged as the lead partner. This was conducted by consulting with young people and members of the community through focus groups and an online survey, stakeholders through participant events, interviews with the senior specialist panel and experienced child, youth and community service providers as well as an analysis of other youth and community-focused centres.

¹ The Laois Offaly Children and Young People's Services Committee was formed in 2017. The LO CYPSC is made up of representatives from services and agencies throughout Laois and Offaly who support children and young people through various health, education, justice, community, youth and other services. The responsibility of the CYPSC is to secure better outcomes for children and young people in their area through more effective integration of existing services and interventions.

The committee works towards the five national outcomes for children and young people, as set out in Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures; the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020.

²Youth Work Ireland Laois is the largest youth organisation in Laois, made up of 20 Local Member Youth Services who are supported to deliver an integrated services model to young people in their communities.

Between 2006 and 2016, according to the Census, Laois County has witnessed an unprecedented population growth of 26% to from 67,012 in 2006 to 84,697 in 2016. This growth, particularly in the younger age groups has placed significant pressure on services aimed at children and young people.

The CYPSC has been aware of the growing youth population of Laois; the diverse ethnic background of young people; and the current lack of services dedicated to young people. The CYPSC has also identified issues concerning the effect of the recent lockdowns on young people. While YWI Laois plays a vital role in providing an integrated services model in Laois, it has recently outgrown its current premises in Portlaoise town.

According to the World Health Organisation³, wellness is not just when we are not unwell it is ‘a state of complete physical, mental, and social-wellbeing’ (2006). Wellness is the act of practising healthy habits on a daily basis to attain better both physical and mental health outcomes. The Department of Education (2018) published the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice*⁴ and it specified that by endorsing wellbeing amongst children and young people, they are more likely to contribute positively to their community, socially, culturally and economically.

The Local Private Business Owner , interviewed for this study, highlighted how at times young people need guidance in order to achieve positive physical and mental health outcomes.

“Wellness is the empowerment to feel like a person has control of their own health through lifestyle choices and at times people need to be guided by facilitation to achieve this.” (Local Private Business Owner)

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures⁵ (DCYA 2014), states that young people are increasingly at risk of mental health disorders and that the teenage years can be vulnerable (2014). The same document also stresses the ‘importance of supporting children and young people to develop their mental literacy skills.’

Recent events such as the Covid-19 pandemic have placed increasing pressure on children and young people as the pandemic left a vast amount of people feeling isolated and vulnerable (ESRI 2021⁶, Young Voices During Covid 2021⁷).

³ Microsoft Word - HPR Glossary - New terms 12 July 2006_web.doc (who.int)

⁴ 07cc07626f6a426eb6eab4c523fb2ee2.pdf (assets.gov.ie)

⁵ <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/63a1ff-report-of-the-national-policy-framework-for-children-young-people-20/>

⁶ Pandemic affects children and young adults from low-income families negatively in terms of internet access, quiet places to study and higher likelihoods of living with someone vulnerable to severe COVID-19 disease | ESRI

⁷ Young Voices During COVID-19

According to the LO CYPSC the purpose of the youth wellness centre would be to:

- Provide young people of Laois with a space to spend time
- Ensure an inclusive environment to explore their wellness needs
- Give access to universal services
- Allow young people to avail of targeted services and information when required

The overall aim of the centre would be to provide a permanent home for all things youth in Laois, a 'one stop shop' for youth services according to the LO CYPSC.

Provision	Purpose
Wellness orientated Space	Space needs to provide young people of Laois with a space to spend time participating in mental and physical wellness outlets and activities
Inclusive environment	Ensure an accessible inclusive environment for all young members of the community including parents as well as other members of the community
Access to services	Provide and enable young people to access a range of preventative services from statutory, voluntary and community bodies
Information	Access information from trusted sources
Targeted services	Provide a space for young people to avail of targeted services when required
Future projects	An opportunity to support future projects to be delivered through the centre

Table 1.1 Provision of services within the Youth Wellness Centre

Research questions, aims and objectives

- This feasibility sets out to establish:
- If there is a need for a youth wellness centre amongst young people and the community
- If the centre is a priority amongst stakeholders
- What the needs of child and youth community in Laois are
- As well as what key considerations need to be taken into account for the establishment of a youth wellness centre
- If YWI Laois is a suitable partner for the youth wellness centre

A research advisory committee was made up of key stakeholders from the LO CYPSC Active & Healthy subgroup. The following research questions were agreed by the research advisory committee:

1. What need is there amongst the youth population in Laois?
2. What are the priorities of key stakeholders?
3. What are the considerations that need to be taken into account?

Arising from the research questions, the overall aim of the feasibility study was determined. This was to examine the feasibility of a youth wellness centre in these key areas:

- The need for a youth-based centre
- The communities and key stakeholders' priorities in relation to the functions of and services within the centre
- A proposed funding and management structure
- Evidence-based key considerations for the establishment of the service based on a profile of best practice

To further steer the feasibility study, a set of specific objectives were devised. The specific objectives were to document:

- Key findings from a socio-demographic and service profile of Laois
- The needs of the youth community and the priorities of stakeholders
- Best practices of a range of international and national youth or community-based centres
- Recommendations from the senior specialist panel and experienced child, youth and community service providers
- Key considerations for the establishment of the youth wellness centre

1.2 Structure of the report

This report is divided into eight chapters:

- Chapter One provides an introduction
- Chapter Two describes the methodology of the research conducted
- Chapter Three is an area profile of Laois and an overview of the current service landscape
- Chapter Four details the community, youth and stakeholder consultation carried out
- Chapter Five examines a selection of youth and community-focused centres
- Chapter Six discusses findings from interviews with the senior specialist panel and experienced child, youth and community service providers
- Chapter Seven utilises collated data to explore key considerations for the feasibility of the youth wellness centre
- Chapter Eight sets out conclusions and recommendations in relation to the services

Chapter Two: Methodology

2.1 Overview

The feasibility study was conducted using a mixed-methods qualitative approach. The CYPSC active and healthy sub-group guided the research process, and the Laois/Offaly CYPSC Coordinator was appointed to liaise with the researcher.

Primary Research included: in compliance with Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, young people were consulted with to express their views regarding a youth wellness centre via an online survey and focus groups, secondly, an online stakeholder event held with local stakeholders. Table 2.1 provides a summary of participants of the primary research. Interviews were conducted with a senior specialist panel including those that were engaging directly with young people and with knowledge of the resources and services identified as suitable for the youth wellness centre. Finally, site visits and online interviews were carried out with key authorities on youth and community focused centres.

Youth Engagement		Stakeholder Event		Senior Specialist Panel		Experienced child, youth and community service providers
Survey Respondents	Focus Groups	Organisations	People	Organisations	People	Service Providers
80	25	24	26	5	5	6

Table 2.1 Summary of participants of primary research

Secondary desktop research was conducted on relevant data and indicators to provide an up-to-date youth profile of Laois. As well as a profile of services, relevant policy in relation to youth wellness and an outline of best practices within the youth and community focused centre community.

2.2 Data collection

Youth and community focused primary data was sourced from an online survey and focus groups. The online survey, disseminated between May and July 2021 via various social media platforms in Laois consisted of 16 questions aimed to identify the youth and communities' idea of wellness, engagement with existing services and expectations of a wellness centre.

In total 80 people took part in the survey, of those:

- Average age of respondents was 20 with an age range from 12 to 55 years
- 21% were male and 71% were female while 7% did not want to say or identified as non-binary
- In terms of ethnicity, 83% were White Irish, 6% were Other White, 6% were Black or Black Irish and 2% were White Irish Traveller. 2% identified as Other or did not specify.

- 86.9% of respondents did not have a disability or a chronic health condition.

Focus groups were carried out between April and May 2021. There were attended by 25 young people and facilitated by youth workers and the researcher. Up to six hours of sessions were recorded, transcribed and analysed. This allowed for the identification of reoccurring themes. Table 2.3 details the distribution of the 25 young people that participated by gender, age and ethnicity.

Focus Group 1: Youth Club		
Gender	Age	Ethnicity
Female	<18	Black or Black Irish
Female	<18	White Irish
Female	<18	White Irish
Female	<18	White Irish
Female	<18	White Irish
Female	<18	White Irish
Female	<18	White Irish
Female	<18	White Irish
Female	<18	White Irish
Male	<18	White Irish
Male	<18	White Irish
Focus Group 2: LGBTQI youth group		
Gender	Age	Ethnicity
Male	<18	White Irish
Female	<18	White Irish
Female	<18	White Irish
Male	<18	White Irish
Female	<18	White Irish
Trans	<18	White Irish
Focus Group 3: Unity Youth Group		
Gender	Age	Ethnicity
Male	>18	Black or Black Irish
Female	>18	Black or Black Irish
Female	<18	Mixed race
Female	<18	Black or Black Irish
Focus Group 4: FRC Youth Group		
Gender	Age	Ethnicity
Female	>18	Other white
Female	>18	White Irish
Female	>18	White Irish
Male	>18	White Irish

Table 2.3 Summary of participants of youth focus groups

To capture the opinion of existing stakeholders within the community an online stakeholder event was held. This large-scale online event, held in June 2021 facilitated by six volunteers and the researcher, provided stakeholders an opportunity to examine research accumulated thus far in the project and discuss the results in smaller groups. The stakeholder event was attended by 26 people representing 24 organisations in Laois. Table 2.4 details the organisations that took part in the stakeholder event.

Community Stakeholder Event	
1.	Laois Volunteer Centre
2.	Laois County Council

3.	Laois Offaly Education & Training Board
4.	Foroige
5.	Youth Work Ireland Laois
6.	HSE – Sexual Health Clinic
7.	HSE – Community Alcohol & Drugs Service
8.	Public Participation Network
9.	Portarlington Enterprise Centre
10.	Laois Partnership
11.	Laois Domestic Abuse Service
12.	Comhairle na nÓg Laois
13.	Healthy Ireland Laois
14.	Youth Arts
15.	Mountmellick Youth & Family Resource Centre
16.	Barnardos
17.	Credit Union
18.	EBS
19.	No Name Club
20.	Teac Tom
21.	Respond
22.	HSE – CAMHS/YAMHS
23.	Portlaoise College
24.	GAA
25.	Tusla
26.	Portlaoise Educate Together

Table 2.4 Organisations that took part in the stakeholder event

Following this a series of interviews were carried out with a senior specialist panel in Laois to provide an insight into the needs of the community as well as guidance in relation to the establishment of a youth wellness centre. Table 2.5 outlines organisations that took part in the interviews.

Senior Specialist Panel	
1.	Laois Volunteer Centre
2.	Laois County Council
3.	Laois Offaly Education & Training Board
4.	Tusla
5.	Local Private Business Owner

Table 2.5 List of the senior specialist panel interviewed

These interviews resulted in over six hours of recordings that were transcribed and analysed to identify reoccurring themes.

And finally, a series of site visits and online interviews were conducted with a variety of organisations to establish the best practices of youth wellness centres. Table 2.6 is a list of organisations that were visited, or in-depth interviews were carried out.

Site Visits/Online interviews	
1.	Childhood Development Initiative Tallaght (interview)
2.	Archways – Blue Skies Initiative Clondalkin (interview)
3.	Nano Nagle Place (site visit)
4.	Saint Joseph’s Healthcare, Hamilton, Canada (interview)
5.	Attic House, Longford (site visit)
6.	Castleblaney Youth Centre (interview)
7.	Youth Work Ireland Laois

Table 2.6 List of youth and community experts interviewed

2.3 Ethical Considerations

All participants of the focus groups, interviews and surveys were assured of anonymity. All participants were informed and acknowledged that their participation was entirely voluntary and that it was possible to terminate their participation at any time. Participants were informed that if they had any complaints, they could contact the LO CYPSC coordinator.

2.4 Limitations of the Methodology

It was envisaged in the original methodology for this research that focus groups would be conducted to evaluate the partnership approach. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, from March 2020 it was not possible to pursue focus groups due to public health guidelines. Instead, semi-structured interviews were conducted via telephone.

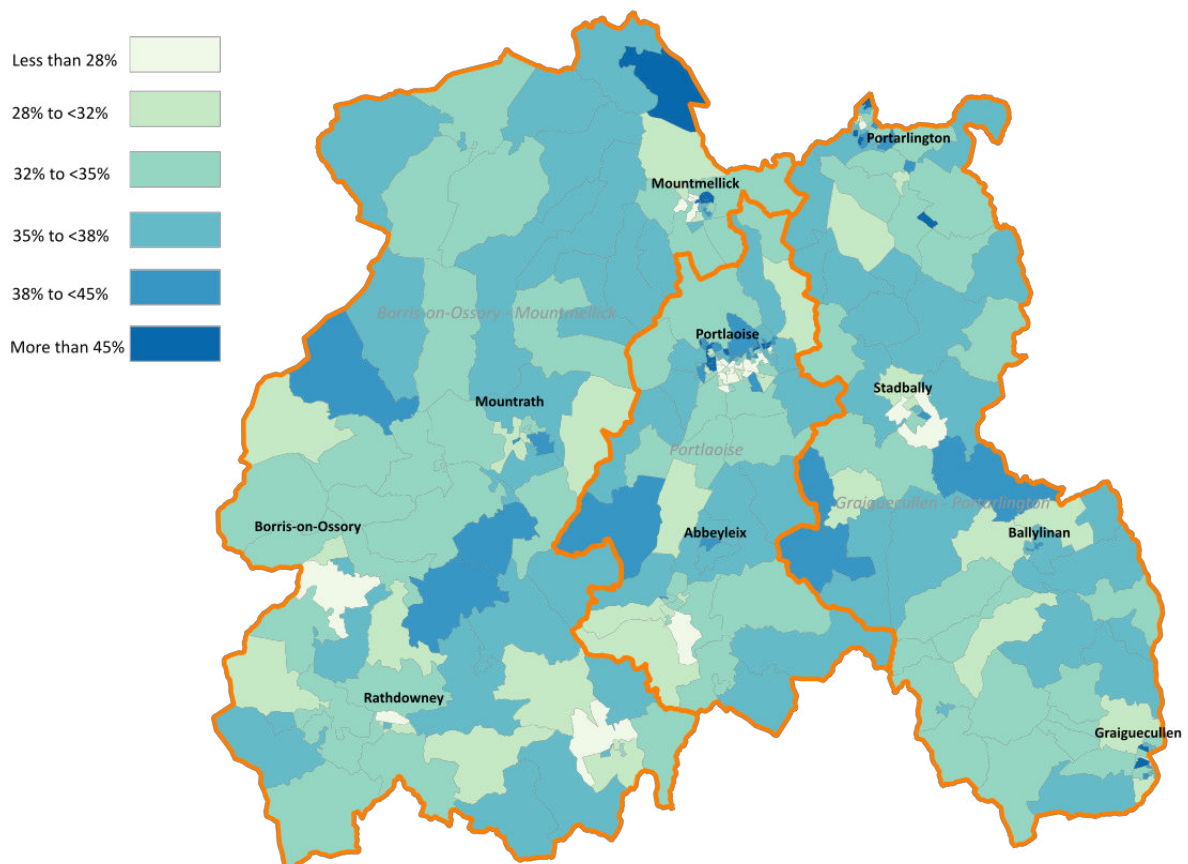
Chapter Three: Area Profile and Services Profile

3.1 Overview

This section examines data collated from Census 2016 on the population of Laois, its socio-demographic and ethnic profile. Other data from sources including Tusla, the HSE and the Department of Education are explored as well as the current level of services for young people in Laois.

3.2 Census data

Geographically, Laois is only the 10th least populated local authority in Ireland with a total population of 84,697 people. However, this number represents a 5.1% population increase from 2016. This rate is comparable with larger suburban local authorities like Fingal, Meath and Kildare (Census 2016). Laois is characterised by being a commuter county for those working in Dublin City and hinterlands, having a substantial population growth in and around Portlaoise town over the past number of years as well as being significantly ethnically diverse. Laois is primarily a rural based county with a distributed population with high levels of disadvantage while over 35% of the population is aged under 25 years (Map 2.3).



Map 3.1 Population aged<25 years, Census 2016

Within Laois are three Local Electoral Areas (LEA):

Portlaoise

The Portlaoise LEA includes the towns of Portlaoise and Abbeyleix. With a total population of 32,165 this LEA has experienced the most significant population growth in Laois of 7.6% between 2011 and 2016. This population growth is double that of the State's growth at 3.8%. While over a third of the population (35.8%) is in the under 25 age group.

Of the LEAs in Portlaoise is the most ethnically diverse with 26.3% of its total population belonging to ethnic minorities. Predominant ethnic minorities in Portlaoise include, 'Other White' 12.3%, 'Black or Black Irish' (3.2%) and 'Asian or Asian Irish' (2.7%). In Portlaoise town more than a third of the population belongs to an ethnic minority group.

Over a third of the population on Portlaoise town belongs to an ethnic minority group

Education levels in the Portlaoise LEA are higher than in the other LEAs, with lower proportional shares in low education levels and higher in the high education levels.

The rate of Lone Parents families is highest in Portlaoise at 20.6% and 13.0% of households do not have access to a car. While the labour force unemployment rate in 2016 was 17.3%, nearly 5% percent above the national average.

20% of families in the Portlaoise LEA are lone parent families

According to the Pobal HP Deprivation index some of the counties most deprived Small Areas (SAs) with scores of less than -20 (very disadvantaged) are located within the town of Portlaoise and also where over a third of the population is aged under 24 years. The five SAP areas determined as 'very disadvantaged' are located primarily to the north of Portlaoise. These SAP areas are relevant to the areas of Knockmay, Newpark, Lakeglen and Saint Brigid's Place.

Borris-on-Ossory – Mountmellick

Included in the LEA of Borris-on-Ossory-Mountmellick are the towns of Mountmellick, Borris-on-Ossory, Mountrath, Rathdowney and Durrow. With a population of 24,237 it is the least population of the Laois LEAs and saw the least population increase in the Laois at 2.2%. Despite only 34.7% of

the population of the LEA being within the under 25 age groups in 2016, the actual settlement of Mountmellick had a youth population of 37.4% significantly above the national average of 33.2%.

The LEA Borris-on-Ossory-Mountmellick is not as ethnically diverse when compared with Port Laois as over 90% of the population are 'White Irish'.

Education levels in Borris-on-Ossory-Mountmellick are much higher in the lower levels of education with 16.8% of the population having no formal or primary only levels of education and only 22.2% of the population has a a third level education.

16.8% of the population in Mountmellick have no formal or primary only levels of education

The rate of Lone Parent Families is 18.3% and lower than the state average while car ownership is also low at 11.4%. While the labour force unemployment rate was higher than that State average at 15.0%.

According to the Pobal HP Deprivation index there were three SAs in Borris-on-Ossory-Mountmellick classified as very disadvantaged in Rathdowney, Mountmellick and Mountrath. In the most disadvantaged SA in Mountrath 45.5% of the population are aged under 24 years.

In the most disadvantaged Small Area in Mountrath, 45.5% of the population are aged <25 years

Graiguecullen - Portarlinton

The LEA of Graiguecullen - Portarlinton includes the town of Partarlinton (part Offaly), Stradbally, Graiguecullen (part Carlow) and Ballylinan. This LEA has witnessed a population growth of 5% between 2011 and 2016 to a population of 28,096. The Graiguecullen - Portarlinton population has the highest proportion of population aged within the under 25 at 36.5% (or 10,267). However, in the town of Ballylinan over 40% of the population is aged under 25 years.

In the town of Ballylinan over 40% of the population is aged under 24 years.

The proportional rate of ethnic minorities in Graiguecullen – Portarlinton is comparative to national levels.

Comparatively there are lower levels of low education and higher levels of upper levels of education in Graiguecullen – Portarlington when compared with the other LEAs.

The rate of lone parent families in Graiguecullen – Portarlington is lower than all of the other LEAs at 17.8%. As well as having the lowest rate of households with no cars at 8.3%. Graiguecullen – Portarlington also has the lowest unemployment rate of all of the LEAs.

Finally, there are no SAs in the LEA of Graiguecullen – Portarlington defined as extremely or very disadvantaged.

3.3 Other Data

- In 2017, according to the National Suicide Research Foundation, the rate of female self-harm (<25 years) in Laois/Offaly was 282.8 per 100,000 female population. This rate was the 10th highest rate (of 32 Local Health Office Areas) and was greater than the state average of 270.4.
- In 2019, a total of 48 children and young people aged <18 years sought treatment for substance misuse according to the Health Research Board in Laois/Offaly and equates to a rate of 10.6 per 10,000 population aged <18 years. This rate is greater than the State in 2019 (8.0) and in recent years the rate of those accessing treatment has increased in Laois/Offaly.
- In 2017, according to Tusla 612 children and young people in CHO8 (Laois/Offaly, Longford/Westmeath and Louth/Meath) were referred to CAMHS, however, were deemed not suitable or not in need of the service.
- In 2018/19, according to the Department of Education, only 89.3% of the Leaving Certificate cohort that was entrants to the junior cycle in 2013 completed their Leaving Certificate. This was less than the state average of 91.0% and the 8th lowest rate in the country.
- In 2019, according to the Department of Justice there were 710 Laois/Offaly referrals to the Garda Youth Diversion. This figure equated to a rate of 15.64 per 1,000 population aged <18 years.
- In 2021, according to the Department of Social Protection the total number of young people aged 18 to 25 years that were signing on the live register was 477. This figure equated to a rate of 79.7 per 1,000 populations, it was higher than the states rate of 51.2 and was the 7th highest rate in the country.

3.4 Buildings Profile

When planning a wellness centre, which aims to respond to the need of the youth population, it is vital to consider the existing youth buildings in Laois. The following buildings for young people are currently available in Laois:

Name
Portlaoise Parish Centre
YWI Laois Youth space Portlaoise
Foróige Old Bank Youth Centre Portlaoise
Foróige Mountrath Youth Hub
Foróige PORT Project, Portarlinton
Mountrath Youth Project
Treoir Nua and Portlaoise FRC
Mountmellick Youth and FRC
Rathdowney Youth Café Space

Table 2.3 Youth buildings in Laois (2022)

Some buildings listed above are also mapped showing the distribution throughout Laois in the map below.



Map 2.5 Youth Services in Laois (2021)

As of 2021, there were only four targeted youth spaces in Laois. Of this half were located in Portlaoise town, while the other two were in Mountrath and Portarlinton respectively. The current locations for targeted youth services in Laois are either rented or leased short term.

3.5 Conclusion

- Between 2011 and 2016 Laois County has witnessed an unprecedented population growth. Data shows how this population growth was concentrated in the Port Laois LEA of the county. The population in Laois is unique compared to the rest of Ireland as it comprises of not only a very young population but also a very ethnically diverse community.
- A number of factors can contribute to the level of deprivation in an area. This includes levels of education, employment and age. Data from the Pobal HP Deprivation Index, collated in 2017 using data from the 2016 Census highlight the high levels of youth population residing in some of the most deprived Small Areas in the county.
- Population surges, above the national average, similar to that have taken place in Laois can place high demand on existing services when development of infrastructure and services does not match the population growth. The consequence of this can be that those most in need not being able to access necessary supports.
- There are limited youth services in Laois to respond to the needs of the youth population and most notably there is a lack of a permanent dedicated youth service or building.

Chapter Four: Community, Youth and Stakeholder Engagement

4.1 Overview

This chapter uses data gathered from the online survey disseminated in Laois, focus groups carried out and data gathered from the online stakeholder event. This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive guide to what wellness is perceived as, what is the need of the community and what are the possible barriers as outlined by the community, young people and stakeholders.

This will be discussed; firstly, based on the findings from the online survey circulated within the community in Laois, the youth focus groups carried out and the stakeholder event.

4.2 Community engagement (Online Survey)

Between May and July 2021 an online survey was disseminated via multiple social media platforms within the Laois Community. 80 people responded to the survey, of those:

- Average age of respondents was 20 with an age range from 12 to 55 years (only 39 specified their age)
- 21% were male and 71% were female while 7% did not want to say or identified as non-binary
- In terms of ethnicity, 83% were White Irish, 6% were Other White, 6% were Black or Black Irish and 2% were White Irish Traveller. 2% identified as Other or did not specify.
- 86.9% of respondents did not have a disability or a chronic health condition.

Findings from the online survey distributed within Laois show the following:

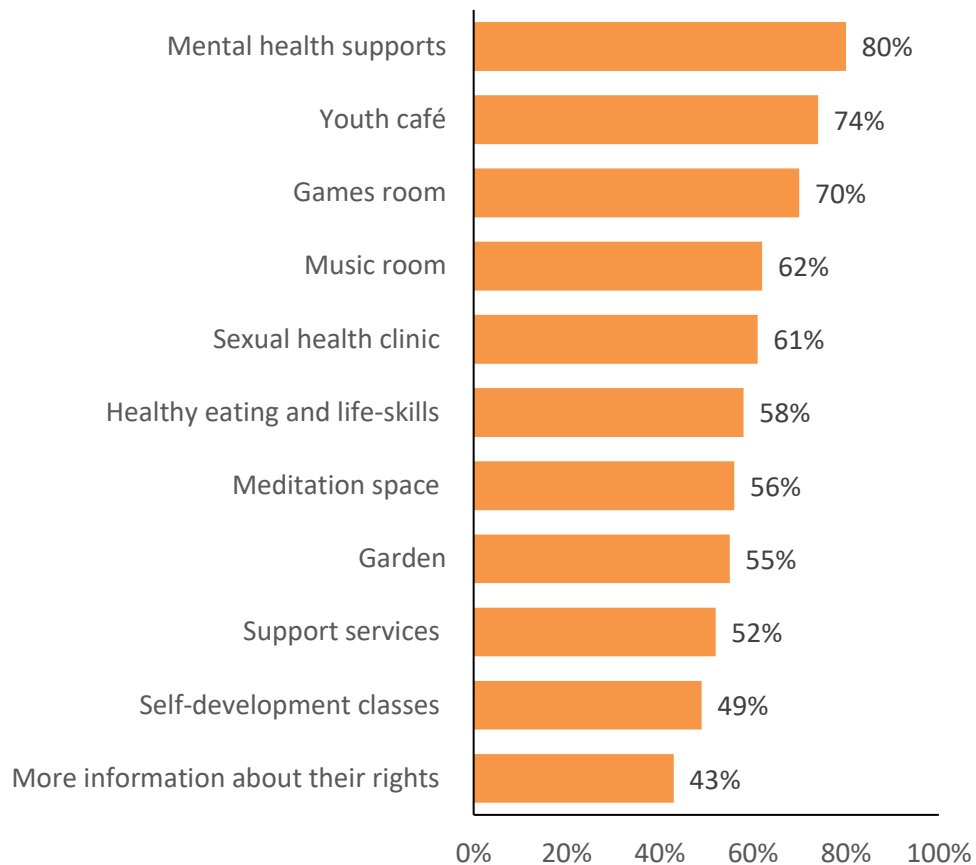
Wellness

- 78% reported that wellness meant mental well-being.
- 46.7% reported that it meant physical well-being.
- 20% reported that wellness meant both mental and physical well-being.
- When asked what words came to mind when they thought of wellness most answered health, mental health, physical health, happiness and peace.
- 60% responded that they had already been engaged with youth groups, clubs or services.
- Those that had engaged reported benefits including improved social skills, building relationships, teamwork, and better self-confidence as well as having a place to go.

Need

- 80% felt that there were not enough opportunities to meet the social and wellness needs of young people in Laois

- 96% reported that they would like to see a new youth wellness centre established in Laois
- In the wellness centre the following resources, services and supports were identified as being needed by the respondents: Mental health supports (80%), Youth café (74%) and a Games room (70%). Graph 4.1 outlines the resources identified as being needed by survey respondents.



Graph 4.1 Resources needed in a youth wellness centre, online survey May to July 2021.

- Most respondents wanted access to a wellness centre in the evenings and at the weekend

Barriers

- 64% reported that transport would be a significant barrier to them attending a wellness centre
- 57% felt that that cost would be a barrier
- Of the respondents that noted 'Other Reasons' as being a barrier six felt that social anxiety would be a barrier for them attending

4.3 Youth engagement (Focus Groups)

In total 25 young people from across Laois attended four focus groups carried out online in May 2021.

Of the young people:

- 24% were male, 72% were female and 4% were trans
- 76% were White Irish, 16% were Black or Black Irish and 4% were mixed race or Other
- 92% were aged under 18 and 8% were aged over 18.

Wellness

As part of the focus groups, young people were asked to note words or phrases that came to mind when they thought of wellness (Graphic 4.1). Most identified wellness as a combination of both their physical and mental health. Others noted words that included classes, reading and art that would be used to achieve wellness. Significantly, financial stability and security were noted by young people as being related to wellness.



Graphic 4.1 Words related to wellness as identified by young people in Laois, April to May 2021.

Young people were asked what they can do to 'feel well'. Some of the young people described how taking part in classes with other youths or partaking in activities such as yoga and Pilates gave them a sense of wellness. While others described having a safe environment where they could 'relax and take a deep breath' was required in order to feel well.

Need

Of the youth focus groups carried out, only some of the young people had a wide range of knowledge and were well informed when it came to targeted services such as substance misuse, mental health and sexual advice supports available to them. Of these, most were aged over 18 and were in third-level education. While the younger cohorts, aged less than 18 years and in full-time education, comparably had far less awareness of targeted services.

In the focus groups, young people expressed a need for not only information on how to access targeted services but also a safe, confidential and respectful environment where they could actively pursue them.

Two young people discussed how despite being reserved or anxious they still had a strong desire to experience new things. Of the activities that young people described that they would like to be involved with through a wellness centre included: gardening, celebrating different cultures and a youth café.

Young people were asked to detail what they felt they wanted in a youth wellness centre. To the young people the design of the building was important and that it was not a clinical or stark environment. They wanted a space that was warm, welcoming and inclusive. One group discussed the various aspects of other communal spaces they liked and didn't like. They stated how they enjoyed spaces such as libraries as it provided them with a space to be quiet and away from social media. They welcomed the idea of community centres but in practice felt that they were never open and not comfortable spaces to spend their free time. Young people were most favourable with shopping centres as it gave them an opportunity to spend quality time with friends, but they did not have the money to spend there and often felt like they were loitering.

The possibility of parents accessing the centre was posed to young people throughout the consultation. While some young people were hesitant that parents would also have access to the centre, they were in agreement that it would be beneficial that parents also had access to centre but at different times to young people. Young people were asked if they would be happy if the centre could be utilised by other groups or members of the community during school hours when young people would not be attending the centre and most young people agreed that this would be positive.

Throughout the focus groups, young people spoke of activities that they would be interested in within a youth wellness centre, such as:

- Dedicated youth space
- Classes in photography and creative writing

- Bike racks
- Pool table
- Youth café
- Space for peer-led teaching
- Lectures and information series

Identified targeted services for young people included:

- Sexual health education, advice and clinic
- Access to substance misuse treatment and advice
- Mental health services

Finally, young people described how the environment of the wellness centre could appeal and be welcomed to young people by:

- Having tasteful décor
- Space for people that may have a sensory overload
- Accessible building
- Calm, understanding and compassionate staff
- Multi-cultural representation in young people attending and staff
- Free contraception and feminine hygiene products

Barriers

A consistent and dominant theme when young people were asked about barriers when attending a youth wellness centre was transport. Young people described how in rural areas there was a lack of access to public transport; urban-based young people did not feel safe walking at night, even in groups of people. Young people felt there were limited options for them to travel independently to services, particularly in the evening time. This meant that they were reliant on lifts in private cars, which were not always available to them.

The next barrier identified by young people was cost. Most felt that the cost of attending groups, clubs or services could be at times prohibitive. They favoured options where they could give funds to an 'honesty box' when they could afford it and that it did not mean they could not attend the service if they did not have the financial means. They were favourable to options where they could access a youth café or other services for free whilst other members of the community could attend and pay full price. Some young people did express concerns over confidentiality and not feeling comfortable

with this option, but if other community members were attending at separate times, they felt it could work.

Confidentiality was an additional barrier identified by young people particularly in relation to respect from staff members and peers when accessing confidential services. Young people favoured respectful system for accessing confidential services such as a discrete reception desk and separate entrances for targeted services.

Further barriers noted by young people included not having enough information or knowledge on the service beforehand and how they would feel somewhat anxious or apprehensive about accessing a service with little prior knowledge. The young people favoured a strong social media presence by the wellness centre which would give them possible 'tours' of the building and a breakdown of services available so that they would feel more enabled to attend with prior knowledge.

Some young people noted how the presence of large or dominant groups of other young people could be off-putting. Young people noted how this dominance can be off-putting to other young people and how it is important that the space is maintained as an open and inclusive space for all in a structured manner.

4.4 Stakeholder engagement (Stakeholder event)

In June 2021 an online stakeholder event with over 26 stakeholders representing 24 organisations involved in youth, community and business services in Laois was held. The event was facilitated by 6 volunteers this offered an opportunity for breakout rooms to be provided for stakeholders to discuss themes surrounding the youth wellness centre.

Wellness

As part of the event stakeholders were asked to note words or phrases that came to mind when they thought of youth wellness centre (Graphic 4.2).



Graphic 4.2 Words related to wellness as identified by stakeholders in Laois, June 2021.

Most described how a youth wellness centre should be a safe space that would provide young people with access to support services and a positive environment to explore wellness. Stakeholders were also asked what they felt that they would expect to find in a youth wellness centre (Graphic 4.3)

WHAT STAKEHOLDERS SEE A YOUTH WELLNESS CENTRE AS



Welcoming environment
Free services
Knowledge
Guidance
Counselling
Career guidance
Mindfulness
Open Communication
Creative activities
Access to support
Therapy services
Approachable staff
Advocacy

Graphic 4.3 Words related to what should be in a youth wellness centre as identified by stakeholders in Laois, June 2021.

Stakeholders agreed the most important aspect of centre that it would be a welcoming environment, with access to a variety of services.

Need

In recent years the population in Laois has witnessed a significant surge of 5.1% between 2011 and 2016, far greater than that of the state at 3.8%. Findings from the stakeholder event showed how the population increase has placed pressure on local services. This is reflected in increased demand for local services, as well as a lack of recreational facilities to accommodate a growing youth population according to stakeholders. A combination of a lack of funding for the provision of space and the availability of greenfield sites were highlighted as the main reasons why there is a current lack of dedicated youth space and sports facilities. The impact of the surge in population also created more pressure on employment opportunities for young people, a lack of adequately funded projects to respond to their needs and created a significant urban/rural divide amongst the population.

Stakeholders discussed at length how Laois had quickly become a multi-cultural county due to its location in Ireland, being at the crossroads of major route ways and having two International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS). The above average proportions of ethnic minority groups in Laois are reflected in the Census 2016 data. Those who took part in the stakeholder event described

how some of the ethnic minority communities had integrated well in the local community of Laois and had a strong presence whilst others had not.

Throughout the consultation, the diverse population in Laois has been discussed as well as the various inclusion initiatives that have taken place. Cultural parades and food demonstration days were identified as the most successful. Stakeholders highlighted some minority communities do not engage with local organisations as there can be communication and language barriers when services are only offered in English. Additional barriers noted are when staff members and centre representatives are primarily White Irish as minority community members may not feel represented or that they belong in the centre.

The importance of having parents involved with the youth wellness centre was highlighted by stakeholders from the preliminary stage of research. Parental involvement would provide parents with a space to access supports and information for young people while also encouraging parents to promote the centre amongst their young people.

Having parents or other members of the community utilise the centre during school hours while young people were not accessing it appealed to stakeholders. Uses considered during school hours included an information point for parents and family supports as well as room rental to community groups which could possibly be additional income for the centre.

Building type

At the event, stakeholders were provided with three options for the type of building that could be utilised for the purpose of the youth wellness centre. These were:

1. A purpose-built building that would have a large site for a range of facilities and would be multi-accessible. However, there could be a significant wait time for a suitable site to be available as well as a need for planning permission and significant funding.
2. An existing building re-purposed could be leased eliminating the need to wait for long-term funding, it could be adapted, and the community would already be familiar with it. While there may be some wait time involved for a suitable building to be available, the repurposing budget would be unknown, and it may not be suitable for evolving needs.
3. The final option to link in with an existing organisation or service such as a library would provide an opportunity to avail of existing community interest and existing facilities. However, this would also mean that the building would have to be shared with a separate organisation and that there would be no purpose-built facilities.

At the event the option to re-purpose a building was favoured by stakeholders.

Overcoming obstacles

Engagement with stakeholders, both service providers and community groups, is essential for the successful establishment of a youth wellness centre in Laos. An effective establishment of the youth wellness centre would in turn support the viability of the centre and its future. Local politics or past working relationships can possibly impact negatively on the establishment of a new community centre. As part of the stakeholder event, it was critical to engage with stakeholders to identify how possible obstacles that could face the establishment of the wellness centre at a local level be overcome.

At the stakeholder event stakeholders were asked to add words relating to overcome obstacles in the establishment of a youth wellness centre, at a local level, could be overcome. The image below shows the words added at the stakeholder event.



Graphic 4.3 Words related overcoming obstacles in relation to the establishment of a youth wellness centre as identified by stakeholders in Laos, June 2021.

Ways to overcome obstacles, as described by stakeholders, can be divided across four themes: (1) Collaboration, (2) Consultation, (3) Perseverance and (4) Communication. Collaboration between services and organisations is essential in order to provide the youth of Laos with centre of youth services. Consultation, research and evaluation is critical to ensure that the centre responds to the needs of the community. Perseverance of the centre to achieve funding and strategic goals is

necessary in order that the centre remains financially viable while clear and effective communication between agencies is required in order to best serve the community.

4.5 Conclusion

- The online community survey presented how there is an appetite amongst the community for the development of a youth wellness centre.
- Through the focus groups the young people of Laois are aware of their wellness needs and have identified that they feel there is a lack of youth-focused services in Laois.
- Amongst both young people and local stakeholders there is an increasing demand for youth-focused centre that can provide young people with a space to go to, participate in group activities, access targeted services if required and participate in their local community.
- Amongst local stakeholders, there is strong support to facilitate the development of a youth wellness centre. Support was evident amongst both statutory and C&V organisations.
- Stakeholder and young people both agreed that the centre would benefit from parents and other members of the community utilising the space during school hours.
- Most stakeholders were in agreement that a suitable building option would be the refurbishment of an older building opposed to a greenfield site or linking in with an existing organisation.
- Finally, in order for multiple agencies to provide a centre of youth services in Laois stakeholders described how collaboration between agencies, consultation with young people, perseverance to access suitable funding and communication between agencies are all essential to overcome obstacles in the establishment of the centre.

Chapter Five: Child, Youth or Community Focused Centres

5.1 Overview

A fundamental element of this study was to examine both national and international service providers to seek best practice from other child, youth and community centres. Information sourced in this chapter was directly from the centres or site visits. Centres that were examined included:

- St. Joseph's Healthcare in Ontario, Canada
- Attic House, Longford
- Nano Nagle Centre, Cork
- ABC Programme Tallaght, Dublin
- Blueskies Initiative, Dublin
- Tracton Arts and Community Centre, Cork
- Clarecare, Clare
- Squashy Couch, Waterford
- Soearth, Co. Kildare

Each centre will be examined in relation to its history, the services available, the buildings, and management structure as well as funding.

5.2 International best practice - Canada

In February 2017, the Ontario government in Canada announced funding for integrated service hubs across the province to address gaps in the youth service system. Ten hubs are now being established to serve as fully integrated "one-stop-shops" for youth aged 12-25, to address their needs related to mental health, substance use, primary care, education, employment, training, housing and other community and social services. These hubs will also include peer services, outreach, and system navigation services.

One of these hubs is St. Joseph's Healthcare in Ontario Canada. It is a safe, accessible environment for young people aged 17 to 25 to receive expert mental health and substance use care by self-referral. The method of referral allows people to self-refer or for friends and families to refer an individual. The service is confidential and is covered by the Ontario Health Care Plan. It has a very strong social media presence on Twitter and Instagram including its own dedicated hashtag. Most of its social media content is actively engaging with young people on a regular basis and promoting its events.

Referrals are made by means of a detailed online referral form that can be filled out by the young person themselves, a relative or friend or a service. A detailed case history is requested as well as information on other services the young person may be linking in with.

Clinical care is offered through three different pathways:

- Early intervention for those experiencing emerging concerns
- Transitional support when moving from child-based services to adult services
- A mobile team provides services to young people who face barriers accessing the service

According to Wang et al. (2020) utilising data obtained from the clinic itself that the primary route of access to the centre was through self-referral. This showed how young people welcomed the opportunity to take control of their own health needs access early intervention, be supported to navigate an otherwise complicated system and access transitional services.

The youth wellness centre is deemed a success in the study as it successfully reached a cohort of young people that would be otherwise at risk for the development of mental disorders.

5.3 Irish Centres & Services

Attic House, Longford

History: A redevelopment of the Attic Youth Café based in Longford town; this teen project was established in 2015. The Attic House is an adapted building that captures the needs of young people aged 10 – 18 years of age in Longford.

Services Available: The Attic House has a computer suite, meeting rooms, a Youth Café, kitchen, offices and reception, outdoor sports area, demonstration kitchen, sound studio, and a workshop room for projects.

Building: The building itself is a refurbished house and additional buildings have been built in a green space as funds permitted.

Management Structure: The Attic House is registered as a limited company with a board of directors. A limited number of staff members are employed through a community employment scheme such as caretakers and a receptionist.

Funding: The building is owned outright by the Attic House company, purchased and renovated for €800,000. Funding for the project, including maintenance and upkeep of the building, comes from an annual festival organised and run by young people attending the project. Rooms and facilities are

rented to local groups for meetings etc. Foróige, acting as an anchor tenant, run five groups from the Attic House.

Tracton Arts & Community Centre, Cork

History: Acquired by Tracton Community Council in 2006, the Knocknahanagh Old School Trust oversaw the restoration and the development of the community arts centre in 2014.

Services Available: The centre provides a community space where rooms can be rented for local groups or classes. Based in the centre is the Inkwel theatre, a 120-capacity theatre that has attracted many theatre groups and acts.

Building: The building itself is a refurbished schoolhouse and additional buildings have been built in a green space as funds permitted.

Management Structure: The centre is registered as a limited company with a board of directors. It has charitable status through an affiliation with Muintir Na Tire, a voluntary organisation dedicated to the promotion of the process of community development. There is a full-time secretary and there are a limited number of staff members employed through a community employment scheme (CE scheme), such as caretakers.

Funding: The centre is funded by the income generated from the theatre, grants from the LEADER Partnership, the Arts Council Funding and small capital grants as well as room rental.

Nano Nagle Place, Cork

History: Nano Nagle Place is located in Cork City and is housed in the Presentation Buildings in Douglas Street, Cork. The buildings have been recently regenerated with funds from the Presentation Sisters.

Services Available: Located in the centre is an education centre, a café and restaurant as well as rooms available to let by local communities and groups. Nano Nagle Place is also home to the Cork City Migrant Project and the Lantern Project.

Building: The building is extensive with a large garden area. It includes a large gift shop, museum, offices and communal rooms. There are two sets of residential units, one with apartments for sisters of the presentation order and the second with pre-existing social housing.

Management Structure: Nano Nagle place was established as a limited company with a board of directors and is a registered charity. The management team tasked to run Nano Nagle place include a CEO, business manager, facilities manager and a programmes manager.

Funding: For the renovation of the building funding was obtained from the Presentation Order Funds. Other funds include rent from anchor tenants (CUCA) who pay for the use of some of the buildings. An income is generated from room rental to local groups and the space for the café and restaurant. Income is also generated from the museum and gift shop.

Clarecare, Clare

History: Established in 1969, under the Clare Social Services Council, as a voluntary service to respond to the needs of the older population of Clare. Renamed Clarecare in 1987 is a not-for-profit agency providing a wide range of services throughout Clare and the mid-western region.

Services Available: Services include a Family Support Service, an Older Persons Service, a Social Work Department, Homecare Service, over 65's clubs, Addiction Treatment Services, Counselling Service, Homework Club and holiday homes for those in need.

Building: Clarecare operates from a number of buildings and offices throughout Clare including Ennis, Kilrush, Shannon, Killaloe and Ennistymon.

Management Structure: Clarecare is registered as a limited company with a board of directors for corporate governance. It has its own charitable status. Employed with the organisation includes a CEO and service coordinators.

Funding: The primary source of funding is the Health Services Executive, Tusla Child and Family Agency and other statutory funders. Additional funds come from various Trust Funds, private donations, Church-gate collections, collection boxes, bequests, and voluntary donations.

Childhood Development Initiative, Dublin

History: In 2003 through seed funding from the Katherine Howard Foundation and AP, a three-year consultation was carried out to develop a strategy to improve outcomes for children and young people in Tallaght. In 2005 a strategy was launched, aimed at improving the health, safety, learning and overall wellbeing of children in the area and increase their sense of belonging to the locality.

Services Available: Through its staff working with commissioned organisations and/or community representatives a number of services are provided including:

- The Early Childhood Care and Education service;
- The after-school service to promote literacy ('Doodle Den');
- The after-school service to promote pro-social behaviour ('Mate-Tricks');
- Quality Enhancement Programme (QEP).

Building: The CDI is based in St Mark's Youth and Family Centre, Tallaght.

Management Structure: CDI is a legal entity and a limited company. The Initiative is overseen by a board comprised of a range of actors from the community, community sector, academia, the private sector, and a philanthropic organisation. There is also a Service Sub Committee comprising of three board members alongside statutory and community organisation representatives and a school principal with the functions of ensuring CDI services reflect national policy and government thinking as well as making recommendations to CDI Board.

Funding: It is funded equally through two sources: from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth through the Prevention and Early Intervention fund; and through a matching grant provided by the AP.

Squashy Couch, Waterford

History: Squashy Couch is an Adolescent Health & Information project, based in Waterford City. It provides young people aged between 14-19 years with access to health and information services. Up until a number of years ago Squashy Couch had open access to its youth café however this is now no longer available.

Services Available: Originally Squashy Couch offered an open youth café with access to counselling services. All the services were offered free of charge and all staff were fully qualified. It now provides a sexual health clinic, GP services and access to Tusla aftercare services.

Building: Squashy couch is located in the centre of Waterford City in a repurposed building.

Management Structure & Funding: Squashy couch is funded and run by Tusla.

Soearth Projects, Kildare

History: Based on a farm in Co. Kildare Soearth Projects provide mental health, arts and eco-wellness services for Adults, Children and Adolescents.

Services Available: Soearth Projects provide mental health, arts and eco-wellness services. The Creative Arts Therapy service offers Art Psychotherapy and Music Therapy. This is available for Adults, Children and Adolescents. Soearth Projects also facilitate arts and eco-wellness experiences. The privately run centre offers a range of internal programmes and rental options for community and business groups.

Building: Soearth is based on a farm with a purpose-built building.

Management Structure & Funding: Soearth is managed privately and is funded directly from the services it provides.

5.4 Conclusion

- Most of the centres highlighted in this section benefit from having a range of services available within them. Services can be universal or targeted allowing multi-levels of access and use based on the needs of the individual accessing them.
- Centres operating with a commercial element and multi-purpose rooms benefit from additional income revenues as well as having multiple services in the one building.
- Services with a charity-based affiliation benefit from having an ability to seek funding as well as fundraise.
- Centres with a clear and transparent management system where local stakeholders have an opportunity to have a voice are the most common structure in the centres that were identified for this study.
- Finally, control or ownership of the centre is critical to the overall day to day running of the service as well as the accessibility of services to young people that wish to access it.

Chapter Six: Interview Findings – Senior Specialist Panel and Experienced Child, Youth and Community Service Providers

6.1 Overview

In this chapter data collected from one-to-one interviews with a senior specialist panel as well as experienced child, youth and community service providers. The findings are separated into the interviews carried out with a senior specialist panel including Laois Volunteer Centre, Laois County Council, Laois Offaly Education & Training Board, Local Private Business Owner and Tusla. Topics discussed included:

- Needs
- Priorities
- Challenges
- Funding

While experienced child, youth and community service providers including Youth Work Ireland Laois, Childhood Development Initiative Tallaght, Archways – Blue Skies Initiative Clondalkin, Nano Nagle Place, Saint Joseph’s Healthcare, Hamilton, Canada, Attic House, Longford, Castleblaney Youth Centre and discussed:

- Best practices
- Challenges
- Cultural Diversity
- Management Structures
- Research and Evaluation

6.2 Senior Specialist Panel

Need

Three senior specialist panel members discussed the significant needs that are present in Laois as a result of existing services being placed under pressure due to the recent surge in population. A lack of youth facilities and recreational sites were highlighted as needs. One senior specialist highlighted how the unprecedented surge in youth population in Laois had placed an emphasis on the lack of formal funding directed at youth services in the area. This demand on services, according to the senior specialist, was evident as the limited number of youth services that did exist in Laois such as YWI Laois, did not have the capacity in their current locations to respond to the demand of their services.

‘The lack of premises limits their activities’ (Senior Specialist 3)

Other needs highlighted included more mental health services, an information service for both families and young people, domestic violence support and an informal space for young people to engage in services and supports.

One senior specialist detailed how some young people can be fortunate to access mental health support through local Mental Health Services. This support can initially be six to eight sessions.

The senior specialist went on to describe in some cases this is not enough, given the experiences of the young person. Additional sessions/ supports or another service is then needed for the young person. Two senior specialists described how in order for a young person to feel supported, enabled and empowered to improve their well-being, a longer-term more holistic focused support is required.

Priorities

One senior specialist noted how young people need to be more involved with their community and that the key to having young people involved in more and more activities was to begin their journey somewhere. He went on to describe that original or unusual activities that they are unable to access in other services can act as a facilitator to encourage them to participate in their local community.

‘Creativity can connect’ (Senior Specialist 1)

Senior specialists discussed how young people that are engaged with liberal and inclusive environments, they are more likely to connect and engage with the services it provides. One senior specialist that the youth centre should be a space to give youth services and organisations to connect with one another. He went on to stress that it is important that overall strategic development and ethos of the centre should be clear with a well communicated approaches and strategies.

‘The centre must have a clear vision’ (Senior Specialist 1)

Throughout the interviews senior specialists discussed what elements they envisage and what services and functions should be made a priority in a youth-focused centre. These included:

1. Information Services

- A youth information service
- Career guidance service
- Peer mentoring
- Parent groups
- Parent information hub
- Sexual health information

2. Outreach
 - Education outreach
 - Volunteer outreach centre
3. Social Enterprise
 - A social enterprise-based café or restaurant to generate a possible income and provide an opportunity for young people to gain work experience or part-time employment
4. Mental Health Services
 - Self-referred mental health services
 - Mental health nurse
 - Group-based therapy programmes
 - Holistic treatments and classes
 - Evidence-based programmes and treatments
5. Space
 - Utilising an existing site or building
 - Providing an inclusive sensory space
 - Utilising an anchor tenant for possible funding

Challenges

Noted by the senior specialists' challenges included that it is important to not be seen as an urban only service and to appeal to the broader rural community. It would be important for the service to conduct outreach through existing based rural services and schools as well as local transport links.

Having access to long term funding would provide an opportunity to locate a site for the service and create a long-term plan for growth and expansion.

In order for a youth centre to succeed and provide much needed essential services to the young people of Laois, multiple services must come together to achieve this, as described by one senior specialist.

<p>'See the need for an integrated centre, none of us can do it on our own' (Senior Specialist 3)</p>

They outlined how not one agency or service could provide such a multi-faceted facility for young people and communication and cooperation between multiple service providers and stakeholders.

Funding

A number of funding streams were discussed with senior specialists. They stressed the importance of steady and long-term funding stream which included:

1. Capital funding

Working with a lead partner, such as a local authority, an application can be made for the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) or Leader. This fund is held within the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and was established as part of the National Planning Framework, to support more compact and sustainable development. Other URDD funds granted in Laois include Portlaoise – A Cultural Quarter (€2,343,000.00) and Portlaoise – A Low Carbon Town (€1,014,000.00).

2. Operational Funding

An anchor tenant as a national or regional youth focused agency with a strong local presence. This agency would lease a proportion of the centre, on a minimum five-year basis providing the centre with a guaranteed income for a number of years. Three senior specialists noted how a social enterprise operating as a café or restaurant could be well-received particularly as it would enable other members of the community to engage and interact with the centre.

3. Programme Funding

The availability of small or medium-sized meeting rooms could appeal to private practitioners, other agencies, and community groups to avail and utilise space, at a cost. The cost of the room rental can be utilised for programme funding within the centre.

6.3 Experienced child, youth and community service providers

A part of the research was to learn from other youth-focused centres, both nationally and internationally, on what practices have worked well in their organisations.

Best Practices

Best practices and features in other services that worked well, as identified by experienced child, youth and community service provider, included:

1. Partnerships with existing organisations

Established youth-focused organisations can provide links with seldom heard or hard to reach communities. These organisations have existing links with funding aids and members of the community that the wellness centre would benefit from.

2. Drop-in youth service or café

A drop-in youth service provides young people with an informal space and gives them an opportunity to engage with more targeted services. This space could operate also as a social enterprise providing an opportunity to generate an income and involve the wider community in the centre.

3. Multifunctional rooms and meeting spaces

Various rooms and spaces within a service such as gardens, theatre spaces, demonstration kitchens and various sized meetings rooms not only provide additional space for the service but can also be used for income generation when young people are not in attendance.

4. Facilities Manager

A facilities manager would provide day-to-day management of the centre including overseeing multiple rooms and service operations within the centre. A strategic and business-minded centre manager would bring strong enterprising elements to the centre. A centre manager will have strong local links with other services and agencies with a strong experience on the needs of young people. The centre manager will not be able to operate in isolation. Other roles that should also be considered, according to one interviewee, should be a community engagement officer as well as a financial officer.

Cultural Diversity

Experienced child, youth and community service providers were asked what they would recommend for a strong engagement with a culturally diverse population. Responses included:

1. Facilitating not integrating

To ensure there is an emphasis on facilitating ethnic minorities in the centre through services that they would want to or have a need to engage with rather than encouraging them to integrate with existing services. Services and information should be provided in multiple languages within the centre.

2. Cultural programs

Facilitating cultural programs with targeted groups would provide an opportunity to build strong links and bridges with seldom-heard communities.

3. Multi-cultural staff

In order for multiple ethnicities and groups, including people with disabilities to be encouraged to attend that should be a wide range of staff members employed. This would include staff of multiple ethnicities, identities and abilities.

Challenges

Challenges as described by experienced youth and community service providers, included:

1. Targeted services becoming overwhelmed

Due to an increased demand for youth wellness services targeted, individual mental health services could be prone to becoming inundated. Services in the past in other parts of the country, as described by two youth and community service providers, were overwhelmed when offering drop-in or open-door targeted services such as mental health supports. This resulted in services having to remove drop-in elements and reduce access to targeted mental health supports.

One key authority advised having a mental health practitioner or nurse who could assess needs by utilising a detailed referral form for each individual hoping to access treatment. A detailed referral form would act as a tool to assess the needs of an individual and guide them to the correct service. In practice in other centres the mental health nurse or practitioner acts a signposting service to group therapies or to more targeted services if they are required.

2. Centre staff

The importance of centre staff was also emphasized by five of the key authorities. Some centres relied heavily on volunteers or staff from Community Employment Schemes⁸. This element of staff is vital for outreach, community inclusion and maintenance, however, interviewees stressed how a centre management structure including a general manager or CEO, a financial manager and community engagement staff would be critical for the day-to-day running of the centre.

Possible Management Structures

Based on their own experience experienced child, youth and community service providers were asked about the best practices regarding the management structure. This included:

1. A new Company Limited by Guarantee without a Share Capital (CLG) with a board of directors

⁸ The Community Employment (CE) programme is designed to help people who are long-term unemployed (or otherwise disadvantaged) to get back to work by offering part-time and temporary placements in jobs based within local communities.

A CLG is recommended for non-profit companies such as charities that require a separate legal entity or corporate protection. There are no shareholders in this type of company, and they are required to have a minimum of two directors. In the case of a CLG being formed, it is required to have a board of directors in place to determine the long-term aims of the centre.

2. An existing Company Limited by Guarantee without a Share Capital (CLG) with a board of directors

This management structure would be based on utilising an existing CLG already in place in Laois with a board of directors. Utilising an existing CLG would benefit the centre by availing of standing and current relationships with other groups as well as programme funding streams. An expansion of existing board of directors may be required to best suit the commercial aspects of the wellness centre as well as a commercial manager to ensure financial viability.

3. Private entity

The centre would be funded privately and operated in a solely commercial manner. Agencies and services could avail of room rental and operate within the at a cost. It would be hoped that the centre would operate in response to a social model however this would be dependent on the operator.

4. Funded and operated by one organisation

The final option would be that the youth wellness centre is funded and operated by one organisation. This would provide secure funding and staff as well as the operation however the day to day running of the centre being managed and controlled by an agency and a management committee.

Research and evaluation

Finally, three experienced child, youth and community service providers stressed the importance of research and evaluation. Research was highlighted as being vital to ensure that those that are seldom heard have a voice in the centre as well as an advocate for their needs and supports required. While the importance of evaluation was stressed to ensure the goals set out of the youth wellness centre are being achieved.

6.4 Conclusion

- Senior specialists stressed that there is a strong need for a youth-focused wellness centre in Laois as it could respond to the significant increase in population, the demand for space for young people to have access to out of school activities and accessible targeted services.
- Functions and services that are seen as priorities included information services, outreach and evaluation, social enterprise, mental health services and an accessible space. In terms of the

possibility of funding, multiple streams were discussed including large scale funding, anchor tenants, a social enterprise such as a café or restaurant and room rental.

- Senior specialists emphasized that the centre must be seen as a county wide service, multiple funding streams should be accessed, and services and agencies must work together to ensure that they are catering to the needs of the youth community.
- The best practices outlined in other centres include having a drop-in element, affiliations with other organisations, multifunctional spaces and facilities management as well as evidence-based research and ongoing evaluation. Possible challenges were also outlined including having a narrow catchment area, lack of management and long-term funding as well as targeted services becoming over accessible.
- Experienced child, youth and community service providers that discussed management structures recommended utilising an established CLG with a Board of Directors in conjunction with a management structure. Building on an existing structure could expertise and local knowledge with regard to fundraising, other service providers and large-scale capital funding. An existing board of directors would provide a transparent platform to guide the ethos of the centre while the management structure could oversee the commercial element to the centre and ensure its strategic and financial viability.

Chapter Seven: Key Considerations

7.1 Overview

This chapter utilises data gathered from interviews with senior specialists and project stakeholders. It aims to provide a comprehensive guide to the central elements of the proposed youth wellness centre in Laois under the following headings:

- Aim of the centre and accessibility
- Services and functions
- Organisational structure
- Predicted project costs
- Key partnerships
- Financial viability

7.2 Aim of the centre and accessibility

The aim of the youth wellness centre should be a community focused model aimed at providing young people with an accessible and inclusive environment where they can explore their mental and physical wellness to become more resilient, involved in their community, empowered and enabled.

A youth-focused hub or centre of activity would provide young people with a space to attend out of school hours to access youth-focused physical and mental wellness activities and services.



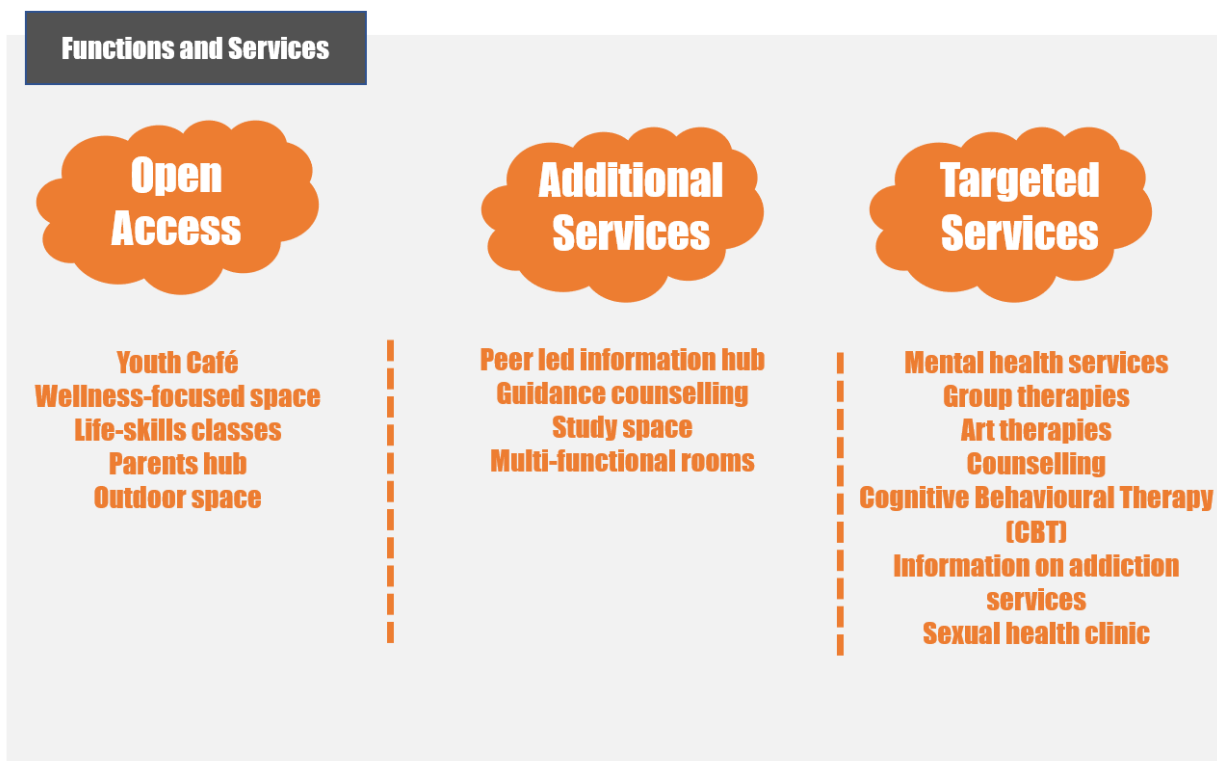
Graphic 7.1 The youth wellness centre

Access to the wellness centre should be open to all young people, based in a central location with transport links to rural areas. Portlaoise town centre would be the preferred location ideally located adjacent to, or in close proximity to other youth or community-focused organisations. A central location would ensure adequate transport links to rural areas and existing footfall as well as encouraging young people to avail of the centre.

The building must also be accessible and have separate or facilitate discreet entrances for targeted services as well as being an inclusive space for disabled people or those with sensory needs.

The space should also be available to parents and other members of the community during school hours. By making the space accessible to parents, they can avail of family or parents support services such as information hubs. While members of the community could avail of the multi-functional spaces available in the building.

7.3 Functions and services



Graphic 7.2 Functions and services

At an open access level, there is a need for the youth wellness centre to have youth-focused elements such as:

- Drop-in dedicated youth café

- Multi-functional wellness-focused space for meditation, yoga or other wellness-based activities with drop-in and regular activities
- Short courses on budgeting, career guidance and other life skills
- Outdoor space

Regular activities at the centre should have a strong focus on wellness, engaging and retaining young people, empowering them to become more a part of their local community and enable them to take better care of their wellbeing.

Other services available at the centre should include:

- Peer-led youth information hub
- Guidance counselling
- Bookable study space
- Multi-functional rooms – options for classes, art zone, music room, partnership with other agencies to share resources as well as adequate storage for multiple groups utilising the centre.

Targeted services available at the centre should include:

- Mental Health Supports
- Group therapies
- Art therapies
- Counselling
- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)
- Educational supports provided (CADS)

If mental health supports were available access should be through open referrals and with a completed assessment form in conjunction with the trained and dedicated mental health professional or nurse as per the Hamilton model. St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton's Youth Wellness Centre is a safe, accessible environment for young people age 17 to 25 to receive expert mental health and substance use care by self-referral providing early intervention, transition support and a mobile team. <https://www.stjoes.ca/hospital-services/mental-health-addiction-services/mental-health-services/youth-wellness-centre>

The purpose of this is to ensure that young people receive timely access to services best suited to their needs. Based on the assessment form carried out with a mental health professional or nurse young people can be referred to either universal or targeted services, whichever best suits their needs at the time of referral.

Other services available at the centre should include family services such as family therapy and a parents information hub. While a sexual health and advice clinic would also greatly benefit young people.

Footnote the Hamilton model.

7.4 Organisational structure

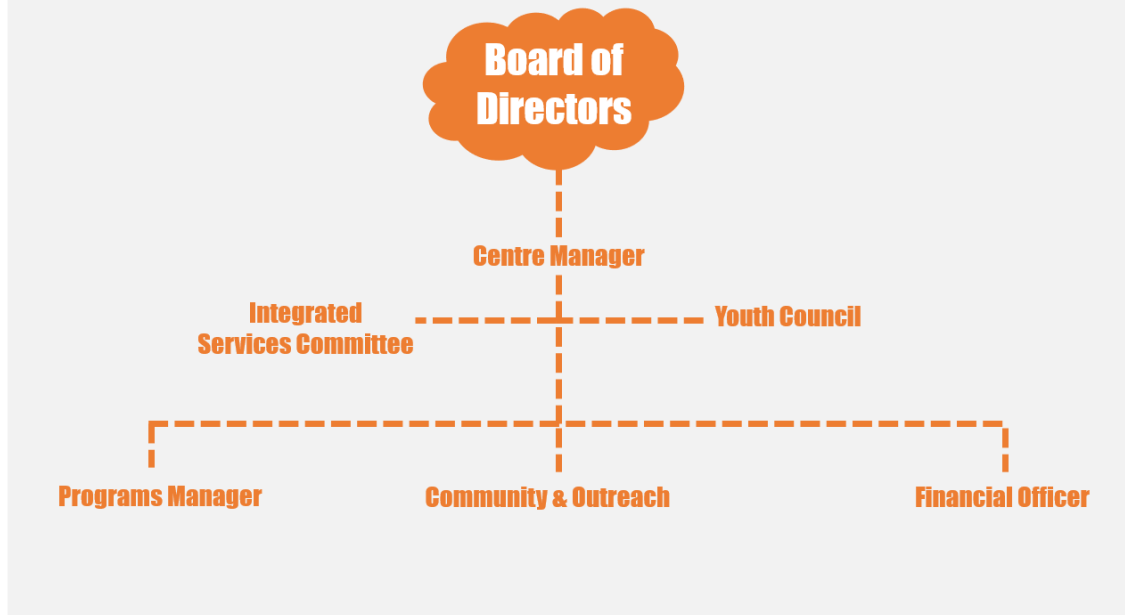
The recommendation from the study would be that the centre should be established as CLG with a Board of Directors. Those that are appointed to the board should be done based on them being members of the local community as well as having the necessary skills and adequate knowledge. It is essential that the board be a wide-ranging entity and includes local business interests or corporations to ensure a diverse skillset.

Other committees that are vital to the Youth Wellness Centre, would be an Integrated Services Committee made up of local statutory agencies that can feed information, queries as well as act in an advisory capacity to the board as well as a youth council made up of youth representatives. The Integrated Services Committee would ensure that local agencies and service providers present in the community will have an opportunity to work together and provide guidance to the centre to ensure that the needs of young people are responded to.

Answering to the Board would be a general manager of the Youth Wellness Centre. The role of the manager will be to manage the centre ensuring high-quality activities with maximum quality, service and efficiency for the organisation and will report to the Board of Directors.

Other advisable roles to be implemented would be a financial officer to manage financial elements, a programs manager to oversee the fulfilment of larger organizational goals of the youth wellness centre and a community and outreach officer to engage with the local community (see graphic 7.3).

Organisational Structure



Graphic 7.3 Proposed management organisational structure

Core staff to ensure the day-to-day working of the centre would include youth workers, a mental health nurse/mental health practitioner, administration staff and caretakers.

7.5 Predicted project costs

The expenditure associated with the youth wellness centre can be divided in to:

Set-up costs – Capital Funding

- i. Acquiring the building
- ii. Renovations to the building
- iii. Equipment
- iv. Legal costs associated with the CLG

Running Costs – Operational Funding

- i. Purchase of materials
- ii. Premises maintenance costs including rent of building, heat, light, cleaning and maintenance.
- iii. IT, admin and stationery
- iv. Insurance
- v. Health and safety compliance costs.

Employment – Staff Funding

- i. Centre manager
- ii. Programs manager
- iii. Community Outreach
- iv. Financial Officer
- v. Mental Health Practitioner or Nurse
- vi. Youth Workers
- vii. Administration
- viii. Care taking staff

7.6 Building development costs

Currently the Portlaoise Youth Café is approximately 200 Sq M total floor area. The space requirement for a sustainable future proofed youth space is considered to be well in excess of this at a guide total floor area of 400 Sq M. For the purposes of a guideline cost we will base our estimates on 400 Sq M.

Building Construction

At this stage of the project, the level of information available is insufficient to provide any detailed design and therefore any detailed associated costs. As a guide, the Society of Chartered Surveyors provide a guide for estimating building costs for light commercial buildings which is likely to apply in the case of a youth centre as proposed.

The estimate € per square metre cost for a light commercial building with site coverage of 400 sq m is : New Development : €2,500 per Sq M = €1,000,000.

These figures include development of the shell and internal spaces but do not include land costs, and individual space fit-outs such as kitchen, studio space, etc. It would include toilets, internal walls, insulation, electrical requirements etc. No costs have been included for car-parking or other site works.

The option of retrofitting an existing building will be an obvious consideration should a suitable building in the right location be found. The cost of refurbishment is generally estimated as a % of a new building so this would enable the following approximate costs to be used: New internal finishes, new cellularisation and upgrade of mechanical & electrical works

Retro-fit development: € per Sq M = 2,000 @ 400 Sq M = €800,000

This figure is based on the same exclusions as for a new development however the cost of purchase/lease of the building will need to be allowed for.

Additional Project Costs

In addition to land purchase/lease and building costs there are other project costs that should also be budgeted for. These include project management (design, quantity survey and M& E). In addition, given the high level of increase around the actual construction costs at this early stage a 20% contingency fee should also be allowed for.

Once a suitable site has been identified, land or building purchase/lease costs are known and a detailed design has been completed, then a more accurate budget can be developed.

7.7 Key partnerships

The funding of this youth development centre of this scale is undoubtedly going to be a critical factor in the community's decision to support the project. As a community facility, funding from Statutory funders will be required, both to enable the capital development to take place and to provide for its annual on-going operating costs to an agreed level.

Funding critical for the establishment of the centre includes:

- Capital funding for building development
- Operational funding for staff costs
- Programme funding to cover new programmes being established within the centre.

The success of the Youth Wellness Centre does not exist in a vacuum and will require key partnerships with other local agencies and groups. This study proposes that key partnerships can be developed with agencies that would be valuable to the wellness centre such as:

- Laois County Council to support the procurement of a dedicated youth space
- Laois Partnership Company in relation to accessing capital funding
- Laois Local Community Development Committee for the inclusion of a dedicated youth space in any future plans e.g. LCDC Plan, County Development Plan, SICAP Plan.
- Jigsaw regarding a possible expansion of its existing service
- Barnardos to access a community-based setting where they could provide some of their services locally in Laois
- Laois Offaly Education and Training Board Youth Strategy for Laois and Offaly
- Local Youth Services Foroige, No Name Club, Midlands LGBTI+ etc.

YWI Laois as the principal partner is key for the successful establishment of the centre. A number of factors relate directly to this including the local links already established by YWI Laois with other agencies. YWI are already actively pursuing expanding their services to meet current levels of demand as well as having a proven background in accessing funding.

Other opportunities for funding through YWI Laois include philanthropic funding from local business and corporate organisations could be another source of revenue for the centre. This could take a number of different forms including financial donations, or corporate sponsorship of events or spaces, or fundraising activities encouraging young people with the support of the local community to take a direct role in generating funds and would give the young people an opportunity to learn new skills.

While multi-functional spaces and rooms within the centre would provide an opportunity for additional revenue from room rental to groups. Throughout the consultations with young people and stakeholders there were discussions about maximising the usage of this space. Consultations indicated that from 9 am to 3 pm the wellness centre could be potentially accessed by other members of the community.

7.8 Financial viability

The potential for the financial viability of the youth wellness centre can only be indicative and achieving success is subject to several conditions and assumptions. One of these conditions is that opportunities for income generation should be sought from the outset. By expanding a contracting approach to the delivery of wellness services to young people, the centre could be in a position to secure a steady income from these means. In order to achieve this, a successful track record of operational experience would need to be generated.

Maintaining a centre of this nature will be challenging and will require commitment, expertise, local knowledge, strong leadership, and entrepreneurial skills from the management body.

7.9 Conclusion

- The aim of the youth wellness centre should be to provide young people with a permanent space where they can explore their mental and physical wellness to become more resilient. The centre should be centrally located in order to utilise existing and future transport routes as well as existing footfall.
- Young people, along with other members of the community, should be able to avail of various functions and services throughout the day such as a drop-in facility, wellness space, targeted services and a peer-led information hub.

- In order to strategically develop the centre as a long-term entity for Laois, it is vital that a clear and responsive organisational structure is established with a Board of Directors and an Integrated Services Committee.
- It is vital that multiple funding streams are examined for the establishment of the centre and subsequently self-generated income is explored. Following these, other opportunities can be explored such as philanthropic funding, community fundraising and the delivery of support and training programmes.
- The wellness centre will not exist in isolation and key partnerships with other agencies are vital for the running and success of the centre.
- Establishment and running costs of the centre can be estimated, however, the viability and success of the project are based on the significant expenditure that is required to establish the service, the management of the centre, that it is strategic and viable as well as exploring further opportunities for income generation.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion and Recommendations

8.1 Overview

This research set out to identify what the need amongst the youth population in Laois is and what are the priorities of key stakeholders in relation to a youth wellness centre would be. The research also set out to identify what key considerations need to be considered for the establishment of a youth wellness centre.

The findings show that due to an unprecedented growth in population there has been a demand placed on services in Laois, particularly youth services. The young people of Laois have been moving through a vulnerable stage of their lives including the pandemic.

The consultation carried out clearly demonstrated that:

- Young people are aware of their wellness needs and as they reduce online learning and online socialising post pandemic, they have a strong appetite for somewhere to spend free time as well as benefit their overall wellness.
- Key stakeholders from Laois equally feel there is a strong need for a youth wellness centre that can respond to the needs of young people in Laois. A lack of information services, an accessible location for a drop-in youth café and mental health services were amongst the needs of young people identified by local stakeholders.
- A youth wellness centre would adequately respond to the need for a permanent home for youth services in Laois.

A dedicated space for youth wellness has the potential to become a viable project, however, it will require a range of income streams to be developed to achieve long-term sustainability.

This final section of the report will describe the components of youth wellness centre that can contribute to a successful model and will make recommendations for the further development of the service.

8.2 Components of the youth wellness centre

- The aim of the youth wellness centre should be to provide young people with a space where they can explore their mental and physical wellness.
- The centre should be centrally located in order to utilise existing and future transport routes.
- Young people should be able to avail of various functions and services such as a drop-in facility, wellness space, targeted services and a peer-led information hub.

- Sessional space for other mental health services which might facilitate better communication, connectivity and collaboration.
- Space to provide coordinated parenting supports are key to meeting the social, emotional and developmental needs of children, adolescents and families.
- Utilising an existing youth focused structure, such as YWI Laois should be perused, expanding the Board of Directors and establishing an Integrated Services Committee.
- Finally, aside from the significant funding required to establish the centre, the success of the centre will be based on an inclusive and accessible dedicated space for young people, key partnerships with other agencies, the availability of capital and program funding as well as the centres' ability to generate income.

8.3 Recommendations

This section outlines recommendations arising from the research.

Need for a permanent youth centre

The evidence outlined in this feasibility study shows there is an apparent need for a youth centre in Laois. The purpose of the centre should be a dedicated youth space to provide a permanent home for youth services in Laois.

Project funding

The financial commitment has yet to be realised. It is worth considering the capital costs weighed against the benefits of a community youth centre for both town and county for young people and the community as a whole in respect to factors such as meeting the Local Authority's Corporate Plan Community objectives for youth, enhanced personal development and wellbeing of our youth, strengthening of employment skills and training and the perceived or real safety for all residents, young and old.

Funding

In order to refurbish and launch the centre and to cover costs until a self-generated income has been established a large-scale capital fund needs to be identified and applied for such as the Urban Regeneration Programme or Leader funding. Applications for these funds are thorough. In order to emphasize an increased demand due to a surge in population as well as a lack of recreational facilities, a detailed county wide audit of services and a socio-demographic profile would need to be produced.

Following these, operational and staffing funds for three years would provide a sufficient groundwork to establish the financial and strategic viability of the centre to operate sustainably.

Existing site

An existing site in a main town such as Portlaoise for the location of the youth wellness centre is the preferred option. Reasons for this include that it would be more cost-effective, an existing site may be available quicker than a greenfield site and an existing building is more likely to be in the centre of an urban area closer to schools and other amenities.

Strategic Development

In order to accompany this feasibility study, a detailed strategic development document would need to be created, taking the key considerations of this study into account. The strategic development document would aim to identify the organization's goals, the actions needed to achieve those goals and all the other critical elements developed during the planning exercise.

Facilitation for multi-cultural communities

The youth wellness centre should represent the unique multi-cultural population of Laois. With over a third of the population in the town being an ethnic minority, these cultures should be facilitated within the centre. Outreach to non-Irish communities should be conducted, staff should be multi-cultural, referral forms and information should be offered in other languages and art forms representing all the cultures living in Laois should be represented in art forms throughout the centre.

Outreach

Outreach to schools, through open evenings and social media, will be critical for the success of the youth wellness centre. The outreach conducted should ensure that multiple groups are facilitating the centre and that it is a county-wide centre with a wide catchment to ensure its success and viability.

Transport

During the strategic development of the centre, strong links with local transport companies are required to ensure that all the young people of Laois, in both urban and rural areas, have access to the youth wellness centre.

YWI Laois as principal partner

The youth wellness centre cannot be established in isolation and required a number of key partnerships. Most importantly a principal partner such as YWI Ireland with existing links within the community and relationships with other services is critical to the success of a youth focused space.

While partnerships with other agencies should be formed to benefit the centre through availability of services and room rental.

Management Structure

The management structure including the Board of Directors of YWI Laois should be consulted in relation to expanding their board and developing a management structure. A Board of Directors offers transparency and accountability for funders while a clear management structure can offer strategic and financial guidance to ensure the centres viability.

Research and Evaluation

Finally, to ensure the success and vitality of the centre ongoing research and evaluation are required. Research and analysis on how the surrounding community is growing and developing are vital, as this will impact the needs of young people in the community.

While internal and external evaluation of the centre and its services is critical to appraise the functions of the service, identify practices that are functioning well and what best practices can be replicated in other areas.

Appendices

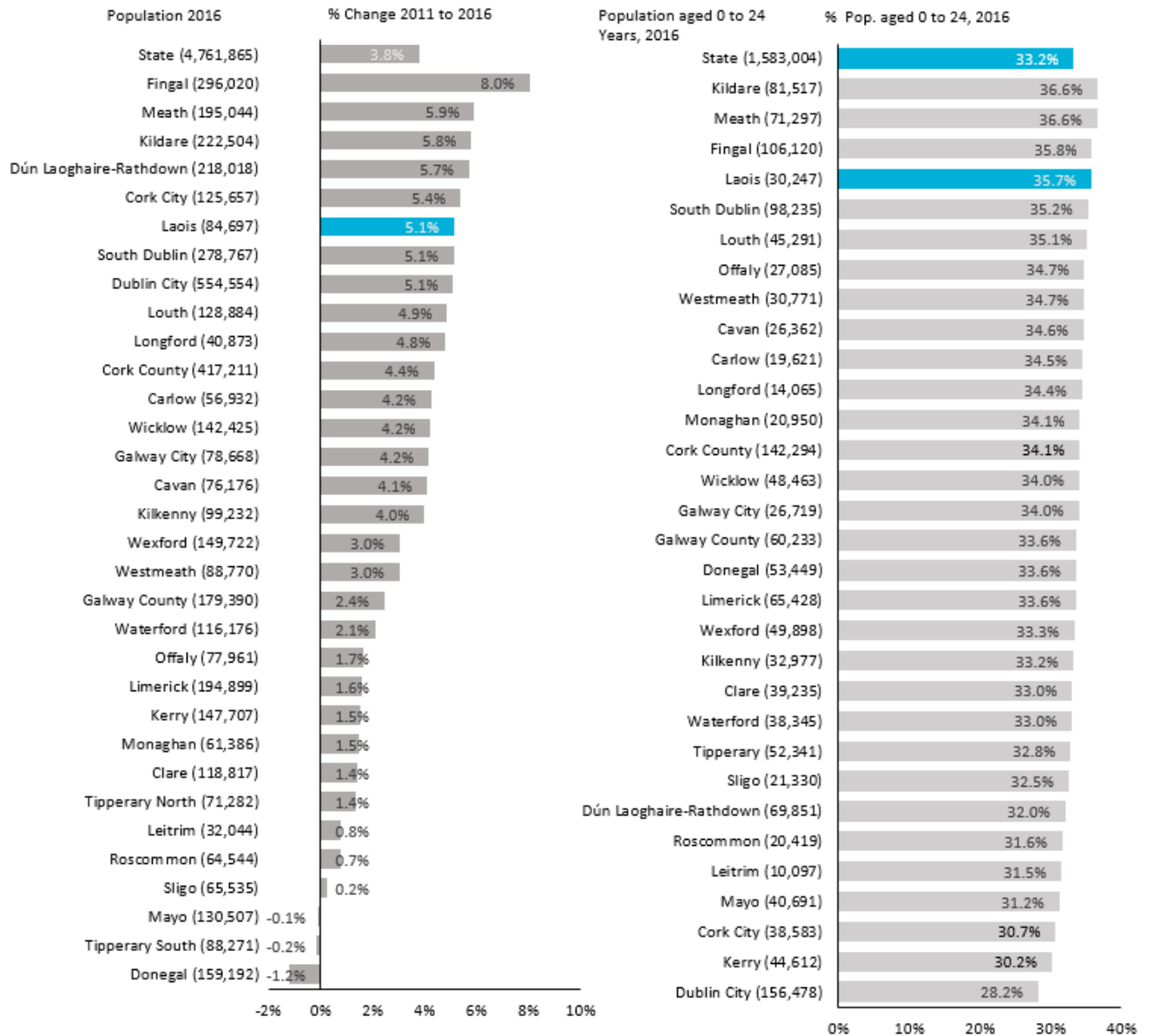


Figure 1 Population Change 2011 to 2016 & Figure 2 Percentage population aged 0 to 24 years, 2016

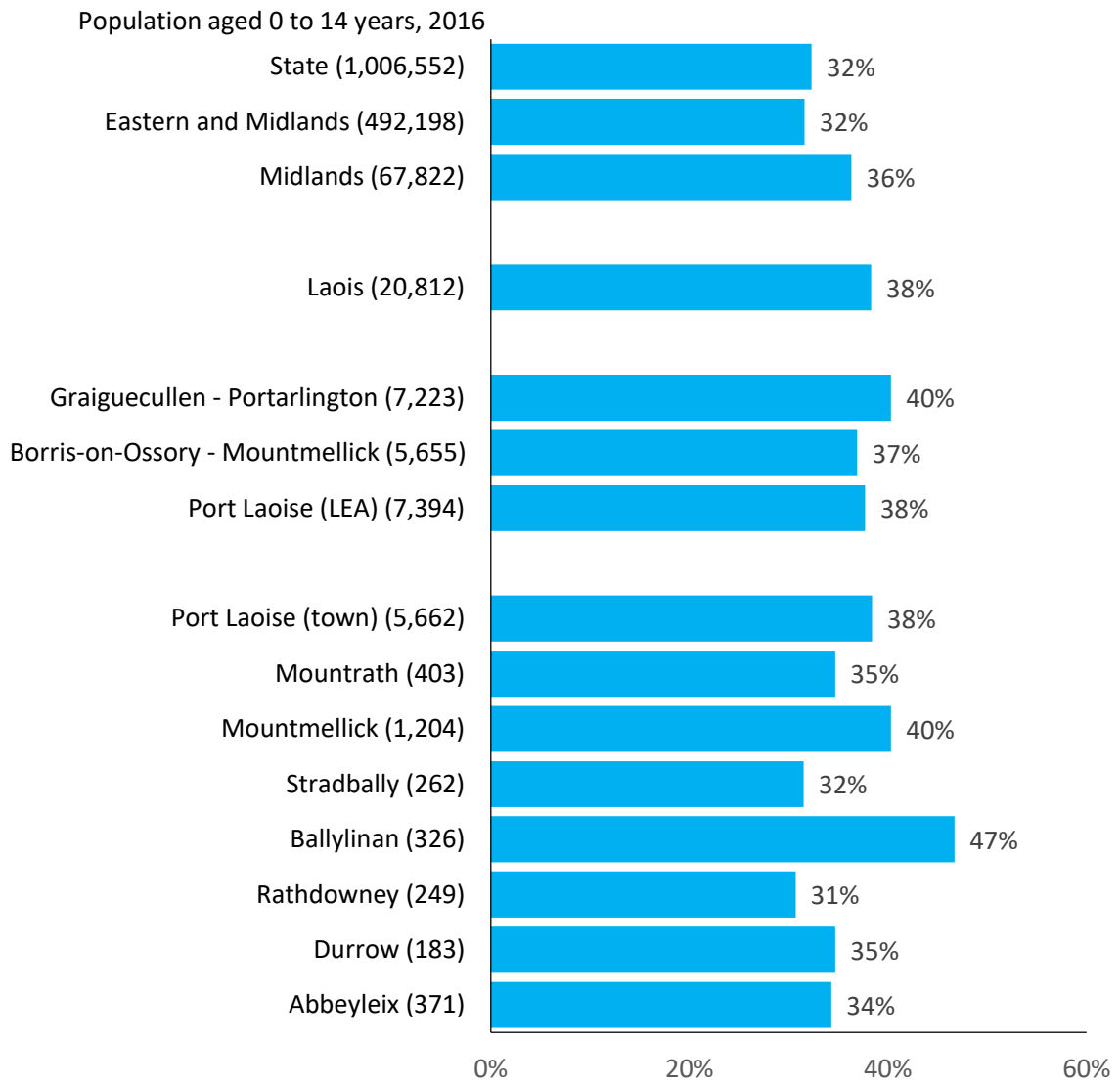


Figure 3 Young Dependency Ratio, 2016

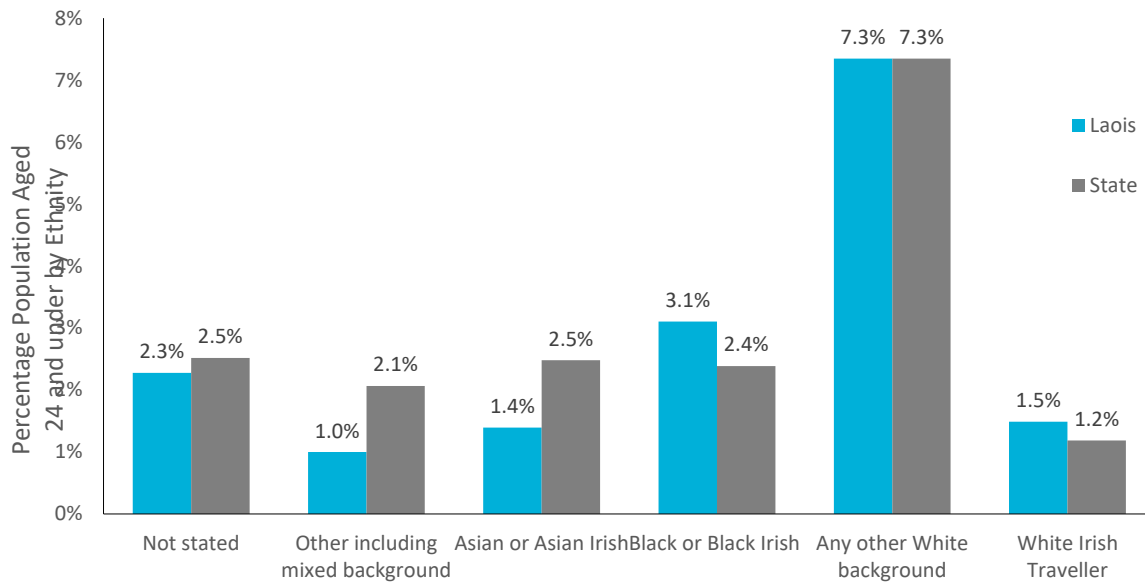


Figure 4 Ethnic Minorities. Source: Census 2016

Census 2016	Number	%	State Average
Ethnicity - White Irish	14,285	or 64.8%	80.9%
Ethnicity - White Irish Traveller	308	or 1.4%	0.7%
Ethnicity - Other White	3,591	or 16.3%	9.4%
Ethnicity - Black or Black Irish	985	or 4.5%	1.4%
Ethnicity - Asian or Aisan Irish	848	or 3.8%	2.1%
Ethnicity - Other	541	or 2.5%	1.5%

Figure 5 Ethnic Minorities - Portlaoise. Source: Census 2016

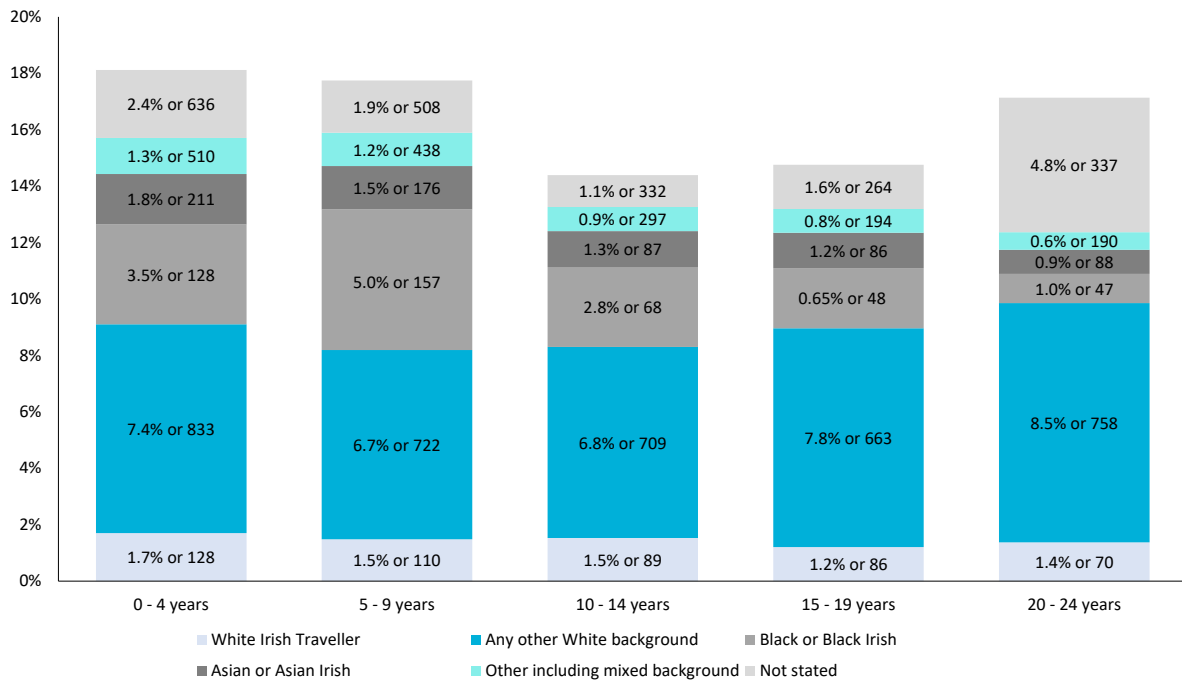


Figure 6 Ethnic Minorities by age group. Source: Census 2016

What 3 words come to mind when you think of a Youth Wellness Centre?

Mentimeter



What would you expect to find in a Youth Wellness Centre

Mentimeter



67
👤

How do we overcome obstacles ?

Mentimeter



25

