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UNESCO Chair in
Children, Youth and Civic Engagement
Ireland
CHILD AND FAMILY RESEARCH CENTRE

Citizenship

The permanent tsb Foróige Youth Citizenship Programme

Evaluation Report

Undertaken by the

UNESCO Child & Family Research Centre, NUI Galway

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Evaluation Report

Undertaken by

The UNESCO Child & Family Research Centre, NUI, Galway

on behalf of

Foróige's Best Practice Unit

May 2012

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Executive Summary

Foróige established its citizenship programme in 1968, preceding the emphasis on youth citizenship that has come to the fore over the past decade in particular. The purpose of the programme is to promote community awareness and connection for young people. The core model underpinning the programme is one of 'awareness, action, evaluation' whereby young people undertake a three phased approach in identifying and responding to a community or social issue. Over 2,000 young people take part in the programme in youth clubs and projects throughout Ireland each year.

This evaluation was undertaken to:

- To describe the Citizenship Programme, including its core model, structures and development to date.
- To place the programme in the context of literature and theory in relation to youth civic engagement (YCE)
- To explore the type of activity facilitated through the programme, the processes underpinning it and the perspectives of stakeholders regarding the programme
- To assess whether the programme is successful in achieving its desired outcomes

The study is mixed-methods, with a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods used to address the research questions. The methodology is described in detail in **Chapter One.**

The programme history and structures are outlined in **Chapter Two.** In recent years, as a result of financial support from **permanent tsb**, the programme has seen an increase in resources, volunteering and promotion throughout Ireland. As a result entries to the programme have increased from an average of 20-25 groups per annum up to 2006, to 148 in 2011. In 2011, 118 groups showcased their projects at regional events and ten projects were selected to take part in a national event.

The review of the literature in **Chapter Three** shows that, while there is a strong rationale for the active citizenship of young people, there are many challenges faced in translating this aspiration into practice. Adults can tend to control the nature of youth civic engagement activity and provide avenues for 'safe' activities such as volunteering that don't challenge the status quo. In terms of good practice in the promotion of youth citizenship, the literature suggests that organised efforts are required to mobilise young people. Such programmes should be based on action, as well as reflection and skills development. There is a need for good adult-youth partnerships to ensure that learning occurs but young people should be given the scope to shape the initiative according to their own vision. Other desirable aspects of programmes include ensuring that projects are seen through to completion and encouraging the exposure of young people to a diverse range of viewpoints and perspectives.

Qualitative interviews and focus groups were undertaken with young people and leaders from three groups that entered the 2011 awards to highlight the perspectives of key stakeholders regarding the benefits of the Citizenship Programme and provide an insight into some of the processes surrounding their participation in the programme. The three projects are profiled in **Chapter Four.** With regard to the benefits identified by participants, all project profiles show that one of the main benefits identified relates to the development of confidence and skills among young people. Young people across the three projects spoke of how their confidence developed as a result of having to 'put themselves out there' in undertaking the project, talking to a diverse range of people in the course of undertaking their project and presenting their projects at the regional events and interviews. The group leaders also spoke of seeing an increased level of confidence among group members, particularly those who had been quiet or shy. There is also evidence that the awareness of members regarding social needs in the community has been raised.

A finding that comes across strongly is that participation in citizenship projects can be a means of connecting young people with their communities and receiving positive feedback from them. This can be seen as a two way process, in that young people are seen as creating community by providing reasons to bring people together to celebrate and benefit from their achievements as well as drawing on the resources of the community to help them to achieve their ends. The evidence in these project profiles suggests that the skills and know-how to take action on a community issue is developed in the course of undertaking a citizenship project. Young people appear to have a developed a sense of efficacy in relation to their abilities to address issues of concern to the community. Another interesting finding relates to the impact of the citizenship project on club or group development. The respondents referred to the bonding and teamwork that occurred through having a common focus.

Chapter Five outlines the findings of one-to-one interviews with 20 Foroige staff and management regarding the Citizenship Programme. The programme's focus on connecting young people with their communities and enhancing their capacity to make a positive contribution to community are seen as critical to the practical realisation of Foróige's philosophy. The programme is believed to bring a range of benefits, including greater community connectedness, skills development, promoting a positive view of young people, enhancing club development and building capacity for future civic action.

There was positive feedback regarding the impact of the ptsb sponsorship, with staff and management acknowledging how the investment had enabled Foróige to expand the programme, provide additional resources for projects and to run regional events which are considered to be very successful. The media profile and national event have also helped to raise the profile and create a sense of excitement around the programme. An issue of concern for staff and management is the awards system for the programme, with many making the point that some entrants are disappointed because they don't win an award. There is also some unease regarding the selection of an overall winner, an issue that the programme has grappled with since its inception. The programme manual developed for the Citizenship Programme has been very well received. Feedback suggests that it is seen as a valuable resource by staff, volunteers and young people.

This aspect of the evaluation also explored the factors that influence participation by groups and projects in the programme. One of the key factors that appears to be conducive to participation is the existence of a strong culture of support for the programme in particular areas, most notably Tallaght and Blanchardstown in Dublin. Other factors include the preferences and experiences of a core group of volunteer leaders and clubs which encourages them to enter the programme consistently. With regard to issues that discourage clubs from entering, the view was expressed that a significant majority of Foróige clubs undertake community projects but don't enter them in the Citizenship Programme because they believe that they are 'not good enough'. A negative experience on the part of one or two clubs or projects in a particular county may influence other clubs not to enter, which makes it difficult to challenge the culture of non-participation in the Citizenship Programme that exists in some areas where Foróige has a strong presence.

This quantitative research reported in **Chapter Six** sought to explore whether involvement in the Youth Citizenship Programme impacts on attitudes and behaviours related to civic engagement for young people participating in Foróige projects. A total of 289 young people completed surveys in October / November 2010 (time 1), with 61% of the initial cohort participating in a 8 to 9-month follow-up (time 2). The key findings of this part of the research were as follows:

- A cross-sectional analysis of the time 1 data suggests that young people who had previously taken part in a Citizenship Programme rated themselves as more likely to get involved in a community issue in the future than those who had not taken part in a Citizenship Programme. They also showed a higher perceived competence to take action on community issues.

- Young people who have taken part in a Citizenship Programme at any time score higher on civic competence than a comparison group of Foróige participants who have not undertaken a Citizenship Programme.
- The data also suggests that involvement in the Citizenship Programme has a cumulative benefit in that significant differences were observed on the civic competence measure for young people who had taken part in a Citizenship Programme more than once, when compared to others.
- There was no evidence of impact on the civic engagement measures for young people who had taken part in citizenship in the previous 8 months only.
- There was no significant difference in levels of positive youth development (PYD) between the citizenship participants and non-participants at Time 2 or for the overall sample between time 1 and time 2. A negative outcome on the PYD character scale was observed for young people who had undertaken a citizenship project in the previous 8 months.
- In summary, the data indicates that those who participated in the Citizenship Programme had higher self-rated competence to take action on community issues. There is no evidence that their levels of positive youth development were increased.

The findings also show that ratings for the Foróige Citizenship Programme were very positive, with over 95% of young people who took part rating it as "good" or better. Furthermore, those who rated the programme as excellent were more likely to score highly on the 'participatory citizen' scale compared to those rating the programme as good. Other findings of interest include those who have higher positive development may be more inclined to take part in the programme in the first instance, but this is difficult to establish with certainty due to the fact that participation in the programme may have contributed to this baseline profile.

The report concludes in **Chapters Seven and Eight** that the Foróige citizenship programme represents an important Irish initiative in the promotion of youth civic engagement. It can be seen to embody practices that are highlighted in the literature as being associated with good practice in youth civic engagement programming. Reviewed against a typology of forms of youth development activity, the programme can be considered to fit with a description of youth civic engagement activity. Both the quantitative and qualitative data suggest that participation in the youth Citizenship Programme enhances young people's perceived competence for civic action. The qualitative data suggests that the programme can be successful in connecting young people with their communities, developing skills and confidence, promoting bonding between team members and enhancing club development. The study indicates that the programme is effective in its objective of engaging young people as active citizens and encouraging them to make a positive contribution to their communities and to society. A series of recommendations are made, including that the programme be recognised as a model of good practice in youth civic engagement and that the number of entries to the programme be increased.

1. Introduction and Methodology

1.1 Introduction

The interest in the concepts of civic engagement and citizenship have been fuelled by a perceived decline in connectedness in society as a result of the primacy given to economic rather than social imperatives over recent decades. There is a desire to ensure that modern diverse societies can find common meaning and purpose and ensure that the needs of all citizens are understood and addressed. In this debate, there has been a particular focus on how young people can be encouraged to engage in active citizenship. Policy and academic interest in the concept of youth civic engagement has been motivated by a range of different influences and concerns. For some, the key issue of concern relates to the threat to democracy posed by declining levels of civic engagement in society in general and among young people in particular. Others are motivated by a desire to realise the rights of children and young people to participate as full citizens of society. There is also a strong belief in the role of youth civic engagement as a means to promote the positive development of young people. Promoting young people's sense of belonging and connection to the communities and societies of which they are part is also an important rationale for the promotion of such programmes. Civic engagement programmes are seen to have potential for the inclusion of young people who have been excluded from society for reasons of class, disability, race or socio-economic issues. Foróige is a national youth organisation which aims to enable young people to involve themselves consciously and actively in their own development and the development of society. Foróige established its Citizenship Programme in 1968. The programme requires young people to explore their community's needs, look at creative ways of meeting these needs and find out whether their efforts have made an impact. The programme is based on the belief that each young person can make a difference to the world around them and to the lives of others. The programme aims to enable young people to make a positive difference in their communities. According to the programme manual, |on completion of the programme and their projects young people will be able to:

- Define what citizenship means to them
- Research their community's needs
- Illustrate ways in which to benefit their community

- Plan a project to meet an identified need using a planning model
- Organise and manage their project
- Evaluate the effectiveness of their project
- Demonstrate improved communication skills, collaboration and civic responsibility
- Receive positive recognition from their community

The programme is run through youth clubs and projects throughout Ireland and entry into the programme is voluntary. Over 2,000 young people take part in the programme each year. Projects are exhibited at regional conferences held throughout Ireland each year and ten projects are selected to take part in a national event.

In recent years, the Citizenship Programme has undergone some development. Firstly, through financial support from **permanent tsb**, the programme has seen an increase in resources, volunteering and promotion throughout Ireland. Secondly, through the work of the Foróige Best Practice Unit, a programme manual has been written to support leaders in facilitating the programme. The manual and associated training has been 'rolled out' among staff, volunteers and young people since 2009.

1.2 Aims of the Study

One of Foróige's aims under its current strategic plan is to prove that involvement in Foróige makes a difference to young people. One of the roles of the Foróige Best Practice Unit is to gather evidence regarding the impact of Foróige's programmes. This evaluation was undertaken under the auspices of the Best Practice Unit and its purpose is to:

- To describe the Citizenship Programme, including its core model, structures and development to date.
- To place the programme in the context of literature and theory in relation to youth civic engagement (YCE)
- To explore the type of activity facilitated through the programme, the processes underpinning it and the perspectives of stakeholders regarding the programme
- To assess whether the programme is successful in achieving its desired outcomes

The study therefore encompasses a descriptive, theoretical, process and outcomes focus, an overview of which is provided in Table 1. As Table 1 illustrates, the study aims to answer a set of key questions in order to address the aims of the study. Answering these questions will, in turn, provide the data required to address three core questions in Chapter Seven, namely:

- How can the **permanent tsb** Foróige Youth Citizenship Programme be conceptualised and understood in the context of the literature on youth civic engagement?
- Is the programme successful in achieving its desired outcomes?
- What issues arise from the research that are worthy of consideration in the future development of the programme?

Table 1: Overview of the study aims, questions and methods

Aim	Key Questions	Methods	Chapter
To describe the programme, including its core model, structures and development to date.	• What is the origin of the programme? • What is the core programme model? • How has the programme developed over time? • What is the current profile of participation in the programme?	Review of programme materials and statistics Interviews with key stakeholders	Chapter Two
To place the programme in the context of literature and theory in relation to youth civic engagement (YCE)	• How are youth citizenship and civic engagement defined? • What is the rationale for a policy interest in YCE? • What are the trends and patterns in relation to YCE? • What are the challenges to the civic engagement of young people? • What can be learned from the literature regarding good practice in YCE programmes? ***How can the permanent tsb Foróige Youth Citizenship Programme be conceptualised and understood in the context of the literature on youth civic engagement?***	Review of academic literature	Chapter Three Chapter Seven
To explore the types of activity that are facilitated through the programme, the processes underpinning it and the perspectives of stakeholders regarding the programme	• What types of projects are undertaken and how are they conducted? • What are the views of young people, volunteers and project leaders who have taken part in the programme regarding its processes? • What are the views of staff at various levels of the organisation regarding the purpose of the programme, its core model, the benefits it brings, its development to date and the factors influencing participation in the programme? ***What issues arise from the research that are worthy of consideration in the future development of the programme?***	Interviews with young people and voluntary leaders who have participated in Citizenship Programmes Profile of three citizenship projects Interviews staff and management	Chapter Four Chapter Five Chapter Seven
To assess whether the programme is successful in achieving its desired outcomes	• Is there evidence that young people participating in the programme show a higher level of awareness and skills related to civic engagement? • What do stakeholders perceive to be the outcomes of the programme? ***Is the programme successful in achieving its desired outcomes?***	Quantitative research with young people participating in Foróige services Qualitative interviews with staff, young people and volunteers	Chapter Six Chapter Four Chapter Five Chapter Seven

1.3 Methodology

In order to address the various domains set out in Table 1, a combination of literature review, qualitative and quantitative methods was used, as now described in greater detail.

Literature review:

The academic literature in relation to youth citizenship and civic engagement was reviewed in order to put the Foróige Citizenship Programme in context. The review of literature involved a search of academic databases such as Web of Knowledge and Science Direct and a search of the NUI, Galway library using key words such as 'youth citizenship' and 'civic engagement'. An internet search was also conducted using Google to identify relevant reports and other publications related to the topic. The author benefited from discussions with colleagues in the Civic Engagement Research Team (CERT) in the UNESCO Child & Family Research Centre at NUI, Galway which helped to develop ideas and concepts of relevance to the literature review.

Qualitative methods:

The qualitative methods included a review of secondary data, interviews and focus groups.

Review of secondary data: The description of the programme drew on data supplied by Foróige, including programme materials and statistics. It also drew on staff interviews, an interview with a representative from ptsb and observation by the researcher at regional and national events.

Staff and management interviews: A sample of 20 staff and management at various levels of the Foróige organisation and in various regions were requested to take part in either face-to-face or telephone interviews and 17 agreed to take part. The purpose of these interviews was to explore the perspectives of staff regarding:

- The role and purpose of the programme within Foróige
- The benefits and challenges associated with the programme
- The programme structure and systems – including the core model of 'awareness, action, evaluation', regional and national events.
- Development of the programme in recent years
- The value of the programme manual
- The factors influencing or deterring entries to the programme

All interviews were recorded and transcribed in full. The numbers and positions of staff interviewed is outlined in Table 2. The sample includes a higher number of Regional Youth Officers and Senior Youth Officers as these positions hold particular responsibility for the promotion of the Citizenship Programme.

Table 2: Numbers and positions of Foróige staff interviewed

Position	Number of interviews	Code used when ascribing quotes
CEO	1	CEO
Divisional / Regional Managers	3	RM
Regional Youth Officer (RYO)	7	RYO
Senior Youth Officer (SYO)	3	SYO
Project Officer	2	PO

Case profiles: Three profiles of citizenship projects that were entered in the 2011 awards were also undertaken. In choosing the sample, there was a desire to get a mix of urban and rural projects, project based and club based, and new and more experienced groups. It had been hoped to undertake 5 case profiles, but due to the summer break and the pressure on clubs to finalise projects, just three projects approached were willing to take part in the research. In each of these cases, young people who had been involved in the Citizenship Programme in 2011 were asked to take part in a focus group. A total of 30 young people from these three projects took part in focus groups, while two volunteer leaders and one project worker gave one-to-one interviews. These interviews and focus groups were recorded and transcribed. Consent forms and interview schedules are provided in the appendix.

Quantitative methods:

Programme statistics: Groups entering the citizenship awards submit a project report from to Foróige which includes details about the group and the project they have undertaken. Key variables were entered into an access database by Foróige staff which was made available to the researcher for analysis. This data related to the 118 projects that participated in the regional events in 2011. A table with the numbers of entries from previous years was also made available by the Citizenship Project Officer and incorporated into the analysis of programme data in Chapter Two.

Youth survey: The aim of the youth survey was to use standardised measures to assess whether participation in the Foróige Youth Citizenship Programme impacted on participants' civic attitudes and behaviour. Based on the literature and the logic model for the programme, the outcomes that the quantitative strand of the research aimed to assess were:

- Young people's sense of social justice, caring and civic responsibility
- Their motivation towards community and civic involvement
- Their sense of connectedness to community, school, family and peers
- Their research, planning, organisational and evaluation skills
- Their perceptions of their own general competence and self-confidence

Three types of measures were used as part of the quantitative strand.

Demographic data: Gender, age, education, ethnicity, participation in community activities, frequency of attendance at the project

General measures of positive youth development: The measure of positive youth development (Lerner et al, 2005) assesses the development of 5 C's:

- Character – includes social conscience, values diversity, conduct behaviour and personal values
- Competence – includes academic, social and physical competence
- Caring – empathy for others
- Connection – to family, community, school, peer
- Confidence – self-worth and positive identification

This measure was deemed to be appropriate as it focuses on the life skills developed through the programme including connection to community, social conscience, confidence and social competence. These variables are also deemed to be predictors of civic engagement.

Measures of civic engagement: Three sub-measures of civic engagement collated by Flanagan, Syvertsen and Stout (2007)[1] were used:

- Participatory citizen – assesses the degree to which the respondents see themselves as having a responsibility to become involved with community issues.
- Expectation for engagement in community issues – assesses their likelihood of getting involved in community issues in the future
- Competence for civic action – assesses their perceived competence to take action on community issues. It was adapted to reflect the awareness, action and evaluation model that underpins the Citizenship Programme.

In choosing the sample, there was a desire to get a mix of projects taking part in citizenship and projects not taking part in order to compare outcomes and assess the added-value that participation in a citizenship project brings. The logical way to do this is to select a sample of participating

[1] Adapted from the California Civic Index (Kahne, Middaugh & Schutjer-Mance, 2005), Civic Engagement Questionnaire (Keeter, Zukin, Andolina & Jenkins, 2002) and the California Civic Index (Kahne, Middaugh & Schutjer-Mance, 2005).

and non-participating clubs and take baseline measures at the start of the club / project year (September / October) and follow up measures at the end of the year (May). Differences in outcomes over the course of the year for the intervention and comparison groups could then be compared. However, projects and clubs entering the citizenship programme are not required to indicate their intention to participate until April of the awards year which means that a clear sample of participating and non-participating clubs and projects cannot be identified at the start of the club / project year. To overcome this issue, the Regional Youth Officers, club and project officers employed by Foróige were asked to select two clubs in their area - including one which they felt was likely to enter the Citizenship Programme and one which they felt was unlikely to enter. Baseline and follow up measures were conducted with the groups nominated. The clubs and projects then decided through normal processes if they wished to enter the Citizenship Programme in 2011, meaning that there was a naturally emerging intervention and comparison group within the sample. While a full quasi-experimental design would have been preferable, involving a clearly matched intervention and comparison group, the nature of the programme made it difficult to achieve this without altering the programme processes in some way.

It was hypothesised that participation in the Citizenship Programme would give young people a practical opportunity to engage in active citizenship, which in turn would make them more civic-minded and likely to see themselves taking part in such activities again in the future. An increase scores on the measures related specifically to civic engagement was expected for the group taking part in the Citizenship Programme compared to the comparison group. Because the comparison group would also be taking part in Foróige projects, which promote positive youth development, it was expected that all young people in the sample would improve on scores of positive youth development. However, given that positive youth development is seen to act as a building block for civic engagement, it was possible that the citizenship programme participants would show a higher level of positive youth development than the comparison group.

The RYOs or project officers who nominated clubs or projects for participation in the research agreed to liaise with the clubs with regard to undertaking the fieldwork. They ensured that consent forms and information sheets were provided to young people and returned these to the research team. Securing parental consent proved to be very difficult in many cases. Ensuring the completion of surveys was a difficult task and the fieldwork was drawn out over several months. The severe weather conditions in winter 2010 / 2011 also impacted on the clubs and meant that many were not meeting.

Young people taking part in the study sample were asked to complete a baseline questionnaire in October 2010. A follow-up questionnaire was administered before the club year ended in May 2011. A total of 289 young people completed the survey at Time 1, representing 34 clubs and projects, while 177 young people participated at Time 2, representing 21 clubs and projects. Further details regarding the sample is provided in Chapter Six.

1.4 Overview of the Report

Chapter Two provides a description of the **permanent tsb** Foróige Youth Citizenship Programme and includes an analysis of entries to the 2011 programme. In Chapter Three, the programme is placed in context through a review of the literature related to youth civic engagement and citizenship. Chapter Four provides a profile of three projects that were entered into the 2011 awards and analyses their experiences in terms of perceived benefits, challenges and the processes underpinning their projects. Chapter Five outlines the views of staff and management in relation to the programme. In chapter Six, the findings of the survey strand of the research are presented. Chapter Seven collates and analyses the findings of the previous chapters according to relevant themes, to address the core aims of the study.

2. Foróige and the permanent tsb Foróige Youth Citizenship Programme

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a brief overview of the work of the Foróige organisation before proceeding to describe the **permanent tsb** Foróige Youth Citizenship Programme in some detail. The programme model, structures and history are outlined, including recent developments that have significantly impacted on the programme. An overview of trends in relation to projects entered in the programme is provided and an in-depth analysis of the profile of projects participating in the 2011 awards is provided.

2.2 Overview of the Work of Foróige

Foróige is a national youth organisation with a presence in all 26 counties of the Irish republic. Its mission is 'to enable young people to involve themselves consciously and actively in their own development and in the development of society'. In 2010, almost 53,000 young people were engaged in Foróige's work, supported by 4,633 volunteers and 302 staff members (Foróige, 2010).

Foróige's work can be described as a mix of universal and targeted youth services. Universal services aim to meet the developmental needs of all young people, while targeted services are designed for young people who may be vulnerable due to socio-economic or personal issues. The 'backbone' of the universal youth work is a network of volunteer-led clubs throughout the country, of which there are 482 nationally. These clubs are open to all young people aged 12-18 years in local communities. Regional Youth Officers and club workers are employed by Foróige throughout Ireland to support the development of clubs in their areas.

A mix of targeted and universal work takes place through a range of youth projects and services, which are generally staffed by professional workers. Such projects and services include youth cafes, youth information centres, neighbourhood youth projects and garda youth diversion projects.

Foróige also has a core set of programmes that are run through clubs, projects and schools. In 2009, Foróige established its Best Practice Unit (BPU), with support from the Atlantic Philanthropies, with

the intention of developing manuals for its various programmes and introducing new evidence-based programmes. To date, manuals developed by the BPU have included the Albert Schweitzer leadership for life programme manual, which aims to promote youth leadership skills, the NFTE programme manual, which promotes youth entrepreneurship, 'A life of choices', which explores youth offending behaviour and the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Programme manual. The BPU also developed a manual for the **permanent tsb** Foróige Youth Citizenship Programme, which will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

2.3 The permanent tsb Foróige Youth Citizenship Programme

The Citizenship Programme was established by Foróige in 1968. Its core purpose is to facilitate young people to become actively involved in the development of their own communities – in other words, to become active citizens. The programme is based on the belief that each young person can make a difference to the world around them and to the lives of others.

The programme aims to enable young people to make a positive difference in their communities. According to the programme manual, |on completion of the programme and their projects young people will be able to:

- Define what citizenship means to them
- Research their community's needs
- Illustrate ways in which to benefit their community
- Plan a project to meet an identified need using a planning model
- Organise and manage their project
- Evaluate the effectiveness of their project
- Demonstrate improved communication skills, collaboration and civic responsibility
- Receive positive recognition from their community

The programme is open to entries from groups of young people attending Foróige and non-Foróige youth clubs and projects throughout Ireland and must be undertaken outside of school hours. The age range is generally 12-18 years for Foróige clubs or 10—18 years for Foróige projects and services and non-Foróige projects. The programme is based around three core actions:

- *Awareness*: Participants are expected to explore the needs of their community and identify ways in which it can be improved. Having selected one or more issues worthy of action, the group is expected to research the issue in greater detail and identify how they can be effective in addressing it.
- *Action*: The group is expected to decide on a course of action in relation to the identified issue, to plan and organise this action and to take action.

- *Evaluation*: Having completed the action, the group is expected to review what went well, how they could have done better and to decide what further awareness or action is needed.

In the past, topics have included:

- Identifying and addressing the needs of groups such as people with disabilities, senior citizens, children and minority groups.
- The provision of services to the community, such as a newsletter, radio programme or community alert scheme.
- Investigation of and action in relation to social issues such as drug use, crime, road safety and pollution.
- Environmental improvements such as local clean-ups, developing a bottle bank, landscaping and painting murals.
- Linking with immigrant groups to promote intercultural understanding, for example through concerts, social evenings, sports and language guides.
- Building links with the developing world and taking action to provide practical assistance.
- Promotion of local economic or social development, for example, through development of a local area plan.
- Efforts to influence regional and national policy in relation to local issues.

To enter the programme, groups must do the following:

Postcard: Submit a postcard indicating their willingness to take part in the programme (usually by March).

Project Report form: Submit a project report form outlining the details of their project, including a description of the awareness, action, evaluation components of their project (usually by April).

Regional recognition events: Four regional events are held in May each year, at which the clubs and group showcase their work. They must display their project on two A1 size display boards and be present to explain it to the public. Two group members are interviewed about their work by a judging panel. Those entering the regional recognition events are marked on their project report form, the interview of group members and display board. Following the regional recognition events, a number of projects that reach a particularly high standard receive an award of 'merit' and others are selected to take part in a national awards ceremony. Clubs and groups are subsequently notified if they have been chosen to take part in the national awards.

National awards: The national awards are awarded at a high profile evening event in Dublin which features performances by popular musical acts and contributions from celebrities, and has recently

been covered as part of a TV series. Groups taking part in the national awards ceremony must also display their work and take part in interviews. The focus of the national awards is on honouring and celebrating the achievements of the participating groups. Up to 2010, no overall winner was chosen but national winners were chosen in 2010 and 2011 at the request of the TV production company.

2.4 History of the Programme

The Citizenship Programme was initiated in 1968 and represented one of the eight core programmes that made up the non-formal education curriculum of Foróige. The other programmes included leadership, agriculture, co-operative education, science and lifeskills. The main inspiration behind the development of the programme was then Foróige CEO, Michael Cleary. The theme of the Citizenship Programme was 'collective action for the common good'. According to the current CEO, the ethos of Foróige was about being outward looking, seeking out ways to connect with the community and to show young people at their best. The programme initially started as a 'know your area' project, whereby young people went out to research their communities. These then developed into community action projects, whereby the young people got to know their area but also identified an issue on which they could take action. Eventually the model was refined into the 'awareness, action, evaluation' cycle that underpins the programme today.

Prior to 2007, approximately 20-25 projects entered the awards every year, from which three were selected for recognition at national level. The programme received funding in the region of €20,000 per annum from the Wrigley's Company. While organisational aspects of the programme have changed over the years (for example there have been phases where a national winner was chosen and phases where all entrants to the national awards have been honoured), the essence of the programme has remained unchanged in the forty or more years since its establishment. Prior to 2007, there were no designated staff positions to support the Citizenship Programme. At national level, direction was provided by the Head of Training and Programmes and the programme was supported on the ground primarily by regional youth officers and volunteers.

Since 2007, two significant developments have occurred. Firstly, Foróige received substantial sponsorship from **permanent tsb** in 2007 which enabled it to expand and develop the programme and to significantly increase its media profile in Ireland. **permanent tsb** provided funding in the region of €2.5 million over four years, consisting of direct funding of €250,000 per annum and indirect support of a similar amount through support for marketing and advertising. The conditions attached to the funding were that ptsb would receive branding rights to the programme, that it would be open to non-Foróige groups, that there would be a significant increase in entries and that the programme would develop a higher profile at national and regional levels. Following this significant investment, Foróige did the following:

- Created a designated staff position 'Citizenship Programme officer' to support the development of the programme
- Employed a marketing officer and developed a marketing strategy for the programme
- Opened the programme for entries from non-Foróige projects
- Staged four annual regional events at which groups and projects could showcase their projects
- Staged a high profile national event
- Significantly enhanced the profile of the programme in local and national media, including a TV and radio advertising campaign and a two-part TV3 series in 2010 and 2011.

The outcome of these developments is that the programme has expanded considerably, with over 100 groups and projects entering the awards annually, while over 100,000 viewers watched the TV programmes in 2010 and 2011. Entries to the programme traditionally came from volunteer-led clubs but a significant increase in entries from groups of young people involved with staff-led Foróige projects has also taken place in recent years. Recent trends will be explored in greater detail later in this chapter.

The second major development to occur in recent years is the development of the 'Citizenship Programme Manual' and the training of staff, volunteers and members in its use. This document, developed by Foróige's Best Practice Unit, is designed as a resource for those undertaking citizenship projects and to support them achieving a good standard. It includes exercises designed to facilitate participants to work through the phases of 'awareness, action and evaluation' and includes a learning journal whereby participants can record the actions and learning that take place through their projects.

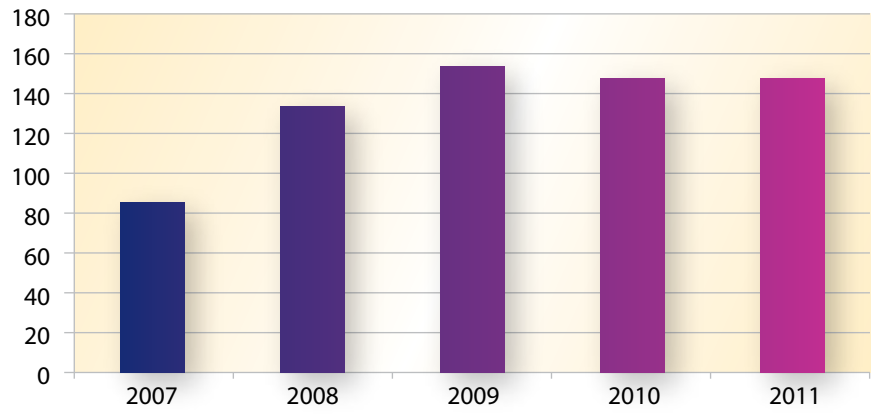
The manual was developed in close consultation with a working group consisting of staff, volunteers and young people, and was piloted with a group of staff and volunteers, before being finalised in 2010. Staff and volunteers throughout the organisation have been trained in the delivery of the manual. As of July 2011, a total of 44 staff, 151 volunteers, 108 club members from Foróige and 46 representatives from external groups had been trained in use of the manual.

2.5 Trends in Programme Entries[2]

As just outlined, Foróige secured sponsorship from **permanent tsb** in 2007, which enabled it to employ a dedicated Citizenship officer to develop the programme and to expand the numbers of groups taking part. This sponsorship also facilitated the hosting of regional awards throughout the country and a high profile national event. The national event was first televised in 2010. As illustrated in Figure 1, entries to the programme have increased significantly since 2007, with a 74 per cent increase in entries to the programme between 2007 and 2011. The highest number of entries was recorded in 2009, representing an 81% increase on the numbers entered in 2007.

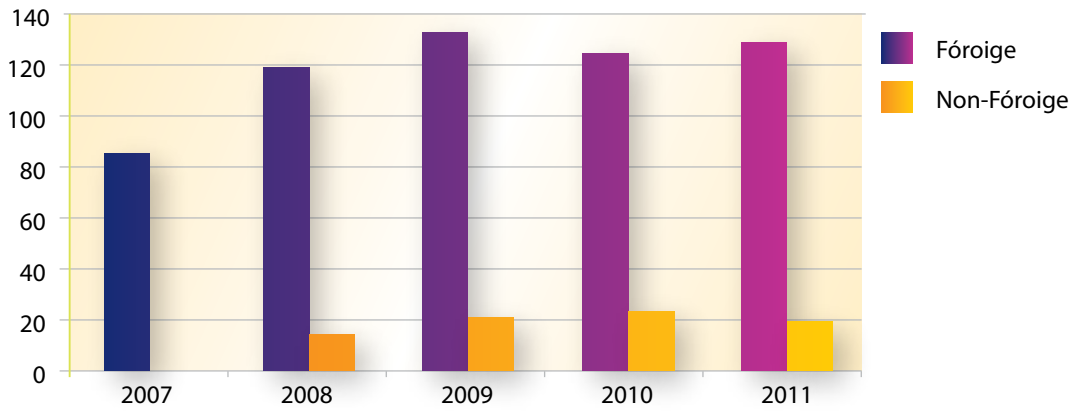
[2] The analysis in this section is based on data supplied by Foróige in relation to entries to the programme since 2007.

Figure 1: Number of programme entries each year – 2007-2011



Prior to 2008, the Citizenship Programme was open to Foróige groups and projects only. Following the ptsb sponsorship, the programme was opened up to non-Foróige clubs and projects. Figure 2 illustrates the trends regarding entries from Foróige and non-Foróige projects since 2007. The highest proportion of non-Foróige entries occurred in 2010, with 15% of all entries in that year coming from non-Foróige sources.

Figure 2: Number of entries from Foróige and non-Foróige groups each year 2007-2011

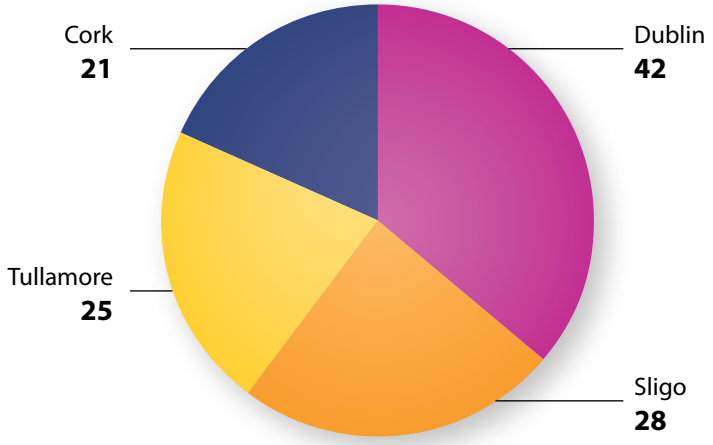


2.6 Analysis of Entries to the 2011 Programme[3]

Four regional events were held in 2011, at which a total of 118 projects were showcased, indicating that 30 groups submitted project report forms but did not take part in the regional events. The largest event took place in Dublin where 42 groups showcased their projects. A total of 28 projects were showcased in Sligo, 25 in Tullamore and 21 in Cork. Ten projects were selected for entry to the national awards held in Dublin on November 2nd. (see Figure 3)

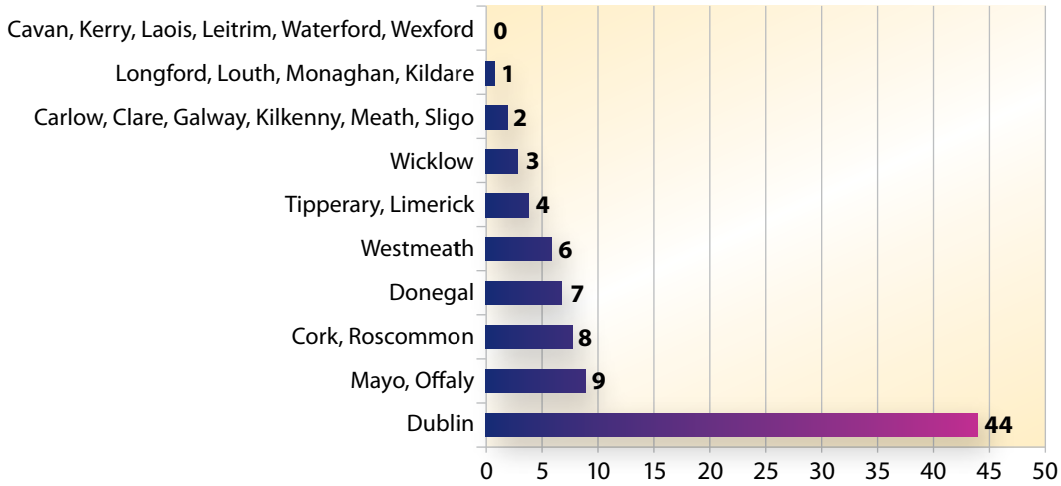
[3] The analysis in this section is based on data contained in the project report forms submitted by the 118 groups who took part in the regional events in 2011.

Figure 3: Number of entries showcased at each regional event in 2011



The 118 projects showcased at the regional events were drawn from 20 of the 26 counties in Ireland. As illustrated in Figure 4, the highest number of entries came from Dublin, which accounted for 37% (n=44) of all entries to the 2011 programme. Other counties with a relatively high number of entries include Mayo, Offaly, Cork, Roscommon, Donegal and Westmeath.

Figure 4: Number of projects showcased at the 2011 Citizenship awards from each county



Profile of groups entering the programme

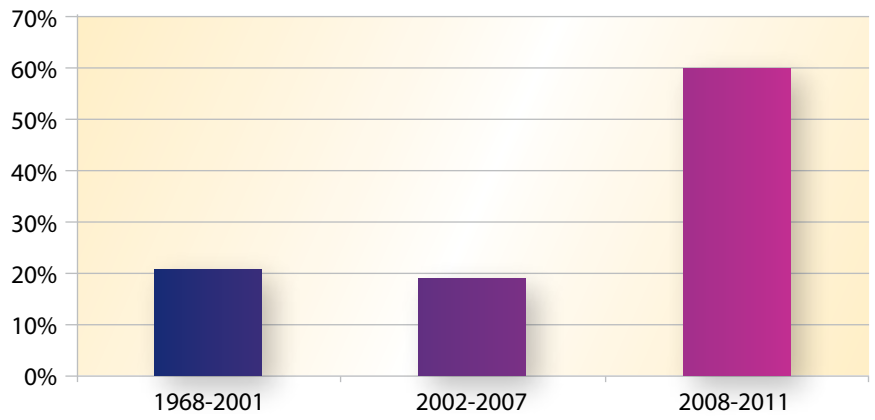
Analysis of the project report forms for the 118 entries to the regional events shows that a total of 2,494 young people were involved in the clubs or projects that participated fully in the awards programme in 2011. The numbers of young people involved in each group ranged from 3 to 128, with an average of 21 members in each group. The modal (i.e. most commonly occurring) number of young people in a group was 12.

Seventy-two of the entering projects (61%) reported that all group members were involved in the citizenship project, while 46 indicated that a smaller group of members had undertaken the citizenship

project. Across the 118 projects, an estimated 1,744 young people were actually involved in the citizenship project. This indicates that on average, 70% of club or group members are involved with the citizenship project.

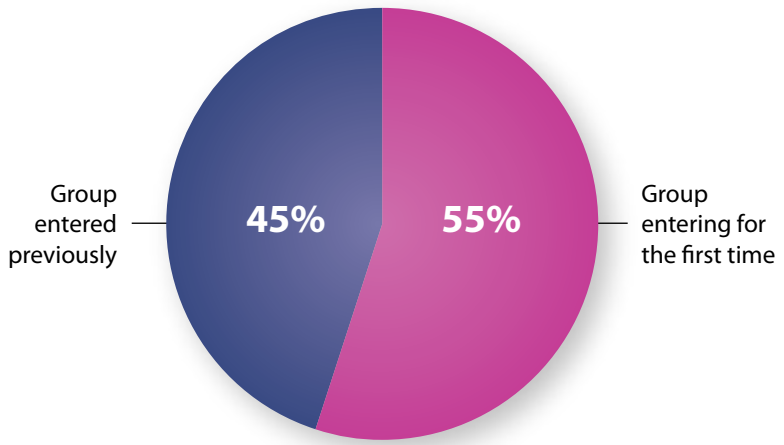
Analysis of the year of group formation (see Figure 5) shows that approximately one in five entries came from long-established groups that were in existence for 10 or more years. The oldest group was formed in 1968. One in five groups were in existence for between five and ten years. The vast majority of groups entering the programme (60%) had been established in the past four years. In fact, 2010 was the most common year of group establishment, with 29% of groups entering the 2011 awards reporting that they were formed in 2010.

Figure 5: 2011 entries: Year of group establishment



As illustrated in Figure 6, 55 per cent of entrants to the 2011 programme were entering for the first time, indicating that 45 per cent of groups had entered previously.

Figure 6: Breakdown of new and previous entries in 2011 programme



It appears that approximately 29% of entries listed a Foróige staff member as a contact person, while the remaining 71% listed a young person or voluntary leader. This suggests that approximately one in three

entries comes from a project with paid staff, while 2 in 3 come from local clubs with voluntary leaders, although it is hard to be certain as some Foróige clubs have been established within projects and may have the support of project staff.

2.7 Conclusion

The **permanent tsb** Foróige Youth Citizenship Programme was established in 1968 as a means of promoting community awareness and connection for young people. The core model underpinning the programme is one of 'awareness, action, evaluation' whereby young people undertake a three phased approach in identifying and responding to a community or social issue. The Citizenship Programme has expanded considerably since 2007, with 148 groups entering the awards in 2011, compared to 85 in 2007 and an average of 20-25 in the years prior to this. Entries from non- Foróige projects accounted for 15% of entries in 2010.

The Citizenship Programme draws entries from 20 counties, with Dublin a significant contributor, accounting for 37% of entries in 2011. Analysis of data from the 2011 project report forms suggests that approximately 1721 young people were involved in the programme up to the regional event stage in 2011. A total of 30 groups entered the awards but did not participate in the regional events, which indicates that a further approximately 420 young people enter the programme but don't see the process through to the awards stage. Just over half of the groups entering the programme were entering for the first time and the majority of groups were formed in the past four years.

The following chapter reviews relevant academic literature in relation to youth citizenship and civic engagement.

3. Literature Review – Youth Citizenship and Civic Engagement

'we desperately need the energy and intelligence of youth plugged into action that will improve society now'

(Stoneman, 2002, p.226)

3.1 Introduction

The concept of youth citizenship and civic engagement has acquired increased prominence in research, policy and practice over the past two decades. The interest in the concept has been spurred by a concern regarding a perceived decline in levels of civic and political engagement among young people throughout the western world. Because the participation of citizens is important in the functioning of a healthy democracy, there is a concern that a disengagement of young people from the political system will negatively impact on the governance of society. The evidence suggests that citizenship beliefs, skills and behaviours are developed in youth, which focuses attention on youth as a phase of life during which civic skills should be nurtured. The civic engagement of young people is also seen as a means to promote community connectedness, well-being and social justice. As a consequence, there has been an increase in programmes and policies designed to enhance the civic engagement of children and young people.

The aim of this chapter is to place the Foróige Youth Citizenship Programme in context by providing a review of the literature in relation to citizenship, youth citizenship and the promotion of citizenship skills and behaviour among young people. In Chapter Seven, the citizenship programme model will be conceptualised in relation to this literature. The review firstly defines the concepts of citizenship, active citizenship and civic engagement and explores the rationale for the existence of programmes designed to promote youth civic engagement. It then reviews the trends and patterns in relation to youth civic engagement identified in research. The literature review moves on to explore the barriers to youth civic engagement and identifies the programmes and models that offer opportunities for the development of civic skills and aptitudes among young people. The research literature draws our attention to a number of issues that can impact on the outcomes from youth civic engagement programmes and these are discussed.

3.2 Definitions of Citizenship, Active Citizenship and Civic Engagement

The concept of citizenship refers to the legal, political and social relationship of individuals to the society of which they form a part (Wallace, 2001). Marshall (1950) identified the historical sequence that characterised the emergence of citizenship rights in modern societies. The first citizenship rights to be granted were those of property ownership and freedom of speech, followed by political rights, including the right to choose a government. The final set of citizenship rights included social and economic rights (i.e. the right to a minimum standard of living and to equal opportunities).

The concept of citizenship can be interpreted in a narrow (or passive) way to refer to the conferring of membership of a nation state and the rights that are associated with this membership (Wallace, 2001). However, it can also be used more expansively to describe people's status as active participants in their community and the democratic life of a nation state regardless of their 'legal' citizenship status (Taskforce on Active Citizenship, 2007, p.4). The concept of active citizenship refers to the individual or citizen taking responsibility for what they give to society rather than just accepting what they receive from society. The Irish Taskforce on Active Citizenship (2007) conceives of active citizenship as an all-encompassing concept embracing formal and non-formal, political, cultural, inter-personal and caring activities. They define active citizenship as

> ***'the voluntary capacity of citizens and communities working directly together, or through elected representatives, to exercise economic, social and political power in pursuit of shared goals'*** *(2007, p.5).*

Honohan (2005) identifies the following attributes of an active citizen

- They are aware of the inter-dependency of people in society and pay attention to the social and political issues that affect themselves and fellow citizens
- They accept the need to act in a way that recognises the best interests of others and not just themselves - for example, through accepting tax increases, taking time to recycle and undertaking caring activities. They are also willing to challenge an infringement of the rights of others.
- They are open to deliberative engagement, whereby they listen to the viewpoints of others, support others who raise issues of concern and themselves bring matters to public attention.

The concept of civic engagement is closely related to that of active citizenship and has been defined as 'individual or collective actions in which .. people participate to improve the well-being of communities or society in general, and which provide opportunities for reflection' (Innovations in Civic Participation, p.vi). Civic engagement is a 'bedrock value of democracy' and usually defined as being able to influence choices in collective action (Camino and Zeldin, 2002, p.214).

3.3 Rationale for Youth Civic Engagement

The civic engagement of young people has been a focus of policy and academic attention over recent decades. The topic is of interest to people from a range of disciplines, including political science, psychology and sociology, which has led to the emergence of a range of rationales or discourses that view the civic engagement of young people as a positive and necessary thing for society. This section reviews some of the key rationales for youth civic engagement to be found in the literature, which include democratic participation of young people, positive youth development, community connection and care.

Democratic Participation of Young People

Over the past number of decades, there has been an upsurge of interest in citizenship education and concern regarding the engagement of youth as citizens. There are two key drivers behind this. The first influence is the growing movement for the realisation of the rights of children and young people. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1979) emphasises the participation rights of children and subsequent policy and legislation in nation states, such as the National Children's Strategy (2000) in Ireland have been developed to ensure a more active engagement with children and young people as citizens. The democratic participation of young people is, therefore, viewed as a right and debate focuses on how recognition should be accorded to the legitimacy and value of young people's voice, perspective and participation as citizens.

Secondly, it can be seen that the focus on youth civic engagement has stemmed from a broader societal concern with declining levels of adult civic engagement. The topic became a subject of increased political and popular interest in the 1990s following the work of Robert Putnam (1996, 2000) regarding the decline of social capital and civic engagement in society. In the UK, the New Labour government came to power in 1997 with a clear objective regarding the promotion of citizenship, which they believed had been damaged by the neoliberal free market emphasis of the previous conservative governments. Young people in particular were targeted by government in its strategy to encourage active citizenship and to promote the values of respect (Tonge and Mycock, 2010). In Ireland, there is a perception that civic engagement is declining as a result of changing values and lifestyles, that there is a lack of trust in political institutions and reduced capacity for communities to address issues affecting them (Taskforce on Active Citizenship, 2007b). A key concern is that a decline in democratic participation among young people will have particular consequences for the future democratic health of nation states.

Positive youth development

There is a wide body of literature supporting the theory that civic engagement activities are a means of strengthening the development and capacity of individual youth. The early 1990s saw a move away from problem prevention to a positive youth development framework that emphasised skill and asset building approaches to working with young people. Lerner et al (2005) developed the 'positive youth development (PYD)' model which identifies five key personality characteristics (5 C's) that they believe to epitomise positive youth development,: competence, confidence, character, connection, and caring.

Lerner et al (2005) argue that positive youth development can promote 'contribution' or civic engagement, which in turn further promotes positive youth development. For example, youth must feel a connection with an external entity in order to want to contribute. 'Character' is also important as civic participation always relates to and involves values. Hence the individual's character often determines the nature of their civic engagement (Sherrod, 2007). 'Caring' is an important aspect, because while we want citizens who obey laws and contribute generally to the public good, we also want citizens who care enough to recognize social injustices and take actions to correct them (Sherrod, Flanagan, Kassimir, & Syvertsen, 2005). The final two "C's", competence and confidence, are also necessary to allow participation. Individuals must have the competence to contribute to their society and the confidence that their actions are worthwhile. Thus, the five C's (manifesting in the sixth "C" of Contribution), provide a useful framework for approaching the conceptualization of civic engagement (Sherrod, 2007).

Belonging / Community Connectedness

Civic engagement of youth is seen as a means to create stronger connections for youth towards others in the places they live and the spaces they interact in. The concept of social capital refers to the benefits that accrue from social connections and trust between people (Field, 2008; Portes, 1998; Putnam, 2000). Empirical research has shown that the dimensions of social capital, such as social support networks, civic engagement in local institutions, trust and safety, quality of school and quality of neighbourhood – are associated with positive outcomes for children and young people (Ferguson, 2006). One of the conclusions that can be drawn from social capital research is that community is important to adolescent well-being by virtue of broadening networks and providing opportunities for interaction with others, often through local groups and activities. Furthermore, being known (by adults) matters to children for sense of safety and being cared for.

Sherrod, Flanagan and Youniss (2002) highlight that helping others can bring great satisfaction and exhilaration and helps people to feel part of something bigger than themselves. It can engender feelings of efficacy and being able to make a difference from having some form of responsibility or leadership. It can also mean that young people have a sense of contributing to shared norms or values so that 'one feels at home rather than out of place' in their communities (p.267). Furthermore, Flanagan and Levine (2010) point out that engaging with fellow members of community-based groups also helps young people form social networks, build social capital and connect to opportunities. Such involvement contributes to both the development of community and the social and psychological development of the youth within it. Active youth represent the future leaders and activists that will help shape community life and well-being in the years to come.

Care

Civic engagement has also been viewed as a means of creating a more caring and supportive environment in the lives of young people, particularly those who experience challenges, such as poverty, health issues, disability and exploitation. Traditional youth services emphasise addressing young person's problems such as poor academic performance or social isolation before they are deemed ready to take

on leadership roles or engage collectively with others to bring about social change. Pittman et al (2003, p.14) argue that the assumption that young people need to be 'fixed' before they can be developed runs counter to what is known about human motivation and adolescent development. They believe that all youth need to be challenged as well as cared for and there is a need to weave together opportunities to develop and engage. Likewise, Dolan (2010) argues that civic engagement should be seen as a means by which the needs and rights of vulnerable young people can be simultaneously addressed. Civic engagement acknowledges the rights of young people to democratic participation and in doing so, their resilience and social support can be enhanced. Social or political civic activity by youth, whereby they are engaged in action about which they feel passionate, can act as a protective factor that supports the young person in becoming resilient to the challenges they face in life.

The relationships formed though civic engagement activities may also act as protective factors for young people. It has been argued that involvement in youth activities, such as civic engagement projects, provide opportunities for young people to feel connected to others, give and receive support and to feel that their participation makes a difference to society (Dolan, 2010).

In summary, therefore, a range of rationales for the civic engagement of youth can be found in the literature. From a societal point of view, it is argued that the participation of young people is important to ensure that the democratic process is inclusive, energised and renewed. Civic engagement is seen as a means of promoting the positive development of young people and is an important means by which they can become connected to their communities and feel a part of something bigger than themselves. There is also a view that engaging young people with civic activities can be a means of promoting resilience and supporting young people who are vulnerable.

3.4 Trends and Patterns in Civic Engagement

As we have seen, there is a perception that civic engagement is declining as a result of changing values and lifestyles, that there is a lack of trust in political institutions and reduced capacity for communities to address issues affecting them (Taskforce on Active Citizenship, 2007b). However, there is no downward trend evident in data on voluntary participation in Ireland. In fact, a 2006 survey of civic engagement undertaken by the Taskforce on Active citizenship showed an increased level of engagement in the community. Regular volunteering increased from 17% of the adult population in 2002 to 23% in 2006. However, there was a decline in volunteering (from 17% to 15%) for young people aged 29 and under. There is also a decline in electoral turnout, in line with international trends. Nonetheless, the Taskforce on Active Citizenship also points out that for every person who is actively involved in their community, there are two who are not. A number of key influences on patterns of civic engagement can be identified in the research literature and these are now reviewed:

Age: According to life-cycle theories, stable patterns of political engagement emerge once people have settled down into marriage, parenthood and home ownership. They are more likely to get involved in their communities when they have put down ties and have a vested interest in the area (for

example, school boards and neighbourhood associations). Irish research has also shown that volunteering and community engagement is higher among people in mid-life (40-64 years) (NESF, 2003, 49-66; National Committee on Volunteering, 2002). For example, Healy (2005) showed that people who are well educated, married with children and who are settled in a geographical area for a long time are more likely to give time in volunteering or community activities. With regard to young people, research suggests that young people are more likely to be civically engaged in adolescence than in early adulthood (Finlay, Wray-Lake and Flanagan, 2010). This is because young people in schools represent a captive audience, unlike young people who have left school.

Generational factors: Flanagan and Levine (2010) highlight that young adults today are less likely than their counterparts in the 1970s to exhibit nine out of ten characteristics of citizenship: belonging to at least one group, attending religious services at least monthly, belonging to a union, reading newspapers at least once a week, voting, being contacted by a political party, working on a community project, attending club meetings and believing that people are trustworthy. Volunteering is the only indicator that has seen an increase since the 1970s. Data such as this, leads Flanagan and Levine (2010) to question whether young people in today's society have weaker civic connections or whether the lengthened transition to adulthood means that young people take longer to forge these connections. Studies have shown that young people are less likely to vote than older people. For example, an Irish survey (NESF, 2003) showed that 55% of those aged under 25 had not voted in any election since they became eligible to do so. Tonge and Mycock (2010) point out that evidence of disengagement of young people from political activity in the UK can be seen in the fact that just 39 and 37 per cent of 18-24 year olds voted in the 2001 and 2005 elections in the UK.

Sherrod Flanagan and Youniss (2002) believe that forms of civic engagement change from generation to generation. For example, in the wake of the 9/11 attacks in the USA, young people were more likely to be concerned with issues such as terrorism, defence and the economy. They are also more likely to engage with online communities than to read newspapers, join political parties or join unions (Sherrod, Flanagan and Youniss, 2002). The institutional supports available to young people, that can influence whether or not they become civically engaged, can also vary from generation to generation. Camino and Zeldin (2002) also highlight that young people are increasingly segregated from older generations and from opportunities to engage civically due to changing employment patterns and working parents.

Inequality: People with lower income and education levels are less likely to take part in voting, volunteering and other behaviours (Flanagan and Levine, 2010). This international trend was confirmed

in an Irish context by a NESF survey in 2002, which found that levels of educational attainment were very strongly related to engagement in voluntary or community groups. A 2006 survey showed that those in paid employment were more likely to be actively involved than those who are not – including homemakers, students and the unemployed. Furthermore, people with disabilities and older members of the community were much less likely to be involved in their communities (NESF, 2003, 49-66; National Committee on Volunteering, 2002, Taskforce on Active Citizenship, 2007). These groups also have lower levels of informal social contact and support. The Taskforce on Active Citizenship believes that this fact raises major concerns on the grounds of social equity and potential access to political and community decision-making.

3.5 Challenges to Civic Engagement among Young People

A number of challenges to civic engagement of young people have been highlighted in the literature. These can be summarised as follows; adult attitudes to young people, young people's self-perceptions, adult control of youth civic engagement, the discourse and language of civic engagement and unequal participation of young people.

Firstly, Camino and Zeldin (2002) point out that adult society has low expectations for young people. Adult attitudes and beliefs about young people tend to be negative and focus on risky behaviour, negative peer influences and resistance to adult authority rather than seeing them as individuals with the motivation and skill to contribute to others (Camino and Zeldin, 2002, p.215). As a result, adults do not prioritise the creation of new pathways for the civic engagement of young people.

Secondly, a body of research highlights how young people sense that their participation is not valued in society, which in turn makes them less likely to engage in collective activity (Hart, 2009; Millbourne, 2009; Morrow, 2008). For example; Hart's (2009) research with disadvantaged young people highlights some of the issues that prevent young people from exercising their citizenship rights. Her research with 14-16 year olds in Nottingham showed that young people felt excluded from their communities, which in turn had an impact on their sense of political agency, whereby they felt there was no point in trying to effect change because they would not be listened to (p.653). For the young people taking part in the research, how they were treated and interacted with in their everyday lives was crucial to their sense of inclusion as citizens. Stoneman (2002) argues that young people, especially those from low income backgrounds, are conditioned to believe that nothing they will do will make a positive difference to society.

A third barrier to the civic engagement of young people relates to how citizenship is defined and the criteria associated with being a 'good citizen'. Young people tend to define citizenship in a passive way (i.e. not breaking the law) rather than in terms of active participation in society. Millbourne (2009) found that, even though young people provided valuable support to friends and neighbours, they considered themselves as lacking citizenship because they did not define this as civic behaviour. Wallace (2001), Hart (2009), Bynner (2001) and others highlight how the official conceptualisation of a 'good citizen' is somebody in paid employment who pays taxes and abides by the law, a conceptualisation that generally

excludes young people. Sherrod et al (2010, p.265) and Wallace (2001) believe that there is a need for more critical appraisal of a citizen as one who exercises informed judgement and criticises the status quo where necessary. They argue that it is necessary to educate young people regarding the rights and responsibilities that come with citizenship and to provide opportunities for them to encounter, appreciate and respect those of different backgrounds, beliefs and races. Likewise, Hart (2009) argues for a move away from a normative citizenship agenda, whereby young people are taught what constitutes appropriate citizenship values and behaviour, towards a citizenship informed by a cultural or difference-centred approach (p.654). Such an approach would seek to uncover the practices that exclude certain groups from citizenship and define them as 'other'. In this way, normative assumptions of citizenship (such as those promoted through compulsory citizenship education in UK schools) would be replaced by an approach which takes the views of citizens seriously and allows them to input regarding what a revised citizenship would mean in the 21st century. Hart, Millbourne and others believe that young people are capable of developing projects that change their own and others' worlds but that they are not encouraged to do so, as these projects risk challenging space and models in existing institutions. Similarly, Watts and Flanagan (2007) argue that the literature on civic engagement focuses on the maintenance of existing institutions rather than action for social justice.

A fourth challenge to the civic engagement of young people is 'adultism', the tendency of adults to control the nature and content of young civic engagement activity. Bynner (2001) highlights that adults typically try to ensure that young people exercise their power in a typically adult way. There are numerous examples in research of where adults welcome young people's involvement and input but show no commitment to their interests or wish to see their involvement continuing on a permanent basis. Volunteering is encouraged by adults as a 'safe' way to educate young people about their responsibilities as citizens. Most of the young people who volunteer are in education or employment and do it for a mix of altruistic and egotistical reasons. Bynner highlights the exclusion of marginalised groups from this form of active citizenship, as those with fewer qualifications are less likely to volunteer and argues that it is the exclusion of those without the resources to engage that challenges the idea of citizenship most. Similarly, Brooks (2007) suggests that the more able young people are, the more likely they are to volunteer, seeing the opportunities for their future careers. Millbourne (2009) found that young people see 'volunteering' as something that is more 'top down' than being something you do because you really want to do it. Millbourne argues that the negative connotations associated with the language of volunteering highlight failures to adopt more youth friendly perspectives and discourses which could avoid perpetuating some young people's exclusion (p.356). She argues that youth action and activism carry more positive associations for young people but that these terms can be challenging for dominant institutions.

The final issue relates to the point raised earlier in relation to the association between income and education and levels of civic engagement. The family can be considered 'the basic nucleus of active citizenship' as it plays a critical role in cultivating the traits associated with such behaviour (Taskforce on Active citizenship, 2007). International research suggests that young people from families with lower incomes are less likely to vote or take part in civic organisations, while young people who do

not attend college have fewer institutional opportunities to engage in citizenship activities (Finlay et al, 2010; Hart and Atkins, 2002). Disconnected young people, who are not involved with school, college or employment are particularly difficult to reach. Finlay et al (2010, p.282) argue that, given the developmental importance of civic experience in adolescence for lifelong engagement, these early disparities in civic opportunities have implications for the democratic health of the nation, in that these people are not likely to have their voices heard through the electoral system.

3.6 Promoting Civic Engagement among Young People

There is a broad consensus in the literature that organised efforts are required to promote youth civic engagement. For example, Stoneman (2002) argues that it takes a deliberate, consistent effort to organise any group of people into any form of civic activity. She believes that young people are not involved in politics to any large degree because they don't feel they can make a difference and also, because nobody has organised, persuaded and funded them to be involved. Research suggests that young people are more likely to become civically engaged when they are in setting such as schools, workplaces and community organisations where they are asked to take part because their friends are or because they learn about issues that concern them (Flanagan and Levine, 2010). There are a range of contexts for the promotion of civic engagement among young people as now described:

Colleges and schools: There are a number of ways in which schools can promote civic learning.

- *Teaching of civics and citizenship:* Torney-Purta (2002) argues that civic education needs to be given a higher priority in schools in order to raise the level of civic engagement among young people and adults. Research shows that having opportunities for discussion and debate, which teaches young people that it matters to be informed and to hold an opinion, is related to civic knowledge (Niemi & Junn, 2000). The UK commission highlighted the need for greater connection between citizenship and political life within the educational curriculum (Tonge and Mycock, 2010).

- *Extra-curricular activities:* Initiatives such as school councils, mentoring programmes, service learning and volunteering can offer young people opportunities to practice active citizenship. Research evidence indicates that involvement in such extra-curricular activity predicts later political activity (Finlay et al, 2010).

- *School climate:* Subtle aspects of the school climate, such as the style of teaching that promotes dialogue and discussion, teacher behaviour and school policies can give young people 'important messages about who is included in the definition of citizenship' (Sherrod, Flanagan & Youniss, 2002, p.269).

Youth organisations –Youth organisations can encourage a wide range of civic skills and motivations. Many community based organisations – such as boy scouts and girl guides - work collectively on projects for the broader community. Engagement in such groups is higher during school years, after

which young people are on their own to identify opportunities and join organisations (Finlay et al, 2010). Many such organisations also seek to create opportunities for young people to become engaged in the management or governance of the organisations.

Youth activism – Youth activism is generally youth-led voluntary activity that is motivated by the desire to redress perceived injustice in society. The model is similar to community organising and often involves a critical analysis of social, political and economic power (Finlay et al, 2010, p.290; Hart and Gullan, 2010). Stoneman (2002) outlines how, in her work (with YouthBuild USA), she has taught young people to take charge, to govern the organisations they are in and to create new organisation and projects as they see fit. She believes that young people respond to the vision of community development and social change with greater intent than to the moral idea of individual responsibility to be a good citizen.

Political parties – Young people can become involved in political parties but local political parties are often not very active in recruiting young voters. The potential benefits associated with the mobilisation of young people as a political force were evident in the 2008 presidential election in the USA where Barack Obama took 68% of the vote of those under 30 (Finlay et al, 2010). The strategies used in the Obama campaign, combined with the message of hope that he promoted, are likely to have connected with the younger voters in a way that previous presidential campaigns had failed to do.

Service and training programmes – Many Irish universities have introduced service learning to their curriculums, whereby students become involved in community and voluntary groups and services as part of their course requirements. In the USA, there are also service and training programmes such as the Civilian conservation corps and AmeriCorps whereby people devote a year of service in exchange for a modest living stipend. Finlay et al (2010) point out that well-organised programmes such as these can have lasting benefits for the individuals and society as they occur at a period in life when young people are consolidating their civic identities and values.

Public policy consultation on youth issues – In these cases youth sit on advisory boards to influence or manage policy issues related to young people.

3.7 Civic Engagement Programmes: Issues for Consideration

While the effectiveness of these programmes have not been rigorously tested, the programmes hold promise. A number of authors (Camino and Zeldin; 2002; Finlay et al, 2010; Stoneman, 2002) have highlighted aspects of civic engagement programmes that are associated with better outcomes. The literature suggests that youth civic engagement programmes should:

- *Be action-orientated:* Zaff et al (2003) emphasise the importance of having an opportunity to undertake civic engagement activity in adolescence as it influences young people's citizenship identity, which in turn predicts further citizenship behaviour. Research has shown that young people are committed to social justice but do not consider themselves responsible for doing anything about the injustices they

see (Flanagan and Levine, 2010). Therefore, it is important that the ideals of the programme are grounded in action rather than ideals alone. Skills training in combination with actively employing those skills through service is a hands-on method of helping young people develop a repertoire of abilities. Finlay et al (2010) believe that organisations should outline the specific civic goals they wish to achieve and provide real opportunities for young people to engage in action towards meeting them. Stoneman (2002) believes that the learning involved in deciding what community service one would like to do, and then developing a project to fulfil it in partnership with an adult organiser, is profound. In her view, developing youth-designed community improvement and service projects can unleash enormous positive energy and teach complex skills to the next generation of community-based leaders. This process must be funded by government or adult foundations because it takes ongoing adult staff support and leadership.

- *Clarity regarding the degree of youth ownership:* Young people's participation can be conceptualised in a range of ways, ranging from a narrow individualistic model concerned with young people's access to services and facilities, that is, inclusion in existing adult institutions to a model concerned with youth participation and leadership in community endeavours. Projects and initiatives for young people can often prioritise 'top down' centrally regulated indicators and are shaped to match external professional agendas (p.350). Millbourne questions whether these initiatives have the potential to be 'transformative' or whether they are about creating new forms of accommodation within existing social and political institutions (p.351). It is important, therefore, that civic engagement initiatives are explicit regarding the degree of youth ownership of their activities and their decision-making authority in relation to them. The Taskforce on Active Citizenship (2007) highlights the need to ensure that government and public service institutions are open to sharing power, quoting Honohan (2005, p.179)

  'We should be wary of exhortations to be more active or civic spirited, or to join voluntary associations in order to strengthen social capital, unless ordinary citizens are given a larger voice in decision-making, opportunities for meaningful participation and the material conditions necessary for active citizenship'

- *Provide opportunities for youth-adult partnership:* Camino and Zeldin (2002) believe that youth leadership requires a complex set of skills, behaviours, actions and attitudes that are best developed through apprenticeship and experiential-type processes, which require close partnerships between young people and adults. For the civic engagement process to be meaningful, ample time must be spent offering necessary guidance and support to young people. Finlay et al (2010) draw attention to the value of mentoring young leaders, whereby young people are matched with supportive adults after completion of a civic engagement or service learning programme to support them in the further development of their skills and aptitudes.

- *Have structured guidelines that encourage programme completion:* Some programmes ask young people to make a commitment to completion of their task. Finlay et al (2010) argue that this teaches young people valuable lessons about fulfilling their commitments and working for long-term results. By seeing the results of their actions, they may acquire a sense of agency and efficacy.

- *Encourage exposure to diverse social networks:* Interacting with people from different world views can challenge views and may lead young people to envisage different futures for themselves. For example, getting to know civic leaders may help to shape identities.

3.8 Conclusion

Policy, practice and academic interest in the concept of youth civic engagement has been motivated by a range of difference influences and concerns. For some, the key issue of concern relates to the threat to democracy posed by declining levels of civic engagement in society in general and among young people in particular. Others are motivated by a desire to realise the rights of children and young people to participate as full citizens of society. There is also a strong set of evidence regarding the role of youth civic engagement as a means to promote the positive development of young people. Promoting young people's sense of belonging and connection to the communities and societies of which they are part is also an important rationale for the promotion of such programmes. Civic engagement programmes are seen to have potential for the inclusion of young people who have been excluded from society for reasons of class, disability, race or socio-economic issues.

This review of the literature has shown that, while there is a strong rationale for the active citizenship of young people, there are many challenges faced in translating this aspiration into practice. Among the barriers identified were negative views of young people, a failure to value their participation, passive definitions of citizenship and the tendency of youth Citizenship Programmes to focus on maintaining existing belief systems rather than empowering young people to challenge societal norms and create new forms of citizenship. Adults can tend to control the nature of youth civic engagement activity and provide avenues for 'safe' activities such as volunteering that don't challenge the status quo. It can also be difficult to engage disconnected young people in civic engagement activity because they are not involved in institutions such as school or college where youth civic engagement activity often takes place.

In terms of good practice in the promotion of youth citizenship, the literature suggests that organised efforts are required to mobilise young people. Such programmes should be based on action, as well as reflection and skills development. There is a need for good adult-youth partnerships to ensure that learning occurs but young people should be given the scope to shape the initiative according to their own vision. Other desirable aspects of programmes include ensuring that projects are seen through to completion and encouraging the exposure of young people to a diverse range of viewpoints and perspectives.

4. Project Profiles

4.1 Introduction

In order to explore the types of projects submitted to the Citizenship Programme and the processes associated with them, interviews and focus groups were conducted with young people, leaders and project staff involved in three separate citizenship projects submitted to the awards in 2011. The purpose of these project profiles is to provide a description of the types of projects submitted for the awards, highlight how the dimensions of awareness, action and evaluation were fulfilled, gain an insight into the perceived benefits from the perspectives of stakeholders and understand the context and processes that influence group decisions in relation to the programme. The interview and focus group schedules used in gathering this data are provided in Appendix 6. Please note that the names of groups and individuals in the project profiles have been changed to avoid direct references to groups and individuals but the qualitative content of data has not been altered in any way.

4.2 Foróige Club 1

Foróige Club 1 is located in a rural area and meets on a Friday evening, between 9 and 10.30 pm. The members do a range of activities, including trips to the cinema, fundraising and bowling. As part of this research, a focus group was held with 8 participants (6 female, 2 male) and a one to one interview with the voluntary leader. All participants were aged 14 years, with the exception of one 15 year old. Four of the eight participants were in their first year in the club, three were members for two years while one was in his fifth year in the club.

The club entered the citizenship awards in 2011, which was their second time to enter. The idea was to provide mobility for wheel chair users in the local church. It followed on from their previous citizenship project in 2008, which involved repairing a bell on the local church. The group did a general survey among people in the community, whereby they distributed approximately 50 questionnaires. This indicated that there was a need for wheelchair access in the local church. As the local church is the main place where most people in the community gather regularly, the group felt that it was important to ensure that the church was physically accessible to all members of the community.

The group got quotations from two local builders and found that the project would cost in the region of €750. To raise the funds for the work, they held a jumble sale in the local community centre and raised €800. They then commissioned a builder to undertake the work and oversaw that it was completed to the standard required. When the work was completed, a mass was held to bless the new facilities and the community gathered for tea afterwards. The new facilities have been used by the priest, who is wheelchair bound and by other people from the community. To evaluate their project, the group distributed 30 questionnaires in the local community. The group displayed their project at the regional awards and received an award of merit.

According to the group members, the feedback from the community has been very positive and they feel that the profile of their Foróige club has been raised in the community. They feel that they previously benefited from the community facilities (i.e. meeting in the community centre) but this project has meant that they have now done something in return for the community. They enjoyed the experience and feel that they bonded more as a group. Some members said that doing the project has made them more aware of other people's problems. Others said that they are more confident about getting involved in the community now. A number of members said that they personally feel more confident as they had to overcome their nervousness about speaking in public and being interviewed as part of the citizenship regional event in Sligo. The group said that more people want to join the club, now that the news has spread about their work and the fact that they won an award. When asked if they would like to do a citizenship project next year, they said they would as this has shown them what is possible and they have a lot of ideas for other things they could do and feel more confident about taking them on. They feel that it's very important that the citizenship project 'is a bit of craic' as it makes people want to see it through to completion.

When asked what was the best thing for them about the project, two of the members referred to the fact that they met a lot of people and got to know them better. Three of the members took satisfaction from knowing that people with disabilities would not be prevented from going to mass by lack of access to the church. Two members identified 'helping the community' as the aspect of the project that gave them most satisfaction. One young person said that she felt the best thing about it was that it meant that 'young people got involved in their community – they are usually not involved in the community'.

Paula, the group leader said that she asked the members to think about if they would like to take part in the citizenship project and gave them two weeks to think about it. She was of the view that it was better to just do it with members who wanted to do it than to push it on everybody. She said that 14 or 15 young people came back and said they would like to do it. They were mostly the older members (aged 14+) and she feels that citizenship is more suited to this age profile than to the younger age group on the basis that the younger group enjoy the freedom of doing a variety of group activities and may not have given the citizenship project the attention it required. The group doing citizenship spent about half an hour of the club night doing 'awareness' exercises for about six weeks. Some of the members who were not doing citizenship joined them for some of the activities and enjoyed them. They started

the project in February, which Paula believes gives ample time and ensures that the project does not feel 'dragged out' and cause the members to lose interest. She believes it is important that they have the first few months of the club year to get to know each other and the leaders and to feel comfortable in the club setting.

Paula did the citizenship training and describes the manual as 'a godsend, it is fantastic'. Before she got the manual, she described her efforts at facilitating the citizenship group 'as like the blind leading the blind' whereas now she feels a lot more confident about how to go about it due to the guidance that the manual provides. Paula also said that working through exercises in the manual and filling in their journal meant that they had a good record of their project which made it easier to fill in the project report form.

> *it just gave me more of a guideline about how to do it because like they'd be asking you and you'd be kind of thinking, 'oh God I don't know' whereas at least if you had the manual it was like, well this, and I'd often show them the book like, photocopy pages for them out of it. One night we were doing awareness and we did the case studies and like I had them in little groups, it was just amazing. The debates that came up like, it was fascinating like on how to be a good citizen. It was really good.*

She has seen a change in the group members since they took on this project and believes they are a lot more confident. She has had feedback from parents that their children have become a lot more confident and they notice a change in their behaviour at home. Within the group, she can see a difference between the members who did the citizenship project and those who did not.

> *there are some girls here that literally wouldn't talk and they went up on stage, they interviewed people, they spoke about their project, they did everything. ….I think they're more mature, you can see the people who did Citizenship and who didn't within, when the whole group is together. The ones that did it, they're kind of more mature, more like, well look if we listen we get things done and we achieve stuff where if we're just messing nothing happens.*

Paula said that the feedback from the community 'has been really positive'. They have had specific feedback from people who have used the ramp and it has made a positive difference in their lives.

Paula thought the awards ceremony was very well-organised and said that they had a great day out. She feels that its great opportunity for young people to get the recognition for that they have achieved and that 'it's all about them on the day, which is great'. She did not feel that the awards were competitive, which she thinks is a positive thing as 'they have enough competition in their lives already without having it in Foróige too'. Paula spoke highly of the support provided by the RYO and the citizenship officer in relation to all aspects of the project and the awards.

When asked why other groups don't take part in citizenship, Paula was of the view that it is probably because of the level of work involved. She said that, from the perspective of voluntary leaders, there is a lot of work to be done as part of the citizenship project and that the regular club activities have to be maintained at the same time. While the young people take the initiative for most of the work on the project and are motivated, as a leader she has to 'keep on top of what they are doing'. However, she is of the view that the extra work is worth it, as the following quote illustrates.

> It is an awful lot of work but it is worth it when you see how far they've come……yeah it's definitely worth it, you know.

4.3 Project Citizenship

The Project Citizenship group was formed specifically to take part in the Citizenship Programme, emerging from a youth project and café in an urban area that provides a range of targeted and universal youth services to young people. Orla, the project worker from the youth project approached transition year students from the local schools to see if they would be interested in taking part and facilitated the group with guidance from the programme manual. A group of 10 (9 female, 1 male) agreed to take part and they met every Tuesday between 4 and 5.30pm between September 2010 and May 2011. As part of this research, seven of the group participants (all female) took part in a focus group and a one-to-one interview was held with Orla, the Project Worker who facilitated their group.

According to the group members, they had not heard about the Citizenship Programme before Orla approached them. When they asked their friends about it, they heard from other people who did it in the past that it is a good fun and decided to go for it as they saw it as an opportunity to do something in the community.

They started off by brainstorming potential ideas in the group. One issue they identified was that there were few social activities for older teenagers in the town. Teenage discos tend to be favoured by younger teenagers, while adult clubs are just open to those aged 18 years or over, which leaves a dearth of social activities for the 15 to 17 year age group. They decided to survey people between the ages of 15 and 17 years. The results of the survey showed that teenagers felt that there was a lack of social outlets for them and that they would welcome having something in the evenings and at weekends. They decided to focus on providing social events for older teenagers for the purposes of their project.

The group decided to host a formal ball for older teenagers. In order to raise the funds for the ball, they decided to hold three fundraising events, which would also act as social events for teenagers. These were a 'stay awake', a date night' and a 'we've got talent' show. All were well attended and very successful. The group took responsibility for organising all aspects of these events. The ball was held on 1st of April, 2011 in a local hotel and was attended by 168 people. The entrance fee was 12 Euro/ticket and formal dress was required. It was an alcohol free event. The group organised all aspects of the ball, including

pricing and selecting hotels, advertising, decorating the venue, booking a band and DJ, arranging transport and MCing the event. The young people also recruited volunteers to help out prior to and during the event. The feedback was that young people from the community were really happy with the event. Feedback from adults was also very positive and they especially appreciated that it was well organised and that there was no alcohol at the Ball. They were featured in a local newspaper article and spoke on local radio. The group met after the ball to evaluate the project, which included a discussion of what they would do differently.

According to the group members, the citizenship project was a very positive experience. It was their first time to organise and take initiative in the community and they really enjoyed it. They felt that they bonded very much as a group and got great satisfaction from seeing young people from all over the town enjoying the activities they had organised. According to the group members, it was good to have Orla there to "push" them when they got "lazy" and to remind them to do things. Some of the members said that they would not have believed if you had told them a year ago that they would be capable of doing something like this. Some of the participants said that they felt they had gained in confidence and maturity from being trusted with the responsibility to do a project of this nature. As all the participants are in transition year, they were asked how doing the citizenship project differed to projects they may undertake in transition year, they said that it was very different because it was totally their project and they had complete ownership of it. One member commented that young people tend to receive a lot of negative publicity and that their experience shows that young people 'are capable but undervalued'. When asked if there was anything negative about the experience, they said no that it was all positive for them.

The members said that they would very much like to do another project or to continue as a group in the future. The issue of lack of activities for teenagers is still pertinent and they would like to look at how it could be addressed on an ongoing basis.

According to Orla, the project worker, the group were very cohesive, motivated and committed and believes that the small size of the group contributed to this. She used the manual to guide activities in the 'awareness' phase of the project and found that they worked very well. When it came to the action phase, the group took ownership of the project and she found that she didn't need to take such a leadership role. She said that the young people took responsibility for organising the events and she just had to look after things like ensuring that child protection guidelines were followed and ensuring there were adequate staff or volunteers on site. She believes that seeing the success of their efforts and getting positive feedback from their peers was a very powerful experience for the participants and that they have all grown in confidence as a result.

They were being thanked by their peers. They loved that as well I suppose because they were getting constant recognition from….it was from their community…… And it wasn't just from their peers either it was from parents and it was from anybody you were speaking to was really positive about their project.

Some of the people in the group like, the difference that I could see in them now like, their confidence, self esteem and everything is just huge now. Young people who wouldn't have spoken out in the group are now some of the leaders in the group.

She feels that this group really understood the Citizenship Programme and fully embraced the phases of awareness, action and evaluation. She feels that they also gained from showcasing their project at the regional event and that seeing their project in a wider context enhanced their learning and appetite for similar work in the future.

They all really enjoyed the awards ceremony. I suppose it was kind of a concluding point for them…..they had done the project, they had done all the hard work and now they were able to present it and look back and say, look what we did. Definitely when they were doing the boards and writing their report, they were really reflecting on what they actually did do and what they did achieve and what they learned from it. And I suppose they really enjoyed the day yeah, they had great fun. Just even to see the different groups and the different people and the different work that they did and the citizenship projects they did. Even some of them were saying like, I think they'd nearly a better understanding as well after that day as well of what, and they were, can we stay involved now? Can we keep, can we do another project? Different things like that.

Orla is hopeful that the members will join a youth committee in the youth project and may undertake another citizenship project. She is of the view that the citizenship project is of benefit to all young people, including those who have been targeted for participation in youth projects and those from the 'universal' population, such as this group.

I think it's a great programme for the universal young people while they mightn't be identified or targeted young people or mightn't be referred to the project …they develop their self esteem, their confidence, communication, team building. They become more self-aware, they can reflect on their learning and they receive positive recognition for something they can do and they can really recognise that they can achieve something when they put their mind to it. There's no stopping them……

Orla acknowledged that facilitating a group like this can be easier in a project setting as the young people can come in after school and full-time staff are available during the day to plan sessions and follow up on tasks.

4.4 Foróige Club 2

Foróige club 2 is in a rural area and currently has 52 members. The club has entered the Citizenship Programme every year for the past ten years. For the purposes of this research, twelve members took part in a focus group, ranging in age from 13 to 18 years. Approximately one third of the group were doing citizenship for the first time, while the remainder had taken part in citizenship either two or three times. The club meets on a Friday night.

Their 2011 citizenship project was 'Operation Road Wise' which aims to educate people about the dangers of driver distractions such as mobile phone usage and smoking in the car. It builds on their project from the previous year, which involved designing, producing and selling reflective clothing to promote road safety. As part of the awareness phase of the project, the group did research into the dangers of mobile phone usage and monitored the use of mobile phones among passing cars during a specific period. They also did a survey in the community about people's attitudes and behaviours regarding using mobile phones while driving. The research identified a range of distractions that drivers face while driving. Some of them were beyond the control of the group, such as poor signage or road conditions, so they decided to focus on changing behaviour around mobile phone usage as they felt it was something they could influence.

The group decided to produce an air freshener with the 'no phone zone' logo to remind people when they got into the car not to use their phone while driving. They arranged for the air fresheners to be produced and sell them for 2 each. They also produced business cards that people can use to write the names of taxis or people who can give them a lift home. The group also did some experiments, using go-carts, to emphasise the dangers of driving too fast or using mobile phones while driving. They videoed them and put them up on their website. Some members of the group composed songs and used them as soundtrack to the videos. They then held a carnival day to promote the theme of road safety. The group got a lot of coverage in the local media.

The members said that the citizenship project is 'good craic' and that they enjoy having something to work on a weekly basis rather than just playing soccer or games. Each of the members was asked what they felt the best thing about citizenship was for them. A number of the members said that they think it is important to do their bit for road safety and that if they can change people's behaviour even in a small way that they will have done a good job. They are aware that its good for their CVs and one member said that it helped him to get into his chosen college course. A few members referred to an increase in confidence from doing citizenship, as encapsulated in the following quote.

> *I think citizenship is good because it makes you an awful lot more confident like, I was on the radio one night, I don't think I'd ever have done that if I hadn't done the citizenship.*

One girl said that she found that the experience of doing the citizenship interview really helped her when she came to do a real interview. Another member said that 'you learn so much by doing' and that doing this project shows the potential that young people have to make a difference to others. One member said that a project of this nature involves so many dimensions that all participants can find something that they really enjoy. For example, this project involved a range of tasks such as developing web pages, shooting and editing videos, recording songs, doing surveys, organising events, public speaking, dealing with manufacturers and doing media interviews. All of the members could find some tasks that they were interested in.

In the previous year, the club had reached the national finals and were featured in the TV programme, which caused great excitement in their community. The events that the group runs as part of their project provides a focal point for the community. The view was expressed that doing a project of this nature changes the perceptions of the community about young people and they are seen as having something positive to contribute.

> *Like in this country area, some people only come out only for say mass every Sunday so for people like that, it's a kind of opportunity to come out. So it kind of gets them out in their community, the whole community gets involved.*

The members said that the publicity surrounding their project from last year had generated a lot of interest in the club and there is now a waiting list for new members. The group has got recognition from the Road Safety Authority, Mayo County Council and the Garda Siochana. The point was also made that the members get to know each other very well through focusing on a common task so they have developed stronger friendships as a result.

> *The citizenship project is great because to be honest you might not realise it at the start but in the end of it once you've done it it looks brilliant. You've accomplished so much and you can accomplish so much.*

Jane the club leader has been involved with the group since it was established. She believes that the club is very active and prefers to be doing something for the community than just playing games or sports. She believes that one of the reasons that they have a high number of older members is that the members don't get bored as they are constantly working on a new project which brings focus and cohesiveness to the club. She sees the Citizenship Programme as pivotal in connecting the young people with their communities. She is of the view that having the experience of being connected to community at a young age can be instrumental in changing young people's attitudes to community participation in the future.

We're a rural community so they're very involved in their community and involved in what's happening in their community and they see different things that need to be done. We get them involved in it. I suppose it's to give them a sense of place and a sense of pride in their place….. And like in the future hopefully this is what will go into their head, well I'm part of this community or I'm part of whatever community they become part of and therefore I must put myself out there to do it….. That's what Citizenship does, it engenders a sense of community and belonging and the fact that people aren't going to come out and bring you in, you have to try and make yourself come in.

The citizenship projects undertaken by the club are very much a means of connecting all members of the community. Jane described how the wider community helped out last year to make the area look well for the TV coverage of the citizenship awards.

The community came out and they brought out flowers and they and they cut grass and there was painting done and there was all kinds of things being done and flags put up. It was a real community effort which again is good for them (young people) to see.

Jane thinks it's important that the club is inclusive, opening their events up to as many community members as possible. For example, they involve younger siblings of club members in the fashion show last year and in this year's carnival. This has the effect of bringing all members of the community together and also nurtures a future generation of club members. Many of their past members also come to their events and the citizenship events can be a means by which young people who have left the area can connect back with their communities.

Those that have been in it (the club) for the last 10, more years are coming back to see the show and they did last year and some of them are coming back to help. They wouldn't have brothers or sisters here now but they're actually coming back to be here, to be part of it like they did last year. Like we've people who are taking their holidays to come home for it.

Jane spoke of the importance of the citizenship project being fun as it keeps young people engaged and motivated. She spoke of the individual benefits that people derive from being involved, such as skills development, confidence and career progression. Many of their former members have gone on to become club leaders and the citizenship project is instrumental in nurturing new leaders as it enables members to realise the skills they have and to allow them to emerge in a safe environment. She believes that the Citizenship Programme is also important in that it gives positive media coverage to young people.

We always say if the kids wreck the place there will be every camera in the place out there and every paper but it's awful difficult to get positive press for something good and I think this is what Citizenship can do, give positive press to young people because they are doing good work.

Asked why other clubs don't enter the awards, Jane said that she feels maybe there is a need for more training and awareness raising with them about the potential for citizenship. She thinks there may be a perception that it is difficult or complex but she believes that all that is needed is creativity and an open mind. She said that the leaders have to have the courage to go with the young people's ideas, even if they seem a bit crazy. She thinks that leaders need to be open-minded about what is possible.

When they see the likes of our project, they think oh God that's awful hard, it's very difficult but yet their project we've done was done with a camcorder, a dictaphone, editing it off Microsoft 7….their own initiative, their own imagination and drawing out designs for air fresheners themselves and coming up with it…… Every single child has it; it's just a matter of letting them get on with it. I think let the kids run, don't let them harm anybody else, let them rip. …. I suppose we're lucky. We have got some younger leaders; we've leaders in their 20s which makes a difference…..They're not afraid to let their creative streak out there

She said that in the past, there used to be a county-wide recognition event, whereby the clubs in the county came together to showcase and celebrate their community projects. She thinks it may be useful to re-kindle events of this nature in order to reinforce the message that this is something that every club can do.

Asked if they had any recommendations for how the programme could be improved, club members said that there should be more space on the project report form. With regard to regional events, they recommended having more activities during the regional events as it can be difficult to keep their 40-50 members entertained for the few hours while the interviews are taking place. They felt that perhaps more than two members should be allowed to take part in the interview and that there should be more space for display boards. They welcome the national events and the TV coverage as it encourages them to 'put more effort in'. However, travelling to the national event in Dublin involves a very long day for them and it was suggested that a venue somewhere central such as Athlone would make it easier for rural groups. The club was not aware of the citizenship manual and so has not followed it.

4.5 Conclusion

The project profiles in this chapter highlight the perspectives of key stakeholders regarding the benefits of the Citizenship Programme and provide an insight into some of the processes surrounding their participation in the programme.

With regard to the benefits identified by participants, all project profiles show that one of the main benefits identified relates to the development of confidence and skills among young people. Young people across the three projects spoke of how their confidence developed as a result of having to 'put themselves out there' in undertaking the project, talking to a diverse range of people in the course of undertaking their project and presenting their projects at the regional events and interviews. The group leaders also spoke of seeing an increased level of confidence among group members, particularly those who had been quiet or shy. There is also evidence that the awareness of members regarding social needs in the community has been raised.

A finding that comes across strongly is that participation in citizenship projects can be a means of connecting young people with their communities and receiving positive feedback from them. This can be seen as a two way process, in that young people are seen as creating community by providing reasons to bring people together to celebrate and benefit from their achievements as well as drawing on the resources of the community to help them to achieve their ends. The case of Foróige Club 2 in particular shows how the experience of citizenship can lead to the development of a culture of citizenship among young people in the community and the group is very much a means of connecting community members of all age groups and fostering a sense of pride in the local community. Similarly, Foróige Club 1 project shows how the young people developed a sense of themselves as having a contribution to make to their community and the positive impact of feedback from the community. The case of Project Citizenship shows how the actions of the group helped to create a community of 15-17 year olds that previously did not have a shared space to meet socially.

The project profiles also show how a positive experience in the programme appears to 'whet the appetite' of participants for future projects. Many of the young people taking part in focus groups spoke of their desire to build on what they have learned in the past year through undertaking a project in the coming year. As well as doing the project itself, participation at the regional events was seen as valuable in terms of raising awareness of the potential for other types of projects and methods. As highlighted in the literature review, seeing the project through to completion was an important step for the projects profiled as it enabled them to reflect on and take stock of their achievements. The evidence in these project profiles suggests that the skills and know-how to take action on a community issue is developed in the course of undertaking a citizenship project. Young people appear to have a developed a sense of efficacy in relation to their abilities to address issues of concern to the community.

Another interesting finding relates to the impact of the citizenship project on club or group development. The respondents referred to the bonding and teamwork that occurred through having a common focus. Engaging in a citizenship project is seen as a means of retaining older members who appear to thrive on the challenge of projects of this nature. The feedback of the Foróige club 1 leader suggests that the project has helped to develop maturity and a work ethic among participants. All referred to the project as involving a lot of work but in hindsight, they all feel that it was worth the effort due to the degree of learning that has resulted.

In two of the three profiles, the option to undertake a citizenship project was offered to a larger group, from which a self-selecting group opted to take part. In the third case, all group members have been involved. This indicates that many of those opting to take part in citizenship projects are a particular sub-sample of the overall Foróige population and may have a stronger orientation towards this type of work. In the case of Foróige Club 2, the presence of older and newer members means that the energy and skills of the group are constantly replenished, with older members passing on skills to younger members and younger members bringing new energy and perspectives.

Two of the three groups profiled used the citizenship manual and found it to be very useful. In both cases, the manual was particularly valuable for the awareness phase of the project as the exercises were helpful in providing focus, cohesion and bonding for the group. The exercises tended to be facilitator-led in the awareness phase, after which time group members took more ownership for leading on actions, often using resources from the manual to do so. This qualitative data also draws attention to the balance that group leaders have to strike between leading the group and allowing the young people to take control. All leaders were conscious of getting this balance right, allowing the young people to give free rein to their creativity while ensuring that the task was completed safely and on time. As just highlighted, in all three cases, the group members appeared to be empowered to take ownership following an initial phase of discussion and agreement regarding the focus of the project.

The profiles also show that citizenship projects can be undertaken successfully by newly established groups as well as more experienced groups and illustrate the differences between citizenship projects undertaken in club settings and those in volunteer-led clubs. The project based group were formed specifically for the task and undertook their project over a full academic year, while the clubs tended to complete their projects over a shorter time-frame and had to fit it in with other club activities. The project group could meet directly after school as they were in an urban setting and had the support of a staff member, whereas the club groups were restricted to weekly club meetings and were reliant on the availability of volunteer leaders.

5. Staff and Managers Perspectives

5.1 Introduction

A sample of Foróige managers and staff from various levels of the organisation took part in one-to-one interviews about their views of the programme. The sample included the Foróige CEO, 4 regional / divisional managers, 7 Regional Youth Officers, 3 Senior Youth Officers, and 2 Project Officers. The purpose of the interviews was to assess their views regarding the role of the Citizenship Programme within Foróige and what they perceived to be the benefits of the programme. They were also asked their views in relation to operational issues, including the factors influencing participation in the programme and the challenges faced in delivery of the programme. This chapter starts with an outline of responses in relation to the role of the Citizenship Programme within Foróige and the benefits they believe are associated with it.

5.2 Role of the Citizenship Programme within Foróige

When asked about the core rationale for the programme, the Foróige CEO spoke of his belief that non-formal skills such as citizenship education have to be taught to young people and that they have to be given meaningful opportunities to connect with society.

> *We have to embrace the fact that non-formal skills which are really important to effective living, can't be learned by chance. There has to be a formal, thought through way in which young people are offered the opportunities to develop these skills. So, it's the skills of living, it's the skills of being effective in life. ....If we want a society that is integrated and stable, then it's important that we provide these opportunities. Otherwise we run the risk of disconnecting young people from society and when that happens you get the riots in Paris, you know, where people don't feel they have a stake in, or any way of changing or controlling or influencing, they become totally disconnected. I would see our programme is very much about trying to do the opposite, about trying to give young people their space in life, space in community and space in the greater society. .. and it's not social control, it's actually showing respect to young people and I think the Citizenship Programme and programmes like it do that.*

Many of the respondents expressed the view that the Citizenship Programme captures the essence of what Foróige is about. In particular, they drew attention to the emphasis that Foróige places on young people contributing to and engaging with their communities. The responses also emphasized how the programme acknowledges the power of young people to bring about social change.

> *It's core of the work we're doing, do you know? Around civic responsibility and good community, engagement in the community, that it's both ways, it's adults engaging in the community but it's young people engaging back into the community as well, I think it's absolutely core to what we do. (RM 9)*
>
> *For me in a lot of ways Citizenship is almost the programme that plays out models of Foróige's purpose and philosophy entirely. It's about young people realising that they can identify something, they can plan and work together to do something about that and they can be powerful, a small group of people can change something even if that's on your doorstep. (RM 10)*
>
> *It reverts back to Irish history in terms of Meitheal – people coming together to help their neighbour, communities coming together to look after issues within it. And particularly then young people connecting with the community and contributing to it. It reflects very much the thinking and ethos of Foróige in that the club is not internal looking. Foróige differentiates itself from most other organisations youth groups by being outward looking, seeking out ways to connect with the community, seeking out ways in which to show young people at their best. So it's about putting young people in the spotlight by doing something good for the community. And it's about getting the community to interact with young people around common action. (CEO)*

One respondent highlighted the 'all round' nature of the programme whereby it does not focus on a particular set of skills which may be the case in some programmes, but enables participants to use a wide range of skills to the benefit of their communities.

> *I think Citizenship gives a good introduction to lots of other programmes that Foróige might provide that would then build on those skills. You need leadership, you need to be maybe creative, you need to have a bit of entrepreneurship about you, you need to have, we've got programmes that go down avenues that are more specialist around those kind of skills for young people. But maybe Citizenship encompasses a bit of them all as well as keeping it very community focused and I really like that about it. (RM 10)*

5.3 Perceived Benefits of the Programme

Respondents were asked their views regarding the benefits of the programme. The key benefits identified include that it connects young people and the club with the community, it develops skills in young people, doing a citizenship project is good for club development, it builds relationships between young people, it's fun and it promotes a positive view of young people. Each of these perceived benefits are now discussed in turn.

It connects young people and the club with the community: One RYO spoke of how the Citizenship Programme helps to realise the purpose of Foróige, which is about connecting young people with their communities. The positive regard that young people get from their communities as a result of their citizenship projects is seen as helping to build community spirit and make the community stronger. It is also seen as inclusive in the sense that it can provide a vehicle for people to contribute to their communities in ways that they may otherwise not have opportunities to do.

> *I think that's the purpose of Foróige, that it's not about having a group of kids meeting in a room. It's about getting them to do something, giving them that sense of belonging within their own communities. Yeah it's absolutely vital. It allows the community to see young people in a different light that they don't often get the opportunity to see. And it's not just the great sportsmen, it's not the guy who can take all the frees, it's not the guy who can save the goals. It's the girl or the guy who can do a little bit extra or collect more papers or, you know, spend a bit of extra time painting…. It's for everybody. It's not just the best of the best. (RYO 5)*
>
> *I like the recognition they get from their community for getting involved and doing something… that it's not just a youth club. When I go to an information evening or do a training, like there's two aspects to it, personal development and encouraging them to get involved in their community and the clubs kind of take that on, that right, we need to do something for our community, you know. Every year, every second year we have to do something. So I like that and I think the young people gain from that and they have a good experience of it and it's something they'll remember. So I definitely think that's something worthwhile. (RYO 6)*

In recent years, there has been a strong emphasis on increasing entries from projects and clubs working with disadvantaged young people. For Foróige, promoting community connection for young people whose relationship with their communities may be difficult or conflictal is seen as a powerful mechanism for change at both an individual, group and community level and the Citizenship Programme is a core method to enable the organisation to achieve this, as described by the CEO.

> *What we are trying to do very very consciously is to take disaffected young people and connect them to their communities. One of the winners last year was a project with a group of young people who were all in trouble with the law. For them to work with a community about cleaning it up, and putting a better image in it, like it works on so many different levels, getting rid of prejudice, the pride .. huge huge learning….. So, the Citizenship Programme offers huge possibilities for those risk or marginalised to re-connect or to connect for the first time or to be valued….. We would say regularly that young people are part of the solution not the problem… it's about making young people visible but for the right reasons. And not only for them to be seen by others but to see themselves in that light, you know that they actually have something valuable to contribute to society and that's a very very powerful thing, particularly for those who are on the edge. All young people should have the chance to be seen and see themselves at their best at some stage. You know, whether that's in sport, or in music or something like this, it doesn't bother me … to flourish in life you have to see yourself and be able to have that memory of success or goodness. (CEO)*

Develops skills in young people: Respondents referred to the skills that young people can develop through participation in a citizenship project. These can include taking part in interview, selling their idea, research, evaluation and planning. Participation in a citizenship project is also believed to develop young people's social awareness in that they are exposed to and develop an understanding of people who are different to them and often less fortunate. The point was made that the type of personal development that occurs depends on the project that is undertaken and the level of participation of young people in the project. There can also be a variation in impact depending on the personalities, skills and aptitudes of the young person.

> *It just completely depends on the different projects they do. And like whether it's their communication skills or their socialising and stuff like that, but definitely improvement for some of the quieter ones. Like what I would say in any club like, if there's 30 members I'd say to the leaders don't be trying to get 30 members to do a project because that's more hassle than it's worth. Get the ones that want to do it, if there's 6 that would like to do it work with them. And that would sometimes be some of the quieter ones that would get involved in it so they'd learn an awful lot from it as well. (RYO 6)*
>
> *That while maybe one person is very good at the report writing bit someone else might be absolutely amazing at getting people to donate if it's a fundraising project or being the leader and motivating people to do whatever activity … I think young people can contribute in a lot of ways. (RM 10)*

Promotes a positive view of young people: A number of respondents referred to the fact that projects of this nature help to promote a positive view of young people, which is important as the prevailing view of young people can tend to be negative.

> *The main thing that I would see is that it promotes the positive of young people as opposed to the negative that seems to be always getting the Press and getting talked around areas or whatever. So it just promotes the good stuff that young people can do and it gets them linked into their local community and gets them thinking about stuff that they can be part of and that they can get involved in.*

Good for club development: A number of respondents spoke of the value of undertaking a citizenship project in terms of group development. It provides variety and focus to the activity of the club and provides a common task around which group members can bond. Involvement also builds relationships and friendships between people in the group. The citizenship activity also raises the profile of the club in the community and can be a form of advertisement to potential new members regarding what the club is about.

It tends to bond the group. It certainly gives the club a focus farther than the next week or so, do you know what I mean? Almost like a long term goal. The sense of achievement of the accomplishment of the project can almost cement the club very often you know. (RYO 3)

I suppose a different dimension to what the club can be doing, you know, gets them out of a routine of what they might normally be doing on a week-to-week basis in the club and gets them thinking about other things that they can do. ..and also then getting the recognition within their own local communities and promoting themselves within their local areas that they exist. I think the more they do that the more they get known and the more people want to be part of the club. (RYO 4)

It builds their capacity and aptitude for civic engagement activity in the future: A number of respondents believe that involvement in a civic engagement project such as citizenship can influence the outlook of participants, making them more likely to consider involvement in similar activity in the future.

Ideally that they'd actually carry it into the future if they remember, like we do it with lads maybe 12 years old or 14 years old and they might, when they're 10 years older remember what they had done and continue on that way or keep doing it, that kind of stuff for the community. Just if you can maybe spark an interest in them for later life. (SYO 1)

I think it's powerful, I think it stays with them for life and it does create a sense of other and their place in the world…Young people begin to believe and have a belief and it's important to them that doing something that benefits their own community, not up to other people, it's really up to everyone and I think that message is loud and clear out there. (SYO 8)

These are young people that are identifying something within their own community that needs to change or to improve or that needs to be addressed or that they want to learn more about, or that they want to know about. The sheer level of skill and learning for life going forward, do you know? That the young people, that the young people are getting from it, about identifying a need and being able to respond to it, and yes, we can collectively respond to this within our own community. (RM 9)

It's fun: Respondents emphasized the importance of ensuring that the citizenship project is fun in order to ensure that young people stay committed.

Also it can be fun, or it is fun. Whenever we do it the kids turn up. We were doing a cleanup there a few months ago and like they turned up every week to it and they enjoy it and it's I suppose important to know that it's fun for them too.

5.4 Staff Perspectives on Various Elements of the Programme

Feedback from staff and management in relation to aspects of the programme is now reviewed, starting with their views regarding the core programme model of 'awareness, action, evaluation, the regional and national events, the impact of the ptsb sponsorship and manualisation of the programme.

Core programme model – awareness, action, evaluation

Overall, there was a strong level of support for the core programme model of awareness, action and evaluation. The Foróige CEO spoke of the importance of the action element of the programme in terms of making a real impact on young people's belief in their capacity to create change.

> *How do you become resilient if you don't experience that feeling of excitement and power… if you can't physically see that change?. You can read all the books and write the greatest project and everything like that but unless you actually go out and experience it or do fundraising and actually see a change that you brought about (CEO)*

While in favour of the core model, the point was made that some clubs don't work through the three steps of awareness, action and evaluation in detail. For example, someone may come to their club to talk to them about an issue. On the basis of this, the cub may decide to do a citizenship project in response to this issue. Thus, when the time comes to complete the project report form, they may feel that they are not eligible to enter as they don't have much detail on that section. Or they may enter the awards and be marked poorly for their awareness section, which may deter them from entering again. One RYO made the point that changes could be made to the marking of projects to reflect the different pathways that can lead clubs or projects to choose particular topics.

> *A lot of clubs would do a Citizenship project and it might be someone coming to the club and just giving a talk and they went, oh right, we want to do something about that. So the awareness section of the Citizenship in some clubs it might be absent really, do you know? They mightn't have done the observation or the walk about or the research or the questionnaire but they might have came across it through different avenues and I think that might be off-putting then when they look at the report form, the awareness, kind of like, oh we really don't have a whole lot for that section so we can't really enter it. (RYO 2)*
>
> *A third of the marks for the awareness section and that can be very punitive if the clubs are approached by a charity or if they choose a charity because there's an issue affecting somebody in the club. Say for example if one of the kids mum had cancer or something so they do something for breast cancer because they haven't gone out into the community to see what they needed, that it can be very punitive on their marking system whereas it's kind of irrelevant….. just because they're told about a need or know about a need doesn't mean that they're not doing a good community project. (RYO 3)*

The point was also made by some respondents that the emphasis on written report forms can be off-putting for some groups, particularly where there may be literacy problems in the group. A number of respondents suggested that the possibilities of using other forms of entry rather than project report forms should be explored, for example podcasts or submitting their learning journal that comes with the manual.

> *Every year specifically the project people do feedback that young people maybe don't express themselves as well as they could through a different medium. It is report orientated and year on year that's the feedback. I don't agree nor disagree if you know what I mean… I think when it's being judged everyone is mindful of this, you're not just judged on that but certainly the projects do feel if there were different, I don't know, a podcast or whatever it might serve some of their young people a bit better. (RM10)*
>
> *I think the project report form turns everybody off. You know the journal that they have, if they could nearly hand up the journal, like they could do it bit by bit and it's not this big academic thing that they have to fill out at the end. (RYO 3)*

Regional and national awards

There was a consensus among staff that actually entering the awards brings an added value compared to doing a community project but not entering it in the awards. It was felt that entering the awards allows the clubs to receive recognition at local, county and regional level for the work they have done. It also raises the awareness of the young people of what other clubs are doing and makes them feel part of something bigger.

> *I mean even if just to go to a regional event. The reaction that the young people get and see what everybody else is doing. I think that it's so inspirational for a young person to go in and see what other young people are doing. The amount of them that come back and say my patch is better than theirs or, she never tried to do that, or, you know. I like the way they presented their project, we could do it much better or we could have changed this. Just learning from each other is fantastic. And talking to each other. You know, a couple of the clubs now are looking to meet up with other clubs, all those sort of things come out of it which is really positive. (RYO 5)*
>
> *They really do present it so well, and all of that I think is a fantastic experience for them, outside of what they have actually achieved and the skills that they have developed from doing the project, the actual experience of the event as well I think is massive for them. (RM 9)*

It is obviously very important in terms of being true to the programme model that the citizenship projects are undertaken by the young people themselves, with the support of their adult leaders rather than being led by the adult leaders. The point was made that having the regional events means that young people can be interviewed about their projects and it enables the judges to get a sense of whether the projects have been truly youth-led, which can be hard to assess from the project report form.

I've done a lot of judging and my impression is the kids do actually do it, but you come across a few cases where you would be very doubtful…. that's a great advantage of having this programme restructured now, that because there are so many regional events, we interview the kids. Interviews give you much more of a feel of the project whereas with the written report you are reading between the lines. (RM11)

While there is a strong level of support for the programme among staff and management, some unease was expressed regarding the system of recognising projects for merit awards or for entry to the national programme. It was highlighted as an issue across the majority of interviews undertaken with staff. One of the main areas of concern is the difficulty associated with deciding to recognise the achievements of one group and not of another, given that groups are coming to the awards from different levels of capacity. There was some feedback that some volunteers perceive entries from projects to be at an advantage because, unlike the volunteer-led clubs, they have the day-to-day support of professional staff. Also, while recognising the need to meet the requirements of TV coverage, there is also evidence of unease in relation to the selection of an overall winner.

The fact that it's a competition is a difficulty but I think we'll always be torn that way and with the TV involvement and that I think it kind of necessitates a competition you know and it's certainly something that young people understand from reality TV you know. That's a challenge. (SYO 8)

I would personally get rid of the merit awards because I just think you're setting up a tiered system and it's a very, very difficult thing to measure, you know. You might have a group of young people from a very disadvantaged background who might, by just getting together and doing something, it might be very small, it might even have been organising a cake sale and giving the proceeds to something. That to them could be like climbing Mount Everest whereas you might have a group of young people who might be 16, 17 and been in the Foróige club for a long period of time and they might do something that's obviously more eye-catching or more detailed and they're competing against each other. I personally feel that every club who enters the regional awards should get the same. They should get the framed cert, be it a trophy or something and enjoy the day and it's a celebration of what people have achieved and maybe then a week later then they can announce who is going forward to the nationals. Now I totally understand that there's TV involved as well and they need to capture that as well so it's trying to find a balance really. (RYO 2)

Many of the staff said that they had received feedback from volunteers and group members that they are uncomfortable with this aspect of the programme. A number of respondents made the point that more awards could be given at regional events.

You could have 50 groups at regional events so it's a lot of groups to walk away empty handed. Sometimes the disappointment can ruin the day. Maybe there could be more prizes… like the best boards so that, you know, very often it doesn't have to be about being the best, it's just about recognition and the smallest prize can mean a lot to kids…..rosettes … anything at all. (RYO 3)

The only criticism I have heard from leaders about the programme to date is that they don't like the overall winner idea and also kind of around clubs who have just started off and they've never done a Citizenship project being pitted against somebody who has done one for the last 10 years, you know. They find that difficult, that there should nearly be categories….. And then as well you have clubs who are purely volunteer led and then projects who have staff and resources to back them up…. Or clubs that have been doing it for years and they've got a brand new bunch of kids who've never done Citizenship before. Everybody is in the same class which is very difficult, very difficult. (RYO 5)

I suppose you have come up with something that can be done, kind of to have more sub level awards or something just to make people recognised, different aspect of it like, yeah. ….Even like a prize for the best project from a new club…..To keep them interested basically, that's what I can think of. Or you know, the best boards. There would be young people there who spent an awful lot of time doing these boards, like why do they bother? Now don't get me wrong, I'm probably one of the biggest supports of Citizenship in the organisation. I love it and I love everything to do with it but you know, why would you bother going to all that hassle, people do beautiful boards …And throw them in the back of a car….Whereas it would really give an incentive if there was a prize even for the best boards or something. (RYO 6)

Impact of the ptsb sponsorship

There was a sense that the ptsb sponsorship has made an impact on the ground, through there being more resources for training, materials, promotion and for the TV awards. There are now considerably more groups entering the awards and there is a general view that the standard of entries has improved.

*I think what **permanent tsb** has brought to it is it's really given it a massive profile. I think our local version was working really well but I think that access to feeling part of something bigger wasn't there. We weren't able to do that in the same way. I think having the programme written up is really beneficial and the feedback has been very good on year one of using the manual. And it's given us dedicated staff people, you know, all of those things that we couldn't have done. (RM 10)*

There are more groups entering. I think we've made it more accessible and therefore people are more likely to give it a go. We've made it more visible and less daunting. I think there was a perception that you almost had to be obsessive to enter the citizenship awards. You can do it now with a good idea well done. The numbers involved have hugely increased in the past few years. …The standard has improved. The standard of the top 3 was always very high but I think we have raised the consistent standard right across the board. (CEO)

The point was made that having the TV coverage makes it easier to sell the programme to young people who don't understand what the Citizenship Programme is about.

> *I think visuals are so much better than people just standing up talking about it because I've shown the snippets of the show to a few groups now and they get a much better sense of what it is because they're like going, 'oh these are young people the same age as us and we're well able to do that too'. That works much, much better. (RYO 4)*
>
> *I think it's a great idea, I mean it's a great way of raising the profile of Foróige and the programme as well, fantastic like, I think a lot more people are aware of it, and aware of Foróige because of the TV programme. (RYO 7)*

One Regional Manager summed up the benefit and challenge posed by the TV coverage. On the one hand, seeing the high standard of projects may mean that the programme may become confined to the 'stronger' groups and projects and that others may perceive that it is not for them. On the other hand, showcasing the high standard of projects profiled on TV can raise awareness of what is possible for other youth projects and provide them with an incentive to do similar work.

> *I think that maybe one of the weaknesses that might be there, is the fact that some people feel they'll never get to the top because of the way the programme is now going, and step back from it, and then you will have the stronger ones that will be there consistently, year in year out. …. I think when it's there on the telly; a lot of them are very snazzy projects. But yes, very achievable and I know, I've talked to clubs and on the Sunday nights the programme was on I was getting phone calls from leaders do you know? God we could do that, and we've done that and do you know? So they see, it is also, you know? I suppose the flip, there's two sides to it, they do see that what they're doing is a good (RM 9)*

Manualisation of the programme

The staff interviewed were asked their views about the manual that has been developed to support the implementation of the programme. They were asked their views on the manual, the training in its use and their experience of its implementation. The overall sense was that the manual is perceived as a valuable development by staff.

There was considerable support for the manual as a resource for staff and volunteers. One SYO made the point that, because the staff like the Citizenship Programme, they were very open to a resource in relation to it. It's seen as being of particularly value to new staff who are not familiar with the programme. Furthermore, staff are now becoming quite accustomed to manualised programmes and thus find it easy to adapt to having a manual for the Citizenship Programme.

I thought the manual was great, very clear with the steps and different things and I thought it was, I found it very good because at the time I was just after coming to the role of RYO and I wasn't very familiar with it, so it was great. I found it very useful. (RYO 7)

There's definitely bits and pieces in it that I wouldn't have thought of before. So even as a relatively experienced staff member it was definitely a benefit but it's more probably beneficial for inexperienced staff that are just getting going and they're kind of looking for some support structures. (SYO 1)

I think it's a great idea. ….Because I think it's a resource that leaders can take and use in their club you know. I also think it gives them a real understanding of what is meant by awareness, in very simple exercises. The manual definitely helps. And the journal is great. (RYO 4)

They (voluntary leaders) think it's a fantastic tool. Yeah they think it's something that they will refer to. (RYO 2)

The CEO spoke of his vision for the manual as being a resource rather than a prescriptive programme that has to be followed rigidly. His intention is that it will support those who wish to undertake a project by providing clarity regarding what is expected and reassurance that they are going about it properly.

I'm very strong that the manual should not be seen as a step by step guide. It's an aid, a support, it's about making sure that those who want to do it have the information and process in which to put it. …I don't think it takes away from the creativity, the spur of the moment stuff. I've seen no evidence that it's going to change in any way the variety of stuff that comes off - I just think it's going to make it better. That's the hope you know. It's about supporting the clubs, the leaders in particular by making it more accessible, making it less daunting and giving that bit of reassurance that they're doing it right rather than just feeling that everything starts and finishes with them and that they're on their own. (CEO)

Some of the respondents interviewed had trained Foróige staff members, older members in clubs, some had trained volunteer leaders and some had trained young people. The general feedback was that the manual and training were well-received. Respondents said that the feedback they have received in relation to the manual has been positive. Some of the respondents drew attention to the importance of how the manual is 'sold' to volunteers. As highlighted in the above quote from the CEO, there is a risk that the manual could be seen as a blueprint which puts people off, especially if they are not particularly academic. The feedback from RYOs concurred with this view and they emphasised the importance of the manual being 'sold' as a tool or resource.

The view was expressed by several RYOs that some of the newer clubs are more likely to use the manual than the more experienced clubs. There was a sense that the training and the manual was easier to sell

to newer clubs. The point was made that it was important how the manual was communicated to some of the more experienced leaders, to ensure that they did not feel undermined. There is a view that some people will embrace the manual and use it extensively while others will continue to work without it.

> *I suppose trying to communicate to the long standing leaders really that this isn't, it's not that you've ever done anything wrong in previous years but this is just something to help, something to aid you in the years ahead when you're trying to do it. ……But in their own mind they'd probably be thinking well, you know, we're not going to learn anything new here when they're coming to the training. (RYO 2)*
>
> *For newer leaders it's fantastic, absolutely love it. For some of the older leaders they kind of looked at it and went, why are we getting this training? .. they just felt, ah here, hold on a minute, we know Citizenship, we've been doing Citizenship for years, longer than you've been in the organisation. (RYO 5)*

Training in using the manual is still being 'rolled out' so the full impact of the manual has not yet been seen. One RYO said that her approach has been to invite a mix of volunteers and young people from clubs to take part in manual training. This increases the likelihood that a critical mass of stakeholders in the club will grasp what the manual is trying to achieve which makes it more likely that it will be implemented.

> *I would invite say 2 or 3 young people and 2 volunteers from the club to go to the training. We might have maybe 5 different groups at a training from 5 different clubs and just go through the manual with them. ….So they begin to understand it and that's one or two leaders from the club… and then you've two or three members understanding it and what's meant to be done and the awareness, the action and the evaluation. (RYO 6)*

The feedback suggests that the manual is used by groups undertaking citizenship projects that are entered in the awards but also by groups undertaking citizenship projects that are not entered in the awards and for other training purposes within the organisation. For example, one respondent said that she also uses elements of the manual (for example committee training) for other training purposes unrelated to the Citizenship Programme.

Respondents were asked if they believe that having the manual will improve the quality of citizenship projects undertaken. The point was made that the manual is a good resource to build up the information needed in completing the project report form. One RYO believes that it will in some cases, but that other groups will continue to do what they have always done and wont necessarily see the value of following the manual. One RYO gave an example of a group that had used the manual with an obvious improvement in the quality of their project. However, he has not trained very many clubs to date so did not have further evidence of an enhancement of quality.

I think it's improved it (quality) hugely for projects when it comes to awareness, action and evaluation. There's no doubt about it.. I think it's brilliant. (RYO 6)

It focuses you on the steps that you need to take and the jobs that need to be done and all of that. It's easier then when it comes to filling in the forms …if they wanted to enter, that they have all of the work done whereas I think in the past people came to the forms and said, oh God we don't have any photographs or we don't have this done, we don't' have that done. So from that point of view it's great because it does build up to that. (RYO 4)

They attended the training and this year I just found that they really, really took elements of their project and did a lot of detailed work that they wouldn't normally have done in previous years. They would have entered it before but like in particular now they would have done a bit of research and the questionnaires and so on, it was about water safety and they would have went into more detail and did up leaflets and stuff, I don't think they would have done it before. So I think definitely that club has used it and would have used it to their benefit you know. (RYO 2)

5.5 Factors Influencing Participation by Groups and Projects in the Citizenship Programme.

The research sought to explore the factors that influence participation by clubs and projects in the Citizenship Programme. The analysis of the geographical spread of entries into the programme outlined in Chapter Two highlights that a high number of applications are received from certain counties, while there are little or no entries to the programme from other counties. Through the staff interviews, the reasons for this geographical disparity in entry levels and other factors affecting participation in the Citizenship Programme were explored. The factors that were identified have been divided into two key categories – factors that encourage entries to the programme and factors that discourage entries to the programme. Each of these is now discussed in detail.

Factors that encourage entries to the programme:

Local culture support citizenship: Some of the staff interviewed work in regions where there is a very strong culture of support for citizenship among clubs and projects on the ground. For example, the youth services in Blanchardstown and Tallaght in Dublin have a very high level of interest in the programme. When asked why this culture has developed, respondents attributed it to the priority that is placed on the programme by Foróige staff, whereby targets for groups entering the programme are built into annual workplans. The programme is actively promoted at both club and project level and there is a local recognition event to showcase all local projects. These events are high profile occasions for the local community and are believed to play an important role in recognising and reinforcing the value placed on the community work undertaken by young people. These regions obviously have the advantages of denser networks of population and groups and dedicated support staff that some of the rural regions may not have.

There's an expectation on the youth projects here in the youth service. Every year we would have it written into our plans that we engage at least one group in a Citizenship project. .. this year there was quite an interest from the voluntary groups, there was extra interest. I was trying to work out why that is and I have to say I think the TV and media coverage certainly contributed to that. I mean trying to see what else, also the training that the club workers would have done with the youth groups and everyone has trained on the manual. (SYO 8)

This SYO also highlighted that all local citizenship projects are showcased at a high profile local community event, with good production standards (this is held before the regional citizenship events). The programme is also funded by the local council, who are 'big fans of the programme' and this enables the youth service to offer seed funding to groups to help them with their projects. He believes that this mix of factors – management commitment, training, TV coverage, local showcase event, council support and funding – 'has been a recipe for success'. Most of the groups taking part in the local citizenship showcase event also participate in the regional citizenship events. The fact that a local project was one of the groups featured in the TV series was also seen as contributing to the 'buzz' surrounding the programme in the past year.

Similarly, in Tallght the local event has been in existence for a long time and there is now a culture of participation in citizenship in the area. The Manager describes the impact that the local event has but she also believes that the regional and national elements are important in terms of linking the young people with a wider group of young people working to similar ends.

The local event is so fantastic is genuinely most years you'll get quite a number of parents, teachers or school completion, home school, the odd principal…. the community guards, people from the Partnership…community members, coming in, looking at the projects, getting a chance to see what can be done. … So on lots of levels, locally and for the young people themselves I think it's really good to get the recognition on their doorstep in the first instance and I think the programme is designed really for that, and really overall that's the main piece, within your own community…. But then I think the excitement and the sense of more than my doorstep is really important as well. It is created through the regionals and then absolutely through the national and now there's the whole TV piece and everything else, you know, to feel part of something that large I think is really, really important. (RM10)

A regional manager from a rural area made the point that, while there is a designated staff member employed at national level to oversee the management of the programme, it would also be useful to have development officers on the ground at regional level to encourage and develop entries to the programme. It currently falls to the Regional Youth Officers to promote the Citizenship Programme but their job is so broad that it can be difficult to ensure that it gets the attention it requires.

It would be great if there was somebody that was dedicated to being able to promote it and support it and do the training. Like I'm not saying full time in every area, but even if, or maybe it's, I don't know, within the existing resources, that if we say to an RYO region, listen for one day a week we need you to come out of the RYOs role and promote Citizenship. ….I think sometimes because their roles are, the RYOs job is so vast, so broad, so wide, that maybe what is needed is somebody dedicated to programmes ..and Citizenship being one of them. (RYO 9)

Encouraging entries from newly formed groups: One RYO from a rural county with a high level of entries into the programme said that she encouraged new groups to take part in citizenship as part of their induction training, advising them that it was something that Foróige clubs 'nearly had to do'.

Clubs recognise the value of the programme: One RYO said that there is a 'hardcore' of clubs who enter the competition every year. Asked why these groups consistently enter the awards, he attributed to the fact that they value the events as a means of showcasing and getting recognition for the work that has been done by young people.

They've experienced the regional events and they think it's a very good occasion and it's an opportunity for the club to get recognition at a county level and as well as that then when they have the display boards done they can get recognition in the local level. I think they just like the experience and they keep going back for more and I think some of the members who would have attended the regional events then would be a driving force in getting another project done, you know. I think that's a key element to it. (RYO 2)

Experience and motivation of key members or leaders: Another RYO said that the groups who enter consistently in her region have become quite experienced and have a good understanding of what is required. Another RYO said that there is generally a key leader in the club who is very interested and pushes the club to participate.

Factors that discourage entries to the programme

Perception that projects are not good enough to enter: With regard to counties and regions that have a low level of entries to the awards, the RYOs expressed the view that most groups do citizenship type projects but don't enter them in the awards. For example, in Cavan-Monaghan, there are 35 clubs but just 2 or 3 enter the citizenship awards. However, the RYO estimates that 32 or 33 of these clubs undertake a community project. The point was made that clubs don't view their projects in the community as citizenship projects or 'good enough' to enter the awards.

They may not use the structures of the Citizenship, the three different areas, but they take on things within their own community - fundraisers, helping the elderly, doing intergenerational projects. There are loads and loads of them that do those things…. but they're not entering it, or not recognising it as a Citizenship project, and I have had loads of conversations with leaders when they have been describing what they're doing and I'd say why wouldn't you enter that in the Citizenship and they'd be saying, 'sure that's not a Citizenship', and I'm saying 'yes, that is Citizenship'. (RM 9)

The RYOs in these regions spoke of their efforts to encourage clubs to enter the awards but find it difficult to overcome the resistance to actually entering the awards. There were a number of reasons given for this reluctance. One RYO spoke of the challenge of overcoming the perception that a citizenship project had to be something 'big'.

The challenge is just to get people to realise that it doesn't have to be a big deal, that it doesn't have to take months and months. It can be something very small and very simple and even getting people around to the way of thinking that we are actually doing this. But they don't see that side of it I suppose. (RYO 4)

We'll say there is intergenerational projects, reading or listening to stories from the older generation and vice-versa or young people sharing some of their skills, around IT with elderly in the community. They may not see that that's actually hugely significant, outside of the fact that, sure all they were doing was showing her what I know about the computer…..They may not see the value, the huge value of it beyond their own vision of it, you know…..They minimise I think sometimes, the extraordinary good that they're doing. (RM 9)

Entering not a priority for new clubs: In some areas, many of the clubs are relatively new and 'don't see entering the awards as a massive priority for them'. The RYO described how these new groups may have a turnover of members or leaders and may not have the continuity that is needed to plan and implement a citizenship project. (RYO 4)

A lack of outward focus in the club: One RM said that the reluctance of clubs to enter the awards may be reflective of the quality and standard of some clubs, indicating a lack of interest and motivation to engage with others outside of the club or community.

Selling the concept to young people who have not experienced it: The point was also made that it's hard to convince young people who have not previously done a community project of how enjoyable and beneficial it can be for them. Getting over the initial hurdle of actually doing something can be challenging, after which point they have seen the benefits for themselves and are likely to be more willing to keep doing what they are doing. Similarly, another RYO finds that it's hard to sell the programme to clubs that have not attended the awards as they don't understand why it would be beneficial.

It's not until you actually do it that you get a sense of what it is and how it can be achieved and all of that whereas you know if you're just talking about it and explaining about what it is, young people certainly don't get it because they see it as nearly, you know, kind of something not cool to do. They're going, oh my God why would we want to get involved in our community? It's not until they do it then that they realise that this is actually fun too and we enjoyed it. So I think that if clubs get into it it's a great thing it becomes part of the programme nearly for the year. (RYO 4)

I think it's very hard to sell the Citizenship event to groups that haven't been to it. Like when they go to it and they see they get so much out of it but until they go to it it's hard to sell it to them. (RYO 3)

Staff reluctance to enter the awards: One respondent made the point that the recognition events are well-promoted within Foróige and staff are encouraged to bring young people along, but there is a reluctance among some staff to enter. He attributed this to a disinclination to focus on project report forms and the administrative tasks associated with the programme. This SYO acknowledged that it would be valuable for staff to 'get the credit' for what they are doing and can see the value in documenting the work being done and showcasing it.

To be honest, for the staff, if the young people are doing the thing that's particularly, that's kind of what matters really to them…..they'd much rather be out doing something with young people and empowering the young people to do stuff than actually writing up a report about it. (SYO 1)

Time commitment: The point was made that entering a project can be all-consuming and groups may decide not to enter every year, but rather every two years so that they can focus on something else every second year. One manager described how the entries for the programme can ebb and flow from year to year due to events occurring within clubs and projects and believes that this is important in terms of maintaining energy and substance.

Things come up and unfortunately it can be a death within a project, you know, something unforeseen. Some projects don't necessarily go in every year. One or two projects might put two in one year and then might do nothing for a year or two. So they might go through Citizenship waves. And I don't have a problem with that. I think you need to look at the group, what they did last, where they're at, you know what I mean …you don't want the actual substance of the programme, the work of the project become tokenistic just to have entered, you know. (RM 10)

Some respondents referred to the fact that the club year is very short and has been disrupted in recent years due to prolonged spells of bad weather. Furthermore, citizenship entries must be made in April / May time when young people are very busy with exams and sport and it can be difficult to get them to focus on filling out the project report form and preparing boards for the regional events.

Maybe time has something to do with it as well, I mean, the way the weather has been in recent years, by the time they get set up and then the weather kicks in, Christmas is upon them before they know it, and then when they come back, its straight into projects if they are, and then it's time to have the report in, so, maybe that's something as well. (RYO 7)

This RYO also made the point that clubs just meet once a week whereas projects can meet several times a week and thus have more time to complete their projects.

Cost: Cost was also raised as a factor in influencing whether or not clubs attend the regional or national events. One RYO made the point that if the club is spending up to €500 on an end of year event, they may choose to go to an adventure centre or something perceived as more 'fun' than attending the citizenship awards. She said that some of the clubs don't have the money to pay for the buses so the young people contribute, which she believes means that they are 'almost paying to enter the project'.

Issues with the competitive element of the programme: A number of RYOs said that some clubs have entered the regional events but decided not to enter again in the following year because they don't agree with the competitive element to the programme. The point was also made that some of the newer clubs were somewhat disappointed that they did not win an award at the regional events.

I've a few clubs then that would have entered and would have went to the event and wouldn't go back the following year mainly because, say in recent years you have the merit award and stuff like that you know, you've the tiered kind of prize giving and some leaders would feel very strongly that it should be, everyone should get the same, you know, leave getting the same and ok, announce the national winners then afterwards, maybe a few days later or something. Maybe not on the day because what happens then is they might have done a fantastic project in their own eyes and made a big difference in their own communities but then when they go to their event, the regional event they've members going away feeling disappointed and it shouldn't be about that. (RYO 2)

The regional event might have been a bit of a damper even though it was a great event, I don't know, just the kind of way the top 5 or the top 2 or whatever, that kind of left a little bit of a bad taste I felt anyway. Like I would have preferred kind of like, you know, you had stuff for the best boards or the best action or the best visual as well as the top 2…. It kind of felt a little bit like, ok you've got the brilliant, that's the winners and the television, or the ones that's going to television, you've got the really good, that's the ones that gets the merits and then you've got everybody else….. It's very hard to go back and to encourage clubs to get involved again if they go away with a bitter kind of taste. (RYO 5)

continued

I think there used to be more of an interest in previous years… but from what I gather the clubs seem to have stepped back a little bit from it. I don't know why exactly, but I think it's probably because of the fact that, that they feel sometimes, well from clubs I have been talking to, they would have said that they have done their project and then they've gone to the awards day, the regional day and then sometimes the young people feel like their project isn't as good as some of the other groups that are there. ….like for some groups a small project is massive for them and for their needs, but it's just when they're all put together and they all have their display board, that sometimes they kind of get put off by another group's efforts, but that other group could have massive capabilities and links in their community, you know? … they feel that way- that's what I have been getting back anyway. (RYO 7)

Another RYO concurred with this view and feels that some groups who enter the awards because of the competitive element to it can become 'almost disgruntled' if they come away without an award of some sort. She describes how the experiences of these groups influenced attitudes to the programme at county level.

I think if they do it as a competition and as a TV then they can become very disillusioned with the whole process. But if they enter saying we're proud of our project no matter what and this is about showing the good work that the young people did then it's almost irrelevant if they're on TV or not. Then they enjoy the day and the experience. But if it's about the competition and purely about getting on the TV and they don't get there then they can become very disillusioned….. That negativity then can feed back on a county basis, but then if that's their attitude then it's a completely wrong attitude to have that anyway. Then they're not understanding the programme that they're entering. (RYO 3)

Another reason given for the groups deciding not to re-enter is the workload associated with entry into the national event. One RYO said that groups living very far away from Dublin found it to be a burden.

5.6 Future Opportunities for the Programme

An issue that was highlighted by the Foróige CEO in particular relates to the possibilities that exist for creating an expanded civic engagement programme within Foróige that would, in addition to the Citizenship Programme, offer support for social entrepreneurship and political education.

What we have perfected is that collective action for the common good. …. a group based response, which is one very strong element of civic change….. I think we have least three or four other areas that we need to be equally as good to have a good civic engagement programme….. Collective action for the common good is brilliant but it may deny or exclude some people who don't go on with a group but who have a compelling idea that others are not ready to take on at the moment. (CEO)

The CEO firmly believes that any future developments should be driven by the same purpose that is at the root of the Citizenship Programme – namely a desire to promote genuine civic engagement based on practical action, reflection and learning.

> *I'm not caught up on, that you have to have a political education bit or you have to have an individual bit. I only want them as a way, as methods in which young people can learn and understand and practice the skills of civic engagement in a very practical real way, and it's not theoretical learning, it's very much hands on, learn by doing, get the hands dirty, get the setbacks and move forwards, but know what you're doing and why you're doing it and what you're getting from it. (CEO)*

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the perspectives of staff and management at various levels and regions of the organisation regarding the Citizenship Programme. The feedback emphasises that the Citizenship Programme is seen as extremely important element of Foróige's work, with most respondents of the view that it encapsulates Foróige's core purpose. The programme's focus on connecting young people with their communities and enhancing their capacity to make a positive contribution to community are seen as critical to the practical realisation of Foróige's philosophy. The programme is believed to bring a range of benefits, including greater community connectedness, skills development, promoting a positive view of young people, enhancing club development and building capacity for future civic action. There is also a strong support for the core programme model of 'awareness, action and evaluation', with all respondents of the view that following this methodology ensures that the young person gains a good understanding of what they are doing, why and they gain an appreciation of the difference it has made. Participation at the regional events is seen as bringing an added value to the experience as it allows young people to see their efforts in a bigger context and to appreciate the variety of achievements of which young people are capable.

There was positive feedback regarding the impact of the ptsb sponsorship, with staff and management acknowledging how the investment had enabled Foróige to expand the programme, provide additional resources for projects and to run regional events which are considered to be very successful. The media profile and national event have also helped to raise the profile and create a sense of excitement around the programme. An issue of concern for staff and management is the awards system for the programme, with many making the point that some entrants are disappointed because they don't win an award. There is also some unease regarding the selection of an overall winner, an issue that the programme has grappled with since its inception. Many are of the view that all young people should be recognised for their achievements and that singling some groups out over others can cause resentment. Some staff are in favour of more categories of awards being created to recognise the different capacities of groups. Staff and management are fully aware of the need for TV coverage to have drama and excitement and the benefits that such coverage can bring so it is acknowledged that there is need for compromise in relation to this issue.

The programme manual developed for the Citizenship Programme has been very well received. Feedback suggests that it is seen as a valuable resource by staff, volunteers and young people. It appears that the manual is most valued by groups and volunteers who are new or relatively new to the programme, with some slight resistance reported among more experienced volunteers. There is a sense that the impact of the manual can be seen in the improved quality of some projects entered in the awards.

This aspect of the evaluation also explored the factors that influence participation by groups and projects in the programme. One of the key factors that appears to be conducive to participation is the existence of a strong culture of support for the programme in particular areas, most notably Tallaght and Blanchardstown in Dublin. Other factors include the preferences and experiences of a core group of volunteer leaders and clubs which encourages them to enter the programme consistently. With regard to issues that discourage clubs from entering, the view was expressed that a significant majority of Foróige clubs undertake community projects but don't enter them in the Citizenship Programme because they believe that they are not 'good enough'. A range of other issues were also identified, including staff reluctance to enter the awards, the time commitment involved and a lack of outward focus in clubs. Many RYOs said that a key issue is that some groups who enter may decide not to re-enter in the following year as they have been disappointed at not winning an award. A negative experience on the part of one or two clubs or projects in a particular county may influence other clubs not to enter, which makes it difficult to challenge the culture of non-participation in the Citizenship Programme that exists in some areas where Foróige has a strong presence.

The following chapter outlines the findings of the quantitative strand of the research which explores the outcomes for young people from participation in the Citizenship Programme.

6. Survey Data

6.1 Introduction

As part of the Foróige Citizenship evaluation, quantitative research was conducted among young people participating in Foróige clubs and projects. The aim of the quantitative strand was to assess whether young people taking part in Citizenship Programmes within Foróige were more likely to score higher on measures assessing constructs associated with civic engagement than young people taking part in other Foróige activities. A description of the survey design and measures used is provided in Chapter 2. This chapter outlines the findings of the survey analysis and is divided into three sections.

Section 1 profiles the sample at Time 1 and Time 2 in terms of age, gender, duration of involvement in Foróige and participation in Foróige and other programmes and activities. It also explores differences in PYD / civic engagement scores in terms of age, gender, duration of involvement in Foróige and participation in Foróige and other programmes and activities.

Section 2 focuses specifically on the Citizenship Programme and

- explores differences in the Time 1 measures for those who had previously taken part in Citizenship Programme and those who have not.
- presents the ratings of the Citizenship Programme by young people who had participated in a Citizenship Programme between Time 1 and Time 2
- explores differences in measures at Time 2 for those who had taken part in the Citizenship Programme and those who had not
- explores whether the Citizenship Programme appeals to particular types of young people (i.e. those with a higher level of PYD or civic competence at Time 1)

Section 3 summarises the key findings from this strand of the research.

As described in the methodology in Chapter One, three types of measures were used as part of the quantitative strand.

- *Demographic data:* Gender, age, education, ethnicity, participation in community activities, frequency of attendance at the project
- *General measures of positive youth development:* The measure of positive youth development (Lerner et al, 2005) assesses the development of 5 C's:
  - Character – includes social conscience, values diversity, conduct behaviour and personal values
  - Competence – includes academic, social and physical competence
  - Caring – empathy for others
  - Connection – to family, community, school, peer
  - Confidence – self-worth and positive identification
- *Measures of civic engagement:* Three sub-measures of civic engagement collated by Flanagan, Syvertsen and Stout (2007)[4] were used:
  - Participatory citizen – assesses the degree to which the respondents see themselves as having a responsibility to become involved with community issues.
  - Expectation for engagement in community issues – assesses their likelihood of getting involved in community issues in the future
  - Competence for civic action – assesses their perceived competence to take action on community issues. It was adapted to reflect the awareness, action and evaluation model that underpins the Citizenship Programme.

6.2 Section 1: Profile of the Sample

This section describes the sample in terms of age, gender, duration of involvement in Foróige and participation in Foróige and other programmes and activities. It also explores differences in PYD / civic engagement scores in terms of age, gender, duration of involvement in Foróige and participation in Foróige and other programmes and activities.

Time 1

A total of 34 clubs and projects participated in the study at Time 1 (October 2010). The number of participants from each club who took part ranged from a single individual to 20 individuals, with a mean of 8.59 young people from an individual club taking part. A total of 289 predominantly Irish (94.1%) young people took part in the study, with over half of participants' female (57.4%). The age of participants ranged from 11 years to 17 years old, with a mean age of 14 years. The majority of participants were in secondary school education, with higher numbers of participants from 1st Year, 2nd Year and 3rd Year, relative to 5th and 6th class in primary school, and the senior cycle in secondary school (see Table 3).

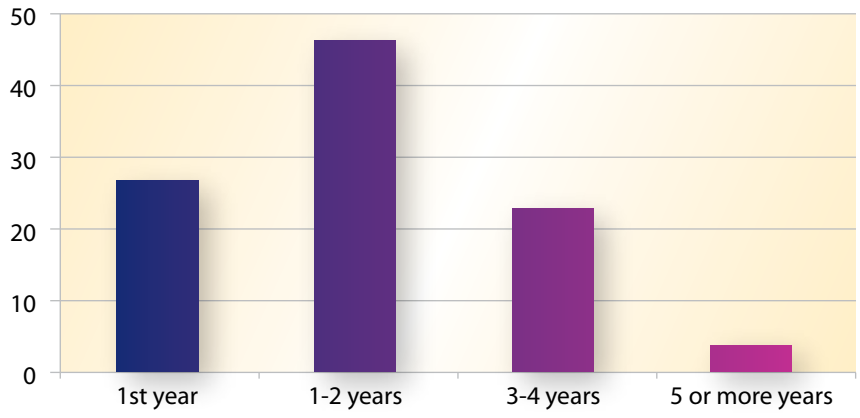
[4] Adapted from the California Civic Index (Kahne, Middaugh & Schutjer-Mance, 2005), Civic Engagement Questionnaire (Keeter, Zukin, Andolina & Jenkins, 2002) and the California Civic Index (Kahne, Middaugh & Schutjer-Mance, 2005).

Table 3: Study Population Statistics – Time 1

Clubs	34 Clubs	Mean = 8.59 participants per club	
Age	Mean = 14.00	SD = 1.213	Range 11-17years
		N	%
Gender	Male	119	41.2
	Female	166	57.4
	Missing data	4	1.4
	Total	289	100
Class	5th Class	3	1%
	6th Class	16	5.5%
	1st Year	47	16.3%
	2nd Year	84	29.1%
	3rd Year	95	32.9%
	4th Year	20	6.9%
	5th Year	20	6.9%
	6th Year	3	1%
	Not in School	1	0.3%
Nationality	Irish	272	94.1%
	Traveller	4	1.4%
	English	4	1.4%
	German/French	1	0.3%
	Romanian	1	0.3%

Many of the participants in the study at Time 1 had been involved in Foróige for more than one year (73.3%), with 26.7% in their first year at Foróige. The majority of young people had been involved in Foróige for 1-2 years (46.7%). Few participants took part in Foróige for more than 5 years (3.9%).

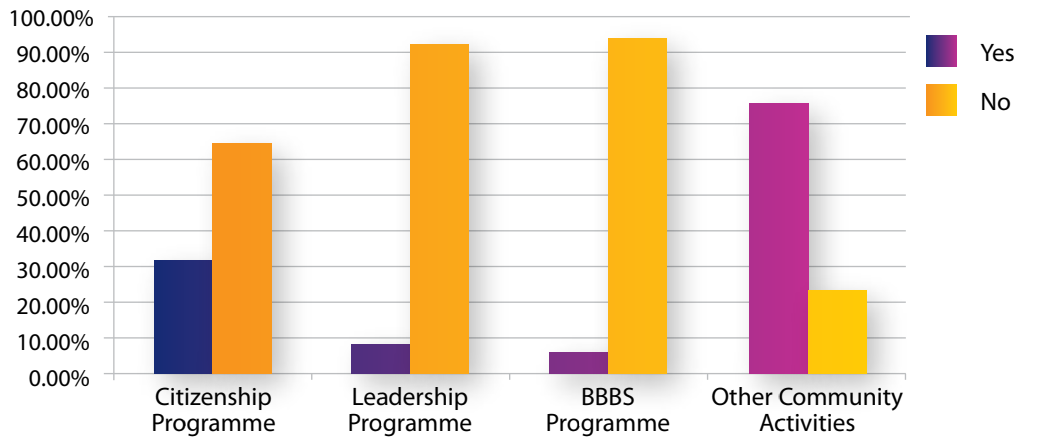
Figure 7: Length of Time with Foróige (% of Participants)



Participation

When asked about participation in Foróige programmes, the majority of young people indicated that they did not take part in "Citizenship", "Leadership" and "Big Brother Big Sister" (BBBS) programmes (see Figure 8). On the other hand, over three-quarters of participants were involved in community activities, such as cycling, GAA, music, ballet and athletics.

Figure 8: Percentage of participants who have taken part in Foróige Programmes and Other Community Activities at Time 1.



Time 2 Descriptive Statistics

177 participants completed the Time 2 questionnaire. Similar to Time 1, the majority of participants were female (57.1%), and had a mean age of approximately 14 years (see Table 4).

Table 4: Overall population statistics for Time Two.

Clubs	21 Clubs	Mean = 8.14 participants per club	
Age	Mean = 14.95	SD = 1.17	Range 13-18years
Gender		N	%
	Male	73	41.2
	Female	101	57.1
	Missing data	3	1.7
	Total	177	100
Participation in Citizenship Programme over previous 8 months			
	Yes	75	44.4%
	No	94	55.6%

Age was divided into three categories; early adolescence (11-13years), middle adolescence (14-15years), and late adolescence (16-17years).

Using One-Way analysis of variance (ANOVA's), significant differences were found between the stages of adolescence and scale scores at Time one (see Table 4). "Participatory citizen" scores were significantly different, F (2, 269) = 4.83, p <.01, with late adolescent scores higher (M = 4.12, SD = 0.53) than middle adolescent scores (M = 3.64, SD = 0.80). There was also a significant difference on the "expectation for engagement" measure, F (2, 271) = 3.28, p < .05, between middle (M = 3.43, SD = 0.96) and late adolescence (M = 3.93, SD = 0.82). Significant differences were also found between early (M = 3.44, SD = 0.79) and late adolescence (M = 3.95, SD = 0.62), and between middle (M = 3.52, SD = 0.87) and late adolescence in "civic competence" scores, F (2, 264) = 4.06, p < .05. No age differences were found for PYD subscales (p > .05).

A significant difference was found for the "Time 2 – Civic Competence" scale, F (2, 157) = 4.01, p < .05, with early adolescents scoring significantly lower (M = 3.26, SD = 0.86) than late adolescents (M = 3.81, SD = 0.93). No other significant findings were observed.

Table 5: Time One Mean and Standard Deviations for Civic Engagement Scales at each stage of adolescence.

Scale	Stage of Adolescence					
	Early		Middle		Late	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Participatory Citizen	3.77	0.69	3.64	0.80	4.11	0.53
Expectation of Engagement	3.45	0.94	3.43	0.96	3.93	0.82
Civic Competence	3.44	0.79	3.52	0.87	3.95	0.62

Analyses (One-Way ANOVA's) were carried out on the overall sample assessing if the length of time spent at Foróige had an influence on PYD and/or Civic Engagement scales at Time 1. No differences were found between groups who were in Foróige for their first year, for 1-2 years, 3-4 years, or 5 or more years (p's > .05).

6.3 Section 2: Analyses of Involvement in the Citizenship Programme

This section focuses specifically on the sub-set of young people who had taken part in the Citizenship Programme, including those who indicated at Time 1 that they had previously participated in a Citizenship Programme and those who indicated at Time 2 that they had undertaken a citizenship project in the previous 8 months. The outcome measures for citizenship participants are compared to non-participants.

Differences in measure scores at Time 1

Of the 289 young people who participated in the evaluation study at Time 1, 87 (31.8%) indicated that they previously had participated in the Citizenship Programme. This subsample of young people represented 20 different clubs, and had a male to female ratio of 1: 1.72.

At Time 1, significant differences were found between those who had previously participated in a Citizenship Programme, and those who had not. Specifically, a significant difference was found using t-test's for the "Expectation for Engagement" scale, t (271) = 2.29, $p < .05$, with those who had taken part in the programme having a higher likelihood of getting involved in a community issue in the future (M = 3.68, SD = 0.95 vs M = 3.40, SD = 0.93). Significant differences were also found for "Civic Competence", t (264) = 3.25, $p < .05$, with those who had taken part in the programme having higher perceived competence to take action on community issues (M = 3.28, SD = 0.91 vs M = 3.43, SD = 0.76). No differences were found for any of the PYD subscales or the "Participatory citizen" scale at Time 1.

Ratings of the Citizenship Programme

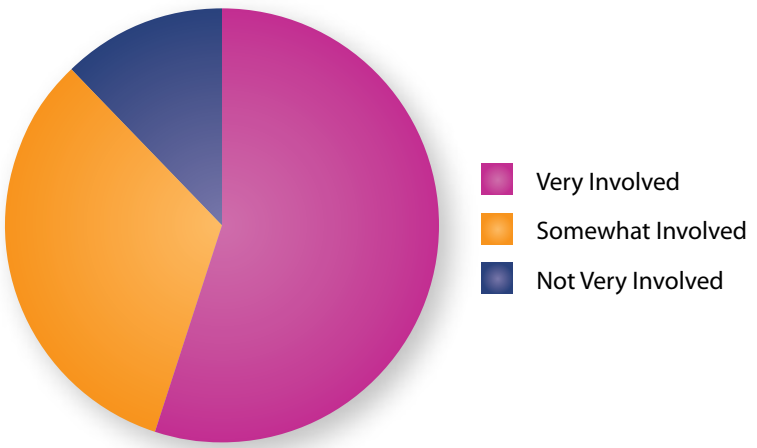
At Time 2, 44.4% of participants had taken part in a Foróige Citizenship project in the previous 8 months. These young people represented 18 different clubs, with a mean of 4 participants per club. The majority of participants in the Citizenship Programme at Time 2 were female (64.9%). See Table 6 below for details.

Table 6: Descriptive statistics of those who participated in the Foróige Citizenship Programme at Time 2

Age	Mean = 14.95	SD = 1.17	N = 173
Gender		N	%
	Male	32	36.8
	Female	55	63.8

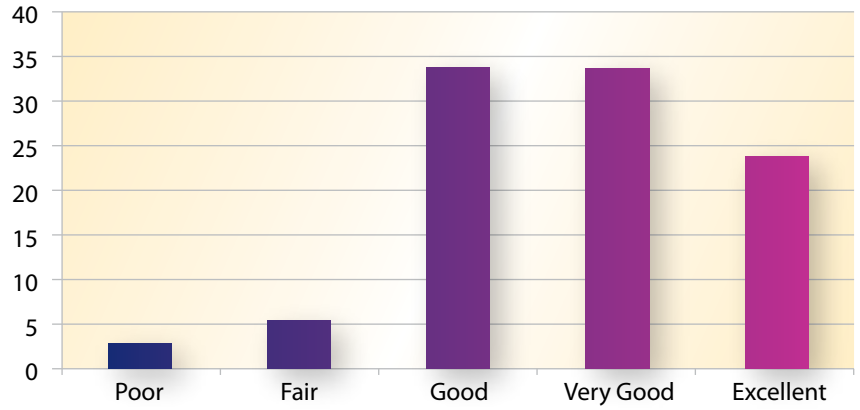
Young people who had participated in a Citizenship Programme at Time two were asked a number of follow-up questions. For example, when asked about their rate of involvement in the Citizenship project, over half (54.7%) indicated that they were "very involved", 33.3% acknowledged being "somewhat involved", while 12% indicated being "Not very involved" in their Citizenship project (see Figure 9). One-way ANOVA's were used to examine whether rate of involvement in the Citizenship project over the previous 8 months was related to scores on the PYD and Civic Engagement scales. No significant differences were found (p's > . 05).

Figure 9:
Time 2 Involvement in Citizenship Programme



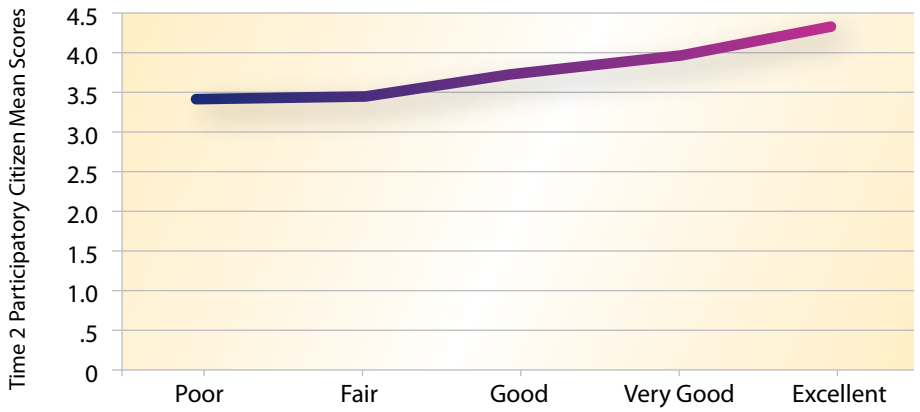
The young people who took part in a Citizenship project were also asked their opinion on the Citizenship project. Over 95.1% of young people that took part rated it as "Good" or better (see Figure 10).

Figure 10: Percentage of Ratings for the Citizenship Programme



One-Way ANOVA's were used to ascertain whether young people's rating of the Citizenship Programme was associated with PYD or Civic Engagement scores. A significant difference was found for the "Time 2 Participatory Citizen" scale, $F(4, 65) = 3.42$, $p < .05$, with those rating the Citizenship Programme "good" scoring significantly lower on the scale ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 0.59$) than those who rated the programme "excellent" ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 0.58$). See figure 11 below. No other significant relationships were found (p's $> .05$).

Figure 11: Mean Participatory Citizen scores and rating of Citizenship Programme



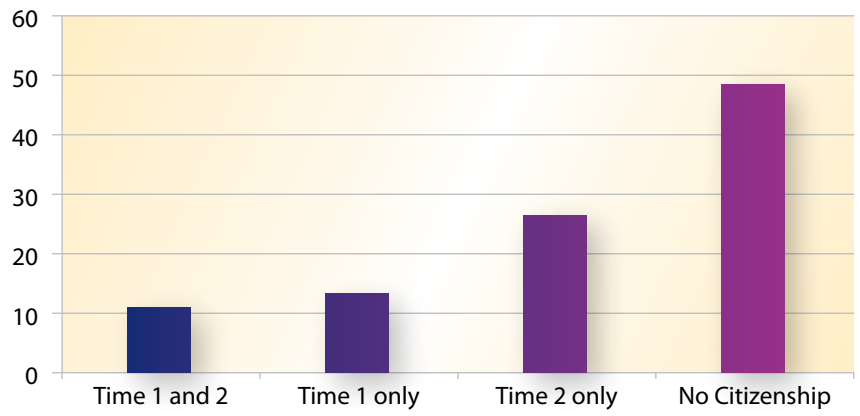
Analyses of Time 2 measures

A total of 132 participants provided sufficient information to link questionnaires at Time 1 and Time 2. The next set of analyses used this sub-set of participants to explore differences in Time 2 PYD and Civic Engagement scales between those who had participated in the Citizenship Programme more than once, once only (Time 1 or Time 2) and not at all.

Before looking at differences related to participation in the Citizenship Programme, paired-sample t-tests were used with the 132 linked data participants to examine whether there was any difference for the overall sample between Time 1 and Time 2 scores on the PYD and Civic Engagement scales. Looking at the overall dataset, no significant differences were found between Time 1 and Time 2 (*p's* > .05).

The sample was divided into a range of sub groups to reflect differing levels of participation in the Citizenship Programme. As outlined in Figure 12, just over half of the 132 linked participants had taken part in a Citizenship Programme at any time. Specifically, 10.6% of the participants indicated that they had participated in citizenship at both times 1 and 2, 13% had taken part at Time 1 only, while 26% had taken part at Time 2 only and 47% indicated that they had never taken part in a Citizenship Programme. Analyses were undertaken to explore differences in outcomes for these sub-groups.

Figure 12: Percentage of participation in Citizenship Programme at Time 1 and Time 2



Firstly, analyses were used to examine differences on Time 2 PYD and Civic Engagement scales between those who had participated in the Citizenship Programme **at any point (Time 1 and Time 2, Time 1 only, and/or Time 2 only)**, and those who had not. T-tests showed a significant difference in "Time 2 Civic Competence", t (120) = 2.02, $p < .05$, with those who had taken part in a Citizenship Programme scoring higher (M = 3.68, SD = .67) than those who did not (M = 3.39, SD = .88). No other significant differences were found.

Secondly, analyses were used to examine differences on Time 2 PYD and Civic Engagement scales between three groups;

- those who had participated in the Citizenship Programme at **Time 1 and Time 2**
- those who participated at one time-point only (Time 1 or Time 2), and
- those who did not participate in the Citizenship Programme at any time.

A significant difference was observed for "Time 2 Civic Competence", F (2, 121) = 3.87, $p > .05$, with those who took part at Time 1 and Time 2 scoring higher (M = 4.02, SD = 0.73) than those who did not

take part in a Citizenship Programme at any time (M = 3.39, SD = 0.88). Analyses were conducted to examine differences on Time 2 PYD and Civic Engagement scales between those who had participated in the Citizenship Programme at **Time 1 only** (p's > .05) (see Appendix 3). ANOVAs revealed a significant difference for "Time 2 PYD-Character", F (3, 79) = 4.25, p < .05, with those who participated at Time 1 only scoring higher (M = 74.90, SD = 8.69) than those who took part at Time 2 only (M = 63.21, SD = 12.93). No other significant differences emerged. Analyses (ANOVAs) were also used to examine differences on Time 2 PYD and Civic Engagement scales between those who had participated in the Citizenship Programme at **Time 2 only** (p's > .05) (see Appendix 3). A significant difference was observed for the "Time 2 PYD-Character" scale, F (2, 79) = 6.42, p < .01, with Time 2 only scoring significantly lower (M = 63.21, SD = 12.93) than those who took part in a Citizenship Programme at Time 1 and Time 2, and Time 1 only (M = 75.47, SD = 9.63). No other significant differences emerged.

These findings suggest that participation in the Foróige Citizenship Programme appears to impact positively on outcomes related to civic engagement. However, the outcomes were stronger for those who had taken part in the programme more than once, with no evidence of impact on the civic engagement measures for young people who had taken part in citizenship in the previous 8 months. In fact a negative outcome on the PYD character scale was observed in this case.

Further analyses

The possibility exists that the young people who undertake the Citizenship Programme have a higher level of positive youth development or a stronger orientation to civic engagement to begin with. Analyses of Time 1 measures were undertaken to explore whether this was the case. In order to carry out this analysis, first the sample was edited so that those who did not participate in a Citizenship Programme at Time 1 were selected. The sample was then divided into two groups:

- those who participated in the Citizenship Programme at Time 2 and
- those who did not participate in the Citizenship Programme at Time 2.

Looking at Time 1 scores, differences emerged between those who participated in a Citizenship Programme at Time 2, and those that did not participate. For the "Time 1 PYD-Caring" subscale, a significant difference was observed, t (87) = 2.46, p < .05, with those who participated at Time 2 scoring higher (M = 70.55, SD = 14.57) than those who did not participate at Time 2 (M = 60.96, SD = 18.68). Differences also emerged for the "Time 1 PYD-Total" scale, t (39) = 3.37, p < .01, such that those who participated in a Citizenship Programme at Time 2 scored higher in overall PYD (M = 67.53, SD = 7.23) compared to those who did not participate at Time 2 (M = 59.71, SD = 6.97). This suggests that young people with a higher level of positive youth development, and with a higher sense of sympathy and empathy for others, may be more attracted to the Citizenship Programme.

Finally, we wanted to explore whether the 5 C model of PYD at Time 1 would predict civic engagement at Time 2 for those who participated in a Citizenship Programme at any time, and those who did not. Using

regression models, we explored whether PYD at Time 1 predicted civic engagement at Time 2. Time 1 PYD scales (Character, Competence, Caring, Connection, and Confidence) were entered as predictor variables, with separate regression models carried out for each of the Time 2 civic engagement scales (Participatory Citizen, Expectation of Engagement, and Civic Competence).

For those who did participate in a Citizenship Programme at any time, the regression model for "Time 2 Participatory Citizen" was significant, F (5, 33) = 2.60, $p < .05$. In particular, "Time 1 PYD-Character" (β = .50, t = 2.21, $p < .05$), "Time 1 PYD-Competence" (β = .40, t = 2.28, $p < .05$), and "Time 1 PYD-Confidence" (β = -.39, t = -2.06, $p < .05$) were observed as unique predictors, with higher character, higher competence, and lower confidence related to higher participatory scores. The model accounted for 32% of the explained variance in "Time 2 Participatory Citizen" scores (r^2 = .32, adj. r^2 = .20). The regression model for "Time 2 Civic Competence" was also significant for those who participated in a Citizenship Programme, F (5, 33) = 3.01, $p < .05$. There was no unique contributor to the model, with the overall model accounting for 35% of the explained variance in civic competence (r^2 = .35, adj. r^2 = .23). Regression models for those who did not participate in a Citizenship Programme were all non-significant (*p's* > .05). This suggests that young people who have a higher level of positive youth development to begin with may be more attracted to the Citizenship Programme. However, it should be recognised that the cohort who took part in citizenship at Time 1 may have higher Time 1 PYD scores as a consequence of their participation in the Citizenship Programme. In order to explore this with greater clarity, analyses would need to be conducted with groups who had not previously taken part in citizenship. Either way, it confirms that there is an inter-relationship between the concepts of PYD and civic competence, emphasising that the variables that make up the construct of positive youth development are important building blocks for civic engagement activity.

Differences were also analysed for gender differences between Time 1 and Time 2. No significant gender differences were found for males or female scores on any of the scales (*p's* > .05).

6.4 Section 3: Summary and Discussion

This research sought to explore whether involvement in the youth Citizenship Programme impacts on attitudes and behaviours related to civic engagement for young people participating in Foróige projects. A total of 289 young people took part in the Foróige Citizenship Programme Evaluation Project at Time One. 61.25% of the initial cohort participated in the 8 to 9 month follow-up, with an attrition rate of 38.75%. Of those who completed the follow-up questionnaire, 74.58% provided enough information in order to be matched with their Time One questionnaire. Therefore a total of 45.67% of the total sample provided a satisfactory level of information for follow-up analysis.

The hypothesis for the study was that young people who had taken part in the Citizenship Programme would score more positively on measures of their perceived civic competence, their perceptions of themselves as participatory citizens and their expectation for future engagement in community issues. Because the comparison group would also be taking part in Foróige projects, which promote positive

youth development, it was expected that all young people in the sample would improve on scores of positive youth development. The 5 C's that make up the PYD measure were also included to allow for exploration of the factors that may contribute to civic engagement activity. Given that positive youth development is seen to act as a building block for civic engagement, it was possible that the citizenship programme participants would show a higher level of positive youth development than the comparison group.

The study findings provide some support for the hypothesis, particularly in relation to the measures of civic engagement.

- A cross-sectional analysis of the Time 1 data suggests that young people who had previously taken part in a Citizenship Programme rated themselves as more likely to get involved in a community issue in the future than those who had not taken part in a Citizenship Programme. They also showed a higher perceived competence to take action on community issues.
- With regard to Time 2 data and specifically the cohort for which there is linked data, the findings suggest that young people who have taken part in a Citizenship Programme at any time score higher on civic competence than a comparison group of Foróige participants who have not undertaken a Citizenship Programme.
- There was no evidence of impact on the civic engagement measures for young people who had taken part in citizenship in the previous 8 months only.
- The data suggests that involvement in the Citizenship Programme has a cumulative benefit in that significant differences were observed on the civic competence measure for young people who had taken part in a Citizenship Programme more than once, when compared to others. There was no significant difference in levels of PYD between the citizenship participants and non-participants at Time 2 or for the overall sample between Time 1 and Time 2. A negative outcome on the PYD character scale was observed for young people who had undertaken a citizenship project in the previous 8 to 9 months.
- In summary, the data indicates that those who participated in the Citizenship Programme had higher self-rated competence to take action on community issues. There is no evidence that their levels of positive youth development were increased.

The study findings also show that an orientation to civic engagement increases with age, with the older adolescents scoring significantly higher on measures of civic engagement than younger or middle adolescents. It shows that ratings for the Foróige Citizenship Programme were very positive, with over 95% of young people who took part rating it as "good" or better. Furthermore, those who rated the programme as excellent were more likely to score highly on the 'participatory citizen' scale compared to those rating the programme as good. Other findings of interest include those who have higher positive development may be more inclined to take part in the programme in the first instance, but

this is difficult to establish with certainty due to the fact that participation in the programme may have contributed to this baseline profile. However, if this is the case, it reflects that the programme is playing a role in providing a practical outlet for motivated young people to take leadership in relation to social and community issues.

There are a range of challenges in studying a programme of this nature. As outlined in Chapter One, clubs and projects decide over the course of the year whether they will take part and thus it is difficult to pick a sample in advance. Furthermore, there will be variation between clubs regarding their previous levels of engagement with this particular programme and, because the Citizenship Programme is run alongside other club / project initiatives, it is difficult to disentangle the impact of the Citizenship Programme from other activities undertaken in the clubs. As we have seen in the qualitative strand of the research, many clubs undertake citizenship-type projects but may not enter the Citizenship Programme. Also, issues such as the quality of the club and the level of participation of young people may be more influential in terms of ensuring particular outcomes than the clubs entry into the Citizenship Programme. There is also an issue that only a sub-set of young people within a club may actually work on the Citizenship Programme though all may officially have been involved. There is also a risk of attrition of club members over the course of a year which can significantly impact on survey response rates.

This research was confronted with these issues and the findings should therefore be viewed as exploratory rather than definitive. This is the first study of this nature in an Irish context and it will bring important learning for the design of future studies as well as insights into how civic engagement programmes, such as citizenship can impact on young people.

7. Analysis and Discussion

7.1 Introduction

The **permanent tsb** Foróige Youth Citizenship Programme was established in 1968 as a means of promoting community awareness and connection for young people. The core model underpinning the programme is one of 'awareness, action, evaluation' whereby young people undertake a three phased approach in identifying and responding to a community or social issue. The Citizenship Programme draws entries from 20 counties, with over 2,000 young people involved in the programme in 2011.

Although the Citizenship Programme has been run by Foróige for over forty years, this study represents the first piece of external research undertaken in relation to the programme. The purpose of the study is to describe the programme, including its core model, structures and development to date; to review the literature and theory in relation to youth civic engagement (YCE); to make an assessment of whether the programme is successful in achieving its desired outcomes and to explore the type of activity that is facilitated through the programme, the processes underpinning it and the perspectives of stakeholders. This chapter draws together the findings presented throughout the report to reach a series of conclusions regarding the programme. In particular, the following questions are addressed:

- How can the **permanent tsb** Foróige Youth Citizenship Programme be conceptualised and understood in the context of the literature on youth civic engagement?
- Is the programme successful in achieving its desired outcomes?
- What issues emerge from the research that are worthy of further consideration in terms of the future development of the programme?

7.2 How can the permanent tsb Foróige Youth Citizenship Programme be Conceptualised and Understood in the Context of the Literature on Youth Civic Engagement?

The review of the literature in relation to youth civic engagement in Chapter Three highlighted that, while there is a strong rationale for the active citizenship of young people, there are many challenges faced in translating this aspiration into practice. In order to adequately evaluate the Citizenship Programme as a model of youth civic engagement, it is useful to draw on concepts from the research literature that can help us to understand what is meant by youth civic engagement and how it differs to other forms of youth activity.

This section firstly identifies the key elements of good practice in relation to youth civic engagement identified in the literature review in Chapter Three and assesses the Foróige Citizenship Programme model in relation to these indicators. Secondly, it discusses the programme in the context of a typology developed by The Funders Collaborative on Youth Organising (FCYO) (2003) to illustrate how youth civic engagement can be distinguished from other forms of youth activity and uses it to highlight both the current purpose of the programme as well as opportunities for its development in the future.

Research in the field has drawn attention to a range of factors that are associated with good practice in youth civic engagement activity. The key elements identified are listed in Table 7 and the evidence regarding how the programme under study adheres to these guidelines is identified. To begin with, the literature suggests that youth civic engagement does not happen by chance and that organised efforts are required to mobilise young people for any type of civic engagement activity. In Chapter Five, we saw that the Foróige CEO expressed similar sentiments, arguing that the development of non-formal skills such as youth civic engagement cannot be left to chance and that organised, systematic efforts are required, such as those embodied in the Citizenship Programme. The Foróige Youth Citizenship Programme is arguably the largest youth civic engagement programme in Ireland, with a structure that is sufficiently flexible to allow to be implemented in every community in Ireland. It benefits from having the regional structure of Foróige behind it and the support of locally based Foróige staff and volunteers to promote it. The aims of the programme are clearly stated and from an organisational point of view, the resources are in place to support volunteers and young people who wish to participate. Importantly, the ethos of the Foróige organisation is closely aligned with that of the Citizenship Programme, with both emphasising the importance of young people looking outwards towards the needs of their communities and 'being part of the solution rather than part of the problem'. It was clear from this research that management and staff at all levels of the organisation are committed to this philosophy and as a consequence have a strong belief in and passion for the Citizenship Programme as they see it as a practical expression of Foróige's ethos.

Table 7: How the permanent tsb Foróige Youth Citizenship Programme measures against indicators of good practice in youth civic engagement

Good practice in youth civic engagement	permanent tsb Foróige Youth Citizenship Programme
Organised efforts are required to promote youth civic engagement and encourage young people to see that they can make a difference (Stoneman, 2002)	Clear programme philosophy and model, with national reach, staff support and programme resources. Very strong staff commitment to the programme.
Facilitate young people to input into what citizenship means rather than telling them what 'good' citizenship is	Programme resources facilitate group discussions about what citizenship means and how young people can engage creatively in active citizenship
Programmes should be action-orientated, providing real opportunities for young people to engage in civic action (Zaff et al, 2003)	Action is core to the programme and is driven by young people's own priorities and preferences
Promote skills development and reflection (Zaff et al, 2003)	Resources are available to encourage reflection and skills development. Evidence suggests that a range of skills are developed in the course of undertaking projects. The evaluation and awareness elements of the programme model embody a commitment to reflection prior to and subsequent to the action element.
Provide clarity regarding the degree of youth ownership, avoid 'adultism' (Millbourne, 2009)	Programme requires that young people take ownership of all aspects of the project
Promote adult-youth partnerships	Support is provided to adults to effectively support and facilitate youth leadership through training and resources
Have structured guidelines to encourage project completion (Finlay et al, 2010)	The core model of awareness, action and evaluation encourages project completion and review. Entry deadlines and showcasing events also encourage project completion and reflection.
Encourage exposure to diverse social networks	The programme encourages young people to move out of their 'comfort zone' and engage with people they may not otherwise have dealings with. Regional and national events expose young people to the actions and projects of a wide variety of young people.
Encourage participation of young people who traditionally may not be involved in civic activities (Finlay et al, 2010)	The programme has an explicit commitment to inclusion of young people who traditionally would not have entered the Citizenship Programme. This can be seen in the significant increase in entries from projects such as Garda Youth Diversion and Neighbourood Youth Projects in recent years.

The research literature suggests that young people are often taught what constitutes appropriate citizenship behaviour and are not given the scope to input into a youth-centred vision of citizenship (Hart, 2009; Millbourne, 2009). As a result, young people tend to have a passive view of citizenship and most generally don't see their contributions as constituting citizenship behaviour. The project profiles highlighted that lively discussions took place within participating groups regarding what is meant by citizenship, which suggests that the young people who take part in the programme are actively facilitated to engage with and develop a shared understanding of the concept citizenship.

Zaff et al (2003) argue that civic engagement programmes should be based on action, as well as reflection and skills development. The Foróige Citizenship Programme model clearly emphasises the importance of awareness, action and reflection, which are all considered to be essential ingredients in learning civic behaviour. The research highlighted that there is strong support for the core programme model of 'awareness, action and evaluation' among staff, management, volunteers and young people, with all respondents of the view that following this methodology ensures that the young person gains a good understanding of what they are doing and why and an appreciation of the difference it has made. The outcome of this emphasis on action within the programme model can be seen in the quantitative data, which indicated that young people who have taken part in citizenship project have a higher self-rated competence to take action on community issues.

Research has also emphasised the need for good adult-youth partnerships to ensure that learning occurs but that young people should be given the scope to shape the civic engagement initiative according to their own vision. Adults can tend to control the nature of youth civic engagement activity and provide avenues for 'safe' activities such as volunteering that don't challenge the status quo (Bynner, 2001; Brooks, 2007). Furthermore, youth Citizenship Programmes tend to focus on maintaining existing belief systems rather than empowering young people to challenge societal norms and create new forms of citizenship. The evidence throughout this report suggests that the programme is designed to be youth-led, with support from adult volunteers. Foróige has taken an active role in supporting adult volunteers to facilitate the process effectively through the provision of resources, staff support and training in the programme manual. The project profiles showed that the group leaders are cognisant of the need to achieve a balance between facilitating the project and enabling young people to take the lead and showed the benefits that accrue from allowing young people to be creative.

We also saw in the literature that it can also be difficult to engage disconnected young people in civic engagement activity because they are not involved in institutions such as school or college where youth civic engagement activity often takes place (Hart and Atkins, 2002; Finlay et al, 2010). Foróige has made a conscious effort over recent years to increase the participation of young people who traditionally did not participate in the Citizenship Programme, reflecting their ethos that community involvement can be a powerful means of inclusion for young people.

According to the literature, other desirable aspects of programmes include ensuring that projects are seen through to completion (Finlay et al, 2010). The structure of the Citizenship Programme is critical in

this regard. While the end of year deadline can be difficult for projects, it focuses groups on completing their tasks and reflecting on them. If this deadline did not exist or was open-ended, it is possible that the projects would not be seen through to completion. Furthermore, having the regional and national events as end points of the process ensures that projects end on a positive celebratory note. They also fulfil another criteria associated with good practice in civic engagement programmes; that is encouraging the exposure of young people to a diverse range of viewpoints and perspectives.

Judged against the indicators identified in Chapter Two, therefore, the evidence suggests that the programme is very much in line with good practice in the promotion of civic engagement among young people. This part of the chapter now moves on to assess the role of the programme in the context of other forms of youth development activity.

Figure 13: Continuum of Youth Engagement

Source: Funders Collaborative on Youth Organising (2003) An Emerging Model for Working with Youth, Occasional Paper Series on Youth Organising, No. 1. Downloaded from www.fcyo.org on 5th August 2011.

Youth Engagement Continuum				
Youth Services	**Youth Development**	**Youth Leadership**	**Youth Civic Engagement**	**Youth Organising**
Defines young people as clients Provides services to address individual problems and pathologies of young people Programming centered around treatment and prevention	Provides services and support, access to caring adults and safe spaces Provides opportunities for personal growth and development Meets young people where they are Builds young people's individual capacity Provides age-appropriate support Emphasises positive self-identity Supports youth-adult partnerships	Includes components of youth development approach plus: Builds authentic youth leadership opportunities within programming and organisation Helps young people deepen historical and cultural understanding of their experiences and community issues Builds skills and capacities of young people to be decision makers and problem solvers Youth participate in community projects	Includes components of youth development and youth leadership plus: Engages young people in political education and awareness Builds skills and capacity to do power analysis and action around issues they identify Begins to build collective identity of young people as social change agents Engages young people in advocacy and negotiation	Includes components of youth development, youth leadership and civic engagement plus: Builds a membership base Involves youth as part of core staff and governing body Engages in direct action and political mobilising Engages in alliances and coalitions

The FYCO typology (see Figure x) identifies five types of youth development activity. To the left of the diagram, *youth services* are described as those programmes which provide treatments and supports to address the problems that young people face. *Youth development* services are those which provide a range of services and settings that enable young people to form relationships, develop skills, feel connected to others and take on new roles. These forms of youth work are valuable in themselves but can also be seen as building blocks for young people's participation in civic engagement activity. The activities of Foróige clubs and projects can be seen as examples youth service and youth development in practice.

The three elements to the right of the typology differ from the forms of youth work just described in that they are explicitly cognisant of culture, identity and power issues and aim to give young people the skills necessary to challenge systems and institutions and to push the 'adult-determined boundaries of traditional youth work' (p.9). *Youth leadership* development helps young people to 'look beyond their personal needs and interests to see their relationship to a collective group, organisation or community' (p.8). Young people are trained in leadership skills such as decision-making and problem-solving and are facilitated to reflect on their experiences and to develop values that can 'guide their relationship with the world' (p.8). In the case of Foróige, opportunities for leadership development are currently promoted through the Albert Schweitzer Leadership for Life programme, as well as through the Citizenship Programme.

The Citizenship Programme can be seen as fitting most neatly with the next element of the typology, that of *youth civic engagement* in that it helps young people to 'develop the skills and habits needed to actively shape democratic society in collaboration with others' (p.8). This approach is distinguished from the others by the fact that young people are engaged in a democratic process, both within their own organisation and through their efforts to make a difference in society. FYCO (2003, p.8) see that, in youth civic engagement, young people move from an individualistic space of *'what can I do by myself'* to a collective space of *'what can we do together'.* The Foróige Citizenship Programme can be seen to fit with the main indicators of a 'youth civic engagement' approach as described on the basis that it builds the collective identity of young people as social change agents and engages them in analysis of social issues.

The final element of the FYCO typology is *youth organising*. Youth organising sets out to empower young people with the skills and opportunities to make a difference in their communities within a longer term goal of moving them into broader social and political spheres. This activity is youth-led, with young people defining the issues, organising groups to support them, designing and implementing strategies and evaluating their efforts. The model is similar to community organising and involves young people undertaking a critical analysis of social, political and economic power (Finlay et al, 2010, p.290; Hart and Gullan, 2010).

This typology may help to illustrate how the citizenship programme currently fits in the context of other forms of youth provision offered by Foróige. The programme can be seen to occupy an important space in the continuum of youth development efforts. The typology may also be useful in helping to conceptualise the potential role of other initiatives that Foróige may take in the area of youth civic

engagement. An issue that was highlighted in this research by the Foróige CEO in particular relates to the possibilities that exist for creating an expanded civic engagement programme within Foróige, of which the citizenship programme would be one part. The CEO firmly believes that any future developments should be driven by the same purpose that is at the root of the Citizenship Programme – namely a desire to promote genuine civic engagement based on practical action, reflection and learning – and the evidence from the literature reviewed in this study supports this argument. Some of the areas for potential development include the development of modules on political or social analysis which could be an add-on for interested or more experienced groups. Furthermore, while the citizenship projects involve elements of youth organising, the projects undertaken as part of citizenship often come to an end after the regional or national events. According to this typology, a youth organising approach would focus on empowering young people to develop and lead sustained efforts in relation to social change – for example, as highlighted by the CEO, taking particularly outstanding citizenship projects 'to the next level'.

In summary, the Foróige citizenship programme represents an important Irish initiative in the promotion of youth civic engagement. It can be seen to embody practices that are highlighted in the literature as being associated with good practice in youth civic engagement programming. Reviewed against a typology of forms of youth development activity, the programme can be considered to fit with a description of youth civic engagement activity. The literature highlights that there is scope for further development in the area of youth civic engagement, a need which has also been identified within the Foróige organisation.

7.3 Is the Programme Successful in Achieving its Desired Outcomes?

The aim of Foróige's Citizenship Programme is to enable young people to make a positive difference to their community by taking part in the programme. The outcomes expected from the programme for young people are an ability to:

- Define what citizenship means to them
- Research their community's needs
- Illustrate ways in which to benefit their community
- Plan a project to meet an identified need using a planning model
- Organise and manage their project
- Evaluate the effectiveness of their project
- Demonstrate improved communication skills, collaboration and civic responsibility
- Receive positive recognition from their community

Quantitative and qualitative methods were used in this study to explore the outcomes for young people

from the ptsb Youth Citizenship Programme. Young people involved in 32 Foróige clubs and projects completed surveys, while qualitative data consisted of interviews, focus groups with young people involved in three projects, as well as interviews with staff members and volunteers.

The quantitative research sought to explore whether involvement in the youth Citizenship Programme impacted on attitudes and behaviours related to civic engagement for young people participating in Foróige projects. Measures designed to assess self-rated concepts related to positive youth development and perceptions of capacity in relation to civic engagement were completed by young people in October 2010 (Time 1) and again in May 2011 (Time 2). We saw in Chapter Six that a cross-sectional analysis of the Time 1 data survey data, which was based on a sample of 289 young people attending Foróige projects showed that young people who had previously taken part in a Citizenship Programme rated themselves as more likely to get involved in a community issue in the future than those who had not taken part in a Citizenship Programme. They also showed a higher perceived competence to take action on community issues. When the sample was narrowed to focus on the 132 young people for which there was data available for both Time 1 and Time 2, young people who had taken part in a Citizenship Programme at any time scored higher on civic competence than a comparison group of Foróige participants who had not undertaken a Citizenship Programme. Significant differences were also observed on the civic competence measure for young people who had taken part in a Citizenship Programme more than once, when compared to others. In summary, the data indicated that those who participated in the Citizenship Programme had higher self-rated competence to take action on community issues.

There was no significant difference observed on measures of positive youth development (PYD) for those who had taken part in the Citizenship Programme compared to those who had not. However, the analysis shows that those with higher scores on measures of positive youth development (the 5 C's) may be more inclined to take part in the programme in the first instance. Participation in the Citizenship Programme is voluntary and it is designed as a universal programme so it is inevitable that young people with an orientation to civic engagement activity will self-select. The research literature shows that it is important that young people with such values and aspirations are given practical opportunities to apply, hone and develop their skills (Zaff et al, 2003) in order to ensure that their orientations find expression in action. This reflects the findings of the qualitative project profiles which found that in two of the three projects, the option to undertake a citizenship project was offered to a larger group, from which a self-selecting group opted to take part. This indicates that many of those opting to take part in citizenship projects are a particular sub-sample of the overall Foróige population and may have a stronger orientation towards this type of work. However, it should be noted that Foróige also actively encourages groups of young people who may not show such an aptitude to take part in citizenship projects (for example young people in targeted work) as a means of whetting their appetite for civic engagement behaviour.

The regression analysis shows that the constituent concepts of positive youth development – caring, connection, character, confidence and competence - are important building blocks of civic behaviour and that an orientation to civic engagement increases with age, with the older adolescents scoring

significantly higher on measures of civic engagement than younger or middle adolescents, regardless of whether they had taken part in citizenship or not.

Ratings for the Foróige Citizenship Programme were very positive, with over 95% of young people who took part rating it as "good" or better. Furthermore, those who rated the programme as excellent were more likely to score highly on the 'participatory citizen' scale compared to those rating the programme as good. This suggests that people get more out of the programme if they perceive it to be a positive experience, which emphasises the importance of ensuring that the Citizenship Programme is both enjoyable and challenging.

Although they are not based on a representative sample of citizenship projects, the project profiles in Chapter Three help to illustrate the ways in which the concepts assessed through the quantitative strand may be observed qualitatively in citizenship projects. The project profiles show how a positive experience in the programme appears to 'whet the appetite' of participants and increase competence to take action on community issues. Many of the young people taking part in focus groups spoke of their desire to build on what they had learned in the course of their project through undertaking a project in the coming year. As well as doing the project itself, participation at the regional events was seen as valuable in terms of raising awareness of the potential for other types of projects and methods. The project profiles suggest that the skills and know-how to take action on a community issue are developed in the course of undertaking a citizenship project. Young people appeared to have a developed a sense of efficacy in relation to their abilities to address issues of concern to the community.

Although there was no quantitative evidence of impact in relation to the positive youth development (PYD) measure, the 5 C's of character, caring, connection, confidence and competence were reported as outcomes of engagement in the programme in the qualitative strand. Participation in citizenship projects was seen by stakeholders a means of connecting young people with their communities and receiving positive feedback from them. These qualitative findings reflects the findings of previous research which shows that community involvement for young people can lead to feelings of being valued and taken seriously by others in the community (Barnett & Brennan, 2006) and increased self-esteem and recognition by the community (Scales and Leffert, 1999). The feedback from young people in this study highlighted that helping others brought them great satisfaction and exhilaration and helped them to feel part of something bigger than themselves (Sherrod, Flanagan and Youniss, 2002). This research showed that young people can play an important role as creators of communities by providing reasons to bring people together to celebrate and benefit from their achievements as well as drawing on the resources of the community to help them to achieve their ends.

The qualitative strand of the research also highlighted the development of stronger connections between peers as an outcome of participation, with respondents referring to the bonding and teamwork that occurred through having a common focus. Another outcome identified relates to the development of confidence and skills among young people. Young people across the three projects spoke of how their confidence developed as a result of having to 'put themselves out there' in undertaking the project, talking to a diverse range of people in the course of undertaking their project and presenting their projects at the regional events and interviews. The group leaders also spoke of seeing an increased level of confidence among group members, particularly those who had been quiet or shy. This appears to reflect the contention in the literature in relation to civic engagement highlights that the skills developed through civic engagement activity can help individuals achieve academic or career progression as well as being of benefit to the community of which they are part. They also represent important skills for young people interested in pursuing political or associated pursuits in the future.

One of the desired outcomes of the Citizenship Programme is to promote 'caring' or awareness of social needs and issues. The project profiles showed that that the awareness of members regarding social needs in the community had been raised. This arose as a result of researching the needs of other groups but also of engaging with people who were affected by their actions. For example, Foróige club 1 members became more aware of issues related to disability access through identifying this as a need and through responding to it and seeing the difference their efforts made to wheelchair users.

Another interesting outcome relates to the impact of the citizenship project on club or group development. Engaging in a citizenship project is seen as a means of retaining older members who appear to thrive on the challenge of projects of this nature. The feedback of the Foróige club 1 leader suggests that the project has helped to develop maturity and a work ethic among participants. All referred to the project as involving a lot of work but in hindsight, they all feel that it was worth the effort due to the degree of learning that has resulted. This could be seen as helping to contribute to the 'character' that is considered an important element of positive youth development and civic engagement (Lerner et al, 2005).

In summary, therefore, both the quantitative and qualitative data suggest that participation in the youth Citizenship Programme enhances young people's perceived competence for civic action. The qualitative data suggests that the programme can be successful in connecting young people with their communities, developing skills and confidence, promoting bonding between team members and enhancing club development.

7.4 What Issues Emerge from the Research that are Worthy of Further Consideration in Terms of the Future Development of the Programme?

The consensus from the qualitative strand of the research is that the Citizenship Programme is on very firm footing in terms of buy-in and support from staff at all levels of the organisation. There are also a core group of experienced volunteers and young people throughout the country who have experienced

the value of the programme and will continue to contribute to it. The research highlights that the traditional elements of the programme – including its philosophy, core model of awareness, action, evaluation and its grounding in the actions of young people in communities – continue to be relevant and indeed cherished by stakeholders. There was also positive feedback regarding the modernisation of the programme in recent years, with staff and management acknowledging how the ptsb sponsorship had enabled Foróige to expand the programme, provide additional resources for projects and to run regional events which are considered to be very successful. The media coverage and national event have also helped to create a sense of excitement around the programme. The Citizenship Programme manual is also seen as a valuable resource by staff, volunteers and young people. Arising from this, two issues emerge from the research that are worthy of attention. These are firstly; increasing entries to the programme, particularly from areas in which entry levels are low; secondly; giving consideration to revising the award or merit system

Increasing entries to the programme

We saw in Chapter Three that entries to the programme have increased significantly in recent years, with 148 projects entering the programme, of which 118 took part in regional events. It is interesting to note that 55% of projects were entering for the first time and that just under one in three groups who entered were formed in 2010. This indicates that the programme includes a mix of experienced and less experienced groups and clubs. This renewal of people feeding into the programme is a positive thing and reflects the continued relevance of the programme to new and old clubs and projects as well as the efforts of staff to promote it among new audiences. Ensuring a continued flow of projects entering the awards and taking part in regional events is of critical importance into the future. Apart from the benefits to individuals and communities identified in this research, we saw that undertaking a citizenship project is believed to result in positive outcomes for clubs in terms of bonding and cohesion and helping with the retention of older members. It appears, therefore, that undertaking a citizenship project can help to enhance the quality of 'the Foróige experience' for young people, be it as part of a club or project. For this reason, it is logical that the organisation should seek to maximise the level of participation in the programme. The programme has the advantage of being a universal programme with a strong organisational infrastructure and resource base, with the critical support of experienced voluntary leaders and members throughout Ireland. For this reason, an increase in entries to the programme would not involve significant additional expense but would result in enhanced outcomes for young people. From the point of view of increasing entries, a number of key issues were identified which are worthy of attention by Foróige, as now discussed.

One of the key factors that appears to be conducive to encouraging participation in the Citizenship Programme is the existence of a strong culture of support for the programme in particular areas, most notably Tallaght and Blanchardstown in Dublin. The factors in these areas that appear to be critical include a strong management commitment to encouraging groups to enter citizenship awards, widespread training of staff and volunteers in the programme manual and the hosting of a local recognition event

that sends clear messages to young people regarding the value that is placed on their contributions. While these areas have the advantage of a high density of population and a good infrastructure of youth projects and staff that does not exist in many parts of Ireland, their experiences highlight what can be achieved where there is a clear commitment at local level. One rurally based RM interviewed highlighted the need for dedicated staff resources to promote the programme on the ground and it was also acknowledged that increasing the level of entries from non-Foróige projects is difficult as (apart from manual training), Foróige does not have the resources to promote and encourage entries from groups outside the organisation. Interviews with RYOs indicates that they do actively encourage entries to citizenship but, apart from providing training and support to clubs, that they don't have the capacity to engage in focused work around increasing entry levels.

It also appears that a significant majority of Foróige clubs undertake community projects but don't enter them in the Citizenship Programme because they believe that they are not 'good enough'. While it is obviously a positive thing that this level of community activity is taking place throughout Ireland, the evidence in this study is that these groups would experience an added-value from actually entering the Citizenship Programme as noted earlier. A range of other deterrents to entries were also identified, including staff reluctance to enter the awards, the time commitment involved, the paperwork associated with entering and a lack of outward focus in clubs. Many RYOs said that a key issue is that some groups who enter may decide not to re-enter in the following year as they have been disappointed at not winning an award. A negative experience on the part of one or two clubs or projects in a particular county may influence other clubs not to enter, which makes it difficult to challenge the culture of non-participation in the Citizenship Programme that exists in some areas, including some in which Foróige has a strong presence on the ground.

In light of these issues, it may be worth considering developing strategies at county level to identify and implement a series of actions that can raise the level of participation in the programme. Actions could include targeting of a number of clubs or projects to participate, hosting a county event to celebrate achievements and designating a portion of RYO or other staff member time to supporting projects. The issue of the awards or merit system is also relevant in terms of encouraging or deterring participation, as discussed in the next section.

Revising the awards or merit system

The awards system for the programme was probably the main issue of concern raised by staff and management who took part in the research. There are a number of issues. Many are of the view that all young people should be recognised for their achievements and that singling some groups out over others can cause resentment with many making the point that some entrants are disappointed because they don't win an award at the regional events. There is some unease regarding the selection of an overall winner, an issue that the programme has grappled with since its inception. However, respondents were aware of the need for TV coverage to have drama and excitement and the benefits that such coverage

can bring so they acknowledged that there is no easy solution in relation to this issue. Some staff are in favour of more categories of awards being created to recognise the different capacities of groups. Some of the possible categories identified were awards for clubs and projects, new entrants, awards by thematic areas (e.g. environment, multi-culturalism), best boards, best interview. While there is no ideal solution, it is an issue that is worthy of further attention on the part of the programme.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter has sought to answer the three key questions that underpinned the study, namely:

- How can the Foróige youth Citizenship Programme be conceptualised and understood in terms of the literature on youth civic engagement?
- Is the programme successful in achieving its desired outcomes?
- What issues emerge from the research that are worthy of further consideration in terms of the future development of the programme?

We have seen that the literature shows that the programme is in line with good practice in youth civic engagement and has quantitative and qualitative evidence that it achieves its outcomes. A number of issues were identified as worthy of consideration in the future development of the programme. The following chapter sums up the conclusions of the overall study and makes some recommendations.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

> ***'We must seek to build together an active, inclusive citizenship; based on participation, equality, respect for all and the flowering of creativity in all its forms. A confident people is our hope, a people at ease with itself, a people that grasps the deep meaning of the proverb 'ní neart go cur le chéile' – our strength lies in our common weal – our social solidarity'.***
>
> *Michael D. Higgins, President of Ireland, Inaugural Speech, November 11th 2011*

As reflected in the quote from the Inaugural speech of President Michael D Higgins above, the concepts of active citizenship and social solidarity have become increasingly central to public discourse over recent years. The concept of citizenship and how it can be promoted has come to the fore in Ireland and internationally over recent decades. The interest in how young people's conceptions of their own role as active citizens can be encouraged and nurtured has been of particular concern. The civic engagement of young people is seen as a means of ensuring that young people's voice and creativity are recognised and that they are given meaningful opportunities for democratic participation. There is also a body of evidence emerging that engagement in citizenship activity can promote the positive development of young people and enhance their feelings of connectedness with community and society.

Foróige established its citizenship programme in 1968, preceding the emphasis on youth citizenship that has come to the fore over the past decade in particular. The purpose of the programme is 'to involve young people consciously and actively in their own development and in the development of society. Through involvement in this programme young people become creators rather than consumers, part of the solution rather than part of the problem and play a vital role in making their communities a better place for all' (Citizenship Programme Booklet). Over 2,000 young people take part in the programme in youth clubs and projects throughout Ireland each year. In recent years, as a result of financial support from permanent tsb, the programme has seen an increase in resources, volunteering and promotion

throughout Ireland. As a result entries to the programme have increased from an average of 20-25 per annum up to 2006, to 148 entries in 2011. In 2011, 118 showcased their projects at regional events and ten projects were selected to take part in a national event.

This evaluation was undertaken to:

- To describe the Citizenship Programme, including its core model, structures and development to date.
- To place the programme in the context of literature and theory in relation to youth civic engagement (YCE)
- To explore the type of activity facilitated through the programme, the processes underpinning it and the perspectives of stakeholders regarding the programme
- To assess whether the programme is successful in achieving its desired outcomes

This concluding chapter sums up the key findings from the study and makes a series of recommendations arising from the findings.

The research literature suggests that there is a strong rationale for the active citizenship of young people and that organised efforts are required to mobilise young people for any type of civic engagement activity. The Foróige Youth Citizenship Programme is arguably the largest youth civic engagement programme in Ireland, with a structure that is sufficiently flexible to allow to be implemented in every community in Ireland. It benefits from having the regional structure of Foróige behind it and the support of locally based Foróige staff and volunteers to promote it. The aims of the programme are clearly stated and from an organisational point of view, the resources are in place to support volunteers and young people who wish to participate. Importantly, the ethos of the Foróige organisation is closely aligned with that of the Citizenship Programme, with both emphasising the importance of young people looking outwards towards the needs of their communities and 'being part of the solution rather than part of the problem'. It was clear from this research that management and staff at all levels of the organisation are committed to this philosophy and as a consequence have a strong belief in and passion for the Citizenship Programme as they see it as a practical expression of Foróige's ethos. The programme can be seen to embody practices that are highlighted in the literature as being associated with good practice in youth civic engagement programming. Reviewed against a typology of forms of youth development activity, the programme can be considered to fit with a description of youth civic engagement activity.

Quantitative and qualitative methods were used in this study to explore the outcomes for young people from the ptsb Youth Citizenship Programme. The quantitative research sought to explore whether involvement in the youth Citizenship Programme impacted on attitudes and behaviours related to civic engagement for young people participating in Foróige projects. A total of 289 young people involved in 32 Foróige clubs and projects completed measures designed to assess self-rated concepts related

to positive youth development and perceptions of capacity in relation to civic engagement. Overall, the data showed that young people who had previously taken part in a Citizenship Programme rated themselves as more likely to get involved in a community issue in the future than those who had not taken part in a Citizenship Programme and had a higher perceived competence to take action on community issues. There was no significant difference observed on measures of positive youth development (PYD) for those who had taken part in the Citizenship Programme compared to those who had not. Ratings for the Foróige Citizenship Programme were very positive, with over 95% of young people who took part rating it as "good", 'very good' or 'excellent'. Furthermore, the data indicates that people get more out of the programme if they perceive it to be a positive experience, which emphasises the importance of ensuring that the Citizenship Programme is both enjoyable and challenging.

The qualitative strand of the research also suggested that a sense of efficacy regarding abilities to address issues of concern to the community was an outcome of participation in the programme. Participation in citizenship projects was seen by stakeholders a means of connecting young people with their communities and receiving positive feedback from them and also helped in the development of stronger connections between peers. Young people who had taken part in citizenship projects spoke of how their confidence developed as a result of having to 'put themselves out there' in undertaking the project, while group leaders also spoke of seeing an increased level of confidence among group members, particularly those who had been quiet or shy. Increased awareness among young people regarding social needs in the community was also identified as an outcome by stakeholders. Engaging in a citizenship project was also seen as helping to ensure a focused and engaged dynamic in the club and of helping to retain older members.

In summary, both the quantitative and qualitative data suggest that participation in the youth Citizenship Programme enhances young people's perceived competence for civic action. The qualitative data suggests that the programme can be successful in connecting young people with their communities, developing skills and confidence, promoting bonding between team members and enhancing club development. It should be noted that this evidence is indicative rather than causal as the study did not involve an experimental design.

Interviews with Foróige staff and management indicate that the Programme has support from staff at all levels of the organisation. The research highlights considerable support for the traditional elements of the programme – including its philosophy and the core model of awareness, action, evaluation– as well as the recent developments in terms of sponsorship, resources, training and the development of the programme manual. The research explored the issues that encourage or inhibit groups from entering the programme. It appears that there is a large body of community based activity undertaken by young people in Foróige clubs and projects that is not entered in the citizenship programme. The system of awarding merits is seen as needing some reform on the basis that it is perceived as unfair by some groups.

Overall, this study has shown the Foróige citizenship programme to be a very popular programme among young people, volunteers, staff and management who took part in the research. The programme model rates positively against indicators of good practice in youth civic engagement. The quantitative outcomes data indicates an association between participation in the programme and increased perceptions among young people of their future likelihood to take action on community issues, while the qualitative data suggests that participants gain in terms of confidence, community connectedness, peer relationships and skills development. On the basis of the evidence in this report, it can be concluded that the programme is effective in its objective of engaging young people as active citizens and encouraging them to make a positive contribution to their communities and to society.

8.1 Recommendations:

The Foróige citizenship programme should be recognised and promoted nationally and internationally as a model of good practice in youth civic engagement. Among the key strengths of the programme are that it can be offered as part of existing youth services infrastructure, emphasises action and reflection, encourages project completion and recognises and celebrates the achievements of young people. The programme manual is viewed as a valuable resource for groups undertaking projects.

While the core citizenship programme is clearly working effectively, there are opportunities for an expanded civic engagement programme within Foróige that could include the citizenship programme and other components, such as add-on modules, support for social entrepreneurship and support for young people to further develop projects undertaken as part of the citizenship programme.

From the point of view of maintaining and increasing entries to the programme, a number of issues were identified which are worthy of attention by Foróige. A significant number of Foróige clubs appear to undertake community projects but don't enter them in the Citizenship Programme. The evidence in this study is that these groups would experience an added-value from actually entering the Citizenship Programme. One of the key factors that appears to be conducive to encouraging participation in the Citizenship Programme is the existence of a strong culture of support for the programme in particular areas. These and the other factors identified in the research as supporting or inhibiting participation in the programme should be considered by Foróige and strategies developed to increase participation from parts of the country where entries are currently low. Actions could include targeting of a number of clubs or projects to participate, hosting a county event to celebrate achievements and designating a portion of RYO or other staff member time to supporting projects.

The issue of the awards or merit system is also relevant in terms of encouraging or deterring participation. Some staff are in favour of more categories of awards being created to recognise the different capacities of groups. It is acknowledged that there is no ideal solution but it is an issue that is worthy of further attention on the part of the programme.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Correlation Table of PYD and Civic Engagement scales at Time One

Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Character	1							
2. Competence	.120	1						
3. Caring	.445**	.043	1					
4. Connection	.540**	.167*	.347**	1				
5. Confidence	.182*	.255**	.159*	.147	1			
6. PYD-Total	.757**	.368**	.726**	.767**	.443**	1		
7. Citizenship	.497**	.068	.343**	.546**	.108	.559**	1	
8. Likelihood	.363**	.053	.232**	.422**	.104	.443**	.649**	1
9. Civic Competence	.422**	.180*	.303**	.502**	.118	.569**	.697**	.630**

Note: * = significance level $p < 0.05$, ** = significance level $p < .01$.

Appendix 2: Correlation Table of PYD and Civic Engagement scales (Time One and Time Two) for match sample. N = 132.

Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1. T1 Character	1																
2. T1 Competence	.02	1															
3. T1 Caring	.34**	.08	1														
4. T1 Connection	.43**	.26*	.28**	1													
5. T1 Confidence	.18	.16	.24*	.12	1												
6. T1 PYD-Total	.61**	.34**	.79**	.80**	.41**	1											
7. T1 Citizenship	.17**	.20	.15	.41**	.11	.43**	1										
8. T1 Likelihood	.18	.13	.07	.42**	.12	.31*	.55**	1									
9. T1 Civic Competence	.34**	..29**	.16	.51**	.19	.56**	.66**	.61**	1								
10. T2 Character	.56**	.06	.35**	.47**	-.07	.48**	.42**	.31**	.30**	1							
11. T2 Competence	-.12	.62**	.11	.04	-.14	.11	.04	-.09	.03	.14	1						
12. T2 Caring	.33**	-.02	.27**	.30**	.01	.29*	.14	.17	-.01	.45**	.05	1					
13. T2 Connection	.32	.22	.24	.60**	.1	.59**	.30**	.30	.37**	.68**	.13	.39**	1				
14. T2 Confidence	.01	.20	-.16	-.08	.07	-.12	-.02	-.06	-.07	.23*	.26*	.14	.10	1			
15. T2 PYD-Total	.54**	.25	.42**	.51**	-.10	.56**	.38**	.34*	.29*	.83**	.44**	.66**	.81**	.34**	1		
16. T2 Citizenship	.13	.18	.08	.24*	-.01	.13	.35**	.36**	.29**	.50**	.06	.29**	.55**	.08	.61**	1	
17. T2 Likelihood	.31**	-.02	.18	.27**	.09	.25	.27**	.38**	.27**	.45**	-.06	.27**	.45**	-.04	.48**	.58**	1
18. T2 Civic Competence	.20	.25*	.25**	.34**	.06	.41**	.39**	.35**	.42**	.44**	.26*	.15	.59**	-.01	.59**	.68**	.55**

Note: T1 = Time 1, T2 = Time 2. * = significane level $p < 0.05$, ** = significance level $p < .01$

Appendix 3: Table of scale scores at different degrees of participation (Time 1 and Time 2, Time 1 only, Time 2 only, and no participation) in a Citizenship Programme at Time 1 and Time 2.

Scale	Participation at Time 1 and Time 2				Participation at Time 1 Only				Participation at Time 2 Only				No Participation at Any time			
	T1 Scores		T2 Scores		T1 Scores		T2 Scores		T1 Scores		T2 Scores		T1 Scores		T2 Scores	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
PYD - Character	80.54	6.85	76.17	11.36	70.03	8.59	74.90	8.69	74.18	11.08	63.21	12.93	70.10	11.19	69.22	11.18
PYD - Competence	52.76	10.03	50.69	6.24	50.33	8.39	52.33	7.44	54.36	6.76	51.96	6.81	52.61	9.21	51.54	11.45
PYD - Caring	63.16	22.83	66.34	17.44	62.67	17.54	62.67	15.78	70.55	14.57	68.10	14.49	59.94	20.13	68.05	20.29
PYD - Connection	87.21	8.11	80.48	10.48	71.47	13.32	74.32	12.30	76.00	16.47	73.53	17.06	72.41	15.82	70.27	17.48
PYD - Confidence	55.25	6.00	54.77	9.23	52.88	5.82	53.84	5.59	54.92	9.10	52.71	9.99	53.97	8.56	54.58	8.06
PYD - Total	70.45	6.42	65.70	7.34	62.85	7.41	65.36	6.77	67.53	7.23	62.72	8.07	59.71	6.97	61.08	8.77
Participatory Citizen	4.20	0.49	4.20	0.42	3.88	0.48	3.81	0.76	3.58	0.63	3.81	0.60	3.79	0.62	3.78	0.78
Expectation for Engagement	3.96	0.66	3.97	0.82	3.53	0.91	3.41	0.59	3.22	0.59	3.50	0.90	3.47	1.02	3.58	1.06
Civic Competence	4.13	0.60	4.02	0.73	3.74	0.62	3.66	0.61	3.43	0.77	3.53	0.64	3.45	0.77	3.39	0.88

Appendix 4: Table of scale scores at different degrees of participation (Participation more than once, participation once, and no participation) in a Citizenship Programme at Time 1 and Time 2.

Scale	Participation More than once				Participation Once				No Participation			
	T1 Scores		T2 Scores		T1 Scores		T2 Scores		T1 Scores		T2 Scores	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
PYD – Character	80.54	6.85	76.17	11.36	72.24	10.05	67.55	12.76	70.10	11.19	69.22	11.18
PYD – Competence	52.76	10.03	50.69	6.24	52.93	7.50	52.13	6.98	52.61	9.21	51.54	11.45
PYD – Caring	63.16	22.83	66.34	17.44	67.81	15.93	66.29	14.99	59.94	20.13	68.05	20.29
PYD – Connection	87.21	8.11	80.48	10.48	77.34	15.26	73.81	15.37	72.41	15.82	70.27	17.48
PYD – Confidence	55.25	6.00	54.77	9.23	54.07	7.87	53.22	8.19	53.97	8.56	54.58	8.06
PYD – Total	70.45	6.42	65.70	7.34	65.47	7.54	63.98	7.43	59.71	6.97	61.08	8.77
Participatory Citizen	4.20	0.49	4.20	0.42	3.68	0.60	3.81	0.65	3.79	0.62	3.78	0.78
Expectation for Engagement	3.96	0.66	3.97	0.82	3.33	0.73	3.47	0.80	3.47	1.02	3.58	1.06
Civic Competence	4.13	0.60	4.02	0.73	3.54	0.73	3.58	0.63	3.45	0.77	3.39	0.88

Appendix 5: Information Sheets and Consent Forms

Young Person Information Sheet and Consent Form

Date: 27th September 2010

FORÓIGE RESEARCH

Study Title: Evaluation of Foróige Youth Programmes

I am carrying out a study of Foróige youth programmes to see if young people benefit from taking part in them. The study is exploring if programmes such as Citizenship make a difference to the young people taking part in them.

Young people involved in Foróige Youth Projects and Clubs are being asked to take part in the research.

- If you choose to take part you will be asked to fill out a questionnaire in October 2010 and May 2011.
- A small number of young people will be asked to take part in an interview for a maximum of 30 minutes about their views on Fóroige youth programmes
- Young people involved will be completely anonymous and information obtained will be confidential.
- If you choose to take part you may withdraw from the study at any stage.
- A two page sheet will be given to all those who take part in the study with information about the findings.
- No personal questions will be asked.
-

If you have any questions about the research please do not hesitate to contact the researcher:

Bernadine Brady

Child & Family Research Centre, School of Political Science & Sociology, NUI, Galway

Tel: 091 495759. E-mail: Bernadine.brady@nuigalway.ie

Young Person Consent Form

Study Title: Evaluation of Foróige Youth programmes

Name of Researcher: Bernadine Brady

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read the information sheet dated 27th September 2010 for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. ☐

2. I am satisfied that I understand the information provided and have had enough time to consider the information ☐

3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, without my legal rights being affected. ☐

4. I agree to take part in the above study ☐

Name of Participant	Date:	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Name of Parent / Guardian	Date:	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	Date:	Signature
_____	_____	_____

Information Sheet and Consent Form for Volunteers & Staff

Date:_____

FORÓIGE RESEARCH

Study Title: Evaluation of Foróige Youth Programmes

Foróige is undertaking a study of its youth programmes to see if young people benefit from taking part in them. This study is exploring, in particular, how the Citizenship Programme works and what the young people, volunteers and staff involved with it think of it.

Volunteers and staff involved in Foróige Youth Projects and Clubs are being asked to take part in the research.

- You are asked to take part in an interview for a maximum of 60 minutes about your views of Fóroige Citizenship programme
- Your information will be completely anonymous and information obtained will be confidential.
- If you choose to take part you may withdraw from the study at any stage.
- No personal questions will be asked.

If you have any questions about the research please do not hesitate to contact the researcher:

Bernadine Brady

Child & Family Research Centre, School of Political Science & Sociology, NUI, Galway

Tel: 091 495759. E-mail: Bernadine.brady@nuigalway.ie

Consent Form for Volunteers & Staff **Date:_____**

FORÓIGE RESEARCH

Study Title: Evaluation of Foróige Youth Programmes

Name of Researcher: Bernadine Brady

Please initial box

- I confirm that I have read the information sheet dated_____ for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. ☐
- I am satisfied that I understand the information provided and have had enough time to consider the information ☐
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, without my legal rights being affected. ☐
- I agree to take part in the above study ☐

Name of Participant	Date:	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	Date:	Signature
_____	_____	_____

FORÓIGE RESEARCH

Study Title: Evaluation of Foróige Youth Programmes

Case study Information

I am carrying out a study of Foróige youth programmes to see if young people benefit from taking part in them. The study is exploring, in particular, if the Citizenship programme makes a difference to the young people taking part in it.

As part of the research, I would like to profile the work of five citizenship projects and would like to request your permission to feature as one of the case studies. The case studies will describe the activities of each project as part of the programme and explore the perceived benefits and challenges from the perspective of volunteers and young people. The researcher will meet with volunteers and young people and talk about your work.

- Young people will be asked to take part in a focus group for a maximum of 60 minutes about their citizenship programme
- Volunteers will be asked to take part in a telephone interview for a maximum of 30 minutes about their citizenship programme
- The name of the club will not be used and information will be written in a way that will protect the anonymity of participants. However, it is possible that the project will be identifiable from some of the details given.
- If you choose to take part you may withdraw from the study at any stage.

I would be grateful if your club would consider this request to take part and, if you are happy for your project to be included as a case study, sign the consent form. If you have any questions about the research please do not hesitate to contact the researcher:

Bernadine Brady

Child & Family Research Centre, School of Political Science & Sociology, NUI, Galway

Tel: 091 495759. E-mail: Bernadine.brady@nuigalway.ie

Consent Form for Case Studies **Date:** 2nd May 2011

FORÓIGE RESEARCH

Study Title: Evaluation of Foróige Youth Programmes

Name of Researcher: Bernadine Brady

Name of Club: _____

- I confirm that my group has read the case studies information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
- I am satisfied that I understand the information provided and have had enough time to consider the information
- I understand that our participation is voluntary and that we are free to withdraw at any time
- We agree to take part in the case studies

Name of Leader	Date:	Signature
_____	_____	_____

Name of Researcher	Date:	Signature
_____	_____	_____

Appendix 6: Interview and focus group schedules

Focus Group Questions: Young People

Intro:

- Explain who I am, why I am doing this. What the interview covers.
- Please be as honest as possible. There are no right or wrong answers. Don't feel you have to be positive if you don't want to be. All comments and remarks will be anonymous – it won't be possible to identify you. We really want to know if you think this programme is worthwhile.
- Ask if it's okay to record their answers. I am just using it as I won't be able to take everything down and want to make sure that I capture everything they say. Nobody else will listen to it and I will erase it when I am finished taking down notes. I might use some direct quotes but there won't be any names with them.

Questions:

General:

- How long have you been involved with Foróige?
- Can you tell me a bit about your club?
- What do you like best about the club?

About the programme:

- Can you tell me about your citizenship project?
- Had you done the citizenship programme before this year?
- What does the word 'citizenship' mean to you?
- What activities did you do to:
  - Raise awareness?
  - Take action?
  - Evaluate?
- Did you enjoy doing the activities?
- What is a logic model? Did you use one? If yes, was it useful?
- Did you use the workbook / learning journal? If yes, was it useful? Did it help you in filling out the report forms?
- Did you take part in the regional conferences / national event? If yes, how did you find it?
- What has been the best thing about doing citizenship?
- Was there anything that was not so good?
- If you were to advise Foróige on this programme, what would you say to them? i.e. is it worth continuing? Should it be more widely available? Would the money be better spent in other ways?
- Since doing the programme, do you feel differently about your community / society? Please explain.
- Any other comments?

Interview Questions: Volunteers / Leaders

Intro:

- Explain who I am, why I am doing this. What the interview covers.
- Please be as honest as possible. There are no right or wrong answers. Don't feel you have to be positive if you don't want to be. All comments and remarks will be anonymous – it won't be possible to identify you. We really want to know if you think this programme is worthwhile.
- Ask if it's okay to record their answers. I am just using it as I won't be able to take everything down and want to make sure that I capture everything they say. Nobody else will listen to it and I will erase it when I am finished taking down notes. I might use some direct quotes but there won't be any names with them.

General

How long have you been involved with Foróige?

How long have you been taking part in the Citizenship programme?

Overall, what is your opinion of the programme?

Can you talk me through the different parts of the programme structure and systems – including application process, event, project, entering into the awards – does this structure work well?

What is your view of the core model of' awareness, action, evaluation' – how well does it work in practice?

Are young people involved in the process of deciding what project to do, leading it, etc.?

Could any of these aspects of the programme be improved?

What do you think young people gain from taking part?

What do communities gain from the programme?

Is there much awareness of the programme in your community?

Manual

Did you run the programme in other years without using the manual?

If yes, what has been the main difference using the manual?

In what ways has the manual been helpful / unhelpful?

What sections did you find particularly useful?

What activities did you use?

Do you think that young people have a better understanding of citizenship as a result of doing the exercises in the manual?

Do you have any recommendations for how the manual could be improved?

Do you think that all groups doing the citizenship programme should use the manual?

Would you recommend having manuals like this for other Foróige programmes?

Overall, what are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats of the programme?

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Educational, Scientific and
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