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youth cafés in Ireland

a best practice guide

commissioned by the office of the minister for children and youth affairs **on behalf of the** national children's advisory council

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About the Child and Family Research Centre

The work for this report was conducted by the Child and Family Research Centre (CFRC), which is a partnership between the Health Service Executive (HSE) and National University of Ireland, Galway. Based in the School of Political Science and Sociology, the CFRC undertakes research, education and training in the area of child and family care and welfare.

The CFRC's objectives are:

- to understand child and family needs by producing scientific research and evaluations;
- to improve services for children and families through third- and fourth-level education, better service design and learning networks for service practitioners;
- to build research capacity in family support through applying best practice methodologies, developing researchers and supporting practitioner research;
- to influence policy for children by engaging with researchers, policy-makers, service providers, children and their families.

More information on the CFRC can be obtained at www.childandfamilyresearch.ie
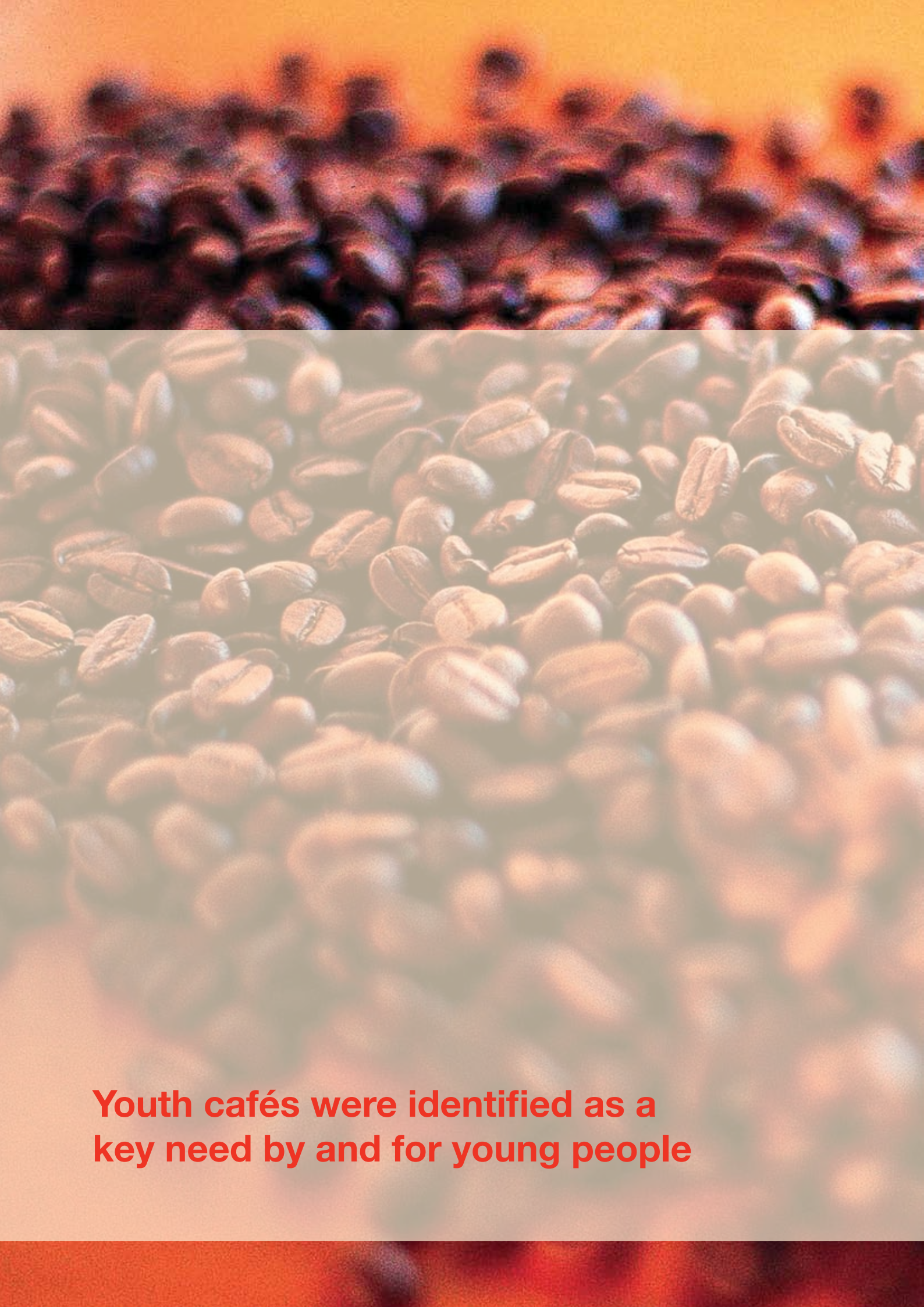
Youth cafés were identified as a key need by and for young people

Executive Summary

Context for report

■ In the National Recreation Policy for Young People, called *Teenspace* and published by the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA) in 2007, youth cafés were identified *as a key need by and for young people* (OMCYA, 2007a). The Government is now committed to the expanded provision of youth cafés on a phased basis around the country.

■ This research on Youth Cafés in Ireland - A Best Practice Guide was commissioned by the OMCYA on behalf of the National Children's Advisory Council with the aim of contributing to the formation of a solid policy foundation for the support and development of the youth café model of intervention with children and young people in Ireland.

Data collection

■ An extensive literature review was carried out to gather and examine information from formal academic sources, web-based data and 'gray literature' (e.g. technical reports, working papers, White/Green papers, preprints), as well as using key international contacts held by the Child and Family Research Centre (*see Chapter 1*).

■ Interviews were conducted with a selection of key stakeholders from across the youth café sector and the wider children and youth sector.

■ Interviews were also held with young people who are currently involved in youth cafés, in addition to a reference panel of young people arranged through the OMCYA.

Conceptual model and framework for youth cafés

- By grounding the 'youth café' idea in a conceptual base, it is possible to set out what is unique to the model of youth care provided by such cafés and how it differs to the 'youth club' model (*see Chapter 2*).
- Considering this, a youth café can be conceptualised as:
  - offering support, ranging from practical to advisory, for young people in a non-stigmatising way;
  - being based on well-established youth work principles;
  - providing a forum for young people to develop their social networks and thus their social support;
  - playing an important role in offering a secure base for young people;
  - being central in its potential to enable a young person to become or stay resilient;
  - helping connect resilience to civic engagement.
- One of the most attractive features of a youth café is that it can work with young people across all levels of need, including universal populations through to those 'at risk'.
- The 2007 *Youth Café Survey* commissioned by the OMCYA estimates that there are more than 20 youth cafés in operation around Ireland, with the highest density in Co. Wexford (Donnelly *et al*, 2009).
- In the Request for Tender for this research, the OMCYA described the main types of youth cafés found in Ireland as:

  Type 1 – A place or space to simply 'hang out' with friends, to chat, drink coffee or a soft drink, watch TV or movies, surf the Internet, etc.

  Type 2 – All the above but also with the inclusion of entertainment or leisure services chosen by the young people themselves, together with information on State and local services of interest and relevance to young people.

  Type 3 – This is perhaps the ideal model and the one that should be aimed for in the medium to long term, where all the above activities and facilities are augmented by the actual provision of services targeted directly at young people. This can include education and training, healthcare (both physical and emotional) and direct targeted assistance.

One of the most attractive features of a youth café is that it can work with young people across all levels of need

Incorporating an outcomes focus in youth cafés

- The publication in 2007 of *The Agenda for Children's Services: A Policy Handbook* (OMCYA, 2007b) indicates a move towards an outcomes-focused approach for policy and services for children and young people, based on 7 national service outcomes (*see Chapter 3*).
- Another significant theme in *The Agenda* is the need for integration of policy and services. As the range of possible functions of the youth café emerges in this report, it will be apparent that such integration is essential.
- A logical framework has been developed against which a youth café might be considered, incorporating all of these issues.

Guiding principles for youth cafés

A set of guiding principles has been identified for what a youth café should, or could, be (*see Chapter 4*).

Core guiding principles:
- A youth café should be a place that is guided by the *principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* and in particular enables the *participation* of young people;
- a place that offers a *safe and quality space* for young people;
- a place that has a *clear purpose*.

Other guiding principles:
- A youth café should be a place that is *inclusive of, accessible to and flexible with* all cultures, differences and abilities;
- a place that enables the development of good *quality relationships* between young people and their peers and between young people and adults, supported by *volunteerism*;
- a place that uses a *strengths-based approach* and is respectful of *individuality*;
- a place that will be *sustainable* and well-resourced into the future.

It is imperative that young people are involved through partnership in youth cafés in order to ensure success

Operational issues for youth cafés

There are many operational issues to be considered for youth cafés – the 'how tos' (*see Chapter 5*). These include:

- **Day-to-day management and running of a youth café**
  It is imperative that young people are involved through partnership in youth cafés in order to ensure success and this means from the very beginning of the concept right through to the daily running of the café. A committed staff team is also crucial, as are the range and content of activities and programmes offered by the café.

- **Funding and ongoing sustainability**
  Making the funding of youth cafés sustainable into the future is a key issue and central to success is the creation of partnerships between relevant agencies.

- **Location, building design and content**
  Youth cafés need to be accessible and convenient for young people and various location options exist, ranging from small villages to big towns or cities. The building design and content of youth cafés also need to incorporate a homely and welcoming atmosphere.

- **Promotion of youth cafés**
  A youth café faces various challenges in attracting young people and continually promoting itself. Young people who use youth cafés also need to be more proactive in encouraging other young people to use the facility.

- **Training and education of staff and volunteers**
  All staff and volunteers who work with young people in a youth café must have sufficient training. This is related back to the aims of the National Youth Work Development Plan 2003-2007 (Department of Education and Science, 2003) and the North-South Education and Training Standards Committee (NSETS) for youth work (Lalor *et al*, 2007).

- **Policies central to a youth café**
  A host of policy issues exist for youth cafés to function successfully. These range from major policies, such as child protection issues, health and safety, and insurance, to many others, such as alcohol, drugs and smoking.
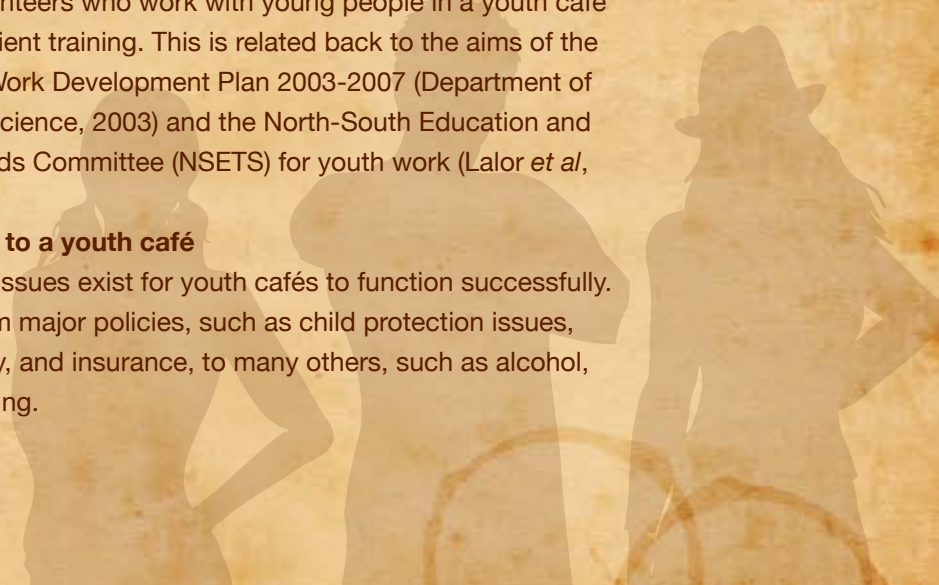
A place that enables the development of good quality relationships between young people and their peers and between young people and adults and is respectful of individuality

Monitoring and evaluation systems in youth cafés

■ Once established, the need to monitor and evaluate youth cafés is of paramount importance (*see Chapter 6*). After drawing a distinction between 'monitoring' and 'evaluation', several case studies on monitoring and evaluation systems in Ireland are examined, with particular attention being given to the AFQuATs system.

Imagined youth cafés scenarios

■ Youth cafés can take many different forms depending on such factors as the number of staff and volunteers available, the geographical area or funding concerns. However, in addition to these 'variables', each youth café will also have a number of 'constants' and these are illustrated by examining specific case studies (*see Chapter 7*).

Making the funding of youth cafés sustainable into the future is a key issue and central to success

1. Introduction

While the course of adolescents' physiological and psychological development might not have changed over the last number of years, there is little argument that the social context within which this takes place has altered greatly, both globally and in Ireland. Thus, what it is to be a teenager and what it is to experience this phase of one's life is in some respects radically different to what it was even 30 years ago. For example, Ireland has seen major changes in fertility, work, urbanisation and in the nature of community life, occurring alongside fundamental shifts in information and communication technologies. Being 16 years of age in 2009 is not the same as being 16 in 1979.

Even the positioning of young people in our society has shifted significantly; they are much more visible as a social group and as objects and subjects of policy concern. For example, significant legislation has been put in place covering child welfare and justice, while early childhood care and education has seen major policy and regulatory developments. More widely, the National Children's Strategy, published by the Department of Health and Children in 2000 – the benchmark statement of Ireland's understanding of children and young people – presents a view of and an approach to young people that represents a break from historically limited policy attention paid to them. Flowing from this strategy, the National Longitudinal Study of Children in Ireland, entitled *Growing Up in Ireland*, explicitly demonstrates the more all-embracing interest in young people by the State (*see* www.growingup. ie). This 7-year cohort study has been commissioned by the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA) and is being conducted by a consortium of researchers led by the Children's Research Centre at TCD and the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI).

The positioning of young people in our society has shifted significantly ... more visible ... social group ... objects and subjects of policy concern

In the general context of change, the need for policy to be dynamic, flexible and innovative is apparent. The National Children's Strategy is a general example of the need for policy approaches to adolescents to be innovative and dynamic, to accept that what is appropriate at one point in time will at a minimum require scrutiny as to its relevance at a point in the future. Sometimes, new developments in policy and practice are top-down, reflecting ideas from other jurisdictions (often the UK) or from senior policy stakeholders; sometimes new developments emerge locally, demonstrating the quality of our young people and the people who work on their behalf. Either way, when responding to young people, change is the constant.

There are many existing youth groups and community organisations in Ireland undertaking excellent work, often with very limited resources. The focus of the research in this report is on one such innovative response to the changing context of youth development in Ireland – the youth café. Developed initially at regional policy level, the idea has been taken up by a range of groups, statutory and voluntary. Most recently, the approach has been accorded a specific status within the National Recreation Policy for Young People (OMCYA, 2007a). Youth cafés are one mechanism through which young people are engaged and supported in their communities. Therefore, as suggested by a number of agencies interviewed for this report, youth cafés should not be seen by Government as the only way to support youth activities in Ireland, but rather as one of a number of options for young people to hang out with friends, get involved in local activities and access information.

A crucial point is that a youth-based initiative such as the youth café depends on solid interagency work. When functioning effectively, this work enables young people to identify their needs, establish their desired outcomes and thus determine the most appropriate level of service provision from the very beginning.

The remainder of this introductory chapter outlines the specific rationale, aims and methodology for the research and the structure of the report.

Youth cafés are one mechanism through which young people are engaged and supported in their communities

International and Irish experiences

This research arises in the context of the unfolding of the National Recreation Policy for Young People, entitled *Teenspace* (OMCYA, 2007a). Within the policy, youth cafés have emerged as a key need identified by young people. Accordingly, Objective 3, Action 22 of the policy states:

> Resources permitting and following a local needs assessment, dedicated youth cafés should be provided on a phased basis, particularly in areas where there are high concentrations of young people between the ages of 12-17. These cafés/drop-in centres should be introduced in consultation with young people.

Thus the State is committed to the expanded provision of youth cafés on a phased basis in Ireland. The research for this report is founded on a survey of youth cafés completed by the OMCYA in 2007, which established a profile of these facilities around the country (Donnelly *et al*, 2009).

What then is a youth café? As represented by the OMCYA in the Request for Tender (2007), youth cafés have a number of characteristics:

- a relaxed meeting space for young people, which is safe, friendly, inclusive, tolerant and free of set rules;
- a place for young people of both sexes and from all social and cultural backgrounds to engage in social interaction with their peers in a safe, drug-free environment;
- in its most basic form, a simple meeting space but can be more complex;
- a location for relaxation, recreation, entertainment, health information, advice or even direct care/service provision;
- no single model to suit all situations or locations;
- the precise model that is most suitable for them and their respective communities is something for young people themselves to decide, ideally with assistance from adults in the background.

From an international perspective, youth cafés are a relatively new concept and way of working with young people. This is reflected in the fact that at the time of writing this report, a search of the academic literature revealed only a handful of published studies on youth cafés. As reported in the *Youth Café Feasibility Study for Cork City*, a number of well-established youth cafés exist internationally (Cork City Partnership, 2007). As part of the feasibility study, the Cork group visited the 'Walker's Night Café' in Helsinki, Finland, which was established in 1994 under the auspices of a registered association known as Aseman Lapstry. The aim of this youth café is to prevent young people getting into a cycle of substance abuse, crime and anti-social behaviour. Another café visited was the 'Basement Night Drop-in Centre' in Liverpool. This service is provided for homeless young people, aged 18 and over, between 5.30 and 9pm; during the day, a Young Person's Advisory

Service operates by appointment and provides referrals to other programmes for those aged 16-18. In Hong Kong, the Cork contingent visited the 'Youth Mobile Teams', set up to help address youth homelessness and mental health problems for young people. Another facility visited was 'Congress' in Alice Springs, Australia; this after-hours drop-in-centre was designed to be a safe place for young people who may have fallen through the gaps in terms of the law and support services.

From an Irish perspective, the *Youth Café Survey* noted that there are more than 20 youth cafés in operation around Ireland (Donnelly *et al*, 2009). A total of 20 youth cafés responded to the survey, the main objective of which was to understand and assess the common practices of youth cafés in Ireland. The highest density of youth cafés is to be found in Co. Wexford, where there are 6 such cafés representing 30% of respondents surveyed (*see Table 1*).

Table 1: Youth cafés in Ireland participating in the survey, by county

Name of youth café	County	Year started
The Attic	Co. Cork	2006
The Youth Café	Co. Cork	2006
The Loft (Learning Opportunities for Teens)	Co. Donegal	2006
Area 24	Co. Dublin	2006
EXIT Youth Health Café	Co. Dublin	2004
The Zone Café	Co. Dublin	2003
The Gaf	Co. Galway	2001
KDYS Drop-In Project	Co. Kerry	2003
KDYS Oasis Drop-In Centre	Co. Kerry	2001
KDYS Tralee Youth Café Project	Co. Kerry	2003
The Curragh Youth Café	Co. Kildare	2007
Lava Java Youth Café	Co. Limerick	2006
The CRIB	Co. Sligo	2002
Squashy Couch	Co. Waterford	2004
FDYS Night Café	Co. Wexford	2006
FDYS Rock Café	Co. Wexford	2005
FDYS The Hive Youth Drop-In	Co. Wexford	2003
FDYS Youth Café	Co. Wexford	2003
FDYS Youth Space	Co. Wexford	2006
Gorey Youth Needs Drop-In	Co. Wexford	1995
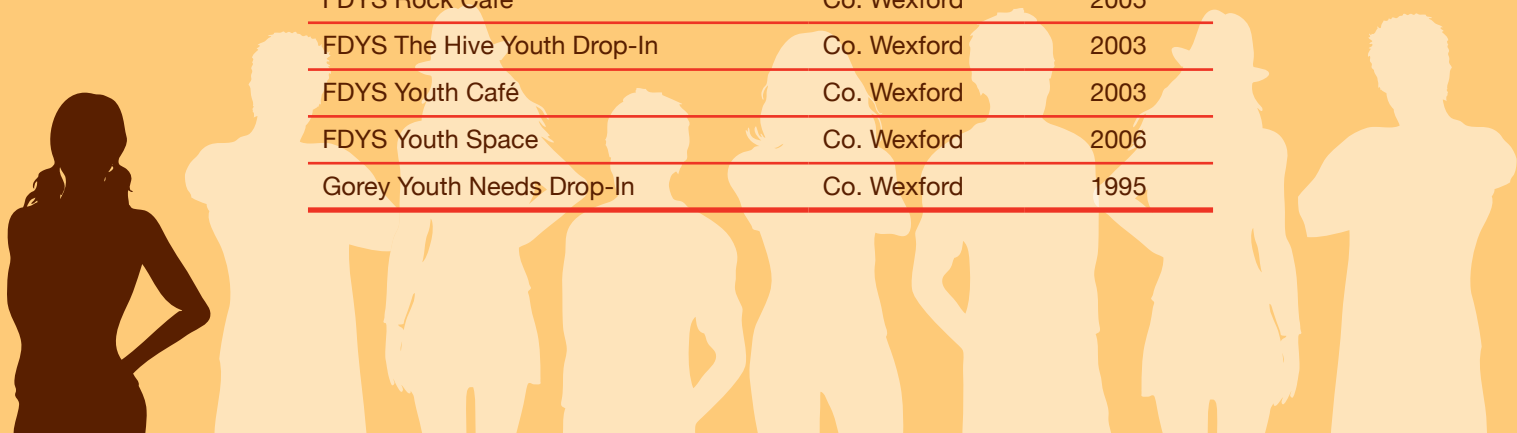
The survey also presents information on the trends regarding the establishment of youth cafés in Ireland from 2000 to 2007 (*see Figure 1*). Only one youth café existed in Ireland in 2000, but the number has increased steadily since then.

Figure 1: Emergence of youth cafés in Ireland between 2000 and 2007
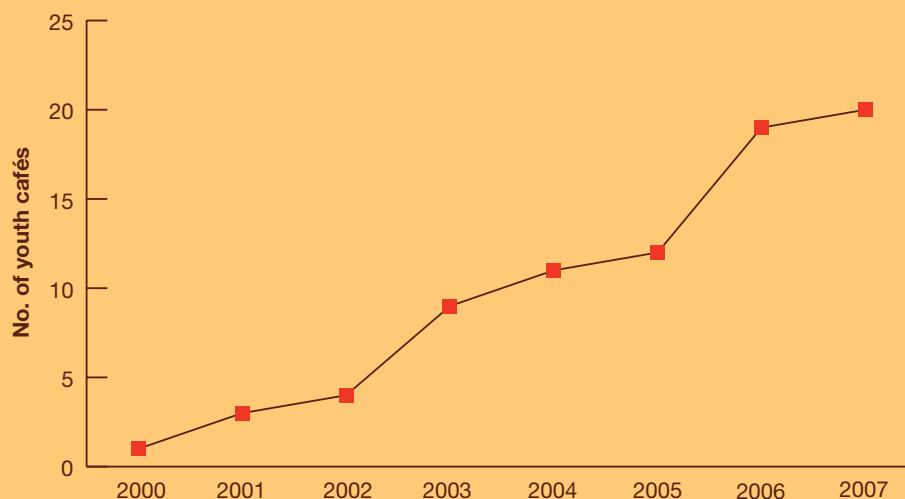
Source: Donnelly *et al* (2009)

As part of the *Youth Café Survey*, respondents were asked to report the number of uses of their cafés for each day of the week. The results show that the number of uses over the course of a week ranged from 25 to 561 (*see Figure 2*). It should be noted, however, that these figures are somewhat inflated as young people are likely to use their café more than once per week. Nonetheless, this provides a general impression of the frequency of use and popularity of youth cafés in communities. The most popular age group targeted by youth cafés participating in the survey was 12-18 years, with 45% of cafés targeting this specific group. The general target age groups for other cafés ranged from 11 to 25 years. Findings also show that 12% more boys use youth cafés than girls: boys constitute 56% of youth café users, while girls account for the remaining 44%.

Figure 2: Number of uses of youth café per week

Source: Donnelly *et al* (2009)

In the Request for Tender for this research, the OMCYA described the main types of youth cafés found in Ireland as:

- **Type 1** – A place or space to simply 'hang out' with friends, to chat, drink coffee or a soft drink, watch TV or movies, surf the Internet, etc.
- **Type 2** – All the above but also with the inclusion of entertainment or leisure services chosen by the young people themselves, together with information on State and local services of interest and relevance to young people.
- **Type 3** – This is perhaps the ideal model and the one that should be aimed for in the medium to long term, where all the above activities and facilities are augmented by the actual provision of services targeted directly at young people. This can include education and training, healthcare (both physical and emotional) and direct targeted assistance.

Clearly, the youth café model as an interface between young people and the State is one that offers potential across a number of policy domains. As the youth café idea has developed in Ireland, it has become more varied, reflecting the needs and desires of those promoting it in different parts of the country.

At a wider policy level, the youth café approach is significant insofar as it reflects the substantive policy objective of participation – Goal 1 of the National Children's Strategy (2000) – to give children and young people a voice in matters that affect them and to ensure that their views are given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity. This is in line with Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was ratified by Ireland in 1992. Participation can range from the provision of information to

consultation and to involvement in the governance of an organisation. The participation of young people can be at national, local and organisational level. Moreover, there is a neat fit between youth participation both as a policy objective and as a potentially effective strategy in developing successful interventions. Any programme that might emerge offers a genuine opportunity to discover whether the ways in which the involvement of young people in the design and delivery of youth cafés enhances their effectiveness.

Research aims

The aim of this research is to help contribute to the formation of a solid policy foundation for the support and development of the youth café model of intervention with children and young people in Ireland. It will be the basis for a more practice-based document supporting the establishment and operation of youth cafés.

From the initial Request for Tender, it was anticipated that the research would result in a report with the following content:

- literature review, including international best practice;
- an overview of the Irish experience, including the views of adults and young people;
- key principles for youth cafés;
- essential elements, including programme development, finances, achieving sustainability, management and governance, operations and practical tips;
- risks and how to handle them;
- quality, monitoring and evaluation, including data management systems and proposed criteria for funding/investment.

On the operational side, the Request for Tender proposed that areas covered by the report would include:

- location, building design and layout of youth cafés;
- promotion of youth cafés;
- training and education of volunteers;
- child protection;
- health and safety;
- insurance;
- ongoing sustainability (including options for ongoing self-funding, collaboration with planners and developers, options of funding from philanthropic sources);
- day-to-day management and running of facilities;
- involvement of young people at every stage of development.

Initial consultations with the OMCYA clarified the nature of the potential report further. A key additional area identified (not explicitly referenced in the Request for Tender but implicit in its contents) was the establishment of a conceptual basis for the youth café model. As the work evolved, the necessity of locating the youth café idea more firmly within an emerging agenda of outcomes-focused policy for children became apparent.

Methodology

The research was undertaken by the Child and Family Research Centre (CFRC) over a relatively short period on an intensive basis. The key elements in the data collection and analysis strategies adopted are set out below.

Data collection

1. **Consultations with OMCYA and NCAC:** The work began with initial consultations with OMCYA personnel to clarify key foci and the balance of emphases across the different areas of interest. This was supplemented by further contact during the research. A key stage in the process was a meeting with the National Children's Advisory Council (NCAC), the commissioning body, towards the latter stages of the project to discuss key sections of the emerging report.

2. **Extensive literature review:** The literature search represented the major part of the research. It comprised a number of components:
   - Search of formal academic literature using various search engines focusing on relevant domains, including child welfare, sociology of children and young people, youth work/youth policy, health promotion, drug misuse, sexual health and community development.
   - Search of other web-based sources, including websites of government and non-governmental agencies involved in youth café provision and/or similar types of service. The number of sources found was relatively limited, but nonetheless proved to be valuable.
   - Search of 'gray literature', including various policy documents from different jurisdictions. Some key documents studied were *The Youth Café Survival Guide* (Prince's Trust, 2005); *Youth Café Feasibility Study – Cork City* (Cork City Partnership, 2007); the *Youth Café Survey* conducted for the OMCYA in 2007 (Donnelly *et al*, 2009); the *Step-by-Step Guide to establishing a Youth Advice Café,* conducted for the Galway County Development Board (Bane and Mullarkey, 2007); and *Young Voices. Guidelines on how to involve children and young people in your work* (National Children's Office, Children's Rights Alliance and National Youth Council of Ireland, 2005).

- Contacts held by the CFRC in the USA, UK, New Zealand and Australia were used in generating international material.
- Limited review of key literature on good practice in interventions with young people.

3. **Targeted interviews with key stakeholders:** Nine interviews were undertaken with key stakeholders across the youth café sector and the wider children and young people policy arena. In establishing the sample for this part of the work, the CFRC was guided by the OMCYA based on its knowledge generated from the *Youth Café Survey,* along with the CFRC's own ideas of key sources. Unfortunately, a number of agencies invited to contribute their views opted not to participate.

4. **Targeted interviews with young people:** As with the key stakeholders' interviews, the CFRC was guided by the OMCYA in developing an appropriate sample of young people, as well as drawing on its own networks. As a result, four focus groups were held with young people having experience of successfully operating youth cafés; a fifth focus group was conducted with a reference panel of young people, arranged through the OMCYA.

5. **Focused examination of data management systems:** Good examples of data management systems were identified from the literature search, interview process and based on the OMCYA's *Youth Café Survey.*

In generating data from both primary and secondary sources, the research team kept in mind the idea of the youth café as a model, inclusive of the variety of approaches to provision, and reflective of, among other dimensions:

- urban and rural experiences;
- cafés operating in the statutory and voluntary community settings and at different scales;
- management and operational structures;
- the diversity of policy concerns/domains within which cafés operate (e.g. youth work, drugs, mental health).

Youth cafés should not be seen by Government as the only way to support youth activities in Ireland

Data analysis

Because a generally consistent approach was taken to generating the data, the analysis involved bringing the various sources together under a series of headings and sifting the data carefully to identify areas of consensus and differences. From this, key points were distilled, which then formed the basis of the development of drafts of this report. Thus, in the report, the individual sections represent an amalgam of sources. As stated above, the commissioning body, the National Children's Advisory Council (NCAC), also participated in the analysis process, giving feedback on the conceptual basis, key principles and overall proposed structure for the report. Furthermore, the more general research, policy and practice experience of CFRC staff also contributed to the development of the report.

Structure of report

- *Chapter 2* outlines a theoretical framework within which the youth café model can be understood. Key elements discussed within the framework are the ways in which a youth café can support young people and deal with their differing levels of need.
- *Chapter 3* on an outcomes-focused framework links the youth café idea into the wider policy context for children in Ireland.
- *Chapter 4* outlines a set of key guiding principles for youth cafés, reflecting the value bases for their operation and the means of distinguishing youth cafés from other intervention models.
- *Chapter 5* describes a number of core operational issues for youth cafés, including funding and sustainability, location, building design and content, promotion of youth cafés, training of staff and volunteers, policies and the day-to-day management of youth cafés.
- *Chapter 6* offers some guidance on how to approach the issues of information collection and management, and monitoring and evaluation systems to establish the quality of operation and effectiveness of youth cafés.
- *Chapter 7* sets out a number of imagined youth café scenarios, vignettes reflecting the many possibilities for youth cafés in Ireland, all of which are underpinned by the main points made in the preceding chapters.

respectful of individuality

2. Conceptual model and framework for youth cafés

The conceptual model and framework for youth cafés presented here includes a description of their core *raison d'être* and their potential to meet youth need based on sound adolescent development theoretical underpinnings. Although the format for a youth café may vary in terms of target population or location, the framework described applies to all youth cafés. It details what is unique to the model of youth care they provide and how a youth café differs from the 'youth club' model operated by the major youth work providers around Ireland.

Youth cafés as a model for supporting young people

One of the core functions of a youth café is that it offers support to young people, ranging from practical support to advice, through their participation in activities that are of interest to them and that are varied and on offer at times that suit their normal daily routines. Central to the youth café model is that it is seen by young people as 'cool' and attending the café carries absolutely no stigma or label. One of its key values is that whether a young person attends the café just to hang out with friends, drink coffee and listen to music, or attends in order to receive specific support to deal with a crisis in his or her life, for all these purposes it looks the same. Thus, even though a young person may be in receipt of counselling or other form of support, from the perspective of coming and going to the café, there is no perceived social cost or stigma to attendance. Importantly, youth cafés also imply an informal fun culture with a strong sense of governance by youth and although programmes may be facilitated by caring and understanding adults, they are, in the main, youth-determined and led.

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Central to the youth café model is that it is seen by young people as 'cool' and attending the café carries absolutely no stigma or label

Situating youth cafés within youth development theory

Whereas to date, the youth café model has not been developed from strong theoretical underpinnings, this is not to suggest that it is without theory. In general terms, it can be seen as centrally located within well-established youth work principles, including social informal education, strong youth participatory and governance approaches, peer learning, enabling civic engagement and positive youth development models (Brady, 2007; Lalor *et al*, 2007; Sweeney and Dunne, 2003). In addition, promoting culture and interculturalism are newly emerging principles for any work with young people and should also be considered in this regard. More specifically, one could argue that there are a number of core theories in relation to both normative and non-normative adolescent development that connect very solidly to the youth café model and these are now briefly outlined.

In terms of **social support theory**, a youth café can offer a forum for young people to develop their social networks (actual and virtual), particularly in terms of accessing new and appropriate friendships with peers and adults (Dryfoos *et al*, 2005). The opportunity for a young person to just be present and spend time with their peers in a safe environment such as a youth café can provide much needed mutual support. Thus, a youth café can be an important hub in the lives of young people. Through engagement in both the informal and formal youth café programmes, a young person can access practical, emotional and advice support and develop closeness to others (Pinkerton and Dolan, 2007). At a basic level, just spending time in an appropriate way with other young people and adults is in itself supportive and its value should not be underestimated. Finally, both in terms of maintenance support (for universal populations of youth with little or no difficulty) and crisis support (for targeted youth experiencing adversity or 'at risk'), a youth café offers network support across all contexts (Cutrona and Cole, 2000). Given the well-proven association between social support in adolescence and robust mental health, this social support function of youth cafés is central to their success (Brugha, 1995).

Similarly, regarding **attachment theory**, youth cafés play an important role particularly in terms of offering a secure base for young people. For many young people, adolescence is a time of socially appropriate experimentation, including formation and trying out of relationships with others, such as their family, friends and peers (Rutter *et al*, 1998). Whereas school and community are the obvious non-home sites for this development, for many young people having a local youth café offers more breadth and positive opportunities. For example, if a young person does not achieve well in sport or academic work, school can quickly be seen as a site of stress and failure. Similarly, in communities where a young person does not have access to a youth club, scout troop or other forum, there may be little opportunity for him or her to

explore actual and potential talents (Gilligan, 2008). A youth café that is well run and strongly supported by adults offers a secure base for young people to explore talents which otherwise may be left untapped, notably so in relation to music and the arts[1]. Furthermore, it is a safe base to interact with peers and develop relationships beyond school, home and immediate community – all part of the attachment maturation process during adolescence.

What may be of central importance to the role of the youth café is its potential to enable a young person to become or stay **resilient**. In itself, a youth café can be deemed to be a protective factor in a young person's life whereby he or she has a support service (and access to other services if needs be) and thus a place to alleviate stress. In effect, by engagement with a youth café, a young person in need can access appropriate help to redress perceived and/or actual difficulties. Given that hobby success is well recognised as a central source of resiliency-building, the wide range of activities available through a youth café makes its contribution to youth development particularly noteworthy. For example, a young person may engage with new interests and hobbies via music and the arts that otherwise might remain unattainable. More specifically, through the support available at a youth café, a young person may access support that will help him or her address difficulties in life and thus enhance their capacity to cope (e.g. for a young person who is gay or lesbian and struggling with issues around their sexuality). Through the discrete support of the youth café and allied services, they may access self-coping strengths to deal with issues as they emerge and over time.

Finally, it could also be argued that one of the main benefits of youth cafés is their potential as a forum to connect **resilience and civic engagement** in young people. Given that attendance at a youth café is semi-formal, it has the capacity to engage young people who may be on the margins of communities and including those who are experiencing adversity. Whether youth present as troubled or troublesome, a youth café has the potential to engage them positively in services, but also within civic society. Within resilience theory, there is an acceptance that by enabling young people with problems to be altruistic and help others with needs, major positive change in the behaviour of the donor youth may accrue. Thus, by enabling positive civic engagement in youth who present as difficult, there may be a larger benefit in changed attitudes and behaviours in young people, in part leading to better resiliency capacity. As such, a youth café, because of its 'no stigma' label, has major potential in this regard to mix young people with or without difficulties in their lives and to create common good to the benefit of all its members.

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[1] The term 'the arts' denotes many activities, some of which are film, animation, photography, dance, drama, creative writing, circus, music, singing, visual arts and traditional arts.

Youth cafés as a fulcrum to meet differing levels of need

Probably the most attractive feature of the youth café model is its potential to work with youth across all levels of need, including universal populations with few or no issues in their lives, right through to those 'at risk' and experiencing severe adversity, including harm. A useful way of thinking about this is to use a conceptual model developed by the late Pauline Hardiker and colleagues (Hardiker *et al*, 1991), which has become known as the **Hardiker Framework** for assessing the level of need. As Figure 3 illustrates, there are 4 interconnected levels of need and matched services. Each subsequent level represents a more detailed engagement with State-provided or funded services, going from a range of universal, open access services on Level 1 to Level 4 which deals with out-of-home care for young people (Pinkerton, 2006).

It is well established that the number of young people who experience severe difficulties is far less than is often assumed and ranges between 10%-15% of the population (Coleman and Hendry, 2002). Positively, we also know that even for the minority population with difficulties, most young people surmount their problems as they grow older. One of the reasons that this is the case lies in the important function of society to offer maintenance support to young people: during adolescence, family, friends, schools and communities remain central and are often the unsung heroes of youth (Feldman and Elliot, 1990). However, for those who do experience small problems, or potentially could, prevention is key and the role of the youth café to help as an early warning system for young people over time may prove to be crucial. This population of young people are described as being at Need Levels 1 and 2 in the Hardiker Framework (*the bottom 2 levels in the pyramid of need in Figure 3*).

The populations in the Hardiker Framework at higher levels of need (Levels 3 and 4) present to services as being in need of more urgent intervention. So, for this group of young people, a youth café can help by either directly working with them and/or referring them on to a relevant service (e.g. a child and adolescent mental health service for a young person with depression). A youth café may be seen as offering services that are helpful either by monitoring some young people or by intervening where a young person self-reports or is known to have more severe difficulties. In terms of the 'core' work of a youth café, it could be argued that at its most basic level, a youth café could meet the needs of young people on Levels 1 and 2. Needs at Levels 3 and 4 could also be met by a youth café, drawing services from the 'cluster'[2] of specialist services around it and using the expertise at hand.

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[2] In this case, a 'cluster' refers to the range of specialist services that are available to a youth café outside of its normal service. For example, these services might be counselling or addiction services, the arts, educational guidance and/or health-related issues.

The most attractive feature of the youth café model is its potential to work with youth across all levels of need ... right through to those 'at risk' and experiencing severe adversity, including harm

Therefore, using the Hardiker Framework, youth cafés can be regarded as a service that is **'looking out'** for those young people at Levels 1 and 2, in terms of prevention and early intervention work. For those young people who present at Levels 3 and 4, youth cafés can be conceptualised as **'looking in'** in terms of providing or enabling intervention for them. At the various levels of prevention and intervention, this should be typically reflected by the range of services on offer in the youth café. At one end of the continuum, there is a safe space to relax and hang out and connect with other youth through a mutual interest in, for example, music or sport, right through to the other end, which might offer programmes, in a non-prescriptive way, such as sexual health to a targeted set of vulnerable young people or a support programme to young people living in foster care.

Figure 3: The Hardiker Framework – youth cafés as a 'fulcrum' service across Levels of Need

FULCRUM EFFECT

'Looking in (to)'

YOUTH CAFÉ SERVICES

'Looking out (for)'

Level 4
Intensive long-term support/ rehabilitation for young people

Level 3
Services for children with serious difficulties, including risk of harm

Level 2
Support services for children and families in need

Level 1
Universal services and community development available to all children and families

Source: Hardiker *et al* (1991)

A youth café offers a secure base for young people to explore talents which otherwise may be left untapped, e.g. music and the arts

3. An outcomes-focused framework for youth cafés

While Chapter 2 grounds the youth café idea in a conceptual base, this chapter locates the idea in the context of the evolving children's policy domain, focusing particularly on themes of outcomes and integration. Foundational to all policy and legislation in relation to children in Ireland is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989). Thus, ultimately, all that we seek for our children and young people is guided by the tenets of this Convention. Policy and services for young people have been increasingly concerned with achieving outcomes for and with them. Although there are different meanings attached to the word 'outcomes', it is now recognised in Ireland that good outcomes involve the best possible conditions, situations and circumstances for children to live their lives to their full potential, as stated in the current social partnership agreement, *Towards 2016* (Department of the Taoiseach, 2006) and in *The Agenda for Children's Services* (OMCYA, 2007b).

The move in Ireland towards an outcomes-focused approach is in part a reaction to a perception of our work with young people, while generally directed towards achieving positive change in their lives, as being services-led (McTernan and Godfrey, 2006). At a wider level, it reflects higher expectations and standards for public services generally. In December 2007, the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs published *The Agenda for Children's Services: A Policy Handbook* (OMCYA, 2007b). The overall purpose of the document is to '*set out the strategic direction and key goals of public policy in relation to children's health and social services in Ireland'* (*ibid*, p. 2). The document re-emphasises the commitment to the delivery of evidence-based and outcomes-focused services to children, their families and their communities in Ireland. *The Agenda* is based on 7 national service outcomes for children in Ireland and is a first attempt to delineate a set of high-level outcomes towards which all public services should be working. These national service outcomes state that every child should be –

- healthy, both physically and mentally;
- supported in active learning;
- safe from accidental and intentional harm;
- economically secure;
- secure in the immediate and wider physical environment;
- part of positive networks of family, friends, neighbours and the community;
- included and participating in society.

Another significant theme in the evolution of policy and services is integration. The report by the National Economic and Social Council entitled *The Developmental Welfare State* placed strong emphasis on joined-up government (NESC, 2005). Similarly, the idea of interagency cooperation, 'while difficult to achieve' as the NESC notes, has long featured in the lives of those working in the child protection and welfare area in particular and for those working with children and youth generally (Roche and Tucker, 1997). Such integration is not just about action at local level: the 2008 report *Framework for Joint Planning for Outcomes for Children and Families* reiterates the ongoing significance of the integration issue at *all* levels, from front-line services to policy-makers and politicians (Bradley *et al*, 2008). Thus, when thinking about the development of policy for youth cafés and the roll-out of a funding and support programme in relation to them, themes of outcomes and integration will have to be key.

As the range of possible functions of the youth café model emerges in this report, it will be apparent that integrated policy and services will be required. In this sense, youth cafés will reflect a critical theme in the NESC (2005) report – that of joined-up government and services. Notwithstanding the fact that the funding arrangements underpinning a youth café programme may be diverse, for youth cafés to be relevant (particularly where they have a clear function to meet higher levels of need), they will have to reflect strong commitments to multidisciplinary and interagency working.

In relation to outcomes, the wider policy context is one in which they should be the focus of all our efforts. But as recognised in *The Agenda for Children's Services* (OMCYA, 2007b), 'the being', as well as 'the becoming', aspects of childhood and adolescence must also be emphasised. In some ways, the youth café model combines a dual 'being' and 'becoming' focus. Either way, the 7 national service outcomes for children (*see above*) are a valuable focus for the development of youth cafés. They can easily be seen as providing opportunities for the achievement of outcomes in relation to participation, involvement in active learning and being part of positive networks. Depending on their purpose, youth cafés may be relevant to the achievement of health outcomes in relation to the full range of physical and mental health needs.

However, in proposing outcomes as a useful focus, a number of caveats must be made. First, the effect of youth cafés on outcomes is more readily apparent in some cases than in others. There may be a proximal relationship, with reasonable inferences made between the youth café intervention and the achievement of inclusion and participation goals. The relationship may, however, be more distal, with a direct link between mental and sexual health outcomes and youth cafés being more difficult to see. Moreover, when it comes to measurement of outcomes, some will be easier to measure than others and in some cases causality will be more difficult to prove. A detailed commentary on the 'how tos' of monitoring and evaluation is provided in Chapter 5 – processes that are key to achieving these outcomes.
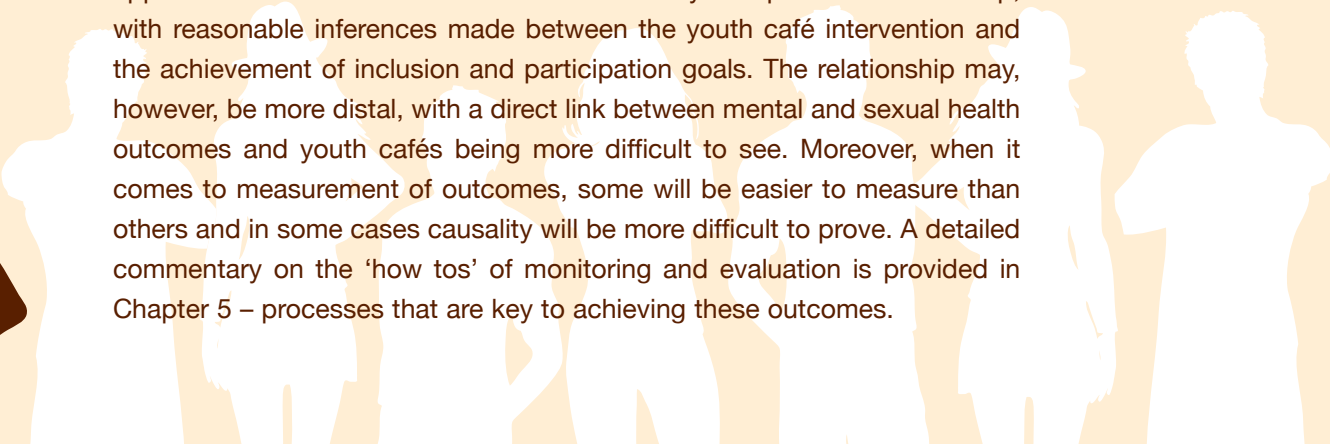
With these general ideas and associated cautions in mind, Figure 4 sets out an example of a logical framework against which the development of a youth café programme might be considered. It is just an example since the researchers believe that only the stakeholders in the process can really develop it. That said, the researchers regard an underpinning logical framework as a sine qua non for the development of policy in this area.

Figure 4: Example of logical framework for planning youth cafés

INPUTS

For example:
- Policy support
- Finance
- Funding structures and mechanisms
- Management and staffing
- Good practice
- Integrated planning

ACTIVITIES

For example:
- Range of youth café types of operations
- Range of activites undertaken by youth cafés

OUTCOMES

For example:
- Agreed outcomes linked to overarching 7 national outcomes for children (some outcomes more proximate than others)
- Ultimately contributing to the fuller achievement of children's rights in Ireland

OUTPUTS

For example:
- Numbers of cafés
- Time/timing of work
- Programmes run
- Referrals in and on (where part of brief)
- Use levels by young people
- Level of adult volunteers

Youth café policy, services and practice underpinned by common guiding principles for youth cafés *(see Chapter 4)* and reflecting *The Agenda for Children's Services*, service characteristics required for good outcomes.
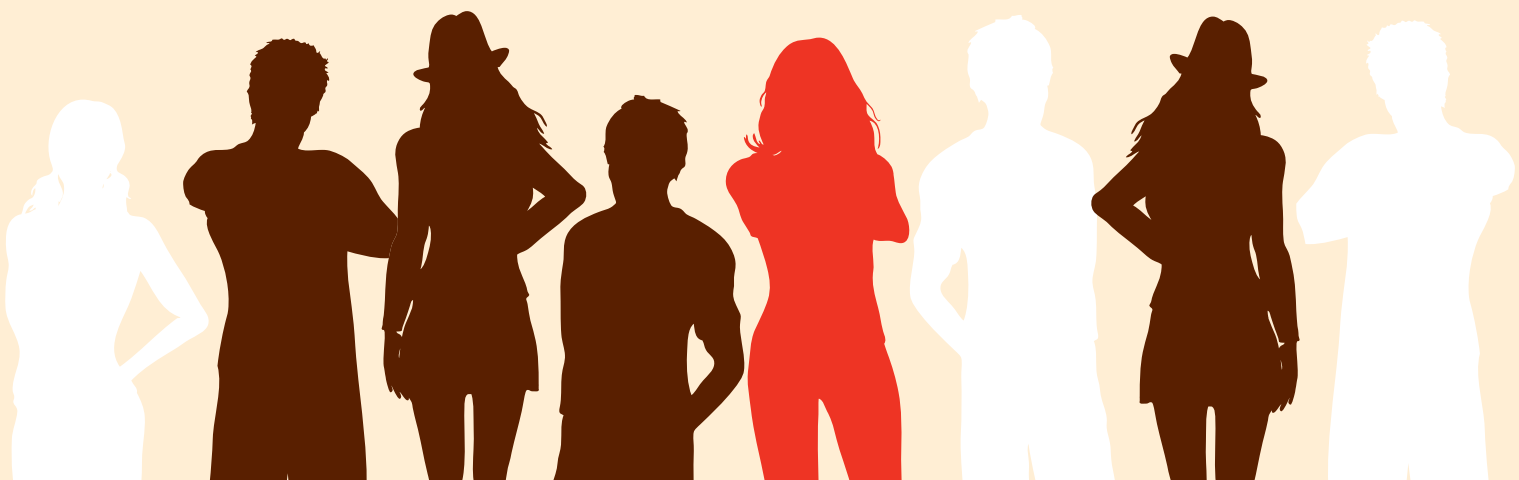
The introduction of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 provided a global bill of rights for all children ... Article 12 states that children's views must be taken into account in all matters affecting them

4. Guiding principles for youth cafés

For any youth café to be successful, it must incorporate and adhere to a set of guiding principles. These principles are the bedrock upon which the work of the café is based and can be used to focus an evaluation and assessment of its overall success. One of the main aims of this research was to identify a set of guiding principles for the provision of youth cafés in Ireland. Seven principles (3 'core' and 4 'others') have been identified as key to this work (each discussed in detail below), with the help of data collected from key stakeholder agencies involved in youth work provision, from young people already involved in youth cafés, from key academic literature and with the experience of the CFRC research team.

Core guiding principles:

- A youth café should be a place that is guided by the *principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* and in particular enables the *participation* of young people;
- a place that offers a *safe and quality space* for young people;
- a place that has a *clear purpose*.

Other guiding principles:

- A youth café should be a place that is *inclusive of, accessible to and flexible with* all cultures, differences and abilities;
- a place that enables the development of good *quality relationships* between young people and their peers and between young people and adults, supported by *volunteerism*;
- a place that uses a *strengths-based approach* and is respectful of *individuality*;
- a place that will be *sustainable* and well-resourced into the future.

Core guiding principles

1. YOUTH PARTICIPATION

It is now widely accepted that enabling child and youth participation in all areas of life in which they are involved is a universal right (Alvarez, 1994; Chaskin and Glodek, 2008). Therefore, over the recent past, there has been a growing momentum towards the cause of children's participation (Brady, 2007). The introduction of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 provided a global bill of rights for all children. Enshrined in the Convention is the belief that for a child to develop, there are accepted pre-conditions that must be present and provided. One of the major provisions of the Convention, as contained in Article 12, states that children's views must be taken into account in all matters affecting them.

From an Irish perspective, the publication in 2005 of *Young Voices: Guidelines on how to involve children and young people in your work* was prepared with the aim of encouraging services to explore ways in which they can develop a culture of participation by children and young people (National Children's Office, Children's Rights Alliance and National Youth Council of Ireland, 2005). As the report suggests, participation by young people in decision-making gives them a greater sense of civic responsibility. It goes on to suggest that principles such as visibly involving young people in organisations, recognising diversity among young people, equality and honesty, to name just a few, are key guiding principles of participation.

Other factors have also changed the landscape of child and youth participation. As children are consumers of goods and services and in line with growing consumerism, children are now considered to have a right to express their satisfaction with the services available to them. Also, with the growth in the sociology of childhood (James and James, 2004; Kehily, 2004; Roche and Tucker, 1997), children have increasingly come to be studied as an independent social group instead of solely seeing them as only part of their family. Therefore, one of the most accepted and supported concepts within youth work today is youth participation, a concept related to youth development. This has been built into the conceptual framework for youth cafés, discussed in Chapter 2.

International evidence

With regard to youth cafés, there is ample international evidence that supports an emphasis on youth participation. In New Zealand, for example, built into youth work policy and provision is the view that young people need to be given opportunities to have greater control over what happens to them, through seeking their advice, participation and engagement. As a consequence, the New Zealand Ministry of Youth Development (2002) suggests that 'youth development is triggered when young people fully participate'. McLaughlin *et al* (2001), examining inner-city youth in the USA, discuss the importance of creating opportunities for young people to get involved in areas of interest, with tangible results for themselves and their communities. In the UK, *The Youth Café Survival Guide* suggests that a bottom-up, youth-led approach for youth cafés is of paramount importance for the successful development of young people, as well as the success of youth cafés (Prince's Trust, 2005). By giving young people responsibility for decisions in the youth café, they will feel confident, secure and valued, with this philosophy being summed up by the phrase *'By young people, for young people'*.
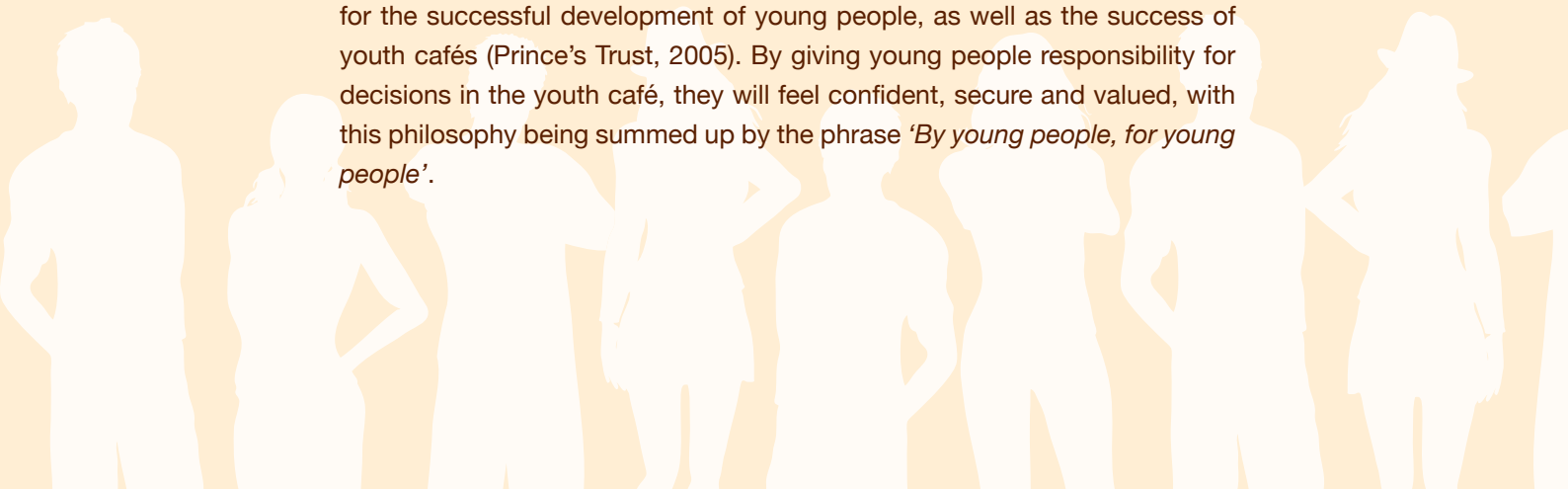
Irish evidence

In the focus groups for this research conducted with young people already involved with youth cafés around Ireland, a sense of feeling involved and belonging were viewed as key reasons why they enjoyed attending the cafés. As suggested by one young person, he was 'giving something back' and 'involved in something worthwhile' as a positive outcome of attending the café.

The importance of youth participation is also supported by the 2007 *Youth Café Survey* (Donnelly *et al*, 2009), the findings of which show that of the youth cafés surveyed, the majority (85%) were managed by a team of both adults and young people, with the remaining 15% being managed by adults only. Further data show that young people were involved in all areas of the development of youth cafés – from the initial concept development, through to policies and protocols, to advertising and fund-raising.

In 1992, Ireland ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Since then, there has been an increasingly open attitude to listening to young people in Ireland, with the development of the National Children's Strategy (2000), the National Children's Office (now called the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs), the creation of the posts of Minister for Children and Youth Affairs and the Ombudsman for Children. In the National Children's Strategy, Goal 1 states that *'Children will have a voice in matters which affect them and their views will be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity'* (Department of Health and Children, 2000, p. 37). In explaining participation, the policy document uses the concept of Hart's Ladder of Participation, which suggests that participation can be thought of in two ways: 'non-participation' and 'degrees of participation' (*ibid*, p. 39). Non-participation is built on manipulation and tokenism, while participation varies in degrees from where the child is informed of decisions to where they can share decisions with adults. The view expressed in the National Children's Strategy is that to enable real participation to occur, opportunities are needed where children will be supported in participation and where they can learn the necessary skills to do so.

It was clear from the present research that youth participation is regarded as the basic principle for working with young people and is core to the work of the youth work providers and other agencies involved in providing or supporting youth work programmes. Their combined view supports the involvement of young people at every level of the youth café – from planning to design and evaluation. This view was supported by a manager of a well-established youth café in Ireland interviewed for this research: he stated that youth participation is one of the core guiding principles on which a youth café is built and that *'there is normally a great buzz when young people take control of it'*.

It is important to acknowledge that some groups of young people (e.g. those who are marginalised, such as Travellers, or young people from new communities or other cultural and social backgrounds) may need extra support in order to participate. Additional resources of advertising and outreach work may be needed in order to include these cultural groups, who may be reluctant to join something they see as only for 'mainstream' youth. These groups should be encouraged to join and participate at all levels in the organisation of youth cafés in order for the cafés to be fully representative of Irish society. It is only when young people of *all backgrounds* are participating together that discrimination and marginalisation among our young people can be challenged.

However, as argued by Alvarez (1994), experiences with civic engagement and social institutions can be so minimal or so poorly designed that some adolescents fail to develop either the will or the skills necessary to participate fully as adult community members. This view was also supported by the same youth café manager quoted above, who suggested that youth participation in youth cafés is the *'gold standard'* and is a slow painstaking process, which often has the potential to be tokenistic if not planned carefully. Nevertheless, when youth participation is achieved in a youth café setting, it can create for those young people involved a sense of contributing something of value to their society and creating a feeling of connectedness to others and to society generally.

2. A SAFE AND QUALITY SPACE

There has been a development and growth in the number and range of initiatives aimed at improving the lives of young people over the last number of years. According to Alvarez (1994), this growth is based on the recognition of the inadequacies of current provision for young people. One of the core principles supported in youth work in this regard is for the provision of safe and quality spaces for young people.

International evidence

Youth cafés are being examined in many parts of the world as a means of facilitating young people in getting together safely in groups. In the UK, for example, as part of a project funded by the Prince's Trust, 20 towns in the Scottish Highlands and Islands have established youth cafés, providing a safe place for young people to chill out with their friends without feeling pressured into alcohol or drugs. In Australia, the police and Citizens' Youth Clubs in South-East Queensland have undertaken a major change in direction, from the traditional emphasis on energetic physical activities (such as boxing and gymnastics) towards the provision of informal and unstructured space in 'The Pulse' youth cafés. These include state-of-the-art music recording and mixing facilities, as well as facilities for large discos and participatory drama (OMCYA, 2007a).

Irish evidence

In Ireland's National Recreation Policy for Young People, Objective 3 states that there is a need to *'ensure that the recreational needs of young people are met through the development of youth-friendly and safe facilities and environments'* (OMCYA, 2007a). In the research carried out for the National Recreation Policy, De Róiste and Dinneen (2005) found that over 90% of young people reported enjoying hanging out with their friends, with most young people hanging around outside 'every day' or 'most days'. In general, the locations identified for hanging around tended to be outdoor for boys and indoor for girls, with examples of outdoors being 'in the estate', 'behind the church', 'in the park', 'in the woods', 'at the [village] square', 'around the shops' and 'doing laps of the town'. De Róiste and Dinneen (2005) note in their report that this 'hanging around' can be problematic because it can be regarded as threatening to other members of the community, but can also result in health-compromising activity for the young people themselves, in the form of alcohol and drug use. Pavis and Cunningham-Burley (1999), on the other hand, note that *'the normality of hanging out in teenagers' lives also has to be recognised. It is an important space for being with friends, chatting and doing nothing in an unsupervised adult-free space'*.

The research by De Róiste and Dinneen (2005) also found that the majority of young people expressed a wish for somewhere to hang out with their friends, a place that is 'safe' being a key component. This need was summed up by one participant in the public consultation for the National Recreation Policy: *'somewhere children and young people can go to play or hang out and feel safe without being afraid of getting kidnapped or abused'* (OMCYA, 2007a, p. 61). Similarly, in the present study conducted with young people involved in youth cafés around Ireland, 'a safe, comfortable place to hang out with friends' was cited as a main reason for using local youth cafés; in addition, youth cafés were seen as providing a quality space for more activities. The 2007 *Youth Café Survey* also found that one of the most basic services a youth café can provide is a sense of security for young people (Donnelly *et al*, 2009). When asked what they liked most about their youth café, the young respondents suggested that having 'a comfortable facility' and 'good atmosphere' were crucial to the success of the café.

The need for a quality, safe space – a *'space that is more than a space'* – was also supported and regarded as key to the success of youth cafés by youth work providers and other agencies involved in providing or supporting youth work programmes. According to the manager of a well-established youth café interviewed for this research, the starting point for a youth café is the provision of *'a safe, dedicated, quality space that is not compromised in any way'*.

3. A CLEAR PURPOSE

As discussed in Chapter 3, the introduction of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child provided a global bill of rights for all children. Its ratification by Ireland in 1992 led to the publication of the National Children's Strategy (2000). In using a 'whole child perspective', the strategy recognised the capacity of children to interact with and shape the world around them as they grow up. It identified 9 key dimensions of children's development, from physical and mental well-being to social and peer relationships, stating that all of these dimensions of childhood development must be addressed if a child is to enjoy a satisfactory childhood and make a successful transition into adulthood.

The Agenda for Children's Services (OMCYA, 2007b) set out the strategic direction and key goals of public policy in relation to children's health and social services in Ireland. It is underpinned by the commitment in the National Children's Strategy to services for young people that would be evidence-based and outcomes-focused. This shift in thinking is also supported by the publication of *Teenspace: National Recreation Policy for Young People* (OMCYA, 2007a).

One may, therefore, ask what might a youth café offer to young people and what might be its main purpose? As discussed in Chapter 2 on the conceptual model and framework for youth cafés, the format for a youth café may vary in terms of target population or location. Probably the most attractive feature of the youth café model is its potential to work with youth across all levels of need, including universal populations with few or no issues in their lives, right through to those 'at risk' and experiencing severe adversity, including harm. In the Request for Tender for this research, the OMCYA described the main types of youth cafés found in Ireland as:

- **Type 1** – A place or space to simply 'hang out' with friends, to chat, drink coffee or a soft drink, watch TV or movies, surf the Internet, etc.
- **Type 2** – All the above but also with the inclusion of entertainment or leisure services chosen by the young people themselves, together with information on State and local services of interest and relevance to young people.
- **Type 3** – This is perhaps the ideal model and the one that should be aimed for in the medium to long term, where all the above activities and facilities are augmented by the actual provision of services targeted directly at young people. This can include education and training, healthcare (both physical and emotional) and direct targeted assistance.

Concurring with these categories, *The Youth Café Survival Guide* (Prince's Trust, 2005) suggests that when asked, most young people would say that what they really want is somewhere to go, a place for young people. Youth cafés are just that – safe, alcohol-free places where young people feel welcome, can meet friends, have fun and take part in a wide range of activities. They take young people off the streets and are an important alternative to the pub. In addition, youth cafés are natural places for information, advice and guidance to be disseminated on issues affecting young people's lives, including sexual and mental health issues, careers, parenting skills, training and further education. Agencies are signposted from the café or they visit or have a presence there. By showing them what is available in the wider world, the young people are able to make more informed choices. They are more receptive to messages about serious issues like the dangers of alcohol or drug abuse because the presentation is non-judgemental and in a place where they are at ease. One manager of a well-established youth café in Ireland, interviewed for this research, pointed out the positive effect that a youth café can have on those who use it: *'The [name of café] has not stopped drinking among young people going into [it], but it has reduced the amount they drink.'* If they want to gain access to the café, they cannot have any signs of alcohol use.

Other guiding principles

The remaining 4 guiding principles identified as essential for the successful development of youth cafés are supportive of the core principles above.

4.   INCLUSIVE, ACCESSIBLE AND FLEXIBLE

A youth café needs to be inclusive of, accessible to and flexible with all cultures, differences and abilities. As suggested by *The Youth Café Survival Guide* (Prince's Trust, 2005), supporting and including all young people who use a youth café is crucial. According to Chaskin and Glodek (2008), such a rights-based approach, with efforts towards equality of opportunity for all youth, is core. Similarly, McLaughlin *et al* (2001) suggest that a key to developing effective supports for young people is that the programmes provided are flexible and responsive to the local context. The need to provide a flexible service, able to adapt quickly to the changing needs of young people, was fully supported by the major youth work providers in Ireland and other agencies involved in providing or supporting youth work programmes.

In this study's focus groups conducted with young people already involved in youth cafés, a sense of belonging was cited as key to the reasons why they continued using the facility. In the 2007 *Youth Café Survey*, it was noted that many youth cafés aim to promote young people's recognition, adherence

Youth cafés need to be inclusive, accessible and flexible

and participation in the customs, attitudes and values of their community as a means to encourage social behaviours which allow the young person to function successfully in their environment (Donnelly *et al*, 2009). The report goes on to suggest that it appears that of the youth cafés surveyed, there was a focus on promoting social inclusion through empowerment and personal development of the young people in question. In an era of multiculturalism in Ireland, it is important for youth cafés to continue to work proactively with the native Irish ethnic grouping, Travellers, as well as with the new communities, particularly those from Eastern Europe.

Related to this point, a member of the commissioning body for this research, the National Children's Advisory Council (NCAC), suggested that in terms of inclusion, youth cafés had the potential to work specifically with children with various forms of disability, such as autism: *'When they reach 18, those with autism often get cut off from State services.'* Therefore, a youth café could be the portal to integration for them with their peers and, in particular, could help them with relationship issues and sexual education. To enable this to happen, it was suggested that agencies involved in providing youth cafés should develop specific training programmes for staff and volunteers on how best to work with young people with a disability.

While discussing the concept of providing an inclusive youth café, one manager of such a facility noted that in any given location where a youth café is provided, there will be various 'types' of young people (e.g. Moshers and Trendies[3]). Considering the different likes and needs of these various groups, youth cafés need to be as inclusive and as organic as possible, and consider how best to attract young people from these different groups. However, the manager went on warn against the issues associated with this: *'Why do we expect that young people will all go to the one space when we won't as adults? We try to be as inclusive as possible [in our youth café].'* He also suggested that, from experience, working with various communities and bringing young people into the café ensures that any impression they might have had that it was 'not for them' is dispelled: *'We try and run a session with these groups and then they can come in on their own the next time. We do have a good cross-section, but we will never appeal to everyone.'*

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[3]   A Mosher is a person who dresses in black/brightly coloured clothes and listens to any type of rock music. A Trendy is a person who follows modern fashion and listens to mainstream music, following no music genre in particular (*see* www.urbandictionary.com).

Related to this point, a representative from one of the key stakeholder agencies interviewed for this research suggested that a further challenge is the risk of the youth café *'turning into a ghetto'* or a hang-out for certain groups of young people. This may happen depending on how it is structured: it can become the 'hang-out' for a group of young people who can colonise the place so that others may not feel welcome. This risk can be managed by creating a space for all young people so that it meets the needs of a broad range of interests.

A point raised by another key stakeholder agency was that ensuring a youth café is inclusive, accessible and flexible is a core principle on which basic youth work services are built. However, the agency suggested that for many of the most disenfranchised and socially excluded young people, a great deal of *'pre-development work … needs to be done with some groups prior to them taking the next step to mixing with other groups [in a youth café]'*. For some young people in this situation, *'a high level of one-to-one support and guidance'* would be required. It is therefore vital for a youth café, while planning its services, to be conscious of the need for this level of work with some young people.

5. QUALITY RELATIONSHIPS AND VOLUNTEERISM

There is no reason why a youth café cannot be just about providing a safe space for young people, where they can develop relationships with their peers and caring adults. The creation and maintenance of quality relationships in this manner is one of the fundamental principles underpinning youth work and youth development. Adolescence can be a particularly trying time, characterised by several changes and new challenges. The US Committee on Community-level Programs for Youth (2002, p. 47) has identified various challenges, opportunities and risks presented in previous literature that are typical of the adolescent period of life. Such challenges or tasks include:

- dealing with the changing nature of relationships between young people and their parents;
- exploring new personal, social, and sexual roles and identities;
- transforming peer relationships into deeper friendships and intimate partnerships.

If adolescents are not enabled to develop these supporting relationships, they can fail to make the social connections with the kinds of adults and social institutions that can aid their transition to mainstream adulthood. Therefore, it is widely acknowledged that community programmes, such as youth cafés, can play a crucial role in the developmental period of adolescence. As argued by Quinn (1999, p. 98), youth development programmes can provide *'environments and relationships that nurture and challenge young people,*

building their competencies and treating them as resources'. Similarly, in New Zealand, the concept of youth development is based on principles of young people being connected to others in society, including family, peers, other adults and the community, via quality relationships.

In this study's focus groups conducted with young people already involved in youth cafés, the availability of the staff members and the support and information offered *'both on an individual basis and through workshops and programmes'* were as important as having a fun place to meet with friends and new people. For many of the youth work providers and other agencies involved in providing or supporting youth work programmes, the need to support and equip young people to develop quality relationships was fully endorsed.

As supported by *The Youth Café Survival Guide* (Prince's Trust, 2005), youth cafés should be developed, led and run by young people themselves, with the support of professional staff and volunteers. In the 2007 *Youth Café Survey*, it was found that, in addition to professional youth workers, most cafés had 6 or less volunteers (Donnelly *et al*, 2009). The existence of trained, open and quality volunteers will further aid the development of quality relationships with young people. The importance of having the help of local volunteers was fully supported by the major youth work providers interviewed for this research since volunteerism goes to the heart of the concept of personal and youth development. In addition, as suggested by a manager of one youth café, a youth café can be run by trained volunteers during weekends, ensuring the optimal level of service to young people is achieved. Due to their local knowledge, volunteers are key sources of human capital, creating endless possibilities and especially helpful in breaking down barriers and creating new opportunities (McLaughlin *et al*, 2001). The importance of volunteers will be returned to in Chapter 5.

6. STRENGTHS-BASED AND RESPECTFUL OF INDIVIDUALITY

When working with the needs of young people, there has been a gradual move away from focusing on young people as 'problematic' to a model that celebrates their 'strengths', known as a strengths perspective. According to McLaughlin *et al* (2001), developing effective supports for young people involves creating structures where young people are seen in a positive light, both by themselves and by broader society. At policy level in New Zealand, for example, youth development is based on a consistent strengths-based approach. Strengths-based policies and programmes build on young people's capacity to resist risk factors and enhance the protective factors in their lives.
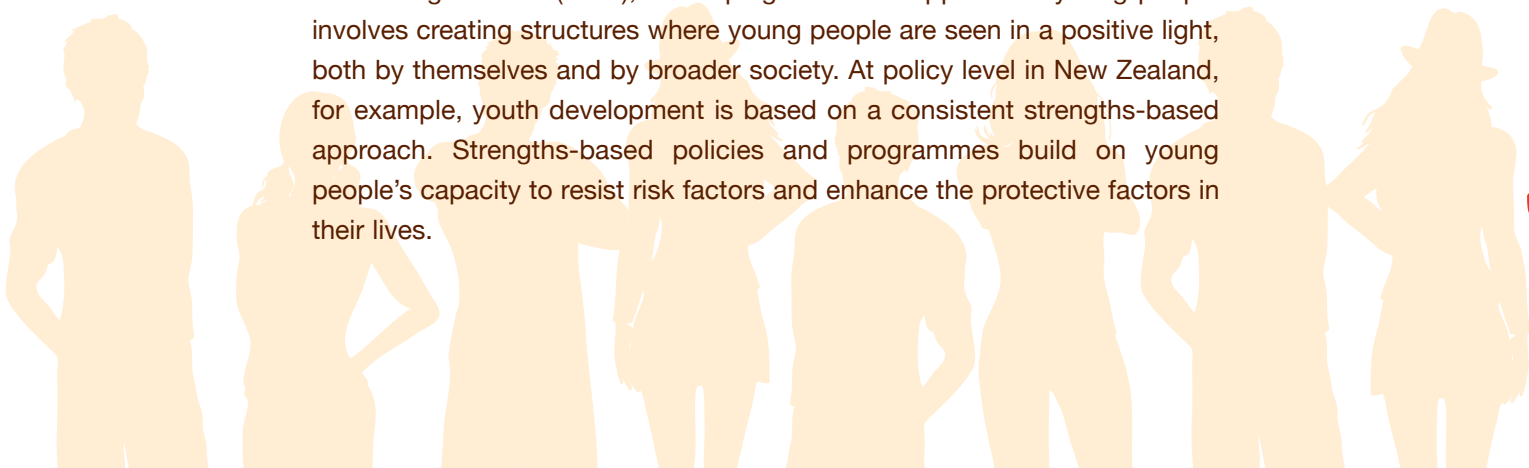
Commenting on the importance of this approach, one of the key agencies interviewed for this research supported the idea that all young people need a place where they can express their individuality: *'That [individuality] needs to be valued and the arts give expression to this in a particular way. The arts are about discovering and valuing our own, and each other's, creativity. They [the arts] are very good at validating uniqueness – this helps develop self-esteem, which can, in turn, have wider social benefits.'*

Participating in the arts has an intrinsic value in the lives of young people. The respect for individuality was discussed in an interview with one manager of a youth café, who suggested that a youth café can provide a channel for young people's talents, particularly if they are not involved in sport: *'A lot of young people don't have a channel for their talents. What some young people get from sport, the others may be hanging around the square and maybe [name of youth café] is the answer.'*

7. SUSTAINABLE

The importance of a youth café being sustainable is core to any discussion about this way of working with young people. The provision of a safe, quality space, guided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, enables young people's participation in society, but it is dependent on the sustainability of the youth café concept. Similarly, the need for a youth café to be sustainable underpins the crucial role it can play in the developmental period of adolescence, helping young people to counteract risks they may encounter and contributing to the broad goal of positive youth development. A more detailed discussion on sustainability is contained in Chapter 5 under the heading 'Funding and ongoing sustainability'.

For a youth café to be sustainable, it faces a number of issues, namely:

- **Financial support**
  The guiding principles that underpin the concept of a youth café as discussed above can be found encapsulated in the theory of youth work and youth development. However, this is not to say that youth work providers should shoulder the entire cost of funding youth cafés. As already alluded to in Chapter 3, as the concept of a youth café emerges, it will be apparent that *integrated policy and services* will be required. Notwithstanding the fact that the funding arrangements underpinning a youth café programme may be diverse, for youth cafés to be relevant (particularly where they have a clear function to meet higher levels of need, *see Figure 3*), such funding will have to reflect strong commitments to multidisciplinary and interagency working.
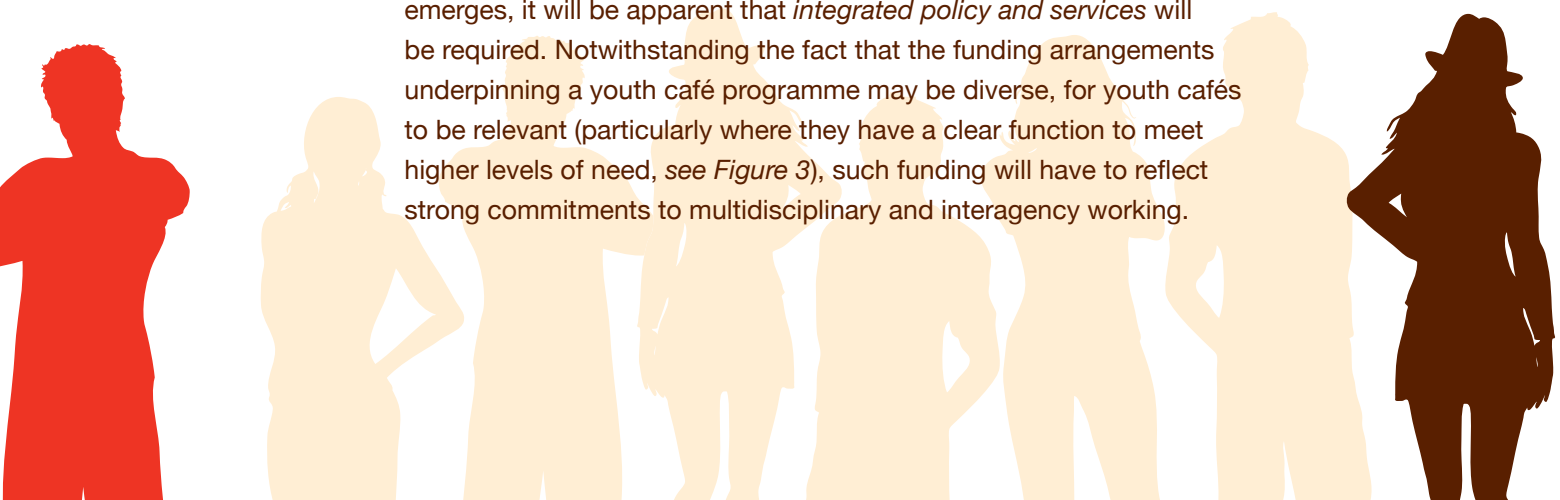
Therefore, it was the view of one of the key youth work agencies that youth cafés should be an extension of good youth work practice and their delivery should be led by the major voluntary youth work providers in Ireland. However, youth development services are shaped by macro forces, such as the social, cultural and economic contexts of the day. Thus, in the event of an economic downturn, for example, youth cafés may not be sustainable unless there is a strong commitment to multidisciplinary and interagency working. If this is not achieved, youth cafés will not be financially sustainable.

Another way of thinking of financial sustainability would be for each youth café to investigate how the overall cost of running could be supplemented by youth-led fund-raising initiatives at local level. This would, in turn, create useful monetary gains for the café, while also satisfying many of the guiding principles discussed above.

■ **Ownership of café by young people**
By giving young people responsibility for decisions in their youth café, they will feel confident, secure and valued – *'By young people, for young people'*. The continual enabling and empowering of young people to take control of their youth café is crucial for its long-term sustainability. In addition, the 'product' on offer within the café is also very much related to its long-term sustainability.

■ **Acceptance by the community**
A key service provider interviewed for this research raised a further risk factor for the sustainability of a youth café. This was described as *'a potential for community backlash'*. Such a risk will, of course, depend on the location of the café in the community and the reaction of local business. As the service provider stated, *'If the work of the café is promoted broadly within the community, buy-in from the community can be obtained. That is part of the broad promotion of youth cafés and what they are trying to do and is a critical element in trying to negate "negative" perceptions in the community'*. Therefore, one of the major concerns for a youth café is to work with its local community to ensure all sides are happy with its operation, thus helping in its long-term sustainability.

By giving young people responsibility for decisions in their youth café, they will feel confident, secure and valued

5. Operational issues for youth cafés

As discussed in Chapter 1, one of the key tasks of this research was to investigate the operational issues intrinsic to the working of a youth café. This chapter offers some guidance on the 'how tos' of youth café provision.

Day-to-day management and running of a youth café

Involvement of young people through partnership

As stated by one of the youth work providers interviewed for this research, real engagement with young people leading to ownership of a youth café by them is the key to credibility and success of the café. As pointed out by one of the key stakeholder agencies: *'services in a youth café should be demand-led and should reflect the needs of local young people using the café as they have articulated them. Setting up a Type 3 café [see page 32 for definition] without proper youth engagement in the process could risk stigmatising the space and alienating young people from it.'*

The involvement of young people in this manner was proffered by all youth participants in this research as key to the reasons why they use youth cafés at all. In addition, the fact that young people have a role in the running of the cafés encouraged attendance by all those who participated in the study's focus groups. For these young people, the inclusion of young people from the outset – in the planning, setting up and running of the youth café – is essential. It was their view that young people must be allowed and enabled to have a real and valued role in the management, decision-making and programme-planning process in the cafés.

There is a considerable amount of literature examining the role for children and adolescents in gaining control over aspects of after-school initiatives, such as a youth café. It is recognised that many youth programmes, such as youth centres and drop-in centres, are led and driven by youth, albeit in necessary collaboration with adults. Larson *et al* (2005) and others (e.g. Miller, 2006) identify a continuum of adult–youth-driven programmes. At one end of this continuum are programmes driven by youth, where adults play little or no role in such initiatives, and at the other end are adults setting the direction and running daily programme activities with no input from youth. The advantages of youth-driven programmes are that experience of decision-making can enhance leadership skills and wider development, potential for increased learning, an increased overall sense of empowerment, greater commitment to other work and the desire to strive towards overall goals. The establishment of youth–adult partnerships has been viewed as an important conceptual development (Zeldin *et al*, 2005). Such partnerships should be guided by 6 managerial guidelines:
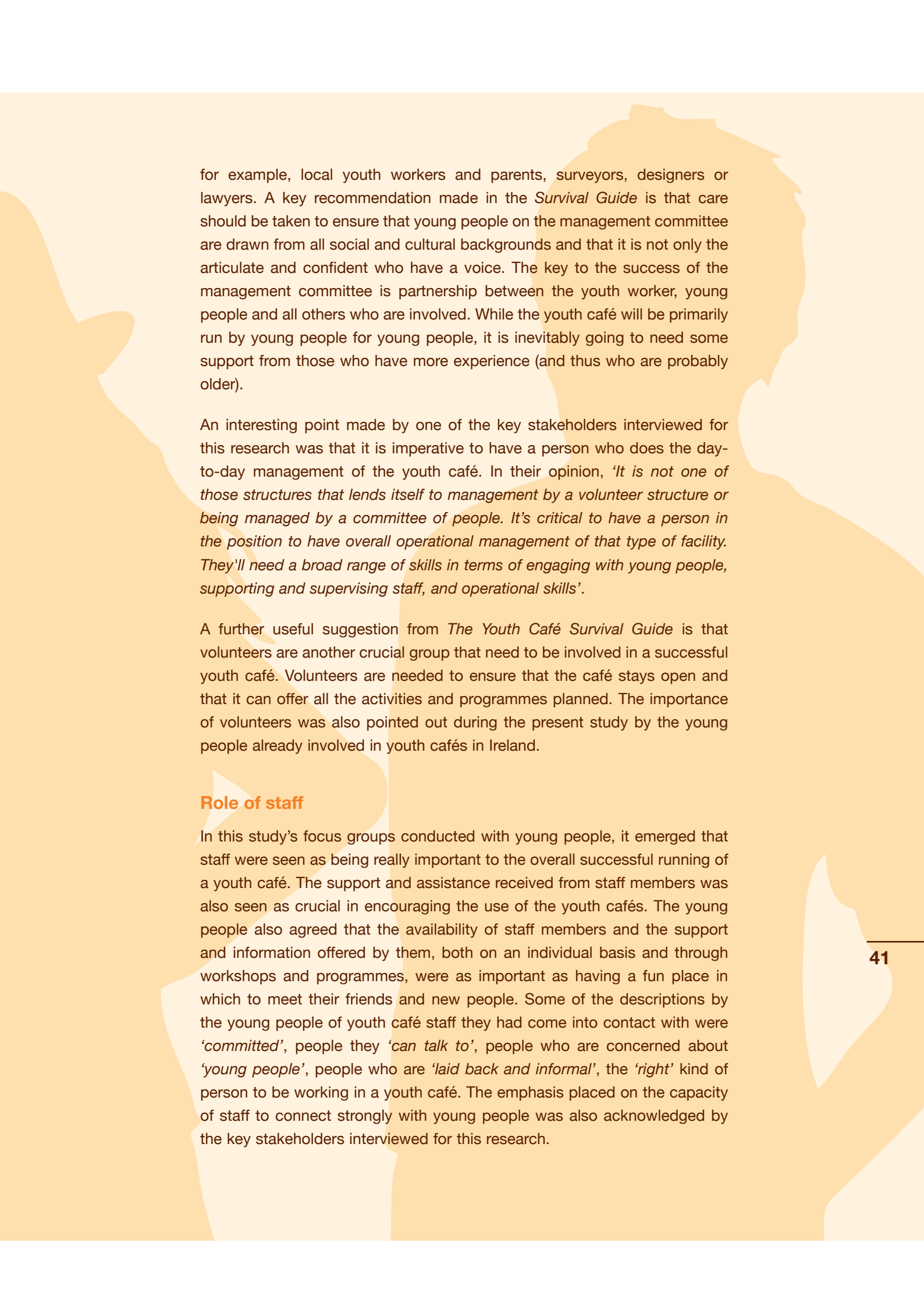
- gain clarity and consensus on the purpose of the partnership;
- mobilise and coordinate a diverse range of stakeholders;
- create favourable narratives about the partnerships;
- construct theories and stories of organisational change;
- affirmatively address issues of power;
- institutionalise new roles for youth.

McLaughlin *et al* (2001) report that a successful programme is one that attracts and retains youth involvement. It will match activities to youth interests and goals. This type of support is not a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to programming; rather, it must be reflexive, responsive and inclusive. McLaughlin *et al* recommend that young people should be involved in developing programme rules and agreeing any sanctions. In general, they believe a successful programme will offer youth real opportunities to learn skills and provide them with a sense of responsibility. Programmes should build in youth involvement at all stages, listen to youth, acknowledge accomplishments and make youth the centre of the programme.

The Youth Café Survival Guide (Prince's Trust, 2005) strongly supports the involvement of young people from the beginning of the youth café and acknowledges that their views and opinions are essential to the development process. By asking young people what they want, the *Survival Guide* states that those involved can be confident that the proposal has strong roots and that they are getting people on board to support it in the future. Therefore, involving and empowering young people is the key to the success of a youth café – *'Ask them what they want and then get them to help you to do it'* (*ibid*, p. 13). Furthermore, the *Survival Guide* suggests that by giving young people responsibility for decisions and by directly involving them in the planning and running of the café, they will feel confident, secure and valued, while at the same time creating an atmosphere of ownership and trust. There are various ways that young people can be directly involved, including:

- research, e.g. talking to peers and other café users about the youth café and its aims and objectives;
- day-to-day running of the café;
- design elements – of the café itself and/or of promotional material;
- promotion and marketing, e.g. talking to peers and encouraging them to get involved.

The Youth Café Survival Guide also discusses the concept of a management committee in a youth café, which can be formed to advise on the policies for the café, as well as to discuss fund-raising. It says that the formation of such a committee is crucial if the café is to survive and suggests that the committee be made up of the staff in the café, young people and other key stakeholders, the aim being that it assists in the long-term work of the café. It also suggests using expertise and advice from within the larger community,
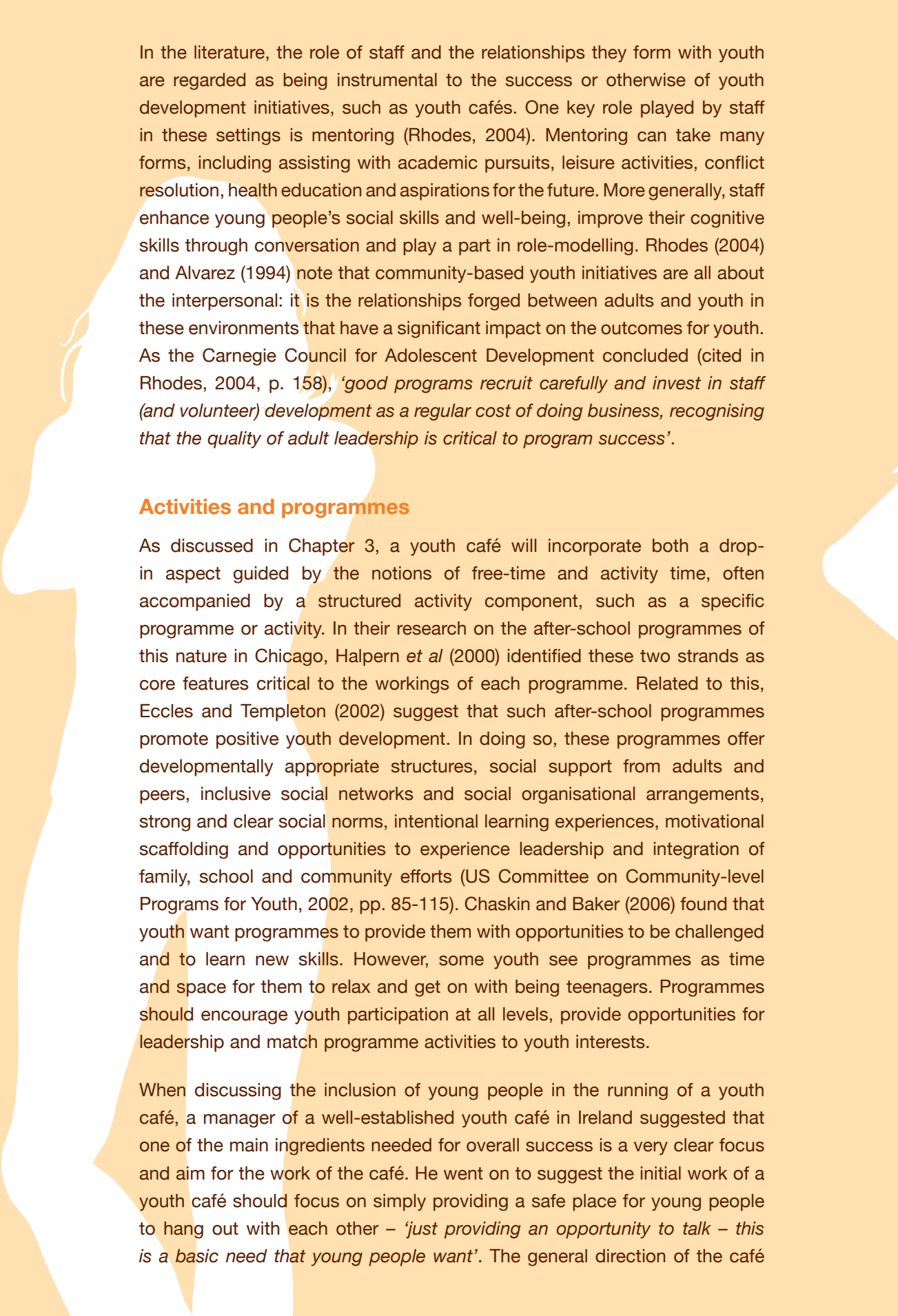
for example, local youth workers and parents, surveyors, designers or lawyers. A key recommendation made in the *Survival Guide* is that care should be taken to ensure that young people on the management committee are drawn from all social and cultural backgrounds and that it is not only the articulate and confident who have a voice. The key to the success of the management committee is partnership between the youth worker, young people and all others who are involved. While the youth café will be primarily run by young people for young people, it is inevitably going to need some support from those who have more experience (and thus who are probably older).

An interesting point made by one of the key stakeholders interviewed for this research was that it is imperative to have a person who does the day-to-day management of the youth café. In their opinion, *'It is not one of those structures that lends itself to management by a volunteer structure or being managed by a committee of people. It's critical to have a person in the position to have overall operational management of that type of facility. They'll need a broad range of skills in terms of engaging with young people, supporting and supervising staff, and operational skills'*.

A further useful suggestion from *The Youth Café Survival Guide* is that volunteers are another crucial group that need to be involved in a successful youth café. Volunteers are needed to ensure that the café stays open and that it can offer all the activities and programmes planned. The importance of volunteers was also pointed out during the present study by the young people already involved in youth cafés in Ireland.

Role of staff

In this study's focus groups conducted with young people, it emerged that staff were seen as being really important to the overall successful running of a youth café. The support and assistance received from staff members was also seen as crucial in encouraging the use of the youth cafés. The young people also agreed that the availability of staff members and the support and information offered by them, both on an individual basis and through workshops and programmes, were as important as having a fun place in which to meet their friends and new people. Some of the descriptions by the young people of youth café staff they had come into contact with were *'committed'*, people they *'can talk to'*, people who are concerned about *'young people'*, people who are *'laid back and informal'*, the *'right'* kind of person to be working in a youth café. The emphasis placed on the capacity of staff to connect strongly with young people was also acknowledged by the key stakeholders interviewed for this research.

In the literature, the role of staff and the relationships they form with youth are regarded as being instrumental to the success or otherwise of youth development initiatives, such as youth cafés. One key role played by staff in these settings is mentoring (Rhodes, 2004). Mentoring can take many forms, including assisting with academic pursuits, leisure activities, conflict resolution, health education and aspirations for the future. More generally, staff enhance young people's social skills and well-being, improve their cognitive skills through conversation and play a part in role-modelling. Rhodes (2004) and Alvarez (1994) note that community-based youth initiatives are all about the interpersonal: it is the relationships forged between adults and youth in these environments that have a significant impact on the outcomes for youth. As the Carnegie Council for Adolescent Development concluded (cited in Rhodes, 2004, p. 158), *'good programs recruit carefully and invest in staff (and volunteer) development as a regular cost of doing business, recognising that the quality of adult leadership is critical to program success'*.

Activities and programmes

As discussed in Chapter 3, a youth café will incorporate both a drop-in aspect guided by the notions of free-time and activity time, often accompanied by a structured activity component, such as a specific programme or activity. In their research on the after-school programmes of this nature in Chicago, Halpern *et al* (2000) identified these two strands as core features critical to the workings of each programme. Related to this, Eccles and Templeton (2002) suggest that such after-school programmes promote positive youth development. In doing so, these programmes offer developmentally appropriate structures, social support from adults and peers, inclusive social networks and social organisational arrangements, strong and clear social norms, intentional learning experiences, motivational scaffolding and opportunities to experience leadership and integration of family, school and community efforts (US Committee on Community-level Programs for Youth, 2002, pp. 85-115). Chaskin and Baker (2006) found that youth want programmes to provide them with opportunities to be challenged and to learn new skills. However, some youth see programmes as time and space for them to relax and get on with being teenagers. Programmes should encourage youth participation at all levels, provide opportunities for leadership and match programme activities to youth interests.

When discussing the inclusion of young people in the running of a youth café, a manager of a well-established youth café in Ireland suggested that one of the main ingredients needed for overall success is a very clear focus and aim for the work of the café. He went on to suggest the initial work of a youth café should focus on simply providing a safe place for young people to hang out with each other – *'just providing an opportunity to talk – this is a basic need that young people want'*. The general direction of the café

can then be determined locally by the young people themselves: *'After a few years, young people are your best guide on how X, Y or Z should be introduced'*.

When young people in this study were asked about what they would like to see being offered in a youth café, they suggested that a variety of activities and opportunities (free or low cost in the main) should be available, representing their areas of interest and suggested topics. They pointed out the importance of holding workshops, programmes and events that are both entertaining and educational. They also mentioned the importance of actively encouraging diversity in the groups of young people attending the youth café (e.g. people from the Traveller community and new ethnic communities) in order to promote an inclusive policy and ethos. Variety in the activities offered, including the type of music and dance, was seen as essential in an effort to ensure that the café is perceived as being open to all young people in the area. The majority of young people spoke of this as a major challenge for any café and recognised the difficulties in encouraging young people to mix with each other.

Other suggestions from the young people interviewed included a variety in the food menu at the youth café, with healthy options being available, and the provision of a kitchen area for 'help yourself' refreshments was thought by some to be an important feature. Related to these points was the important aspect of opening hours – weekends were particularly mentioned, with Saturday afternoons and evenings and Sunday afternoons being cited as times when young people need somewhere to go and something to do. In general, it was noted that their preference was to have the café open at these times, even if this resulted in it remaining closed during other evenings or during the week.

The young people interviewed also saw the café as a place where they could learn about how to use the Internet safely. One participant said that it would be good to have *'education programmes about cyber-bullying and ways to protect ourselves because young people are all the time on the Internet and rather than banning some Internet sites like Bebo, the café should help to protect us when we're on-line'*. In addition, the availability of information and confidential advice and help from counsellors or therapists on issues including *'teenage pregnancy, alcohol and drugs, sexual, mental and general health issues'* were seen to be central to the work of a youth café.

One issue that was raised by the young participants themselves concerned other young people *'hanging around'* in groups outside the cafés and their possible misbehaviour, resulting in the cafés getting a bad reputation. They suggested that it is important that no single group of young people is allowed to take over a youth café because this will prevent others from attending or seeing the café as a resource for them.

Funding and ongoing sustainability

In Ireland, it is common practice for State-supported funding for agencies offering programmes for young people and youth development to come from multiple departments and sources. For example, funding can emanate for these programmes from Vocational Education Committees (VECs); the Department of Education and Science; the Health Service Executive (HSE); the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform; dormant accounts; and Regional Drugs Task Forces, to name a few.

In addition to State support, funding is often sourced by youth work providers from specific agencies with a remit that includes young people. One such agency, relevant to youth café funding. is the Crisis Pregnancy Agency (CPA), which has provided seed funding to a number of youth cafés in Ireland. Funding was provided because the youth café model addressed one of the CPA's key aims – namely, the prevention of crisis pregnancies among young people. There are many other examples of funding sources such as this across the existing youth café sector at present.

One of the key problems associated with State or other funding sources for youth work providers trying to develop programmes such as youth cafés is that the funding sources are often not sustainable. This is often due to the pilot nature of the funding given. As a result, many youth cafés operating in Ireland today spend much of their time chasing additional current funding, diverting them away from their core work with young people. McLaughlin *et al* (2001) suggest that youth work providers need to work with funders in educating them on the potentially negative effects of such short-term funding for programmes.

Therefore, for youth cafés to survive, two aspects of funding need to be reviewed: first, funding needs to be sustainable into the future and, second, the process of applying and receiving funding needs to be streamlined and made easier and more user-friendly.

International evidence

Larner *et al* (1999, pp. 10-18) make a number of general recommendations on developing and sustaining after-school initiatives for children and young people. The following points are directly applicable to the sustainability of youth cafés:

- advocate and use public education opportunities to educate and strengthen the willingness of voters to support the use of public resources to address out-of-school time for children and young people;
- develop new models for financing such after-school initiatives, such as private sector support, affordable fees and expanded Government
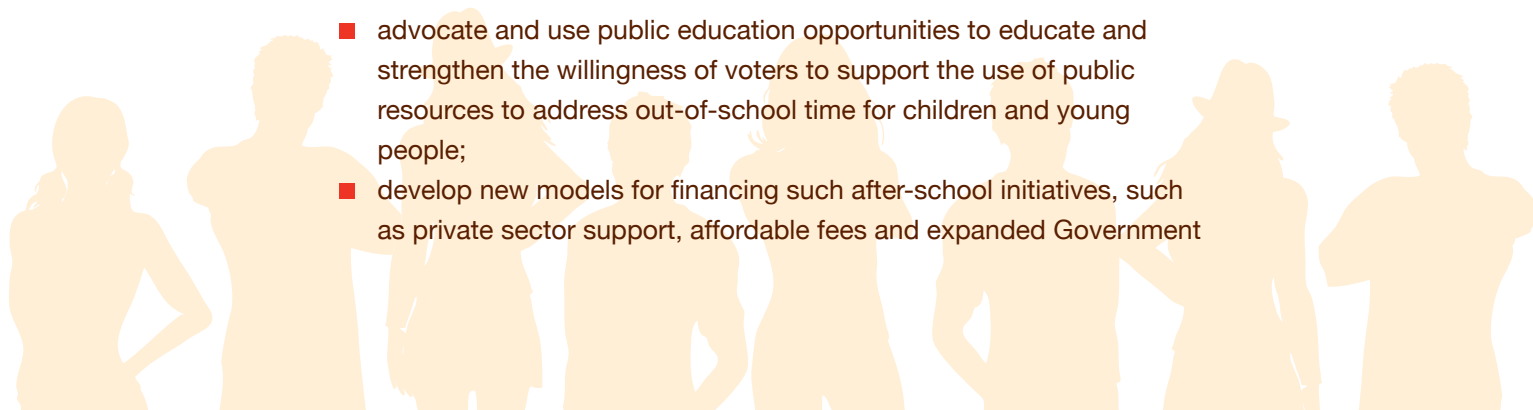
funding. New approaches to combining and balancing funding from a variety of sources is needed to ensure sustainability and ease of access for low-income families;

- establish strategic partnerships between public and private organisations to maximise the benefit derived from resources and facilities that are suitable for children and young people;

- create coalitions, councils or coordinating bodies to serve as network hubs, intermediaries, advocates and support systems for such initiatives, as well as families and youths in the community;

- launch a limited number of rigorous evaluations of models that are viewed as important because they are based on strong theory or are delivered on a wide-scale basis. Such evaluations should be designed to estimate the effects on a broad array of outcomes' measures. Positive results can reinforce public confidence that Government has a role to play in this area.

The idea of multi-source funding from public and private bodies was also supported by McLaughlin *et al* (2001). In addition, they suggest that youth initiatives may support and explore philanthropic support and endowment. An interesting finding from the literature was that in New Zealand, there are examples of youth cafés that are open to the general public as working restaurants. These projects are staffed by young people who are training in the hospitality sector and these services generate a small income. In general, these projects are linked to training and education programmes for early school-leavers.

The Youth Café Survival Guide (Prince's Trust, 2005) suggests that a number of youth cafés in the UK have appointed business development coordinators, whose clear role is to oversee aspects such as fund-raising, managing the building and addressing the problems of long-term sustainability. The youth workers are thus free to do what they do best. The *Survival Guide* also makes the following key points:

Be professional

In the long run, youth cafés must aim to become self-sustaining, at least in part, if not fully. A useful tool in this regard is to consider a youth café as a small business, one that incurs regular costs and consequently needs to generate regular income, be it from funders, activities or individuals. Coupled with this, in order for potential funders and any other interested parties to have confidence in the long-term sustainability of a youth café, each café should develop a business plan *(see Table 2)*, which:

- pulls together all the information that it has gathered to date;
- gives an overview of the project's aims and objectives, and details how it intends to achieve them;
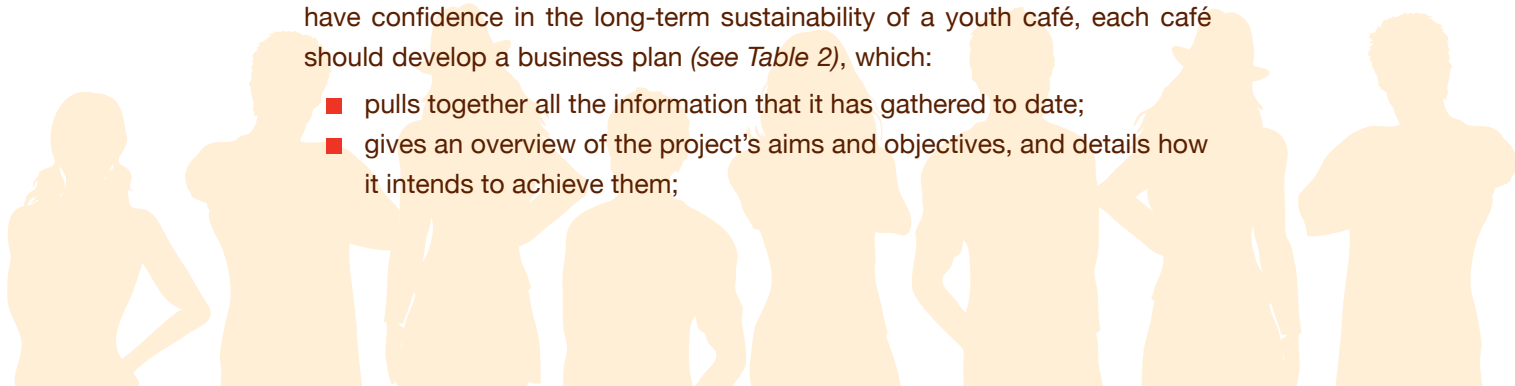
- will help to clarify the work that it will have to do, will show potential funders and supporters that the café has planned beyond next week, and demonstrates that it intends to run the café in a business-like fashion.

Another feature of the business plan is to have a section on how to monitor progress against the aims and objectives of the youth café. In order to be able to do so, simple monitoring systems should be established from the very beginning, including such things as attendance records, feedback forms and activity reports. This issue is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6 of this report.

Table 2: Typical sections contained in a business plan

Personal objectives	■ Why the café is being set up and what it wants to achieve?
Business description and purpose	■ What is the purpose of the café? What are its unique selling points?
Business vision and long-term objectives	■ What does the café see itself being in the future?
Current market situation	■ Is there a need for a café in the area? How will the café get young people to use it?
Target customers	■ What groups is the café planning to support? Why would young people use the café?
Competitor analysis	■ Is there another café or youth centre already? What will this youth café do differently?
Marketing strategy	■ How many people will use the café? How will the café advertise what it is doing?
Operational requirements	■ What resources does it need to get off the ground? Where will the café get the resources from?
Budget	■ How much money does the café need? Where will it come from?
Management	■ Who is involved in the project? How will they provide support?
Business risks	■ Could anything go wrong? What would the café do about it?

■ **Network to learn**

The *Youth Café Survival Guide* (Prince's Trust, 2005) notes that youth cafés can also learn from other people's experiences. The youth cafés that survive are those that share – be it their premises, their volunteers, their equipment or their funding expertise. It also suggests making connections with other groups or individuals who could help raise or save money. Working with other youth groups and agencies strengthens the base of support, particularly with regard to getting grants. Potential funders like to see local connections being made because this points to the acceptance of the project in the locality and the obvious need for the work being done.

■ Funding sources

For many youth cafés, the greatest challenge in the longer term is simply staying open and continuing to offer a wide range of activities. In order to keep a youth café up and running, there are a number of potential sources for funding, most of which fall into four broad categories:

- ■ public, e.g. local agencies and councils, national government;
- ■ private, e.g. charitable trusts and foundations, individuals, business sponsorship;
- ■ earned, e.g. income from activities or from fund-raising events;
- ■ in-kind support, meaning when an individual or company provides practical support or equipment, e.g. computers, free printing of posters or legal expertise.

The *Youth Café Survival Guide* also advises those running a youth café to think about all the activities that are potentially going to run from as many different angles as possible. This will help identify key sources of funding.

Views of key stakeholder agencies in Ireland

When asked to discuss the ongoing sustainability of funding for Irish youth cafés, the various key stakeholders interviewed in this study made a number of suggestions. The overarching point put forward by the agencies was that youth cafés need to be funded appropriately, with funding ideally being prioritised by Government. They also agreed that funding should not be 'on a shoestring' because of the potential usefulness of youth cafés in providing preventative services, information and ongoing support for young people.

The view of the main youth work providers in Ireland was that youth cafés should be guided and operated by youth work principles. They also agreed that funding should be centralised and not come from multiple agencies and organisations. One agency felt that the VECs should be the conduit for funding since they are now aligned to youth work by the Youth Work Act 2001. One of the aims of the Act is to ensure that all agencies involved in youth work pull together to achieve optimal services for children and young people. Furthermore, this agency suggested that the funding could be coordinated by the OMCYA, who would send it to the VECs for distribution. Another youth work agency suggested that funding could be channelled through the Young People's Facilities and Service Fund, provided by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, via the VECs.

At present, due to the multiagency system of funding, one agency commented that *'People are robbing Billy to pay Jack … To have a real professional service, you need to be clear on where the money is coming from, for what purpose, what we are all trying to do'*.

One youth work agency was of the opinion that funding for youth cafés should *not* be channelled through the newly emerging Children's Services Committees (CSCs), to be established in every county with the aim of promoting integrated, locally led, strategic planning for children's services. The reason given for this was that channelling funding through the CSCs would be moving away from the suggestions made in the Youth Work Act and the important role of the VECs in youth work provision. One manager of a well-established youth café noted that the type and source of funding needed by a youth café comes back to what it wants to achieve as a service for young people: *'I think the main focus could be drugs and alcohol. It could be channelled under the Drugs Task Forces – this could be very good as they have the interagency thing set up – no need to go and do that again.'*

Another agency suggested that funding needs to come from multiple sources in order to allow a youth café to be sustainable. It was proposed that a partnership approach would be best since this gives a sense of ownership by a broad group of organisations, which all feel they are part of the initiative: *'You can't really rely on one source of funding. You need to source a number of funding options. I think public/private partnerships are the way to go. In these fiscal times, things change from one year to the next. You can be building a service based on 3-year funding, but after 3 years the funding might not be available. While it is easy to get reliant on a fixed source of funding, you need to get funding from a broad range of public and private sources. A lot of organisations are keen to invest in young people. If you market your service and develop a plan that has a fund-raising and development strategy to link with community and private agencies that might be interested in making an investment, you can be surprised at the positive reactions of local businesses to any invitation to donate or support a particular programme.'*

Therefore, it was the view of this last-quoted agency that funding from multiple sources depends on the creation of partnerships between relevant agencies: *'Partnerships work well. An agency may give up one of its youth work posts to allow for a dedicated staff to work in a youth café. Partnerships can bring in different service providers who may come in and work in that site.'* However, as the interviewee noted, getting the correct balance in the partnership can be difficult: *'It depends on the buy-in at a local level from different organisations and agencies. It depends on the relationships people have …'*

A further issue raised related to the actual building housing the youth café. For a café to be sustainable, the options around security of tenure need to be investigated since this will have a direct implication for issues such as capital funding (*see below*).

Location, building design and content

The location, building design and content of a youth café is central to its success. This point was summed up by one key stakeholder, who commented that the location, design and content *'is fairly critical. If you get it wrong, you might as well give up and go home. For young people, it is not a case of "build it and they will come" [a reference to the film, Field of Dreams]. It's a case of "build it and they won't come" because they haven't been consulted or they don't like the design. This point is inextricably linked to the involvement of young people at every stage of development and is paramount to the overall success of any initiative'*.

Location

For the young people in the focus groups for this study, the location of the café was seen to be important. The general consensus was that a youth café should be based in an area that is convenient to and accessible for young people. However, they also acknowledged that this does not necessarily mean that a youth café needs to be located on a main street in a city or town (one of the drawbacks being the potential busy and dangerous nature of the main street).

From an international perspective, Slesnick *et al* (2008), in their work on designing and sustaining a drop-in centre for homeless youth, offer some useful pointers on location that can apply to all drop-in centres, including youth cafés. The authors state that physical and social/emotional accessibility need to be addressed since they are crucial concerns from the outset. They suggest that the location of the Centre should be somewhere where the target group congregates or can reach easily by way of public transport or on foot. The Centre should also be emotionally accessible, where target groups are not made to feel like outsiders or strangers. In addition, such centres should fit in with the community and not unduly change the landscape of the locality. In this regard, the Centre should be located in an area where it is viewed as a positive addition. This point is echoed by Alvarez (1994) who comments that wider community and social support is essential to the success of any youth initiative. This support serves to pressurise such initiatives into performing for youth, while also reinforcing processes for the achievement of development goals.

From an Australia perspective, White (2002) argues that locating a youth café in the central business district of a town or city can often have a positive outcome. He suggests that the negative image of young people held by some members of the business community can be challenged through the smooth running of the service in close proximity to the business community. In addition, local businesses appear prominently in the funding structure, alongside local councils and voluntary organisations, and young people can have positive contacts with the business community through the café.

The Centre should be located in an area where it is viewed as a positive addition

In discussing location, Chaskin and Baker (2006) consider the possibilities of locating programmes such as youth cafés in schools. On the positive side, doing so would act as a point of access for young people and may encourage them to join the programmes on safe and familiar territory. Nevertheless, for some young people, that familiarity may work against the programme – they may not choose to participate because it is in the school. However, the safety of the wider environment should also be considered. If young people cannot get to and from the programme without worrying about safety or having adequate transport links, then this will restrict their involvement. It may be possible to support young people to advocate for improved environmental safety and transport links, and thereby encourage their civic engagement.

The general consensus on location from key stakeholders interviewed for the present study was that a youth café needs to be convenient for young people and also a place that is perceived as neutral or open to all types of young people. The point was also made that if the management committee of a potential youth café could build up a good relationship with the local authorities, they could work with them in finding the best location for their youth café, in line with the local development plan.

Related to this point, various ideas emerged from these interviews about how to examine the best way to provide a youth café from across a spectrum of locations, ranging from, for example, a small village to an urban environment *(see Figure 5)*. In general terms, in more rural areas, a youth café may be located in a shared multi-purpose building, with transport being arranged to get the young people to the café. However, in the larger urban areas, a youth café may be located in a dedicated space. *The Youth Café Survival Guide* (Prince's Trust, 2005) suggests that the management committee of the youth café will need to decide if they are going to lease or purchase a property. Leasing or renting space means that they will have to adapt the space and activities around other groups of users and will also be subject to their rules and regulations. Purchasing a property, however, will give greater freedom over what can be done and when it can be done; on the other hand, it requires a larger financial outlay up-front, as well as the long-term commitment of keeping up payments and maintaining the building.
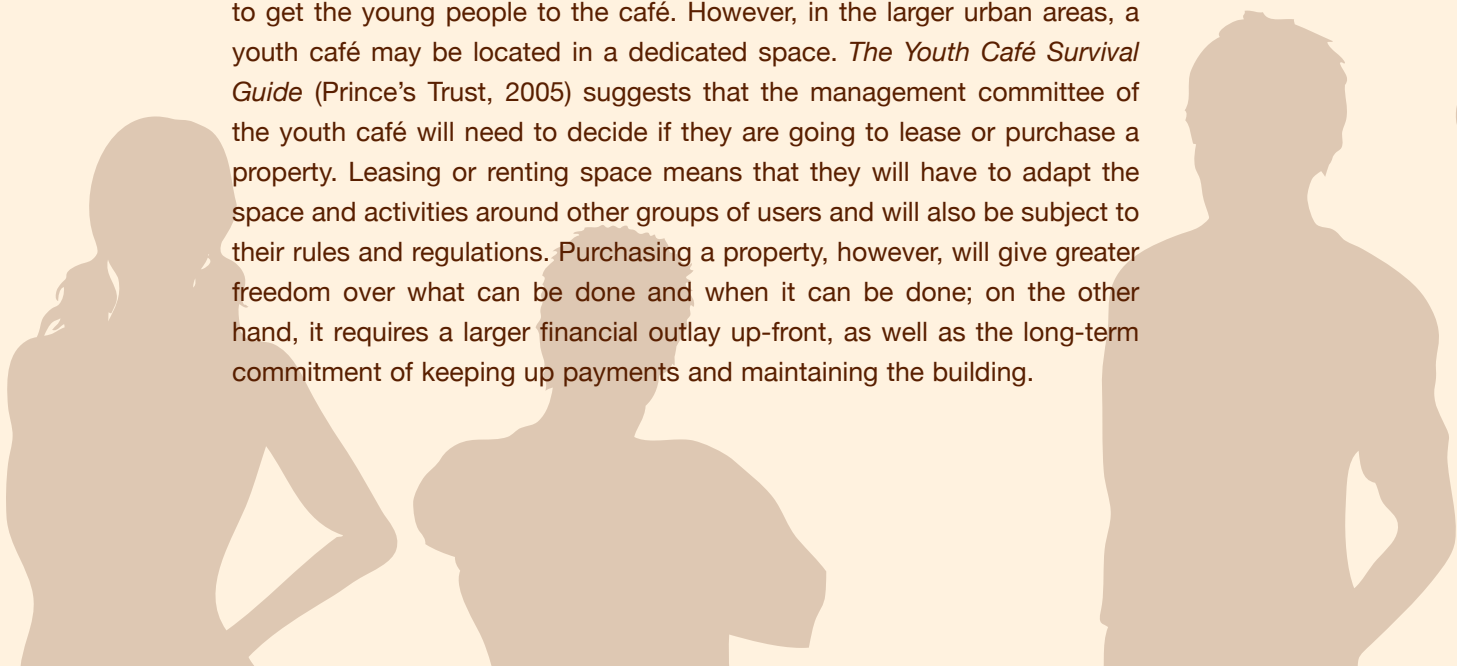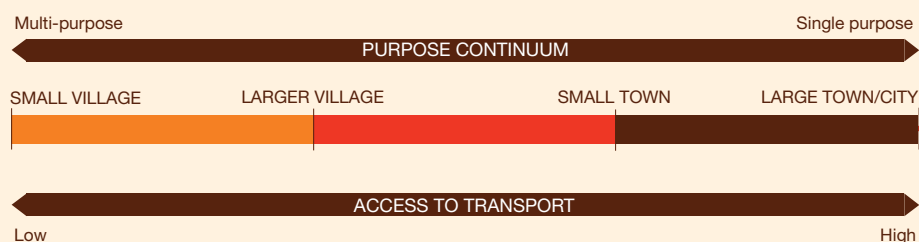
Figure 5: Factors related to accessibility of youth cafés

Multi-purpose   Single purpose

PURPOSE CONTINUUM

SMALL VILLAGE   LARGER VILLAGE   SMALL TOWN   LARGE TOWN/CITY

ACCESS TO TRANSPORT

Low   High

Small to Large Village or Small Town

For young people from a small to large village or a small town, there are a number of options in relation to the provision of a youth café model:

- One option would be that the youth café could be provided in a multi-purpose hall in the community, where the space would be shared with other community groups. One suggestion from the interviews held for the present study was that a public/private partnership could be developed in the locality to facilitate young people in this regard; for example, a school may be made available to the community after 4pm. The need to arrange adequate access to transport for any young people wishing to avail of the service would be crucial. In the UK, *The Youth Café Survival Guide* (Prince's Trust, 2005) suggests that in recognition of the value of youth cafés for young people, the possibility of requesting some local councils to provide funding for transport or a minibus service could be considered.

- An alternative option for rural-based young people would be to provide a mobile youth café. These mobile units would target communities that do not have a youth café and provide a service to many young people isolated in these communities. As noted by the Foróige representative in the present study, *'It is envisaged that this is not only a mobile unit, but a unit that will mobilise communities'*. A mobile Youth Arts model of this nature has been operated very successfully in the UK: for example, Bigga Fish is a young, Black-led company that delivers unique models for involving young people in music-making; it promotes club events run by and for under-18s, and provides a mobile outreach service to schools, youth services, arts and training organisations (*see* www.artscouncil.org.uk).

- A third option would be to transport rural-based young people to their nearest youth café in a larger town. Again, this would have consequences for transport and access.

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Large Town or City

The main obstacles facing the provision of a youth café in a large town or city may be the actual cost of the premises due to its physical location. This was also mentioned as a core concern in the feasibility study for youth cafés conducted for Cork City Partnership (2007). As noted by one of the key stakeholders interviewed for the present study, *'With many of the present youth cafés, the location is often somewhere that is cheap to rent and not totally accessible. Therefore, cost is a huge thing for young people – cost prohibitive. Therefore, [it is best] if you can get a community setting where the costs can be kept low'*.

Building design and content

Besides location, another key feature of a youth café is the actual design of the building itself and its content. One of the primary concerns for any youth café committee would be to ensure that the building complies with all the legal requirements (e.g. wheelchair accessibility and fire safety).

In the focus groups for this study conducted with young people already involved with youth cafés, they were of the clear opinion that the building design should provide a *'comfortable', 'homely', 'cosy'* area, with *'colourful, friendly surroundings and a relaxed atmosphere'* to *'chill out'* and relax in. They also mentioned the need for separate space for separate activities and groups, but their preferred option was for *interconnected* rooms, rather than totally separate and disconnected areas, because this would promote mixing and inclusion of young people, as opposed to encouraging separate groups.

While discussing the design and layout of a youth café, *The Youth Café Survival Guide* (Prince's Trust, 2005) suggests that design is not just about the wallpaper; a number of factors need to be considered, particularly the ones that are less exciting. Many of the 'hints' about what a youth café should look and feel like will come from listening to young people from the outset. Some of the key questions to ask are:

- What facilities does the café want to offer?
- Does the café need space for a pool table?
- Is the café going to have a library area, with computers and magazines, etc?
- What kind of kitchen space is needed?

The layout of a youth café should serve the needs of all youth attending. If a young person wishes to eat, they should be able to do so in an appropriate place; if a young person wishes to engage in recreational activities, it is important that suitable places are provided. When asked about the building design and layout of a youth café, a manager from a well-established Irish café said that, above all, the facility needed to be a quality one and a safe space: *'There has been a tendency to provide poor facilities in youth work for young people. This is not acceptable. No matter what the size, the environment has to be very good … The safe space is the key and build around this – we need to focus on the very basic needs, like somewhere to hang out.'*

The layout of a youth café will obviously be determined by the physical space available and the needs identified in consultation with young people. Two examples of what might be found in a youth café are:

- **Kick-back Café, Co. Clare:** The café area includes a jukebox, bookshelf and seating area with leather furniture and 5 tables set out in the eating area. Upstairs has a pool, table tennis and air hockey tables, as well as a Playstation area with comfortable bean bags for hanging out. There is also a youth information display board in this area, which is updated regularly by the Youth Information Officer.
- **The Vault Youth Café, Co. Carlow:** This café has a large recreational seating area, designed for young people to watch DVDs, music videos, sports channels, etc. There is also a coffee dock area for people to have a selection of snacks on request. There is an Internet access point, which is closely monitored by staff. The seating areas throughout the café allow young people to have a chat with friends over a cup of coffee. There is a sound-proof music room situated off the main café, used for music production and band rehearsals. The kitchen area has facilities for cooking and baking, and also acts as a 'wet area' for arts and crafts. There is an enclosed outdoor recreational area for soccer and basketball.

Opening hours of youth cafés were regarded by young people as being particularly crucial. The need to have flexible opening hours during the week as well as during the summer holiday months was pointed out. (This was supported by an example of a Youth Orchestra in Sweden that occasionally runs a 2am programme *'and the 18-30 age group turn out in huge numbers'*.)

The building design should provide a 'comfortable', 'homely', 'cosy' area, with 'colourful, friendly surroundings and a relaxed atmosphere'

The 2007 *Youth Café Survey* tabulated the opening hours of 20 youth cafés in Ireland during the school year and school holidays (Donnelly *et al*, 2009). Considerable variation was found in the opening hours of the youth cafés surveyed: some open at 9am, while others do not open until the evening time; closing times also differ, with some cafés closing at 2pm and others remaining open until 11pm. None of the youth cafés surveyed opened every day and none reported being open on Sundays. Yet, in the survey, some 38% of young people reported that increased opening hours would improve their youth café, particularly at weekends and in the evenings.

There appears to be a focus on opening in the afternoons and closing in the early evenings, which would cater for younger teenagers. However, it is often the case that older teenagers have no access to a youth café in the late evening or at night. During the school year, youth cafés are least likely to open on weekends; instead, 85% of them are open mid-week, on Wednesdays and Thursdays. During school holidays, evenings and afternoons were found to be equally popular opening periods, with 79% of cafés open on at least one evening per week and on at least one afternoon per week. During the holidays, youth cafés are least likely to open on Saturdays and Sundays.

Promotion of youth cafés

The *Youth Café Survival Guide* (Prince's Trust, 2005) points out that any café has to work hard to attract and keep its visitors – and a youth café is no exception. In order to promote itself, a youth café must ensure that people know where it is and exactly what it provides, and that the sooner the café starts working on this, the better. One of the obvious ways to inform people is through the local media, whose coverage, if the story is a good one, will reach a lot of interested people, including potential members, supporters and volunteers.

Once established, a further challenge for a youth café is ensuring that it continues to attract young people. This requires good organisation, committed adult volunteers and responsiveness to trends among its target groups. The *Survival Guide* points out that the young people who attend a youth café will have different motivations and reasons for doing so. A young person may start coming for one reason and as they become more familiar with and involved in the café, they may keep coming for different reasons. It is, therefore, essential to keep up-to-date with people's reasons for turning up. As the needs of the young people in the locality develop, so too can the activities offered by the café. First impressions count and promotion starts at the door: new users should be greeted and made to feel welcome, with established members showing them around and introducing them to others.

From international experience, Chaskin and Baker (2006) point to the fact that the school environment offers opportunities to promote these supports. Supportive relationships with adults with leadership roles within young people's social contexts can encourage their involvement in programmes. Young people tend to get involved in things based on their previous experiences, while their lack of involvement may reflect their lack of confidence in getting involved or their lack of interest in the programmes.

Youth cafés can also be promoted extensively through their own websites, as well as through the websites of local government and city councils. In Australia, for example, a host of forms of promotion are used by youth cafés. The Papakura Open Mike Youth Café promotes its service by attending local schools and showcasing the events they run. The Retro Café in Albury City produced a DVD for schools, youth groups and community services in order to promote its activities.

At the time of writing, none of the youth cafés in Ireland had a website. However, at least one – Java Lava in Limerick – had a Bebo web page, while The Gaf in Galway is listed as a live music venue on http://entertainment.ie.

When asked to comment specifically on the best methods to promote a youth café, the young people interviewed for this study who were already involved in youth cafés made the following suggestions:

- The information available on what the various youth cafés do and who they are available to is not widely known among young people in the catchment areas. Therefore, more awareness and publicity would be welcomed. This point was summed up by one of the young participants, who commented *'You constantly need to keep advertising the service and keeping up with the trends and bringing in new groups. Things change so quickly … It [youth café] has to keep evolving and changing'*. One of the key stakeholder agencies in the study suggested that accessible information explaining what a youth café is about could be handed out to potential members.
- Young people saw themselves as having a specific role to play in promotion: *'We could have a welcoming area when new young people come in. They could be met by young people and help to introduce them to others.'*
- Free Internet access was suggested as a means of encouraging young people to make their initial visit to a youth café, as well as access to free mobile phone chargers.
- Each café needs to have a clear focus on what it is trying to achieve: *'You should have a good message, a mission, something that's clear about why you're setting the youth café up. The reason behind it'*. Young people will then begin to use the service if it is appropriate to their needs.

■ An Open Day for parents, other services and agencies could be arranged to allow them to see the café and the programme of work. One of the key stakeholder agencies suggested that parents of Traveller children, for example, would be much more supportive of such new initiatives if they were informed about the purpose of a youth café.

Finally, one of the key stakeholders pointed out the importance of positive promotion of the work of youth cafés: *'Promotion is also critical. It gives a leverage to get some positive PR, it's a chance to say "This is us and this is what we are trying to do in the community". It helps create a positive press about young people. We are always hearing about what young people do wrong and their negative contribution to society. It's easy to forget the positive contribution. I think a community facility like this is a great way to talk about positive things that young people are doing in the community.'*

Training and education of staff and volunteers

One of the most central and crucial aspects of a youth café is the extent to which those involved in providing the programmes are sufficiently trained to deal appropriately with the needs of young people. From the outset, Slesnick *et al* (2008) suggest that intensive training should take place to orientate all staff to the philosophy and principles of the youth facility in question.

The work within a youth café needs to be supported by trained professionals, such as youth workers. An important point raised by a member of the commissioning body for this research, the National Children's Advisory Council (NCAC), was that in a era of ever-growing multiculturalism in Ireland, it is necessary for a youth café to consider recruiting both staff and volunteers who reflect the make-up of the community in which it is based. For example, if members of the Traveller community were working in a youth café, it would encourage Traveller children to attend, making the café more multicultural.

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The key youth work providers interviewed for this study also supported the idea that volunteers from the community should be encouraged to get involved. One interviewee noted that an infrastructure was needed to recruit, train and support volunteers. McLaughlin *et al* (2001) stated that volunteers are significant sources of human capital, which has numerous possibilities especially in helping to break down barriers and create new opportunities. However, volunteers need to be effectively supported through training and supervision and encouraged to maintain involvement.

The Youth Café Survival Guide (Prince's Trust, 2005) suggests that part of the work of the café should be to provide others with the opportunity of learning new and useful skills. Some staff and volunteers may already have

relevant training; for others, it may be necessary to provide training in youth worker skills and certification, drugs and alcohol awareness, child protection and health and safety. One of the key stakeholder agencies involved in the present study suggested that youth workers, whether paid or voluntary, also need to be fully trained on how to proactively encourage the inclusion of groups in a youth café, such as those from ethnic minorities (*see Chapter 4 under the heading 'Inclusive, accessible and flexible'*).

Quoting again from *The Youth Café Survival Guide* (Prince's Trust, 2005), it suggests that much of this training can be provided through the host agency or organisation; for very specific training, it may be possible to secure funding from an external source. Other suggestions for training include talking to other local youth groups to find out if they provide training themselves or if they would be interested in sharing costs.

This need for training ties in with the Irish National Youth Work Development Plan (NYWDP), published by the Department of Education and Science in 2003. Goal 4 of the NYWDP is *'to put in place mechanisms for enhancing professionalism and ensuring quality standards in youth work'*. It argues that before youth work can facilitate the individual and community development aspect on which it is built, it will be necessary to ensure that youth work programmes are quality-based, safe, efficient and effective. One of the primary concerns is the need for the utmost rigour to be exercised in relation to the adults that work with young people, particularly in relation to safety and child protection issues. The flip side of this is the protection of youth workers, be they paid or voluntary, from unfair allegations or threats, which obviously also needs to be addressed.

Commenting on the call for the professionalisation of youth work, Lalor *et al* (2007) point to the fact that the North-South Education and Training Standards Committee (NSETS) for youth work was launched in Armagh in January 2006 and is representative of all relevant youth work interests on the island of Ireland. The plan is that NSETS will start to assess all aspects of the quality of training and professionally endorse (or otherwise) any programmes submitted to it for consideration and approval. Therefore, when fully operational, NSETS will have a positive impact on the overall functioning of initiatives such as youth cafés.

Another key component in relation to youth café staff and volunteers is that of professional supervision. It is necessary for every staff member, volunteer and student involved in a youth café to receive regular and structured supervision. Within this process, it is important that the guiding principles and functions of supervision are adhered to. According to the Supervision document used in one well-established youth café in Ireland, supervision has four key functions:

- **Support:** Working with young people throws up all kinds of issues and emotions for project workers, both positive and negative. Supervision enables the supervisee to identify and deal with the personal impact of their work.
- **Education:** As workers develop their practice, they learn or discover where they need further inputs to increase their knowledge base, to explore new topics or to help them grow professionally. Supervision assists supervisees to assess their level of skill and competence.
- **Management:** Working with young people around the area of health, and particularly sexual health, can be difficult in terms of legislation and prevailing ethos. Supervision ensures that the supervisee is working in line with management expectations and standards.
- **Mediation:** This involves establishing a healthy feedback mechanism between all parties.

With regard to the practical arrangements of frequency of supervision, the policy in this particular youth café in Ireland suggests that project staff will have individual supervision on a monthly basis, volunteers as per time commitment and work undertaken, and students every two weeks.

Policies central to a youth café

Child protection

Every youth café needs to have a Child Protection Policy in place. Core to this policy document should be a Child Protection Statement, which is underpinned by the basic principles stated in the Child Care Act (1991). Section 3(2)(b) of this Act states:

> Having regard to the rights and duties of parents, whether under the Constitution or otherwise –
> (i) regard the welfare of the child as the first and paramount consideration, and
> (ii) in so far as is practicable, give due consideration, having regard to his age and understanding, to the wishes of the child.

The Child Protection Policy of a youth café will also adhere to the guiding principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, namely:

- All children should be entitled to basic rights without discrimination.
- The best interests of the child should be the primary concern of decision-making.
- Children have the right to life, survival and development.
- The views of children must be taken into account in matters affecting them.

In addition to the Child Protection Statement, the Child Protection Policy document will normally include a number of key sections. The following example is based on information contained in the Child Protection Policy of a well-established youth café in Ireland.

1. **Code of behaviour for staff/volunteers/students**
   The youth café in question acknowledges that all young people who use the service deserve to be treated with respect. Therefore, no physical or verbal abuse of either the young people or the staff can be tolerated. The policy then outlines a number of individual responsibilities and codes of behaviour to ensure that young people and staff are respected.

2. **Reporting procedures to the HSE and An Garda Síochána**
   While working with young people, project workers may become aware, through disclosure or third-party referrals, that a young person is being abused sexually, physically or emotionally, or being neglected. In the event of receiving such information, the Child Protection Policy outlines the procedure that must be followed.

3. **Parental involvement and sharing of information**
   One of the main themes to emerge from the public consultation held for the National Children's Strategy (2000) was an emphasis on the empowerment and support of families and communities as the most effective way of supporting children. In working with parents, it is important to recognise that they have a part to play in their children's lives and that consultation and inclusion are vital to the well-being of young people. Health service personnel are obliged to inform parents if they have professional concerns about a child's health safety, welfare or care. This is based on the agreed *Children First* national guidelines on child protection and welfare (Department of Health and Children, 1999, revised 2009).

4. **Confidentiality statement**
   Confidentiality is the maintaining of information shared by a client in a professional, purposeful and respectful manner. Staff working with young people may find themselves in a position where young people disclose sensitive information about personal issues. It is particularly important not to promise total confidentiality before hearing what a young person has to say since as it may be necessary to share the information with others.

Children should be entitled to basic rights without discrimination

In addition to child protection and health and safety policies, it is also necessary for a youth café to have a plethora of other policies in place to help the smooth running of the café

5. **Safe recruitment and selection procedures**
   All staff and volunteers should be vetted by the Central Garda Vetting Unit and references checked in line with the *Children First* national guidelines. With specific reference to any queries to a youth café in relation to volunteering/placement, it is important for the staff to issue the prospective volunteer/student with an application form. On completion and return of the form to the café, an initial meeting can be set up with the Volunteer/Student Coordinator and/or Project Leader, prior to seeking Garda clearance.

6. **Safe management of staff and volunteers**
   It is necessary for each staff member involved in a youth café to receive regular and structured supervision. Within the process of supervision, it is important that the guiding principles and functions of supervision are adhered to.

7. **Allegations against staff and complaints procedure**
   As outlined in the café's Child Protection Policy, complaints or allegations against staff members are dealt with through HSE systems according to the publication *Trust in Care: Guidelines for Health Service Employers on preventing patient/client abuse and dealing with allegations of abuse against employees* (HSEA, 2005).

8. **Accidents procedure**
   The Child Protection Policy outlines the procedure to follow if a young person is injured while under the supervision of a staff member of the youth café.

Health and safety

The health and safety of the young people who use youth cafés, as well as that of the youth workers and volunteers, is an important concern for any youth café management committee. In Ireland, the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 (which repealed and replaced the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 1989) was introduced to make further provision for the safety, health and welfare of persons at work. The Act clarifies and enhances the responsibilities of employers, the self-employed, employees and various other parties in relation to safety and health at work. It also details the role and functions of the Health and Safety Authority (HSA), provides for a range of enforcement measures that may be applied and specifies penalties that may be applied for breach of occupational safety and health.

The HSA believes that education is the key to fostering a culture of safety that will keep young people safe in the home, school, community and workplace (HSA, 2008). There are 5 strands to the HSA's education strategy:

- managing safety in schools – creating a safe teaching and learning environment;
- mainstreaming health and safety at all levels of education;
- providing teacher supports and classroom resources;
- teacher training;
- joint initiatives and programmes.

The HSA is continually exploring opportunities whereby the principles of health and safety can be disseminated through the formal education system. Therefore, the extension of this to youth cafés would be possible. The Education Strategy Manager at the HSA is an invaluable resource for information on this subject.

Insurance

The data collected for this study shows that, in general, the insurance for a youth café is arranged through the host agency or organisation. For example, if Foróige is managing a youth café, the insurance cover for the project would be arranged under the umbrella of the Foróige organisation.

Other policies

In addition to child protection and health and safety policies, it is also necessary for a youth café to have a plethora of other policies in place to help the smooth running of the café. The most common of these are:

- alcohol and drugs policy;
- managing a drug-related incident;
- band regulations;
- code of behaviour between volunteers and young people in the youth café;
- use of toilets;
- policy for outside groups using the café;
- policy on drop-in to café during school hours;
- protocol for use of pool table;
- smoking policy.

A copy of these policies as operated by one well-established youth café in Ireland is included in the Appendix to this report.
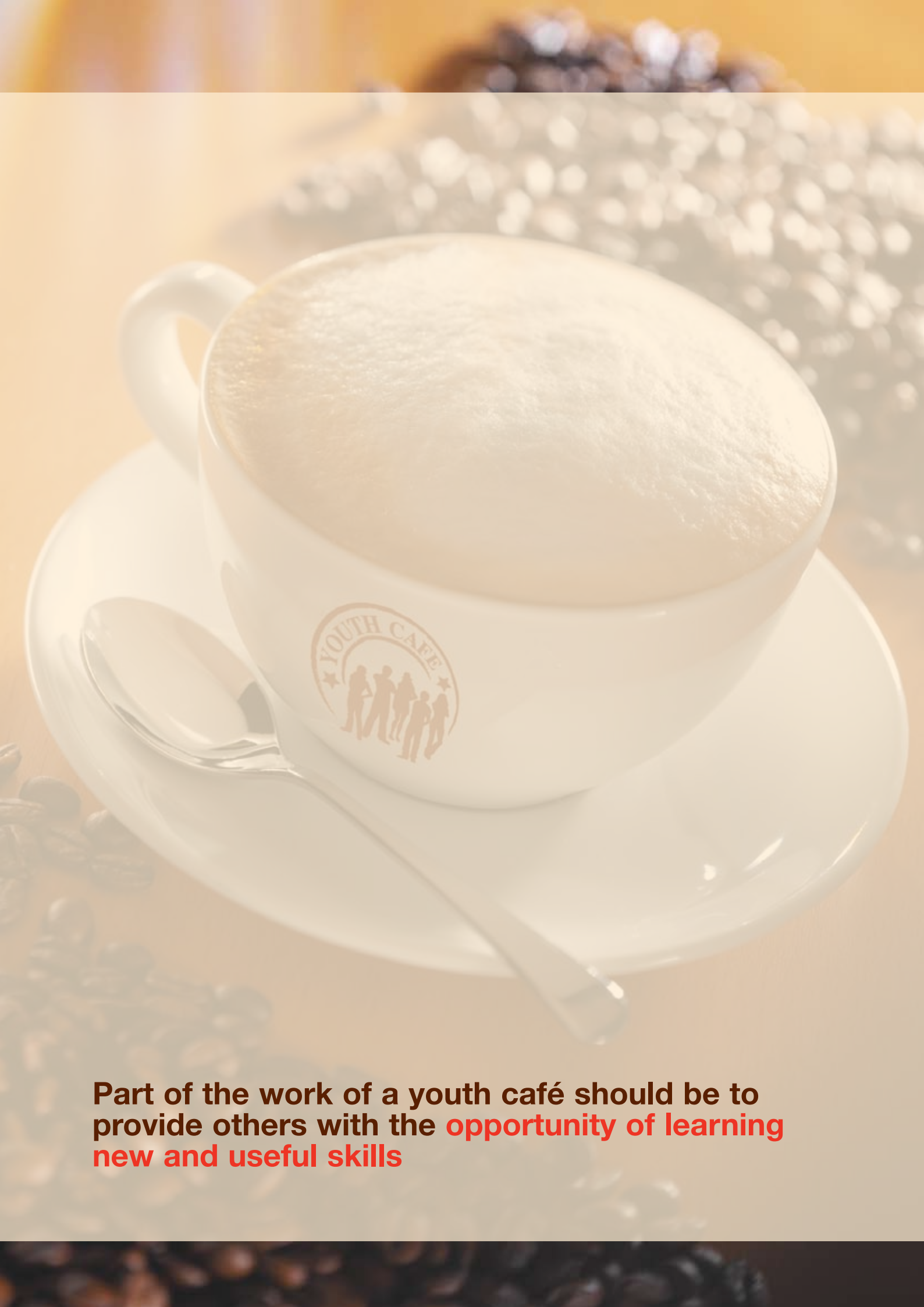
Part of the work of a youth café should be to provide others with the opportunity of learning new and useful skills

6. Information, monitoring and evaluation systems

The need to monitor and evaluate an initiative such as a youth café is of paramount importance. As discussed in Chapter 3, policy and services for young people are becoming increasingly concerned with achieving outcomes for and with them. Although there are different meanings attached to the word 'outcomes', it is now recognised in Ireland that good outcomes involve the best possible conditions, situations and circumstances for children to live their lives to their full potential, as stated in the current social partnership agreement, *Towards 2016* (Department of the Taoiseach, 2006) and in *The Agenda for Children's Services* (OMCYA, 2007b).

The 7 national service outcomes for children in Ireland, described in *The Agenda for Children's Services* (OMCYA, 2007b), are a valuable focus for the development of youth cafés. They can easily be seen as providing opportunities for the achievement of outcomes in relation to participation, involvement in active learning and being part of positive networks. Depending on their purpose, youth cafés may be relevant to the achievement of health outcomes in relation to the full range of physical and mental health needs.

There is a need to distinguish between the terms 'monitoring' and 'evaluation'. In the context of a youth café, once it opens its doors, it can begin to monitor its work by collecting various types of data, such as throughput, take-up of programmes by gender and age profile of users, and the general level of satisfaction with the service, to name a few. However, over time, this 'soft' data would not enable the café to adequately assess its progress as set out in its original objectives. Therefore, after a period of bedding-in, it would be envisaged that each youth café would begin to develop robust systems of evaluation, while continuing to monitor key aspects of the project.

A key component in the monitoring and evaluation process is that of ethics. The first ethical issue concerns *informed consent* and, specifically, the information provided to young people and their parents on how data are used. It is ethically questionable to collect and retain data for no good reason, which means that youth cafés need to decide what data they need to know and why. The second issue is that data are likely to be managed by adults, which may be at odds with young people taking charge of the youth café's affairs. Overriding these concerns are issues relating to data protection, which is a complex area and needs to be given serious consideration by a youth café management committee. A related point is that formal recording of attendance and membership may cause tension with the broadly informal approach that most youth cafés try to take. There is no doubt that youth cafés need to collect information on those who attend, but the procedures for collecting and using that information have to be clearly rationalised.

Some evaluations of youth-based activities have indicated that programmes can achieve improved outcomes across several areas, including academic, social participation, behaviour and physical health

International evidence

It is estimated that approximately 6.5 million children and young people in the USA are engaged in out-of-school activities, which often focus on positive youth development (Harvard Family Research Project, 2008). One of the key questions asked by stakeholders involved in such enterprises is 'Does this make a difference in the life of the young person involved?' Some evaluations of youth-based activities have indicated that programmes can achieve improved outcomes across several areas, including academic, social participation, behaviour and physical health. However, Chaskin and Glodek (2008) take a more cautious approach: in a systemic review of 63 evaluations of 48 after-school programmes, they reported 50% of youth improved academically, 30% showed improved behaviour and 25% reported improved self-esteem and life skills. This, they believe, is not surprising given the low dosage and episodic nature of attendance in these programmes. Overall, the authors note that it is difficult to develop causal explanations to underpin programmes given the interrelationship between the characteristics of the individual, their family, neighbourhood and programme contexts.

Undertaking evaluations of such supports as youth initiatives can be difficult. In particular, the nature of some initiatives characterised as adopting an open approach can present further difficulties since, as Mercier *et al* (2000, pp. 73-74) point out, *'youth participation varies according to convenience and exposure to the programme is inconsistent'*. Nevertheless, such inconsistencies should not deter attempts to evaluate such programmes, no matter how fluid they may be.

Wright (2007) presents an emerging framework for designing and evaluating community-based after-school arts programmes. Specifically, she identifies the need to adopt an outcomes-focused approach to such initiatives, supported by an identified theory of change, or logic model. Such a theory of change would have a number of elements (*ibid*, p. 127):

- a pathway of change that illustrates the relationship between the variety of outcomes that are each thought of as a pre-condition of the long-term goal;
- indicators that are defined to be specific enough to measure success;
- interventions that are used to bring about each of the pre-conditions of the pathway and at each step of the pathway;
- assumptions that explain why the whole theory makes sense.

Wright (2007) points out that the type of data collected by a youth initiative can be at different levels. For example, basic data on programme participants will inform the evaluation while also telling a story about who is using it on a day-to-day basis. Structured activities are important to Wright's study, as are identifiable direct outcomes of participation, more intermediate outcomes relating to attitudes and behaviours (which are sought by way of a survey) and, lastly, identified longer term outcomes such as improved academic behaviour and reduced delinquency rates. The strength of adopting such a framework is that it allows service providers to identify which youth are using the service, how such use can be sustained and increased, and how such a service impacts on the psychological functioning of children and young people.

With particular reference to youth cafés, *The Youth Café Survival Guide* (Prince's Trust, 2005) suggests that evaluation is an essential part of keeping a youth café on track. Evaluation helps to find out what the youth café is doing well and what it could do better. It also provides interesting and sometimes essential information for funders and supporters. Successful evaluation requires a review of the aims and objectives that were agreed early on in the project and an assessment of performance against them. The *Survival Guide* also suggests that a youth café contemplating an evaluation needs to be very clear about why it is carrying out the work: who is the information being gathered for and exactly what is the café trying to find out? It goes on to discuss the fact that the 'measurements' undertaken as part of an evaluation can be either qualitative or quantitative in nature and that they do not have to be complicated:

- **Qualitative measurements:** Assessing the quality and value of achievements, e.g. users' opinions of the café, how much fun the café is, whether the café is providing activities that users enjoy and what kind of opportunities they have had to learn new skills. It is also important to remember that monitoring and evaluation of this kind should reflect where the young people using the service are at: those doing the work should realise that young people are able to identify outcomes through their own experience with youth cafés. As alluded to earlier, young people attending a well-established youth café in Ireland were able to link a reduction in the amount of alcohol they drank with their attendance at the café in question.
- **Quantitative measurements:** Counting the number and type of achievements, e.g. number of young people using the café, takings at the shop, events and activities provided and numbers attending.

Irish evidence – Case studies

There was agreement among all the key stakeholders involved in youth work provision, when approached for this study, that evaluation and monitoring is crucial in setting up an initiative such as a youth café. However, information, as one agency suggested, *'can be difficult to determine. It is not so much quantitative data, but through qualitative data that you can get a sense of why young people may utilise the service, what they may get from it, what outcomes it has had for them, their capacity to promote it to their friends and peers. Evaluation in anything to do with young people is critical. We don't always do it well or do it often'*.

Much of the data collected by youth cafés is for monitoring purposes only. Several cafés (e.g. The Zone, The Crib, FDYS) collect information on age, gender, date of first contact with café, frequency of attendance, home location, involvement in youth café activities, involvement in other youth activities, contact details for parents and information on allergies and illnesses. Where youth cafés have members, this information can be recorded at registration. Where external trips are taken, parental consent is requested. These practices are most common where youth work organisations have existing policies on membership and the youth café is one among a range of services. Members sign in whenever they attend. Where there is no membership, surveys of those attending are often taken on a quarterly basis. On a day-to-day basis, the number of people attending can be recorded hourly by the staff. One of the recommendations of The Zone evaluation is to establish baseline data on participants' needs, knowledge, skills, and attitudes when they first attend (McGlinchey, 2006).

In one of the most well-established youth cafés, The Gaf in Galway, a system of objectives and indicators are used as a means of monitoring and evaluating the work. Despite this system, the manager of The Gaf suggested that by its very nature, much of what goes on in a youth café is very difficult to measure: *'It is very hard to measure causality in terms of The Gaf. Young people will always value just the chat over a coffee. This is very hard to quantify, but it is really crucial.'* The manager noted that documenting the number of self-referrals to the project is another method of evaluation since it shows that young people value the project: *'You could also look at what the young people are getting out of the programmes and look at the qualitative good of The Gaf and the significance of The Gaf in their lives.'*

The Zone in Blanchardstown, Dublin, is another successful youth café. It has developed a robust method of monitoring and evaluating its work, with the use of outcomes, indicators and targets (*see Table 3*). This model identifies 7 outcomes central to its work: engagement; youth friendliness; health-promoting service; personal development; implementation of good youth work practices; engagement with appropriate agencies; and cost-

effectiveness. Each outcome is measured by a number of indicators and targets are set for the following year. Combining these forms the basis for the evaluation of the café.

**Table 3: Outcomes, indicators and targets –
The Zone Youth Health Advice Café, Dublin**

OUTCOME	INDICATOR	TARGET
1. Engagement	Attendance figures	30 attending each week. 20 regularly. 30 irregularly (approx. once per month). 30 once off (approx. once per year).
	Gender and age balance	1.5:1 females to males. 60% 14-18 age group.
	Home location	80% Blakestown.
	At risk of teenage crisis pregnancy	80% display one or more risk factors.
	Level of engagement	3 promotional events per year to recruit 10 new young people. Teenage Health initiative: 1 follow-up per year per young person.
2. Youth friendliness	Accessible	Physically, geographically.
	Management	Young people make decisions regarding operations and programmes, and are actively involved in running them.
	Ground rules	Clear rules: structure for implementation.
	Activity focus	85% specific health. 15% general.
	Appealing appearance	Friendly décor, posters, artwork, notice boards. Warm, comfortable, relaxed atmosphere.
	Youth Advisory Committee	20 involved per year. Training (per year): 18 in Committee skills 10 in leadership skills 10 in communication skills
	Involvement in other youth opportunities	60% of those attending avail of other opportunities in area.
	Volunteer, staff training	Introduction to youth work: child protection; drugs, tobacco, alcohol guidelines; information provision for volunteers within 12 months. Induction training: child protection; consultancy; programme development for staff within 12 months.
	Peer education	10 attend training.
	Physical, emotional safety, security	Café is safe.

Young people perceive they are better able to express their opinions, listen and communicate

OUTCOME	INDICATOR	TARGET
3. Health-promoting service	Health-promoting café	Drug-free: health information available; healthy food; healthy activities. Crisis Pregnancy Agency (CPA) positive options. 50% targeted at young people.
	Teenage Health Initiative (THI) training	40 participate. 30 complete.
	Development of skills, knowledge, attitudes	20 young people gain new skills, interests and knowledge.
	Young people's health-related communication	12 health-related queries recorded per month. 2 observed occasions of use of health information per week.
	Health workshops and learning	Health professional: 10 visits per year. Young people satisfied, queries answered satisfactorily.
	Young people's role in health information provision	2 consultations per year on the kind of information required. Satisfied with available health information.
	Parental involvement in Teenage Health Initiative	30 informed of content. 10 participate in facilitated discussion.
4. Personal development	Active participation	20 on Youth Advocacy (YAC) per year. 20 complete Blanchardstown Youth Service (BYS) skills training per year. People attending become active participants.
	Leadership and assertiveness	Young people take leadership roles. Young people perceive they have better leadership skills as a result. Young people assert themselves in the group. Young people perceive greater assertiveness as a result.
	Listening and communication skills	Active listening and communication skills. Young people perceive they are better able to express their opinions, listen and communicate.

OUTCOME	INDICATOR	TARGET
5. Implementation of good youth work practices	Young people and decision-making	Young people make decisions in relation to the operation of the café and its programme.
	Involvement and skills of staff and volunteers	2 trained staff and 9 adult volunteers involved in operating project. Staff and volunteers have a range of relevant skills and expertise.
	Youth work values	Stated youth work values governing project's operation. Issues arising dealt with effectively by young people and staff.
	Links with other youth work agencies	Mechanisms to link with other youth-serving agencies in area to respond to needs of young people and to refer where appropriate.
	Flexibility of design	Flexible in design and operation, and open to adaptation to meet young people's needs.
	Reporting and evaluation systems	Internal reporting systems in place. Bi-monthly BYS staff meetings. Bi-monthly staff and management meetings. Tri-monthly staff and volunteer meetings. Budgeting, accounting and auditing systems in place. Quarterly reports to funders. Evaluation procedures to monitor and review project.
6. Engagement with appropriate agencies	Involvement of stakeholders	Annual meeting of stakeholders to consult on operation, procedures and outcomes. Management Advisory Committee of agencies to advise on project's development. Annual meeting with CPA. Quarterly reports to CPA.
	Referral relationships with relevant agencies	Relevant agencies can refer to project. Project can refer to relevant agencies. Recording of contacts relating to specific needs of a young person.
7. Cost-effectiveness	Project costs	BYS calculate number and cost of staff involved. BYS cost level of administrative back-up involved. BYS calculate programme cost.
	Volunteer cost estimates	BYS calculate the time cost to 9 volunteers of being trained and involved.
	Comparison with other youth health cafés	Comparison of costs with other similar projects.

In addition to this system, because The Zone youth café is funded by the Crisis Pregnancy Agency (CPA), a very specific system of monitoring and evaluating has evolved. The CPA requires a number of different types of data from The Zone at various times of the year, including quarterly financial reports, quarterly statistical reports (*see Figure 6*), a 6-monthly narrative report and an annual client profile report.

Figure 6: Quarterly statistical report – The Zone Youth Health Advice Café

crisis**pregnancy**agency
Formulating & Implementing a National Strategy

Quarterly Statistical Report

Service Provider	Blanchardstown Youth Service
No. of Café service users in the quarter	
No. of Male Café Users	
No. of Female Café Users	
Number of nights Café open to use	
Number of THI training sessions delivered	
Average No. of participants [1]	
Number of other training sessions delivered	
Average No. of participants [2]	

Guidelines:

[1] Figure to be based on average number of participants completing or attending THI courses in the quarter being reported.

[2] Figure to be based on average number of participants completing or attending courses in the quarter being reported on.

From a national perspective, a most valuable and useful tool for evaluating services was developed under the auspices of the HSE and the Programme of Action for Children. As a result of this joint work, the Adolescent-friendly Quality Assessment Tools (AFQuATs) were published in 2006. The 2002 report *Get Connected – Developing an Adolescent Friendly Health Service,* published by the National Conjoint Child Health Committee (2002), described the importance of addressing adolescent health services and its recommendations formed the basis for the development of the AFQuATs. The report suggests that *'Access to healthcare for young people is central to promoting health and well-being. Young people, regardless of socio-economic class, have the potential to become marginalised when it comes to access to health services.'*

Considering this, the AFQuATs were designed to provide a method for health service providers and planners to assess the quality of services for young people in relation to adolescent-friendly quality standards. As part of the feasibility study for AFQuATs, they were tested in a number of settings, one being The Gaf Health Advice Café in Galway city. The AFQuATs are based on 6 quality dimensions, with each dimension being further sub-divided into assessment categories (*see Tables 4 and 5*).

Table 4: The 6 quality dimensions of Adolescent-friendly Quality Assessment Tools (AFQuATs)

Accessibility of service
Flexibility of service
Staffing – core competencies and training
Quality information
Partnership approach
Confidentiality and Privacy

By using the AFQuATs, any service can assess the 'Accessibility of Service' dimension by examining its 4 assessment categories, which are the interrelated areas of administration, geography, economic and access (*see Table 5*). Any 'Actions for improvement' can then be noted against each category and acted upon. The assessment categories for the other 5 dimensions are also given in Table 5.

In the context of youth cafés, the AFQuATs would provide a robust model of assessment as the 6 quality dimensions can relate directly back to the work of any youth café. In addition, the tools allow for standardising any cross-fertilisation of ideas from diverse youth cafés and other related youth programmes over time.

Table 5: Assessment categories for the 6 quality dimensions of AFQuATs

DIMENSION 1: ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICE				
Assessment category		**Yes**	**No**	**Action for improvement?**
Administration	Does the service have a reasonable* time period when waiting for first appointment?			
	Does the service have a reasonable time period when waiting for follow-up appointment?			
	Are the service operational hours clearly advertised in a variety of locations and through a variety of media?			
	Is the service tailored to young people's needs (or does the service have a subsection tailored to the needs of young people)?			
	Is the service available in convenient and appropriate settings (e.g. drop-in centre or outreach/mobile service)?			
Geographic	Is the service close to where young people live (or can it be accessed through public transport)?			
Economic	Is the service provided free or at low cost?			
Access	Does the service have non-discriminatory access regardless of minority status (e.g. wheelchair access, childcare for teenage parents, translation services)?			

* The term 'reasonable' will vary depending on the nature of the service provided. Services are required to determine an acceptable standard for this dimension.

The service should have non-discriminatory access regardless of minority status (wheelchair access, childcare for teenage parents, translation services)

DIMENSION 2: FLEXIBILITY OF SERVICE				
Assessment category		**Yes**	**No**	**Action for improvement?**
Administration	Does the service have operational hours suitable for young people (e.g. after school, weekends)?			
	Does the service have suitable appointment allocation for needs of young people (e.g. sufficient time to assess problem, extra time for complex consultations, appointments to suit young people travelling long distances)?			
	Is there a multi-service approach whereby a range of services are available for young people (e.g. hospitals, health centres, youth centres, one-stop-shop)? OR Is it a tailored service within traditional provider setting?			
Physical/ structural	Does the service have adequate space and comfortable waiting area?			
	Is the service appealing for young people, in that it acknowledges a youth culture (e.g. appealing decoration, displays, music)?			
	Does the service support the young person to have a friend or other person with them when receiving the service?			
Variety of services	Is a holistic model of health adopted in the provision of healthcare services and treatments to adolescents (e.g. range of services, health promotion or signposting to other services)?			
	Are there services for individuals with special needs (e.g. young people with learning disability or low literacy, translators for non-nationals, signing for deaf)?			
	Does the service have appropriate provision of staff for the problem presented and the patient attending (e.g. peer counsellors, healthcare professionals for technical diagnosis, male and female staff)?			
	Is maximum use made of the contact time with adolescents to minimise missed opportunities (e.g. health promotion advice)?			
DIMENSION 3: STAFFING – CORE COMPETENCIES AND TRAINING				

The service should have a system where parents are briefed in relation to information and services offered for adolescents

Assessment category		Yes	No	Action for improvement?
Staffing	Have all staff received the essential training required for this service?			
	Have all staff (including support staff) ever received any discrete training for working with young people?			
	Are staff trained to prevent any missed opportunities with the adolescents who attend the service?			
	Is there ongoing training for staff to keep them informed and their skills current?			
	Is there a multidisciplinary and multiagency approach taken by staff?			
Interpersonal relations	Are staff (including support staff) trained in appropriate communication skills when dealing with adolescents?			
	Does the service use or have appropriate criteria-based interviewing in the recruitment of trainees or those who will work with or supervise staff to work with adolescents (e.g. informed attitudes, qualifications, interpersonal factors)?			
	Does the organisation have a member of staff appointed to develop and oversee the adolescent-friendliness of the service?			

DIMENSION 4: QUALITY INFORMATION

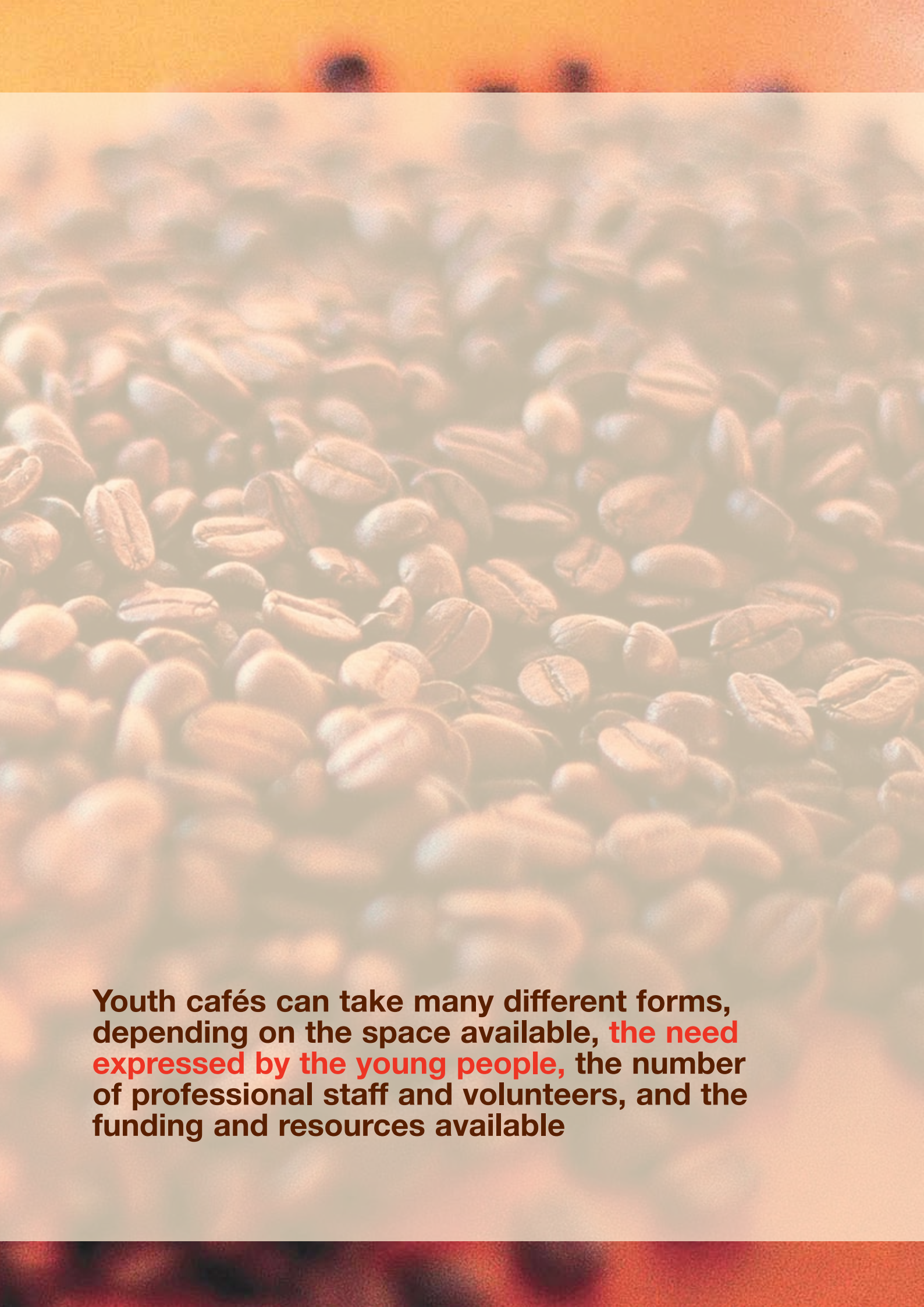| Assessment category		Yes	No	Action for improvement?
Type of information provided	Have staff received adequate training in the information required by adolescents, e.g. • available health and support? • accessing appropriate services? • options, rights and entitlements? • back-up services and after-hours numbers? • general health issues? • health promotion and adolescent health issues? • process for making complaints (e.g. Ombudsman for Children)?			
	Does the service have a system where parents are briefed in relation to information and services offered for adolescents (e.g. information on health issues, adolescents' needs for confidential services, rights of parental consent)?			
How the information is provided	Does the service have an agreed format on the provision of information for young people (e.g. accurate, age-appropriate, complete, eye-catching, language-appropriate, relevant, tailored for special needs, through a variety of media, updated)?			
	Does the service provide open access to medical records?			
	Does the service provide information through attractive and appealing media (e.g. interactive tools/computers/DVDs, telephone hotlines by trained counsellors, contemporary designed leaflets, through a variety of points of contact)?			
	Does the service provide a one-stop-shop approach to provision of information • on the service provided? • on other relevant services? • on general health information for adolescents?			

DIMENSION 5: PARTNERSHIP APPROACH

Assessment category		Yes	No	Action for improvement?
Young people	Does the service offer opportunities to involve young people • in the planning of services (e.g. through focus groups or involvement in management committees)? • in the delivery of services (e.g. peer-led or mentoring projects)? • in the evaluation of services (e.g. consumer satisfaction questionnaires, in mystery shopping)? • in appropriate consultation with established groups? • in the development of new groups?			
Parents/ carers	Does the service involve parents/ carers in the planning, delivery and evaluation of services, as appropriate, through • the planning of services? • the evaluation of services?			
Other relevant agencies	Does the service involve other relevant agencies in the planning, delivery and evaluation of services?			
	Has the service formed alliances with other relevant organisations (e.g. local schools, youth organisations)?			

DIMENSION 6: CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY				
Assessment category		Yes	No	**Action for improvement?**
Physical/ structural	There should be an environment respectful to confidentiality.			
	There should be appropriate, user-friendly signage throughout the premises.			
Staff	There should be a non-judgemental approach taken by staff in dealing with young people.			
	Staff should be trained to respect the confidentiality of young people.			

At the time of writing, Foróige, the National Youth Development Organisation, was in the process of developing and piloting an outcomes monitoring and evaluation system. The system, referred to as the HOMES system (the Hull Outcomes Monitoring and Evaluation System), is an Internet-based information management system designed for not-for-profit and charitable organisations. It helps organise and collect agency data, in particular outcome information. The Canadian Outcomes Research Institute (2008) describes the system as follows: *'The HOMES database integrates data collection procedures into common program and case management procedures, including the use of program logic concepts, standardized testing, research design and accreditation concepts.'* In addition to case management features, a human resources section allows for monitoring of personnel, volunteer and donor information, including timesheets. When implemented in Ireland, Foróige will have sole rights to its use for the initial two years. However, after this time, it may be worth considering it as a potential tool for the monitoring and evaluation of youth cafés.

Youth cafés can take many different forms, depending on the space available, the need expressed by the young people, the number of professional staff and volunteers, and the funding and resources available

7. Imagined youth café scenarios

As discussed in Chapter 1, the overarching aim of this research was to contribute to the formation of a solid policy foundation for the support and development of the youth café model of intervention with children and young people in Ireland. To facilitate this, intensive searches of the academic literature and web sources were done. Coupled with this, interviews were conducted with key stakeholders and agencies involved in youth work and related areas, as well as holding a number of focus groups with young people themselves. The National Children's Advisory Council (NCAC), the commissioning body for the research, also got the opportunity to provide feedback to the research team on a number of draft sections of the report, prior to its completion.

Due to the dearth of academic knowledge in Ireland on youth cafés, Chapter 2 presented a conceptual model and framework, which outlined a theoretical framework within which the youth café model can be understood. Chapter 3 introduced a logic model for youth cafés, built on an outcomes-focused framework and connecting the youth café idea with the wider policy context for children in Ireland. Following this, a set of interdependent guiding principles specific to the work of a youth café were presented; these principles distinguish youth cafés from other intervention models available to young people. In Chapter 5, a number of operational issues for youth cafés were discussed, ranging from funding and sustainability to training of staff and volunteers to specific policies and the day-to-day management of youth cafés. Chapter 6 offered a number of options for the monitoring and evaluation of youth cafés across several key service provision dimensions or domains.

As a model of supporting young people, youth cafés can take many different forms, depending on the space available, the need expressed by the young people, the number of professional staff and volunteers available to support the work and the extent of funding and resources available. The level of service on offer in any youth café will also be determined by its geographical location, in a distinctly rural or urban setting or somewhere in between. Therefore, the provision of youth cafés has a number of variables that will make each one similar to another, yet different in its own way. To illustrate this, three case studies are presented below – two operating in Ireland (The Gaf in Galway and The Attic in Cork) and one in Australia (The Albury City Retro Youth Café).

Case Study 1 – The Gaf, Galway

The Gaf Health Advice Café is run by the HSE West, in partnership with Foróige and Galway Youth Federation. This youth café has a drop-in service that provides a drug- and alcohol-free alternative for young people in Galway. It caters for young people aged 14-21 and approximately 150 people attend each day over weekends. To complement the drop-in service, The Gaf has a work programme, designed by staff and a youth committee, that offers a variety of information and educational services, incorporating a range of prevention and education strategies and offering health advice and information. The space contains a drop-in area, DJ decks, a pool table and a space for workshops and formal work, such as drama, yoga, discussion, dance and photography. There are 7 staff members in the building and 10-15 trained volunteers. The café has a set of policies to cover all aspects of its work, including alcohol, drugs, smoking, use of toilets, pool table, etc. (*see Appendix*).

Case Study 2 – The Attic, Bantry

The Attic was established in 2006 due to a lack of facilities for young people in the Bantry area of Cork. It caters for marginalised and vulnerable youth aged 14-19, offering an organic menu of services that change with the needs of the young people who use it. Approximately 150 young people use the youth café each day. The space has a 'bar' area, serving smoothies, hot beverages and snacks, a separate sitting room and an upstairs games room with a pool table. Although structured activities are on offer in The Attic, uptake has been slow. A committee of 2 adults and 10 young people manage the youth café, deciding on the rules, opening times, activities and services available.

Case Study 3 – The Albury City Retro Youth Café, Australia

The Albury City Retro Youth Café was opened in 2004 and was developed from a direct request by young people in the local area that they wanted a safe and central place in which they could come and hang out. The local council and businesses were involved in the development of the service. This youth café has been created as a one-stop-shop for young people aged 12-25. It adopts a zero tolerance drug policy and is an alcohol-free venue. Free activities are offered, including Internet access and discounted food for students.

The aims of this youth café are:

- to provide an accessible and safe place for young people to meet and hang out;
- to provide structures that allow young people to involve themselves with the service in a way that suits them;
- to address contemporary issues affecting young people by providing a range of youth programmes;
- to generate new opportunities for local young people in order to increase their resilience and self-confidence;
- to provide local young people with creative outlets to express their views and experiences in their own way;
- to generate links with local youth services and education providers in order to generate training opportunities and provide information and programmes that increase young people's sense of responsibility and ability to contribute to the community.

The Retro Café is run by a youth management committee, which is involved in planning events and the daily operation of the café. There are also a large number of volunteers who provide a range of supports in the youth café's business, educational and hospitality programmes. Funding sources include the Department of Juvenile Justice, several voluntary organisations (e.g. the Lions and Rotary Clubs) and a number of local businesses.

The space has a 'bar' area, serving smoothies, hot beverages and snacks, a separate sitting room and an upstairs games room with a pool table

Essential components for all youth cafés

These case studies illustrate the variable nature of what a youth café might look like, depending on a number of intrinsic and extrinsic factors. However, underpinning each youth café are also a number of essential components that need to be in place in any facility claiming to be a youth café. These essentials have been discussed throughout this report, but to sum up, it is important to give the last word to the young people interviewed for this study. In their view, a youth café should incorporate the following essentials:

- The inclusion of young people from the outset is essential – in the planning, setting up and running of the youth cafés. Young people must be allowed to have a real and valued role in the management, decision-making and programme-planning process in the cafés.
- Also essential is the appointment of a committed and passionate staff team who have a real interest in young people and their welfare. The staff can be supported by trained volunteers.
- The location and internal environment of the café itself was seen as a central factor.
- An integral part of the success of the cafés is a variety of activities and opportunities (free or low cost in the main) available to those attending, representing their areas of interest and suggested topics. Workshops, programmes and events that are both entertaining and educational were recommended.
- Diverse groups of young people (e.g. Travellers, members of new ethnic communities and those of other social and cultural backgrounds) need to be actively encouraged to attend and engage with the cafés in order to promote an inclusive policy and ethos.
- Raising awareness and giving information on the resources and supports available to young people are also recommended.

In addition to this list, other key essential components, identified in the 2007 National Recreation Policy for Young People as intrinsic to the success of a youth café, are:

- A partnership approach to guarantee sustainable funding (with statutory and other relevant agencies) should be adopted, as well as linking with the local community and winning its support.
- In the case of larger towns, youth cafés should be located in central, neutral locations, making them as accessible as possible to all groups.
- Youth cafés should be drug- and alcohol-free.
- Opening times should, in so far as possible, meet young people's requirements (e.g. be open in the evenings and at weekends).

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APPENDIX:
Policy – The Gaf Health Advice Café

14 Francis Street, Galway. Tel: (091) 534473. No website as of December 2008, but listed as a live music venue on http://entertainment.ie

1. Alcohol and Drugs Policy

Alcohol

- Young people must not bring alcohol into The Gaf or to any organised activities or events.
- Young people must not be under the influence or consume alcohol while in The Gaf or at any organised activities or events.
- Voluntary adult leaders and staff must not consume, or be under the influence of, alcohol while working with young people.

Illicit drugs and solvents

- Young people or adults must not use, possess or supply any illicit drugs or misuse solvents in The Gaf or at any organised activities or events.
- Young people or adults under the influence of illicit drugs or solvents will not be permitted to enter The Gaf or take part in any activities or events.
- Young people must always be supervised when using potentially harmful art materials, cleaning products or other materials.
- Voluntary adult leaders and staff should not administer over-the-counter drugs.

2. Managing a drug-related incident

1. Young person is suffering from serious levels of intoxication:
   a. Do a risk assessment. Ensure their personal safety. Phone parents. Remove from the premises.
   b. If parents cannot be contacted, seek medical intervention. Call for an ambulance and accompany the young person to the hospital.

2. The young person is drunk but is alright (however, they may be at risk to themselves or others):
   - Do a risk assessment.
   - Contact parents.
   - If unable to contact parents, contact the Gardaí.
   - If the young person leaves prior to contacting the Gardaí, notify them of direction young person went and clothes they are wearing, etc.

3. Young person is drunk but not at risk to themselves or others:
   - ◼ Ask them to leave.
   - ◼ De-brief them after the incident.

4. Group of young people whom you have suspicions of taking alcohol or other substances:
   - ◼ Ask them to leave.
   - ◼ If it is repeated behaviour, they may be barred for a period of time, i.e. three strikes and you're out.
   - ◼ If they refuse to leave, contact the Gardaí.

5. Drug is offered to another young person by a peer and it's reported to you:
   - ◼ If they inform you of the individual, then contact the Gardaí due to the fact that they are underage and breaking the law.
   - ◼ You need to know the facts, i.e. full name, etc.
   - ◼ Do not report on 'hearsay' – monitor the situation.
   - ◼ Confidentiality is broken if people break the rules.

6. Rumour of drug use:
   - ◼ Meet individual/individuals.
   - ◼ Monitor and record behaviour.
   - ◼ If suspicions persist and there is reasonable evidence to suggest drug-taking/dealing, bar the young person.
   - ◼ Parents are contacted if young person is barred.

7. Young person bragging about alcohol consumption or drug-taking:
   - ◼ Do a brief intervention there and then.

8. Discovery of drugs:
   - ◼ Report to Gardaí immediately.

3. Band regulations

1. There is a *'no drink no drugs'* policy in The Gaf, which band members must adhere to. If any member of the band has consumed alcohol, then the band will not be permitted to play.
2. For safety reasons, *'moshin'* [refers to the activity in which audience members at live music performances aggressively push or slam into each other] is not allowed. If *'moshin'* starts, the band will be requested to ask the young people to stop and if this is not successful, the music will be terminated.
3. If bands receive a signal from staff to stop the music, they must leave down their equipment and move away from the stage.
4. Bands must look after their own equipment and it is their own responsibility. The Gaf will not be held responsible for loss or damage. Personal equipment must be removed at the end of the gig.

5. Bands must ensure that all equipment belonging to The Gaf is removed from the 'chill out area' and replaced in the storage area.
6. Bands must arrive on time and adhere to their time slot. There must be no surprise guest appearances without prior notice to staff in The Gaf.
7. All bands and young people must cooperate with staff around health and safety issues that may arise.
8. If staff or anyone feels that young people have taken alcohol and there is a danger to himself or herself or any other young person in the project, the band will be asked to stop.
9. The band will be cancelled if there are not 3 or more staff/adult volunteers on duty on the day.
10. Bands must read and adhere to these regulations. If the regulations are not adhered to, then the band will not be permitted to play in The Gaf again.

Name of Band: _____ Date played: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Staff member on duty: _____

Notes: _____

_____

4. Code of behaviour between volunteers and young people in The Gaf

- Young people are not left unattended in the project.
- Keep records of:
  - attendance;
  - accidents (incident book);
  - consent forms;
  - any complaints or grievances.
- Volunteers know at all times where young people are and what they are doing.
- Dangerous behaviour is not allowed.
- Sign in at the beginning of each shift and sign out at the end of your shift.
- Volunteers are not to be on their own when challenging behaviour is being dealt with.
- A record is kept in an incident book, describing what happened, the circumstances, who was involved, any injury to a person or property, and how the situation was resolved.
- Volunteers are given a work schedule so that everyone knows who is on duty.

- It is the responsibility of each person to ensure that they arrange cover if they are unable to undertake their duties.
- Activities should be organised so that they maximise participation, fun and learning, but also safety.

Training

Each volunteer should receive the following training:
- induction training;
- particular skills training – to fit in with the nature of the organisation;
- child protection training – to raise awareness and provide information about how to respond to suspicions or incidents of child abuse.

Supervision

This should consist of (at least):
- an initial review;
- a review at the end of a trial period;
- an annual review.

5. Use of toilets

1. Keys for toilets are kept behind the counter – they can only be given out by a member of staff or a volunteer.
2. The key must be handed back to the same member of staff or volunteer.
3. Toilets to be checked regularly by a member of staff/security or adult volunteer. Staff must sign the sheet in the toilet, detailing the frequency and time of checks.
4. During a live band/event, a member of staff/volunteer should position themselves in close proximity to the toilet doors to ensure optimum vigilance and efficiency.
5. Any incidents must be detailed and recorded and brought to the attention of staff at the weekly team meeting.

6. Policy for outside groups using The Gaf

1. The premises must be left in the same condition in which they were found. This involves ensuring dishes are washed and put away, floors and tables are cleaned, furniture is replaced and lights and equipment are switched off.
2. If you require the use of equipment, staff must be notified prior to use.
3. The coffee machine is for Gaf use only.
4. Tea/coffee is available from the containers on the counter.
5. Groups must adhere to The Gaf's Tobacco, Alcohol and Drugs Policy.
6. All groups must ensure the building is secure upon leaving, the alarm is on and the windows are closed.
7. If you need to make arrangements for storage, please notify staff beforehand.
8. All groups using The Gaf must have appropriate Public Liability Insurance.

7. Young people attending The Gaf (drop-in) during school hours

1. From 1st September 2004, a register will be kept (each day) of all young people attending The Gaf between 2pm-3.30pm.
2. Staff will question the reasons as to why they are here during school time and will encourage them to return to school. A record will be kept of any such dialogue.
3. The Gaf aims to encourage young people to return to school. The Gaf will work with schools in order to achieve this goal.
4. The Gaf is here to support the young person and will actively explore the reasons as to why they are not attending school.
5. In September 2004, a letter will be sent to all school principals detailing our position in relation to the above.

8. Protocol for the use of the pool table

1. Players pay a €2 deposit upon collection of cues/balls from the front counter. This deposit is returned when the cues/balls are returned and the pool room is left in a satisfactory condition.
2. Players must sign the equipment in and out.
3. Maximum of 6 people up at any one time. The person who pays the deposit is responsible for the group.
4. Players are given a half-hour time slot after which the pool cues and balls must be returned to a staff member at the front counter.
5. Staff/Volunteers or a member of the Youth Committee checks the table after each half-hour slot. Any incidents or damage must be recorded on an incident report sheet, which accompanies the signing in/signing out sheet.
6. Staff/Volunteer/Youth Committee member must accompany the players upstairs.
7. The room is checked on a regular basis (i.e. 15-minute intervals). The CCTV camera should focus on the pool room while it is in use.
8. You can only pre-book on the day. If a person is late, they forfeit their booking unless no one else is using the table.

9. The Gaf Smoking Policy

- The Gaf is a non-smoking building. Under no circumstances is anyone permitted to smoke inside the building. Anyone found doing so would be asked to leave immediately.
- People are asked to refrain from smoking outside the building as a matter of public safety. This is to ensure that the pathways are kept free for the use of the general public.
- Smoking should be actively discouraged at all times.
- The Gaf will encourage and support people who wish to stop smoking.

Notes

Notes

national
children's advisory council

Oifig an Aire Leanaí
agus Gnóthaí Óige
Office of the Minister for
Children and Youth Affairs

**Department of
Health & Children**
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