Foreword and Acknowledgements

The youth service Regional Advisory Group (RAG) and Local Advisory Groups (LAGs) held their inaugural conference on 11th March 2017 in the Hilton Hotel, Templepatrick, the theme of which was “Young People First”.

The conference programme was designed by a planning group consisting of young people and Regional Voluntary Youth Organisations (RVYOs), and was chaired by EA Youth Officers. The group put together a very interesting and thought-provoking programme, which gave participants the opportunity to consider how key issues in the Regional Assessment of Need could be put into action over the life of the next Regional Youth Development Plan (RYDP). They were helped in this regard by stimulating inputs by Action Mental Health, Lighthouse, the Bytes Project, the Rainbow Project and the Consumer Council.

The programme included an input by the keynote speaker, Koulla Yiasouma, Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People, who affirmed the participative approach that RAG and LAGs had adopted in engaging young people in a meaningful way in planning youth services.

This report is a compilation of the main points made by speakers, discussion points from each workshop, actions proposed for the RYDP and a collation of the evaluation form responses.

I would like to thank all of the Conference Planning group members, whose names are listed in the report, everyone who assisted in preparing materials for the conference, Paul Deighan for the preparation of presentations and the facilitation of the Twitter and social media feeds, and the speakers, Dr Clare Mangan, Director of EA Children and Young People’s Services, and Koulla Yiasouma.

Arlene Kee
Interim Head of Youth Service

Conference Planning Group

Regional Advisory Group
Natalie Corbett
Tara-Grace Connolly
John Meikleham
Peter Mogey
Doug Smith

Local Advisory Groups
Elsa Blackstock
Dominik Kelly
Nicole McKeague
Paul Reid
Sarah Stewart

EA Supporting Staff
Lynsey Branniff
Liam Curran
Paul Deighan
Clare Harvey
Stephen Quigley
Pauline Smart
Donna Weir
# ypfirst

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Programme

9.30 Arrival/refreshments

10.00 **Welcome:**
Dr Clare Mangan, Director of Children and Young People’s Services, Education Authority

10.15 **Keynote Address:**
Koulla Yiasouma, Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People

11.00 Break

11.15 **Workshops:**
- LGBTQ and gender identity
- Mental health / body image / boredom / confidence
- Life Skills / skills for independent living / money management
- Employability / careers / getting a job / pathways for young people
- Suicide / legal highs / drugs and alcohol

1.00 Lunch

1.45 **Workshop feedback**

2.30 **Regional Youth Development Plan Discussion Forums**

3.15 **Feedback / plenary**

3.45 **Closing Remarks:**
Peter Mogeey and Tara-Grace Connolly, Northern Ireland Youth Forum, representation on the RAG
Welcome
&
Keynote Address
Conference Welcome

Dr Clare Mangan, Director of Children and Young People’s Services, Education Authority

In welcoming all participants to this inaugural RAG/LAG conference Dr Mangan noted she was especially pleased to see so many young people in attendance.

To put the event into context she recapped that the Regional Advisory Group (RAG) and Local Advisory Groups (LAGs) had originated from the Department of Education’s *Priorities for Youth* policy. The RAG first met in June 2014 and provides a forum for voluntary organisations, young people and government departments to advise the Education Authority on youth service policy and planning. The more recently established LAGs play an important and complementary role to the RAG, in advising on the development of local youth service provision through area plans.

The need for a Regional Youth Development Plan (RYDP) also stemmed from the *Priorities for Youth* policy, and this will be a three year high-level Plan for the youth service. Both the RAG and the LAGs have an essential advisory role in shaping the Plan, and Dr Mangan stressed the importance of ensuring that young people’s views are considered throughout this development process.

Before introducing the keynote speaker, Dr Mangan expressed thanks to the RAG/LAG Conference Planning group and EA support staff, and also to Action Mental Health, Lighthouse, the Bytes Project, the Rainbow Project and the Consumer Council for their inputs to Conference workshops.
Keynote Address

Koulla Yiasouma, Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People

In congratulating organisers for running this inaugural RAG/LAG conference, Koulla observed that in her previous role at Include Youth she had attended the first RAG meeting back in 2014.

She went on to explain the role of the NICCY Office as safeguarding and promoting the rights and best interests of children and young people. These rights are enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and Koulla drew attention to several Articles which have particular salience for the youth service.

Firstly she noted the broad definition of education contained in Article 29, which refers to ‘developing young people’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities’, and preparing them for an active adult life. Koulla highlighted the compatibility between this whole-child view of education, and the methods used by youth workers when engaging holistically with young people.

Koulla then referred to Article 12 of the UNCRC which enshrines children and young people’s rights to express their views and have their voices heard in decision making. In the absence of a Northern Ireland youth parliament, Koulla especially welcomed the youth service pilot of a Network for Youth as a regional structure for participation. Whilst reiterating that youth work methods are highly congruent with Article 12, she stressed that participation requires not only listening to young people, but being able to demonstrate how their views have been taken into account.

Referring to a survey of over 1200 young people recently conducted by the Education Authority to inform the Regional Assessment of Need, Koulla noted that ‘friendships’, ‘relationships with youth workers’, ‘new activities’ and ‘more programmes’ had been highlighted by young people as positive aspects of youth work. Koulla urged that the service takes heed of what young people value about the service, and retain the ‘joy’ provided by youth work.

She then outlined current NICCY priority areas of work, which include addressing children and young people’s complex mental health issues, the disparities in educational attainment, the impact of poverty on children and young people, and the need to safeguard their safety, including a challenge to physical punishment.
On the subject of mental wellbeing, Koulla noted the high proportion of EA survey respondents who had identified ‘exam stress’ as a major pressure in their lives. In reflecting on how the youth service can respond, she referenced Article 31 of the UNCRC which enshrines the right to ‘rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.’

She commented that, for young people experiencing stress and anxiety, the youth service offers an incredibly important space for rest and leisure, a safe place to socialise and just to ‘hang around’. This fundamental aspect of youth work should not be overlooked or downgraded.

In closing Koulla commented that youth work is ‘by far the most rights-compliant way we have of engaging with young people’, and as such its methods should be shared widely with other public services.
Workshops
Workshops

The aims of the conference were two-fold:

i) To provide RAG/LAG members with the opportunity to examine themes raised in the Regional Assessment of Need, with a view to exploring how they could be taken forward by the EA in the period 2017-2020, and

ii) To consult with RAG/LAG members on the draft Regional Youth Development Plan

Following the keynote address the conference took the format of thematic workshops, each informed by an interactive presentation from an expert organisation. Workshop participants focused on generating ideas for specific actions which the youth service could take to respond to the issues. The afternoon session built on these ideas, and workshop participants were tasked to propose recommendations for the Regional Youth Development Plan. Some groups aligned these recommendations with the RYDP structure, e.g. Raising Standards for All, Closing the Performance Gap, Developing the Education Workforce, Improving the Learning Environment, and Transforming Governance and Management. Other groups made additional recommendations for actions by the Local Advisory Groups.

The following synopsis of workshop discussions is closely drawn from the video-recorded feedback sessions, along with the notes taken by nominated note-takers within each group.
LGBTQ and Gender Identity

Workshop Presentation: The Rainbow Project

The Rainbow Project is a voluntary organisation which aims to promote the health and wellbeing of LGBTQ people and their families in Northern Ireland, as well as supporting individuals who are questioning their sexual orientation or gender.

Using the model of a ‘Genderbread’ person, the workshop began by exploring the often misunderstood differences between gender identity and sexual orientation. It was highlighted that the gap between the age of first being aware of same sex attraction and/or gender identity and the age of coming out has widened over recent years, with LGBTQ young people generally coming out at a later age – this is in spite of an apparently more ‘open’ society. The group then took part in an exercise to explore the role of language in sustaining stereotypes and prejudices about those who are not heterosexual. The workshop also looked at the concept and impact of heterosexism, i.e. the tendency to assume that all people are heterosexual and hence to convey an unconscious bias.

It was noted that LGBTQ young people can face multiple issues, which include:

- Inequalities for LGBTQ
- Drug and alcohol use and misuse
- Emotional health and wellbeing
- Sexual health
- Hate crimes
- Homelessness
- Domestic and sexual violence (1 in 4 LGBTQ people suffer domestic violence)
- Isolation and invisibility (urban/rural)
- Trans health care
- Relationships education
Discussion points included:

- Remember that young people who are LGBTQ have different needs, they are not all the same
- Youth workers don’t need to be LGBTQ themselves to work with LGBTQ young people
- Why has bullying increased for LGBTQ young people? It was felt that social media has taken homophobic and transphobic bullying viral
- There needs to be better acknowledgment of the time lag between knowing you’re LGBTQ and coming out
- Need for more conversations, more training, more partnerships, more sharing of resources, and greater confidence within the youth service to support young LGBTQ people
- Need for critical reflection, e.g... look at our facilities, what are we posting, how do we present ourselves, and how are we influencing those above us to make change happen?
- Need consistency and sustained funding, rather than funding for schemes.

Recommended actions for the youth service

1. The coming out age is higher now than it was in 2003, which raises the question of what the youth service is doing to support LGBTQ young people during the years before they have come out? Do youth centres promote LGBT in a positive light?
2. The service must avoid unconscious bias or making heterosexist assumptions about young people. This means looking closely at the language used, the role of the youth worker to challenge negativity and affirm diversity, and making sure the service is truly open and inclusive of LGB and T (an example of this being the need to review the arrangements put in place for residentialss).
3. Up-to-date and relevant training about LGBTQ is needed at all levels in the service, and this training must extend to part time workers and volunteers.
4. The youth service should not shy away from issues, or opt to simply signpost LGBTQ young people elsewhere. The relationship between youth workers and young people should be the basis for offering support and helping young people to deal with their issues and fears.
5. The youth service needs to create more partnerships, and to proactively build and share best practice in work with LGBTQ young people.
6. The service should respond to the breadth of issues and fears which individual LGBTQ young people may face, such as domestic violence, homelessness and alcohol use, rather than just focusing on their LGBTQ orientation.

**Recommendations for the Regional Youth Development Plan**

**Developing the education workforce**

- Bespoke training delivered to teams of full time workers, part time workers, volunteers and young people. Different levels of training should be delivered.
- Create change through the Quality Assurance Framework (People, Practice, Organisation).
- Need to ensure clear messages from organisations to stamp out homophobia

**Transforming governance and management**

- The Regional Assessment of Need must be translated from need into practice. There are particular considerations for rural LGBTQ accessibility, and to explore how the youth centre is inclusive, how we work with LGBTQ, and the role of the youth worker
- Influence – to challenge the structures of organisations, and influence policy to be more representative. Need to challenge the rhetoric of political representatives

**Raising standards for all**

- Need to share the forthcoming ‘Still Shouting’ research and to deliberate on the findings. Actions should be created from this, to include a broader deliberation with schools and churches
- Develop IT systems to support young people.
- The youth service Management Information System should include access to a resource library (e.g. research, posters)
- Audit and map good practice in LGBTQ work – this is a long term issue.
Mental Health / body image / boredom / confidence

Workshop Presentation: Action Mental Health

Action Mental Health (AMH) is a local charity which works to enhance the quality of life and the employability of people with mental health needs or a learning disability in Northern Ireland. AMH also delivers a programme called Mindset which raises awareness and increases knowledge of mental and emotional health and wellbeing and promotes self-help and self-care. Mindset is designed for young people aged 14-17 years, and for adults.

The workshop began with an interactive exercise on the words used around mental health, which showed the predominance of negative language. A short film was shown based on young people in schools, with the observation that 3 pupils in each classroom experience a diagnosable mental disorder. A PowerPoint presentation referenced statistics from Northern Ireland, including findings from a survey of 16 year olds which showed that 29% had emotional or mental health problems. The workshop also outlined the ‘Five Steps to Wellbeing’ which cover ways to promote self-help and combat negative thinking.

Discussion points included:

- Reflection on the high percentage of young people experiencing a mental health issue, and the lack of mental health education in schools
- The variety of words and phrases relating to ‘mental health’, often have negative connotations, and words having different meanings to different people. Mental health can also be used in a positive sense, in terms of good mental wellbeing.
- The difference between mental health and mental illness

When discussing what youth workers could do to respond to this complex area, the following points were made:

- Youth workers have two roles to play – they can encourage positive mental health, and also be a ‘go to’ person for young people, i.e. they should be both educator and helper
- Youth organisations should run mental health awareness programmes, should be able to recognise the signs of poor mental health, and create safe spaces where support can be found
• There should be mental health services in everyday places, such as youth centres and common-rooms etc. There could be drop-in hubs across the regions offering a safe presence

• Training is important but there is also the important role for youth provision to promote positive mental health, including offering fun activities, sports, arts and volunteering opportunities

• Training around holistic therapies, mindfulness and self-help

• Resources are essential

• Outreach work to young people and communities which remain under the radar

Recommended actions for the youth service

There needs to be more focus on encouraging positive mental health and providing activities to help prevent young people’s issues from escalating

1. Potential for the youth service to harness IT to support mental health, for example developing a mental health app which allows young people to share experiences, and to connect to advisors and specialists

2. Young people should be able to find specialist help easily, and this help needs to be age appropriate and issue-specific

3. Youth workers should offer support rather than just signposting young people on. Workers are well placed to do this, given the relationships of trust they build with young people.

Recommendations for the Regional Youth Development Plan

• Conduct wide ranging research into mental health. This should include the needs of minority/invisible groups, an audit of current services, and identify the challenges facing youth workers in this area.

• Develop a Taskforce or working group to look at how the youth service can address challenges (by March 2018)

• Offer training programmes for youth workers to create a skill set. There should be parity of access to this training across the voluntary and statutory sectors.

• Promote positivity around mental health: develop educational resources by March 2018
- Make more use of technology, for example develop an app and a virtual map of support services
- Develop a pilot scheme of peer support and peer education.

**Life Skills / skills for independent living / money management**

**Workshop Presentation: The Consumer Council**

The Consumer Council is an independent organisation working to bring about change to benefit Northern Ireland consumers. The Council has a statutory remit to promote and safeguard the interests of consumers in Northern Ireland and it has specific functions in relation to energy, water, transport, postal services and food. The Council also works directly with the education, voluntary, community and advice sectors, by providing information, leaflets, resources and lesson plans to help consumers learn about their rights and equip them with the skills to become more informed, confident consumers.

The workshop began by exploring the different personalities of savers, and gave practical tips on money management skills. This was followed by a quick quiz to assess awareness of consumer issues, and a video on the Consumer Rights Act (which now covers rights on digital downloads as well goods and services)

**Discussion points included:**

- Youth services could support young people to gain knowledge on practical issues such as how to apply for driving licenses and passports.
- An important aspect of life skills is the development of social skills to deal with adults, with those in authority, and colleagues in the workplace. Therefore life skills involves relationship building and social skills.
- There is a link between money matters and mental health, but money skills are not covered in formal education. Learning for Life and Work (LLW) needs to be enhanced to cover financial matters in more detail
- Issues of consumerism and young people failing to see the consequences. Also of parents replacing social interaction with money and consumer goods.
• Discussions about young people and debt, including gambling apps, misunderstanding of how pawn shops operate, getting into drug debt, pay day loans and the impact of student loans

**Recommended actions for the youth service**

1. Young people are often not believed in shops due to their age – they need training in consumer rights but also to be supported to be confident consumers, rather than confrontational
2. Issues which need to be addressed include the increasing use of gambling apps by young people, drug debt, handling the impact of student loans, budgeting and saving, and developing skills for independent living and leaving home.
3. Branding a programme as ‘financial management’ doesn’t appeal to young people – need to consider how to make life skills programmes more attractive.
4. The youth service should maximise opportunities to give young people real experiences of handling money and financial decision making. Tuck shops in youth centres, admission fees, involving young people in fundraising, and the Small Grants Scheme, are all relevant learning opportunities in the youth service and should be retained.

**Recommendations for the Regional Youth Development Plan**

• Regionally the youth service should design a pack of resources to support youth work and programmes on life skills
• Youth service should work with sub-cultures, e.g. gamers, goths etc.
• Outreach or peripatetic work for young people within their centres may be more appropriate than having to travel to an external service
• Youth centres need to be maintained as a safe place to be, and to support social skills rather than being project focused. Centres need to move from a one-size-fits-all approach
• LAGs should build awareness around life skills and develop age appropriate programmes
• LAGs need to develop links with gambling support organisations, which could include creating a Directory
• LAGs should develop social skills among young people, as these are needed for wider life skills
Employability / careers / getting a job / pathways for young people

Workshop Presentation: The Bytes Project

The Bytes Project is a voluntary youth work organisation which uses creative ICT to engage and inspire socially excluded young people to realise their full potential and to progress into education, training and employment.

The workshop began with a presentation about the services provided by the Bytes Project and the innovative use of ICT combined with a youth work methodology, one-to-one mentoring and opportunities for young people to gain OCNs and other vocational qualifications.

Discussion points included:

- If young people do not achieve numeracy and literacy they will face barriers to employment, but there is a stigma which devalues Essential Skills training
- A formal approach is not effective for all young people. There is a need to set achievable youth work outcomes, and to invest more time in the human aspects of youth work and less on monitoring targets
- Encourage participation among young people in youth clubs, and focus on sustaining an environment which allows young people to express themselves freely
- Employability skills can be taught through everyday aspects of youth clubs such as tuck shops (although these should also consider healthy eating)

Recommended actions for the youth service

1. The youth service needs to challenge the stigma and devaluation of Essential Skills, the importance of these qualifications should have parity with GCSEs
2. Need to encourage social enterprises among young people
3. Not all young people learn academically, and some may be unaware of their aptitudes and capabilities because they haven’t been taught skills. A less formal approach is needed in work with young people
4. The youth service should invest more time on young people’s development – this is a more important focus for the service than meeting targets
5. The environment in a youth club is easier (than schools) for many young people to handle and learn in, so the youth service could develop tutoring programmes which will help to reduce exam stress.

6. Young people operating tuck shops teaches employability skills – it is important to use this aspect of youth work for learning

**Recommendations for the Regional Youth Development Plan**

**Raising standards for all**

- The LAGs should have a budget, so they can use a grant to target specific areas

**Closing the Gap**

- Focus more on personal and social development. This should include addressing issues with younger age groups (e.g. drugs, smoking, and sex education).
- There should be more use of residential to address on specific issues. Residencies are effective spaces for learning, and a good opportunity to spend time away from situations.
- Make use of people who have been through experiences - this makes learning more real-life for young people
- Have age-appropriate opening times for programmes
- Look at ways to reward volunteers who work long hours

**Developing the Education Workforce**

- Specialised training (mental health, LGBT)

**Transforming Governance**

- Targets should be reduced, and should be age appropriate

**Suicide / legal highs / drugs and alcohol**

**Workshop Presentation: Lighthouse**

Lighthouse is a suicide prevention charity based in north Belfast. It was established in 2003 as a community response to the exceptionally high incidence of suicide in the area. Lighthouse is committed to helping individuals who are in crisis, and to providing support services to families who have lost loved ones.
Discussion points included:

- The term mental health often used as a negative – need to use it more in terms of promoting positive mental health.
- The need to break down stigma, to normalise mental health and make it OK to talk about it. Youth service needs to raise awareness, build resilience, take a more proactive approach, to have mental health education built into youth work and schools - mental health in the curriculum.
- Importance of relationships with people you know and trust. Need to give young people the time and safe space to talk about what is happening.
- Age is an important aspect. We need age appropriate programmes and to work with a younger age group. As children often look up to older ones, young people who have experience could work with the younger ones.
- The role of social media as a platform for young people to get information and help, e.g... Mind your Head. Advertise where young people can get help.
- Have youth workers in school for drop-in. Take a mindfulness approach in schools, rather than the medical approach.
- There is too much expected from young people, causing exam stress and pressure to succeed.
- There needs to be more in place to address bullying on social media.

Recommended actions for the youth service

1. Further partnership working is needed, including more cross-sectoral links between health and education.
2. Health and education should collaborate at a policy level in terms of addressing mental health issues.
3. Long term preventative measures are needed in addition to reactive youth work, i.e. positive mental health should be supported from an earlier age.
4. There is potential value in peer mentoring as an approach to support young people’s mental health. This action includes the training of peer mentors, youth workers and volunteers.
5. Mindfulness should be included across the education curriculum.
6. Professional development training is needed for youth workers, (part time and full time) and for volunteers
7. The development of outcomes measurement is important – there is a need to be able to measure and demonstrate the impact gained through youth work
8. The youth service should help to raise awareness among young people of where to get help for mental health. This should focus on social media and apps
9. There is a strategic need to raise awareness among politicians about the lack of resources

**Recommendations for the Regional Youth Development Plan**

**Closing the Gap**

- Long term preventative measures as well as reactive ones: mindfulness on the youth work and school curriculum.
- Young people trained to deliver peer education (in mindfulness)
- Young people deliver workshops at future RAG/LAG conference

**Developing the education workforce**

- Training for youth workers (full time, part time, volunteers) and young people as peer mentors. This will lead to an increased awareness of stigma and mental health
Closing Remarks
**Closing Remarks**

**Peter Mogey and Tara-Grace Connolly, RAG representation & NI Youth Forum**

Peter and Tara highlighted the importance of participation, saying that young people’s voices have been heard in the Regional Advisory Group and throughout the process of conference planning. They also welcomed that young people’s voices had been central to the process of developing the Regional Assessment of Need.

Reflecting on the conference, they observed:

- Young people have intrinsic rights to be heard and have their opinions considered
- Education should be more than educational attainment, it should be holistic and enrich the whole person. It is vital that the role of youth work is affirmed
- More young people participating in the conference workshops was beneficial
- It was refreshing to hear voluntary sector organisations prioritising young people’s need in their service provision, and taking the opinions of young people on board to provide effective programmes and interventions
- Expectation to see actions in the Regional Youth Development Plan as a result of the conference

In closing, after thanking the organisers and all those who had contributed and participated, Peter and Tara noted that they would wish to see this as an annual conference, with greater participation from RAG / LAG members.
Evaluation
**Evaluation**

**Do you feel that the aims of the conference were met?**

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In terms of Aim ii) some commented that copies of the draft RYDP had not been circulated – questions were asked whether there would be a formal consultation on the RYDP and whether the Plan would be young people friendly?

**What did you find most useful about the conference?**

Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and three aspects of the conference were particularly mentioned within the comments:

- The focus on mental health / the mental health presentation
- Keynote address by the Commissioner for Children and Young People
- Excellent / informative workshops, workshop presentations very helpful and easy to understand

Other positives were listed as; the opportunity to network, discuss, and hear other views; having a role in setting youth service priorities; young people’s active involvement during the day; seeing ideas being turned into action points; opportunity for young people and adults to work together; having time to focus on a single issue; gaining information.
Do you have any suggestions for topics for future conferences?

A popular suggestion for future conferences was that young people should be more centre-stage, including facilitating and delivering workshops, and being keynote speakers. Several felt the format of the conference programme and some of the tasks/language could have been more young-person friendly. There were also comments that Saturday is inconvenient to young people with part-time jobs, and that a weekday during half-term holiday may be more suitable.

It was suggested that future conferences should retain and expand the interactive approach. Several commented that the next conference should include a review of what has been achieved from this one, that the LAGs could be more involved in agenda-setting, and that there could be a wider representation from the voluntary youth work sector.

Suggested topics for future conferences included

- Gambling
- Debt
- Mental health
- Exam stress
- Youth participation
- Drugs and alcohol
- Antisocial behaviour
- Child sexual exploitation
- Community relations
- Education / links to parenting
- Generic youth work
- Technology awareness
- LAGS to decide on topics
- Mixed schools
- Young people in care
- The future of the youth service
- Peer education
- Quality indicators
- Sport and volunteering in youth work
- Brexit
- Consumer issues
- Youth service and school links
- Paramilitarism & legacy of conflict

Overall would you say the whole experience was...

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very satisfactory</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not satisfactory</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Selection of comments about the conference

The vast majority of written feedback from RAG members, LAG workers and young people was positive. The following gives a selection of comments made - both positive and negative.

A useful day for me as a LAG member, to get a feel for the wider work across NI and the RAG

Enjoyable, interesting, thought provoking day. Good to have a chance to talk to other workers

Workshop leaders LGBT were brilliant, made me feel very comfortable as I lacked knowledge, and made their talk very easy to understand

Excellent conference, brilliant to hear the feedback from young people. Some really interesting points made by young people – excellent opportunity to ask them questions, hear new ideas and get their views

Very good opportunity, really enjoyable, was good for us young people to have a voice and share our opinions

I enjoyed the impact of the conference and the opportunity to talk to workers/young people from other areas

Great young people taking on leadership roles during the planning of the Conference and Closing comments

All useful, found input from Children’s commissioner and workshop on mental health very positive and informative. Very positive day for me. Inspirational young people.

I found everything useful in the conference, employability and mental health. There should be more workshops every year on these needs of young people

It was excellent, really well done. Issues were not only identified but great to see action being taken. A real voice for young people

Refreshing model of young people co-working alongside adults. Opportunity to raise opinions and have them ‘heard’. Now it’s about next steps and key actions and approaching funders

The opportunity to hear feedback from each group. Really positive.

I think the conference was successful in achieving the aims. Great opportunity for members of LAG/RAG to meet together and share ideas and learning from experiences to date, and on the way forward

Would have liked opportunity to go to more than one workshop. They all seemed to be very informative

Well delivered and had lots of feedback and allowed good discussion among group members. The topic range was very well thought out and touched a lot of key areas

Great conference, relevant issues for workshops and discussions

Employability workshop was very good. RYDP discussion allowed participants to see how actions can be taken forward practically through the plan and at local level

LGB and T workshop really well facilitated, presentation was excellent. Koulla’s input was very supportive of the benefits of being involved in youth services
It was informative, specifically the Bytes project talk

Would have liked to attend more than one workshop

Great learning throughout the day. Would have been great to have discussions about exactly what RAG have been doing....We need to be looking at funding and where the service is going

Very well organised and all the people were good

Our facilitators were very good, excellent presentation and engagement throughout and encouraged discussion while maintaining focus on the issue

Meeting people in an informal environment and having the opportunity to chat and build relationships

Young people’s conference would be beneficial

It was very useful to both older and younger people, however could have been less formal

Poor turnout from RAG

Need language young people understand

It is more for older youth workers rather than young people, make it more fun for young people

Could’ve been a bit more interactive

Overall it was good but some additional activities or more young people-friendly activities would have been useful as some of them struggled to engage in the process.

Quite a formal process and procedure. More young people’s involvement needed and an informal process to be used
Participants

Rebekah Andrews
Brooke Bain
Alison Beattie
Graham Beattie
Annemarie Bell
Zara Birch
Elsa Blackstock
Joshua Boyd
Alisha Braiden
Lynsey Branniff
Amy Briers
Johnny Brolly
Rosie Carey
Tara-Grace Connolly
Marie Conway
Catriona Coyle
Johnny Crumble
Liam Curran
Alex Curry
Stephen Dallas
Tommy Dallas
Stephen Daly
Paul Deighan
Katie-Ann Doran
Justine Donnan
Abagail Duffy
Martin Dunne
Dreena Evans
Martin Fahy
Paul Fitzsimons
Conor Fitzpatrick
Christian Ford
Gillian Forrest
Michelle Fullerton
Mickey Gaffney
Noel Gallagher
Cathy Galway
Marc Giboney
Kathleen Grego
Shauna Gribben
Ryan Grieve
Terry Hamill
Tanya-Louise Hamill
Nathan Hamilton
Clare Harvey
Ashley Hibbert
Kevin Hughes
Elizabeth Johnston
Mandy Jones
Daniel Kavanagh
Arlene Kee
Aoife Kelly
Jess Keyte
Ben Lewis
Andrew Linton
Francis Loughlin
Patricia Mackey
Rebekah Madden
Shannon Magee
Jacqueline Maguire
Patricia Mallon
Dr Clare Mangan
Mark McBride
Cahal McCaffrey
Seamus McCaughen
Gillian McClay
Roisin McConville
Aideen McCormick
Etha McCracken
Mollie McGeown
Chloe McGoldrick
Yvonne McKeever
John McLaughlin
Martin McMullan
Ena McTaggart
Gerry McVeigh
Monica Meehan
Mark Megaughin
John Meikleham
Esther Millar
Philip Mitchell
Peter Mogey
Paul Moore
Wayne Morris
Ainesu Mtowa
Sinead Mulholland

Colette Murray
Katrina Newell
Christopher Nicol
Jan Nixey
Maureen O’Gorman
Cora O’Hara
Michael O’Loan
Chloe Rainey
Chelsea Reid
James Roy
Rebecca Russle
Narene Skeffington
Brenda Shearer
Pauline Smart
Doug Smith
Laura Stewart
Sarah Stewart
Megan Stratton
Koulla Yiasouma
Maire Young
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tweet</th>
<th>Link to Content</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RT *****: &quot;Young People First&quot; RAG/LAG Conference #ypfirst @NIYF You are doing a great job with young and for young people.</td>
<td><a href="https://twitter.com/nandijproject/status/840609209469304833/photo/1">https://twitter.com/nandijproject/status/840609209469304833/photo/1</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT *****: Really inspiring to hear the voices of young people at the forefront #ypfirst @NIYF <a href="https://t.co/20z1G1TkaO">https://t.co/20z1G1TkaO</a></td>
<td><a href="https://twitter.com/nandijproject/status/840610422378098688/photo/1">https://twitter.com/nandijproject/status/840610422378098688/photo/1</a>, <a href="https://twitter.com/nandijproject/status/840610422378098688/photo/1">https://twitter.com/nandijproject/status/840610422378098688/photo/1</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Massive thank you to our workshop presenters today at the #ypfirst conference @TRPNI @lighthouseirela @bytesproject @amhNI @ConsumerCouncil</td>
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<tr>
<td>Closing remarks Tara &amp; Peter from the RAG #ypfirst <a href="https://t.co/llIs0VdVcP">https://t.co/llIs0VdVcP</a></td>
<td><a href="https://twitter.com/eayouthservice/status/840587307816222724/photo/1">https://twitter.com/eayouthservice/status/840587307816222724/photo/1</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>RT *****: @Start360org great workshop on #mentalhealth with @amhNI at @eayouthservice #ypfirst conference</td>
<td><a href="https://twitter.com/sdalla5/status/840570377331961856/photo/1">https://twitter.com/sdalla5/status/840570377331961856/photo/1</a>, <a href="https://twitter.com/sdalla5/status/840570377331961856/photo/1">https://twitter.com/sdalla5/status/840570377331961856/photo/1</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>RT *****: Contributing to the regional development plan #ypfirst <a href="https://t.co/vcVQVA82AY">https://t.co/vcVQVA82AY</a></td>
<td><a href="https://twitter.com/ismise_aoife/status/840573204418691073/photo/1">https://twitter.com/ismise_aoife/status/840573204418691073/photo/1</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>RT *****: Regional/Local Advisory Group conference to talk about priorities for young people; exam stress, mental health &amp; poverty</td>
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<tr>
<td>RT *****: #ypfirst brilliant and eye Opening 8) 8) 8)</td>
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<tr>
<td>RT *****: @SpunOut let’s use this online tool to support mental health in NI #ypfirst <a href="https://t.co/uOBtJoIoZi">https://t.co/uOBtJoIoZi</a></td>
<td><a href="https://www.pscp.tv/w/a5KIzfFvTIFsTFB5cURhUXd8MXlvSk1IZXpxeVlKUSBHyAnmNn6aP3a8RZ94oh05J1zLmnI5fTMIgJSjpke">https://www.pscp.tv/w/a5KIzfFvTIFsTFB5cURhUXd8MXlvSk1IZXpxeVlKUSBHyAnmNn6aP3a8RZ94oh05J1zLmnI5fTMIgJSjpke</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Workshop feedback #ypfirst <a href="https://t.co/uOBtIoIoZi">https://t.co/uOBtIoIoZi</a></td>
<td><a href="https://twitter.com/eayouthservice/status/840541128634093573/photo/1">https://twitter.com/eayouthservice/status/840541128634093573/photo/1</a>, <a href="https://twitter.com/eayouthservice/status/840541128634093573/photo/1">https://twitter.com/eayouthservice/status/840541128634093573/photo/1</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Group discussions have started to look at key actions to help address issues or themes raised in our workshop #ypfirst <a href="https://t.co/JONmipEzMh">https://t.co/JONmipEzMh</a></td>
<td><a href="https://twitter.com/eayouthservice/status/840537571079905280/photo/1">https://twitter.com/eayouthservice/status/840537571079905280/photo/1</a>, <a href="https://twitter.com/eayouthservice/status/840537571079905280/photo/1">https://twitter.com/eayouthservice/status/840537571079905280/photo/1</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>#ypfirst participants getting quizzed by @ConsumerCouncil on their consumer rights, we will let you guess how many they got right! <a href="https://t.co/MisYnqrF9g">https://t.co/MisYnqrF9g</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group discussion in @TRPNI workshop @ #ypfirst <a href="https://t.co/oHoKrdW5cp">https://t.co/oHoKrdW5cp</a></td>
<td><a href="https://twitter.com/eayouthservice/status/840536242827755520/photo/1">https://twitter.com/eayouthservice/status/840536242827755520/photo/1</a>, <a href="https://twitter.com/eayouthservice/status/840536242827755520/photo/1">https://twitter.com/eayouthservice/status/840536242827755520/photo/1</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>RT *****: Unreal video with amh #ypfirst <a href="https://t.co/I9ssUtUYi7">https://t.co/I9ssUtUYi7</a></td>
<td><a href="https://twitter.com/sdalla5/status/840534515923746816/photo/1">https://twitter.com/sdalla5/status/840534515923746816/photo/1</a>, <a href="https://twitter.com/sdalla5/status/840534515923746816/photo/1">https://twitter.com/sdalla5/status/840534515923746816/photo/1</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>RT</td>
<td>Mental health is not the same as mental illness #ypfirst</td>
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<td>RT</td>
<td>Activity time...what does mental health mean for you #ypfirst</td>
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<td>AZH #ypfirst</td>
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<td>RT</td>
<td>Scale of issues #ypfirst</td>
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<td>RT</td>
<td>Action Mental Health getting us to consider how we address key issues #ypfirst</td>
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<tr>
<td>RT</td>
<td>And youth services are in the middle of that @ShriekingGreek #ypfirst</td>
</tr>
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<td>RT</td>
<td>My priorities are mental health and finding ways forward @ShriekingGreek #ypfirst</td>
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<td>RT</td>
<td>Importance of friendships through youth work #ypfirst</td>
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<tr>
<td>RT</td>
<td>Listening to the voice of young people through the EA Regional Assessment of need #ypfirst</td>
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<tr>
<td>RT</td>
<td>@amhNI presenting a workshop on mental health and coping skills for young people #ypfirst</td>
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<tr>
<td>RT</td>
<td>@lighthouseirela presenting a workshop on young people’s mental health and wellbeing #ypfirst</td>
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<tr>
<td>RT</td>
<td>@bytesproject presenting a workshop on employability &amp; career pathways for young people #ypfirst</td>
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<tr>
<td>RT</td>
<td>@TRPNI presenting a workshop on work with LGB&amp;T young people</td>
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<tr>
<td>RT</td>
<td>@ConsumerCouncil presenting a workshop on young people, money &amp; life skills #ypfirst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT</td>
<td>@ConsumerCouncil: We are giving a presentation today at the @Ed_Authority RAG LAG Conference for younger people #ypfirst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT</td>
<td>@Start360org hearing about the importance of safe places for young people from @nichildcom at #ypfirst conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT</td>
<td>Anxiety and stress of children and yp and the right to play and REST #ypfirst</td>
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<td>RT</td>
<td>NI needs proper regional structures for yp to have their voice heard #ypfirst</td>
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<tr>
<td>RT @myvoiceyAND:</td>
<td>Young people are future leaders and the Big Plan for AND is interested to hear their views at EA’s young people first conference</td>
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<tr>
<td>RT @sdalla5:</td>
<td>Education is about the whole child and youth work can support that #ypfirst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT @shriekingGreek:</td>
<td>Valuing the role of youth work #ypfirst.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT @ardcarnetyouth:</td>
<td>Just started the #ypfirst conference. EAyouth <a href="https://t.co/LxVZsxyYqR">https://t.co/LxVZsxyYqR</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT @gerrymcveigh:</td>
<td>Attending @Ed_Authority #ypfirst conference with @Start360org discussing future of Youth Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT @ardcarnetyouth:</td>
<td>Just started the #ypfirst conference. EAyouth <a href="https://t.co/LxVZsxyYqR">https://t.co/LxVZsxyYqR</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT @sail_ni:</td>
<td>Glad to be at the inaugural @eayouthservice conference #ypfirst with @nichildcom @TRPNI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up now keynote address by @nichildcom #ypfirst</td>
<td><a href="https://www.pscp.tv/w/aSjJZjFvTIFsTFB5cURhUXd8MWt2S3BubmF5bW1KRe-J9XwHKA01GWvFLNlenhC-y932y2NhrgmWVKHbEuGl">https://www.pscp.tv/w/aSjJZjFvTIFsTFB5cURhUXd8MWt2S3BubmF5bW1KRe-J9XwHKA01GWvFLNlenhC-y932y2NhrgmWVKHbEuGl</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going live #ypfirst</td>
<td><a href="https://www.pscp.tv/w/aSjZpDFvTIFsTFB5cURhUXd8MXpxS1ZiYkxCTXBLQj0tHFESxRgbsTw_xvAXGjA5vvFQPnepsiP4VPyB3H">https://www.pscp.tv/w/aSjZpDFvTIFsTFB5cURhUXd8MXpxS1ZiYkxCTXBLQj0tHFESxRgbsTw_xvAXGjA5vvFQPnepsiP4VPyB3H</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We will be showing the keynote addresses live after 10am via twitter #ypfirst</td>
<td><a href="https://twitter.com/eayouthservice/status/840503031011631105/photo/1">https://twitter.com/eayouthservice/status/840503031011631105/photo/1</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All setup and ready to go #ypfirst</td>
<td><a href="https://twitter.com/eayouthservice/status/840490447646687232/photo/1">https://twitter.com/eayouthservice/status/840490447646687232/photo/1</a></td>
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Young People First

Conference Welcome
Dr. Clare Mangan
Director of Children & Young People's Services

Keynote Address
Koulla Yiassouma
Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People

To safeguard and promote the rights and best interests of children and young people Act 6 (11)

'A society in NI where all children and Young people flourish, are valued and their views are respected.'

It's All About You
Young People First Conference – 11th March 2017

Priorities for Youth
Young People Live through Youth

Article 29 - Aims of Education
Education shall aim at developing the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to the fullest extent. Education shall prepare the child for an active adult life in a free society and foster respect for the child’s parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, and for the cultural background and values of others.

UN recommendations on participation
34. (a) Establish structures for the active and meaningful participation of children and give due weight to their views in designing laws, policies, programmes and services at the local and national levels, including in relation to discrimination, violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, harmful practices, domestic care, sexual and reproductive education, leisure and play. Particular attention should be paid to ensuring that children and children in vulnerable situations, such as children with disabilities.

35. (b) Ensure the establishment of youth parliaments in all local and administrative units as permanent forums for children’s effective engagement with national legislative processes on issues that affect them.

36. (b) Ensure that children are not only heard but also listened to and their views given due weight by all professionals working with children.

UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2010
Summary Points

- Young People’s Voice – has been heard in RAG and throughout the process of conference planning.
- Regional assessment of need – young people’s voices were central to the process.
- Reflections on today – intrinsic right of young people to be heard and have their opinions considered.
- Holistic education – education should be more than educational attainment, but enriching the whole person. Vital youth work role confirmed.

Summary Points

- I feel that more young people participating in the workshop was beneficial today. (Peter)
- It was refreshing to hear voluntary sector organisations prioritising young people’s needs in their service provision, and taking the opinions of young people on board as to provide effective programmes and interventions.
- Expect see to actions in the RYDP as a result of today.
- Would want this to become an annual event with more participation from RAG/JAG members.