

REPORT

**RAG/LAG Participation Event  
Mid & East Antrim**

**Research and Innovation in Youth Work**

*Monday 4<sup>th</sup> November 2019*

*Carrickfergus YMCA*



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides details of the Stakeholder Participation Event that took place on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> November 2019 in Carrickfergus YMCA. The event was part of the Education Authority (EA) RAG participative processes and was led by the Regional Advisory Group (RAG) and Local Advisory Group (LAG) for Mid and East Antrim.

The event engaged seventy three key stakeholders from across the statutory and voluntary youth sectors to consider 'Research and Innovation in Youth Work'.

In the course of the event participants looked at the impact of the Department of Justice (DoJ) "Ending the Harm" campaign and the effect this hard hitting approach has in getting across a message to young people. The overwhelming opinion was that it was effective at the moment but had limited long lasting impact.

Young people stated that mental health, diversity, bullying, sexual health, physical health and substance abuse were key issues for young people that could benefit from innovative approaches. The use of IT, safe places to go, outreach work and more consultation events were suggested as ways of enabling youth services in helping young people address these issues in their lives.

Young people felt that increased funding to youth services to provide more traditional youth work methodologies such as residential, trips, cross-community events, qualifications and drop-in centres would create new opportunities for young people to engage.

Adult feedback suggested engaging youth workers in schools to deliver impactful sessions around "Ending the Harm" and other issues which could create meaningful learning. More extensive use of Outdoor Learning and experiential learning were also seen as effective approaches to address issues affecting young people.

### Local Advisory Group

The Mid & East Antrim LAG members including young people have led, supported and engaged with youth service stakeholders for the RAG participation event in Carrickfergus YMCA on Research and Innovation in Youth Work.

### Aims

To identify and inform the Education Authority (EA) and the Regional Advisory Group (RAG) on research and innovation within youth work.

To support the development of key themes for the Regional Assessment of Need and the Regional Youth Development Plan 2020-2023.

To increase participation of young people and other key stakeholders at a local level to identify innovative approaches to addressing key issues identified by young people

### Objectives

To host a local event to increase the participation of young people and key stakeholders.

To provide opportunities for RAG members, LAG members and key stakeholders to network and to analyse and discuss innovative approaches that may enhance youth work.

To develop recommendations on how youth services could use innovative approaches to best engage young people and address their needs.

## 2.1 Methodology

The event was hosted and facilitated by young people from the Mid & East Antrim LAG and Carrickfergus YMCA.

The young people held two event planning meetings and allocated roles for the evening. Two young people, David Fee and Ashlyn Close co-hosted the event. Six young people facilitated discussion groups with a youth worker scribing the discussion.

A variety of methodologies were used to enable the participants to engage fully, which are outlined below.

The EA Outdoor Learning Service opened the event with an icebreaking activity and team building challenge, to help the young people and adults mix together.

Debra White from the Department of Justice presented a PowerPoint giving background to their 'Ending the Harm' campaign which included showing the four TV adverts linked to the campaign.

Participants were split into small discussion groups to give their opinions on the impact of the campaign and methods to provide young people with information on important issues. Discussions also took place regarding what innovative opportunities Youth Services can offer for young people.

Finally, a representative from the Youth Work Alliance facilitated an interactive presentation on 'Learning Dreams', which incorporated Mentimeter and brought the evening to an inspiring end.

## 3 ATTENDANCE

A total of 73 people attended the event.

Participants in attendance included young people and youth workers from Local EA and Voluntary Youth Service, including Ballykeel Youth Resource Centre, Greenisland Youth Centre, Waveney Youth Centre, Larne Youth Projects, Sunnylands Youth Centre, Downshire Youth Centre, Carrickfergus YMCA and Larne YMCA.

Other key stakeholders included representatives from PlayBoard and the Department of Justice.

Representation from RAG included the Department of Education, YMCA Ireland and the Youth Work Alliance.

A representative from Ardmore Advertising, the media company behind the Ending the Harm campaign also attended.

### 3.1 Attendance Figures

Attendance Group	Number
Young People	39
Local Advisory Members	6 (1 Adult, 5 Young People)
Regional Advisory Members	3
Youth Work Staff	19 (EA 14, Voluntary Sector 5)
Statutory Partners	3 (DoJ, EA 2)
Others	3 (PlayBoard 2, Media 1)

### 3.2 Satisfaction

100% of evaluations stated that the event was very satisfactory or satisfactory.

### 4.1 Impact of Hard Hitting Campaigns

Many of the young people hadn't seen the "Ending the Harm" adverts before the event. Of those that had, most had viewed them on a social media platform, with YouTube and Facebook identified as the most popular access points. Some young people had seen the Snapchat campaign which was a first attempt by DoJ to use that platform.

Views were mixed on the style of the videos and opinions were split on whether it was too scary and could benefit from a softer approach; to the opposite feeling that it could have been much more hard hitting and grim.

Young people felt that they needed more information on paramilitaries as a result of seeing the adverts.

The adverts were seen as engaging; young people liked seeing the different perspectives and wanted to see "what happens next".

Having the adverts in more public spaces was seen as a good idea including projecting the videos onto public buildings and showing them in schools.

Generally the young people liked the realism of the adverts and how they treated the issue seriously.

Adult stakeholders felt the campaign was hard hitting but questioned the effectiveness of it, with it only being able to be televised after 9 pm.

Adult stakeholders also felt that the campaign needed to be integrated into the school curriculum.

### 4.2 Difficult or Important Issues Young People would like to talk about more

The engagement event aimed to capture information on other issues affecting young people that could benefit from an innovative approach.

Mental health and where to go for help was identified by all of the discussion groups.

Physical health, appearance, body image and sexual health were all key subjects that young people felt needed to be open for discussion in a safe environment.

Practical life skills ranging from living independently, through to being able to cook and clean, to managing finances were identified as being areas where young people need the chance to develop in a real environment.

Concerns over employability and how to get a job were raised by most groups; they felt there wasn't practical help within formal education and a new approach was needed.

The young people thought that sensitive subjects such as sexual assault, drugs, FGM, honour killings, paramilitaries and teen pregnancy were avoided within school and that these were amongst the things that they didn't feel comfortable to talk about in their schools.

Adult stakeholders identified socialising safely as something that was a need for young people and they were concerned about the consequences of sexting and online sexual exploitation on the long term wellbeing of young people.

Adult stakeholders also felt that youth workers need to know the latest trends and risks young people were subject to.

#### 4.3 What innovative opportunities can Youth Services offer to young people?

A wide range of examples were identified by participants as to how Youth Services can support young people with difficult or important issues in an innovative way. This included the identification of programmes, activities and themes, the most prevalent of which are outlined below.

Participants had discussions about how best to address issues such as those highlighted in ending the harm and felt that better use of adverts such as this could make an impact, but they should be relevant to the age group they are addressed at and be accessible on platforms that young people use. Drama was cited as a method to recreate scenarios in a realistic way within youth services to allow discussion on these issues.

Youth services should provide more opportunities for over 18s, as participants felt that youth work seems to stop for them. This could be in the form of leadership and volunteering programmes.

There was also discussion about the need for more qualifications and courses in youth centres, not just for this age group but for all young people.



Young people discussed and highlighted that the centres they attend are outdated and they would like to see extensions or more rooms in youth centres, which are modernised.

Young people also stated that they would like access to more centres that use a drop-in approach as opposed to the more traditional style youth centre.

Opportunities to travel internationally was a key recommendation for programmes that could be offered by youth services, along with cross-community work and inter-club trips. Identifying young people's need to experience different cultures and meet new people.

Finally, it was outlined by a number of participants that youth services could engage with more young people through the promotion of the opportunities on offer through an increased social media presence.



### 5.1 Recommendations

The following recommendations were identified as a result of this participative event.

The use of anonymous surveys to enable youth workers to design workshops that all young people could access in school.

Youth Service to provide better information on support groups that young people can access independently.

Youth Service could make better use of social media platforms and websites where young people can seek information or request workshop topics.

Young people would benefit from having more youth workers for them to speak to.

Finally, it was recommended that youth services complete longitudinal research into the impact of youth work, conducted by professional researchers to guide future initiatives and methodologies for working with young people.

### 5.2 Future considerations

The key themes identified through the stakeholder event should be considered further by the EA Information and Planning team in preparation for the Regional Assessment of Need and will be shared with all local Senior Youth Officers for development of the upcoming three year plans.

The LAG should take account of the recommended youth service responses to identify issues for future area planning purposes and future service delivery.

List of evidence sources available on request

- I. Agenda
- II. PowerPoint presentations
- III. Notes from discussion groups
- IV. Mentimeter Findings
- V. Programme Invite
- VI. Attendance Record
- VII. Evaluation Feedback

